

2015

H.P. Lovecraft & The French Connection: Translation, Pulps and Literary History

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H. P. Lovecraft & The French Connection: Translation, Pulps and Literary History

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

Comparative Literature

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2015

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Dedication

To my best friend, my wife and everything in between, Nathacha.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Jeanne Garane whose guidance, suggestions and editing has helped me beyond belief. Thank you for your patience and willingness to help me pursue my interests.

I would like to personally thank the following French experts on H. P. Lovecraft, Cédric Monget, Phillipe Gindre, Adam Joffrain, Stéphane Delure, Joseph Altairac, Bertrand Nébel Bonnet, L.V. Cervera Merino, Werna Burton, Arnaud Moussart and the talented artist, Jeff Grimal. Your comments and insight on Lovecraft's reception in France have been the greatest source of information that I could have asked for. I would like to especially thank Cédric, Adam and Stéphane who have responded to countless questions over emails and Facebook posts to the group H. P. Lovecraft: Francophone.

Last, but certainly not least of all I would like to thank Mr. S. T. Joshi for his participation as a committee member for my dissertation. I would also humbly thank him for his herculean feat of editing, publishing and writing on all things Lovecraft. Without Mr. Joshi, Lovecraft studies would be stuck somewhere in the shadow of August Derleth.

Abstract

Weird fiction writer H. P. Lovecraft captured the zeitgeist of the modernist movement, despite his association with popular fiction. Lovecraft's post-mortem climb from the margins of the American literary system to its center is indicative of his influence on "mass" and "elite" cultures alike in the second half of the twentieth century and onward. Lovecraft's influence is not restricted to American culture, but it spread like an airborne virus to other cultures, and to France in particular. His imaginative weird fiction, a unique combination of horror and science fiction, has been translated into more than 25 languages from Bengali to Serbo-Croatian.

The French were the first to translate Lovecraft and, according to S. T. Joshi, they hold provocative and insightful ideas and interpretations about him. Their interest in Lovecraft and their philosophical tradition have lead them to be the assumed champions of Lovecraft. Due to their unique differences, how does a comparison of Lovecraft's image in French culture inform the modern American Lovecraft scholar and enthusiast? This question is important because the modern American Lovecraft scholarship is primarily monolingual, and therefore cannot fully benefit from the excellent scholarship that is produced in the French language.

The goal of this dissertation is to trace Lovecraft's literary and cultural history in France, from its beginning to present-day. This lineage will be traced through an application of translation polysystems literary theory as described by Itamar Evan-Zohar

and Gideon Toury. This system is effective in offering a conceptual model for the structures of literary systems on the micro (national) and the macro (world) level. Regarding the world literary system, the French have gained a particularly dominant position. Therefore, if the French have been leaders of Lovecraftian scholarship, how much of their interpretation of Lovecraft is visible in the American interpretation of Lovecraft? Ultimately, despite the literary influence of France on world cultural systems, polysystems literary theories explain the particular role that translation plays in the balance of literary domination.

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Introduction

Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) is most well known for his contribution to pulp-fiction magazines with his weird fiction tales such as “The Call of Cthulhu,” “The Whisperer Out of Darkness,” and “The Colour Out of Space,” among many others. Similar to many authors in their lifetime, he did not receive the recognition that he deserved. This is perhaps due more to the medium in which Lovecraft’s stories were published than to the content, though that cannot be overlooked as well. S. T. Joshi observes that despite the fact that the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* “provided the first steady professional market for Lovecraft’s tales . . . , Lovecraft and other practitioners of weird fiction began a process of self-marginalization that was not overcome for decades” (Forward xi). Retrospectively Lovecraft’s notoriety and importance in shaping a whole genre of weird fiction has been recognized by his elevated status, according to Joshi, as “a cultural icon . . . whose imagination populated the world with a legion of cosmic horrors that bleakly underscored the significance of humanity and all its works in a blind, godless universe” (“Introduction” ix).

Lovecraft’s childhood and adolescence can be characterized as introverted due to the death of his father, Winfield Scott Lovecraft (1898) and his grandfather Whipple Phillips (1904). Lovecraft’s mother, Sarah Susan Phillips Lovecraft’s treatment of her son was a mixture of “overprotectiveness and a curious emotional distance” (ix). Due to health concerns, Lovecraft dropped out of high school in 1908 without a diploma, which

meant that he could not attend Brown University, as he desired. Lovecraft's adolescence is what perhaps earned him the title as "the recluse from Providence" because he mostly confined himself to his house, where his only companions were his books.

In 1913, Lovecraft wrote a letter criticizing Fred Jackson, whose sentimental romances were often featured in *Argosy*. This launched a debate, and it was in this manner that Edward F. Daas, an official of the United Amateur Press Association invited Lovecraft to join the association. Lovecraft also later joined the National Amateur Press Association. Arguably, it was the supportive atmosphere of the amateur press associations that allowed Lovecraft to become confident in his capacities as a writer. He even published thirteen issues of his own journal, *Conservative* (1915-1923) which "reflect[ed] both his political and literary conservatism, as befitted one who felt he belonged in the eighteenth century" (x). Lovecraft submitted three short stories through the encouragement of his friends to the magazine *The Vagrant* in 1919. Of the three, "Dagon" was published.

HPL's mother died in 1921 and it was his two aunts who took care of him until he married Sonia H. Greene in 1924. The newlyweds moved to Brooklyn, NY where Sonia was an executive in a department store. Lovecraft was unable to find employment in New York City despite his constant search. Their marriage only lasted two years. Sonia left NYC to find a job in Cleveland, and Lovecraft, who developed a distaste for New York City, returned to Providence in 1926. The two were divorced shortly after his return to Providence. The time in New York City was relatively fallow in his production, but rich in offering him material for the stories he would write upon his return to Providence.

In Providence, Lovecraft corresponded with many people, some young fans and friends with whom he had kept in contact since his days with the amateur press associations. Lovecraft's work was never highly regarded during his lifetime, and on March 15, 1937 Lovecraft died in relative poverty of tertiary intestinal cancer.

Lovecraft unknowingly left a legacy behind, which has steadily grown since his acceptance as a canonical author in the Library of America in 2005.¹ According to S. T. Joshi, "Lovecraft remains unique in being simultaneously a figure commanding respect among highbrow critics and a significant figure in popular culture, the source of films, role-playing games, and other media adaptations" (xiv). This is evident in the popularity of the *Call of Cthulhu* role-playing game, which remains in publication since 1981.² Also *en vogue* at this moment is the Lovecraft inspired board game *Arkham House*, and its many expansions. In "Tentacles and Teeth: The Lovecraftian Being in Popular Culture," Mark Jones remarks the heterogeneous effect of Lovecraft on culture. On the one hand the academic treatment of Lovecraft has proved essential to Lovecraft's cultural elevation, and on the other hand one finds the more relegated or marginalized expressions of Lovecraft's themes and philosophy. Notably, the closer the medium of expression is to the centrality of culture, the more "distilled" the themes and content. Jones explains, "the usual populist requirements of commercial culture mean that the bleakness characteristic of the Lovecraftian worldview is largely restricted to marginalized or alternative forms" (230). One example of a marginalized form is heavy metal and its subgeneric forms such as death, doom and black metal. In horror fiction and film, Lovecraft's themes and philosophy have been so incorporated that many tropes idiosyncratic to Lovecraft's style have become staples. For example the *Alien* (the first appearing in 1979) movie trilogy is

particularly rife with cosmic indifference towards mankind, and the more modern sci-fi horror film *Prometheus* (2012) seems to bear resemblance to the basic premise of *At the Mountains of Madness*. The website lovecraftezine.com has several different sections dedicated to various Hollywood and amateur movies with notable Lovecraft influence.

In the first English-language scholarly approach to Lovecraft's oeuvre, *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* (1980), S. T. Joshi states that French critics have "significant and provocative views about Lovecraft" ("Preface" xiii). Later, he even makes the comment that the French "have been leading champions of Lovecraft" ("Lovecraft Criticism: A Study" 24). In the entirety of English-language scholarship on Lovecraft, these two statements have been largely unexplored. Within the field of American Lovecraft Studies this dissertation explores something entirely unknown. Therefore, it does not attempt to revise a particular "American" view of Lovecraft, but rather to enlarge it by noting the evolution of a parallel, French, view. In doing so it will explore the significant and provocative views about Lovecraft that the French have, to determine whether these views have in turn influenced American Lovecraft Studies. To achieve this goal it will be necessary to understand the cultural context of Lovecraft in America and compare that with his cultural context in France.

Chapter one is a parallel historiography of Lovecraft in both the French and American literary systems. In order to understand the image of Lovecraft in France, it is necessary to start with the image and its evolution of Lovecraft in America. The manipulation of an image occurs (in)voluntarily. These images are often refracted by scholars, critics, translators, editors who don't necessarily "produce" the image ex-nihilo but rather expand it in some manner. When Lovecraft died in 1937, his friend and

longtime correspondent August Derleth self-appointed himself as the de facto authority on all things Lovecraft. Derleth essentially manipulated the direction of Lovecraft's image (i.e. interpretation) in America. It was no different in France, as Jacques Bergier incorporated Lovecraft into a readily available French schema as the outsider, an author whose genius is a perfect combination of intelligence and madness. As we will discover in this chapter, the more that Lovecraft became an object of scholarly analysis, the more Lovecraft's image in both America and France came to resemble more Lovecraft's authoritative intent as expounded upon in his numerous nonfiction treatise and letters on weird fiction.

The focus in chapter two is the initial moment of Lovecraft's introduction in France. If we can understand literary systems to be literary environments, then Lovecraft can be considered as a foreign animal to which the environment has no defenses. Lovecraft's initial introduction by Robert Benayoun and Gérard Legrand into a small coterie of surrealists in 1953 is a curious event. In understanding the principles of surrealist philosophy, this part of the chapter analyses Lovecraft's texts surrealistically. If we understand Surrealism to be more interested in the power of the subconscious mind, Fantastic Realism contends that there is innate power in a higher state of awakening. Fantastic Realism was a term coined by Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwels in their 1960 "new age" book *Le Matin des magiciens*. The French publisher Denoël published a collection of Lovecraft's tales entitled *La Couleur tombée du ciel* in 1954 to target a growing niche in the post-WWII French literary system. In an effort to understand the development of Lovecraft's image in France, this chapter explores the critical approach

to Lovecraft as an author whose philosophy appeared to synchronize with that of the French in the post-WWII era.

Chapter three focuses primarily on the “modern” image of Lovecraft in France, one which coincided with Michel Houellebecq’s publication of *H. P. Lovecraft: Contre le monde, contre la vie* in 1999. We will consider Houellebecq’s image of Lovecraft to be the “French” fountainhead expressing the general move towards reading Lovecraft’s work as a poetic expression of his worldview and philosophy. In focusing on the literary environment and how it has adapted to Lovecraft since 1954, this chapter highlights recent French scholarship on Lovecraft. It culminates with a retrospective analysis of two recent publications on Lovecraft by Cédric Monget and Didier Hendrickx, which essentially represents a “modern” interpretation of HPL. In other words, where two later texts reflect the American image/interpretation of HPL.

Part of understanding Lovecraft’s work in a literary system is that on a global scale, each particular literary system struggles against all others. In the history of literature, the French literary system dominated in a time period that roughly mirrored the French military’s rise and fall.³ This has led to the general understanding in the “world republic of letters,” that the French are culturally and literarily dominant.⁴ In the end, however, when we apply a polysystems translation theory to our research, we find that translation plays a major role in highlighting micro and macro levels of literary conflict. In our case, it leads us to the conclusion that although the French literary system has traditionally dominated, it must import material (genres for example) through translation when it lacks a genre (or genres) in marginal zones of its literature, that is to say, Lovecraft served a specific cultural need to fill in the gap in the French literary system.

Due to the fact that the American literary system was particularly strong in this special type of “weird” fiction, so too is its influence over the genre. The greatest amount and most accurate interpretation of Lovecraft has been conducted in the English language. The most accurate French Lovecraft scholarship is generally that which bases its findings on English-language research. In other words, despite the fact that French scholarship has insightful and provocative views of Lovecraft, their current image of Lovecraft is like a classic American cuisine reinterpreted through French styles of cooking.

What is Weird Fiction?

Defining a genre is, at best, a difficult maneuver. It needs clear-cut borders that remain unwavering because classification systems cannot have blurred borders. Certainly, this is a difficult task when some genres are a hybrid of many genres, as is the case with Weird Fiction, as will be defined below.⁵ To complicate matters further, genre classification is not a static, one-and-done affair. It is subject to change across time *as well as* across cultures. For instance one can ask, does French criticism regard weird fiction in the same light as the American criticism? What makes “weird fiction” distinct and separate from its literary predecessors, Gothic and Fantastic Literature.

The emergence or creation of a genre is often the product of a historical and/or cultural moment. Weird Fiction is no different. Although Weird Fiction appeared to coalesce into a genre with the pulp-fiction magazine *Weird Tales* (1923-1954), S. T. Joshi looks towards 1880 as the beginning of this new “genre,” which according to him, is not specifically a genre but rather “*the consequence of a world view*” (*The Weird Tale* 1).

China Miéville, for his part, remarks the time period of 1880-1940 as part of “classic Weird Fiction,” and “Haute Weird Fiction” appearing with H. P. Lovecraft and other weird fiction writers whose works were published in *Weird Tales* (“Weird Fiction” 510).⁶

Let us not be confused by the terms “classic” and “Haute” weird fiction—they merely serve as chronological markers in the genre “weird fiction” as a whole. HPL’s weird fiction treatise “Supernatural Horror in Literature” (1927) catalogues those artists and writers whose specific worldview heavily influenced his own writing. HPL regards Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) as nothing short of the one to whom “we owe the modern horror-story in its final and perfected state” (“Supernatural” 53). HPL also acknowledges Arthur Machen (1863-1947), Lord Dunsany (1878-1957), and Algernon Blackwood (1869-1951) as other authors who separated themselves from their fellow contemporaries as possessing a specific “weird” worldview. This specific worldview can largely be summed up as a type of cosmic fear, or the fear of the unknown and the uncertainty of man’s place vis-à-vis the unknown. More eloquently put, the specific zeitgeist accorded to weird fiction as a genre can be summed up in the opening paragraph of HPL’s “Call of Cthulhu:”

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should travel far. The sciences, each straining in it’s own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but someday the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and our frightful

position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age (79).

Not only does this citation warn the reader of a cosmic indifference to mankind, it also demonstrates a specific attitude towards the industrialization and scientific advancement of the early half of the twentieth century. While some reveled in this new age of scientific advancement, an age where “anything” could supposedly be known or discovered, there were some who regarded it with suspicion. Among them were the weird fiction writers.

According to S. T. Joshi, the classic weird fiction period is roughly 1880 to 1940, while China Miéville’s understanding of “Haute” Weird Fiction corresponds roughly to the publication of *Weird Tales* in 1923, the most popular weird fiction pulp magazine.⁷ The genre of “weird fiction” does not exist in France in the same way that it does in the American literary system because it is subsumed either under fantastic literature or science-fiction, which largely depends on the particular way any given “weird fiction” tale is interpreted.⁸

It was during the boom era of pulp-fiction magazines that weird fiction coalesced as a genre. Pulp magazines were produced on cheap paper composed of wood pulp, and usually sold for a dime. The content of pulps covered nearly as many themes one could imagine, from Western pulps, Romantic pulps, Zeppelin (as in aerial vehicles filled with helium) pulps, Detective/Crime pulps, and Supernatural Horror pulps. According to Tim DeForest, “pulp first appeared in the late 19th century and faded away in the 1950s. During their heyday (1920s-1930s), any newsstand in the country was overflowing with

pulps, with their garish and often bizarre covers competing for the attention of eager readers” (11).⁹

Weird Fiction is defined by HPL not so much by what it is, but by what it is not. For HPL, “[t]he true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to [tropes used by prior writers looking to incite fear]” (“Supernatural” 15). A weird tale may certainly contain such elements, but they alone do not constitute a weird tale. The weird tale, then, contains more than Gothic or Fantastic tropes. The true weird tale is the result of

[a] certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces [which] must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of the 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 (15).

For Lovecraft, the atmosphere of the tale is of the utmost importance, and “[t]herefore we must judge a weird tale not by the author’s intent, or by the mere mechanics of the plot; but by the emotional level which it attains at its least mundane point” (16). Thus, the more evocative the atmosphere, and the more intensity which it excites in the emotions of the reader, the better the weird tale. More specifically, Lovecraft writes that weird fiction is “the illusion of some strange suspension or violation

of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law which forever imprison us and frustrate our curiosity about the infinite cosmic spaces beyond the radius of our sight and analysis” (“Notes” 113). It should be mentioned that this illusion or strange suspension is a result of the carefulness with which the weird fiction writer composes his tale so that each event builds up the overall atmosphere to a vertiginous height coinciding with the denouement.

HPL provides the reader with many different sources from which a definition of weird fiction may be drawn. However, retrospectively, S. T. Joshi and China Miéville provide a more “literary” definition. In *The Weird Tale* (1990), S. T. Joshi sees HPL’s previously cited definition of weird fiction as a broad category, and Joshi concludes in the following “broad divisions [of weird fiction]: fantasy, supernatural horror, non-supernatural horror, and quasi science-fiction. All these categories should be regarded as loose and nonexclusive, and there are some other subtypes that are probably amalgams or offshoots of those just mentioned” (*The Weird Tale* 7). In his two-volume work entitled *Unutterable Horror: A History of Supernatural Fiction* (2012), Joshi reveals a modified version of his 1991 divisions. Weird fiction is now understood to be a hybrid genre under the aegis of imaginative fiction, whose broad divisions are: science fiction, supernatural horror, crime/suspense and fantasy. Imagine four circles, with each circle representing the previously mentioned genre categories. On top from right to left are: science fiction (1), supernatural horror (2) and crime/suspense (3). Both science fiction and crime/suspense share attributes or overlap with supernatural horror. Immediately below supernatural horror is fantasy (4), which only intersects with supernatural horror. At all the intersections with supernatural horror, the weird tale can be found, and it also fits entirely

within the supernatural itself. Joshi notes specifically that the “fusion of supernatural horror with science fiction occurs prototypically in the work of H. P. Lovecraft and some of his followers” (*Unutterable* 7).¹⁰ While both supernatural fiction and science fiction deal with a suspension or violation of natural law, science fiction rationalizes the suspension of natural law. In HPL’s hybrid genre, then, the horror experienced is of a different kind where the rationalization of science unlocks or reveals unrationalizable phenomena. In some cases, science is unavailable to understand the phenomena. As Joshi concludes, for HPL “natural law is a mental construct based upon current scientific knowledge” (*The Weird Tale* 180). Indeed, most of HPL’s best-known works emerge in this hybrid of science fiction and supernatural horror. These are “The Colour Out of Space” (1927), “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1930), “At the Mountains of Madness” (1931) and “The Shadow Out of Time” (1934).

For his part, China Miéville’s definition does not venture very far from Joshi’s, but nevertheless it will give us a better understanding of a difficult-to-define genre. Miéville remarks that weird fiction is “conceived of as a rather breathless and generically slippery macabre fiction, a dark fantastic (‘horror’ plus ‘fantasy’) often featuring nontraditional alien monsters (thus [the term,] ‘science fiction’)” (510). However, Miéville continues to analyze weird fiction as a “radicalized sublime backwash” (511). The sublime is traditionally understood as including or containing a sense of awe which provokes a type of joy mixed with horror. Miéville writes, “according to Edmund Burke and other theorists of the sublime [such as Kant], the beautiful and sublime are mutually exclusive: at a certain scale, [of] enormity and unrepresentability[,] . . . the sublime appears” (511). Weird Fiction, then acts as a rupture between the beautiful and the

sublime which “allows swillage of that awe and horror from ‘beyond’ back into the everyday—into angles, bushes, the touch of strange limbs, noises, etc” (511). Essentially, weird fiction separates itself from both Gothic and Fantastic literature because weird fiction “attempts to evoke an [awe whose function acts as a] *lack* of recognition rather than an uncanny resurgence, guilt-function, [or] return of the repressed” (512, emphasis in original). Thus, what is “coming through” *per se* operates differently than is traditionally the case in supernatural tales of horror from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th century. Rather than assuming that unrepresentables can be represented through language, the function of awe as a lack of recognition suggests that this is not the case. No noun can quite capture the qualities of an object, and this indeed explains the purple or elaborate prose often found in weird fiction, and certainly that of HPL. The death of the wizard Wilbur Whateley in “The Dunwich Horror,” will serve as an example of representing the unrepresentable:

The thing that lay half-bent on its side in a foetid pool of greenish-yellow ichor and tarry stickiness was almost nine feet tall . . . It was not quite dead . . . The thing itself, however, crowded out all other images at the time. It would be trite and not wholly accurate to say that no human pen could describe it, but one may properly say that it could not be vividly visualized by anyone whose ideas of aspect and contour are too closely bound up with the common life-forms of this planet and of the three known dimensions. It was partly human, beyond a doubt, with very manlike hands and head, and the goatish, chinless face had the stamp of

the Whateley's upon it. But the torso and the lower parts of the body were teratologically fabulous, so that only generous clothing could ever have enabled it to walk on earth unchallenged or uneradicated (Lovecraft, "The Dunwich Horror" 263).

First, there is the admission that this visualization challenges normal human concepts of biological shape as well as accepted laws of physics and allowable dimensions. The first system of representability is biological observation, and the second system, mathematical representation. The compiling of adjectives attempts to render the noun closer to what is observed, but sadly the reader encounters a blurry visualization of the object coupled with teratological modifications, which break down any harmonious visualization. Thus, the unrepresentable is not quite representable in our current and "inadequate system of symbols" (Miéville 512). Effectively, the horror is not the return of the repressed, nor an uncanny resurgence, but the lack of recognition and association of a perceived object.

To summarize, Weird Fiction is a hybrid of many genres whose common point is supernatural horror. Lovecraft and many of the authors he influenced share, to some degree, his particular worldview based upon a cosmic fear, largely understood as a fear of cosmic indifference to mankind. This posits the idea that man should not and cannot know everything, and any acquisition of knowledge may produce results that will destabilize the delicate balance of his understanding and rationality. In that sense, the horror produced is not a function of past supernatural horror genres such as Gothic Fiction or Fantastic Literature, the return of the repressed or uncanny resurgence respectively, but the horror is a function of unrepresentability in meaning, and inability to

recognize the unrepresentable. Graham Harman, in his 2012 book *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy*, writes that unrepresentability in the “meaning of being might even be defined as *untranslatability*. Language (and everything else) is obliged to become an art of allusion or indirect speech, a metaphorical bond with a reality that cannot possibly be made present” (16). The aforementioned passage where Whateley’s body is described, accurately represents the inability of meaning to be carried forward. This implies that “reality is too real to be translated without remainder into any sentence, perception, practical action, or anything else” (16). In this sense, reading Lovecraft in a surrealist manner reveals the untranslatability in his texts. Thus, weird fiction is a direct product of its historical emergence—an historic moment where modernist writers were, in their own “culturally elite” way, challenging the same very notions of reality as were weird fiction writers. One cannot claim that the *whole* of weird fiction writers produced good “art,” in fact far from it, but those who did produce good weird fiction laid waste to the delicate balance and systems of aesthetics that relegated this genre of mass market pulp-fiction.

The history of weird fiction in both the American and French literary systems can be traced to Gothic Literature, defined as a combination of fiction, horror and Romanticism (~1764-1820), and Fantastic Literature, defined as the appearance in literature of an event that is ambiguously supernatural (1820~1899). Due to the difference in cultures, the actual “status” of the literary field that “welcomed” the introduction of weird fiction engenders different attitudes. These attitudes determine the function of Weird Fiction in France and the United States.¹¹

The American Weird Tradition

Within the American literary system, one need not look anywhere further than the figure of Edgar Allan Poe in order to divine the origin of weird fiction. Mary Shelley, Sir Walter Scott and James Hogg all wrote “short” stories of horror: however, the truly “American” vein of short horror stories did not begin until the appearance of Poe.¹² It is true that the locale of many of his stories are not revealed, and some even take place in Europe. However, he stands alone as the father of American weird fiction.¹³ In “Supernatural Horror in Literature” (1927), Lovecraft himself acknowledges the influences of Edgar Allan Poe, Ambrose Bierce, Lord Dunsany, Algernon Blackwood and Arthur Machen on his literary production. Of these five, only Poe and Bierce are American (Arthur Machen is Welsh, and Lord Dunsany and Algernon Blackwood were English).

After Poe, Weird fiction in American literary history follows Ambrose Bierce and Henry James. S. T. Joshi writes that Bierce and James instigated “geographical polarization in American weird writing” (*Unutterable Horror vol. 1* 295). The “East Coast School,” led chiefly by Henry James, is inspired by European and English sources, and includes the geographical use of the East Coast, England and the European continent. The “West Coast School,” led by Ambrose Bierce, “transfer[s] the sense of horror and weirdness [present in the East Coast School] to the ‘new’ lands . . . of the Pacific coast” (*Unutterable* 295). S. T. Joshi credits more influence on the development of weird fiction in the U.S.A. to the West Coast School, which Joshi believes “open[ed] the way for more imaginative treatments of supernatural motifs” (*Unutterable* 295). The primary reason for

a distinction between the West Coast and East Coast schools of Weird Fiction in America then, is due to the distance separating the two coasts.

It is important to note that all the writers associated with either school of American weird fiction are not exclusively “weird fiction writers.” Poe and Bierce were journalists, and Henry James wrote other fine stories.¹⁴ This curious plurality of interests is best explained by HPL when, concerning the existence of cosmic fear, he wrote that

[i]t has always existed, and always [will] exist; and no better evidence of its tenacious vigour can be cited than the impulse which now and then drives writers of totally opposite learnings to try their hands at it in isolated tales, as if to discharge from their minds certain phantasmal shapes which would otherwise haunt them (Lovecraft, “Supernatural” 15).¹⁵

Most of the weird fiction written by Bierce, James and other associated writers had their work published in magazines that published more than weird fiction. In fact, weird fiction seemed to be more the exception than the rule. These magazines include *Atlantic Monthly*, *Scribner’s Monthly*, *Scribner’s Magazine*, *Collier’s Weekley*, *Century Magazine*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Everybody’s*, *New England Magazine*, *Examiner*, *Cosmopolitan*, *San Francisco News Letter*, *Vanity Fair*, *Good Housekeeping*, and many others. The extent to which weird fiction was included in such magazines and the fact that many weird fiction writers also wrote other kinds of fiction and non-fiction pieces indicates the always-already presence of the weird within the greater American literary

system. Lastly, the ghost story also enjoyed its tradition being associated with Christmas in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. Henry James' *Turn of the Screw* (1898), the "ultimate refinement of the Christmas ghost story" itself uses this tradition as a premise for the story to be told" (*Unutterable Horror* 296). *Turn of the Screw* can be, in the most extreme sense, summed up as a ghost story where children "communicate" with two ghosts who are haunting an English Estate.

The Pulp and Weird Fiction

Pulp-fiction magazines emerged from the dime novel market. Dime novels were essentially "inexpensive books for the general public," and were the product of "mass-marketing techniques" that developed in the 1860s (DeForest 15). Later in the early 20th century they were known to be "voluminous, cliché ridden, disposable, ephemeral products of mass-market pandering and production" (Earle 73.) When a postage increase signed the dime novel's death certificate in 1896, Frank A. Munsey (a magazine owner) converted his weekly children's magazine *Golden Argosy* to *Argosy* while simultaneously changing its target audience. Not only is Munsey credited with the birth of pulp-fiction, but also with the creation of specialty fiction pulp magazines, when in 1906 he published *The Railroad Man's Magazine* which features exclusively railroad-themed stories. It was in the 1920s when "specialty pulps ranging in subjects from sea stories to love stories to sports stories were common" (DeForest 29). Weird Fiction became a specialty subject when, in 1923, *Weird Tales* published its first issue in March of that year. It's original run expired 279 issues later in September 1954. It was set up by in Chicago by J.C.

Henneberger (who sold it in 1924 to Popular Fiction Publishing Co.) and was under the direction of three editors over its thirty-one year life-span, Edwin Baird (1923- 1924), Farnsworth Wright (1924 -1940). When William J. Delaney became owner of *Weird Tales*, Dorothy McIlwraith (1940-1954) replaced Wright as its third and final editor.¹⁶ Consequently, weird fiction was not marginal to other general fiction appearing in weekly or monthly magazines. In fact, this was the moment when weird fiction itself coalesced into a genre.

Although pulp magazines provided a definitive home for pulp fiction, weird fiction and the pulps themselves were relegated to a second-class literary status due in part to the industry which surrounded the pulps. As well, the formulaic format the stories followed tended to place them in this “secondary” category. For David M. Earle, the pulps are cultural products that reflect cultural tensions of their time. In other words, “the pulps in actuality were the *popularized* version of the dynamics and tensions of modernism in the public sphere; the pulp form was modernism consumable for the masses” (Earle 102). For its part, *Weird Tales* welcomed the fringe or weird stories which echoed the cultural tensions accompanying the social and cultural changes between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The French Weird Tradition

As in the American case, the French “weird” tradition grew out of the Gothic fiction movement originating in England with the publication of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). France had its own writers who participated in this tradition,

such as Jacques Cazotte in *Le Diable amoureux* (1772), Charles Nodier with *Les Proscrits* (1802) and *Les Tristes* (1806). But as Joshi notes, “from the late seventeenth century onward, the French appeared more attracted to fantasy—either as manifested in fairy tales . . . or in the folktale . . . than in pure supernaturalism” (*Unutterable* 133). However, both Honoré de Balzac (*La peau de chagrin*, 1831) and Victor Hugo (*Han d’Iceland*, 1823) can be noted as precursors to the French tradition of “weird” fiction. In the later half of the nineteenth century Théophile Gautier, Prosper Mérimée and Guy de Maupassant all contributed to a resolutely French mode of “weird” fiction, although at the time, and contemporarily speaking, it was known as “le fantastique”.¹⁷

Prosper Mérimée is best known, today, for “La Vénus d’Ille” (1837), in which the hero of the story accidentally betroths a statue of Venus discovered near his town. The hero marries another. But on his wedding night he is killed. The human bride claims it was the statue of Venus. This rather crude résumé does not do justice to the story, one that is well informed by leading scientific thought on physics, biology and magnetism, specifically of the Mesmer branch. The supernatural phenomena that appear in this story can be categorized under the “revenge” category, whereby vindication of some kind is exercised on the part of the supernatural. Théophile Gautier’s supernatural stories employ concepts such as dream-like time travel (“Le Pied de la momie,” 1840), to personality exchange (*Avatar*, 1856) to vampirism (“La Morte amoureuse,” 1836).

Of all the “weird” fiction writers in nineteenth century France, none are on equal grounds with Guy de Maupassant. Maupassant’s move to supernatural fiction from fiction whose main focus were events that took place during the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), occurs in the later part of his career, due in part to syphilis and general

paranoia. His tales are chilling as they combine supernatural and psychological terror. Often the narrator openly admits his delicate psychological state or his insanity, and as a result the events narrated are often ambiguous. “La Main d’écorché” (1875) revolves around the theme of supernatural revenge, where a “stolen” sorcerer’s hand kills the father of the man who possesses the hand. During the funeral, an unknown coffin is discovered, within which is the skeleton of the supposed sorcerer who lacks a single hand. “Lui?” (1883) is the story of man who repeatedly sees an apparition in his house and, the continued exposure to the apparition causes the protagonist to go mad. There are many other examples of Maupassant’s “weird” fiction, yet none is more worthy of laurels than “Le Horla” (1887).¹⁸ The unnamed narrator of the story recounts that he is haunted by an unknown entity *hors-là* (French for, outside). Through the course of the story the narrator becomes increasingly paranoid and fearful. The narrator devises an experiment. Yet, even science cannot dispel the possibility of such an entity. The narrator learns the possibility of other such entities existing in other parts of the world and comes to the conclusion that the Horla’s *race* is vastly superior to humankind, who will soon be subjugated. In the end, the narrator thinks he has trapped the Horla in his room, and lights his house on fire with all his servants inside. It is only then that he realizes that this was foolhardy and that his only escape is suicide. This is a common occurrence in Maupassant’s strange fiction as the revelation of supernatural phenomena challenge the sanity of the observer to the point where either “madness or suicide” are the only options (*Unutterable Horror* 282).

At about the turn of the century, Maurice Renard (1875-1939) appeared within the French weird tradition with his 1905, publication of a collection of short stories,

Fantômes et fantoches, involving the supernatural.¹⁹ Arthur B. Evans views Maurice Renard's fiction as "continuously cross[ing] the line into Gothic horror, mythological fantasy, detective fiction and the fantastic in general" (380). It is worth mentioning that Renard's most well-known work *Le péril bleu* (1911), in which humans live at the bottom of the ocean, has as its theme undertones of cosmic indifference. This can be perceived when the human protagonist remarks,

How foolish we are! Pitiful beings submerged in a gaseous ocean who think themselves masters of Earth! Not even suspecting that another species, much more advanced than ourselves, not only exists above us but is hardly even aware of us! Another species who gives us as much credit for intelligence as we give to crabs! (qtd. in Evans 385).

In 1908 Renard published his novel *Le docteur Lerne, sous-dieu*, dedicated to H.G. Wells, which features the prototypical mad scientist who conducts animal-human experiments, although unlike Wells' Moreau, the biological engineering dips into the weird. However, in addition to the presence of science fiction, weirdness is still present as in the short story, "La singulière destinée de Bouvancourt" (collected with other short stories in 1908 under the title, *Le voyage immobile suivi d'autres Histoires singulières*) where a physician "accidentally" passes through a mirror into the "mirror world," "boulversant toutes nos notions d'espace et de temps" ("overturning all of our notions of space and time"; Versin 734). Like the work of his American counter parts, the large majority of his works first appear in pulps and later, are collected and printed together.

Stories such as “La grenouille” and “L’image au fond des yeux” can be found in *L’invitation à la peur* (1929) while “La découverte,” “L’étrange souvenir de M. Liserot” and “La merveilleuse énigme” are collected in *Le carrousel du mystère* (1929).

There is a portion of Maurice Renard’s work available in English. The most recent translations by Brian Stableford were done in 2010 in *A Man Among the Microbes* (a collection of many tales) and *The Doctored Man* (a collection of many tales) and *The Master of Light*, also in 2010. Three of his works were translated relatively shortly after their initial publication in France, *Le Singe* (1924) was translated in 1928, *Les Mains d’Orlac* (1920) was translated in 1929, and lastly *Le Voyage immobile* (1909) was translated in 1932.²⁰ Despite the recent translations of Maurice Renard, he is relatively unknown to English-speaking readers. Arthur B. Evans views him as a bridge between “two entire *worlds*: not only in chronology (the nineteenth century *fin-de-siecle* and the twentieth century) and of esthetics (the Goncourts [naturalism] and the Surrealists), but also in terms of two fundamental sides of the human psyche—the rational and the irrational” (392). Maurice Renard owes as much to Wells and his “speculative” science fiction as he does to Poe and his masterful impact on horror fiction. There has not been an extensive amount of research committed to Maurice Renard and it would appear that the importation of American Science-Fiction and Weird Fiction overshadowed the French writers of the same period.

Jean Ray (1887-1964) is a Belgian writer who wrote in German, Dutch and French, and composed many types of short stories including his American version of Sherlock Holmes, *Henry Dickson*. He also wrote a significant number of weird tales.²¹ Although he is Belgium rather than French, one can still claim that he makes a

contribution to the French weird tradition due to the fact that his weird fiction was written in French. He is often referred to as the Belgian Lovecraft, although his philosophy is slightly different. In 1925 his *Les contes du whisky* feature about a dozen weird stories among other science-fiction and adventure stories. In 1932, he published *La croisière des ombres* which was received very poorly. He is most known for *Malpertuis* (1943), where Olympian gods are trapped in the bodies of normal people by a warlock. His wartime weird fiction is the most fruitful, and vastly dwarfs in quality and quantity *Les contes du whisky* and *La croisière des ombres*. Of the two French weird writers contemporary to Lovecraft, Jean Ray and Maurice Renard, the former is often more associated with the precise “Lovecraftian” style. Pierre Versins remarks the striking similarities between Ray and Lovecraft in writing fiction:

Tous deux ont écrit de préférence sur les dimensions, les univers qui sont juste à côté, mais invisibles, inaccessibles sauf en de certaines circonstances, ces mondes qui, si l’on en ouvre la port—et elle ne s’ouvre jamais en grand—laissent fuser un vent glacial et passer des entités incompréhensibles. Tous deux ont écrit sur des civilisations perdues, des choses anciennes et oubliées ou peu connues ou inconnues, des cultures et des mœurs différentes des nôtres.

(“Both wrote by preference on dimensions, universes which are alongside ours, but invisible, inaccessible except under certain conditions, these worlds which, if we open the door—and it never opens widely—allow a glacial wind and incomprehensible entities pour fourth. Each wrote on lost

civilizations, of ancient and forgotten things whether known or unknown, of different cultures and morals from ours”; “Jean Ray” 722).²²

Thus, the French weird tradition existed contemporarily alongside the American one. Each tradition stems from Gothic Fiction and Fantastic Literature, and are equally influenced by the monumental change to the field of horror fiction introduced by Edgar Allan Poe. This was the state of the field prior to H. P. Lovecraft’s emergence.

Chapter 1: “Lovecraft, and Literary History”

H. P. Lovecraft in the United States

Of all the weird fiction writers, Howard Phillips Lovecraft is considered to be the greatest. No other writer’s work exemplifies weird fiction as well as his. H. P. Lovecraft was born in Providence, Rhode Island on August 20, 1890. His father had a paralytic attack when he was three, and died five years later in a psychiatric ward. Joshi notes that Lovecraft was a “precocious boy [who] was reading at two, writing poems and horror stories at seven, and learning Latin and Greek at eight” (*The Weird Tale* 168). Due to chronic health problems his education was erratic and “in 1908 he apparently suffered a nervous breakdown which prevented him from graduating from high school and enrolling at Brown University” (168). Despite his lack of formal education certificates, he was a well-read individual and autodidact, who devoured texts of all type whether philosophical, scientific or literary. Lovecraft did not enter into commercial writing until he was urged to do so by his friends whom he met during the period he spent with the United Amateur Press Association and the National Amateur Press Association, roughly between 1914 and 1917.²³ Despite Lovecraft’s overwhelming notoriety for his pulp magazine weird fiction (1917-1937), “his connection with Amateur Journalism was

directly responsible for making him the man he was during the last ten or eleven years of his life” (Cook 55). Amateur Journalism is essentially non-professional journalism. He even maintained his own amateur magazine entitled *The Conservative* (thirteen issues were published between 1915 and 1923). Lovecraft’s influence over the amateur journalistic movement is almost as extensive as his literary contribution, but he gained much in the exposure, through his association, to different worldviews.

With the encouragement of many of his friends from the field of amateur journalism, the fruits of his imagination produced “The Tomb” in 1917. Many scholars believe that this marks the beginning of his “mature” writing period. In May, 1921 his mother passed away and very soon afterward he met Sonia Greene. In 1924 they were married, and subsequently moved to New York City. After two years and a failed marriage, Lovecraft returned to Providence and wrote one his most well known stories, “The Call of Cthulhu” (1926).

While HPL is more known for his fiction writing, his non-fiction writing and correspondence vastly dwarf his fictional output. It is estimated that he wrote over eighty thousand letters in his lifetime, of which Joshi estimates a mere 10,000 still exist.²⁴ Undoubtedly, every biographical text written on Lovecraft will refer to him as a recluse. A look at his epistolarian habit suggests, however, that he was a very social individual via his correspondence. We can hypothesize then, that for Lovecraft letter writing replaced the traditional face-to-face conversation. His letters are important because they divulge innumerable details “about his writing—dates of his stories, poems, and essays; publications of works not otherwise known; sources and origins of works—as well as incalculable details about the particulars of his life” (“Lovecraft’s Letters” 10). As a

result, his letters are often used by critics to support their particular interpretations of HPL's œuvre. Indeed it was these very letters that "dethroned" August Derleth's interpretations of HPL's work, interpretation which once dominated critical views of HPL.²⁵

Before Lovecraft was a weird fiction writer he was, and continued to be, a poet. He wrote "weird" poetry as well as poetry inspired by 17th century poets such as Alexander Pope and John Dryden and 18th century poets such as Thomas Gray and James Thomson. His best "weird" poems have the same powerful sense of cosmic fear, and the general weird atmosphere is compressed into sonnet form. The most well known is "Fungi From Yuggoth," which over the course of 36 sonnets tells a tale of supernatural phenomena and the havoc wrecked upon humanity as a result. Some of his weird poetry was published in *Weird Tales* in 1943 by Arkham House under the guidance of August Derleth, who published many of HPL's weird poems in *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* which also contained weird fiction.

For Lovecraft scholars, Lovecraft's fiction can generally be grouped into three strains, the first of which is known as the "Dream Cycle." The second belongs to the so-called "Cthulhu Mythos," and the final strain contains his macabre or Dunsanian tales. However, the classification of his tales into "strains" leads to a highly volatile discussion among Lovecraft scholars because many of his tales offer no clear distinction between any of the groups. For example, Dirk Mosig proposes the "'Yog-Sothoth Cycle of Myth' [in order] to differentiate it from the distorted version labeled 'Cthulhu Mythos' by August Derleth and company" (106).²⁶ While scholars agreed regarding the stories said to constitute the cornerstones of each "strain," there are ambiguous texts that are placed into

either group depending upon the inclination and vision of each particular scholar. David E. Shultz highlights the difficulty of placing a given story within the “Cthulhu Mythos” or the “Dream Cycle” because “in the nearly seventy-five years that the term [“Cthulhu Mythos”] has been in existence, there has been no consensus as to what stories are part of the ‘Mythos,’ nor has there been a clear idea of why some of Lovecraft’s stories should belong to it and others should not” (28). While this is entirely accurate, it still proves useful to envisage the two strains of work in Lovecraft’s fictional œuvre as either those pertaining to a loose conglomeration that deal with the Dream Cycle and those which orbit HPL’s pantheon of alien entities and the way in which mankind attempts to come to terms with Lovecraft’s cosmic worldview.

The Dream Cycle is a collection of texts which revolve around the Dreamlands, which is essentially an alternate dimension accessible via dreams. While all the texts in the Dream Cycle are interesting in themselves, those in which Randolph Carter, a recurring character of sorts, plays a role are of noted interest.²⁷ Randolph Carter is a central figure in the following stories: “The Statement of Randolph Carter” (1919), published in *The Vagrant* May 1920; “The Unnamable” (1923), published in *Weird Tales* July 1925; “The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath (1926-1927), published posthumously in *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* (1943); “The Silver Key” (1926), published in *Weird Tales* January 1929; “Through the Gates of the Silver Key” (1933), published in *Weird Tales* July 1934 and co-authored with E. Hoffmann Price; “Out of Aeons” (1933).²⁸

The “Cthulhu Mythos” is a collection of texts which feature extraterrestrial entities from “beyond the sphere of conscious human experience: the unplumbed abysses

of space, other dimensions, other universes, and the nightmare depths of the unconscious” (Mosig 107). Lovecraft expresses his philosophy of cosmic indifference in a letter dated July 5, 1927 to Farnsworth Wright which accompanies his *second* submission of “The Call of Cthulhu” (1926) to *Weird Tales*:

All my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the cosmos-at-large. To me there is nothing but puerility in a tale in which the human form—and the local human passions and conditions and standards—are depicted as native to other worlds or other universes. To achieve the essence of real externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all. Only the human scenes and characters must have human qualities. *These* must be handled with unsparing *realism*, (not catch-penny *romanticism*) but when we cross the line to the boundless and hideous unknown—the shadow-haunted *Outside*—we must remember to leave our humanity and terrestrialism at the threshold (*Selected Letters* 2.284).

Therefore, pseudo-mythological entities (Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, Cthulhu and Shub-Niggurath) are props that convey Lovecraft’s philosophy. The stories which are the most celebrated of HPL’s fiction invariably derives from the Cthulhu

Mythos cycle rather than from those of the Dream Cycle. Michel Houellebecq coined the term, “les grands textes” [the great texts], to designate, in his opinion, the best HPL stories (24, my translation). The list is as follows: “The Call of Cthulhu” (1926), “The Colour Out of Space” (1927), “The Dunwich Horror” (1928), “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1930), “At the Mountains of Madness” (1931), “The Dreams in the Witch House” (1932), “The Shadow Over Innsmouth” (1932), “The Shadow Out of Time” (1934). However, Lovecraft also wrote a few powerful tales prior to 1926, notably “Dagon” (1919, in the pulp magazine *The Vagrant*), or “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” (1919, in the pulp magazine *Pine Cones*) in which his philosophical stance toward cosmic indifference was present. His later stories, however, unleash in full force his vision of cosmic indifference. It is often remarked that the period he spent in NYC, while fallow in artistic production, allowed him to develop his own style, which was promptly transcribed upon his return to Providence, Rhode Island.

There is no way around the importance of his “great texts” and their impact on weird fiction. Equally important, if not more so, is his contribution to the theoretical make-up of the genre. There are essentially seven non-fiction texts which constitute, what I term, Lovecraft’s *ars supernaturalis*. These are texts in which HPL explains his method and theory for writing weird fiction, as well as a general defense of weird fiction. These texts are as follows: “Commonplace Book” (1919-1936), “In Defence of Dagon” (1921), “Lord Dunsany and His Work” (1922), “Supernatural Horror in Literature” (1925-1927), “Notes on Writing Weird Fiction” (1932/33), “Some Notes on Interplanetary Fiction” (1934), “In Memoriam: Robert Ervin Howard” (1936).

“Supernatural Horror in Literature” (published in 1927 in the magazine *The Recluse*) is perhaps the most important work from the above list, as it is an effective survey of the supernatural horror genre in literature starting with the appearance of Gothic literature (~1764) up to Lovecraft’s time period. It does not however, contain his own work. For Michel Houellebecq, “sans doute a-t-il ressenti le besoin certainement pas conscient, peut-être même pas inconscient, on aimerait plutôt dire *organique*, de récapituler tout ce qui s’était fait dans le domaine fantastique avant de le faire éclater en se lançant dans des voies radicalement nouvelles” (“although not consciously, and perhaps not even unconsciously, one would almost tend to say *organically*, Lovecraft must have felt a need to recapitulate all that had been done in the domain of horror fiction before exploding its casing and setting off on radically new paths”; 34, translation Khazeni 47).²⁹ It would be difficult to find a more accurate statement of “Supernatural Horror in Literature” and its impact on the field of weird fiction than this. The quote accurately captures HPL’s self-deprecating attitude toward his own literary output. In the sense that Lovecraft held himself to the nineteenth century standard of proper gentleman behavior, and self-aggrandizing was not something he considered to be genteel. As Houellebecq points out, HPL appears to be unaware of the importance of his own œuvre (up to 1927) and the impact it had on weird fiction as a whole as well as the extent to which his shadow would influence future generations. However, by the time “Notes on Writing Weird Fiction” was written, he must have been cognizant of his impact and “Notes” serves very much as a didactic manual on how to write an effective weird tale. As for the “Commonplace Book,” it is simply a list of ideas, sometimes a single phrase or word, that would help provide inspiration for future writers of weird fiction.

At the time of his death in 1937, HPL had gained a significant following within the specialized field of weird fiction pulp magazines. However, his influence at the time in the greater literary system appears to have been negligible. Perhaps it could be said that HPL would have sunken into oblivion had it not been for his close friends August Derleth and Donald Wandrei who founded Arkham House (AH) Publishing in 1939 with the sole purpose of preserving HPL's fiction in hardcover. *The Outsider and Others* (1939) was AH's first publication and features 533 pages including all of his "great texts," along with his ground-breaking essay "Supernatural Horror in Fiction" that closes the book. *The Outsider and Others* went out of print in 1944. In 1943 AH published *Beyond the Wall of Sleep*, which primarily focuses on the Dream Cycle texts.

The Dunwich Horror and Others was published by AH in 1963 and features such tales as "The Call of Cthulhu," "The Whisperer in Darkness," "The Shadow Out of Time," and "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," among other "lesser" known tales of HPL. In 1965, AH published *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* which reprints some of the stories in *The Outsider and Others* and features as a bookend "Supernatural Horror in Fiction." AH published a collection of texts ghost-written by HPL under the title *The Horror in the Museum and Other Revisions* in 1970.³⁰ Ballantine Books published, in 1971, the majority of Lovecraft's poems under the title *Fungi from Yuggoth and Other Poems* which appeared earlier in *Weird Tales* (in December 1929 and January 1930) as well as AH's *Beyond the Wall of Sleep* (1943). In 1995, AH published *Miscellaneous Writings*, a collection of Lovecraft's non-fiction writing.

Arguably, Arkham House dominated the HPL market for much of the 20th century until Penguin published three volumes of HPL's work in their "Penguin Modern Classics"

series, all of which were edited by S. T. Joshi. The first of which appeared in 1999 as *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*, in 2001 *The Thing on the Doorstep and Other Weird Stories*, and finally in 2004 *Dreams in the Witch House and Other Weird Stories*. This was a monumental push towards HPL finally getting the literary recognition that he deserved. In 2005 the Library of America canonized HPL in one volume of his work edited by Peter Straub.

H. P. Lovecraft in France

There is very little evidence of HPL's presence in France prior to World War II. One cannot rule out, however, that English-language bookstores in France did not carry a certain amount of popular fiction magazines. Leading up to the second World War, the French imagination was largely captured by French science fiction writers, with a few notable Anglophone authors such as H.G. Wells. World War I marked the end of a nearly 45 years of growth in the French News Press. The period between 1871 to 1914 is referred to as the "Golden Age" of the French press, during which "circulation of dailies went from one million in 1870 to 5.5 million in 1914, and that of provincial dailies from 350,000 to 4 million" (Marthan 160). The French Press was a casualty of the war in that it "lost advertising revenues, [and] newsprint scarcity and expensiveness, and distribution problems all caused a decrease in the number of pages and the disappearance of numerous titles" (Marthan 162). The same cannot be said of the Anglophone press, which boomed at the end of WWI. The beginning of World War II marked the end of the French Science Fiction boom and associated pulp fiction magazines. Arthur Evans' pseudo-

obituary lists the following deaths of French sci-fi magazines: “*Lectures pour Tous*, *Sciences et Voyages*, *Je sais tout*, *La Petite Illustration*, and—the flagship of such periodicals—the popular *Journal des Voyages*” (“Science Fiction” 234).

With the Nazi invasion and occupation of France, all things American were promptly rejected and an embargo was placed on its popular culture production. This included movies, literature, and music, and created a vacuum in French culture, which was later ripe for foreign infusion in the Post-WWII period. When the Allied Forces invaded occupied France, so too did American popular culture. This invasion came in the form of the Armed Services Editions (published by the Council on Books In Wartime, Inc.), which were essentially books published on cheap paper with the purposes of being highly disposable. The subjects ranged from mysteries, sports, westerns, horror, self-help, travel, and adventure and were intended to provide stress-relief and distraction to the soldiers in occupied France. The Armed Services Editions published over 1,300 titles in 2 years (1943-1945) and distributed over 120 million copies among the soldiers.³¹ H. P. Lovecraft’s weird fiction was featured in the 730th series under the title of *The Dunwich Horror and Other Weird Tales*. While the American market for popular fiction differentiated between SF (*Astounding Stories*) and Horror (*Weird Tales*) pulps, the French market between the wars and immediately following did not do so. The American pulp differentiation was the result of a nexus of business opportunities for owners, the particular “enforcement” of the owner’s vision by the editor, and the readers themselves. It is for this reason that Lovecraft’s fiction is largely placed in the SF category in France, despite the fact Lovecraft’s SF departs significantly from that of other American authors appearing in France at the same time period. American Sci-Fi authors of the 1930s and

'40s who were introduced to the French market by Gallimard and Hachette in the early 1950s are: Isaac Asimov (1920-1992), Ray Bradbury (1920-2012), Clark Ashton Smith (1893-1961), Robert A. Heinlein (1907-1988), Theodore Sturgeon (1918-1985), and Clifford Donald Simak (1904-1988). Ray Bradbury and Clark Ashton Smith both published stories in *Weird Tales*, and Smith was a noted correspondent of HPL. With the quick success of the aforementioned authors, French publishers responded with more of the same, as Arthur Evans catalogues the most well known:

the 'Anticipation' series by Fleuve Noir and the 'Rayon Fantastique' collection by Gallimard and Hachette in 1951, the French reprints of American SF magazines *Galaxy* and *Magazine of Fantasy and SF* (called *Galaxie* and *Fiction* respectively) in 1953, and the 'Présence du Futur' series by Denoël in 1954—all of which served as major conduits to this growing Anglo-American SF presence on French soil ("Science Fiction" 235).

This was the cultural climate in which Lovecraft emerged into, a post-World War II climate of social change and scientific/technological advancement.

The earliest appearance of HPL in French criticism is in a very short column within the pages of *Médium* (edited by Jean Schuster), a French surrealist journal, entitled "H. P. Lovecraft et la lune noire," published in November, 1953. Robert Benayoun (writer, critic and film critic) and Gérard Legrand (surrealist poet, philosopher, essayist and film critic) declare in this brief article that "la grandeur de Lovecraft réside en rien

moins qu'en la création d'une mythologie personnelle qui ridiculise 'l'histoire moderne'" ("Lovecraft's greatness resides in nothing less than his creation of a personal mythology that ridicules 'modern history'; 14). They add that "le reclus de Providence, Rhode Island, ne s'est pas contenté de distiller la pulpe même de cauchemars . . ." ("the recluse of Providence, Rhode Island, did not satisfy himself with distilling simply nightmare pulp fiction") that other pulp-fiction writers wrote (14).

The Surrealists of the 1950s were the first to import the Lovecraft "virus," a term which Michel Houellebecq uses to describe the way in which interest in HPL spreads among readers. Lovecraft's particular prose and his utmost attention to the atmosphere of the tale brings about the actual *weird* (strangeness) in the weird tale, so weird that even a skeptical reader, like Lovecraft, "can be frightened for the duration of the tale but who, when the book is closed, does not take all this [the weirdness in the story] for the gospel truth" (Meurger 5). This is indeed the route that the Surrealists Robert Benayoun and Gérard Legrand took. They interpreted his stories, such as "The Call of Cthulhu," "The Shadow Out of Time" and "The Whisperer in Darkness" as "manifestoes supporting dream-knowledge, astral voyages, and the superiority of nocturnal life to waking life" (6). Essentially, Meurger theorizes that a climate of primitivism and occultism existed in the post-World War II climate in France. For their part, Benayoun and Legrand, saw in Lovecraft a world rich in dream images which offered them precious resources for exploring the unconscious. According to Duplessis the surrealist revolt "contre les insuffisances du réel les a donc orientés vers le mystérieux, le fantastique, le monde du rêve où ils ont pensé pouvoir la saisir tous" ("against the insufficiencies of the real therefore oriented them towards the mysterious, the fantastic, the world of dreams where

they thought they could seize everything”; Duplessis 118). Thus, for surrealists like Benayoun and Legrand Lovecraft, was a type of prophet. Therefore, as Meurger astutely points out “a considerable portion of French criticism of Lovecraft has been oriented from the beginning in this false [primitivist and occult] direction” (7).

A year after Benayoun and Legrand published their article in *Médium* (1953), Lovecraft’s texts were translated into French. The publishing house Denoël started a series called *Présence du futur*. Denoël published a collection of HPL tales, translated by Jacques Papy, under the title *La couleur tombée du ciel* in Spring 1954. In winter of the same year Jacques Papy translated more stories under the heading *Dans l’abîme du temps* for Denoël.

In 1955, four Dream Cycle texts “The Statement of Randolph Carter” (1920), “The Silver Key” (1929), “Through the Gates of the Silver Key” (1934), and “The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath” (1943) were translated by Bernard Noël and collected under the title *Démons et merveilles* by Deux-Rives publishing house. Jacques Bergier, considered by many in French Lovecraft Studies to be the one responsible for introducing HPL in France, wrote the introduction, “Lovecraft ce grand génie venu d’ailleurs.” In 1956 Jacques Papy translated more tales for Denoël, collected under the title *Par-delà le mur du sommeil*. Denoël’s *Présence du futur* published more of HPL’s “lesser” stories under the title *Je suis d’ailleurs* in 1961, translated by Yves Rivière.

The briefest of HPL criticism in France appeared therefore in the Surrealist magazine *Médium* (1953) and two years (1955) later, Jacques Bergier’s preface to *Démons et merveilles* entitled “H. P. Lovecraft ce grand génie venu d’ailleurs” offers the first French, albeit brief, biography and analysis of HPL’s texts. In the same year that

Maurice Lévy finished his thesis, L'Herne published an exclusive study in their Cahiers series titled *H. P. Lovecraft* which features the best French articles written on H. P. Lovecraft as well as French translations of English-language articles on HPL. The French scholarly articles were all written by established critics of Science-Fiction and imaginative fiction, such as François Truchaud, Pierre Versins, Gérard Klein, Francis Lacassin, Jacques Sadoul, Jacques Bergier, Yves Rivière, Jacques Van Herp and many others. The American authors included in translation are for the large part other authors and friends of HPL, rather than established literary critics. The notables are: August Derleth, Robert E. Howard, Robert Bloch, J. Vernon Shea, Fritz Leiber, C.M. Eddy Jr. and Ramsey Campbell. L'Herne's *H. P. Lovecraft* can very much be considered similarly to *Four Decades* in the fact that it collects the best French HPL criticism from 1953 to 1969. In 1969 Jacques Bergier and François Truchaud translated "Supernatural Horror in Literature" as "Epouvante et surnaturel en littérature," published by Christian Bourgois Editeur. It was the first time this text appeared in France. In the same year (1969) Cahiers de l'Herne published *H. P. Lovecraft*, edited by François Truchaud. It was the first collection of French scholarly articles on Lovecraft alongside a selection of French translations of American authors. Alongside the scholarly articles, there also appeared a selection of tales and letters never before translated into French. However, the translators are not identified. Also in 1969, Maurice Lévy finished the first French dissertation on HPL entitled *Lovecraft, ou, du fantastique* which was published in 1972 by Christian Bourgois. Pierre Belfond published *Dagon et autres récits de terreur* in 1969, translated by Paule Pérez, which would later appear as *Dagon* and published by éditions J'ai Lu. Michel Houellebecq remarks that *Dagon* contains "certaines nouvelles du niveau des

‘grands textes,’ d’autres franchement ratées . . . un recueil éclectique, bizarre, finalement très réussi” [certain short stories are at the level of/ as good as his ‘great texts,’ others are frankly failures . . . an eclectic, bizarre, collection in the end a success] (131, my translation). In 1975 Christian Bourgois published *L’horreur dans le musée*, translated by Jacques Parsons. Subsequent editions of the same texts are collected under the curiously different title *L’horreur dans le cimetière* by Pocket, the first of which appeared in 1977, also translated by Jacques Parsons. HPL’s poetry, other than what was presented in Cahier de L’Herne’s *H. P. Lovecraft*, appears in 1987 published by Nouvelle éditions Oswald (NéO) and translated by François Truchaud.

Lastly, in 1991, Robert Laffont, in his series Bouquins published three volumes of Lovecraft’s work (Fiction, Non-fiction and Essays), entitled *Lovecraft*, an omnibus of sorts. The first and second volumes appeared in 1991, and the third in 1992. It should be noted, however, that Lovecraft’s own texts appear alongside those of August Derleth. This will be taken up in more detail in the following sections of this chapter. Due to the nature of the volume itself, there are several translators each of whom translated numerous texts. Derleth’s fiction was translated by Jean Ferry, Pierre Salva and Marthe Gautier. Lovecraft was primarily translated by Bernard Noël, Paule Pérez, Simone Lamblin, Jean-Paul Murlon, Phillippe Gindre, Jacqueline Michaud, Yves Rivère, Jacques Papy, Jacques Parsons, Jean-Daniel Brèque, Marie-Joëlle Moll-Bouyat, François Truchaud, Joseph Altairac, Jocelyn de Pass, Claude Gilbert and Claude Boland-Maskens.

In 1973, the French publisher Marabout hired Jacques Finne to edit *L’Amérique Fantastique de Poe à Lovecraft*, a veritable list of authors of the American horror/weird tradition. Sadly, however, Lovecraft’s representative tale in this anthology is *La maison*

de la sorcière “Dreams in the Witch House” (which is not considered a very powerful tale). In 1975 the first selection of Lovecraft’s letters, apart from those included in the Cahiers de l’Herne, were published in *Marginalia* no.1, translated by François Rivière under the title *Lettres d’Arkham*. In 1978 Christian Bourgois Editeur published *Lettres – tome 1 (1914-1926)*, translated by Jack Parsons. And in 2009 Lyre Press published, in book-form and audio, *Les lettres de 1929 – juillet à décembre* translated by Alain Chouraki.

Denoël, Deux-Rives and J’ai Lu all continued to republish HPL in many editions. Some modifications were made. However it is safe to say that even with the addition of new translators, there appear to be little to no modifications to the first translations and more current editions. Arguably the newest and best translations of Lovecraft’s œuvre have been undertaken by David Camus, who has largely worked off the *corrected* English language texts, rather than simply “going over” the older French ones. In 2010, Camus translated much of the Dream Cycle texts for Editions Mnémos under the title *Les contrées du rêve* and in 2013 for Mnémos he translated many of the more well-known “Cthulhu Mythos” tales collected under *Les montagnes hallucinées et autres récits d’exploration*.

Since Benayoun and Legrand’s article in *Médium* in 1953, and Papy’s translation *La couleur tombée du ciel* in 1954 all of Lovecraft’s fiction *and* the majority of his poetry was translated in under 30 years by 1987. Now that the literary history of Lovecraft in France and the United States has been detailed, it is now time for our gaze to focus on the role translators and critics play in the way in which a particular tale or HPL himself is interpreted and imagined.

Lovecraft and Scholarly Consideration in France and the United States

Due to the medium in which Lovecraft's tales were published, he and other pulp-writers were largely relegated to the shadows, in favor of more worthy "modernist" writers such as Faulkner, Hemmingway, and Joyce. The highly influential literary critic Edmund Wilson's "Tales of the Marvelous and the Ridiculous" reviewed Lovecraft's oeuvre and called it "hack-work" and "bad art," which does "not make good adult reading" (Wilson 47). Wilson extends his definition of "bad art" to describe Lovecraft's noted overuse of elegant prose,

[o]ne of [HPL's] worst faults is his incessant effort to work up the expectations of the reader by sprinkling his stories with such adjectives as 'horrible,' 'terrible,' 'frightful,' 'awesome,' 'eerie,' 'weird,' 'forbidden,' 'unhallowed,' 'unholy,' 'blasphemous,' 'hellish,' and 'infernal.' Surely one of the primary rules for writing an effective tale of horror is never to use any of these words (48).

Oddly enough, Wilson does praise HPL's "Supernatural Horror in Literature" as a "really able piece of work . . . [HPL] had read comprehensively in this field — he was strong on the Gothic novelists — and writes about it with much intelligence" (48). Wilson had extensive literary influence, as he was editor of *Vanity Fair* from 1920 to 1921, he was also a book reviewer for *The New Yorker* and *The New York Review*. Wilson's literary

influence and the “serious business” of literary subjects worthy of study led to an aversion to Lovecraft in the American academy.

Scholarly articles devoted to Lovecraft are rare from 1945 to the late 1960s. The first master’s thesis on HPL was written in 1950 by James Warren Thomas titled “H. P. Lovecraft: A Self-Portrait.” The amount of scholarly articles in America written on HPL between 1960-1969 can be counted on a single hand. Nevertheless, S. T. Joshi founded and edited *Lovecraft Studies* which ran from 1979 to 2005 with a total of 45 issues. S. T. Joshi’s *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* (1980) collects the sparse articles (both positive and negative) written on HPL between 1940 and 1980. Barton Levi St. Armand’s 1977 *The Roots of Horror in the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft* provides a powerful philosophical and psychological analysis of some of HPL’s fiction. Dirk Mosig’s 1976 article “H. P. Lovecraft: Myth-Maker” criticizes Derleth’s interpretation of Lovecraft’s text, and his 1979 article “Lovecraft: The Dissonance Factor in Imaginative Literature” explores the psychological factors influencing HPL’s character.³² *Four Decades* is an essential resource for any Lovecraft scholar as it perfectly describes the literary environment in which Lovecraft’s texts were post-humously published—it also reveals the amount of criticism done in defense of HPL *as well as* correcting Derleth’s misinterpretation of Lovecraft.³³ Many other HPL “fanzines” exist, *Crypt of Cthulhu* under the direction of the Lovecraft scholar Richard M. Price had a successful run from 1981 to 2001, and featured many excellent articles from leading HPL scholars. Price currently hosts a Lovecraft podcast at www.lovecraftzine.com called *The Lovecraft Geek*. From 1993 to 1999 S. T. Joshi edited *The New Lovecraft Collector*, and from 2007 to today, the *Lovecraft Annual* is the new home of scholarly articles on HPL and his

œuvre. In 1988 Maurice Lévy's study on H. P. Lovecraft titled, *H. P. Lovecraft ou du fantastique*, was translated by S. T. Joshi as *Lovecraft: A Study in the Fantastic*.³⁴ In 1990 David Burleson wrote *Lovecraft: Disturbing the Universe*, which essentially deconstructs Lovecraft's tales. One interesting fact in the difference of Lovecraft and his literary history between France and the United States is that major publisher's in France, like Gallimard and Denoël, introduced Lovecraft, whereas in the United States Lovecraft's publication was largely relegated to obscure publishing houses. The difference of publishing houses between the two literary systems shows the amount of respectability accorded to Lovecraft and weird fiction as a genre.

It is without doubt that S. T. Joshi has proved inexhaustible in his, shall we say, quest in bringing Lovecraft the credit he was always due. His respectability and authority on Lovecraft comes from his sheer volume of Lovecraft centered publications and serving as editor to three different Lovecraft journals not to mention the most comprehensive and accurate Lovecraft biography. Joshi's reputation in France is equally well-known as in the United States. His translations have appeared numerous times in French journals and publications on Lovecraft. In 1990 Joshi was one of the first scholars to see in Lovecraft's famous quote: "All my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large" as a philosophical statement worth considering (*Selected Letters* 2.284). *H. P. Lovecraft: the Decline of the West* (1990) is Joshi's exploration of Lovecraft's philosophy based on this now famous quote. With *A Subtler Magick: The Writings and Philosophy of H. P. Lovecraft* (1996) Joshi endeavors not only to provide a substantial revised biography of HPL, but also analyses and summarizes every single tale

he wrote in function of it's historical-cultural moment as well as how it pertains to Lovecraft's œuvre as a whole.³⁵ Joshi also corrects numerous misconceptions on some of Lovecraft's texts. In 2001 Joshi published *The Ancient Track: The Complete Poetical Works of H. P. Lovecraft*, and it was the first time that all his poems were collected under one title. In the same year Joshi also published *A Dreamer and Visionary: H. P. Lovecraft in His Time*, which explores Lovecraft's political, economical and cultural thinking regarding his time. Lastly, in that same year (2001) Joshi edited along with David Schultz *An H. P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia*, which is *the* veritable resource for everything concerning the life and writings of Lovecraft. It provides entries on all his works, characters, and locations complete with a résumé of the tales as well as the word count of each.

In 2011, S. T. Joshi edited *Dissecting Cthulhu: Essays on the Cthulhu Mythos*, an important collection of previously published (although dispersed) essays which attempt to reveal Derleth's particular influence on Lovecraft's texts and their interpretation. In 2012 Graham Harman's *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy* was published by Zero Books. *Weird Realism* should be considered the definitive silencing of critics following in Edmund Wilson's footsteps because Harman analyses Lovecraft's rhetoric and philosophy, arguing that Wilson's judgement that HPL, produced "bad art" placed Lovecraft with authors of lesser quality.

While *Four Decades* is considered to be a collection of the finest Lovecraft scholarship from 1940-1980, David Simmons' *New Critical Essays on H. P. Lovecraft* (2013) covers the time period from 1980 to 2013. It provides ample evidence that Lovecraft scholarship has not only quietly grown from a fanatical following to a full-

blown legitimate subject of literary criticism, but also that one no longer needs to defend oneself for studying Lovecraft. Simmons' *New Critical Essays* is divided into two parts, "Lovecraft and His Fiction," and "Lovecraft and His Influence." It publishes some of the better Lovecraft criticism that has appeared since 2000, showing the ways in which scholars from a variety of backgrounds and specialties are able to offer new critical insights on HPL. Between *Four Decades* and *New Critical Essays*, the voice and position of Lovecraft scholarship has drastically changed. The articles in *Four Decades* are defensive of Lovecraft's position in literature, responding to decades of unchallenged negative criticism—while *New Critical Essays* are written in celebration of HPL's complete "ascent to the canon of American and world literature ("Forward" xv).

In his 1969 Sorbonne thesis, Maurice Lévy wrote that "paradoxically Lovecraft is better and more appreciated in France than in the United States" (Lévy 12). Lévy does not seem to justify this comment. As mentioned earlier, this thesis entitled *Lovecraft ou du fantastique* was later revised and published in 1985 by Christian Bourgois Editeur. In 1988, Joshi translates *Lovecraft ou du fantastique* which is published by Wayne State University Press. Lévy's statement demonstrates that in avant-garde French literary circles, Lovecraft was more appreciated and explored *sooner* than in America. In fact, S. T. Joshi comments in *Four Decades* that "French critics have been leading champions of Lovecraft" (24). Paul Michaud, an American student from Providence, supports both Lévy's and Joshi's statement of French prowess in Lovecraft studies in his article in the December 29th, 1970 issue of *Providence Evening Post* that Lovecraft was very much en vogue in Paris, after having returned to Providence after a trip there.

In 1970 Tzvetan Todorov wrote *Introduction à la littérature fantastique*, a ground-breaking structuralist work explaining the French approach to HPL and other supernatural literature. As previously mentioned, fantastic literature had a pre-existing tradition in the French literary system, and Todorov fits Lovecraft within the ideological framework of fantastic literature. Todorov essentially calls the fantastic the hesitation in a story when neither the characters nor the reader can decide between the *étrange* (uncanny/strange) or the *merveilleux* (the marvelous). The difference between the two is that the uncanny allows natural laws to remain intact whereas the marvelous violates natural laws. In *Unutterable Horror volume 1*, Joshi remarks that *étrange* is better understood as nonsupernatural horror whereas the *merveilleux* is supernatural horror. Todorov discusses H. P. Lovecraft by name very briefly in the beginning of his book when he defines the *le fantastique* (“the fantastic”). Todorov uses Lovecraft as an example of the tendency of “fantastic” writers who want the actual reader of the tale to experience fear: “Pour Lovecraft, le critère du fantastique ne se situe pas dans l’œuvre mais dans l’expérience particulière du lecteur; et cette expérience doit être la peur” (“For Lovecraft, the criteria of the fantastic is not situated in the work but in the particular experience of the reader; and this experience must be fear”; Todorov 39). This is an accurate statement because Lovecraft feels that a particular sensitive person is more prone to feeling fear in a weird tale than an “insensitive” reader. It should be noted that Joshi disputes Todorov’s entire concept of “hesitation” as applied to weird fiction. The great majority of weird tales, in [his] impression, do not in fact embody this conception. Todorov derived it chiefly from his admiration of the Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw*, which he thought did embody it (and [Joshi] maintain[s] that even this text does not do so—that, in

other words, it is not a genuinely “ambiguous” tale where one cannot ascertain whether the events are supernatural or psychological; [Joshi] believe[s] they are emphatically supernatural and were meant by James to be so interpreted)” (“Dissertation Chapter 1”).³⁶

From 1988 to 1994 the French journal *Etudes Lovecraftiennes* was the definitive source for French-language criticism of Lovecraft, which also featured a few translated works by American scholars. Michel Meurger’s article “Anticipation retrograde: primitivisme et occultisme dans la réception lovecraftienne en France de 1953 à 1957” (“Retrograde Anticipation: Primitivism and Occultism in the French Response to Lovecraft 1953-1957”) appears in numbers 3 and 4 of *Etudes Lovecraftiennes*. His article is of extreme importance to understand the origin of Lovecraft’s introduction to France and its subsequent trajectory. According to Meurger, Lovecraft’s texts were annexed by the Surrealists Benayoun and Legrand because, at the time in France, primitivism and occultism were the popular way of recovering the sacred within “modern myths.” Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwels compounded this idea by creating their own understanding of modern myths which they expounded in their magazine *Planète* and also in their 1960 book *Le matin des magiciens*. For Meurger, Lovecraft has always been interpreted through a prism of primitivism, therefore his texts have been inaccurately labeled “fantastic,” rather than as “science fiction.” Primitivism is belief in the value accorded to what is simple or unsophisticated as a philosophy of life. This will be developed later in chapter two.

In 1991 Michel Houellebecq wrote *H. P. Lovecraft: contre le monde, contre la vie* (translated into English in 2006 by Dorna Khazeni and published by the English press Weidfield & Nicholson). In the 2005 English-language introduction Stephen King

remarks that Houellebecq's work "is a remarkable blending of critical insight, fierce partisanship, and sympathetic biography—a kind of scholarly love letter, maybe even the world's first truly cerebral mash note" (9). Stephen King's input is vital as in the preface he acknowledges his own literary debt to Lovecraft. Houellebecq skillfully explores all aspects of Lovecraft's work and shows in a very subtle manner just how far reaching Lovecraft's influence, in France and elsewhere, really is. It is also important in the history of French literary criticism of Lovecraft because it marks a distinction from the initial "Bergian" HPL that dominated so much of early French criticism. Houellebecq's critique of HPL shows a deeper understanding of HPL's philosophy but also involves Houellebecq himself and his personal worldview, which will be explored in detail in chapter two.

In August of 1995 there was a colloquium in Cerisy-la-Salle on Lovecraft titled "H.P Lovecraft : fantastique, mythe et modernité" ("H. P. Lovecraft: Fantastic, Myth and Modernity"). Overall, 17 different scholars met to discuss Lovecraft's influence on French popular culture, and on the French literary system. Articles range from his Death Metal influence to a study about how silence operates in Lovecraft's tales. Maurice Lévy, Donald Burleson, Michel Meurger among others were present. Unfortunately, this colloquium was not published until 2005 in the esoterically minded series *Cahiers de l'hermétisme* by Dervy. Rogert Bozzetto published "Lovecraft et ses mythes intimes" ("Lovecraft and his intimate myths") in *Territoires des fantastiques* published by the University Press of Provence in 1998, and in the same year Alain Pelsoto's "Lovecraft et la nature" ("Lovecraft and Nature") found its way into the pages of *Naturellement. Moi, Howard Phillips Lovecraft*, written in 2004 by Jacky Ferjuault, is an imaginative

autobiography of HPL. Jacky Ferjault also published *Lovecraft et la politique* (“*Lovecraft and Politics*”) in 2008 exploring Lovecraft’s political ideas. It even features an updated approach to Gérard Klein’s Marxist reading of Lovecraft in Cahier de L’Herne’s *H. P. Lovecraft* with his article “Lovecraft un Marx du cauchemar” (“Lovecraft a Marx of Nightmare”). Ferjault’s latest book entitled *100 auteurs évoqués par Howard Phillips Lovecraft* (“*100 authors evoked by Howard Phillips Lovecraft*”) explores how different authors have been influenced not only from HPL’s fiction but his philosophy as well. Didier Hendrickx’s 2012 publication *H. P. Lovecraft, le dieu silencieux* (“*H. P. Lovecraft, the Silent God*”), “se propose d’illustrer la problématique de la dégradation d’espace-temps mythique dans l’œuvre d’[HPL]—dégradation qui affecte notamment la communication interpersonnelle—et de présenter, à la lumière des nouvelles et des lettres de l’auteur, les solutions qu’il y apporte ou tente d’y apporter” (“proposes to illustrate the problematic degradation of mythical space-time in HPL’s œuvre—a degradation which notably effects interpersonal communication—and to present, in light of the tales and letters of [HPL], solutions which he brought or attempted to bring”; 16). More recently, the French magazine *Bifrost* number 73 (2014), published by Béliat, features a slew of recent French scholarship on HPL. In the next section, I will explore the role that translation has played in the development of HPL’s image in France. I will then compare this image with his American version.

Translational Relationships: Refracting and Rewriting

Images are the result of an interaction between a reader and a text. Often these images are the result of interpretation or they can develop as a result of reading secondary source material. Different interpretations yield different points of view or perspectives, and as a result the image is refracted under the influence of interpretation. In translation theory, refraction can also be understood as rewriting. The most liberal understanding of rewriting encompasses anything produced as a result of a particular author and his or her text. A rewriting can therefore be defined as literary history, reference works, anthologies, criticism, editions and translations. The problem with such a wide-ranging definition is that *everything* is a rewriting, therefore the idea of an “original” text does not exist. I would like to propose a more straight forward approach, or at least convey how I will use the term. According to Andre Lefevere, a translation is “the most obviously recognizable type of rewriting and . . . it is potentially the most influential because it is able to project the image of an author and/or a (series of) work(s) in another culture . . .” (9). A translation is executed in such a way that it is read by a target language reader in a manner which introduces a foreign cultural object into the dominant language of a particular target group whether it appears as an authentic foreign object or parades as an authentic domestic object. Regardless of the method in which a translation is made, it is tacitly informed with cultural information. Rewritings, however, verbally acknowledge that their work in some way impacts a readers understanding of the author and text or deepens their knowledge of it, as in the case of criticism. For example, when one reads Dirk Mosig’s “H. P. Lovecraft: Myth-Maker,” they are reading Mosig’s rewriting of

HPL, i.e. his interpretation of how a specific text or group of texts come together to represent “Lovecraft’s Mythos” and to differentiate it from “Derleth’s Mythos.” When the French edition of *Démons et merveilles* includes Jacques Bergier’s preface, “Ce grand génie venu d’ailleurs,” the reader is informed by Bergier’s interpretation of HPL’s life and how it influenced his writing. The goal of this section is to reveal two separate communities of Lovecraft “rewriters” so that a formal understanding of the similarities and differences between the two can help us read a synchronistic understanding of H. P. Lovecraft. In consideration of the broad range of texts encompassed within rewritings, rewriters have the possibility to influence how a text is received within a given literary system. André Lefevere notes the wide-ranging influence of rewriters (critics, editors, anthologists, publishers) because they create “images of a writer, a work, a period, a genre, sometimes even a whole literature. These images [exist] side by side with the realities they [compete] with, but the images always [tend] to reach more people than the corresponding realities . . .” (Lefevere 5). The image is directly affected by the ideology of the translator and the poetics dominant in the receiving literary system at the time of the translation.

Translations and rewritings are loaded with ideological significance. Translators and “rewriters manipulate the originals they work with to some extent, usually to make them fit in with the dominant, or one of the dominant ideological and poetological currents of their time” (Lefevere 8). In this sense, translation is a cultural phenomenon. Literary systems are a product of culture and can be understood to operate in a similar manner. Within a given literary system, one type of genre dominates a system while moving out from the center are other genres arranged in a hierarchical manner. The

further a genre is situated from the epicenter the lesser its status within the system. This is the case with modernist novels and their ascendance over pulp fiction in the early 20th century American literary system. A spoil of victory can be seen in the annals of canonization. The authors who most closely embody the zeitgeist of the dominant ideology of a particular time period are canonized, while those who do so on a marginal level are forgotten by time. Within literary systems, translation holds a variable presence. If the literary system is robust and “dominant,” as of France post WWII then translation plays a minimal role overall. However, if the literary system is young, translation plays a large part in the literary system. In other words, the strength of a literary system can be determined by the role translation plays. Regardless of the strength or position of a literary system, translation fills a void in the target literary system. This can be observed in the introduction of H. P. Lovecraft into the French literary system post-WWII. There was a void in the system due to Nazi Germany’s occupation of France. When the war was over, publishers like Denoël and Deux-Rives recognized a hole in the system. I would argue the contrary, the rapid influx of American Sci-Fi and other pulp fiction genres represents perfectly the role translation plays in a major literary system. This is also when American detective fiction became known in France which was introduced by the publisher Gallimard.

Translation and rewritings have the potential to

deeply affect the interpretation of literary systems, not just by projecting the image of one writer or work in another literature or by failing to do so . . . , but also by introducing new devices into the inventory component of a

poetics and paving the way to change in its functional component
(Lefevere 38).

Translations and rewritings are the result of a network of variables, each of which lends to the overall finished product. The following variables which influence the translation/rewriting are as follows: the status of the author/text, the poetics and/or ideology of the dominant literary group, the patron of the translator/rewriter, the skopos (the aim) of the patron/translator/rewriter, the particular needs of a literary system.

The particular needs and demands of the literary system are the foremost important factors when consideration for translation or rewriting occurs. If a literary system is particularly strong in a certain genre, then it is unlikely that translation will introduce more texts of this genre from foreign sources. The American literary system is rather robust in its production of Sci-Fi, certainly in the time period between the 1920s-1950s—thus there was no need for foreign sci-fi texts to be introduced into the American literary system. It is for this reason that the major francophone Sci-Fi writers of the same time period (previously mentioned in this chapter) have received little attention from American publishing houses.

The overall status of the author/text in the source culture generally plays a big part in the selection of whom to translate and what. Many times an author who is already influential in the source culture is “outsourced” via translation relatively more quickly than a marginal author of the same culture. Despite HPL’s popularity within the specific weird fiction milieu of pulp magazines, he was virtually unknown (or ignored) by mainstream critics and readers. As a result modernist writers who were his

contemporaries, were translated while HPL's texts were not translated into other languages until the 1950s.

The poetics and/or ideology of the dominant group is highly important because this determines even further which texts will be translated and for what purpose. The poetics can be understood as literary cultural norms, which are acceptable in a given culture at a specific point in time. In this respect, certain parts of texts may be edited, or simply eliminated to suit the cultural sensitivities and expectations. Ideology also affects the choice of text and author—a text whose ideology is opposite that of a particular group will not be chosen because it may be thought to undermine the ideals upheld by certain groups. At its most reduced form a censor or an editor embodies a certain poetics and/or ideology and will perform their duties within these bounds. But translation can also play the radical role of introducing newness and change, thus translation can be utilized by either group (“dominant” or “subaltern” for their own means.

The patron of a translation/rewriting can be a person, a publishing house or any other entity which requests a translation or rewriting for a specific purpose or aim (skopos, as used by Hans Vermeer). Often, the skopos either challenges or supports the poetics/Ideology of the dominant group. When Denoël started its series *Présence du futur*, their skopos for choosing translated texts was specifically oriented towards American Sci-Fi texts for the 1950s French public. Any text chosen was then subjected to editors or censors who checked the contents of the text and whether or not it adhered to cultural sensitivities or not.

In consideration of the above, the next section will explore the different ways in which translators (Jacques Bergier et al.) and rewriters (August Derleth et co.) impacted

and controlled the image of HPL in both France and the United States. What are the consequences of these images on the field as a whole? What was the precedent set by Poe and his translator, Baudelaire?

Poe and Baudelaire

In both English and French language scholarship, HPL is commonly understood to be the successor to Edgar Allan Poe. Not only did HPL admit Poe's influence on him in "Supernatural Horror in Literature," but like Poe, HPL drastically altered the way in which horror fiction was written and pushed the boundaries of what could be done. Like HPL, Poe enjoyed literary success abroad before achieving fame domestically. Poe's success in France is largely due to Charles Baudelaire's translations of his work, that is, the French-language version that Baudelaire made of Poe. This is important because, while Baudelaire himself wrote of supernatural phenomena (such as "Le vampire," "Phantôme," and "Le Revenant") and themes in his *Fleurs du mal* (1857), his contribution to the weird tradition in France is much more a result of his translations of Edgar Allan Poe, and "as a leading founder of the Decadents" (*Unutterable* 230). The decadents are artists of all kinds who reflected in their work the beauty in the moral state of decline. In other words, for Baudelaire Poe plays a role in the Decadent movement in France. Poe's role in the Decadent movement can be understood as a model, since for much of his life he never "bought into" the materialization of industrialized society. In much the same way, HPL plays a role in both the French Surrealist movement and Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwels' "new age" movement alike.³⁷ This new age

movement is focused on raising mankind's awareness so as to have access to unused or atrophied abilities in the mind.

Peter Michael Wetherill explores Baudelaire's fascination with Poe in his book *Charles Baudelaire et la poésie d'Edgar Allan Poe* (1962). Wetherill critiques Baudelaire for largely misunderstanding Poe's poetry especially when it comes to "Eureka." Part of this reason is due to the fact that Baudelaire saw in Poe a literary hero, and therefore Baudelaire was "unable" to see errors in Poe's work. Not only did Baudelaire view Poe as a literary hero, but "on voit donc que Baudelaire réussit très bien à nous présenter le portrait d'un Poe dont les ressemblances avec lui-même étaient très marquées" ("we therefore see that Baudelaire greatly succeeded in presenting to us the portrait of a Poe whose resemblance with himself [Baudelaire] was marked very well"; 42-43). In a letter dated June 20, 1864, Baudelaire famously writes that "la première fois que j'ai ouvert un livre de [Poe], j'ai vu avec épouvante et ravissement, non seulement des sujets rêvés par moi, mais des phrases pensées par moi et écrites par lui 20 ans auparavant" ("the first time that I opened one of Poe's books, I saw with horror and delight, not only subjects dreamt by me, but sentences thought of by me and written by him 20 years beforehand"; quoted in Wetherill 42). The resemblances between the two poets do indeed exist, but it appears that Baudelaire overemphasized their similarities in order to overshadow their esthetic differences. For Baudelaire, "Poe a peint un tableau des horreurs de la vie moderne" ("Poe painted an image of the horrors of modern life"; 47, translation mine). By sidestepping certain aspects of Poe's general works, however, Baudelaire "pouvait découvrir dans celles-ci des ressemblances avec ses propres œuvres" [was able to discover in [Poe's works] some similarities with his own works] (47, translation mine).

Baudelaire was therefore convinced of the fraternal affinity the two shared in the hardships of life and in the production of literature. Thus, Poe's success in France brings success and notoriety to Baudelaire and his own work. In this particular case, translation played a role allowing Poe, while still relatively unsuccessful in America, to become known within literary circles in France.

A second criticism on the part of Wetherill is directed at Baudelaire's level of English, which hampered his ability to properly translate Poe—as a result much of the poetics of Poe's poems became, through translation, Baudelairean. Wetherill supports this through word-for-word analysis of the three poems that Baudelaire translated and the way in which the differences of translation give versions of Poe's poetry, which do not altogether correspond to the originals. For example, Wetherill picks apart Baudelaire's translation of the word "throng" that appears in the first stanza of Poe's "The Conqueror Worm." The stanza reads: "Lo! 't is a gala night/ Within the lonesome latter years!/ An angel throng, bewinged, beight/ In veils, and drowned in tears, / Sit in a theatre, to see / A play of hopes and fears, / While the orchestra breathes fitfully / The music of spheres" (Poe, n.p.). Baudelaire's translation reads: "Voyez ! c'est nuit de gala dans ces derniers ans solitaire ! Une multitude d'anges en ailes, parée du voile et noyée de pleurs, siège dans un théâtre, pour voir un spectacle d'espoir et de craintes, tandis que l'orchestre soupire par intervalles la musique des sphères" ("Le ver"). In choosing to translate "throng" by "multitude," Wetherill claims that "Baudelaire prête au drame une envergure bien plus vaste et donc une valeur bien plus universelle" ("Baudelaire lends to the drama a scope more vast and therefore a more universal quality"), whereas if Baudelaire had used

the term “foule” it would have “permis de traduire ce vers de façon plus rythmée” (“permitted to translate this verse in a more rhythmic fashion”; Wetherill 56).

Wetherill does not directly address Baudelaire’s impact on Poe’s image in France in translation theory terms, but from the evidence briefly outlined above, it is clear that Baudelaire’s role as a translator (and rewriter) led to a “rewritten” Poe, who for better or worse, played an important role in the literary aims of Baudelaire who “saw Poe’s self-destructive life as a fitting response to a stultifying, philistine society [America]” (Meyer 258). If Wetherill’s book explores the literary annexation of Poe’s work by Baudelaire, Jacques Cabau’s book *Edgar Poe par lui-même* (1960) does not explore “la légende française ‘d’Edgarpo,’ mais d’un journaliste qui vécut aux Etats-Unis de 1809 à 1849” [the French legend of “Edgarpo” but a journalist who lived in the United States from 1809 to 1849] (27, translation mine).³⁸ This French legend of Poe took him as “un solitaire, un poète maudit” (“a solitary, [or] cursed poet”) an image to which the French have long adhered since Baudelaire introduced him to the French public circa 1856 (27). Through Baudelaire’s translation, and therefore manipulation of Poe “la France adopte le poète, et le confie successivement à Baudelaire, à Mallarmé, puis à Valéry, qui en font tour à tour un archange maudit, puis un ingénieur des lettres” (“France adopts the poet, and confers him successively to Baudelaire, to Mallarmé, then to Valery, who each in their own way make him a damned archangel, and then a man of letters”; 27). Cabau does not fault Baudelaire so much for his (lack of) aptitude in English but rather admits that it is understandable that he may be “mal informé d’une nation si récente” (“misinformed of a nation so recent”; 27). Cabau sets out to correct this solitary image of Poe by addressing the fact that Poe was in the middle of the American literary scene as a “rédacteur en chef

de plusieurs revues, journaliste lancé, en correspondance avec toute l'intelligenzia américaine" ("head editor of many magazines, a successful journalist, in correspondence with the American intelligenzia") and who also visited literary salons up and down the East Coast of the United States (28).

It is a fact then, that Baudelaire manipulated Edgar Allan Poe's image and his works so that they would fall more in line with an overall literary vision that Baudelaire had in mind. The amount of scholarship on the Poe-Baudelaire connection is astounding and indeed merits more space than presently given in this project. We can surmise from this brief rendition that despite the misinterpretations and translations that can be examined for errors, one cannot deny the fact that Baudelaire's Poe influenced a whole generation of weird fiction writers in France much in the same way that Poe himself, did in America, in that Poe provided the prototypes of the horror story "of detect[ive] and science fiction," all of which are incorporated in weird fiction (Meyers 280). If this is the case, in the end, why should it matter that his image was refracted through translation and rewriting? Poe was introduced in such a way as to fit into Baudelaire's preexisting idea of the cursed poet. If one can forgive Baudelaire for his subpar translations, his misunderstanding of Poe in his cultural milieu, and look at Baudelaire's translations as a cultural activity, what does this add to our perspective? And how does this way of shifting the focus impact our own research regarding the role translation/rewriting plays in HPL and his introduction to the French literary system?

First, in regarding translation as a cultural activity we can avoid the tiresome and longwinded debates regarding "originals" and their successive translations. To a certain degree, we can avoid the traditional translation theory dilemma of deciding whether the

author was brought closer to the foreign reader or vice versa. This type of analysis is interesting in and of itself, but within the confines of this study, the question is not so much the adequacy (although it does count) of the translation but the way in which the translation impacts a specific system. Culturally speaking then, Baudelaire translated Poe's work because it represented something that was lacking in his specific cultural moment. That specific cultural moment is the transition in the French literary system from Romanticism to Modernism, and the Decadents proved to be the bridge between the two. Poe played a part in a literary movement, regardless of how "badly" Poe's image was distorted. However what is interesting and useful to this study is the analysis of the process of the role translation played in the "Poe-Baudelaire" case and the way in which it provides a precedent for the "HPL-Bergier" case.

Secondly, as Lefevere points out, the manipulation of an author and/or text is *always* part of the translation/rewriting process. It is unavoidable, because translation and rewritings are supported by the ideology of the dominant poetics in a given historical and cultural moment. This is one reason why new translations of texts are constantly being undertaken. Poetics are not eternal and unchanging but mutate with different groups and eras. However, the "norms, rules and appropriateness of conditions are liable to change. Translations made at different times therefore tend to be made under different conditions and to turn out differently, not because they are good or bad, *but because they have been produced to satisfy different demands*" (Bassnett and Lefevere 5, emphasis mine). These demands are a result of the specific needs of a culture and its literary system. As well, they depend upon the status of the original text. This last statement shows us the importance of moving away from an equivalence or faithfulness-based analysis of a

translation to a culture based analysis of a translation. The extent to which a translation is faithful is no longer based on the original text but now depends on whether “the target text function[s] in the target culture the way the source text functioned in the source culture. Translations are therefore not ‘faithful’ on the levels they have traditionally been required to be—to achieve ‘functional equivalence’ a translator may have to substantially adapt the source text” (8). As Wetherill and Cabau point out, Baudelaire adapted Poe’s texts in order to meet a cultural demand, and indeed one can say that the translations played an analogue role to the cultural function of Poe’s texts in the United States.

There are three ways in which the Baudelaire-Poe case is useful to this project. First, Edgar Allan Poe played a significant role in the development of horror fiction both domestically and abroad; second, HPL himself maintains his indebtedness foremost to Poe; lastly, many French critics esteem HPL as the most important American author alongside Poe. The following two sections will explore the ways in which translation and rewriting have influenced two distinct images of HPL, The first example is provided by August Derleth and the second by Jacques Bergier.

Fantastic Realism and H. P. Lovecraft

French translators and publishing houses initially translated works of HPL that were published by Arkham House under the direction of August Derleth. David Camus, the most recent French translator of HPL’s texts writes that he had to go between “trois versions anglaises” (“three English-language versions”) in order to get an accurate sense of the texts (“Traducteur de Lovecraft” 13). Indeed, multiple versions of HPL’s works

exist. The next section will explore in more detail August Derleth's "singular" view of HPL's works and philosophy. However, suffice it to say that the original French translations of HPL's texts are largely based on the texts printed by Arkham House.

Robert Benayoun and Gérard Legrand were the first to critically introduce Lovecraft into a small Surrealist coterie in France where, André Breton was joined by Robert Benayoun, Gérard Legrand, Jean Schuster, José Pierre, Philippe Audoin, and Claude Cortot. By and large Jacques Bergier (1912-1978) and Louis Pauwels (1920-1997) are credited with putting Lovecraft on the French cultural map.³⁹ Bergier's introduction, "Lovecraft ce grand génie venu d'ailleurs," in *Démons et merveilles* (in 1955 and reprinted in the Cahier de L'Herne's *H. P. Lovecraft* in 1969) is truly the source of the initial image of HPL in France. Essentially, Bergier's introduction is the first appearance of any sort of biography in French on Lovecraft in conjunction with a theoretical/critical appreciation of his life and works. According to Bergier, "il a fallu vingt-cinq ans pour faire connaître Howard Phillips Lovecraft au public français" ("it took twenty-five years in order to introduce Howard Phillips Lovecraft to the French public"; Bergier 121). The eighteen years between HPL's death in 1937 and the first translation of HPL's work in 1955 is one marked by extreme cultural change due to WWII. Bergier wonders if "le menace et les espoirs de l'atome, le contact avec la lune par radar, les grandes fusées et la conquête toute proche, semble-t-il, de l'Espace, les découvertes de la psychanalyse" ("the hopes for and threat of the atom, radar contact with the moon, the great rockets and the close conquest, so it seems, of Space, the discovery of psychoanalysis] aided in Lovecraft's warm reception in France ("Ce grand génie" 121). It is clear that the post-WWII cultural climate in France was particularly primed for HPL

and his texts. For Bergier “la grande mérite de Lovecraft est d’avoir conquis pour l’imagination humaine d’immenses domaines où elle ne s’était jamais encore aventurée” (“the biggest accomplishment of HPL is to have conquered for the human imagination an immense domain where it had never before travelled”; 122).

Bergier continues “Ce grand génie venu d’ailleurs,” with an abbreviated biography that culminates with the following affirmation: “L’exil: voilà le mot clé. Lovecraft s’est toujours comporté comme un étranger, un être venu de très loin. De temps en temps surgissent des êtres de ce genre. Kafka, qui ne semble pas avoir connu Lovecraft paraît en avoir été un autre exemple” (“Exile, that’s the keyword. Lovecraft always comported himself as a stranger, a being from far away. From time to time beings of this kind spring up. Kafka, who seems not to have known Lovecraft appears to have been another example”; 124). Considering Kafka’s literary status, the fact that in this comparison takes place is certainly prestigious. Bergier’s image of HPL is largely based upon the premise of HPL-the-exile who, as a result of his extreme differences from the culture in which he lived, found refuge in his dreams and imagination. It is true that HPL was a recluse of sorts, who often held himself to separate standards of comportment vis-à-vis others, but he was not an stranger in the strictest sense of the term because he often welcomes invitees and friends to his home and traveled throughout New England. Whether by ignorance or volition, Bergier conveniently left out Lovecraft’s prodigious life long correspondence.⁴⁰ To his credit, Bergier did remark HPL’s frequent regional and other East Coast travels ranging as far south as Key West.

Together Bergier and Pauwels wrote *Le matin des magiciens* (1961) and founded the magazine *Planète* (which ran from 1961 to 1968, with further editions being

mentioned under the name *Le nouveau planète* from 1968 to 1971). *Le matin des magiciens*, translated in Britain as *Dawn of the Magicians* in 1963 and in the United States, as *Morning of the Magicians* (1964). *Le matin des magiciens* can be summed up as a type of philosophical-paranormal treatise, which in today's terms can be called "new age." It is divided into three parts: part one is a collection of all things mysterious concerning lost civilizations, tribes, and ancient history. The second part dips into occultism and the Third Reich and the third part is on the future awakening of humanity, in a new era. Bergier and Pauwels remark that *Les matins*

n'est pas un roman, quoique l'intention en soit Romanesque. Il n'appartient pas à la science-fiction, quoiqu'on y côtoie des mythes qui alimentent ce genre . . . Il est le récit, parfois légendé et parfois exact, d'un premier voyage dans des domaines de la connaissance encore à peine explorés

("is not a novel, although its intentions are Romanesque. It does not belong to science fiction, although it frequents myths which feed this genre . . . It is a collection of narratives, sometimes legendary, sometimes exact, a first voyage in the domains of knowledge that are hardly explored"; Bergier and Pauwels 24).

In *Le matin des magiciens* topics range from epistemology to futurology, the fantastic, science fiction, sociology and ethnology. *Planète* continued this philosophical-paranormal exploration and it offered reprints of American pulp-fiction authors. H. P.

Lovecraft was a mainstay in *Planète* to the large part due in fact that Bergier and Pauwels were heavily influenced by Lovecraft's imagination and realism. Jason Colavito believes that Bergier and Pauwels were influenced in particular by HPL's use of extraterrestrial influence on early mankind (which is observed in tales such as "The Call of Cthulhu," "Dagon," "At the Mountains of Madness" and many others). Today this theory is popularly known as "Ancient Alien Theory." In a nutshell, Ancient Alien Theory proposes that mankind evolved biologically and technologically as a result of contact with extraterrestrials in ancient history. Jason Colavito's hypothesis is that this theory *originally* developed as a result of HPL's fiction.

The initial image, then, of HPL in France as an exile well versed in science, math, history and languages who

ne savait pas ce qu'était un homme, une femme, l'argent, le métro, un cheval, il ignorait même les réalités les plus fondamentales de la vie américaine: la situation (job), la position (standing), la nécessité du confort et du progrès matériel.

("did not know about men, women, money, the metro, a horse, he did not even know the most fundamental realities of American life: the location (job), the position (standing), the necessity of comfort and material progress"; "Grand génie" 124).⁴¹

These are highly inaccurate and broad brushstrokes for such a particularly complicated man whose work expressly addresses every bit of contemporary society. To sum it up, the

Bergian HPL existed anachronistically in his time period, and for Bergier that was why he was under appreciated and largely ignored.

As mentioned earlier, part of the initial French critical and scholarly assessment of Lovecraft believed his works to be the “gospel truth” of his convictions. For Jacques Bergier, he believed fully in Lovecraft’s texts and the possibilities they present for mankind’s “awakening.” For Bergier and Pauwels, Lovecraft’s work represents fantastic realism. Pauwels explains that his partnership with Bergier produced a similar type of discovery similar to that of “les surréalistes voici trente ans. Mais ce n’est pas, comme eux, du côté du sommeil et de l’infra-conscience que nous avons été cherchés. C’est à l’autre extrémité: du côté de l’ultra-conscience et de la veille supérieur” (“the surrealists thirty years ago. But it’s not, like them, on the side of sleep and the unconscious that we were searching. It’s to the other extreme: on the side of ultra-consciousness and a higher state of wakefulness”; Bergier and Pauwels 20).⁴² They called this other side “fantastic realism,” which they believed “est au cœur même de la réalité que l’intelligence, pour peu qu’elle soit suractivée, découvre le fantastique. Un fantastique qui n’invite pas à l’évasion, mais bien plutôt à une plus profonde adhésion [à la réalité]” (“is at the heart of reality that intelligence, for the little that it may be superactivated, discovers the fantastic. A fantastic that does not invite escapism, but more, a profound adherence to reality]”; 21). By this time, Jacques Bergier had already credited Lovecraft’s greatest achievement as conquering more space for the imagination. Yet for Bergier and Pauwels, the fantastic “n’est pas l’imaginaire. Mais une imagination puissamment appliquée à l’étude de la réalité découvre que la frontière est très mince entre le merveilleux et le positif, ou . . . entre l’univers visible et l’univers invisible” (“is not imaginary. But an imagination

strongly applied to the study of reality [can] discover that the boundary is very thin between the marvelous and the positive, or, . . . between the visible and invisible universe] (23). Indeed, such tales as “The Call of Cthulhu,” “The Whisperer in the Darkness,” “The Shadow Out of Time,” and many others, all take as themes the blurring of lines between what is real and unreal, visible and invisible. In so doing Lovecraft’s tales challenge the same structures of knowledge and society as Bergier and Pauwels do in *Les matins*.

We established earlier that translation is a cultural activity. By approaching translation through the cultural perspective, we have been able to avoid analyzing translations solely in terms of adequacy and equivalence (criteria which still have a role) and have focused more on the specific role that translation plays with respect to the target culture. The French cultural climate in the 1950s is different than that of HPL’s American cultural climate in the 1920s and 1930s, so the cultural roles of these texts are distinctly different. For Bergier, Lovecraft’s texts represent the reality of French culture in the wake of the horrors that WWII unleashed on the world. French existentialists like Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre explored their own perceptions of terrestrial (to cosmic,) indifference, the potential meaningless of life and the alienating aspect of society that is, traditionally found in the form of existentialist novels. Lovecraft pursued the alienation of man in the face of society and the meaningless of life not on a terrestrial scale, but on a cosmic one. In a rather long citation in a November 8th, 1923 letter to Frank Belknap Long, Lovecraft resoundly and philosophically expresses his version of cosmic indifference, one which could have come from any number of French existentialists writing twenty years later:

The cosmos, child, is simply a perpetual rearrangement of electrons which is constantly seething as it always has been and always will be. Our tiny globe and puny thoughts are but one momentary incident in its eternal mutation; so that the life, aims, and thoughts of mankind are of the utmost triviality and ridiculousness. We are conscious by accident, and during the unfortunate instant that we are so, it behooves us only to mitigate our pain and pass our time as agreeably as we may (*Selected Letters* I.149).

This is certainly the general feeling that one may garner in reading many of Lovecraft's tales. However for Bergier and Pauwels, it is the way in which Lovecraft's imagination is used in convey this philosophy that expresses their version of fantastic realism. Under the guiding hand of Bergier and Pauwels, the initial image of HPL in France is similar to that of Baudelaire's Poe. That is to say, he is viewed as a man misunderstood in his own time and only able to find reprieve by exploring his imagination in writing. It is true that Lovecraft himself admits Poe's influence on his oeuvre. In addition, Bergier links Baudelaire's Poe with his own version of "Lovecraft." When HPL reportedly responded to a letter Bergier sent to him concerning whether HPL had ever visited Paris because his description of Paris in "The Music of Eric Zann," was extremely vivid.⁴³ According to Bergier HPL supposedly responded saying, "Avec Poe, en rêve" ("With Poe, in [my] dreams"; "Ce grand génie" 123).

This correspondence demonstrates that, the Bergian HPL serves a very similar role in French culture as did Baudelaire's Poe. In both cases, they became (are)

portrayed as imaginative writers who fulfill the role of the cursed poet or misunderstood writer.

August Derleth and The Rewriting of H. P. Lovecraft

As mentioned in the beginning of the previous part, all of the initial translations of HPL's work into French were from the Arkham House publications of Lovecraft's work. As we recall, Arkham House was established by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, after HPL's death in 1937 with the sole purpose of preserving their friend's writing. Many of the editions published at Arkham House were prefaced by a brief critical appreciation of the tales included under that particular title. In and of themselves, the published editions did not manipulate HPL's initial public image as much as did the prefaces written by Derleth. August Derleth is a dynamic figure in American Lovecraft Studies. But more often than not he is lambasted as misleading generations of Lovecraft scholars and enthusiasts for his inaccurate interpretations and misunderstanding of HPL's philosophy and texts. Perhaps S. T. Joshi says it best when he writes: ". . . Derleth, though perhaps unintentionally and certainly with no malicious intent, has delayed the advancement of objective Lovecraft criticism for nearly thirty years" ("Lovecraft criticism" 24). Indeed, since *Four Decades* (1980) Derleth has been the straw man against whom a large majority of Lovecraft criticism is directed. Due in part to the early Lovecraft scholars (Fritz Leiber Jr, George T. Wetzel and Matthew H. Onderdonk among other) a distinct "HPL" image has emerged out of the shadow of Derleth's HPL.

If Derleth's rewriting of HPL created an inaccurate image of HPL in the American public, what exactly was that image? How much of Derleth's HPL was translated into the French image of HPL? This last question will be addressed in the next section of this chapter. First however, let us explore the evidence brought against Derleth's manipulation of HPL's reception.

The primary importance of Arkham House was to preserve HPL's work in hardcover. However, what was preserved was not entirely a pure version of HPL but, according to S. T. Joshi, a modified or "highly distorted impression of Lovecraft" because Derleth did not entirely understand HPL's works in their proper philosophical context ("Lovecraft Criticism" 24). Due to his friendship and correspondences with HPL coupled with founding AH, Derleth became the unchallenged authority on HPL, his life and texts. S. T. Joshi comments that "his most serious fault was in writing his 'posthumous collaborations' with Lovecraft, which are not only intrinsically poor but which present a perversion of Lovecraft's cosmic myth-cycle" (24). The perversions of Lovecraft's cosmic myth-cycle range from introducing a morality (good and evil forces) to interpreting the various Lovecraftian extraterrestrial "gods" as elementals (beings created from the classic fundamental building blocks of nature: Earth, Water, Fire, Air).

Earlier in this chapter we provisionally divided Lovecraft's *œuvre* into tales of the Dream Cycle and the "Cthulhu Mythos." The latter collection is largely the invention of August Derleth. Richard L. Tierney's "The Derleth Mythos" (1972) is one of the earliest criticisms of Derleth and his manipulation of Lovecraft's *œuvre*. Tierney points out that Lovecraft's approach to his own *œuvre* was a dynamic one in which his and others prior stories were used to enhance the quality of atmosphere in a given story. But Derleth's

view on the stories was “largely static; he appreciated Lovecraft’s concepts but cared less for developing them than for systematizing them” (Tierney 10).

The chief indictment against Derleth is his inability to cope with an indifferent universe where man is not the referent. Such a view is contrary to Derleth’s Catholic upbringing. Derleth views the conflict in the “Cthulhu Mythos” as one between forces of good (Elder Gods) and evil (Ancient Old Ones), where humanity’s fate lies in the balance. Derleth sees this as parallel to the Christian Mythos of the struggle between Good (God) and Evil (the Devil). To make matters worse, Derleth’s interpretation of the “Cthulhu Mythos” is that the gods are actually an “elemental force.” One of the primary parts of Tierney’s “The Derleth Mythos” catalogues this view as incorrect:

for instance, [Derleth] makes Cthulhu and his minions water beings, whereas ‘The Call of Cthulhu’ has them coming down from space and building their cities on land; only later are their cities submerged by geological upheavals, and this is a catastrophe which immobilizes the Cthulhu spawn. Hastur is portrayed as an ‘air elemental,’ while at the same time Derleth implies that he lives on the bottom of the lake of Hali. Yog-Sothoth and Nyarlathotep, probably the two most purely cosmic of all Lovecraftian entities, are squeezed into the ‘earth’ category; while, finally, he invents the fire elemental, Cthugha, to round out his menagerie of elementals (12).

If Lovecraft indeed conceived of these extraterrestrials as elementals, would he have unwittingly left out a fire elemental, or have left illogical pairings between the “good” and “evil” forces? Furthermore, the concept of good and evil is strictly a human perception, whereas Lovecraft has stated that “[a]ll my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the cosmos-at-large” (*Selected Letters* 2.284).

Tierney’s account of Derleth’s misconception is a peaceful analysis, where as Dirk W. Mosig’s “H. P. Lovecraft: Myth-Maker” (1976) is an aggressive attack on Derleth whom Mosig sees as “unable or unwilling to understand the essence of Lovecraft’s dynamic pseudomythology” (104). The most serious injury is the fact that Derleth’s self-assumed authority on all things HPL “was not only blindly followed by other writers, but uncritically accepted by most readers and critics; the results were disastrous” (104). Derleth’s hold on HPL began to ebb when critics like Mosig and Tierney were able to have access to Lovecraft’s correspondences which were published by Arkham House in 5 volumes from 1965 to 1976. In addition to the publication of Lovecraft’s correspondence, the death of August Derleth in 1971 seemed to mark a new age of Lovecraft criticism that was determined to free itself from Derleth’s shadow. In 2011 S. T. Joshi edited a comprehensive number of the best English-language essays on the “Cthulhu Mythos” under the title *Dissecting Cthulhu: Essays on the Cthulhu Mythos*. By and large, this should be considered the greatest source for dispelling Derleth’s hold over Lovecraft’s creation.

It is unfortunate that despite the “corrected” interpretation of HPL’s œuvre, the Derlethian shadow still has significant power and influence outside the specific field of

“Lovecraft Studies.” The following quotation was used by Derleth whenever he was challenged for his Christian interpretation of HPL’s œuvre. Presumably this came in a letter from HPL to Derleth:

All my stories, unconnected as they may be, are based on the fundamental lore or legend that this world was inhabited at one time by another race who, in practicing black magic, lost their foothold and were expelled, yet live on outside ever ready to take possession of this earth again (cited in “Lovecraft vs. Derleth,” 46).

By now this quotation has been revealed to be false, as it was based primarily on a paraphrase by Harold S. Farnese who wrote the above citation in a letter to Derleth. Derleth, however, used this quote as a trump card to support his interpretation of HPL. This citation is ambiguously similar to Lovecraft’s famous “All my tales . . .” quotation previously cited at length earlier (on page 18). Yet as Joshi remarks, “this quotation does not sound at all like Lovecraft—at any rate, it is entirely in conflict with the thrust of his philosophy” (Lovecraft vs Derleth 46).

It is unfortunate that an erroneous quotation, which has been revealed as such, still has the ability to confuse and even lead to further misinterpretations of HPL. This “black magic” quotation was used by Kenneth Grant, the founder of the Typhonian Order (cult), in combining Aleister Crowley’s (1875 to 1947) Thelemite teachings with Lovecraft’s stories.⁴⁴ Grant viewed Lovecraft’s use of occult knowledge and ceremonies as an outsider’s view of the inner workings of occult ceremonies and beliefs in magic.

When questioned about such realism in his work, Lovecraft maintained that he did not *believe* in his works, but rather used such events to help convey an overall atmosphere and sense of dread.

Whether one views Derleth as a villain or a patsy, his influence over the initial HPL image both domestically and abroad has served as something to work against. Thus, his greatest achievement is not so much in delaying the appreciation of HPL's work, but in allowing access to HPL's œuvre, and providing an interpretation that begs to be challenged.

A Cloudy Lens Continues to Exist

The first two sections of the third part have concerned themselves with those responsible for the initial images of HPL in both France and the United States. It is unfortunate that Derleth's misinterpretations of HPL have affected the reception of HPL in France and in America. Although in France there was an almost immediate scholarly acceptance of his work, in America it was not truly until the 1980s that Lovecraft scholarship gained a steady following. Our exploration in support of the theory that France's acceptance of Lovecraft on the literary scene influenced, in some part the development of American Lovecraft scholarship.

In American Lovecraft Studies, Derleth's shadow has been almost entirely exposed. Scholarly journals, recent books and essays have more than provided ample evidence of Derleth's misinterpretation of Lovecraft's œuvre. The same cannot entirely be said of more recent Lovecraft criticism in France.

There are at least three reasons that Derleth's shadow has yet to be entirely dispelled in France. First, the availability of critical works disputing "Derleth's Mythos" may be unavailable in French, or no longer in print. Second, the French Lovecraftian scholar is more concerned with correcting the Bergian image of HPL. Indeed Derleth's influence may be unseen and therefore not addressed. Lastly, publishing houses in France are not entirely shedding any clarity on the separation between "Derleth's Mythos" and "Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos." The difference between the two is simply that "Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos" are the tales that HPL himself wrote, whereas the "Derleth Mythos," implies Derleth's own tales and "collaborations" with HPL, incorporated alongside HPL's own tales.

On the surface, the most plausible of the three is simply the unavailability of certain articles and scholarship (in France) that is focused on clearing away the Derleth misconception of Lovecraft. With a little effort and time, one discovers that two English-language articles which discuss directly the "Cthulhu Mythos" are available in France. Dirk Mosig's "H. P. Lovecraft: Myth-Maker" was translated into French in 1976 by Esther Rochon as "H. P. Lovecraft, créateur des mythes" and published in *Requiem* number twelve in the same year. It was not reprinted after this initial appearance. Under the direction of S. T. Joshi, the very question of the "Cthulhu Mythos" was explored in French under the title *Qu'est-ce que le Mythe de Cthulhu*, first appearing in 1990, followed by three revisions in 2000 and 2007. *Qu'est-ce que le Mythe de Cthulhu* incorporates articles translated by Philippe Gindre on the "Cthulhu Mythos" by D.R. Burleson, S. T. Joshi, Will Murray, Robert M. Price and David E. Schutlz, a veritable tour de force in Lovecraft studies then and now. The goal of this work is to explore and reveal

the “Cthulhu Mythos” in terms of Lovecraft’s own production and philosophy, and to reveal the influence Derleth had after HPL’s death. Robert M. Price’s 1986 article “What is the Cthulhu Mythos” published in the magazine *Dagon* in 1986 was translated and made available to the French public under the title “H. P.L et le mythe de Cthulhu” first published by Phénix in its 6th issue under the title *H. P. Lovecraft*, in 1986 and reprinted in a Super Phénix edition in 1988 under the title *Lovecraft*. Robert M. Price’s articles help to clear away the last vestiges of “Derleth’s Mythos.” These articles were translated to French, but have not been reprinted since. The issues can be found online, but the elevated price at which they can be bought may discourage scholars from truly being educated on the matter.

Nevertheless, there have been a number of French scholars who have pursued this subject. The most recent edition of *Bifrost* number 73, features an article by Raphaël Granier De Cassagnac titled “Lovecraft et son mythe.” Rather than focusing on Derleth’s manipulation of the “Cthulhu Mythos,” De Cassagnac is more interested in exclusively documenting Lovecraft’s tales that treat the aforementioned mythos. However, prior to this article and the S. T. Joshi reprints of *Qu’est-ce que le Mythe de Cthulhu*, there is very little French scholarship on the matter. Jacques Van Herp published “Naissance du mythe” in *Lovecraft*, in the Super Phénix edition in 1988, and in 1986 his article “La mythologie de Cthulhu,” was serialized in Phénix’s *H. P. Lovecraft* numbers 5 and 6. In 1994 Frank Brénugat published an essay in *Parallèles* number 1, entitled *Le mythe*, “H. P. Lovecraft: le mythe de Cthulhu,” and in 2009 Patrick Marcel published “Chronologie d’un mythe” in *Les nombreuses vies de Cthulhu* printed by the publishing house Les Moutons Electroniques. Therefore, despite the small number of articles available in the

French language, *there is* French scholarship which endeavors to explore the “Cthulhu Mythos,” which invariably involves a separation between Derleth and Lovecraft.

French scholars have indeed spent more time correcting the Bergian image of HPL than that of Derleth. Michel Meurger’s article which appeared in *Etudes Lovecraftiennes* over the course of 2 issues, from 1988 to 1989 is perhaps the most comprehensive essay that deals with the initial introduction of HPL and Bergier’s hand in disseminating it to the greater French public. Jean-Luc Buard’s article “Jacques Bergier, correspondant de Lovecraft? De la légende à la réalité” published in *Etudes Lovecraftiennes* in numbers 9 and 10 (1990-1991) explores the fiction of Bergier’s claim of having communicated directly with HPL via letter. Simon Lequeux published “Lovecraft et Bergier: Le larcin des Magiciens” which appeared over 5 issues of *Etudes Lovecraftiennes* (1991-1994) and explores Bergier’s hand in stealing Lovecraft’s work, in other words, misinterpreting it and presenting it under a different form.⁴⁵ Meurger, Buard, and Lequeux among others have helped the French Lovecraftian scholar to explore a new image of Lovecraft that seems to coincide more with the American Lovecraft scholar’s “post-Derlethian” image. Michel Houellebecq’s *H. P. Lovecraft contre le monde, contre la vie* is a prime example of the new direction and image that French Lovecraft scholars have explored since Bergier’s image of HPL has been ousted. This will be explored in chapter three.

Despite the efforts of scholars and the availability of translations, there is still some confusion as to where Derleth’s and Lovecraft’s “Cthulhu Mythos” separate. Some publishing houses in France, and in America, have gone so far as to introduce the Cthulhu Mythos as a collaboration between Derleth and Lovecraft. The first appearance

of just such collaborations appeared in 1969 under the title *Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos* published by Arkham House. Not only do *Tales* include Lovecraft's own stories, but they include stories written by Derleth, Clark Ashton Smith, Frank Belknap Long, Robert Bloch and Brian Lumely, among others. In 1989, the French publishing house Pocket released a translation of *Tales* under the title *Les choses des ténèbres* (it was reprinted in 1994 and 2001).

Academically speaking, it appears that both English and French speaking Lovecraft scholars are aware of Derleth's manipulation in organizing the "Cthulhu Mythos," but by and large the general public is probably not aware of Derleth's involvement. To make matters worse, one of the most recent French critical books on H. P. Lovecraft by Didier Henrickx titled *H. P. Lovecraft: le dieu silencieux* (2012), opens up with the infamous "black magic" quote, right after Henrickx reveals to the reader his exhaustive scholarship on HPL. It is a wonder that any scholar of HPL would still be unaware of the now clear manipulation of HPL's œuvre by Derleth.

The three hypotheses suggested as to the persistence of such misconceptions do not, in the end, help us understand the extent to which Derleth and Bergier influenced Lovecraft scholarship. Perhaps a more neutral approach to Derleth and Bergier's involvement should be considered. Yes, they misinterpreted Lovecraft's œuvre, both in distinctive ways, yet scholarship did not stagnate. It refracted into different directions. If anything it morphed into something new and their interpretations offered dynamic ways of perceiving HPL's work. Their interpretations also presented themselves as targets to the French and American Lovecraft scholars who would eventually dig through the layers of misinterpretation in order to discover the true Lovecraft below.

Conclusion

H. P. Lovecraft is one of the most influential 20th century writers in both America and in France. It was not until after his death that any of his works gained the respect that they should have always had. Certainly much of the contempt towards his work was due to the medium and genre with which they were associated. However, S. T. Joshi correctly points out

Lovecraft was more than just a writer of clever tales of supernatural fiction; he was, instead, a keen and penetrating thinker who evolved an elaborate worldview, atheistic at its core and reliant on the findings of science to devise a system of ethics and aesthetics that could function viably in a modern world that had demonstrated the inefficacy of the concepts of God, the afterlife, and the very centrality of the human race and human history in the workings of a spatially and temporally boundless universe (“Introduction” 6).

Lovecraft’s inspiration is far from being solely a domestic affair. For his tales spoke to French readers and critics. It is through a theory of translation and rewriting that we can understand just what role Lovecraft played in France and whether or not there is any similarity to his role in America during the 1920s and 30s.

Chapter 2: “Surrealism, Fantastic Realism and Manipulation of an Image”

Introduction

The last chapter provided a literary history of HPL in both France and America. From Lovecraft’s first introduction to the French avant-garde in a small surrealist magazine, entitled *Médium*, to his wide dissemination in paperback form via Deux-Rives and Denoël, a certain image of Lovecraft was created and perpetuated. This image, whether through ignorance or volition was not entirely accurate. Jacques Bergier’s preface to *Démons et merveilles*, “H. P. Lovecraft, ce grand génie,” served as the primary source of knowledge about Lovecraft from 1953 to 1976. As Gilles Menegalado explains in his article, “Lovecraft et ses contemporains,” at a 1995 conference at Cérisy-la-Salle that “Jacques Bergier a contribué à répandre une certaine idée de l’homme et de son œuvre, idée déjà entretenue dans une période antérieure, notamment dans la mouvance surréaliste, avec Robert Benayoun et la revue *Médium*” (“Jacques Bergier contributed to spreading a certain idea of the man and of his works, an idea already maintained in a previous period, notably during in the Surrealist movement, with Robert Benayoun and the magazine *Médium*”; 259, translation mine). Lovecraft’s work is ripe for interpretation. The Surrealist movement that began in the 30s and lasted until the 50s and the short-lived genre of Fantastic Realism both saw Lovecraft’s tales as an embodiment

of their core philosophy. Unfortunately, their annexation and refraction of who Lovecraft was, is largely due to the unavailability of materials (such as correspondences and other texts in which Lovecraft discussed his vision of “weird fiction”) in French, and, as we will observe in the case of Bergier, poor scholarship because elements of it were proven to have been fabricated after Lovecraft’s correspondence and other fiction was made available in the French language.

Surrealism: Definition & Technique

Surrealism was an avant-garde movement that emerged from its predecessor Dadaism. The Dadaist movement itself began in 1916 and ended in about 1922. The beginning of Dada occurred in Zurich at the Cabaret Voltaire, and over the next six years would move into Germany (Berlin and Cologne), France (Paris), and the United States of America (New York). In 1922, French Dadaism morphed into an early stage of Surrealism, when under André Breton, the Parisian Dadaist held a *Congrès de Paris*, in which the general direction of their activity diverted from that of Dada to an initial form of Surrealism.

In 1924, Surrealism officially became its own avant-garde movement when André Breton published the First Surrealist Manifesto.⁴⁶ Surrealism itself was a term first coined in 1917 by André Breton’s mentor Guillaume Apollinaire. Apollinaire’s definition of surrealism was a combination of two concepts: surprise and analogical parallels. Willard Bohn explains that Apollinaire’s surrealism “in its simplest form, . . . can be define[d] as one or more surprising analogies based on reality” (126). Surprise is further bifurcated

into the scandalous and the marvelous. The scandalous surprise is essentially “provocation, conscious cultivation of the scandalous, and confrontation with the absurd” (126). Whereas the marvelous is understood as the embodiment of the “‘incurable human malaise.’ As such, it was recognizable by the revelatory shudder it evoked in those who experienced it” (129). For Apollinaire, these two principles constituted a super-reality, a *sur-réalité*. André Breton uses the term marvelous in a different manner than Apollinaire’s revelation of an incurable human malaise.

Breton defines surrealism as the attempt to “transform modern consciousness by resorting to imaginative means, by refusing to differentiate between the imaginary and the real” (131). Breton provides two working definitions of Surrealism in *Le manifeste du Surréalisme* (1924):

Surréalism, n.m. Automatisme psychique pur par lequel on se propose d’exprimer, soit verbalement, soit par écrit, soit de toute manière, le fonctionnement réel de la pensée. Dictée de la pensée, en l’absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale.

Encycl. Philos. Le surréalisme repose sur la croyance à la réalité supérieure de certaines formes d’associations négligées jusqu’à lui, à la toute-puissance du rêve, au jeu désintéressé de la pensée. Il tend à ruiner définitivement tous les autres mécanismes psychiques et à se substituer à eux dans la résolution des principaux problèmes de la vie.

(Surrealism, n.m. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express-verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.

Encycl. Philos. Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin once and for all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principle problems of life; *Manifestes* 36, 26 translation Lane and Seaver).

Furthermore, Surrealism can be understood as “la résolution future de ces deux états, en apparence si contradictoires, que sont le rêve et la réalité, en une sorte de réalité absolue, de *surréalité*, si l’on peut ainsi dire” (“the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a *surreality*, if one may so speak”; 24, emphasis original, 14 translation Lane and Seaver). Essentially, Surrealism is the point at which differences cease to be perceived as contradictory. The primary methods available to the surrealists in order to explore the unrestrained thoughts of the unconscious are automatic writing and dream analysis.

In *The First Surrealist Manifesto*, Breton instructs the reader in how to engage in automatic writing:

Faites-vous apporter de quoi écrire, après vous êtes établi en un lieu aussi favorable que possible à la concentration de votre esprit sur lui-même. Placez-vous dans l'état le plus passif, ou réceptif, que vous pourrez . . . Ecrivez vite sans sujet préconçu, assez vite pour ne pas retenir et ne pas être tenté de vous relire . . . Continuez autant qu'il vous plaira . . .

("After you have settled yourself in a place as favorable as possible, or receptive, a state of mind as you can. Put yourself in as passive or receptive, a state of mind as you can . . . Write quickly, without any preconceived subject, fast enough so that you will not remember what you're writing and be tempted to reread what you have written . . . Go on as long as you like"; 41-42, 29-30 translation Lane and Seaver).

Breton explains earlier that a phrase came to him just before falling asleep one night, which he did not write down till much later—it went something like, ("Il y a un homme coupé en deux par la fenêtre" ("there is a man cut in two by a window"; 31, 21 translation Lane and Seaver). This intermediary state between being awake and asleep represents the same type of state in which one needs in order to preform automatic writing. Having read and practiced Freud's psychoanalytic method on mentally ill patients during WWI Breton realized that, in this intermediary state one establishes "un monologue de débit aussi rapide que possible, sur lequel l'esprit critique du sujet ne fasse porter aucun jugement, qui ne s'embarrasse, par suite d'aucune réticence, et qui soit aussi exactement que possible la *pensée parlée*" ("a monologue spoken as rapidly as possible without any intervention on the part of the critical faculties, a monologue consequently

unencumbered by the slightest inhibition and which was, as closely as possible, akin to *spoken thought*"; 33, 23 translation Lane and Seaver). Due to the state in which one needs to be, automatic writing is, arguably, free of cultural barriers, which normally are present in our wakeful speech and thoughts. It is when one rereads automatic writing that the opposition between real and the unreal come into play, in other words, when the surreal is observable.

The importance of dreams as an operation of the unconscious for André Breton is largely the result of Freud's monumental *The Interpretation of Dreams*, first appearing in German in 1900, in English in 1911 (translated by A. A. Brill) and finally in French in 1923 (translated by Ignace Meyerson).⁴⁷ For Breton man is a "rêveur définitif" ("definitive dreamer"; 13), and he believes in "la résolution future de ces deux états, en apparence si contradictoires, que sont le rêve et la réalité, en une sorte de réalité absolue, de *surréalité* . . . c'est à sa conquête que [Breton va]" ("the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a *surreality* . . . It is in quest of this surreality that I am going"; *Manifestes* 24, emphasis original, 14 translation Lane and Seaver). Closely related to dreams is the work of imagination, which according to Breton, is lost when one becomes an adult. The loss is a result of an "impérieuse nécessité pratique" ("imperative practical necessity") of adult life, which implies material necessity, moral and social order (14, 4 translation Lane and Seaver). In this sense, Breton is reclaiming not only dreams but also imagination, which were relegated to not having importance in the daily life of an adult. Essentially Surrealism attempts to unify both dreams and waking life in an effort to bring man "à une

conscience intégrale de lui-même” (“to an integrated consciousness of himself”; Duplessis 31, translation mine).

Of primary importance to explore the unconscious is imagination and its multiple forms of manifestation: humor, the marvelous, surrealist objects and word games/images, which are also known as the exquisite cadaver. Each one of the particular concepts above is used to affirm the surrealist belief that “quelque chose est caché derrière” (“that something is hidden behind the façade of objects which we observe and with which we interact”; cited in Duplessis 30, translation mine). The exquisite cadaver is essentially a word or image game whereby a group of people each write a word or line, and after hiding it, pass the paper along to the next member who will write or draw a line. The idea is that “le cadavre exquis permet donc à l’homme de se libérer de la morne réalité pour pénétrer dans un monde de communications directes entre les êtres bouleversant les rapports chronologiques habituels” (“the exquisite cadaver therefore allows man to liberate himself from the stark reality in order to penetrate into the world of direct communication between being disrupting the habitual chronological relations; 42, translation mine). The very first phrase obtained through this process was: “Le cadavre—exquis—boira le vin nouveau” (“the exquisite—cadaver—will drink new wine”; cited in Duplessis 41, translation mine). Humor, for example, “nous permet d’envisager le monde sous un autre angle en brisant les relations familières des objets” (“allows us to therefore picture the world under another angle in breaking the familiar relationships of objects”; 21, translation mine). The ability for humor to break familiar bonds of objects incites the imagination to rework one’s concept of reality “et ainsi le prépare à entrevoir une autre réalité, la Surréalité” (“and therefore to prepare one to glimpse another reality, the

Surreality”); 23, translation mine). Surrealist objects, too, serve to break the common bond between objects. Marcel Duchamp’s “ready-mades,” are objects whose primary function was to disrupt normal usage and invite new ways to conceive of the given object. For example, a barstool with a bicycle tire attached to it on the seat. The barstool is used for sitting, and a bicycle tire is used for movement. Both objects are manufactured for specific purposes. When the objects are combined differently than their preordained purpose, it challenges our conception of the object and invites new and imaginative ways in which to conceive it.

The marvelous is a highly charged concept, certainly with regard to the present study. Breton’s definition of marvelous is not the same as Tzvetan Todorov’s. Todorov’s definition of the marvelous concerns the moment, in fantastic literature, when a supernatural phenomena cannot be explained by natural laws, and therefore we must postulate new laws as to explain them: “on doit admettre de nouvelles lois de la nature, par lesquelles le phénomène peut être expliqué, nous entrons dans le genre du merveilleux” (“we must admit new laws of nature, by which the phenomena can be explained, we then enter into the genre marvelous”); 46, translation mine). Breton himself does not give an outright definition of the marvelous so much as he provides examples of what is marvelous, “le merveilleux est toujours beau, n’importe quel merveilleux est beau, il n’y a même que le merveilleux qui soit beau” (“the marvelous is always beautiful, anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact only the marvelous is beautiful”); 25, 14 translation Lane and Seaver). It is only the marvelous in literature that is able to “féconder des œuvres ressortissant à un genre inférieur tel que le roman” (“fecundat[e]

works which belong to an inferior category such as the novel”; 25, 14 translation Lane and Seaver).

In *Le miroir du merveilleux* (1962), Pierre Mabillet elucidates and reinforces the exalting effect on the mind because “le merveilleux suppose moins des solutions qu’une volonté constant d’exploration du domaine inconnu” (“the marvelous presumes less solutions than a constant willingness of the exploration of unknown realms”; 49, translation mine).

Offering no solutions, only an avenue into the unknown, the marvelous combines the real and the imaginary in such a way as to incite an individual to explore what is only hinted at. Just as the ghosts are unable to be tangibly held in Matthew Gregory Lewis’ *The Monk* they also play “un rôle logique, puisque l’esprit critique ne s’en empire pas pour les contester” (“a logical role in the book, since the critical mind does not seize them in order to dispute them”; *Manifestes* 25, 14 translation Lane and Seaver). The critical mind cannot offer a solution, and neither can the marvelous. However it incites us to explore further the mystery presented. Just as a concept retains its meaning due to its historico-cultural context Breton notes that “le merveilleux n’est pas le même à toutes les époques; il participe obscurément d’une sorte de révélation générale dont le détail seul nous parvient . . .” (“[t]he marvelous is not the same in every period of history: it partakes in some obscure way of a sort of general revelation”; 26, 16 translation Lane and Seaver). These fragments can be found in the haunted castle in Gothic fiction “ou tout autre symbole propre à remuer la sensibilité humaine durant un temps” (“or any other symbol capable of affecting the human sensibility for a period of time”; 26, 16 translation Lane

and Seaver). Breton further explains in “Limites non-frontières du surréalisme” that only in the approach to fantastic literature is

où la raison humaine perd son contrôle, qu’a toutes chances de se traduire l’émotion la plus profonde de l’être, émotion inapte à se projeter dans le cadre du monde réel et qui n’a d’autre issue, dans sa précipitation même, que de répondre à la sollicitation éternelle des symboles et des mythes (“where human reason loses its control, and that the opportunity for the deepest human emotions has any chance to express itself, emotion inapt at projecting itself in the setting of the real world and which has no other exit, even in its haste, only responds to the eternal call of symbols and myths”; 21-22, translation mine).

Essentially, Breton means to say that the social and cultural events liable to affect gothic, fantastic or even weird writers, has no other exit of expression *but* through this type of literature, one in which the marvelous (as Breton understands it) allows for a combination of the real and the imaginary, which in turn allows for one to escape into a realm where the real and the imaginary are no longer distinguished.

Willard Bohn succinctly sums up the aesthetic goals underlying Surrealist techniques and methods:

Surrealism sought to liberate the unconscious, and to tap its powerful forces via automatic writing, automatic speech, and the analysis of

dreams. The superior reality (or surreality) embodied by these forms of association was that of the unconscious itself, the exploration of which promised to expand our total awareness (129).

In my view, there is no better form of literature associated with the unconscious, the marvelous and the strange, than Gothic Literature and its multiple iterations (Fantastic Literature and Weird Fiction). André Breton does not distinguish the difference between Gothic Novels (what he termed *roman noir*) Fantastic Literature or what we are calling “Weird Fiction.” The following section will explore exactly how the Surrealists Robert Benayoun and Gérard Legrand interpreted and presented HPL and his texts to the French surrealists of the early 1950s.

Surrealist Annexation of H. P. Lovecraft

Both Lovecraft and Breton were active in their respective literary fields contemporaneously—although one would argue that Lovecraft participated as the canon fodder for mass culture consumption whereas Breton wrote, and theorized, for an aesthetically sensitive literati. David Earle believes “that the pulp magazine is itself a peculiarly and purely popular form of modernism” (74). As we have just seen, Breton saw Surrealism as a way to tap the powers of the unconscious and in so doing “liberate the mind” (“What is surrealism?” 48). Lovecraft explained that his penchant for writing weird fiction was meant

to give [himself] the satisfaction of visualizing more clearly and detailedly and stably the vague, elusive, fragmentary impressions of wonder, beauty, and adventurous expectancy which are conveyed to me by certain sites (scenic, architectural, atmospheric, etc.), ideas, occurrences, and images encountered and art and literature (“Notes” 113).

He also makes a more matter-of-fact statement. Weird fiction “suits [his] inclination the best” (113).

In Breton’s philosophical definition of Surrealism, automatic writing, speech and dreams are “dictée[s] de la pensée,” (“[d]ictated by thought,”) and come through free of the “contrôle exercé par la raison, en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale” (“control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern”; *Manifeste* 36, 26 translation Lane and Seaver). In tapping the power of the unconscious, Surrealism aims to “transform modern consciousness by resorting to imaginative means, by refusing to differentiate between the imaginary and the real” (Bohn 131). Lovecraft himself “feel[s] a burning curiosity about unknown outer space, and a burning desire to escape from the [prison house] of the known and the real into those enchanted lands of incredible adventure and infinite possibilities which dreams open up to us, and which things like deep woods, fantastic urban towers, and flaming sunsets momentarily suggest” (“Notes” 113-114). The “enchanted lands” that the “infinite possibilities” of dreams allow one to access can analogically be understood to meet the same requirements as Breton’s marvelous. If we recall correctly, Breton believes that the marvelous lies in “les *ruines* romantiques, le *mannequin* modern ou tout autre symbole

propre à remuer la sensibilité humaine durant un temps” (“the romantic *ruins*, the modern *mannequin*, or any other symbol capable of affecting the human sensibility for a period of time”; *Manifeste 26*, 16 translation Lane and Seaver). For Lovecraft, human sensibility to the particular vein of weird fiction is not entirely equally disbursed among all writers nor the public in general. In “Supernatural Horror in Literature” (1927) Lovecraft explains that

the appeal of the spectrally macabre is generally narrow because it demands from the reader a certain degree of imagination and a capacity for detachment from everyday life. Relatively few are free enough from the spell of the daily routine to respond to trappings from outside, and tales of ordinary feelings and events, or of common sentimental distortions of such feelings and events, will always take first place in the taste of the majority; rightly, perhaps, since of course these ordinary matters make up the greater part of human experience (12-13).

In this sense, Lovecraft’s weird fiction could rightly be placed within Surrealism as a genre.

The first collection of Lovecraft’s tales to be translated into French were grouped under the title *La couleur tombée du ciel* (“The Colour Out of Space,” “The Dunwich Horror,” “The Shadow Over Innsmouth” and “The Whisperer in the Darkness”) in 1954 by Denoël. In that same year, Denoël published *Dans l’abîme du temps* (“The Shadow Out of Time,” “The Dreams in the Witch House,” “The Call of Cthulhu” and “At the

Mountains of Madness). These stories are often considered to be the greatest of Lovecraft's tales. Yet as the critical study *H. P. Lovecraft* by the Cahiers de l'Herne testifies the majority of French criticism during the first fifteen years of Lovecraft's presence in French examines the Dream Cycle tales which revolve around Randolph Carter in *Démons et merveilles* ("The Statement of Randolph Carter," "The Silver Key," "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" and "The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath") published in 1955 by Deux-Rives. We should note that *Démons et merveilles* is strictly a French publication, which does not have an "equivalent" in English, as the tales, prior to 1955, were never collected under a single title pertaining to demons or marvels.

A close reading of two of the four tales included in *Démons et merveilles* will give ample evidence that the Surrealists, as well as Jacques Bergier who wrote the preface "Ce grand génie venu d'ailleurs," took Lovecraft's literary production as bearing witness to "connaissances occultes authentiques" ("testimony of authentic occult knowledge"; Legrand 14). *Démons et merveilles* contains four stories that revolve around the personage of Randolph Carter, who is thought to be a representation of Lovecraft himself. The stories deal with Carter and his journeys within the dreamland.

Let us first look closely at "The Silver Key," (translated at "La clé d'argent") written in 1926 but published in *Weird Tales* January 1929, translated into French by Bernard Noël in 1955. It follows the character Randolph Carter who interestingly corresponds almost directly to the general disenchantment with life as expressed in the first Surrealist Manifesto. The opening page of "The Silver Key" evokes the Surrealist principle that all the marvelous and wonderment that has evaporated during adulthood is

due to privileging the real over the imaginary. In order to illustrate how French reader's encountered Lovecraft, I will follow the English version with the French translation:

[Randolph Carter] had read much of things as they are, and talked with too many people. Well-meaning philosophers had taught him to look into the logical relations of things, and analy[z]e the processes which shaped his thoughts and fancies. Wonder had gone away, and he had forgotten that all life is only a set of pictures in the brain, among which there is no difference betwixt those born of real things and those born inward of dreamings, and no cause to value the one above the other.

(“[Randolph Carter] avait lu trop de chose dans la réalité, discuté avec trop de gens. Des philosophes bien intentionnés lui avaient appris à observer les relations logiques des événements et à analyser les processus engendrant les pensées et les rêves ; après quoi le merveilleux avait fui tandis qu’il oubliait, lui, Carter, que toute vie, dans notre cerveau, n’est qu’une collection d’images et qu’il n’y a pas de différence entre celles qui naissent des objets réels et celles qui naissent de nos rêves intimes pas plus qu’il n’y a de raison de considérer les unes comme supérieures aux autres” ; 391, 34 translation Noël).

If we recall for Breton, the loss of wonder and access to the marvelous is due to materialist necessities and the accompanying ideological infrastructures in supporting

them. “Well-meaning philosophers” helped him to privilege the real, which has disrupted the childhood indifference between real and unreal. His education has caused him to lose

the key of the gate of dreams [at the age of thirty]. Prior to that time he had made up for the prosiness of life by nightly excursions to strange and ancient cities beyond space, and lovely, unbelievable garden lands across ethereal seas; but as middle age hardened upon him he felt these liberties slipping away little by little, until at last he was cut off altogether.

(“la clé de la porte des rêves [a trente ans]. De nocturnes excursions par-delà l’espace en d’étranges cités anciennes et en d’inoubliables jardins aux massifs charmeurs s’étendant au-dessus de mers éthérées, l’avaient, avant cette année-là, dédommagé des médiocrités de la vie. En atteignant le milieu de son âge, il sentit que, progressivement, ses privilèges lui échappaient jusqu’à disparaître à la fin complètement”; 391, 33 translation Noël)

Thus, the ability to dream, to imagine and to be indifferent to the division between the real and the imaginary is something that can be lost when one becomes inculcated into the world of materialist necessity. In Carter’s case, education is what destroys this infantile perception of the world. Carter would therefore be understood to be one of those “sensitive” individuals to whom Lovecraft referred as having a particular attraction to the “spectrally macabre.”

This attraction undeniably falls in line with Breton's vision of the marvelous present in Gothic Fiction, Fantastic Literature and by extension, Weird Fiction. The philosophers had "chained [Carter] down to things that are, and had then explained the workings of those things till mystery had gone out of the world" ("avaient enchaîné [Carter] aux objets visibles puis lui en avaient expliqué le fonctionnement jusqu'à ce que toute parcelle de mystère ait disparu du monde"; 391, 34 translation Noël). Carter's sensibility to the marvelous and the mysterious was not protected. Duplessis reflects on Carter's loss universally in that "chaque homme qui avance dans sa propre vie comme dans un chemin de mieux en mieux pavé, qui avance dans l'habitude du monde avec une aisance croissante, qui se défait progressivement du goût et de la perception de l'insolite" [each man who progresses in his own life like a way paved, better and better, who progresses in the habit of life with a growing ease, which undermines progressively its perception of the unusual] (Duplessis 29, translation mine). The description of Carter and the malaise he feels is a cultural symptom that the Surrealists have diagnosed as the loss of imagination and the sense of marvelous. Through the exploration of the unconscious by automatic technique and dream analysis one may, again, gain a greater understanding of oneself. In this way, the Surrealist interpretation of Carter reflects uniquely the French approach to Lovecraft as a legitimate Surrealist artist.

As the story progresses, Carter's critical interpretation appears to be similar to that of the surrealists who attempt to reconcile oppositional pairs such as the real and the unreal; "they did not see that good and evil and beauty and ugliness are only ornamental fruits of perspective, whose sole value lies in their linkage to what chance made our fathers think and feel, and whose finer details are different for every race and culture"

(“ces gens ne savaient pas non plus que le bien et le mal, la beauté et la laideur, ne sont que les ornements d’une perspective dont la seule valeur dépend du hasard chanceux qui fit de nos pères des êtres doués de pensée et de sensibilité, hasard aux détails subtilement différents pour chaque race et pour chaque culture”; “The Silver Key” 393, 37 translation Noël). Just like concepts of good and evil, beauty and ugliness are culturally contingent, so too is “le merveilleux n’est pas le même à toutes les époques . . .” (“the marvelous is not the same in every period of history ;” *Manifeste* 26, 16 translation Lane and Seaver).

The search to regain the marvelous has sent Carter to the philosophers, to wise-men (scientists) and also to the occultists “as an antidote for the commonplace” (“comme antidote à la banalité”; “The Silver Key” 394, 40 translation Noël). However “[m]ost of these [occultist doctrines] are as dry and inflexible as those of science, yet without even the slender palliative of truth to redeem them” (“il s’aperçut alors que les doctrines populaires de l’occultisme sont aussi sèches et aussi inflexibles que celles de la science sans se racheter pour cela par une mince trace vérité”; *The Silver Key*” 394, 40 translation Noël). Further disenfranchised, Carter “bought stranger books and sought out deeper and more terrible men of fantastic erudition; delving into arcana of consciousness that few have trod, and learning things about the secret pits of life, legend and immemorial antiquity which disturbed him ever afterward” (394). Carter’s search for the marvelous appears to be in the right direction for it is the first time that the real and the imaginary merge, for it was in a previous story (“The Statement of Randolph Carter”) in which he recounts the night he accompanied an acquaintance (only to be named in “Through the Gates of the Silver Key”) of his to an ancient cemetery.⁴⁸

The second time that the real and the imaginary occurs when Carter slowly regains his ability to dream, and one night he has a dream about his grandfather who “reminded him of a key” and his ancestor Edmund Carter explained to him how the silver key contained in an antique box had been “handed down from his ancestors” (395). The key effectively was to be used on “the lost gate of dream” (396). Carter finds this key in the “dust and shadows of the great attic” in his familial house and recognized that the hieroglyphs on the key were the same as the parchment his acquaintance had with him the night he disappeared (396). In a dream Carter learns of the key, and in reality he finds it. In possession of the key his dreams become more vivid. They “were calling him back along the years, and with the mingled wills of all his fathers were pulling him toward some hidden and ancestral source. Then he knew he must go into the past and merge himself with old things . . .” (“*Tout au long des années, ils le rappelaient en arrière et de par toutes les volontés confondues de ses pères, semblaient le repousser vers quelque origine ancestrale et secrète. Il sut alors qu’il devait se tourner vers le passé et s’y perdu au sein des vieilles source.*”; “The Silver Key” 396, 45 translation Noël). He then makes his way to his ancestral home.

The third occurrence of when reality and the imaginary merge or overlap follows his arrival at the base of a forested hill upon which lies his ancestral home. Pausing there he remarks that “[a]ll the strangeness and expectancy of his recent dreams seemed present in this hushed and unearthly landscape” (397). In this heightened atmosphere, which reads like a dream, Carter makes his way through the forest to the house. At one point

he saw off across leagues of twilight meadow and spied the old Congregational steeple on Central Hill in Kingsport . . . Then, when he was deep in shadow again, he recalled with a start that the glimpse must have come from childish memory alone, since the old church had long been torn down to make room for the Congregational Hospital. (“une trouée soudaine s’ouvrit à sa droite parmi les arbres et lui permit d’apercevoir dans Kingsport, par-dessus des lieues de prairies crépusculaires, le vieux clocher de la Congrégation sur Central Hill . . . Un instant plus tar, lorsqu’il fut retombé dans l’ombre dense, il se rappela avec un sursaut de surprise que cette rapide vision devait avoir jailli du fond de sa mémoire enfantine et d’elle seule, étant donné que la veille église blanche avait été abattue pour agrandir d’une salle, l’hôpital de la Congrégation.”; 397, 47 translation Noël).

The fourth time occurs immediately thereafter when he hears and sees the old farmhand that his uncle had hired, remarking that the hired man “must be well over a hundred,” since he “was aged even in those far-off times of his boyhood visits” (397). Not only does Benijah Corey, the hired man, signal a merger of the real and the unreal, he also experiences a type of time-space flashback where he is a child again. In a narration which still regards him as a child he travels to a strange cave, “snake-den,” which was extremely deep. “The boy had found a fissure in the farthestmost black corner that led to a loftier grotto beyond—a haunting sepulchral place whose granite walls held a curious illusion of conscious artifice” (399). The boy Carter apparently used the key to gain

access to hidden knowledge of the future and then he returns to his uncle's home. The adult Carter, at the end of the story is missing, and the only evidence of his presence is the empty box and parchment in his car, which he left at the base of the hill, and a handkerchief found on the hill, too common to be identified as his.

These occurrences where the real merges with the imaginary can be understood as surreal moments described in the story, which is laden with vivid dream-like descriptions and wondrous other combinations of adjectives to create a kind of liminal atmosphere where both the real and the imaginary co-exist.

“The Silver Key,” in its narrative technique, its descriptive quality and the overall sense of Carter's loss of dreaming lends itself particularly well to a Surrealist interpretation. The key can be understood as being similar to Surrealist techniques for unlocking the gates which bar access to the unconscious, principally automatic activity and dream analysis. The oscillation between childhood memories, dreams, and adulthood can be viewed as the result of Surrealism's manner to serve as “*la clé qui permet d'explorer ce contenu latent, le moyen de toucher ce fond historique secret qui disparaît derrière la trame des événements*” (“the key allowing exploration of this latent content, a way to touch the bottom of this secret history which disappears behind the web of events”; “Non-frontières” 21, emphasis added, translation mine). While terror does not play a part in “The Silver Key,” the mystery of the unknown and its exploration leads Carter on a quest, one which allows him to experience childhood visions and emotions—a period of human development cherished both by Lovecraft and Breton as limitless in imagination.

Let us look now at another story featured in *Démons et merveilles*. “Through the Gates of the Silver Key,” was written by H. P. Lovecraft in collaboration with E. Hoffmann Price written from 1932 to 1933 and featured in the July 1934 issues of *Weird Tales*. The story itself is a narrative told by an oddly dressed Indian mystic named Swami Chandraputra who recounts the fabulous journey of Randolph Carter after his disappearance in the “Silver Key.” The whole story is one of fantastic reverie and at times incites mystical concepts and explanations which help to reduce the logical relationships between time, space and identity. Many of the descriptions of the scenes are dream-like and provoke the reader to imagine a wonderful scene that would appear in certain Surrealist paintings or objects.

From the very beginning, the surreal is present by the extraordinary nature of ordinary objects, from a “coffin-shaped clock whose dial bore baffling hieroglyphs and whose four hands did not move in consonance with any time system known on this planet” to “odd tripods of wrought iron” issuing forth “the hypnotic fumes of olibanum” (889). The clock plays a central role as its rhythms and ticking coincide with the excitement of the Swami, who at the end of the story is revealed as the Yiddish wizard Zkauba (Randolph Carter on a different conscious-plane). The clock dislocates the logical notion of its purpose, the keeping of time, which is linear.

This is the scene of a settlement dispute over Randolph Carter’s estate, where the real and the imaginary are already mingling, preparing the reader for the tale to come. The majority of the first part of the tale that the Swami relates recalls the events of “The Silver Key” and fills in details that were not related at the time, such as the fact that the key allowed him “to double back on the trail of time and [to] return through forty-five

years to that other October day in 1883 when he had stayed in the Snake Den as a small boy” (891). Essentially, the key allowed Carter to pass into a higher dimension, through dream, that will allow him to explore the cosmos. Carter meets two figures in his cosmic-dream journey, Umr at-Tawil, the dreaded Guide of which the *Necronomicon* warns Carter of his terrible nature and presence on Earth “millions of years before, when man was undreamed of” (896). Just before passing through the Ultimate Gate, Carter is given a choice to turn back or go forward. Having decided to go forward Carter receives a message from “a voice that was not a voice,” which said, “The Man of Truth is beyond good and evil, . . . The Man of Truth has ridden to All-Is-One. The Man of Truth has learnt that Illusion is the only reality, and that substance is an impostor” (901). The first piece of information that Carter learns in his “cosmic-dream,” that perhaps the reality we perceive is not reality at all, was showed by the Surrealists, and certainly Breton, who aimed to disrupt logical relationships that create waking-reality by dialoguing with the imaginary in order to access the Surreal. Through the disruption of the relationship between the object and subject, “the First Gateway had taken something of stability from [Carter], leaving him uncertain about his bodily form and about his relationship to the mistily defined objects around him” (902). Carter, it can be inferred, has experienced his first Surrealist lesson in passing through the First Gateway, the change of perception one is granted when subject—object relationships are disturbed and how this affects our vision of what is or can be. Overlaying a Surrealist interpretation of Carter’s journey through the gates is indicative to the very notion that the initial French reception of Lovecraft took him to be conveying his own personal convictions.

When the Guide “shoots” Carter past the Ultimate Gate, he meets Yog-Sothoth himself.⁴⁹ When Carter passes the Ultimate Gate

he felt a greater terror than that which any of the Forms could—terror from which he could not flee because it was connected with himself . . . Now, beyond the Ultimate Gateway, he realized in a moment of consuming fright that he was not one person, but many persons (902).

Carter sees a multitude of “Carters of forms both human and non-human, vertebrate and invertebrate, conscious and mindless, animal and vegetable,” and many others (902). This site causes much distress in him and he remarks that “no death, no doom, no anguish can arouse the surpassing despair which flows from a loss of *identity*” (902). It is only at this point does Carter learn from Yog-Sothoth the true nature of the universe and the manner in which the true nature of the key is revealed. It is a device that allows one to cut consciousness at a different angle, thus allowing for the back tracking of Carter into that of the small boy. This is explained mathematically in the same way that a “figure of space is but the result of the intersection by a plane of some corresponding figure of one more dimension—as a square is cut from a cube or a circle from a sphere” (905). Carter finally realizes that the innumerable Carters that exist, are the result of angles of dissection of a single “archetypal” Carter. To interpret this scene through Surrealism, one could say that the revelation of multiple Carters across multiple dimensions are all derived from one archetypal Carter as the boundary at which point the real and the imaginary are no longer distinguished, Carter is experiencing himself *surreally*.

After contemplating the revelation of the “Ultimate Mystery,” Carter asks to be “shot” into the consciousness of a Carter he had dreamed before, the wizard Zkauba of the planet Yiddith. Prior to being shot into this consciousness Yog-Sothoth reminds Carter that there is a certain symbolic use of the key that will allow him to return to his 1928 body (the Carter of “The Silver Key”). Much to his dismay, he is trapped in the body of Zkauba and must travel countless eons across vast distances of space *back* in time to 1928 where he can recover the formula he needs to allow his consciousness back into 1928. However, Zkauba arrives in 1930, and learns of the very meeting that will take place in which the Indian mystic recounts this wonderful narration to his audience of three. Carter’s relative Aspinwall does not believe him and in an attempt to uncover the identity of the Swami falls dead when he pulls the beard of the Swami to reveal what is behind the mask he was wearing. The other two observers, both mystics in their own right, De Marigny and Phillips, did not see behind the mask, but in the confusion of the encounter Zkauba approaches the bizarre clock, opens it and disappears.

This crude and short survey of the story does not convey the complexity and intricacy of its detail. “Through the Gates of the Silver Key” lends itself to Surrealist interpretation for the way in which it breaks down the logical associations of what is privileged in our reality. First, the personage of Carter-Zkauba is clothed awkwardly in large robes, clumsy mittens (covering his claws), its face is masked, bearded and topped with a turban. All these objects hide a truth that is inaccessible to current reality, they hide the imaginary, the possibility of another alien life-form existing. Second, the personage of Aspinwall can be interpreted as the rational, materialist individual who is unable to break out of the logical relationship among objects and subjects. When

Aspinwall sees through Carter-Zkauba's deceit, the glimpse of the imaginary shocks and kills him. Aspinwall's death, for the Surrealist, can be understood as the result of an inability cope with perceiving the surreal in the dialogue of the conscious and the unconscious.

Therefore we have two separate tales, each of which can be interpreted via Surrealism to reveal a dialogue between the unconscious and the conscious.⁵⁰ Each tale, in and of itself is an example of the extent to which Lovecraft's own philosophical inclination towards the importance of man on the cosmic scale can also be understood as the Surrealists frustration with the rational order of reality. Lovecraft is not a Surrealist, but his texts certainly can be interpreted using Surrealist methods and as such to access the surreal, the aim of which is "about discovering the terrains of the extraordinary in the midst of the ordinary, quotidien world" (Caws 24). Something as ordinary as a key has the analogical extraordinary ability to unlock what we may lose in becoming an adult, the ability to dream and imagine. Taken from this point of view, Randolph Carter and the "Dream Cycle," beg to be annexed by the group of Surrealists who, not having the benefit of access to Lovecraft's correspondences, interpreted Lovecraft's stories as bonefide convictions and events. Lovecraft's texts are ripe with the importance of dreams and the marvelous and at their core they confront the very same reality that Surrealism targets.

Fantastic Realism and Lovecraft

The prior section of this chapter served to establish Lovecraft as a popular fiction writer who, in every sense of the way, dealt with “modernist” issues albeit through popular fiction. In the brief analysis of two of Lovecraft’s “Dream Cycle” tales, we discovered that Surrealism permeates throughout the two stories through the constant presence of the marvelous to the role of dreams. Initially introduced to the French readers in 1953 by the Surrealists Robert Benayoun and Gérard Legrand, Lovecraft was understood to truly believe in what he wrote and was thought to partake in occultist activities.

After their initial introduction of HPL to the French, Benayoun and Legrand were championed by Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwels who, in their own way, would introduce Lovecraft into a similar area of theoretical thought to Surrealism. Fantastic Realism, first mentioned in two introductions to Lovecraft’s work in 1954 (*La couleur tombée du ciel*) and in 1955 (*Démons et merveilles*), is the primary concept that, together, Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwels explore in *Le matin des magiciens* (1960). Fantastic Realism should be considered as an offshoot of Surrealism’s understanding of literature as a product of unconscious activity, which ultimately seeks the end of the unconscious-conscious spectrum. This section will explore in detail how Bergier and Pauwels’ interpretation of HPL and his œuvre has produced a uniquely French vision of Lovecraft that does not necessarily coincide with the “American” Lovecraft. A unique vision of Lovecraft only accessible in understanding the definition of Fantastic Realism via its

elaboration in *Le matin des magiciens*, coupled with Bergier and Pauwels literary criticism of HPL.

In their collective non-fiction work *Le matin des magiciens* (1960), Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwels hope to open doors of possibilities to mankind. They saw their work to be antipodal to that of the Surrealists who looked to the unconscious and dreams in order to open up possibilities of mankind. Bergier and Pauwels instead looked “du côté de l’ultra-conscience et de la veille supérieure” (“on the side of the super-conscience and of a higher wakeful state”; 20, translation mine). As opposed to Surrealism which privileges dreams and the unconscious, Fantastic Realism seeks to reveal the hidden truth of reality that one can experience in a wakeful or conscious state. Their definition of the fantastic is “une violation des lois naturelles, comme l’apparition de l’impossible . . . [c’est] un effet du contact avec la réalité quand celle-ci est perçue directement et non pas filtré par le voile du sommeil intellectuel, par les habitudes, les préjugés, les conformistes” (“a violation of the natural laws, as the appearance of the impossible . . . it’s an affect of contact with a reality when it is perceived directly and not filtered by the veil of intellectual sleep, by habitudes, prejudices and conformists”; 21, translation mine). This statement respectfully acknowledges the Surrealist effort to tap the powers of the unconscious, but suggests that the waking experience of seeing beyond the veil has a much better potential for reaching a higher state of consciousness.

Breton’s experience during World War I in a neurological ward in Nantes led him to explore the unconscious. In the introduction to *Le matin des magiciens*, Louis Pauwels explains that his personal friendship with Breton led him to meeting Jacques Bergier. There is hardly any information on the friendship between Breton and Pauwels, and even

less on Bergier and Breton. The decision to explore the super-conscience and the superior waking state is directly related to Pauwels' involvement with the Gurdjieff Foundation. This is important because the Gurdjieff group was formed around the figure of George Gurdjieff, an esoteric thinker and teacher who "claimed to have spent his youth travelling in Central Asia, India and Tibet with a company of fellow seekers acquiring occult knowledge" (*Oxford Companion* 448). After travelling throughout Western Europe Gurdjieff established the "Institute for the Harmonious Development of Men" at Fontainebleau, France. He was reported to have a "powerful and hypnotic personality, [and was] labeled as a charlatan, [but] Gurdjieff insisted that his knowledge was more a method than a doctrine, and could only be acquired by initiates through discipline and self-observation" (448). This explains, in part, the supporting structure surrounding Fantastic Realism. The other part involves Jacques Bergier. Pauwels brings a philosophical and spiritual mind set to *Le matin*, and Bergier brings a scientific rationalist materialism. The pair represents a combination of the positivism of science and the marvelous inherent in a non-materialist point of view. Pauwels writes that *Le matin* is a "contrat entre le merveilleux et le positif," ("contract between the marvelous and the positive") valuable only in the eyes of physics and mathematics (Bergier and Pauwels 21, translation mine). Physics and mathematics are the only sciences, according to Bergier and Pauwels, that can describe the possibility of something prior to its existence because science "possède une manière à explorer le merveilleux" ("possesses a way to explore the marvelous"; 23, translation mine). In a nutshell, Fantastic Realism uses scientific means and techniques as a way to explore paranormal phenomena (telepathy, extra-sensorial

perception, alchemy, extraterrestrials) and related topics such as secret societies and lost civilizations.

It should first be mentioned that for Bergier and Pauwels, the understanding of the marvelous in Fantastic Realism is not expressly defined. However, it uses on one hand, a Surrealist combination of the real and the imaginary to promote an exploration of the unknown. On the other hand, Fantastic Realism appears to be understood as being contrary to reality, or purely imaginary.

In any case, for Bergier and Pauwels, fantastic is defined on numerous occasions as not the imaginary but the product of “une imagination puissamment appliquée à l’étude de la réalité [qui] découvre que la frontière est très mince entre le merveilleux et le positif, ou, . . . entre l’univers visible et l’univers invisible” (“an imagination powerfully applied to the study of reality [that] discovers that the barrier is thin between the marvelous and the positive, or, between the visible and invisible universe”; 23, translation mine). In this sense, the fantastic is a condition that exists when one is able to perceive the barrier separating the real from the imaginary. From a confrontation between “le fantastique et la réalité va se dérouler un combat . . . sur toutes les formes de la pensée, dans tous les domaines: littéraire, social, philosophique, moral, esthétique. Mais c’est dans la science physique que l’ordre se rétablira . . . C’est en physique qui naît une nouvelle conception” [the fantastic and reality is going to take place . . . on all forms of thought, in all domains: literary, social, philosophical, moral, aesthetics. But it is in physical science that order will be established . . . It’s in physics that a new conception will be born”; 40, translation mine). This new conception of life, where a heightened wakeful state will be achieved is none other than Fantastic Realism. In order to be in this

heightened wakeful state, “il nous faut avoir une vision exacte et profonde du moment où le fantastique s’est mis à déferler dans la réalité” (“it is necessary for us to have an exact view of the profound moment where the fantastic unravels itself in reality”; 260, translation mine). For Bergier and Pauwels, these moments where the fantastic unravels itself are numerous, from prophetic dreams to clairvoyance and telepathic communications.

For instance, Pauwels and Bergier cite a supposed U.S. Government experiment with telepathic communication involving the world’s first nuclear-class submarine the U.S.S. *Nautilus*.⁵¹ The story was initially reported by the French magazine *Science et Vie* in February 1960. The “*Nautilus* Experiment” can be summed up as follows: Two men, lieutenant “Jones” aboard the U.S.S. *Nautilus* and subject “Smith” located at a government facility in Friendship, Maryland communicate telepathically. Lieutenant “Jones” receives messages from subject “Smith” while the two were separated by thousands of miles. The nature of the messages were the order of simplified cards known as “Zener,” which were “employées depuis longtemps pour les expériences de parapsychologie, sont toutes de même couleur” (“used for quite some time for parapsychological experiments”), each card possessing one of five symbols: three wavy lines, a circle, a cross, a square and a star (394, translation mine). Subject “Smith” sent the order of the cards, drawn at random, to Lieutenant “Jones” who copied the message and sealed them in an envelope. Upon reaching land, the results were analyzed showing “une précision de plus de 70% les signes étaient les mêmes, et placés dans le même ordre” (“an accuracy of more than 70% the signs were the same, and placed in the same order”; 394, translation mine). It is unfortunate however, that this story was a fabrication

by its author Gerald Messadié who “later sold a book on the subject” (Marrs 96). I cite this example to show how Bergier took this article in *Science et Vie* for a bona fide experiment that supported his idea of the expansive and unbound abilities that the heightened consciousness of man can achieve. Bergier and Pauwels believe that “il existe dans l’homme des terres inconnues. La parapsychologie propose une méthode d’exploration” (“within man exists unknown worlds. Parapsychology proposes a method of exploration”; Bergier and Pauwels 399, translation mine). This view explains in part why Bergier and Pauwels see Lovecraft as a writer who represents their thinking regarding Fantastic Realism.

Let us now explore their general deployment of the terms “fantastic” and the “marvelous” in order to prepare a textual analysis of a few Lovecraftian tales that lend themselves to a Fantastic Realist reading. Many lovecraftian texts can be read through the lens of Fantastic Realism. However, for the purposes of this section three have been chosen for analysis: “From Beyond” (1920 translated in 1969 as the French title “De l’au-delà”), “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1930, translated in 1954 as the French title “Celui qui chichotait dans les ténèbres”) and “The Shadow Out of Time” (1934, translated in 1954 as the French title “Dans l’abîme du temps”). Each text, in its own way treats many of the important features of Fantastic Realism as outlined above. “From Beyond” deals with heightened sense perception via resonance wave bombardment, “The Whisperer in Darkness” explores the possibility of alien life coming from the recently discovered planet Yuggoth (Pluto), and “The Shadow Out of Time” entertains the possibility of “consciousness-swapping.”

One feature, however, that each story possesses is that they all portray “une vision exacte et profonde du moment où le fantastique s’est mis à déferler dans la réalité” [an exact and profound vision of the moment where the fantastic begins to unfurl itself in reality] (266, translation mine). In “From Beyond,” this moment occurs when the protagonist, through the aid of a machine which bombards him with resonance waves, catches glimpses of living objects, otherwise unseen to normal humans, resembling “inky, jellyish monstrosities which flabbily quivered in harmony with the vibrations from the machine” (119). In “The Whisperer in Darkness,” the moment occurs with Professor Wilmarth arrives at the secluded Akeley farm to discover that the ancient legend of crab-like creatures is indeed a reality. In “The Shadow Out of Time,” the moment where the fantastic unfurls itself in reality is when Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee’s strange dreams of astral projection become reality as he discovers a manuscript written 150,000,000 years ago in his handwriting.

Let us however, proceed with textual analysis. “From Beyond” is a relatively short tale written in 1920 and published in *The Fantasy Fan* in June 1934. The unnamed narrator arrives at the house of his best friend Crawford Tillinghast, a scientist. In the pursuit of Tillinghast’s physical and metaphysical research, their friendship became strained and it was nearly three months since they saw one another. The narrator recalls the conversation which lead to their estrangement occurred when Tillinghast reveals to the narrator that

[o]ur means of receiving impressions are absurdly few, and our notions of surrounding objects infinitely narrow . . . With five feeble senses we

pretend to comprehend the boundlessly complex cosmos . . . I [Tillinghast] have always believed that such strange, inaccessible worlds exist at our very elbows, *and now I believe I have found a way to break down the barriers* .

(“les moyens que nous possédons pour recevoir des impressions sont ridiculement peu nombreux et notre connaissance des objets qui nous environnent est infiniment restreinte . . . avec cinq faibles sens, nous prétendons appréhender le cosmos complexe et sans limites . . . j’ai [Tillinghast] toujours pensé que de tels mondes inaccessibles existent, près de nous. *Maintenant je crois que j’ai trouvé le moyen de franchir les barrières qui nous en séparent*” 116, emphasis original, 115-116 translation Pérez).

Tillinghast revealed that he created a machine that “will generate waves acting on unrecognized sense-organs that exist within us as atrophied or rudimentary vestiges. Those waves will open up to us many vistas unknown to man, and several unknown to anything we consider organic life (116). Now, three months later Tillinghast’s physical condition deteriorated rapidly from a healthy stout man to a thin body with sunken eyes glowing uncannily, to “dark hair white at the roots, and an unchecked growth of white beard on a face once clean-shaven” (115). Tillinghast leads his friend to the upstairs laboratory; the narrator remarks how all the electricity in the house is shut off. The narrator is told to sit to the right of the machine glowing with a “sickly, sinister violet luminosity,” was promptly turned on (117). At this point the narrator remarks, “the

luminosity increased, waned again, [and] then assumed a pale, outré color or blend of colors which I could neither place nor describe” (117). Tillinghast reveals to his friend that he is seeing the ultraviolet wavelength of light thanks to the machine which woke up “a thousand sleeping senses in us; senses which we inherit from aeons of evolution from the start of detached electrons to the state of organic humanity” (117). The machine has somehow activated the atrophied pineal gland that Tillinghast believes to be “the great sense-organ of organs,” this he knows from experience rather than objective clinical observations (117). The pineal gland is located nearly at the center of the brain, in a niche between the two halves of the brain where the spinal column connects. It controls the hormone melatonin, which helps regulate sleep pattern. It is also considered, in esoteric and paranormal circles, to be the seat of the soul, or our consciousness. The pineal gland perception is similar to “sight in the end, and [it] transmits visual pictures to the brain” and this is precisely how the narrator witnessed evidence “from beyond” the reality that our five senses perceive (117). However, not only does the machine allow other universes and dimensions to become visible, our universe also becomes visible to *them*. The narrator is instructed to remain still and not move, as this was the mistake his servants made.

The narrator soon becomes aware of other dimensions and beings. The narrator recounts the episode:

Suddenly I myself became possessed of a kind of augmented sight. Over and above the luminous and shadowy chaos arose a picture, though vague, held the elements of consistency and permanence. It was indeed somewhat

familiar, for the unusual part was superimposed upon the usual terrestrial scene much as a cinema view may be thrown upon the painted curtain of a theater. I saw the attic laboratory, the electrical machine, and the unsightly form of Tillinghast opposite me; but of all the space unoccupied by familiar objects, not one particle was vacant. Indescribable shapes both alive and otherwise were mixed in disgusting disarray, and close to every known thing were whole worlds of alien, unknown entities.

(“Soudain, j’eus la sensation d’être moi-même en possession d’une vue accrue. Au-dessus du chaos de lumière et d’ombre, s’éleva une image qui, bien qu’imprécise, avait des éléments de consistance et de permanence. Quelque chose de vaguement familier, car la partie inhabituelle était superposée à la scène terrestre habituelle, de la même manière qu’une image de film peut être projetée sur le rideau peint d’un théâtre. Je vis le laboratoire, la machine électrique et la silhouette de Tillinghast en face de moi, mais dans l’espace inoccupé par les objets familiers, il n’y avait pas une parcelle qui fût vide. Des formes indescriptibles, à la fois vivantes et inanimées, étaient mêlées dans un désordre repoussant, et auprès de chaque objet connu il y avait des univers d’entités inconnues”; 119, 121-122 translation Pérez).

It was those “inky, jellyish monstrosities” that the narrator remarked the most,. Tillinghast questions the narrator “You see them? . . . Have I not succeeded in breaking down the barrier; have I not shown you worlds that no other living men have seen”

(119)? As horrible as the jellyish monstrosities are to the narrator, Tillinghast informs him that they are harmless, and ultimately, not responsible for the deaths of his servants. However, over the shoulder of the narrator is the murderous entity, which the reader and the narrator learn is coming for the narrator. Tillinghast questions the very basis of physics and mathematics, time and mass, form and matter and reveals that this machine has allowed him to see “beyond the bounds of infinity and drawn down daemons from the stars . . .” (120). Tillinghast exclaims, “I have harnessed the shadows that stride from world to world to sow death and madness . . . Space belongs to me” (120)! If the image of the jellyish monstrosities were not enough, the narrator paralyzed by fear of what is looming over his shoulder, draws his revolver and shoots the machine, effectively “turning off” the stimulants that allow his pineal gland to perceive other dimensions. Tillinghast dies of apoplexy, and the narrator is told by a doctor that he was “undoubtedly . . . hypnotized by the vindictive and homicidal madman,” but he hardly believes this to be true. Now that the true nature of the universe has been revealed to the narrator (that there is a universe that exists beyond our normal functioning sense) he “never feel[s] alone or comfortable, and [he feels] a hideous sense of pursuit sometimes come chillingly [over him] when [he is] weary” (120).

“From Beyond” (published in *The Fantasy Fan* in June 1934) was written relatively early in Lovecraft’s career, 1920, and is considered to be a “caricature of the ‘mad scientist’ tale, but is of interest in that it was clearly derived from some passages in [Hugh] Elliot’s *Modern Science and Materialism*, particularly those referring to the notion that most material objects consist largely of empty space” (*A Dreamer and a Visionary* 139).⁵² “From Beyond” is generally considered to be an inferior tale due to its

somewhat “sophomoric” ending and his “unsophisticated” use of the theme that “hidden horrors lie just beneath the surface of everyday things” (Burleson 72). Donald Burleson notes that even Lovecraft’s own “opinion of the story was not high” (73). The fact that “From Beyond” is composed with a quality of “scientific realism” using contemporary metaphysics and scientific theory lends credence towards Bergier’s and Pauwel’s Fantastic Realism interpretation. If we remember correctly, they desire to not look for this new consciousness at the center of reality, a reality constantly under revision by scientific theory and advancement. For Bergier and Pauwels, science should be used in order to explore the parapsychological nature of what the marvelous has to offer. The very notion that through the invention of the Tillinghast’s machine one is able to perceive (and be perceived by) the invisible reinforces that the fantastic is achievable by “une imagination puissamment appliquée à l’étude de la réalité découvre que la frontière est très mince entre le merveilleux et le positif . . .” (“an imagination powerfully applied to the study of reality discovers that the barrier is thin between the marvelous and the positive”; Bergier and Pauwels 23, translation mine). This new vision of reality, opened up through an exploration of the marvelous by science is essentially the widening of what is possible and what will become acceptable. For this to happen, Bergier and Pauwels believe that “il faut attaquer la science positive à l’intérieur de ses frontières” (“it is necessary to attack the positive science within its own borders”; 389, translation mine). They understood this to be exactly what Freud and Einstein accomplished, through their willingness to imagine a different reality, “ils ont établie des ensembles de faits que l’expérience à vérifiés” (“they establish a whole group of facts that the experience verified”; 247, translation mine). Tillinghast’s imagination allowed for the possibility of a

new vision of the world, one that “activates” hidden and atrophied sense organs in the narrator. Clearly for Bergier and Pauwels, “From Beyond” embodies the perfect combination of the marvelous and science, which allows for “une manifestation des lois naturelles, un effet du contact avec la réalité quand celle-ci est perçue directement et non pas filtrée par la voile du sommeil intellectuel, par les habitudes, les préjugés, les conformismes” [a manifestation of the natural laws, an effect of the contact with reality when it is perceived directly and not filtered by the wall of intellectual sleep, by habit, prejudices and conformism”; 21, translation mine). The narrator of “From Beyond” clearly perceives directly the manifestation of Natural laws which are *now* visible and *achievable* through science.

Let us move on to “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1930, and published in *Weird Tales* in August 1931). An intriguing story to say the least. Professor Wilmarth of Miskatonic University receives a curious letter from an erudite farmer who lives secluded in the hills of Vermont. The historic flood of November 3, 1927 (an actual event) resulted in curious crustaceous-like entities “found floating in some of the swollen rivers” (“Whisperer” 286). A series of debates both radio and in local newspapers ensued. Professor Wilmarth, while being a professor of literature was also an “enthusiastic amateur student of New England folklore,” his position was rather in favor that the myths and legends of Native Americans and early settlers had clearly created an imaginative backdrop upon which the current events were drawn. The other party, Wilmarth describes as being “merely romanticists who insisted upon trying to transfer to real life the fantastic lore of lurking ‘little people’ made popular by the magnificent horror-fiction of Arthur Machen” (291).⁵³

Professor Wilmarth is contacted by Henry Wentworth Akeley who lives in a secluded farmhouse in the hills of Vermont. Despite this seclusion, Akeley was a learned man who was “willing to leave [his] conclusions in a tentative state like a true man of science. He had no personal preferences to advance, and was always guided by what he took to be solid evidence” (291). Akeley informs Wilmarth that indeed the creatures that were found in rivers after the flood exist and that he has tangible evidence in the form of a phonograph of a ritual summoning Nyarlathotep (an extraterrestrial “god,” in Lovecraft’s “Cthulhu Mythos”), pictures of claw-like footprints and a black stone covered with strange hieroglyphs. Akeley’s letter reveals that “the things come from another planet, being able to live in interstellar space and fly through it,” and that he thinks he knows from which planet they come (293). The creatures are here for a rare mineral which can only be found on Earth and to make matters more nefarious they are “non-human creatures watching us all the time; with spies among us [humans] gathering information” (293). Wilmarth is immediately intrigued by Akeley’s claims and soon receives the tangible evidence, save for the stone, which mysteriously disappears in transit to Wilmarth. Their correspondence continues and Akeley claims that the creature’s activities are becoming more and more aggressive, with multiple skirmishes occurring nocturnally. The apex of their correspondence occurs when Akeley writes a hand-written letter stating that the end is near, and that Wilmarth should inform Akeley’s son (who lives in California) of what is occurring. Despite Akeley’s warnings, Wilmarth writes him with the intent upon coming to Akeley’s aid.

The next letter from “Akeley” is typed, rather than handwritten, and it states that he has made contact with the “Outer Ones” (the crustaceous-like creatures) who have

divulged their “benevolent” and “scientific” plans with Akeley. He also says that Wilmarth should make his way post-haste to the lonely farmhouse because the creatures would love to learn from Wilmarth and in return offer him interstellar space travel. Intrigued, Wilmarth muses that “to shake off the maddening and wearying limitations of time and space and natural law—to be linked to the vast *outside*—to come close to the knighted and abyssal secrets of the infinite and the ultimate—surely such a thing was worth the risk of one’s life, soul, and sanity” (318). Clearly, Akeley has become “awakened” to knowledge and a new life, before unperceivable, that is also extended to Wilmarth upon his arrival to the farmhouse.

Wilmarth arrives in Vermont and immediately notices its untouched wildness that promotes a

strangely calming element of cosmic beauty in the hypnotic landscape through which [Wilmarth and his guide, who picked him up at the train station,] climbed and plunged fantastically. Time had lost itself in the labyrinths behind, and around [them] stretched only the flowering waves of faery and the recaptured loveliness of vanished centuries

(Il y a avait d’ailleurs une beauté cosmique étrangement apaisante dans le paysage hypnotique où nous grimpions et plongeons fabuleusement. Le temps s’était égaré dans les labyrinthes laissés en arrières, et ne s’étendaient autour de nous que les vagues en fleurs de la féerie et le charme retrouvé des siècles disparus; 322, 195 translation Lamblin and Papy),

a scene lending to the overall atmosphere of the story. Wilmarth arrives after a long car ride to the lonely farmhouse, which shows no signs of farm activity, it is quiet and there is no evidence of Akeley's dogs or any other animal associated with a farm. Upon entering the dimly lit house, Wilmarth remarks a faint buzzing that "appeared to be some faint, half-imaginary rhythm or vibration in the air" and a strange odor (326). Akeley apparently suffered some sort of asthmatic attack prior to Wilmarth's arrival. This supposedly explains the dim light and his strange appearance, Wilmarth recounts notes that "Akeley" was "rigid" and had an "immobile expression and unwinking glassy stare . . . There was a touch of the pitiful in the limp, lifeless way his lean hands rested in his lap. He had on a loose dressing gown, and was swathed around the head and high around the neck with a vivid yellow scarf or hood" (326). Mysterious indeed!

The conversation between "Akeley" and Wilmarth is full of mind-blowing revelations as to the nature of the Outer Ones, from where they come, why they are here, and their plans, if any, for humanity. "Akeley" reveals that the actual body of the individual cannot travel across space and time, but rather the mind can. Akeley's name is in quotations because Wilmarth already suspects something is afoot because in the telegraph sent to him, Akeley misspelled his name. We can infer that "the speaker in the chair was not Akeley—whose brain had already been removed from his body and placed in one of the machines—but one of the aliens, perhaps Nyarlathotep himself, whom they worship" (*A Visionary and A Dreamer* 290). The Outer Ones possess "prodigious surgical, biological, chemical and mechanical skills [that] they had found a way to convey human brains without their concomitant physical structure" ("The Whisperer" 330). The brain once removed is placed in a cylinder, which when connected to auditory,

visual and communicative devices allow the brain (mind) to see, hear and speak.

“Akeley” makes it known that all the information concerning the Outer Ones, and more will be conveyed to Wilmarth upon agreeing to participate in the brain removal procedure, which they see as an obvious choice for such an erudite as Wilmarth.

“Akeley” appeals to Wilmarth’s scientific curiosity in saying that “to us, as to only a few men on this Earth, there will be opened up gulfs of time and space and knowledge beyond anything within conception of human science and philosophy” (327). Fatigued by the conversation, Wilmarth retires to the room provided by “Akeley,” with the resolve that he must escape the house as soon as possible. Unable to sleep, Wilmarth overhears a reunion in the drawing room where he met “Akeley” recognizing not only the voice of the guide who picked him up at the train station but also “Akeley” and other buzzing and clicking noises by Outer Ones, as well as the same voice with whom Wilmarth interacted after activating a cylinder upon “Akeley’s” request. After a time, when Wilmarth hears snoring in the floor below, he creeps out of the house and discovers that “Akeley” is no longer there, only the clothing he was wearing, a mask and gloves. It is upon the conclusion of the story that one can infer that Wilmarth actually conversed with Nyarlathotep. Akeley had predicted that the Outer Ones came from a soon to be discovered planet named Yuggoth—this confirms the reality of Wilmarth’s strange encounter with “Akeley,” “especially since that the new planet Pluto has been so curiously discovered” (343). One can infer that Pluto is actually Yuggoth, the solar system’s outpost for the Outer Ones.

As is typical with most of Lovecraft’s stories, the atmosphere reigns supreme as it helps add to the suspense culminating in a final denouement in which the reader’s

suspicion is confirmed. This summary sadly cannot convey the mastery in which this tale was written. It is among the finest of his stories. “Whisperer in Darkness” can be considered a “Fantastic Realist” tale in the fact that humankind is being offered exponentially advanced information on the cosmos in a manner similar to a spiritual encounter with a deity. Subject B-67, the mind located in the cylinder that Wilmarth hooks up in the story, is proof of what the Outer Ones are offering in terms of a heightened state of consciousness. Essentially, the Outer Ones are offering a parapsychological phenomenon known as “astral projecting,” in which capable individuals are able to project their mind to other planets and galaxies. No longer restricted by the body, the mind is free to explore the cosmos. Pauwels and Bergier looked towards the center of reality in order to build this new consciousness. S. T. Joshi in *A Dreamer and A Visionary* reveals that during the time when “Whisperer” was being written Lovecraft’s concept of the cosmos was shaken by Einstein’s theory of relativity. Where the supernatural was once used as a way to contradict known phenomenon, it was now being used as a way to supplement known phenomena. “Whisperer” is essentially a combination of weird fiction (the marvelous) and science fiction (the positive), in other words it combines the same ideas that Pauwels and Bergier had with regard to *Le Matin des magiciens* whose goal is to “ouvrir au lecteur le plus grand nombre possible de ports, et comme la plupart d’entre elles s’ouvrent de l’intérieur, nous nous sommes effacés pour le laisser entrer” (“to open the most number of doors possible to the reader, and as the majority of them open from the inside, we hide ourselves in order to let him enter”; 23, translation mine). For Bergier and Pauwels, it is the positivism of science applied towards the marvelous that will bring about a heightened consciousness in the everyday life of an

individual. “Whisperer” proposes just such a heightened consciousness through extraterrestrial technology; the marvelous is no longer relegated to flights of fancy and imagination but made available to chosen individuals.

Let us consider one more tale, “The Shadow Out of Time,” (1934-35, and published in *Astounding Stories* in June 1936) for our Fantastic Realist reading of Lovecraft. The primary character of the story, Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee, a professor of economics at the Misktonic University, suffers a five-year (1908-1913) case of amnesia. During this five-year period, he was abandoned by his family (aside from one of his children) and his friends. He regains his memory and, in order to explain what happened to him, he decides to pursue a career change into psychology. His research leads him to discover that his “dreams had been so closely duplicated” by recorded accounts dating far back into Earth’s past history (“The Shadow Out of Time” 959). Piecing together the information while also suffering from haunting dreams/memories of possessing another bodily form, Peaslee learns that the “Great Race” has periodically psychically possessed individuals. Peaslee gives them this name since they “alone had conquered the secret of time” (961). In other words the Great Race casts their consciousness into the body of a certain individual, regardless of the time and space, and in turn the exiled consciousness inhabits the strange cone-shaped body of the Great Race 150 million years ago in Earth’s past. While inhabiting the bodies of the Great Race, the exiled consciousness is encouraged to write its specie’s history down. Peaslee spends a vast amount of time in the Great Race’s library. In the present time, Peaslee recounts the increased frequency of his dreams/visions explaining minute details and architectural wonders of the city he saw while inhabiting the Great Race’s body for the five-year period. After learning that his

strange visions have appeared mysteriously in the Australian Great Sandy Desert, Peaslee leads an archaeological dig in the vicinity and discovers, hidden beneath the “sands of time,” the great library city of the Great Race. Urged by memory, he finds his way to the room in which he spent vast amounts of time, 150 million years ago compiling twentieth century’s history, he discovers the manuscript that he himself wrote. Seeing his own hand writing in a book that is 150 million years ago reveals to Peaslee that his assumption that he was suffering from an acute dementia or other psychological illness is disproved. The fact that a mind-swapping occurrence indeed took place is ambiguous, and Peaslee himself would almost wish that it was a flight of fancy because “mercifully, there is no proof that these things are other than fresh phases of my myth-born dreams. I did not bring back the metal case that would have been a proof, and so far those subterranean corridors have not been found” (998). Rather than seek the judgment of others, Peaslee’s story is written down for the benefit of his son who he feels must be told “what [he] saw or thought [he] saw, and let [his son] use his judgment as a psychologist in gauging the reality of my experience, and communicating this account to others” (998).

Of the two previously mentioned stories, “The Shadow Out of Time” is the most interesting because the narrator is psychologically evaluated and determined to be insane. For his own benefit and interest, he changes career paths and becomes a psychologist, and his non-estranged son pursues the same path. On numerous occasions Peaslee questions the validity of what he is recounting by almost wishing that what he experienced was indeed a hallucination and not an experience of reality. The reason being, if it were true, mankind is forced to “accept notions of the cosmos, and of his own place in the seething vortex of time” (948). Man’s place, as the center of the

universe, would be challenged. Peaslee believes that “primal myth and modern delusion joined in their assumption that mankind is only one—perhaps the least—of the highly evolved and dominant races of this planet’s long and largely unknown career” (964). But his mind-swapping experience has led him to rethink mankind as the apex of evolution on Earth—that in the vast past of mankind other beings thrived and, through their defeat of time and space, still thrive today.

This tale exhibits Fantastic Realism’s confrontation with positivism in the fact that, despite the veracity of the evidence lost in Peaslee’s wild ascent out of the subterranean library, the psychological ailment of which he has “suffered” is questioned. The only way for the marvelous to be acceptable, and therefore apparent, is for science to apply itself in imaginative ways in order to study it. In the end of the story, Peaslee does just this—he writes his experiences since 1908 and allows his son, a psychologist by trade, to give the definitive answer as to whether he was truly psychically possessed or simply insane. His conclusion, that the Great Race has survived its own cataclysmic event by inhabiting the body of a cone-shaped species 150 million years ago is hardly believable, but in the face of such evidence, “we are faced with remains [in the desert] of an unknown civilization older than any dreamed of before, and forming a basis for [our] legends,” one begins to rethink the bounds of knowledge and possibility (976).

Part of the process of becoming “fully awake” for Bergier and Pauwels is to be exposed to new ways of conceiving the universe, oneself and the latent abilities that are “inherent” in mankind. In the Fantastic Realist perspective, Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee has some kind of latent psychic power that the Great Race somehow activates during the mind-swap. Pauwels, in the preface to *Le Matin des magiciens* recounts how his

perception of the “modern spirit” was altered after having left the Gurdjieff Group, “ce qu’il y a de grandiose, d’essentiellement révolutionnaire à la pointe de l’esprit modern: l’interrogation sur la nature de la connaissance et le besoin pressant d’une sorte de transmutation de l’intelligence” (“that which is grandiose, essentially revolutionary at the cutting edge of the modern spirit: the questioning of the nature of knowledge and the pressing need of a transmutation of intelligence”; 15-16, translation mine). “The Shadow Out of Time” embodies this modern spirit, as Pauwels sees it, because Peaslee’s quest and ultimate discovery in the Great Sandy Desert is the process by which knowledge and intelligence becomes altered, and irrevocably new. Peaslee’s constant questioning of whether or not the events actually took place is proof enough that he questions the nature of the universe and our knowledge of it.

Each tale mentioned in this section treats certain aspects of Fantastic Realism, and can be read as exemplary texts for its movement. All three tales explore and reveal the thin barrier between the real and the unreal. In the particular experiences of the protagonist/narrators, fantastic realism occurs at the very moment when the unreal unfurls its awesome power in the real. Rather than exploring the dreamland in order to tap the unconscious, Fantastic Realism seeks to bring man to a heightened waking state, and many of Lovecraft’s tales demonstrate the very moment that this occurs. These three tales all curiously deal with science and mathematics for the justification of the apparent supernatural phenomenon. They are the perfect combination of the marvelous and the ways that physics and mathematics are able to “voir ce qu’on n’en peut pas” (“to see that which we cannot”; 21, translation mine). In each tale, science and/or mathematics reveal(s) to man a wonderful/terrifying new vision of a hidden or, beforehand,

inaccessible world. For Bergier and Pauwels, “la réalité, c’est le surnaturel . . . Seules les œuvres d’imagination produites par un esprit qui cherche les vérités éternelles ont quelque chance d’être des œuvre réelles et réellement utiles” (“reality, that’s supernatural . . . Only produced works of imagination by a spirit which searches for eternal truths has some opportunity to be a real work and really useful”; 266, translation mine). For Fantastic Realism, Lovecraft and his texts embody this spirit that searches for eternal truths and then retransmits them through his imaginative works.

History and Misunderstanding of Lovecraft

As the first chapter explored the literary history of Lovecraft in both the United States and in France, one thing was clear, those who were responsible for his prolongation initially misinterpreted his texts. The purpose of this section is to historically explain the misinterpretation of the French critics (mainly Surrealists and Fantastic Realists). The majority of Lovecraft criticism in the 70s and 80s (and even 90s) in America concerned itself with brining Lovecraft out from under August Derleth’s shadow. The same also occurred within the études lovecraftiennes, which, once materials became accessible in the French language, scholars like Michel Meurger and Simon Lequeux quickly sought to correct the heading, as it had been on an incorrect heading.

The Historical Moment of Lovecraft's Introduction in France

The particular historical setting in which Lovecraft was introduced into France is of primary importance because it allows one to understand the historical, cultural and Ideological framework through which interpretation proceeds.

The watershed moment, which prepared the way for Lovecraft's introduction, is undoubtedly WWII. The wholesale extinction of man, that was always just beyond the horizon of eventuality became a reality with the creation of the atomic bomb, which Einstein himself commented in *Le Figaro* on February 14, 1950 that “[m]an finds himself placed today before the most terrible danger that has ever menaced him . . . The poisoning of the atmosphere by radioactivity, and the consequent destruction of all life on earth, are now in the realm of technical possibility” (quoted in Meurger page 6). Ironically, Maurice Lévy reflects on the similarity of the cultural situation in America in the 1920s and that of France Post-WWII

N'est-il pas paradoxal (même en tenant compte de l'inévitable décalage technique entre la publication d'une œuvre quelque part dans le monde et sa traduction en français) que des nouvelles écrites sous la pression de la crise culturelle des années vingt aux USA puis de la dépression et du krach, aient commencé d'être appréciées dans une France en plein essor économique et culturel ? Comme si, à toute époque, le confort et le bien-être (si relatif qu'ils soient) avaient besoin, pour être goûtés, du tableau complémentaire de l'horreur.

(“Isn’t it paradoxical (even considering the unavoidable technical gap between a publication of a work somewhere in the world and its translation into French) that the tales written under the pressure of the cultural crisis of the 20s in American and then of the depression and of the crash, have begun to be appreciated in a France prospering economically and culturally? It is as if, at every time period, the comfort and welfare (as relative as it is) needs, to be tasted, the complementary level of horror”; “Lovecraft, trente ans après” 16, translation mine).

Due to this historical moment, Meurger concluded that there was “uncertainty of the future” which created an environment rich for astrologers, theosophists and faith-healers to make “their fortune” in promising calmness in a period of cultural “chaos” (Meurger 6). For Michel Meurger this period in French intelligentsia was marked by Primitivism, which is generally

characteri[z]ed by a nostalgia for antiquity, considered as a period of lost harmony. This belief engenders reconciliation with cultures thought to have preserved some scraps of the original mentality—in particular, the art of tribal societies. Primitivism also searches out survivals in certain social classes (the peasantry), age groups such as children, or psychological states such as alters states of consciousness, momentary or permanent (madness) (7).⁵⁴

Closely linked to Primitivism is Occultism, which seeks to recover the “lost wisdom of primeval man” (7). Mircea Eliade, a prominent anthropologist, promulgated a return to the archaic and that ancient myth survives today “secularized, degraded and camouflaged” (Eliade 33).

For Meurger, the reign of primitivism and occultism in France conditioned the “reception of American SF and of Lovecraft . . . The futuristic character of SF and the paleontological mythology of Lovecraft were not perceived, or were interpreted as simple camouflages for archaic thought concealed under the guise of progress” (7). Indeed, Lovecraft’s work contains ancient civilizations, occult rituals and dangerous, “dark,” knowledge—but these are only motifs, Lovecraft considered “atmosphere, not action, [as the] great desideratum of weird fiction” (“Notes” 116). The confusion derives from the fact that the use of these motifs allowed for Lovecraft’s work to be taken as *verbatim* and a genuine belief in the occult and the secret wisdom it offers to man. One of the problems for this interpretation is that the material that would allow for a better understanding of Lovecraft was simply not available in French at the time he was introduced in France. Lévy, again, poignantly explains this misunderstanding because . . . “il y a trente ans, la majorité de ces documents étaient inaccessibles; ils modifient sensiblement l’approche des textes de Lovecraft” (“thirty years ago, the majority of these documents were inaccessible; they noticeably modify the approach to Lovecraft’s texts”; “Lovecraft, trente ans après 20, translation mine).⁵⁵

As previously explored in this chapter, certain Lovecraftian texts lend themselves to a Surrealist interpretation, an exploration of the unconscious and the profound impact it can have on our general knowledge. Meurger takes Legrand and Benyanoun to task for

the initial *mis*interpretation of Lovecraft when they present him to the Surrealists in *Médium* in their article “H. P. Lovecraft et la lune noire” [H. P. Lovecraft and the Black Moon] (1953). *Médium* was the forum through which “primitivist-occultists tendencies” were expressed within the Surrealist group at the time (Meurger 8). The interest in “primitivism” coincided with an overall rejection of rationalism and technological progress. The particular usage of “la lune noire,” and the fact that Legrand believes Lovecraft’s personal mythology is derivative of a “témoign[age] de connaissance occulte authentique” (“testimony of authentic occult knowledge”; Benayoun and Legrand 14, translation mine). It is through Benayoun’s and Legrand’s *mis*interpretation that Lovecraft “before even being known to the general [French] public, was annexed by the Surrealists” (Meurger 8).

Meurger points out that the article “H. P. Lovecraft et la lune noire” completely fabricates a surrealist version of Lovecraft and associates him, for the benefit of the French reader, “in the company of [Poe’s] sailor Gordon Pym and the mesmerized Valdemar” (9). This association places him squarely within a pre-established framework of which Lovecraft’s tales are a continuation. It is no secret that Lovecraft adored Poe, and that Poe can be considered as the father of weird fiction. As was explored in the first chapter, Poe’s unique introduction to France, by way of Charles Baudelaire, as a misunderstood man of his times is readily at hand for the same introduction of Lovecraft, a “recluse” who abhorred progress and modernity, and whose “mythologie personnelle ridiculise ‘l’histoire moderne” (“personal mythology ridicules modern history”; 9, translation mine).

Legrand's and Benayoun's interpretation of Lovecraft as a surrealist opens the way for Jacques Bergier's and Louis Pauwel's interpretation of HPL as a Fantastic Realist. In 1954 Denoël published *La couleur tombée du ciel* prefaced by Jacques Bergier. This was the first time that Lovecraft's works were made available in French, and thus, the preface had enormous impact on how Lovecraft was "supposed to be read." We previously explored the *magnum opus* of Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwels, *Le matin des magiciens* in which the marvelous and the real would be utterly inseparable when mankind achieves a higher waking consciousness. Their term for this, as we well know, is fantastic realism. Therefore, it is not by mistake that, in 1954, for them Lovecraft, in their view, "utilise un 'réalisme fantastique' qui lui appartient en propre" ("uses a fantastic realism which belongs to him alone"; "H. P. Lovecraft" 11, translation mine). It is only later that Bergier and Pauwels develop their theory surrounding "le réalisme fantastique" in *Le matin des magiciens* to which Lovecraft is irrevocably linked. What reinforces the reading that HPL's tales use "réalisme fantastique" is the fact that his narrators refuse to demonstrate the point where the marvelous unfurls in reality. Instead they "cherche[nt] toujours des explications rationnelles et prosaïques" ("always search for rational and prosaic explications"; 11, translation mine). It should be noted that the rational and prosaic explications are those that are not open to exploring the marvelous via science, as Bergier and Pauwels later write in *Le matin des magiciens*. A rational and prosaic explication of the supernatural is certainly one of doubt and incredibility of a phenomena existing beyond the confines of a disturbed mind. In other words, Fantastic Realism, for Bergier and Pauwels, is the only apparatus available for the rational mind to

recuperate and understand the supernatural or paranormal phenomenon, all the while leaving the collective reality intact.

Bergier informs the French reader that Lovecraft was fearful of a universe in expansion, an “univers accessible à nos sens [qui] se prolonge à l’infini pour devenir le nouvel univers révélé par la science” (“accessible universe to our senses which grows longer to infinity in order to become the new universe revealed by science”; 9, translation mine). According to Bergier, for Lovecraft this universe is truly populated by monsters, which he “sent autour de lui, être[s] dont la puissance [est] infiniment supérieure à la nôtre . . .” (“feels around him, beings whose power is infinitely more powerful than ours”; 9, translation mine). Not only are these monsters more powerful than us, but they have created humanity whether “un jour par plaisanterie ou par erreur” [one day by jest or by error] and they will come back again to destroy us (9, translation mine). Thus far, anyone who has read Lovecraft’s tales will not be entirely shocked by these statements, but what is shocking in this preface is that it is not Lovecraft’s characters who feel monsters around them, as in “From Beyond,” but rather the assertion that Lovecraft *himself* feels their menacing presence. Bergier further claims that what is scary about Lovecraft is that “sa cosmogonie et sa mythologie nous effraient parce qu’elles sont possibles. Des méthodes scientifiques irréfutables ont montré que la vie existait déjà sur notre globe il y a deux milliards sept cents millions d’années” (“his cosmology and his mythology frightens us because they are possible. Some irrefutable scientific methods showed that life already existed on our globe two billion seven hundred thousand years ago”; 10, translation mine). Bergier sees in Lovecraft’s texts a truth established via carbon dating that asserts that life existed prior to man nearly three billion years ago,

which he interprets as rendering the possibility of HPL's mythology and cosmology possible. He claims that scientific progress retroactively confirms Lovecraft's imaginary scenarios. This is the Lovecraft to whom the French reader of the very first edition of *La couleur tombée du ciel* is introduced. In this view Lovecraft is an author assailed on all sides by monsters, an author who truly believes in his mythology and cosmology. Therefore, according to Bergier, the reader should also take it as veritable. Thankfully Bergier warns the reader that "la lecture de l'œuvre de Lovecraft exige des nerfs solides. C'est une liqueur forte qui doit être absorbée à petites doses" ("reading Lovecraft's works requires solid nerves. It's a strong liqueur, which ought to be absorbed in small doses"; 11, translation mine). In this sense, he writes, be prepared to experience a frightful reality, one that has the capacity, if taken in large quantities, to challenge the ways in which it is normally experienced. Let us refrain for the moment from critiquing this preface in favor of further exploring the particularities of the persona that Bergier and Pauwels created.

In 1955 Deux-Rives published *Démons et merveilles* which is a French translation of the "Dream Cycle" texts. Once again, Jacques Bergier has the privilege of introducing Lovecraft as "ce grand génie venu d'ailleurs" ("this great genius from elsewhere"; "Ce grand génie" 7, translation mine). Bergier recants his prior affirmation that Lovecraft was terrified by "les visions qu'il évoquait" ("the visions he evoked") by responding indefinitely (7, translation mine). "Je ne le crois pas. Il a choisi la terreur comme sujet de son sermon, comme moyen de faire comprendre l'immensité de l'univers et des forces qui s'y meuvent" ("I do not believe so. He chose terror as a subject of his sermon, as a way to make known the immensity of the universe and the forces that stir there"; 15,

translations mine). Perhaps this Lovecraft, the one who wrote the tales incorporated as *Démons et merveilles*, is no longer terrified by the universe and the monsters which surround him, because these tales turn towards the interior of the individual and the exploration of dreams.

Bergier opens “H. P. Lovecraft, ce grand génie venu d’ailleurs” by stating that it took twenty-five years of effort for Lovecraft to be known by the French public. For Bergier, what made Lovecraft more appreciated in France, twenty-five years later than he supposedly should have been appreciated. “Peut-être faut-il avoir beaucoup souffert pour apprécier Lovecraft” (“Perhaps it is necessary to have suffered much in order to appreciate Lovecraft”; 7, translation mine). A suffering which the French people have clearly undergone, with the recent end of WWII and “les événements invraisemblables que nous venons tous de vivre, la menace et les espoirs de l’atome, le contact avec la lune par radar, les grandes fusées et la conquête toute proche, semble-t-il[,] de l’Espace, les découvertes de la psychanalyse . . .” (“the incredible events that we all just lived, the hopes and threats of the atom, contact with the moon by radar, immense rockets and the near conquering, so it seems, of Space, the discovery of psychoanalysis”) are all reasons that (perhaps) lend Lovecraft more readable to the French public than to his contemporaries of the 1920’s, Americans (9, translation mine).⁵⁶ Lovecraft is credited for having “conquis pour l’imagination humaine d’immenses domaines où elle ne s’était jamais encore aventurée” (“conquered for human imagination immense domains where it had never before travelled”; 9, translation mine). For Bergier, Lovecraft’s is “partiellement autobiographique . . . [car] les aventures de Randolph Carter et de Ward Phillips sont du domaine de l’imagination, de la terreur et du rêve, l’évolution de leur pensée est celle

même de Lovecraft” (“partially autobiographical . . . because the adventures of Randolph Carter and Ward Phillips are of the domain of the imagination, of terror and of dreams, the evolution of their thought is that of Lovecraft”; 10, translation mine).⁵⁷

According to Bergier, Lovecraft’s imagination is not supported by occult teachings, as far as these tales are concerned, but rather by “la connaissance scientifique et historique les plus étendues. Cette route est ouverte à tout le monde, y compris au malade emprisonné dans sa maladie et sa pauvreté [comme l’était] Lovecraft” (“the most far reading scientific and historical knowledge. This route is open to all, as well as to the sick imprisoned in his sickness and poverty as was Lovecraft”; 11, translation mine). In this view, Lovecraft was mentally disturbed, in the sense that madness and genius (*génie*) are nearly indistinguishable. According to Bergier, not only is Lovecraft mad, but he is also an exile in his time who hardly ventured outside his home save for a trip to the southern U.S. and “un séjour à New-York” (“a stay in New York”) with a few excursions in New England (12, translation mine). This, exiled and reclusive Lovecraft made up for it by travelling in his imagination to cities he’s never seen but only imagined, such as Paris “avec Poe, en rêve” (“with Poe, in a dream”; 12, translation mine). This Lovecraft “s’est toujours comporté comme un étranger, un être venu de très loin. De temps en temps surgissent des êtres de ce genre. Kafka, qui ne semble pas avoir connu Lovecraft, paraît en avoir été un autre exemple” (“always considered himself a stranger, a being come from afar. From time to time spring forth beings of this type. Kafka, who didn’t seem to know Lovecraft, appeared to have been another example”; 15, translation). Since Lovecraft is presumed to be an exile on planet Earth (or at least in America in the 1920’s),

it is useless “de lui demander d’apprécier nos valeurs” (“useless to ask him to appreciate our values”; 15, translation mine).

Further, in this understanding of Lovecraft, the author was a prodigious student who avidly learned “une grande partie du savoir humain” (“a large portion of human knowledge”; 11, translation mine). This large portion of human knowledge extends to his knowledge of “un nombre incalculable de langues, y compris quatre langues africaines: Damora, Swahili, Chulu et Zani et de dialectes” (“an incalculable number of languages, including four African languages: Damora, Swahili, Chulu et Zani and dialects”; 11, translation mine). The false claim that Lovecraft knew several African languages originates in Zealia Bishop’s memoir, “H. P. Lovecraft: A Pupil’s View” (1953).

This Lovecraft, the great genius from elsewhere, is truly a figure larger than life—who, is no longer terrified by the unknown universe, which has been revealed thanks to scientific knowledge. Lovecraft has, for all of humanity, recaptured the power of dreams and the abilities that lie only accessible to the human spirit.

Lovecraft’s personas introduced to the French public by Bergier was thus firmly limited to tradition of Primitivism. This tradition, which reigned in France in the 50s and prior, emphasized the “archaism of the Lovecraftian corpus, that Key of Dreams for readers of Jung and Eliade” (Meurger 10). Thus, Lovecraft is culturally subsumed as anti-rationalist because “in the fifties (as well as today [1989]) certain devotees of fantasy, influenced by psychoanalysis, readily assimilated literary fantasy with psychological fantasy, considering it a scarcely disguised expression of the unconscious life” (10). The particular literary-historical cultural moment, in which Lovecraft was introduced greatly influenced the way he was received by a certain cultural elite in France of the time. This

initial “anti-rationalist” Lovecraft also influenced the way in which his tales were read and interpreted, long after inaccessible texts became accessible in the French language, texts that could alter the contemporary French perception of Lovecraft, as I document below.

Grand Theft Larceny: Recapturing Lovecraft

Michel Meurger’s “Retrograde Anticipation: Primitivism and Occultism in the French Response to Lovecraft 1953-1957” published in *Etudes Lovecraftiennes* in 1988 and 1989, is not by all means the only article to attack the base upon which the Bergian Lovecraft was established. However, it is the first article to analyze the historical context in which Lovecraft emerged in France. It helps to elucidate the cultural and intellectual climate in which Lovecraft was introduced. Much of the initial interpretation of Lovecraft in France can be largely credited to the inaccessibility of Lovecraft’s body of work which supports his theory of the weird tale. I have termed this body of theoretical work as *ars supernaturalis*. Lovecraft’s *ars supernaturalis* was not entirely available in French until 1991. Let us compare the dates of their original appearance and those that of their French translations: “Commonplace Book” (1919-1936) – FRE “Le livre de raison” (1991); “In Defence of Dagon” (1921) – FRE “Défense de Dagon” (1989); “Lord Dunsany and His Work” (1922) – FRE “Lord Dunsany et son œuvre” (1991); “Supernatural Horror in Literature” (1925-1927) – “Epouvante et surnaturel en littérature” FRE (1969); “Notes on Writing Weird Fiction” (1932/33) – FRE “Suggestions pour écrire des contes” (1988); “Some Notes on Interplanetary Fiction” (1934) – FRE “Quelques commentaires sur la

fiction interplanétaire” (1991); “In Memoriam: Robert Ervin Howard” (1936) – “Robert Ervin Howard 1906-1936” FRE (1991).

The entire five volume of letters which Arkham House published from 1965 to 1976 have never been published in French. There have only been three works in which various letters have been published. The first of these were made available in Cahier de L’Herne’s *H. P. Lovecraft* in 1969, *Lettres d’Arkham* in 1975 and finally in 2009 his *Lettres de 1929* were released both in audio and book format. Had French translations of “Notes On Writing Weird Fiction,” or even “Supernatural Horror in Literature” been available at the time when Lovecraft was introduced into France, it is highly possible that his tales would not have been taken as his own personal convictions. “Notes On Writing Weird Fiction” is essentially a brief explanation of why Lovecraft wrote Weird Fiction, as well as an explanation of the process he goes through for composing such tales. Lovecraft carefully informs the reader that the very nature of the Weird Fiction is not possible, and that the correct “mood and atmosphere” is successful in making the impossible possible—“Inconceivable events and conditions have a special handicap to overcome, and this can be accomplished only through the maintenance of a careful realism in every phase of the story *except* that touching upon the one given marvel” (“Notes” 115). We should stress that “inconceivable” means to support the fact that once it becomes conceivable, one is no longer within the realm of Weird Fiction—the particularity of the inconceivable event depends entirely upon the fact that it is not possible. Essentially, once scientific advancement proves the possibility of an event such as the discovery of an ancient city and its long dead builders in Antarctica, as in *At the*

Mountains of Madness, then the story ceases to be weird fiction and therefore needs to be recategorized.

One cannot entirely fault the initial Surrealist or Fantastic Realist interpretations of Lovecraft in France because there was relatively minimal critical or secondary material available to critics in the French language. Lovecraft was presented to the French public entirely outside of any cultural context. Ultimately, Lévy, at the Colloque at Cérisy, contends that the medium in which his tales were published also play a large role in the way in which he was read in France.

on ne peut, à mon sens, pleinement saisir la qualité particulière de l'écriture de Lovecraft que si l'on replace ses compositions dans le contexte des revues pour lesquelles il écrivait : notamment *Weird Tales*. Le style du périodique impose des contraintes dont on ne peut pas ne pas tenir compte dans l'évaluation finale des textes ("we cannot, in my opinion, fully seize the particular quality of Lovecraft's writing unless we re-introduce his works in the context of the magazines for which he wrote: notably, *Weird Tales*. The style of the magazine imposed constraints which we cannot account for in the final versions of the text"; "Lovecraft, trente ans après" 22, translation mine).

Legrand, Benayoun, Bergier and Pauwels felt that Lovecraft's texts spoke for the author's own convictions. Stripped from their cultural context and the medium in which they appeared, Lovecraft's texts were misinterpreted and swept into a preexisting framework

in French Culture. Lévy feels that, thirty years ago in France, that Lovecraft was innocently read, “mettant sa rhétorique et ses images sur le compte d’une imagination particulièrement vive et noire, *littérairement* cultivée au contact de Poe, de Machen et de Dunsany” (“placing his rhetoric and images on the side of a particular vivid and dark imagination, *literarily* cultivated through contact with Poe, Machen and Dunsany”; 21, translation mine). It is true that Lovecraft owes much to Poe, Machen and Dunsany—but his texts reflect the unique cultural moment in which they were created, that of rhetoric and images he used are a perfect combination of the constraints of his patron, the editors of the various pulp magazines in which his tales were published, and its medium, the pulp magazine format, along with to Lovecraft’s own style and preference.

Since almost all of Lovecraft’s texts have, through translation, been made available in French, the French Lovecraftian reading community has largely made it their mission to set right the image of Lovecraft that Bergier presented. In so doing, the “corrected” image of Lovecraft has slowly approached that of the Post-Derlethian image of Lovecraft in America. The Post-Derlethian image of Lovecraft in America is largely one in which Lovecraft’s mechanistic materialist philosophy is free of Derleth’s imposed Christian teleology. Simon Lequeux’s “Lovecraft et Bergier: Le larcin des magiciens,” sets out to reveal Bergier’s wholesale invention of certain Lovecraftian myths that he circulated, primarily through his preface to *Démons et merveilles* in 1955, which was an expanded version of his brief introduction to Lovecraft in Denoël’s 1954 *La couleur tombée du ciel*.⁵⁸ Lequeux points to Bergier, more than to Legrand and Benayoun as the primary force behind Lovecraft’s reception in France “H. P. Lovecraft, ce grand génie d’ailleurs,” was reprinted from 1955 to 1973.⁵⁹ This means that for nearly the first twenty

years of Lovecraft's reception in France, his readership was largely formed by Bergier's nine-page introduction both to the general public and to academics.

Lequeux's article is "class A" private detective work—he simply reads each line of Bergier's preface and "fact checks it." Of his numerous objections to claims made by Bergier, we will focus on three primary ones: 1) Lovecraft as the "great genius from elsewhere" 2) Lovecraft and Bergier's "correspondence," 3) Bergier the stickler for "facts."

According to Lequeux, Bergier's title suggests that Lovecraft is a genius, and a great one at that. Nit picking as this may be, Lequeux brings up the fact that the quality of this genius is up in the air, and that perhaps it can even be contested, given the fact that his style has been negatively critiqued from various French and English scholars.

Edmund Wilson's critiques of Lovecraft's style have been covered already in chapter one. On the French side of things, however, Pierre Versin, in his article "Une surhumaine tragédie," writes that "[Lovecraft] est plein de tics et de manies, [et] son style . . . est flamboyant parfois" ("Lovecraft is full of ticks and obsessions, and his style . . . is often flamboyant"; 28, translation mine). Here "flamboyant" should be understood as overtly "too much." Lovecraft, according to Versin, neither can be credited with breaking new ground philosophically because "s'il philosophait volontiers—et longuement—[il] ne fait pas œuvre de novateur. Il professe un matérialisme qui prend racine chez les Grecs (. . .) et adhère aux thèses de Nietzsche" ("if he freely philosophizes--and at length—he didn't invent anything new. He professes a materialism whose roots are in the Greeks (. . .) and he adhered to the theses of Nietzsche"; Lequeux 73-74, translation mine). Indeed, the philosophy of Lovecraft's texts can largely be understood, philosophically as cosmic

indifference to man—and any and all spiritualism in his texts should be understood as flights of the imagination if such things *were* to exist. Lequeux digs even further and discovers that Bergier considers that “non seulement Machen mais aussi Chambers et Bierce sont ‘supérieurs à Lovecraft par la qualité littéraire, par la cohérence et par l’imagination” (“not only (Arthur) Machen but also (Robert W.) Chambers and (Ambrose) Bierce are ‘superior to Lovecraft in literary quality, by coherence and in imagination”; 74, translation mine). In “Supernatural Horror in Literature” Lovecraft himself praised each author for his particular style and the way in which their works uniquely inspired and expanded upon the genre of supernatural horror in literature. But what makes them better, is clearly, from what Lequeux is suggesting, subjective reasoning.⁶⁰ Lequeux and other French critics who participated in the Colloque at Cerisy-la-salle demonstrates a new phase in Lovecraft’s reception in France, which is born out of casting off Bergier’s Lovecraft as the authoritative interpretation.

According to Bergier, the great genius Lovecraft cannot possibly be from America, a country in which “l’argent est aussi facilement gagné . . . un homme de la culture de Lovecraft n[’est] jamais arrivé à gagner plus de 15 dollars par semaine” (“money is easily earned . . . a man of Lovecraft’s depth of learning never managed to earn more than 15 dollars a week”; “Ce grand génie 14, translation mine). While it is no secret that Lovecraft was not wealthy, this sentence promotes the idea that a man of Lovecraft’s culture *and* intelligence must be from another place *or* time, because he could earn a decent living. True to form, Bergier continues that

[d]ans un anglais parfait, l’auteur des récits révélait son ignorance des détails [,aux éditeurs qui réjetaient ses récits,] le plus normaux de la vie quotidienne. Il ne savait pas ce qu’était un homme, une femme, l’argent, le métro, un cheval, il ignorait même les réalités les plus fondamentales de la vie américaine: la situation (job), la position (standing), la nécessité du confort et du progress matériel.

(“in a perfect English, the author of the tales revealed his ignorance of details, (to the editors who rejected his tales,) of the most normal daily life. He didn’t know what a man, a woman, money, the subway, a horse, were[.] [H]e was even ignorant of the most fundamental realities of American Life: one’s job, one’s social standing, the necessity of comfort and material progress”; 14, translation mine).

It is quite unfortunate that Bergier did not forgo such drastic claims (as Lovecraft’s correspondence clearly demonstrates the opposite) and more conservatively say, “Lovecraft considered himself to be a perfect gentleman, of the kind that existed in Britain and Europe in the late 19th and early 20th century elite circles.” But perhaps the information that would have suggested this was simply unavailable for Bergier to reference. Rather, he turns Lovecraft into some strange genius who, despite his immense intellectual capacity, knows nothing of daily life. The four tales in *Démons et merveilles* are all those which take Randolph Carter as the protagonist, and Bergier feels that they are “partiellement autobiographique . . . [et que] *La Clé d’Argent* est la seule autobiographie spirituelle de Lovecraft qui nous parvenue” (“partially autobiographical . .

. and that “The Silver Key” is the lone mental/intellectual autobiography of Lovecraft that has reached us”; 10, translation mine). If these tales are indeed partially autobiographical, when Randolph Carter eventually meets Nyralathotep in “The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath,” he learns that what he is seeking in his dreams is the “sum of what [he has seen] and loved in youth. It is the glory of Boston’s hillside roofs and western windows aflame with sunset; of the flower-fragrant Common and the great dome on the hill and the fragrant gables and chimneys in the violet valley where the many bridged Charles flows drowsily” (“Dream Quest 187). Lovecraft, is not from elsewhere, but New England, and more specifically Providence, Rhode Island.

The second curious development in “ce grand génie” is the correspondence that never occurred between Lovecraft and Jacques Bergier. Again, the bulk of this information comes from Lequeux’s effort in following the paper trail. Bergier writes in “ce grand génie” that “il a fallu 25 ans d’effort pour faire connaître [HPL] au public français” [it took 25 years of effort in order to make HPL known to the French public] (7, translation mine). Lequeux points out that 25 years from the date of when *Démons et merveilles* was published, in 1955, means that Bergier discovered HPL in 1930. But Bergier “discovers” HPL when “il emprunte à la bibliothèque de l’American Legion l’anthologie de Dashiell Hammet *Creeps by Night* et qu’il y lit ‘La musique d’Eric Zann’” (“he borrows from the American Legion library (in Paris) Dashiell Hammet’s anthology *Creeps by Night* and, in it, he reads “The Music of Eric Zann”; “Lovecraft et Bergier: Le Larcin des magiciens” part two, 97, translation mine). Bergier claims that after having read “The Music of Eric Zann,” he wrote Lovecraft “pour le féliciter d’avoir décrit un quartier peu connu de Paris dans ‘La musique d’Eric Zann . . . [et je lui ai] demand[é] s’il

avait jamais visité Paris, il me répondit: ‘Avec Poe, en rêve’ (“in order to congratulate him in having described a little known neighborhood of Paris in “The Music of Eric Zann” . . . [and I] asked [him] if he had ever visited Paris, he responded to me: ‘With Poe, in a dream’; “ce grand génie” 12, translation mine). We’ve already touched upon Lovecraft’s prodigious letter writing, and estimating upwards near 100,000 letters, it is quite possible that the two *did* correspond—but there is no proof other than from Bergier himself, whose credibility by now is flagging. Furthermore, Bergier in *Planète* number 1 (October-September 1961), claims that “cette correspondance dura dix ans, jusqu’à la mort de Lovecraft” “this correspondence lasted ten years, until Lovecraft’s death”; qtd in “Lovecraft et Bergier: Le Larcin des magiciens” part two, 97, translation mine).⁶¹ It is highly unlikely that *if* the two corresponded it could not have been ten years in length because the earliest that Bergier could have corresponded with Lovecraft is in 1931 when *Creeps by Night* was published. This means that, *at best*, Bergier and Lovecraft *may have* corresponded for six years (1931-1937). Further on, Bergier claims that Lovecraft “envoya fréquemment des récits détaillés” (“frequently sent him detailed tales, yet again, there is no proof that this ever took place (“Ce gran génie” 13). Most of Lovecraft’s close friends received his tales, notably August Derleth, Robert Bloch and Robert Howard, Arthur C. Clark—unfortunately, any evidence supporting Bergier’s claim has yet to manifest. What we do know, and can confirm, is that Jacques Bergier did write two letters to *Weird Tales* which were published in the Eyrie (the fan mail section)—first in 1936 when he praised Lovecraft and said which tales he preferred, and again in 1937 when he wrote to mourn the Lovecraft’s death.

It appears that not only did Bergier admire Lovecraft's powerful imagination, which was supported by scientific knowledge, but Bergier himself exercised his own imagination in corresponding fictitiously with Lovecraft for ten years, four years of which occurred after Lovecraft passed away! Through Bergier's incessant testimony to this correspondence, one French scholar, Pierre-Jean Founau went so far as to say that Bergier and Lovecraft were friends—which again is not supported by any evidence.⁶²

Along with Bergier's imagined correspondence and friendship with Lovecraft is his lack of "fact checking." Not only does he not fact check, but Bergier also uses quotations out of context. Let us first explore the assertion that Bergier does not "fact check."

Already, in *Le matin des magiciens*, the famous "Nautilus Experiment" that Bergier used to support the fact that world governments were researching parapsychological abilities in humans, has been revealed as fictitious. But as Jim Marrs did point out, the hoax led to *actual* parapsychological investigations on the part of the U.S. and Soviet governments. However, closer to our present concern are a few erroneous statements that Bergier slides into "H. P. Lovecraft ce grand génie venu d'ailleurs."

Bergier's first erroneous fact is that Lovecraft "écrivait avec autant d'érudition sur . . . la civilisation aztèque, [et] la Crète ancienne . . ." (wrote with as much erudition on . . . the Aztec civilization, and Ancient Crete"; 11, translation mine). This is bizarre because there is no mention of either of these in the four tales collected and published under *Démons et merveilles*. Furthermore, there are no tales in which Lovecraft mentions or even alludes in passing to either civilization.

Next, “Lovecraft n[‘est] jamais arrive à gagner plus de 15 dollars par semaine” (“Lovecraft never came to earn more than 15 dollars a week”;¹³, translation mine). The contexts in which Bergier wrote this particular sentence makes Lovecraft out to be someone who should have been paid more, and that his ultimate reason for writing as driven monetarily. However, Faig and Joshi point out in “H. P. Lovecraft: His Life and Work” that

It was ultimately Lovecraft’s nonprofessional attitude toward his work that resulted in the lack of greater material success in his life. He was first and foremost an amateur, and considered writing for money both morally repugnant and aesthetically suicidal. Lovecraft wrote often that he was not and could not be a hack writer: he refused to *produce* work designed to meet the expectations of anyone aside from himself (10).

Looking further into the matter, one discovers that Lovecraft earned anywhere from 1/5 a cent per word to 1.5 cents per word. Lovecraft even ghost wrote for several authors, for example in “February 1924, [J.C.] Henneberger [, founder of *Weird Tales*,] commissioned [HPL] to ghostwrite “Under the Pyramids” for Harry Houdini, paying HPL \$100 in advance” (“Weird Tales” 293). Thus, it is sufficient to say that the weeks when Lovecraft was paid, he certainly earned more than 15 dollars.

In order that Lovecraft be accepted as a “grand génie” it was necessary to create a Lovecraft that appeared to be one of those “highly functional” geniuses who, although brilliant in mathematics or physics, knew next to nothing of everyday life. Bergier writes

that “[Lovecraft] ne savait pas ce qu’était un homme . . . il ignorait même les réalités les plus fondamentales de la vie américaine . . .” (“[Lovecraft] knew nothing of what a man was . . . he was ignorant even of the most fundamental realities of American life . . .”; “ce grand génie 14, translation mine). This is entirely not true, Lovecraft was very much aware of the society and even lamented its “decline,” as can be interpreted in many stories. Lovecraft was an engaged author who regularly discussed politics, society, culture, literature and religion with many of his correspondents. More imperatively, however, S. T. Joshi suggests that

The failure to read Lovecraft’s letters has in particular caused problems for certain critics. They have misconstrued his philosophy or even been unaware that he has one; they have not paid attention to his pervasive self-deprecating humor or his extraordinarily keen observation of an commentary on the literary, political, and social events of his time (“H. P. Lovecraft” 239).

Thus, as was pointed out earlier, at the time when Jacques Bergier composed his preface to *Démons et merveilles* certain documents were simply not available in French.⁶³

When discussing the particularities of Lovecraft’s personality one will always read that he was a recluse, among other things. Although, Faig and Joshi point out that Lovecraft the “‘eccentric recluse’ falls to the ground when we observe the wide travels that he made during the last fifteen to twenty years of his life. That [he] was reclusive in his youth can perhaps not be denied . . .” (“H. P. Lovecraft” 15). Further still, would a

recluse write over an estimated 100,000 letters during his lifetime, or partake in a network of amateur journalists which can be said to be “directly responsible for making [Lovecraft] the man he was during the last ten or eleven years of his life” (qtd. in “H. P. Lovecraft” 5)? Not only did Lovecraft maintain correspondence but “his home was always open to guests . . . [and] although he preferred indirect contact with others, i.e. correspondence; . . . it was rare that [he] turned down the company of a friend” (15). Bergier claims that when Lovecraft’s stories were rejected he would write the editors back saying “Je m’excuse, mais la pauvreté, le chagrin et l’exil m’ont fait sortir tout cela [c’est-à-dire les réalités fondamentales de la vie américaine,] et l’exil m’ont fait sortir tout cela de la tête” (“I apologize, but poverty, sorrow and exile made me exercise all that [, that is to say the fundamental realities of American life,] from my head”; “Ce grand génie” 14). We’ve already established that Lovecraft was very much in tune to the social, cultural, political and scientific trends of his time—so for him, to claim that poverty, sorrow and exile lead him to become detached from American realities seems far fetched.

Closely related to Lovecraft the “exile,” is Bergier’s claim that Lovecraft “s’est toujours comporté comme un étranger, un être venu de très loin” (“always behaved as a stranger, a being from very far away”) and someone who was “très réservé vis-à-vis des hommes et des femmes” (very reserved vis-à-vis men and women”; “Ce grand génie” 14-15, translation mine). There may be some accuracy as to his manner in interacting with people in person, and even in writing—but the fact of the matter is that Lovecraft’s reservations and manner in interaction is not a result from considering himself a stranger or from “far away,” but rather as someone who held himself to the social expectancies of

what a gentleman is/should be. If indeed, the term “exile” could apply to Lovecraft, it would certainly constitute the years he spent in New York City (1924-1926).

The last “misquote” or error occurs when Jacques Bergier uses the term “*réalisme fantastique*” in such a manner that makes the reader believe that Lovecraft himself either invented it, or used it in description of his own work. The part in question is as follows:

[Lovecraft] croyait pourtant à l'importance du réalisme fantastique. ‘Cette branche de littérature,’ écrivait-il, ‘a été cultivée par des très grands écrivains comme Lord Dunsany, et par des ratés comme moi. Elle constitue le seul véritable réalisme, la seule prise de position de l’homme vis-à-vis de l’univers

(“Lovecraft believed moreover in the importance of fantastic realism.

‘This branch of literature,’ he wrote, ‘was cultivated by very great authors like Lord Dunsany, and by failed ones such as myself. It constitutes the only true realism, the only true foothold of man’s position vis-à-vis the universe”; 15).

This quote is problematic because there are some parts of it that sound like Lovecraft, such as the veneration of Lord Dunsany, and the self-depreciation of his own work. That “fantastic realism” is the only true foothold of man’s position towards the universe seems like something that Lovecraft *would* say, however the realism is to be maintained carefully “in every phase of the story *except* . . . touching on the one given marvel [, i.e. the unknown phenomena in question]” (“Notes” 115). Lovecraft never once used the

term “fantastic realism,” it has always been a term that Bergier has used to describe Lovecraft’s texts, as it also appeared in his preface to *La couleur tombée du ciel*. Lovecraft has always used the term weird fiction (or supernatural fiction) for his particular preference of genre. If we use the term “weird fiction” in lieu of “fantastic realism,” then the last sentence stating that this type of literature is a foothold for man to position himself with regard to the outer universe could seem more like something Lovecraft has said, although Bergier’s citation appears more like a paraphrase rather than an actual quote. In “Notes on Writing Weird Fiction,” we find a similar paragraph to the above citation. It reads:

There will always be a certain small percentage of persons who feel a burning curiosity about unknown outer space, and a burning desire to escape from the prison house of the known and the real into those enchanted lands of incredible adventure and infinite possibilities which dreams open up to us, and which things like deep woods, fantastic urban towers, and flaming sunsets momentarily suggest. These persons include great authors, as well as insignificant amateurs like myself—Dunsany, Poe, Arthur Machen, M.R. James, Algernon Blackwood, and Walter de la Mare being typical masters in this field (113-114).

Although written in 1933, “Notes on Writing Weird Fiction” was published for the first time in 1937 in *Amateur Correspondent* (May-June). It is possible, then, that Bergier’s citation in which he slyly suggests that Lovecraft used the term fantastic realism could be

a paraphrase of the much longer quotation taken from “Notes on Writing Weird Fiction.” However, there is no evidence to suggest this is the case, but we know enough about Lovecraft’s own hand that he never used the term “fantastic realism” to classify his own work, nor the works of those who inspired him.

In a short preface that totals nine pages in length, Bergier managed to manufacture, at the very least, six erroneous facts about Lovecraft. These five erroneous facts that have lead to a distorted image of Lovecraft in France. Unfortunately, this “false” image of Lovecraft gained great traction in France until all of Lovecraft’s texts and a small fraction of his letters were made available through translation. Despite the availability of Lovecraft’s theoretical *ars supernaturalis*, this image however, continues to be represented due to the fact that much of the criticism against Jacques Bergier is found in out of print journals, which are expensive to obtain. Such criticism has been referenced throughout this chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the history of Lovecraft in France, from the very moment when Lovecraft was introduced to contemporary readers of his work. In comparison to the cultural context in which Lovecraft’s texts emerged for the first time in the U.S., the context in France was inevitably different. In Lovecraft’s time the atomic bomb was yet to be unleashed upon the world, and the minds of every inhabitant. In 1953 Lovecraft was introduced to a French culture primed and ready for just such a reading experience because “translations are facts of one system only, the target system” (Toury 19). Thus,

to compare a translation to its original can be tricky. However, what is more easily comparable is the role that a translation plays with regard to culture. The evidence presented in this chapter shows that the role Lovecraft's text played in France, during the time of its initial introduction and the period till about 1970, is caught up in the intellectual movement of primitivism. Lovecraft's texts were largely introduced outside of the medium in which they originally appeared, and they were the only available means in the French language to understand the author. The Surrealist reading/reception of Lovecraft by Gérard Legrand and Robert Benayoun in 1953 and the proponents of Fantastic Realism, Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwels, interpreted Lovecraft's texts as esoteric documents. They understood Lovecraft to be a type of prophet whose messages were, overtly or covertly, disseminated in his stories, some of which were taken as autobiographical. If Lovecraft's texts are attributed with different roles according to the particular milieu in which they are discovered and interpreted, then perhaps the one common link between the French and American reception of Lovecraft is the role that "rewriting" plays. Intellectuals in both France and the United States interpreted Lovecraft in a particular fashion—their criticisms, anthologies, and articles try to explain and expand upon Lovecraft's image.

Chapter 3 “Houellebecq and Lovecraft: A Bolder Lovecraft”

Introduction

Now that Lovecraft’s literary history is sufficiently explained, and the contours of his initial image and its interpretation in France have been examined, it is time to see in what ways this image has developed from Lovecraft’s introduction in 1953 to the present day. Beginning as early as 1969 with the appearance of the Cahiers de L’Herne’s *H. P. Lovecraft*, Lovecraft scholars have sought to overturn Bergier’s influence, and in the process, produce fine scholarship. Michel Houellebecq’s book *H. P. Lovecraft: Contre le monde, contre la vie* (1999) was translated into English as “*H. P. Lovecraft: Against the World, Against* (2005) with a second edition appearing in 2008. *H. P. Lovecraft: Contre le monde, contre la vie* is an excellent book which shows how Lovecraft’s philosophy and way of life impacted the texts he wrote.

In this study Houellebecq’s *H. P. Lovecraft* functions as a sign post. As a marker, it is Bergian in influence, although unmistakably modern and forward thinking enough to blaze a new trail. Through a reading/analysis of Houellebecq’s book, this chapter will explore the high points of what we will call “modern” French Lovecraft Studies. This “modern” period in French Lovecraft Studies dates from 1991 to the present day. This chapter seeks a response to the question, what influence has Houellebecq’s interpretation

of Lovecraft had on Lovecraft Studies in France and beyond? I will argue that Houellebecq's interpretation has a great deal of influence for the academically minded Lovecraft reader and scholar in France. Houellebecq's book reveals a complex and ambiguous Lovecraft whose attitude and philosophy operate in reaction to a hostile world and life. This attitude is certainly part of the French spirit as observed in the existentialist movement that Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus spearheaded. In that, Sartre and Camus' texts explore the vacuity of meaning in the world, and from this standpoint, a world hostile to mankind, indifferent at best.

Lovecraft and Houellebecq: Against Both the World and Life

It is clear that Michel Houellebecq benefited from the explosion of the scholarly and popular interest in Lovecraft that blossomed between the end of the 60s and the publication of Houellebecq's book in France in 1999 and the United States in 2005. Whereas Bergier had little to go on and therefore invented Lovecraft's image as a "genius from elsewhere," Houellebecq's Lovecraft is a distilled image composed of information garnered from Sprague de Camp's *Lovecraft, a Biography* (1975), Lovecraft's own correspondence and various other sources, including Houellebecq's particular outlook on life.⁶⁴ Houellebecq's worldview is very much influenced by his observation that the cultural revolution of May 1968 in France has led to turmoil and even further alienation between man and society in France (or even in the West). Houellebecq's literature is a fusion of cosmic indifference, existentialism, and a seething criticism of modern society. Houellebecq's interpretations of Lovecraft were only possible following the publication

of a certain amount of scholarship in the form of articles, biographies or books. There has been a certain time lag because of the time (roughly 1953 to 1991) it took for Lovecraft's work to be translated in its entirety into French. The availability of Lovecraft in France has irrevocably altered the image of Lovecraft, and Houellebecq's book is symptomatic of this change.

There are two general images of Lovecraft in France. First, there is Jacques Bergier's Lovecraft as a mystical-madman-genius. This coexisted with Michel Houellebecq's Lovecraft as a antilife-poet-genius. The distinction is marked in the final line of Houellebecq's *H. P. Lovecraft*:

Offrir une alternative à la vie sous toutes ses formes, constituer une opposition permanente, un recours permanent à la vie : telle est la plus haute mission du poète sur cette terre. Howard Phillips Lovecraft a rempli cette mission

("To offer an alternative to life in all its forms constitutes a permanent opposition, a permanent recourse to life—this is the poet's highest mission on this earth. Howard Phillips Lovecraft fulfilled this mission"; *Contre le monde* 130, translation Dorna Khazeni 119).

This citation demonstrates Houellebecq's view of Lovecraft as a poet. While Bergier's Lovecraft was certainly a mad genius, Bergier would never have described Lovecraft as a poet. If anything, Bergier's Lovecraft is a kind of crack pot/madman infused with esoteric new age ideals.

H. P. Lovecraft: Contre le monde, contre la vie is split into three distinct parts: “Another Universe,” “Technical Assault” and “Holocaust.” We will proceed to analyze Houellebecq’s *H. P. Lovecraft, contre le monde, contre la vie* in order to isolate his image of Lovecraft. This will serve to differentiate it from Bergier’s Lovecraft which we explored last chapter and to see whether Houellebecq’s Lovecraft is influential in either French or American Lovecraft Studies.

Another Universe

In this section Houellebecq explores the philosophical atheism and materialism that underscores Lovecraft’s stories and reinforces his crushing cosmic (or world) view. In the cosmic viewpoint, man’s position as referent (that by which all things are measured and given meaning) is peripheral at best. Houellebecq remarks that Lovecraft’s textual universe is “à ce point imprégné, transpercé jusqu’à l’os par le néant absolu de toute aspiration humaine . . . Tout disparaîtra. Et les actions humaines sont aussi libres et dénuées de sens que les libres mouvements des particules élémentaires.” (“so impregnated, pierced to the core, by the conviction of the absolute futility of human aspiration” [and in fact,] “everything will disappear. And human actions are as free and as stripped of meaning as the unfettered movement of the elementary particles”; (13, translation 33). In this universe we are not even beyond good and evil, or other ideas driven by morality because these do not exist outside of humanity. Lovecraft has said as much in his letter to Farnsworth Wright (the second editor of *Weird Tales*) accompanying his second submission of “The Call of Cthulhu” to *Weird Tales*. Lovecraft writes, “all my

tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large” (*Selected Letters* 2.150).

Reading Lovecraft’s texts should be considered an event, that is “a change of the very frame through which we perceive the world and engage in it” (Zizek 12). Lovecraft has changed the face of horror in literature, bridging the gap between what can be considered “la littérature fantastique” and creating something entirely new, infused with scientific realism, marking the need for the new genre of weird fiction. Houellebecq notes that

[d]epuis l’introduction du virus en France par Jacques Bergier, la progression du nombre de lecteurs a été considérable. Comme la plupart des contaminés, j’ai moi-même découvert HPL à l’âge de seize ans par l’intermédiaire d’un ‘ami.’ Pour un choc, c’en fut un. Je ne savais pas que la littérature pouvait faire ça. Et, d’ailleurs, je n’en suis toujours pas persuadé. Il y a quelque chose de *pas vraiment littéraire* chez Lovecraft (“[e]ver since [Lovecraft’s] virus was first introduced into France by Jacques Bergier, the increase in the number of readers has been substantial. Like most of those contaminated, I myself discovered HPL at sixteen through the intermediary of a ‘friend.’ To call it a shock would be an understatement. I had not known literature was capable of this. And, what’s more, I’m still not sure it is. There is something not really literary about Lovecraft’s work”; 17, translation Khazeni 34).

One can imagine a feverish Houellebecq reading “The Case of Charles Dexter Ward,” eagerly devouring the pages in much the same way the Charles Dexter Ward, himself sought out arcane knowledge in forbidden books.⁶⁵ One story is simply not enough, one must read another, and *another*, always wanting more. One craves the experience of Lovecraft’s mythology and of mankind’s interaction with it. Houellebecq defines this as ritual literature. The reader rediscovers the ritual with impatience, “il [le] retrouve avec un plaisir grandissant, à chaque fois séduit par une nouvelle répétition en des termes légèrement différents, qu’il sent comme un nouvel approfondissement” (“he return[s] to it with mounting pleasure, seduced each time by a different repetition of terms, ever so imperceptibly altered to allow him to reach a new depth of experience”; 19 translation Khazeni 37). It is this experience, and the desire to reproduce the experience that, for Houellebecq, affirms the virus like, or non-literary quality of Lovecraft’s literature.

Houellebecq elegantly describes Lovecraft’s “œuvre [comme] une imposante architecture baroque, étagée par paliers larges et somptueux, comme une succession de cercles concentriques autour d’un vortex d’horreur et d’émerveillement absolu” (“body of work [as] an imposing baroque structure, it’s towering strata rising in so many layered concentric circles, a wide and sumptuous landing around each—the whole surrounding a vortex of pure horror and absolute marvel”; 24, translation Khazeni 40). In this view, the outermost circle contains Lovecraft’s correspondence and poetry, these are neither published in their entirety nor are they available in translation.⁶⁶ The second circle contains Lovecraft’s edits, ghostwritten and co-written stories including the tales that Derleth “finished” from Lovecraft’s notes. The third circle contains Lovecraft’s stories,

all of which are available in French. The fourth, or innermost circle are what Houellebecq terms “the great texts.” Hovering above this arrangement is Houellebecq’s analysis of Lovecraft’s personality. Houellebecq also names the most important “great texts” of Lovecraft’s, all of which were published in the years following his return to Providence. The “great texts” are: “The Call of Cthulhu,” “The Colour Out of Space,” “The Dunwich Horror,” “The Whisperer in Darkness,” *At the Mountains of Madness*, “The Dreams in the Witch House,” “The Shadow Over Innsmouth,” and “The Shadow Out of Time.”

Houellebecq’s image of Lovecraft is distinct from Bergier’s given that Lovecraft’s antihumanist worldview appears to resonate more with Houellebecq’s own worldview as seen in his works. By this, I mean to say that many of Houellebecq’s stories seem to portray a very lovecraftian position on the meaninglessness of mankind. This worldview, as Bergier has suggested, is more poignant and more tangible once one has suffered greatly. In a kind of structuralist description of Lovecraft’s œuvre, Houellebecq envisions a vortex surrounded by four distinct circles, each of which is populated by Lovecraft’s œuvre. Above this interplay of chaos and horror floats Lovecraft’s persona (cold, antihuman, antilife), the one he inhabited and the one his readers have created. In a nutshell, Lovecraft’s universe opens the reader up to anything but tranquility.

Houellebecq believes this universe has an “impact sur la conscience du lecteur” (impact on the reader’s mind”; 26, translation Khazeni). It is “une brutalité sauvage, effrayante; et il ne se dissipe qu’avec une dangereuse lenteur” (“a savagely, frighteningly brutal, and dangerously slow to dissipate”; 26, translation Khazeni 42). While this statement was impossible before Houellebecq, it indicates a certain change in perception of Lovecraft’s œuvre as a whole. Here it becomes a non-literary reception. For Houellebecq, Lovecraft

can be read as an *event* rather than as a literary text. In that the *event* is a unique occurrence altering the way something is perceived.

Technical Assault

Houellebecq regards Lovecraft's "Supernatural Horror in Literature," as somehow outdated and disappointing, for the simple fact that Lovecraft did not take his own œuvre into account.⁶⁷ As Houellebecq writes, "sans doute a-t-il ressenti le besoin . . . de récapituler tout ce qui s'était fait dans le domaine fantastique avant de le faire éclater en se lançant dans des voies radicalement nouvelles" ("Lovecraft must have felt a need to recapitulate all that had been done in the domain of horror fiction before exploding its casing and setting off on radically new paths"; 34, translation Khazeni 47). For Houellebecq it was as if Lovecraft needed to create a mausoleum so as to provide resting place for what existed prior to the catastrophe that his texts left behind.

Although Lovecraft wrote first for his own pleasure and for that of his friends, his stories were also published and read by a general public. But according to Houellebecq, Lovecraft "écrit pour un public de fanatiques ; public qu'il finira par trouver, quelques années après sa mort" ("tends to pick his readers from the start. He writes for an audience of fanatics—readers he was to finally find only years after his death"; 41, translation Khazeni 53). Who are these readers? Who are those affected souls who have suffered greatly? It would seem here that Houellebecq is not necessarily referring to those who eagerly participated in the ritual of reading Lovecraft's material as it was published in *Weird Tales*. Rather, Houellebecq seems to imply that the generation of scholars who

have analyzed his texts in a “post-modern” world are his readers. In any case, Lovecraft’s stories are meticulously precise, all of them building up an atmosphere of dread and terror that culminate in the last few pages of the story. Everything is treated realistically, aside from the one weird event that, in return, casts doubt on the whole architecture of reality. Houellebecq analyzes this effect on Lovecraft’s characters who fare no better than Star Trek’s “red shirts” who accompany Kirk on away-missions, they are always the ones who die. However, Lovecraft’s characters seem to be unaware or unable to piece together what is happening. Nor do they ever arrive at the conclusion that they should not explore a specific location in the middle of the night because it will either cause them to go insane, or better yet, do die.

Houellebecq summarizes Lovecraft’s attitude towards the world as “[u]ne haine absolue du monde en général, aggravée d’un dégoût particulier pour le monde moderne” (“an absolute hatred [. . .], aggravated by an aversion to the modern world in particular”; 46; translation Khazeni 57). According to Houellebecq, Lovecraft’s literature depends on this hatred towards the modern world and this hatred is conditional on the “[l]e rejet de toute forme de réalisme” (“rejection of all forms of realism”; 46, translation Khazeni 57). In Houellebecq’s own texts, sexuality and money occupy a large portion of thematic content, but for Lovecraft these are the only two realities not included. The absence of both sexuality and money are not due to “obscurs motifs psychologiques, mais à une conception esthétique nettement affirmée . . . s’il refuse dans son œuvre la moindre allusion de nature sexuelle, c’est avant tout parce qu’il sent que de telles allusions ne peuvent avoir aucune place dans son univers esthétique” (“hidden psychological motives, but an aesthetic conception clearly articulated . . . if he refused all sexual allusions in his

work it was first and foremost because he felt such allusions had no place in his aesthetic universe”; 48-49, translation Khazeni 58-59). Houellebecq attributes this aesthetic refusal to Lovecraft’s “Victorian prudishness,” which corresponds to his self-imposed genteel behavior (translation Khazeni 60). The power of Houellebecq’s analysis in this section can be summed up in the fact that Lovecraft’s aesthetic choice, or creative limitation, is not necessarily dependent upon “un quelconque ‘trafiquage’ idéologique . . . Lovecraft, lui, n’essaie pas de repeindre dans une couleur différente les éléments de la réalité qui lui déplaisent; avec détermination, il les ignore” (“any sort of traffic in ideology . . . Lovecraft does not try to repaint the elements of reality that displease him; he resolutely ignores them”; translation Khazeni 62). This resolution is resoundingly a combination of both his own philosophy and, according to Houellebecq, a technical imperative.

The most impelling portion of this section is the way in which Houellebecq analyzes Lovecraft’s œuvre through architectural concepts; we discover architecture by moving within it, and to some degree neither a painting nor a film can quite capture Lovecraft’s imagery, neither his non-Euclidean imagined structures nor the description of colors that are not quite colors. For example in “The Colour Out of Space,” Lovecraft relates the observable facts of a strange meteorite that landed near his fictitious New England city of Arkham, “The colour, which resembled some of the bands in the meteor’s strange spectrum, was almost impossible to describe; and it was only by analogy that they called it colour at all” (225). Houellebecq looks to Lovecraft’s correspondence to support his theory that Lovecraft experiences “une transe esthétique violente en présence d’une belle architecture” (“a trancelike state when [he] look[s] at beautiful architecture”; 59, translation Khazeni 65). Not only do his characters experience this

“violent trancelike state,” but readers also enter a trancelike state when confronting Lovecraft’s vertiginous use of adjectives to construct his imagery. For Houellebecq, Lovecraft’s architecture is sacred because it is

[c]omme celle des grande cathédrales, comme celle des temples hindous, l’architecture de H. P. Lovecraft est beaucoup, plus qu’un jeu mathématique de volumes. Elle est entièrement imprégnée par l’idée d’une dramaturgie essentielle, d’une dramaturgie mythique qui donne son sens à l’édifice . . . C’est une architecture *vivante*, car elle repose sur une conception vivante et émotionnelle du monde

(“like that of great cathedrals, like that of Hindu temples, is much more than a three-dimensional mathematical puzzle. It is entirely imbued with an essential dramaturgy that gives its meaning to the edifice . . . It is *living* architecture because at its foundation lies a living and emotional concept of the world”; translation Khazeni 66).

For Catholics and Hindus, their places of worship are tied to the importance of mankind’s place in their respective cosmology. However, Lovecraft’s architectural spaces are blatantly organized around a cosmology indifferent to man. This vision resounds nicely with and even supports the contention that Lovecraft’s literature is ritualistic, in that Lovecraft’s stories themselves constitute the sacred spaces wherein the ritual is experienced.

Houellebecq next analyzes perception in Lovecraft's stories, in particular the lack of psychological depth in his characters. Lovecraft's characters are essentially void of such characteristics because "[t]out trait psychologique trop accusé [aurait]" ("a more obtrusive psychological brushstroke would have") lead the story from the domain of "l'épouvante matérielle" ("material horror") to "l'épouvante psychique" ("psychological horror"; 65, translation Khazeni 68). Lovecraft's characters therefore are sense receptacles, "[des observateurs] muets, immobiles, totalement impuissant, paralysés" ("silent, motionless, utterly powerless, paralyzed observers"; 66, translation Khazeni 69). To support such a thesis, Houellebecq resorts to textual citation which indeed reflects the disarming effects of adjectives as they gather into an amorphous "crescendo hideux" ("hideous crescendo") eventually releasing the character in a malaise of fear and panic (66, translation Khazeni 69).

Lovecraft's particular brand of weird fiction is difficult to categorize, as I explain in chapter one. This is due to the fact that "[en introduisant de force dans le récit fantastique le vocabulaire et les concepts des secteurs de la connaissance humain . . . il vient de faire éclater son cadre]" ("[b]y forcefully introducing the language and concepts of scientific sectors . . . he has exploded the casing of the horror story"; 72, translation Khazeni 74). Houellebecq accurately describes Lovecraft's effect on the horror story genre, as well as Lovecraft's vision that weird fiction is not one genre but a blasphemous hybrid offspring which recounts "antilife." Lovecraft lived in a time of extraordinary scientific advancement both in theory and in practice. In an effort to positively describe the universe in objective means, the sciences, according to Houellebecq

lui fourniront cet outil de démultiplication visionnaire dont il a besoin. HPL, en effet, vise à une épouvante objective. Une épouvante déliée de toute connotation psychologique ou humaine . . . De même que Kant veut poser les fondements d'une morale valable 'non seulement pour l'homme, mais pour toute créature raisonnable en général,' Lovecraft veut créer un fantastique capable de terrifier toute créature douée de raison. ("furnished him with the tools he needed to transmit his vision. Indeed, HPL's aim was objective terror. A terror unbound from any human or psychological connotations . . . Just as Kant hoped to set the foundation of a valid ethical code 'not just for man but for all rational beings,' Lovecraft wanted to create a horror capable of tarrying all creatures endowed with reason"; 76, translation Khazeni 77).

Never before have Lovecraft and Kant been mentioned in the same sentence, nor in such an analogous way. Houellebecq elevates Lovecraft by his association with Kant. According to Houellebecq, the commonality between the two men is "leur volonté héroïque et paradoxale de passer *par-dessus* l'humanité" ("the[ir] heroic and paradoxical desire to *go beyond* humanity"; 76 translation Khazeni 77). Essentially, Houellebecq believes that Lovecraft's concept of horror is universally valid, albeit for Lovecraft what is universally valid is the eternal struggle between mankind and Cthulhu, or an indifferent universe. For Kant what is valid lies not in the epistemological differences between mankind and the world but in things in and of themselves.

Lastly, Houellebecq analyzes Lovecraft's plot technique and use of description. The plot technique is supplemented by Lovecraft's "overuse" of adjectives, but how else would the "l'intersection d'entités monstrueuses, situées dans des sphères inimaginables et interdites, avec le plan de notre existence ordinaire" ("collision of monstrous entities hailing from unimaginable, forbidden worlds with the plane of our ordinary existence" be described (81, translation Khazeni 81)? Lovecraft's plot line traces such a trajectory that they have the ability for the reader, while reading the tale, to suspend disbelief in paranormal phenomena. Houellebecq prefers to say that Lovecraft "emporte notre adhésion à l'inconcevable" "converts us into believers of the inconceivable"; translation Khazeni 81). Thus, Lovecraft's non-literality infects us, and now through Lovecraft's philosophy and its execution via aesthetics converts us into believers in the inconceivable.

Holocaust

This section of *H. P. Lovecraft* explores Lovecraft's, shall we say, innate disdain for people who are not categorized as White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants. For Houellebecq, and many scholars of Lovecraft including Bergier, Lovecraft's disgust for other races manifested itself during his two-year sojourn in New York City. Prior to this period in his life he was no more racist than was socially acceptable for a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant in the early half of the twentieth century. In New York City, he was "contraint de vivre à New York [City] ; il y conn[a]issait la haine, le dégoût et la peur . . . et c'est [là] que ses *opinions* racistes se transform[ai]ent en une authentique névrose raciale"

(“forced to live in New York [City], where he came to know hatred, disgust, and fear . . . and it was [here] that his racist opinions turned into a full-fledged racist neurosis”; 111, translation Khazeni 105). When his wife Sonia Greene lost her job he had to look and compete for jobs alongside immigrants, and found that his racial background and “superior” upbringing did not give him the cultural advantage that he had always been told he had. Houellebecq postulates that Lovecraft’s failure at finding employment was a mystery and that ultimately “il [était] inadaptable à une économie de marché” (“[h]e was inadaptable to the market economy”; 106, translation Khazeni 101). Thus, it’s not so much that he was unfamiliar with the fundamental realities of American life, it is simply that he offered nothing of value to a market economy, besides his writing. This in part must be the result of his personal restrictions as to what he thought were the proper activities and behaviors of a gentleman.

Houellebecq imagines that Lovecraft’s socially acceptable level of racism grew into a brutality similar to the way in which two completely different caged animals might react to one another, through aversion and fear. Indeed when one examines certain correspondences between Lovecraft and his friends, his descriptions of Italians, Jews and Asians appears to directly influence his descriptions of netherworld beings and followers of Cthulhu. In “The Horror at Red Hook,” (published in *Weird Tales* in January 1927) the narrator describes the denizens of Brooklyn, New York as a “hopless tangle and enigma; Syrian, Spanish, Italian, and negro elements impinging upon one another, and fragments of Scandinavian and American belts lying not far distant” (317). Miscegenation plays a large role in several Lovecraft tales, such as “The Shadow Over Innsmouth,” or “The Rats in the Walls.”

All of Lovecraft's tales that Houellebecq regards as "great texts" were written after his return to Providence in 1926. As Bergier suggested, perhaps not only should one have suffered in order to be able to understand Lovecraft, but it would appear that Lovecraft himself also had to have suffered greatly, through unemployment and interpersonal problems, in order to pen his greatest tales over the next ten years. According to Houellebecq in general, Lovecraft's protagonists are all WASP-ish victims, while the "tortionnaires, [les] servants des cultes innommables, . . . sont presque toujours des métis, des mulâtres, des sang-mêlés 'de la plus basse espèce'" ("torturers, servants of innumerable cults, . . . are almost always half-breeds, mulattos, of mixed blood, among the basest of species"; 116 translation Khazeni 109). It would be interesting to have Lovecraft's opinion about the Civil Rights movements that traversed Western Europe and North America in the second-half of the twentieth century. One thing is for certain, his phobia and hatred for non-whites is a combination of his own failure in NYC and his Puritanical upbringing. Houellebecq does not critique Lovecraft's racism in terms of morality, but he highlights the fact that Lovecraft's racism translates into his stories through fear of hybridity or miscegenation. In fact, much of the more recent critiques of Lovecraft's racism is culturally explored through miscegenation and Social Darwinism.

Houellebecq's final thoughts are that for Lovecraft,

l'univers, qu'il conçoit intellectuellement comme indifférent, devient esthétiquement hostile . . . [I]'œuvre de sa maturité est restée fidèle à la prostration physique de sa jeunesse, en la transfigurant. Là est le profond

secret du génie de Lovecraft, et la source pure de sa poésie : il a réussi à transformer son dégoût de la vie en une hostilité *agissante*

(“the universe, which intellectually he perceived as being indifferent, became hostile aesthetically . . . [t]he work of his mature years remains faithful to the physical prostration of his youth, transforming it. This is the profound secret of Lovecraft’s genius, and the pure source of his poetry: he succeeded in transforming his aversion for life into an *effective* hostility”; 130, translation Khazeni 119)

This last statement seems vaguely similar to Maurice Lévy’s postulation that Lovecraft exorcised himself through the act of writing. There is no question that Lovecraft himself felt tied to 19th century concepts such as those of “the gentleman,” “progress,” and racial divisions in the social sphere. Bergier’s interpretation is curiously devoid of the negativity or hatred that Lovecraft has for the modern world, while Houellebecq perceives Lovecraft’s texts to be in direct dialogue with the “évolution du monde moderne [qui] a rendu encore plus présentes, encore plus *vivantes* les phobies lovecraftiennes” (“evolution of the modern world [which] has made Lovecraftian phobias ever more present, ever more *alive*”; translation Khazeni 116). Houellebecq implies that the world Lovecraft cherished was destroyed by “[l]a mécanisation et la modernisation . . . [et] [l]es idéaux de liberté et de démocratie, qu’il abhorrait, se sont répandus sur la planète” (“mechanization and modernization . . . [and] the reach of liberal capitalism [which] has extended over minds”; 124 translation Khazeni 115). Ultimately, the 19th century measurements of the individual no longer hold value, and for Houellebecq, an

individual is now measured by “efficacité économique et son potentiel érotique: soit, très exactement, les deux choses que Lovecraft détestait le plus fort” (“economic efficiency and erotic potential—that is to say, in terms of the two things Lovecraft most despised” (125, translation Khazeni 116).

Thus, Houellebecq’s Lovecraft is more similar to a misanthrope than to some esoteric master as Bergier portrayed him. This represents a fundamental change in Bergier’s perception of Lovecraft. Perhaps, however, this new image of Lovecraft gains more through Houellebecq’s own worldview.

How Much Lovecraft in Houellebecq?

It is no mystery that Houellebecq thinks highly of Lovecraft. Why else would he have written a short “biography”? Indeed, Houellebecq’s own aesthetic and philosophy, as it would seem, as extrapolated from his novels, reflects Lovecraft’s own sensitive disgust with reality. Many of Houellebecq’s characters become disenfranchised with the materiality of life and the value system that upholds it. It is as if Houellebecq and Lovecraft are the only two people who share a genuine vision of horror in the excessive, increasingly narcissistic materialistic nature of Western Civilization. The characters of both authors are both inwardly focused, Lovecraft’s in the pursuit of (arcane/forbidden) knowledge, and Houellebecq’s in search of the fulfillment of sexual pleasure and monetary gain.

If Lovecraft’s rejection of modernization was a total abandonment of sex and money, Houellebecq’s rejection comes from a deep involvement with sex and money.

The main character of *Extension du domaine de la lutte* (translated as *Whatever* by Paul Hammond in 1998) reflects on the analogue features of sex and money. In “a society like ours[,] sex truly represents a second system of differentiation, completely independent of money; and as a system of differentiation it functions just as mercilessly” (*Whatever* 99). In other words, wonders Houellebecq, how do middle-aged individuals react to the passing of the “prime of their life” with regard to sex and money, both of which, according to Houellebecq are truly the privilege of the young. Houellebecq believes that reading Lovecraft is dangerous because it has the possibility to infect (affect) the reader in ways unseen. Equally so, Houellebecq’s novels tend to create an aimlessness, a total disgust with not only how the characters react to events, but also in their realization that “the mysteries of time were banal . . . this was the way of the world: youthful optimism fades and happiness and confidence evaporate” (*Particules* 10). After such a revelation, there is nothing left but horror, fear and disgust. The only option, suicide.

If one reads enough of Michel Houellebecq, then certain lines from *H. P. Lovecraft* will, in all honesty, come as no surprise. Or rather, one could imagine a wooden Lovecraft perched on the lap of Houellebecq the ventriloquist. How much of Houellebecq’s description of Lovecraft’s abject horror is really Lovecraft’s and not Houellebecq’s sentiments? Does it matter? In this “biography” we find the philosophical and aesthetic antilife seeds that sprout up in many of Houellebecq’s later novels such as *Extension du domaine de la lutte* (1994, translated in English as *Whatever* in 1998), *Les particules élémentaires* (1998, translated into English by Frank Wynne as *Atomised* in England, and *The Elementary Particles* in the United States in 2000), *La possibilité d’une*

île (2005, translated into English in 2006 under the title *The Possibility of an Island* by Gavin Boyd).

Houellebecq's *Extention du domaine de la lutte* (1994) is an interesting book, and it gives the impression of a cross between Albert Camus' *L'étranger* (1942) and J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* (1951). Briefly, the book follows its character as he travels to different locations in France to train employees of other companies how to use his company's software. The main character already feels indifferent to his life, but silently and openly expresses his disgust in a society which "sickens [him]; advertising sickens [him]; computers make [him] puke. [His] entire work . . . has no meaning" (*Whatever* 82). In a modern world where individual value is determined by economic efficiency and sexual potency, what do we become when we have neither? The main character perfectly isolates his relationship with the modern world, "it's not that I feel tremendously low; it's rather that the world around me appears high" (135). His hero, and indeed it would appear that all of Houellebecq's characters at one time or another have that moment of self-critical awareness where they realize that they can no longer keep up with this world and all it demands, whether through age or physicality.

Les particules élémentaires (1998) follows two half-brothers, Bruno and Michel, both of whom were quickly given over to their respective grandparents by their libertine mother. In this novel, Houellebecq explores human emotion, behavior, and bodily form analogously through scientific principles and themes. It is only when the story comes to an end that there is any idea that it is set in the future, and indeed that the novel itself is written in honor of humanity. Both Bruno and Michel are unfortunate in Houellebecq's vision of sexual economy. Bruno and Michel, in their own ways, are looking for

happiness, which Houellebecq describes as “une émotion intense et profonde, un sentiment de plénitude exaltante ressenti par la conscience entière ; on peut la rapprocher de l’ivresse, du ravissement, de l’extase” (“an intense, all-consuming feeling of joyous fulfillment akin to inebriation, rapture or ecstasy”; *Les Particules* 15, translation Heinemann 10). The two half-brothers attempt to experience the happiness their society advertises, sex and money, but as Michel soon realizes that “l’univers humain . . . était plein d’angoisse et d’amertume” (“human reality . . . was a series of disappointments, bitterness and pain”; 66, translation Heinemann 55). Each half-brother, in his own way attempts to sidestep or delay the disappointment of human reality. Bruno discovers happiness in an open relationship and Michel finds it in mathematics. Michel’s pursuit of the scientific analysis of human behavior, thought, and actions is an attempt to strip mankind’s own self-aggrandizing notion of uniqueness. Lovecraft’s cosmic indifference can be seen in the crushing realization of the isolation and disappointment that both Bruno and Michel experience through the course of *Les Particules Elementaires*. Michel’s worldview, one which reduces humanity’s uniqueness, is similar in vein to Lovecraft’s leitmotif where his characters are constantly confronted by another system, a cosmic system whose calculations, values and fulcrums are indifferent to humanity. Rather than believe in the illusion of contemporary society and our own self-importance Houellebecq’s underlying critique is that we are “inconséquents, légers et clownesques” (“inconsequential, shallow and ridiculous”; 260, Heinemann 214). As if to highlight this point, in the Epilogue, we discover that Michel has been successful at creating artificial life. The ridiculous, shallow and inconsequential nature of mankind is only transitory, meaning that man and his qualities are not at the apex of the universe.

La possibilité d'une île (2005, the English translation, *The Possibility of an Island*, translated by Gavin Bowd in 2005 and published by Vintage Books, a division of Random House.) is an interesting book in that it explores the possibility of scientific advancements in cloning procedures and the evolution of the human experience as increasingly compartmentalized and alienating. The main narration of the story unfolds through the journal entry of Daniel1 whom the reader soon realizes is the biological original of a line of clones. The narration, then, is a shift between Daniel1's life story and the subsequent life stories (and reflections on Daniel1's own story) of Daniel24 and Daniel25. The future Daniels are known as neohumans, the result of a breakthrough in genetic cloning ushered into existence through the scientific research and control of a scientifically based religion/cult known as Elohimite.⁶⁸ Daniel1's life story is essentially, like many of Houellebecq's characters, a commentary on contemporary society.

Daniel1's narration is a self-conscious exploration of passing from the upper limits of what can be considered youth to middle-age. Similar to previous observations by protagonists in *Extension du domaine de la lutte* and *Les particules élémentaires*, in a society that increasingly liberates sexual identity and sexual forms of pleasure, Daniel1 remarks that "[d]ans le monde moderne on pouvait être échangiste, bi, trans, zoophile, SM, mais il était interdit d'être vieux" ("[i]n the modern world you could be a swinger, bi, trans, zoo, into S&M, but it was forbidden to be old"; *La possibilité* 209, translation Bowd 148). Thus, the true boundary established by society is that between the young and the old, which firmly privileges youth over old age. Daniel1's social commentary is as equally poignant as certain Lovecraftian comments sown throughout his stories, although perhaps Daniel1's comments are generated from a self-conscious position of exteriority

to the “promised land,” whereas Lovecraft’s social commentary seems indifferent to any position of social standing and more concerned with an overall myopic view of mankind. In most of Lovecraft’s tales, there is a belabored search for forbidden knowledge, which in some fashion will reveal the illusory nature of the universe. In *La possibilité d’une île*, the illusory nature of the world is clearly understood by Daniell, who is a comedian. Upon reflecting about his career, he remarks that “si l’on agresse le monde avec une violence suffisante, il finit par le cracher, son sale fric; mais jamais, jamais il ne vous redonne la joie” (“if you attack the world with sufficient violence, it ends up spitting its filthy lucre back at you; but never, never will it give you back joy”; 160, translation Bowd 113). In this sense, Daniell means to say that neither money nor sexual liberation are able to provide the kind of joy that satisfies. For Daniell and indeed the rest of his clones, an authentic joy seems beyond the scope of possibility because the ephemeral joys of sexual pleasure and money always seem to promise more than they can deliver.

It would be absurd to claim that H. P. Lovecraft is the only influence in Houellebecq’s worldview. When we understand Houellebecq’s *H. P. Lovecraft: Contre le monde, contre la vie*, we can certainly claim that Lovecraft and his texts have served as a source of inspiration. One can even go so far as to wonder whether Houellebecq was not describing his own position when he summarizes Lovecraft’s attitude towards the world as “une haine absolue du monde en général, aggravée d’un dégoût particulier pour le monde moderne” (“an absolute hatred of the world in general, aggravated by an aversion to the modern world in particular”; *Contre le monde* 46, Khazeni 57).

Modern French Lovecraft Studies

“Modern” describes the period of French Lovecraft Studies inaugurated by the publication in 1991 of Michel Houellebecq’s *H. P. Lovecraft: Contre le monde, contre la vie*. We already explored the ways in which it paints an image of Lovecraft that is distinctly different than Bergier’s interpretation.

In August 1995, in France, a group of Lovecraft scholars met to discuss their findings in their studies of Lovecraft and his tales at Cerisy-la-Salle. This conference was then published in 2002 by Broché and included an addition by the American Donald Burleson, who is known in Lovecraft studies as the deconstructionist. This volume is important because it gives a good sample of just how much Lovecraft Studies in France have changed since the famous Cahiers de l’Herne *H. P. Lovecraft* (1969). Notably, Maurice Lévy’s “Lovecraft, trente ans après,” (“Lovecraft, thirty years after”) serves as a reminder of just how much was unknown about Lovecraft, and coincidentally how much Bergier invented.

More recently, however, Didier Hendrickx’s *H. P. Lovecraft: Le Dieu Silencieux* (2012) offers a regressive interpretation of Lovecraft and his philosophy as seen in his works. We previously explored Hendrickx’s work and his link to the perpetuation of Lovecraft’s “black magic” quote, an inaccuracy that August Derleth began.⁶⁹ Hendrickx’s interpretation of Lovecraft texts also suffers greatly from his enthusiasm for August Derleth, in that, Hendrickx projects concepts such as good and evil into the Cthulhu Mythos and Dream Cycle. As Robert M. Price points out, “Lovecraft would have regarded Derleth’s benevolent ‘Elder Gods’ as an instance of childish wish-fulfillment as

he did the Christian story of salvation” (“Demythologizing Cthulhu” 122). As previously explored, when Lovecraft resubmitted “The Call of Cthulhu” to *Weird Tales* (July 1927), he included a letter addressed to the then editor of *WT*, Farnsworth Wright expressing his conviction that

all my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large. To me there is nothing but puerility in a tale in which the human form—and the local human passions and conditions and standards—are depicted as native to other worlds or other universes. To achieve the essence of real externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all (*SL* 2.150).

This same letter was translated and included in the 1969 Cahiers de l’Herne edition, *H. P. Lovecraft*, which Hendrickx praises. It is unfortunate that the executor of Lovecraft’s œuvre (Derleth) did not read Lovecraft’s correspondence as closely as he did his tales. Hendrickx’s analysis is also regressive in the fact that he appears to be highly influenced by the reign of primitivism in French literary circles at the time when Lovecraft was first introduced to France, as was explored in chapter two. Lastly, after close reading, one can even come to the conclusion that Hendrickx’s Lovecraft research is hamstrung by the fact that his research and reading of Lovecraft is restricted to what has been made available in

the French language, and more recently it would appear that the most recent document cited is the *Phénix* number 6 issue *H. P. Lovecraft* in September 1986. His citations of Lovecraft's correspondence to support his interpretation of Lovecraft's mythology are restricted to the only volume (of five total) which was translated into French. In later volumes Lovecraft directly addresses the literality of his mythology and the fact that he does not specifically believe in it.

If one can put aside these questionable associations, and this is difficult because he repeatedly reiterates the good versus evil dichotomy, Hendrickx's analysis can be quite lucid and, at times, even excellent. In fact, despite the somewhat regressive interpretation of Lovecraft's work, Hendrickx's critical appreciation and vision is certainly contemporary in the fact that he understands Lovecraft's regard "acéré sur la société industrielle et ce monde technomarchand en pleine éclosion et déjà grand consommateur d'humains" ("sharpened on the industrial society and this technomarket world fully bloomed and already a great consumer of humans"; Hendrickx 8). Hendrickx views Lovecraft's ability to critically pierce the veil of his contemporary society as something which produced much anguish in Lovecraft, coupled with the early deaths of two father figures (his father Winfield Scott Lovecraft died in 1898, and his grandfather Whipple Van Buren Philips died in 1904). For Hendrickx, Lovecraft wrote as "un baume pour apaiser le mal-être" ("as balm to sooth the malaise"; 9). The primary leitmotif in *Le dieu silencieux* is that Lovecraft lucidly remarked a general degradation in interpersonal communication in the West. For Hendrickx, Lovecraft explores this degradation through three mythical structures that are present in each of his stories: 1) the Cthulhu Mythos, 2) Lovecraft's literary New England and 3) his childhood. For Hendrickx these "[t]rois

époques, trois espace-temps primordiaux dont nous pourrions observer la dégradation et dégager les solutions imaginées par Lovecraft pour tenter d'y remédier et donner un sens à son existence" ("three time periods, three primordial space-times which we will be able to observe the degradation and discern the imagined solutions by Lovecraft so as to try and fix them and to give a sense to his existence"; 25). As Hendrickx points out this is not necessarily anything new as Robert M. Price already pointed out, three mythical structures from which Lovecraft drew in his text "H. P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos" first published in *Crypt of Cthulhu* 36, September 1986 (which Hendrickx undoubtedly read in its translation in *Phénix* number 36 in 1986).

The difficulty is that Hendrickx appears to reiterate Bergier's Lovecraft, the mad-poet, although this time he is very much aware of his contemporary society and is disgusted, rather than aloof and unaware. Hendrickx's notion of authorship and writing is that "[é]crire c'est ici accomplir un geste premier, sans passé, présent ni futur, c'est accéder au temps primordial, devenir un dieu . . ." ("here, to write is to accomplish a first gesture, without past, present nor future. It's to gain access to a primordial time, to become a god . . ."; 13). Lovecraft wrote to recover his lost New England, his lost childhood and somehow help overcome the "evil" gods. Due to the way in which Hendrickx interprets Lovecraft's mythos, he reads into it a redemptive feature that appeases Lovecraft's "troubled" mind. According to Hendrickx, then, Lovecraft's stories are representative of his own fears (foreigners, miscegenation) and anxieties with regard to Lovecraft's politics (at times aligned with Fascism) and philosophy (materialist, nihilistic, elite). According to Hendrickx, Lovecraft wrote as a means to control internally what he could not externally. Being a man who considered himself firmly influenced by

19th century customs and thought and, Lovecraft clearly remarked the beginning of a different era in the first quarter of the 20th century. And it is for this reason that Lovecraft wrote, to appease his malaise, because as Hendrickx himself wrote “L’auteur est le maître absolu” (“the author is the absolute master”; 132). Didier Hendrickx’s *H. P. Lovecraft: Le dieu silencieux* is remarkably poignant and forward thinking at times, but ultimately a book whose influence is academically dated, and largely based on inaccurate data.

Let us consider another recent study in French on Lovecraft. Cédric Monget’s 2011 study *Lovecraft: Le dernier puritain* published by La Clef d’Argent. The difference between Hendrickx’s and Monget’s scholarship is clear when one compares the two works cited sections. Monget’s bibliography is over nine-tenths English-language sources, whereas Hendrickx’s sources are all restricted to French. As a result, the complexity and depth from which Monget approaches Lovecraft and his philosophy is remarkably succinct and innovative. Monget’s Lovecraft is no longer the mad/gifted-poet-mystic that Bergier passed on as his inheritance to future French Lovecraftian scholars, but rather more aligned with the modern image of Lovecraft that American scholars such as S. T. Joshi, Robert M. Price and Fritz Leiber have been promoting since *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* (1980). Monget highlights the disparity between the images, a “faute de disposer d’écrits plus tardifs” (“lack of laying out [his] writings much later”; *Le dernier puritain* 71). This leads to the fact the French “s[e] [sont] longtemps imaginé[s] Lovecraft comme étant un mystique décadent vivant dans la réclusion ou un occultiste laissant échapper dans ses récits les parcelles d’une connaissance secrète réservée au seul initiés” (“have for a long while imagined Lovecraft as being a decadent mystic living in reclusion or an occultist having let escape in his tales

the packets of secreted knowledge reserved only for initiates”; 71). Whether on purpose or not, this statement applies perfectly to Hendrickx’s approach to Lovecraft, and indeed the approach that French Lovecraft scholarship inherited from Benayoun, Legrand, Bergier and Pauwels.

The goal of *Lovecraft: le dernier puritain* is to “replacer l’athéisme de Lovecraft dans son contexte biographique et dans sa dynamique intellectuelle” (“to relocate Lovecraft’s atheism in its biographical context and in his dynamic intellect”; 77). This allows Monget to pillage Lovecraft’s correspondence and his secondary writings to inform his tales as a product of not only his aesthetics as an extension of his philosophy (materialist) but also of his atheism. This approach allows a materialist atheist, such as Lovecraft, to incorporate the structure of religion all the while subverting it with a denial of man’s importance. This is certainly a difficult task considering the fact that the esoteric or occultist interpretation of Lovecraft denies Lovecraft’s cosmic indifference to mankind. The occultist or esoteric “highjacking” of Lovecraft is blind to Lovecraft’s atheism and man’s overall lack of importance in the universe at large. Rather, they interpret the symbology of his texts in a specific, esoteric manner as a result “[l]es extraterrestres jouent alors le même rôle que le Dieu des Chrétiens” (“the extraterrestrials play the same role as the Christian’s God”; 73). Monget qualifies reading Lovecraft as an occultist as a “trahison, mais une trahison à laquelle il a prêté la main, non sans humour et désinvolture, par certains de ses écrits” (“betrayal, but a betrayal which he himself lent, not without humor and casualness, by some of his stories”; 73).

What allows for the seemingly contradictory label of “the last puritan” is the fact that Lovecraft’s philosophy logically concludes in

l'absence de Dieu. Il n'y a nulle place pour Lui dans un monde où il n'y a qu'une substance et que cette substance est la matière perceptible. Il n'y a aucun rôle possible pour Lui dans un monde sans finalité régi uniquement par les lois d'airain de la causalité et où le miracle divin de la conséquence sans cause est un mensonge que l'homme fait

("the absence of God. There is no place for Him in a world where there is only a substance and that this substance is perceptible matter. There is no possible role for Him in a world without finality reigning uniquely by bronze rules of causality and where the consequence of the divine miracle without causation is a lie that man himself created"; 69).

Despite Lovecraft's rejection of a God or gods, he understood the necessity of religion but one that "les progrès de la connaissance humaine ont rendu caduques les croyances passées" ("the progression of human knowledge has worn out bygone beliefs"; 69).

When understood in this way, Lovecraft's philosophy and atheism underscores the lack of character development in his stories, "en effet, ce sont les phénomènes qui recèlent en leur sein l'horreur et non la psychologie des héros" ("indeed, it is the events which at their heart deal in horror, not in the psychology of the heroes"; 60). This again highlights Lovecraft's cosmic indifference, that man if anything is secondary or even tertiary in the cosmos at large. This view is resoundingly different from Didier Hendrickx's who undoubtedly sees Lovecraft's cosmic indifference and the stories he wrote as a way to recover past, and lost, mystical structures.

Chapter Three Conclusion

We began this chapter by studying Michel Houellebecq's 1991 *H. P. Lovecraft: Contre le monde, contre la vie* as it appears to be a watershed moment separating the older French image of Lovecraft and the modern French image of Lovecraft. After having studied the framework through which Houellebecq explored Lovecraft and the universe he created, we wondered whether or not Houellebecq's interpretation, which differentiated itself from Begier's interpretation of Lovecraft, proved influential in modern French Lovecraft studies. To answer this question, we explored two recent works *H. P. Lovecraft: Le dieu silencieux* by Didier Hendrickx (2014) and Cédric Monget's *H. P. Lovecraft: Le dernier puritain*.

We discovered that, of the two works, Hendrickx, albeit more recent, proved to be more retrogressive in its interpretation of Lovecraft, his biography, philosophy and œuvre in general. Hendrickx indeed brings a critical approach to Lovecraft's texts which was not necessarily available in the initial introduction of Lovecraft to France (whether that be through lack of translated works, or literary theoretical approaches). Hendrickx's interpretation suffers from a primitivist approach to Lovecraft's text, in that the signs and symbols which dealt in the occult or the esoteric were taken to be the author's own convictions. This coupled with the fact that Hendrickx's resources are restricted to those published in the French language, and the most recent being the *Phénix* 1986 issue devoted to Lovecraft, leads one to believe that this publication is, in reality, a manuscript that preceded the publication of Houellebecq's book.

Cédric Monget's study, in contrast, is rooted in the most recent information on Lovecraft available in English and in French. His approach to Lovecraft was certainly not available prior to any French scholar, not only because Lovecraft's correspondence was not made available in the English till 1976, but because much of Monget's research takes place in English language, and in sources which have yet to be translated. This leads one to believe that modern French Lovecraft scholarship is at its apogee only when the critic has access to the plethora of fine English-language-only scholarship on Lovecraft. Monget's critical analysis of Lovecraft's atheism and his materialist philosophy as expressed in his tales offers a different image of Lovecraft that was not possible prior to Houellebecq. Houellebecq's image of Lovecraft in France is not entirely without influence. Monget and Houellebecq agree on a few points, mostly about Lovecraft's philosophy and racism and its influence on his writing. Monget's work should be accorded its place in French Lovecraft scholarship among the finest (Maurice Lévy's *H. P. Lovecraft, ou le fantastique* and Michel Houellebecq's *H. P. Lovecraft: Contre le monde, contre la vie*—both of which have been translated into English), both in its accuracy and in the possibility it offers. One wonders, if this is the case, when Monget's study will be accessible in English.

Conclusion

Karl Marx wrote in the *Communist Manifesto* that “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles” (Marxist.org). Literature is an expression of a culture at any given historical moment. Literary traditions are understood as an ongoing cultural production, in that each œuvre regardless of its subject and goal, takes part in the production of its culture. Thus, despite the differences in fiction and non-fiction, literature is understood to play a role as a whole. Translation, however, has been regarded as a set of disparate acts such that “one hardly gets any idea whatsoever of the function of translated literature as a whole or of its position within literature” (Even-Zohar 199).

Literary polysystems theory contends that translated literature plays an active role in the formation of literary systems. The role translation plays is either innovative or conservative, and this depends on the relative age of the system. In a young system, translation is active in shaping the center of the system, it is innovative in that it adds to the possibilities of expression. Even-Zohar explains that:

through foreign works, features (both principles and elements) are introduced into the house literature which did not exist there before. These include possibly not only new models of reality to replace the old and established ones that are no longer effective, but a whole range of other

features as well, such as new (poetic) language, or compositional patterns and techniques” (200).

Even-Zohar isolates conditions that must be optimal in order for translation to play an active role in a culture. These are the age of a literary system, the relation of the literature to the center of the system (i.e. peripheral, weak or marginal) and turning points or crises in literature represented as a vacuum. That is, in conditions where the indigenous literary system does not (or cannot) produce a specific genre or style. In this respect young literary systems use translations as models upon which to base their own literary system, which is by proxy a legitimization of a language or a culture. A strong literary tradition can still have translation play an active role, but more often than not the “normal” position assumed by translated literature tends to be a peripheral one” (203). In our particular case, H. P. Lovecraft’s texts offered “new models of reality” to French readers, elite and general alike. To understand the cultural elements influencing Lovecraft’s French introduction requires translation to be an active partner in the formation of a literary system. If we properly understand the role that translation plays in supplying a literary system with innovative or conservative texts, then we can begin to understand the ways in which H. P. Lovecraft has impacted the French and the American literary systems equally. The systems themselves are bifurcated due to the difference of language, which Antoine Berman believes is “hierarchized” (8). This hierarchy of languages is dispersed according to several value factors: the status of the source language versus the status of the target language, the literary status of the source language versus the status of the target language and the value of the source culture and that of the target culture.

These factors contribute to the ways in which a culture not only perceives itself vis-à-vis other cultures as well as the role that translation plays within a given culture. The function, then, of translation is culturally dependent. Or in other words, “the way translations are supposed to function depends both on the audience they are intended for (. . .), and on the status of the source text they are supposed to represent in their own culture” (Bassnett and Lefevere 8).

American Lovecraft studies are largely monolingual, in that there is very little input into the field from articles or books translated from other languages. Critical French works on Lovecraft that exist in English translation are hardly representative of the quantity of good research and analysis of Lovecraft’s work. The French have long been considered Lovecraft to be ripe for critical analysis because to them, his mechanical materialism and cosmic indifference appeared to coincide with avant-garde movements in France such as Surrealism, Fantastic Realism and more recently Existentialism. S. T. Joshi in his 1980 *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism*, remarks that the French held “significant and provocative views about Lovecraft” which will go “unrepresented” in this work (*Four Decades* xiii). Indeed the significant and provocative views about Lovecraft have *always* been unrepresented in American Lovecraft studies, with exception to Maurice Lévy’s *Lovecraft, ou du fantastique* (1972, translated into English in 1988 as *Lovecraft: A Study in the Fantastic*) and Michel Houellebecq’s *H. P. Lovecraft, contre le monde, contre la vie* (1999, translated into English in 2005 as *H. P. Lovecraft: Against the World, Against Life*). The goal of this dissertation has been to document the literary history of Lovecraft in France and to observe his cultural reception and image creation, so as to allow the monolingual American Lovecraft scholar to gain a multicultural image

of HPL. Uniquely enough, it is translation that opens up a space, as it “turns the original, reveals another side of it” that otherwise would be unseen (Berman 7).

The original premise of this dissertation was that if the French critically explored Lovecraft prior to his re-examination in American literary circles, then perhaps the French interest in Lovecraft influenced American scholars’ image of HPL. If this were the case, then the American critical image of Lovecraft would show signs of French thought or influence. However, Lovecraft’s introduction to French literary circles did not come through the same medium as Lovecraft’s emergence in America in pulp magazines in the 1920s and 30s. Lovecraft was introduced to France via avant-garde surrealists in 1953 by Robert Benayoun and Gerard Legrand when they published the article “H. P. Lovecraft et la lune noire” in a surrealist magazine entitled *Médium*. We are reminded that according to André Breton, surrealists believe in “la réalité supérieure de certaines formes d’associations négligées jusqu’à lui, à la toute-puissance du rêve, au jeu désintéressé de la pensée” (“the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought”; *Surrealist Manifesto* 36, 26 translation Lane and Seaver). The access to the “superior reality of certain forms” is gained in “l’absence de tout contrôle exercé par la raison” (“absence of any controlled exercise by reason,”) and therefore “en dehors de toute préoccupation esthétique ou morale” (“exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern”; 36, 26 translation Lane and Seaver). In chapter two we analyzed certain Lovecraft tales through concepts and techniques of surrealism, through which one can argue that for Robert Benayoun and Gerard Legrand, Lovecraft was a surrealist prophet of sorts.

Lovecraft's historical introduction to France occurred at a period of time when Claude-Lévi Strauss and Mircea Eliade were proponents of primitivism spurred on by anthropological and religious studies, respectively. Primitivism is essentially the recognition of cultural value in so-called "unsophisticated" or "primitive" cultures and its productions. The French Lovecraftian scholar Michel Meurger hypothesized that at the time when Lovecraft was introduced, the intellectual environment influenced the overall manner in which Lovecraft was interpreted. Polysystems literary theory helps us to understand the infrastructure of literature, and in particular the needs and wants of a given system. Translation theorists understand translation to be a sort of mediator between the source culture and the target culture. When a specific literary system lacks in a specific genre, translators, publishers or editors look at other literary systems where this genre is present. Thus, while we explored the existing French literary field as possessing "weird fiction," in the form of its predecessor Fantastic Literature, it was not truly until the cultural and literary isolation that France experienced during WWII that several well-known French publishers, Deux-Rives and Gallimard, launched series in the post-WWII years dedicated to science-fiction and fantasy. Francis Valéry explains that "[f]in 1949, le journaliste Michel Pilotin persuade les Editions Gallimard de lancer une collection de science-fiction, un genre littéraire alors inconnu en France . . . Pilotin est en relation avec Jacques Bergier qui en est un fin connoisseur" ("at the end of 1949, the journalist Michel Pilotin persuades Editions Gallimard to launch a science-fiction collection, a genre which was unknown in France . . . Pilotin knows Jacques Bergier, who is a fine connoisseur") of Lovecraft and other science-fiction and fantastic authors (24, translation mine).

Whether it is fortunate or not, the authoritative image of Lovecraft that was translated into French is largely August Derleth's interpretation of Lovecraft and his texts. Derleth's interpretation of Lovecraft's texts were slanted through a Christian worldview, one which contrasted greatly with Lovecraft's belief in cosmic indifference and his mechanistic materialism. Derleth, the self-appointed authority on Lovecraft, influenced the "Lovecraft" whom French translators carried over. As we explored in chapters one and two, Jacques Bergier highly influenced the initial introduction of Lovecraft to the French reading elite and general public in two ways. First, Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwles viewed Lovecraft and his texts as examples of "Fantastic Realism." As we recall, Fantastic Realism seeks to reveal the hidden truths of reality that exist in a waking state. Second, Jacques Bergier's introduction to *Démons et merveilles* (1955) entitled "H. P. Lovecraft, ce grand génie venu d'ailleurs" was reprinted until the 1970s. Francis Valéry remarks its enthusiastic welcome when he writes that "la presse est unanime pour saluer cet auteur d'une profonde originalité, dont la thématique aussi éblouissante que terrifiante ne peut laisser indifférent" ("the press unanimously welcomes this author of profound originality whose thematic is as magnificent as it is terrifying cannot leave anyone indifferent"; 24-26, translation mine). This unanimous welcome is largely informed by Bergier.

In a December 29, 1970 article appearing in the *Providence Evening Bulletin*, Paul Michaud observes in Paris that Lovecraft "is revered by French students, many of who go around carrying Lovecraft [paperbacks] in their hip pockets. To them, Lovecraft is as much of a culture hero as were once Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre" (12). Jacques Bergier is quoted in the article explaining Lovecraft's success in Paris,

traditionally the cultural center of France. According to Bergier, Lovecraft “was a writer crying out against the absurdity of a scientific civilization rapidly encroaching upon man” (12). Bergier believes the absurdity increasingly felt in post-WWII French culture found an echo in Lovecraft’s condemnation of scientific civilization. It was “so well received by French students . . . because, like them, [Lovecraft] is a ‘contestaire,’ . . . who contests or questions the basis of the very society in which [he] lives” (12). Michaud’s article is crucial, as it offers perhaps the first cultural comparison between Lovecraft’s reception in France and America. Michaud awkwardly recounts the fact that he, from Providence no less, knew less about Lovecraft than a student living in the Latin Quartier in Paris. He also observes the startling availability of Lovecraft’s work in France, whereas he had only managed to find two copies of Lovecraft between Providence and Boston in a pawn shop. In this sense, Michaud confirms Joshi’s and Lévy’s observation that the French have long been considered as Lovecraft champions, or at the very least have showed signs of being “infected” by him. During Lovecraft’s lifetime in America, his texts were culturally valued in the special pulp-fiction niche of horror pulps, whereas Lovecraft’s cultural value in France from his introduction (1953) to Michaud’s article (1970) is massive in comparison, so much so that “most bookstores keep large stocks of several [Lovecraft] titles. Many of them go as far as to devote entire display windows to the translations” (12). Thus, Lovecraft not only greatly impacted a large selection of the French general public, but the evidence examined in chapters two and three indicates that he also appealed to the intellectual elite of France in the 1950s and onward. We can therefore draw the conclusion that Paul Michaud’s interest in Lovecraft is perhaps more a

result of Lovecraft's popularity in France than produced by his popularity in the United States.

In 1969, a year before Michaud's article, *Cahiers de L'Herne* published *H. P. Lovecraft*, a collection of academically oriented articles, both by French authors and English-language authors in translation placing Lovecraft under the microscope. It features a reprint of Bergier's "ce grand génie," as well as other articles of superior quality. The most influential American "scholar" in translation is August Derleth. Comparatively, both the initial French image of Lovecraft was influenced to some degree by Derleth's own interpretation and also Bergier's. The French image, however, has its own uniqueness in the fact that the surrealist interpretation changed the angle of refraction from a teleology of good versus evil to one aligned with the aesthetic value of the unconscious mind, challenging perceptions of reality.

French academic thought on Lovecraft did not influence the image of Lovecraft in America. If anything, the evidence would suggest that the majority of French academic thought on Lovecraft is the result of American Lovecraft scholarship. It was not until Lovecraft's correspondence was published in five volumes from 1965 to 1976, that American Lovecraft scholarship began to interpret Lovecraft differently, giving rise to interpretations that were more aligned with Lovecraft's own philosophy and general worldview. In this sense, French Lovecraft studies' own liberation from Jacques Bergier's interpretation was a two-fold process, first through the translated articles of American scholars like S. T. Joshi, Fritz Lieber, Donald Burleson, Robert M. Price among many others, and second through the translation of Lovecraft's non-fictional texts into French (the last of which appeared as late as 1991). French Lovecraft scholarship

exploded exponentially over eight years in the 1990s, arguably culminating in Michel Houellebecq's *H. P. Lovecraft: contre le monde, contre la vie* (1999). The most excellent French critical approaches to Lovecraft have come from bilingual scholars who have access to a set of texts that the monolingual French scholar does not. In chapter three, we explored the differences between Didier Hendrickx's *H. P. Lovecraft: Le dieu silencieux* (2012) and Cédric Monget's *Lovecraft le dernier puritain* (2011). There is a certain visible level of information that a bilingual French Lovecraft scholar has over his monolingual compatriot. For a more recent example, the French Facebook group: "H. P. Lovecraft: Francophone" often discusses a variety of subjects concerning Lovecraft, from the most common "fanboy" type of question or observation to the critically informed question showing years of academic research.⁷⁰ More often than not, justification of one's viewpoint resorts to English-language-only research on the part of the member. This gives the impression that those who have access to the original English texts, yet to be translated into French, are privy to information that the monolingual scholars are not.

It is my contention that although the French have long been considered to be champions of Lovecraft both intellectually and pop-culturally, as this dissertation has revealed, his fame in France (outside of the instances of an American encountering Lovecraft while abroad) has done little to impact his reception and growth in American Lovecraft scholarship. Although the French image of HPL has had its unique refractions and interpretations, the current French image of Lovecraft as was explored in chapter three is more aligned with the American version. The reason for this is that despite the overwhelming wealth of French translations of Lovecraft's philosophical writings and other non-fiction works are still not available in French, including four volumes of his

letters. This means that the French Lovecraftian scholar has to be able to have access to the English language sources. This also implies that the French Lovecraftian scholar has encountered the excellent caliber of English-language scholarship that has been produced since S. T. Joshi's *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* (1980).

Despite the fact that it would appear that American Lovecraft scholarship is more thorough in that the entirety of Lovecraft's œuvre is available without the need of translation; we cannot discount the unique ways in which Lovecraft has impacted other literary systems. Since Berman has observed that differences between languages became hierarchized, we can hypothesize that cultural value and therefore cultural dominance results from direct access to the vault of original materials. In the example of the French Facebook Group, French scholars who have access to the untranslated English texts seem to have more credit with the "bank" than their French counterparts. This explains the fact that despite the literary value normally associated with the French literary system, the American literary system is particularly rich when it comes to Lovecraft (and pulp-fiction magazines in general). Due to its relative dominance, the field of American Lovecraft studies has felt little need to import "significant and provocative views" from other cultures.

The value of knowledge is not always gained as a result of an answer, sometimes it is the question that is more important. In my case, I wondered whether my academic and cultural interest in Lovecraft was the result of his popularity and importance in France. I discovered that this question was not possible to answer without a proper realignment of my consideration of translation and its role within a literary polysystem. I also discovered the influence that those in positions of authority have in shaping the

reception of Lovecraft, whether domestically or abroad. Many more questions have surfaced along the way, and in most cases, they require an in-depth analysis much too large for this current project. For example, how will exploring the “other side” of Lovecraft benefit American Lovecraft Scholars? How will the knowledge of French Lovecraft scholarship circulate and affect its American counterpart?

Ultimately, if better self-understanding comes through an interaction with the other, American Lovecraft Studies can gain in understanding Lovecraft’s image as a cultural “other” in France. This can only be done through a greater understanding of how translation plays an immediate role in the formation of literature, but also the greater role that translation has played in the history of literature.

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End Notes

¹ Lovecraft's canonization in the Library of America can be largely attributed to S. T. Joshi's herculean effort in publishing, editing and writing on Lovecraft. However, one can truly attribute the mass awareness of Lovecraft to Penguin which issued three volumes of Lovecraft's tales (from 1999 to 2004) in their series "Penguin Modern

² *The Call of Cthulhu* role-playing game essentially lays out Lovecraft's conceptual universe in a rule system similar to *Dungeons and Dragons* role-playing game. The characters have attributes such as strength and intellect which are randomly determined by rolling a twenty-sided dice. The players explore Lovecraft's universe via their created characters similarly to the way that Lovecraft's characters explored the universe his stories created. The intriguing point about *The Call of Cthulhu* role-playing game is the function of "insanity." Each time a character gains knowledge or information on the "reality" of the universe they gain an "insanity" point. At a certain threshold, which is determined by the character's intellect, the character will go insane, thus ending their time in the created universe.

³ French cultural domination can roughly be understood to gain prominence from roughly the Enlightenment (choosing arbitrarily Descartes *Discourse on Method* 1637) all the way up to Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo (June 18, 1815). One must keep in mind that cultural domination is not a static event, but it changes like the course of a river.

⁴ Pascale Casanova's 2004 *The World Republic of Letters* is an interesting book which explores the French cultural domination of a global system of interaction amongst literary systems.

⁵ Weird fiction and the weird tale should be understood to be synonymous terms.

⁶ Many of the best weird fiction writers who were published along side H. P. Lovecraft were his friends and correspondents, such as Fritz Leiber, Robert Bloch, Frank Belknap Long, Robert Chambers and August Derleth. Other notable mentions are: E.F. Benson, E.L. White, E.H. Visiak, Donald Wandrei, C.L. Moore, M.R. James and Carl Jacobi. Further, China Miéville's status as an authority on weird fiction is a result of his numerous publications of stories which are considered as "new weird fiction," such as *Perdido Street Station* (2000). New Weird Fiction is perhaps a retrospective categorization of stories and tales infused with certain elements of weird fiction and contemporary society.

⁷ Other weird fiction magazines are *Ghost Stories* (1926-1932), *Tales of Magic and Mystery* (Dec 1927- Apr 1928), *Strange Tales* (1931-1933) to name only a small sample size.

⁸ Tzvetan Todorov's work *La littérature fantastique* provides us with the most general definition of fantastic literature is the hesitation in the reader/narrator as to whether the events experienced or narrated are marvelous or strange (uncanny). The moment when the choice between the two occurs, the fantastic evaporates and the tale is marvelous

(Natural laws are broken, and must be revised in order to incorporate/explain the phenomena). If the tale has a Natural explanation, then the tale is uncanny because the Natural laws that govern the universe remain intact. Science Fiction can most easily be understood as fiction, which utilizes futuristic science and technology, space and/or time travel, parallel universes and extraterrestrials.

⁹ Should the reader desire a more indepth study on pulps, David M. Earle's *Re-covering Modernism*, is a good start. Or, alternatively, one can explore "The Pulps Magazine Project at: <http://www.pulpmags.org/default.htm> .

¹⁰ Some of HPL's works can be associated in a *mélange* with the other divisions. This is certainly the case with much of his early work such as "The Tomb" (1917), "Dagon" (1917), "From Beyond" (1920) and "The Hound" (1922). Alternatively, in some of his later works such as "The Book" (1933).

¹¹ The "weird" literary tradition in France will be discussed below in the section entitled "The French Weird Tradition."

¹² Joshi, S. T. "The Weird Short Story" *Unutterable Horror*. Volume 1. Hornsea, England: PS. 123-133. 2012.

¹³ I return to Poe later in this chapter in order to explore the particular connection between Poe and his initial French translator, Charles Baudelaire and the parallels between them with Lovecraft and his initial French translator, Jacques Bergier.

¹⁴ While Lovecraft may always be more known for his weird fiction rather than for his non-fiction writing, one can consider him to be an epistolarian above all else, having written (at least) 80,000 letters over his lifetime. S. T. Joshi's article, "A Look at Lovecraft's Letters" in *Crypt of Cthulhu*, no 46, 1987, provides a stimulating look at the fascinating revelations that can be gained through HPL's correspondences is.

¹⁵ Maurice Lévy in his *Lovecraft ou du fantastique* (1985), and translated into English by S. T. Joshi under the title *Lovecraft, a study in the fantastic* (1988), proposed that Lovecraft himself wrote such stories so as to cure himself of some illness or haunting. In other words, it was cathartic. Didier Hendrickx's 2012 publication "*H. P. Lovecraft: le dieu silencieux*," builds on Lévy's hypothesis of Lovecraft's writing as a form of self-treatment.

¹⁶ Henneberger initially offered H. P. Lovecraft the editorial position after Baird. However, HPL rejected it and Farnsworth Wright took helm.

¹⁷ Much more will be discussed about "le fantastique" later in this chapter.

¹⁸ There is also a shorter version of "Le Horla" (1886).

¹⁹ He originally started his career under the penname Vincent Saint-Vincent.

²⁰ The original English translator is anonymous.

²¹ He has many pennames, which appeared to change depending on the language and nation where his works were meant to appear.

²² Lovecraft, in his own words, remarks that "I choose [to write] weird stories because they suit my inclination the best. . ." ("Notes" 113).

²³ These amateur associations were created to provide amateur writers with a network in which they could share their stories and theories.

²⁴ S. T. Joshi's article "A Look at Lovecraft's Letters" is an excellent source for a general overview on Lovecraft's correspondences. The journal in which his article can be found, *Crypt of Cthulhu* no. 46 (1987), is wholly devoted to Lovecraft's letters. The letters are published exclusively by Arkham House and Necronomicon Press.

²⁵ August Derleth became the self-titled authority on "all things Lovecraft" upon his friend's death. However Derleth's teleological vision of the universe and all its contents do not correspond with Lovecraft's cosmic indifference. In S. T. Joshi's *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism* (1991), many articles were written in order to "correct" Derleth's "stranglehold" on Lovecraft criticism.

²⁶ Despite the highly precarious nature of such categories, they offer a convenient tool for grouping his tales. Therefore, *faute de mieux* these categories will remain uncontested for sake of clarity.

²⁷ Other Dream Cycle texts can be found in the table of contents of *Beyond the Wall of Sleep*, published by Arkham House in 1943. Essentially, some of Lovecraft's best poems and many of his Dream Cycle texts were collected in this volume.

²⁸ "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward" (1927) does mention Randolph Carter in passing, but in my opinion this is not reason enough for it be associated with the "Dream Cycle," rather than with the "Cthulhu Mythos."

²⁹ The French systematically replaces Lovecraft's word "weird fiction/tale" with "le fantastique." This will be touched upon later in part III of this chapter.

³⁰ In 1989 S. T. Joshi revised and expanded this edition from 383 pages to 450 pages.

³¹ For a brief history and overview of Armed Services Editions the following website is useful: <http://www.armedserviceseditions.com/index.htm>

³² "H. P. Lovecraft: Myth-Maker" was reprinted in both *Four Decades* and *Dissecting Cthulhu*.

³³ August Derleth was one of the chief executors of Lovecraft's estate upon his death. Derleth named himself the authority on all things Lovecraft, from correct interpretations of his tales to selecting which writers should or should not publish their "lovecraftian" style texts. Derleth misinterpreted Lovecraft's cosmic indifference for a teleological good versus evil mythology where certain of Lovecraft's extraterrestrial entities supported mankind and certain did not. Derleth went as far as to assign certain Lovecraftian extraterrestrials elemental properties, such as fire, wind, air and earth.

³⁴ It was originally published by Christian Bourgois/Union Générale d'Éditions in 1972 (reprinted in 1985).

³⁵ In a personal correspondence between myself and Mr. Joshi, he informs me that "*A Dreamer and a Visionary*, but you must know that that book is only a radical abridgment of my biography, first published as *H. P. Lovecraft: A Life* (West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1996); this edition was itself slightly abridged from my original

ms., and an unabridged and updated edition appeared as *I Am Providence: The Life and Times of H. P. Lovecraft* (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2010; 2 vols.) (“Dissertation Chapter 1”).

³⁶ This quote is the result of an email exchange between S. T. Joshi and myself.

³⁷ New Age can be understood as general philosophy that sees untapped potential in mankind, which can be accessed via a spiritual connection with the Earth. This often involves a raising one’s energy or vibrations through various means of meditation and/or drug-induced, often psychedelic, states of awareness.

³⁸ It is not uncommon in French rewriting of Poe to see “Allan” altogether left out when writing Poe’s full name. It is as if the French are rebelling against Poe’s adopted father in much the same way that he did himself.

³⁹ Jacques Bergier, born Yakov Mikhailovich Berger in present-day Ukraine, was a chemical engineer, a participant of the *Résistance*, journalist and fiction writer. Louis Pauwels, born in Belgium, was a journalist.

⁴⁰ Lovecraft’s participation in amateur journalism led him to make many long-lasting friendships, although many of these were maintained uniquely through letters.

⁴¹ Bergier even claims that HPL “connaissait un nombre incalculable de langues, y compris quatre langues africaines: Damora, Swahili, Chulu et Zani et de dialectes” (“knew an incalculable number of langues including four African languages: Damor, Swahili, Chulu and Zani and their dialects”; “Ce grand génie” 123). This is a fabrication, Lovecraft knew Latin, some Greek and could read some French and Spanish. Furthermore, Damor, Chulu and Zani are not even languages.

⁴² Bergier and Pauwels are not trying to imply that the Surrealists in the 1920s knew of Lovecraft (which is possible, but no proof exists), but they are comparing their research into the unconsciousness to *their* research into the “higher” consciousness.

⁴³ There is no hard evidence that Bergier ever corresponded with HPL; But Bergier did have one of his letters published in the March 1936 *Weird Tales* titled “From a French Reader.” This is despite Bergier’s introduction to the general French population in his preface to *Démons et merveilles* (1955).

⁴⁴ Crowley was an occultist, ceremonial magician who painted and wrote poetry. He created the religion and philosophy of Thelema which is a combination of Rosicrucianism, Egyptology. The *Book of Law* is essentially the primary text upon which the Thelematic principles were established. Crowley claims that the *Book of Law* was channeled to him by an entity known as Aiwass when he and his wife sojourned in Egypt in 1904.

⁴⁵ The extent to which Bergier interpreted Lovecraft and his works was discussed previously in the third part.

⁴⁶ André Breton is considered to be the primary leader of Surrealism, and at the time of the First Surrealist Manifesto the following were its members: André Breton, Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard, Philippe Soupault, Jacques Baron, Robert Desnos, Max Ernst, Pierre de Massot, Max Morise, Pierre Unik, Roger Vitrac. This list would later be revised

many times according to the Ideological and political relationship that each had with regard to Breton's vision of the direction in which Surrealism should go.

⁴⁷ The 1923 French title was translated as *La sciences des rêves*, and in 1967 a revised edition featured the title *Interpretation des rêves*.

⁴⁸ After finding a long forgotten tomb, Carter and his acquaintance open the sepulcher to reveal a staircase. His acquaintance descends the staircase and witnesses a horrifying phenomenon (of which we have no concrete description), which eventually takes his life. Carter is the only one found by the police and is thought to have murdered his friend, but Carter does not remember and only knows that it was all real.

⁴⁹ Yog-Sothoth plays an important role in the Lovecraft's "Cthulhu Mythos" tales and is a prominent feature in "The Dunwich Horror."

⁵⁰ To my knowledge the only instance in which Surrealist criticism of Lovecraft appeared was in Benayoun and Legrand's 1953 article "H. P. Lovecraft et la lune noire" in *Médium*.

⁵¹ The U.S. Navy denied this story. Recent research, notably Jim Marrs book *Psi Spies: The True Story of America's Psychic Warfare Program*, confirms that the experiment never took place. Nevertheless, this erroneous story created a psychic "arms race" between the United States and the U.S.S.R., leading to actual psychic research on the part of the U.S. Government and the U.S.S.R.

⁵² Hugh Elliot's *Modern Science and Materialism* was written in 1919. Much of Tillinghast's personal ideas seem to be taken almost verbatim from Elliot's introduction, specifically the question as to what one would experience should we acquire more sense perception.

⁵³ In "Supernatural Horror in Literature," Lovecraft remarks that "[o]f living creators of cosmic fear raised to its most artistic pitch, few if any can hope to equal the versatile Arthur Machen, author of some dozen tales long and short, in which the elements of hidden horror and brooding fright attain an almost incomparable substance and realistic acuteness . . . [T]he fact remains that his powerful horror-material of the [eighteen]-nineties and earlier nineteen-hundreds stands alone in its class, and marks a distinct epoch in the history of this literary form" (88). Bergier and Pauwels devote a small portion of one of their chapters to Arthur Machen in whose entire works "'l'homme est fait de mystère pour les mystères et les visions.' La réalité, c'est le surnaturel. Le monde extérieur est de peu d'enseignement, à moins qu'il ne soit vu comme un

réservoir de symboles et de significations cachées. Seules les œuvres d'imagination produites par un esprit qui cherche les vérités éternelles ont quelque chance d'être des œuvres réelles et réellement utiles" ['man is made of mystery for mysteries and visions.' Reality is supernatural. The exterior world has so little teach, aside that it is seen as a reservoir of symbols an hidden meaning. Only produced works of imagination by a spirit which searches for eternal truths has a chance to be real works and really useable] (Bergier and Pauwels 266, translation mine) A link to provide between Machen and Lovecraft. Both in Bergier's and Pauwels' opinion searched for eternal truths in their works, and each in their own way, in Bergier's and Pauwels' interpretation of their works, believed whole heartedly in the content of their stories.

⁵⁴ Meurger contends that Primitivism "became an important factor in Western culture from the second half of the eighteenth century" (7). Indeed, Western culture has always, in some fashion, looked towards the past for clarity on the present or an augur for the future. The nostalgia for antiquity is present in many Western philosophers and artists, as is evident in Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* or Richard Wagner's *Ring Cycle* which looks towards the Teutonic culture for the German people to return to a "lost harmony," as Meurger would put it. In the France, Primitivism can be seen in the grandiose architecture of Versailles with its statues inspired by Greek myth, its neo-classical columns and general interior design, all of which were inspired in some fashion by Greek and Roman mythology (one only needs to pause for a minute and contemplate the "Herculean Room" in Versailles).

⁵⁵ Certain unavailable documents in French at the time of Lovecraft's initial introduction were personal testimony of Lovecraft via his correspondents, the collection and publication of his correspondence, or works in which he outlined his general theory on Weird Fiction such as "Notes On Writing Weird Fiction," "In Defense of Dagon" and "Supernatural Horror in Literature."

⁵⁶ While the French people did uniquely suffer in the fact that the majority of WWI took place on their own soil, the Americans of the 1920's also participated in WWI.

⁵⁷ It should be noted that in the story "Through the Gates of the Silver Key," Ward Phillips enthusiastically believes the "wild" story that the Swami tells as to explain Randolph Carter's disappearance.

⁵⁸ "Lovecraft et Bergier: Le larcin des magiciens" was published across five issues of *Etudes Lovecraftiennes*, from 1991 to 1994.

⁵⁹ The reprints are as follow, 1955 in *Démons et Merveilles*, 1961 in Bergier and Pauwels magazine *Planète* no. 1, the famous Cahier de L’Herne *H. P. Lovecraft* in 1969 and lastly in the 10/18 re-edition of *Démons et merveilles*.

⁶⁰ We already quoted Lovecraft’s praise of Machen in “Supernatural Horror in Literature,” and of Chambers’ most well known work, *The King in Yellow*, is

a series of vaguely connected short stories having as a background a monstrous and suppressed book whose perusal brings fright, madness, and spectral tragedy, [it] really achieves notable heights of cosmic fear in spite of uneven interest and a somewhat trivial and affected cultivation of the Gallic studio atmosphere . . . (“Supernatural Horror” 71).

Of Ambrose Bierce, Lovecraft notes that almost all of “Bierce’s tales are tales of horror; and whilst many of them treat only of the physical and psychological horrors within Nature, a substantial portion admit the malignly supernatural and form a leading element in America’s fund of weird literature” (66). However, of Bierce’s particular execution Lovecraft finds it “somewhat uneven [and] [m]any of the stories are obviously mechanical, and marred by a jaunty and commonplacely artificial style derived from journalistic models; but the grim malevolence stalking through all of them is unmistakable . . .” (67).

Let us recall that the atmosphere and not the action, according to Lovecraft, is the sign of a great weird tale—this alone is perhaps the saving grace for many writers because, as Lovecraft himself is often criticized, if treated properly “a certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of out, unknown forces [will still] be present” (“Supernatural Horror” 15). Indeed, a weird tale should be judged alone on the quality of atmosphere and the way in which it is executed above all other criterion.

⁶¹ Lequeux footnotes this particular claim in *Planète* number 1 (1961), with another instance in an interview *L’œil du Golem* (numbers 2 and 3, 1976) where Bergier confirms that he corresponded with Lovecraft starting in 1930, which corresponds with the appearance of *Creeps by Night* in 1930-31.

⁶² Lequeux quotes Pierre-Jean Founau in *NRF* number 261, September 1974: “Introduites en France il y a vingt ans par son ami Jacques Bergier, ses nouvelles, dont le tirage reste faible aux Etats-Unis, sont bientôt intégralement publiées en français” [Introduced to France 20 years ago by his friend Jacques Bergier, his stories which are not widely available in the United States, are soon integrally published in French” (qtd in Lequeux page 100, translation mine). Founau’s claim that Lovecraft’s tales were not widely available in the United States in the mid-70s is not entirely accurate, as Chapter One exhaustively detailed his literary history in the United States.

⁶³ Maurice Lévy's article "Lovecraft, trente ans après" is, essentially, a retrospective on how far Lovecraft studies in France has come since the famous Cahier de l'Herne which was published in 1969.

⁶⁴ L. Sprague de Camp's *Lovecraft: A Biography* was published in hardcover in 1975 by Double Day. A year later (1976) it was corrected and an abridged version appeared in paperback by Ballentine Books. Barnes & Nobles republished it in hardcover in 1996.

⁶⁵ "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward" is essentially a story about Charles' ancestral ties to esoteric concepts such as alchemy, necromancy and sorcery. He becomes so engrossed in his ancestry that he is eventually murdered by an ancestor whom he resurrects through occult application of esoteric knowledge.

⁶⁶ In 2001 all of Lovecraft's poems were published by Night Shade Books under a single title edited by S. T. Joshi entitled *The Ancient Track: Complete Poetical Works of H. P. Lovecraft*. More recently, *The Ancient Track* was revised in 2013 and published by Hippocampus Press.

⁶⁷ Composed between 1925 and 1926, this essay was published just before Lovecraft's "great texts" were unleashed onto the world. The first French translation by Bergier and François Truchaud was available by 1969 as "Epouvante et surnaturel en littérature" "Supernatural Horror in Literature."

⁶⁸ Elohim is a Hebrew term which means either god or gods. This would then have been a term that the ancient Hebrew would have used to refer to God in the Torah. The Elohimite cult is centered on cloning technology, thus, one could infer that the cult and its members have replaced the Hebrew God as creator of life.

⁶⁹ "All my stories, unconnected as they may be, are based on the fundamental lore or legend that this world was inhabited at one time by another race who, in practicing black magic, lost their foothold and were expelled, yet live on outside ever ready to take possession of this earth again" (cited in "Lovecraft vs. Derleth," 46).

⁷⁰ I discovered this group by accident after searching on Google for Jacques Bergier references. Many of the most active French scholars on Lovecraft are members of this group including: Joseph Altairac, Cédric Monget, Adam Joffrain, Bernard Bonnet, Philippe Gindre and Christophe Till are among the most notable.