



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Research Commons

<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

Research Commons at the University of Waikato

Copyright Statement:

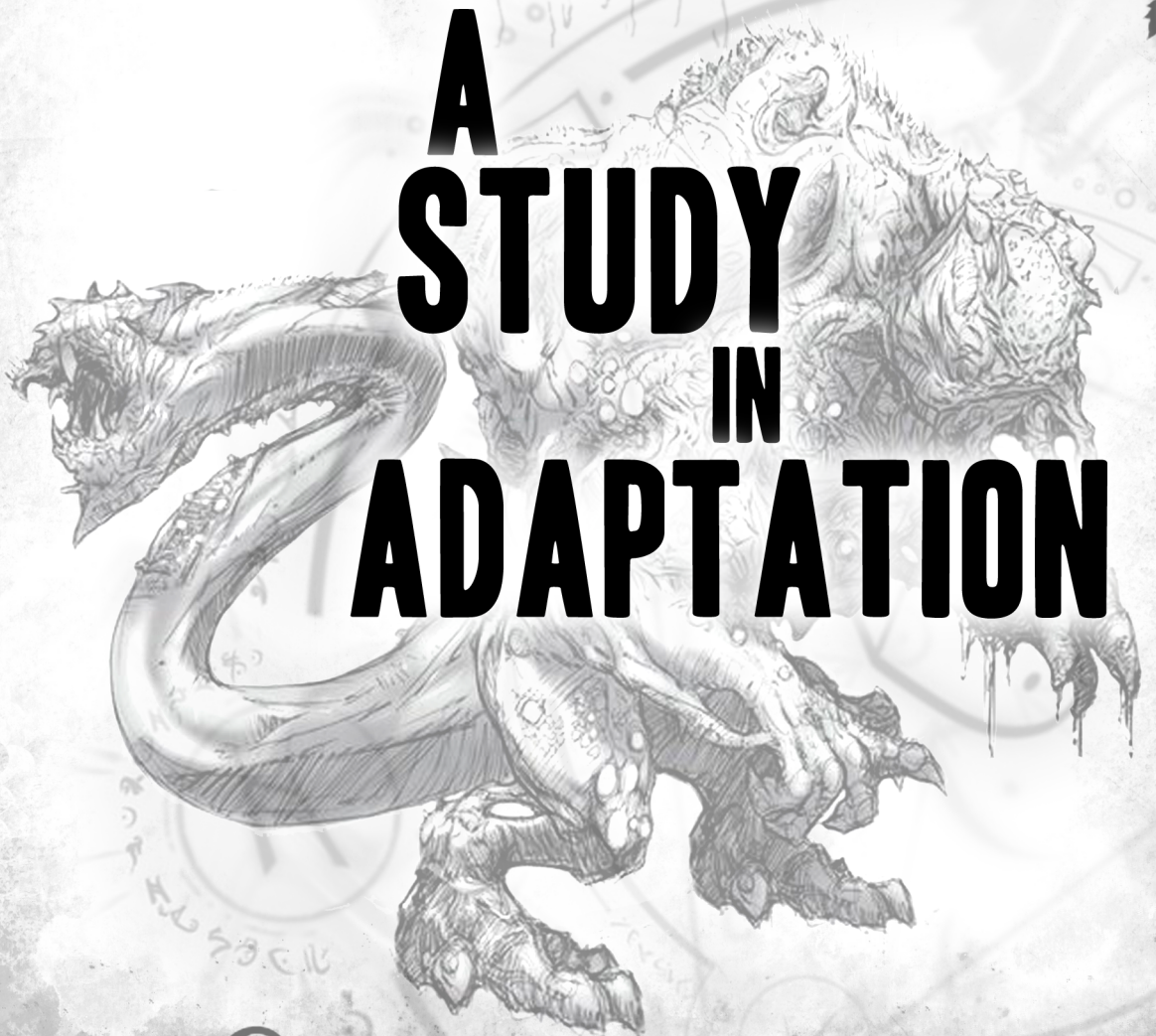
The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

The thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of the thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from the thesis.



WHISPERER



A STUDY IN ADAPTATION

WHISPERER: A STUDY IN ADAPTATION

A thesis
submitted in fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of

Master of Arts in Theatre Studies

at

The University of Waikato

by

BRENDAN WEST

The University of Waikato
2012

ABSTRACT:

It is becoming increasingly common in the modern theatre world for practitioners to be multi-disciplinary. This thesis mates the skills of academia, scriptwriting, technical design and prop fabrication in order to create an adaption of H. P. Lovecraft's *The Whisperer in Darkness*. In it, I investigate the methodology of adaptation and how it has, and can, apply specifically to the Gothic and Weird Fiction genres. Via study of other Gothic and Lovecraftian adaptations, I craft a script from *The Whisperer in Darkness*, including design specifications and specialist technical considerations. Many of these findings are explored through a practical staging of said script.

It is strongly advisable for any reader of this thesis to first read the appendix.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I'd like to express my heartfelt thanks to Gaye Poole, my primary supervisor, whose dedication to a most curious topic has made this thesis possible. Thanks also to Dr. Mark Houlahan, who was previously one of my supervisors, but found that he had to graciously bow out of the process before completion – his script critique was most valuable. Also, I'd like to thank Dr. Kirstine Moffat as an 'honorary supervisor', for the feedback and encouragement she offered outside of the course.

The Cast & Crew of *The Whisperer in Darkness*:

Ross MacLeod

Adrienne Clothier

Kevin Harty

Henry Ashby

Benny Marama

John Hunter

Jono Carter

Danielle Appleton

Andrea Hows

Additional Support:

The H. P. Lovecraft Historical Society

Athena Chambers

Hannah Wright

Mary Melinn

Carolyn Henson

Jenny McGhee

Thanks to my family and friends, who braved endless talk about a subject no one is really interested in.

Finally, posthumous thanks to Howard Phillips Lovecraft for being such a strange, strange man.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Introduction, Constraints & Aims:	1
Chapter 1: Adaptation Methodologies	8
Chapter 2: The Gothic & Adaptations Therein	32
Chapter 3: H. P. Lovecraft & The Cthulhu Mythos	49
Chapter 4 (Section A): Annotated Playscript	73
Chapter 4 (Section B): Script Development	122
Chapter 5: Production Record	152
Chapter 6: Exegesis	164
Bibliography	174
Appendix: Original Text	

ILLUSTRATION ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

The various design work in this thesis was accomplished with a mixture of original and sampled work, courtesy of the online community. Various images were composited together to create the chapter title pages. This is an acknowledgement of those artists' work.

Title Page:

- Kelly Snapka
- David Mitchell

Introduction:

- Robert M. Thomas

Chapter One:

- Chris Lazzer

Chapter Two:

- Ian Hitchinson

Chapter Three:

- Nesty

Chapter Four A:

- Curt Chiarelli

Chapter Four B:

- Pahko (Title Page)
 - o Ruud Dirven
 - o Nathan Rosario

Chapter Five:

- A. Robert Neumann

Chapter Six:

- T. J. Frame

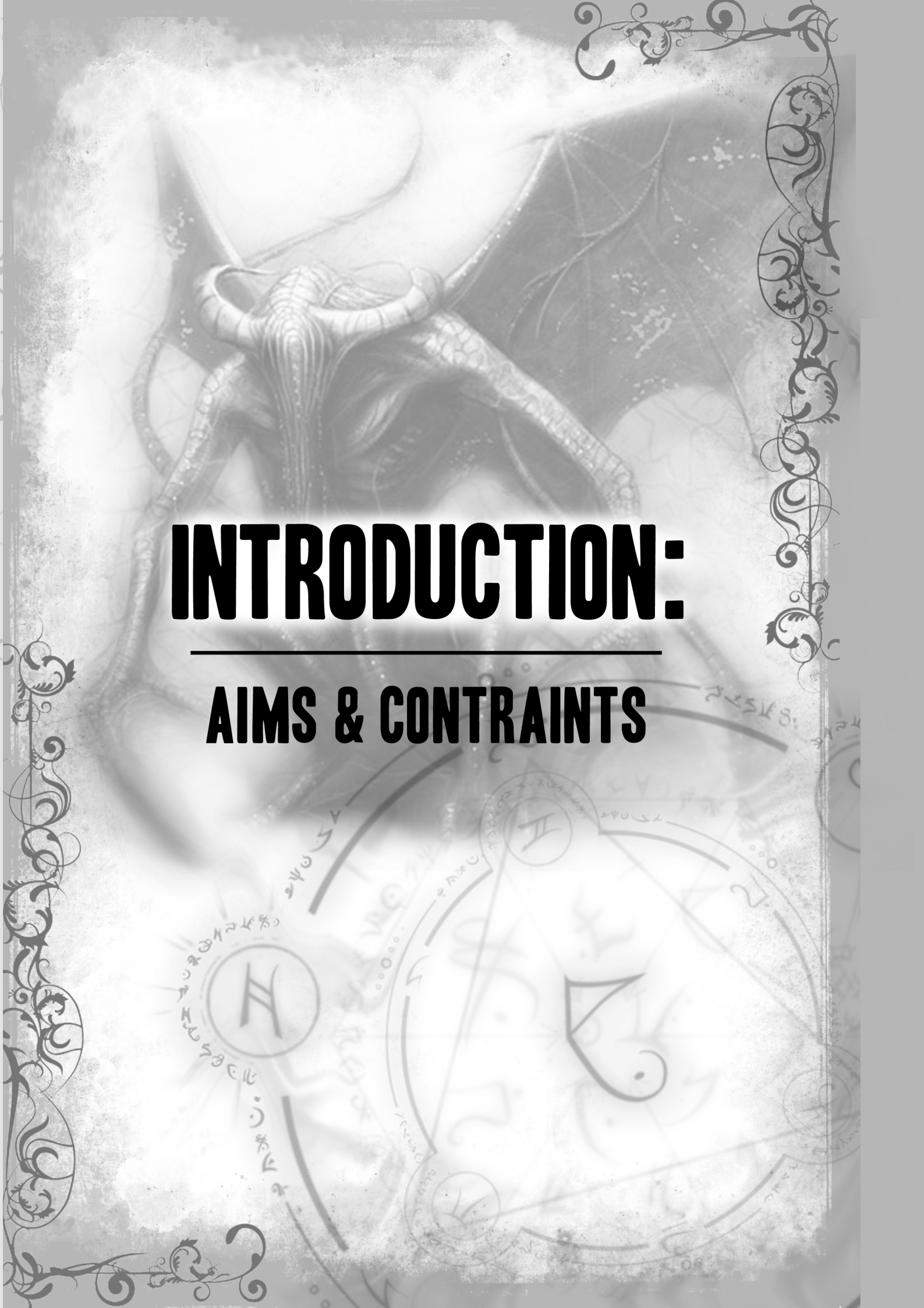
Bibliography:

- Ian Hutchinson

Appendix:

- T. J. Frame



The background features a detailed illustration of a dragon with its wings spread, perched atop a large, glowing orb. Below the dragon is a complex zodiac chart with various symbols and lines. The entire scene is framed by ornate, black, scrollwork borders on the top, bottom, and sides.

INTRODUCTION:

AIMS & CONSTRAINTS

We shall see that at which dogs howl in the dark, and that at which cats prick up their ears after midnight.

- H.P. Lovecraft
"From Beyond"



he inspiration for this thesis came from a love of the dark. It seems that the majority of revelations occur in the dark, whether it be in our dreams, or in those moments of extreme isolation when walking alone at night. The dark is its own landscape: a place where any future is possible, and every past experience is now. It is in the dark that we are both weakest and at our most strong. Only two authors have evoked this feeling for me in the light – Clive Barker and H. P. Lovecraft. A single thread – horror, connects both. Horror is an incredibly divisive genre: for some it is an obsession, for others something to avoid. Rarely are people indifferent towards it.

The very first Lovecraft story I read was *The Outsider*, the tale from the point of view of some creature that had lived for time in memoriam in a subterranean world. All it had ever known was a dark, decayed castle, surrounded by endless black woods, all cut off from the sky. Eventually, he musters his strength and curiosity, climbing the crumbling ruins of the tallest tower, emerging into the real world. Still cut off from the sun by the night, he eventually comes across a household of happy laughing people, who run screaming. Nothing was explained. Nothing was concluded. I was left thinking of the extents of this creature's life. What lay beyond the woods? When had the castle sunk beneath the earth? These questions led to my tracking down, and rabid consumption of, Lovecraft's other works. In many ways, the fans of Lovecraft are like the cults he writes about: an outsider can have difficulty locating a hub, and it takes time to be accepted. Eventually, I made contact with Sean Brannery, president of the H. P. Lovecraft Society and director of the professional Los Angeles theatre company, 'Theatre Banshee'. It was he that inspired me to believe that Lovecraft had a place



Howard Phillips Lovecraft
(Photo undated)

on the stage. From there, an exploration of adaptation began – is it possible to take the intangible and express it in a tangible way?

This thesis has emerged from a very multi-disciplined background. Having spent a significant amount of my theatre experience in a variety of roles, I didn't feel that I could ignore any of them: facets of acting, writing, directing, prop fabrication, illustrating, graphic design, sound design and lighting design all combine to make this a rather unique postgraduate study. As a result, the net of my research has been cast rather wide: I find examples from many media just as salient as academic literature. Because this thesis will cover a range of topics, often in a diffuse manner, as a tool for the reader, here are a few terms and brief definitions to make sense of this miasma.

H. P. Lovecraft:

An American author of New England descent, Lovecraft was the first modern face of the Gothic Horror genre. He was born August 20th, 1890, writing through most of his life until his death in 1937. A prolific writer, his works ranged from scientific pamphlets to philosophical treatises.¹ Most of his fiction consisted of short stories and novellas, written for publication in the various pulp magazines he became associated with. These stories are of a science-fiction horror flavour, focussing on the scale of existence and the fragility of human sanity.

Weird Fiction:

A bridging genre of substantial significance, 'Weird Fiction' was a term coined by H. P. Lovecraft², borrowed from J. Sheridan Le Fanu³, an early 1800s Irish author. Lovecraft set down the foundations of this genre in his essay 'Supernatural Horror in Literature',:

¹ A complete list of his works is available at <http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/>

² First officially used in his essay *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, linked with the pulp magazine in which these tales were published, 'Weird Tales', first published 1923.

³ The first appearance of the term 'Weird' was in the title of a Le Fanu collection – Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, *The Watcher and Other Weird Stories* (London: Downey, 1894)

The one test of the really weird is simply this—whether or not there be excited in the reader a profound sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers; a subtle attitude of awed listening, as if for the beating of black wings or the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe's utmost rim.⁴

In less flowery prose, Weird Fiction is horror that is derived from contact with the Other, but where the Other is larger, more powerful, older and more significant than the protagonist – a form of conceptual agoraphobia, perhaps.



The Cthulhu Mythos:

The culmination of Lovecraft's works, the Mythos is a rough map of how the different creatures, locations and dimensions fit together. Lovecraft never intended for his works to interlink with continuity, but his habit of borrowing names and ideas and characters from his friends created an unconscious framework. This framework was later exploited by co-writer August Derleth, who categorised the Mythos and coined the term 'Cthulhu Mythos'⁵ after the titanic Elder God, which would become Lovecraft's most recognised creation.

Extra-natural:

Lovecraft's creatures are notoriously hard to define. The larger entities alone are described as 'gods', yet they are not gods in the religious sense, but merely by comparison to lesser beings. This led me to seek a term that encompassed the potential of the *supernatural*, but stressed the *natural* way in which these things came about. The result is 'extra-natural': the addition of *another* natural order to the *existing* natural order.

⁴H. P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (New York: Dover, 1973) p. 4

⁵George Gammell Angell, 'Cthulhu Elsewhere in Lovecraft' in *Crypt of Cthulhu #9* (Bloomfield: Miskatonic University Press, 1982)

MacGuffin:

A film-maker's term, popularised and coined by Alfred Hitchcock⁶. A MacGuffin is a word or object designed purely to advance plot and/or reveal character motivations. They serve no greater purpose later in the film (or play) and lack further depth⁷. Lovecraft's library of books – the *Necronomicon* among them – can be considered MacGuffins. This concept is particularly important in dealing with Lovecraft's mythos in a translucent way.

The Whisperer in Darkness:

The practical component source material. A short story published August 1931 in *Weird Tales*, *Whisperer* is a tale of confrontation between the 'normal' world and extra-terrestrial creatures who have been on earth, albeit in hiding, for longer than humanity. This race is named the 'Mi-Go', which would feature in later stories. *Whisperer* is an early example of non-occult horror fiction, and marks Lovecraft's shift towards longer-form faux histories, such as *At the Mountains of Madness*⁸ and *The Shadow Out of Time*⁹.

⁶Marshall Deutalbaum, *A Hitchcock Reader* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1986) p. 114

⁷ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/macguffin>, accessed 04/01/2012

⁸ Originally published as a serial in *Astounding Stories* between February 1936 and April 1936.

⁹ Also published in *Astounding Stories*, June 1936.

Constraints & Aims:

In order to fully explore any given academic topic, it is necessary to define the objectives and thus the boundaries of the material. This thesis consists of multiple components, which interlink, mutually supporting each other. The five components consist of the following:

- 1.) A study of Adaptation Theory
- 2.) A grounding in Lovecraftian themes and motifs, with a background analysis of 'Weird Fiction', supported by examples drawn from other Gothic texts.
- 3.) A practical application of this information in two phases:

Part A – An annotated adapted play script, explaining the adaptation and dramaturgical considerations of the project

Part B – A more detailed and itemised adaptation breakdown of the process involved

- 4.) A dramatic presentation of the script (Completed as of November 24th, 25th, 2011¹⁰), recorded as a production folio, including photography and director commentary.
- 5.) The fifth step, divided from the other four, is an exegesis looking back on the process and the significance of the practical investigation for the academic components.

This progression is designed to take a study of Adaptation Theory, apply it to a topic, and then test the result of that union on the stage in an expanded rehearsed reading. These topics can potentially cover a lot of academic ground. As a result, the objectives of each segment are necessarily precise.

The first component will focus on defining the major terms and ideas in the field of adaptation, examining what the essential 'building clay' of any given adaptation is, and where it emerges from, its genealogy and the relationship between original texts, and their offspring. It will touch on, but not delve too deeply into, the

¹⁰ *The Whisperer in Darkness*, adap. & dir. by Brendan West (New Place Theatre, University of Waikato, 2011)

psychological roots of adaptation, and the human desire to recreate favoured tales and themes. This is to highlight the objectives that adaptations serve for the adaptor and the audience. Practical examples will lean heavily on stage and film adaptations, as that will provide better insight into the later process of this thesis. Certain references to popular sources may seem to be not as apt as more 'classic' examples, but the primary thrust of the adaptation study is to service the Lovecraftian material. As a result, many examples will be from the Gothic, horror or science fiction genres, with particular emphasis on 'cult' media.

The second component is designed to provide a 'crash-course' in the works of H. P. Lovecraft. It will also provide an insight into successful existing adaptations, including both film and video-game versions created by other writers. Because Lovecraft's work, philosophy and life are so intimately entwined, it is necessary to examine all three in order to extract his recurring themes and the reasoning behind them. Unlike many authors, Lovecraft is quite academic in his writing; each of his tales is supported by copious amounts of correspondence with other authors as well as numerous articles explaining his theories on literature and the genre he helped pioneer: Weird Fiction.

Concluding these two components will be a section identifying the most significant adaptation challenges in Lovecraft's fiction, the solutions that the academic material presents, an analysis of the effectiveness of these solutions, and finally, (if necessary) modified solutions. This includes the use of 'amalgam' character, geographic representation, and the appropriation of material from other adaptations.

The practical written section of this thesis includes not only the most significant version of the script with accompanying annotations, but also the design specifications of important theatre effects used to support it. These annotations are mixture of internal dramaturgy, explanatory glossary and technical guide.



CHAPTER ONE:

ADAPTATION METHODOLOGIES

Chapter Introduction: Adaptation Methodologies

This section is designed to lay down the foundations of the thesis – to convey an understanding of the purpose of adaptation. It contains an overview of the language that is used when describing and analysing the adaptation process, as well as the major players in the scholarly field. Whilst the end result of this thesis will be a page-to-stage adaption, this chapter will also deal with film and video-game examples; this decision will become more obvious in the later sections, which will examine popular and successful adaptations of Lovecraft's work. Importantly, this section will also talk frequently about the *subversion* of original texts to create new ones. This relates to Lovecraft's own writing process, which thrives on appearing reasonable and supportable by science.

Another major area of interest is 'fidelity', the preservation of intent or detail within an adaption. Lovecraft, being a writer of literature amorphous in both content and narrative, is thus hard to adapt – this section will explore a range of non-Lovecraftian examples that succeed or fail at the preservation of these qualities. Examples of Lovecraft adaptations dwell later in the thesis.

Aims of the Chapter:

- Introduction to Adaptation Studies
 - o Popular terms
 - o Significant academics
- Constraints of Adaptation
 - o Fidelity
 - o Effects of familiarity
- Appropriation
 - o Cross-pollination of concepts
 - o Derivative texts
- Repurposing Exposition

Defining The Terms of Adaptation:

In an age of massive media growth, adaptations have permeated every part of society. Concepts and ideas have been translated to the stage, onto film, on and off the page, into theme park rides, video games, board games and even card games. In recent years, the significant untapped backlog of un-adapted graphic novels and comics has been blitzed by the film industry, with new examples appearing in nearly every new film release season. Reinterpretation, too, has seen a new heyday; with examples ranging from the rebooting of popular movie franchises to drastic new takes on old favourites, such as Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies*¹¹. Framing such a diverse range of products in any academic context is quite a challenge – where are the dividing lines between reinterpretation, appropriation or duplication? This thesis will attempt to define the major terms of adaptation theory, in turn creating a lexicon with which to approach the latter part of the project: the practical adaptation of a short story.

The process of translation, from one media to another, can take a variety of forms. By what parameters do we define an adaptation, and how does that differentiate it from an original work, or *homage* to older texts? Firstly, we must define 'adaptation' by its most base intent: what is the objective? We must appreciate that any definition will likely immediately prove insufficient as soon as deeper investigation is embarked upon. But, in order to create a beginning point, I'll postulate the following definition:

Adaptation is the act of taking an existing text, in whatever form it takes, and translating it into a new form.

Secondly, for clarity, we must define my use of the words 'adaption' and 'adaptation'. While both Julie Sanders¹² and Linda Hutcheon¹³ use the latter, Hutcheon herself declares that the dual use of the word 'adaptation' for both the 'process and the product' creates unnecessary confusion¹⁴. I believe their use can be specifically defined, and as such, I will refer to the *product* (play, film, etc) as *an*

¹¹ Seth Grahame-Smith, *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies* (New York: Quirk Books, 2009)

¹² Modern academic currently working at the University of Nottingham. Specialises in period literature and adaptation studies.

¹³ Modern academic currently working at the University of Toronto. Specialises in multi-disciplinary critical theory.

¹⁴ Julie Sanders, *Adaptation & Appropriation* (New York: Routledge, 2006) p.15

adaption, while using 'adaptation' to describe the *process* of translation. In this arrangement, they are being used as a noun and a verb, respectively.

Terms of Adaptation Theory:

A collection of common Adaptation Theory words and concepts, with brief definitions. Each of these is mentioned in context in its own section of the thesis. The glossary is not in alphabetical order, but rather in a causal link, with the earlier terms informing the later ones.

Narrative:

A seemingly simple term, narrative is nevertheless the most basic of adaptation concepts, and the primary focus of any adaption. Brian McFarlane, an Australian adaptation academic, poses the following definition for 'narrative':

...a series of events, causally linked, involving a continuing set of characters which influence and are influenced by the course of events...¹⁵

I would propose an extension to this:

...a series of events, causally linked, involving a continuing set of characters which influence and are influenced by the course of events, intended to service a primary theme or message.

A concession being that sometimes the theme or message is that there *appears that there is no theme or message* (for example Terry Gilliam's *Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas*¹⁶, a narrative that intentionally breaks audience expectation, and only in retrospect has a diffuse 'point').

Adaptation Varieties:

Though the types of adaptation are legion, there have been attempts to create a framework in which to place any given example. One prominent individual is

¹⁵ Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) p.12

¹⁶ *Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas*, dir. by Terry Gilliam (Rhino Films, 1998)

Geoffrey Wagner, a German film critic who proposed in his book *The Novel and the Cinema*¹⁷ that there were three major forms of adaptation:

Transposition: ‘...in which a novel is given directly on the screen with a minimum of apparent interference...’¹⁸ The strictest of adaptation types, transposition is practically cross-media dictation, with the primary scenes and dialogue placed in corresponding visual locales. Comparable, perhaps, to opera, where the theatrical components are subserviently utilized to service the musical components. A modern equivalent is Zack Snyder’s *Watchmen*¹⁹.

Commentary: ‘...where an original is taken and either purposely or inadvertently altered in some respect...when there has been a different intention on the part of the film-maker, rather than infidelity or outright violation...’²⁰ The more common modern form, where the base text is used to inform a new work, which attempting to portray the same base intent and primary themes of the original, but has sanction to deviate from it if it were to prove more succinct.

Analogy: ‘...which must represent a fairly considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art...’²¹ Like its parent word, analogy adaptation is the subversion of an original text in order to service a new and independent narrative. Could also be termed total deconstruction. A stage example is Heiner Müller’s *Hamletmaschine*²².

Dudley Andrew also put forward a tripartite classification system in *Concepts in Film Theory*.²³ Andrew’s system is directly comparable to Wagner’s:

Fidelity of Transformation: ‘...the audience is expected to enjoy basking in a certain pre-established presence and call up new or especially powerful aspects

¹⁷ Geoffrey Wagner, *The Novel and the Cinema* (Madison: Fairleigh-Dickinson University Press, 1990)

¹⁸ Wagner, p. 222

¹⁹ *Watchmen*, dir. by Zack Snyder (Warner Bros, 2009)

²⁰ Wagner, p. 224

²¹ Wagner, p. 226

²² Heiner Müller, *Hamletmaschine*, translated by Dennis Redmond (2001), originally published 1979

²³ Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984)

of a cherished work...'²⁴ As this quote demonstrates, Andrew was quite critical of this form of adaptation; a directly adapted work will usually result in a direct, and negative, comparison to the original text.

Intersection: '...the uniqueness of the original text is preserved to such an extent that it is intentionally left unassimilated in adaptation...'²⁵ This form of adaptation values the preservation of original style, but not necessarily form. The director's primary purpose is the expansion of the existing material.

Borrowing: '(the writer)...employs, more or less extensively, the material, idea, or form of an earlier, generally successful text...'²⁶ Compared to the other two definition groupings, Andrew stays closer to the idea of adaptation with his description of the loosest form; borrowing still bears a close relationship with the original text, rather than being a parasitic extension.

Thirdly, the pairing of scholars Michael Klein and Gillian Parker proposed a third comparable system in 1981 in the book *The English Novel and the Movies*²⁷:

Literal Translations: '...give the impression of being faithful, that is, literal translations...'²⁸

Re-Interpretations: '...retains the core of the structure of the narrative while significantly re-interpreting, or in some cases deconstructing the source text...'²⁹

New Works of Art: '...regards the source material merely, as simply the occasion for an original work...'³⁰

Fidelity:

Perhaps the most fundamental argument in Adaptation Studies is whether or not an adaption is being 'faithful' to the original source. This can be broken down into

²⁴ Dudley Andrew, p.98

²⁵ Andrew, p.99

²⁶ Andrew, p.98

²⁷ Michael Klein, *The English Novels and the Movies*, (New York: Ungar Pub Co, 1981)

²⁸ Klein, p.10

²⁹ Klein, p.10

³⁰ Klein, p.10

two major categories: being faithful to the 'letter', or being faithful to the 'spirit' of the text. Often, this can be misconstrued or misappropriate as faithfulness to the period. Brian McFarlane, on the topic of this 'period' interference, states:

In 'period' films, one often senses exhaustive attempts to create an impression of fidelity...the result of which, so far from ensuring fidelity to the text, is to produce a distracting quaintness.³¹

Intertextuality:

Originally coined in 1966 by Julia Kristeva as part of the poststructuralist movement, 'Intertextuality'³² is the dialogue that comes to exist between separate texts in the mind of the reader. Each text is influenced, expanded and interpreted according to *why* we are reading it – the reader creates the meaning in response to the text. The film *Scream*³³ is a perfect example of intertextuality working consciously – we are interpreting a film that is not only self-aware, but is also aware of the dialogue that has gone before it in the study of horror films. As a result, it is self-informing and the audience provide as much of the irony and insight as the film itself. It is, in fact, a film *about* intertextuality. Intertextuality has been further divided into 'constitutive' and 'manifest' by Norman Fairclough³⁴. Manifest intertextuality is the deliberate evocation of literary allusion to create an effect, for example parody and reactionary texts. Linda Hutcheon postulates that with the growing acceptance of intertextuality, the role of the author is diminished, and fails to take into account conscious manipulation of the intertextual dialogue by the said author³⁵. This is addressed partially by the defining of manifest intertextuality. The second type, 'constitutive intertextuality', refers to the appropriation of writing style or themes. The term intertextuality is not without

³¹ Brian McFarlane, *Novel to Film* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) p.9

³² Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980) p.69

³³ *Scream*, dir. by Wes Craven (Dimension Films, 1996)

³⁴ Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992) p.117

³⁵ Linda Hutcheon. *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985)

detractors, however: William Irving criticizes intertextuality as 'a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence'.³⁶

Intratextuality:

Term appropriated for the purposes of this thesis. In contrast to 'intertextuality', 'intratextuality' is intended to refer to textual dialogue within a given grouping, for example the Lovecraft Mythos. The distinction is that intratextuality targets the pollination of ideas over time into more and more complex forms within the author's own scope. In the case of Lovecraft, this term describes the evolution of his ideas between the Dunsanian-Poe, Arkham and Cthulhu Cycles (SEE: The Mythos – Understanding Lovecraft's World).

Extratextuality:

Defined by the Merriam-Webster online dictionary as:

of, relating to, or being something outside a literary text³⁷

Extratextuality is useful for explaining the relationship that inter-medium adaptations have on each other. Films influence the audience's perspective of the original book, just as video games can in turn influence our perspective of their parent movie. This is not necessarily a negative effect, however – video games, for instance, can allow the player to view and experience new areas and events that occur just outside of the film's scope, utilizing the longer play-time to expand the world.

Proximation:

A term coined by Genette Gérard to describe the relocation of a text to a new cultural or period location in order to make it more salient to a given audience³⁸. Particularly useful when discussing texts with multiple proximation adaptations, e.g Shakespeare, Jane Austen.

³⁶ William Irwin, 'Against Intertextuality' in *Philosophy and Literature* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004) p. 228

³⁷ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/extratextual>, retrieved 05/01/2012

³⁸ Genette Gérard, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997) p. 304

The 'Idea' of Adaptation:

Julie Sanders, in her book *Adaptation & Appropriation*, describes adaptation as a form of 'hybridity'³⁹: the blending of an existing text with new cultural, geographical, political or chronological parameters. Shakespeare's works, for instance, have been adapted from page to stage to film and back again. Adaptors may find any number of themes to explore within a new context, from the minor alteration of intra-text re-setting (shifting a work from one period to another), which only very loosely fits into the 'adaptation' discussion, through to dramatic renovations such as the film *10 Things I Hate About You*⁴⁰. It is testimony to Shakespeare that his works can continue to be resonant in new situations. Yet his works, and those of many of his contemporaries, were in themselves adaptations of earlier tales: Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*⁴¹ is a dramatic version of an earlier tale, first published as *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*⁴² in 1587, itself an adaptation of the 'Faust' legend or theme-set: that of diabolic forces taking advantage of latent greed. With each reiteration of the tale, the narrative is advanced in chronological setting. Many classic tales have gone through multiple series of adaptation: Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* would one day become the stage musical *Kiss Me Kate*⁴³, then the film *Kiss Me Kate*⁴⁴, and finally the modern film *10 Things I Hate About You*. Each of these examples is the repositioning of a group of themes, which make up the source story, within a new chronological period and geographical location. Further complexity, in the case of *Kiss Me Kate*, lies in the play-within-play structure. The audience navigates a play world where characters performing a musical adaptation of *Taming* are experiencing the same comic love setup, which in turn is a reference to Shakespeare's play-within-play motif, as seen in *Hamlet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Taming of the Shrew* itself⁴⁵. The audience gleans the meaning of the second-or-third-generation texts because they are aware of the first-generation one. This concept, 'intertextuality', is particularly important in relation

³⁹ Julie Sanders, *Adaptation & Appropriation* (New York: Routledge, 2006) p.17

⁴⁰ *10 Things I Hate About You*, dir. by Gil Junger (Touchstone Pictures, 1999)

⁴¹ Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, premiered 1592

⁴² Anonymous, *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, published 1587 by Johann Spies

⁴³ *Kiss Me Kate*, music and lyrics by Cole Porter (Broadway, 1948)

⁴⁴ *Kiss Me Kate*, dir. by George Sidney (Leow's Incorporated, 1953)

⁴⁵ Sanders, p.28

to adaptation, which places much importance on the pre-discovered nature of its source text. To compress these examples into a more succinct statement:

Adaptation can become as complex as the adaptor wishes to make it. Over time, adaptations can become hybrids of hybrids, as the earlier adaptations become as well known as the original.

The Allure Versus The Desecration Of The Familiar:

Linda Hutcheon, another notable modern scholar of adaptation studies, considers adaptation to be a very natural symptom of obsession⁴⁶. Any fan of a particular story, concept or idea desires to see new versions of the same thing. Perhaps it is to recreate the feeling one gets when a piece of media resonates for the first time; one automatically desires that feeling again, and the only way to do that while sticking to the same topic is to experience an adaptation. The re-presentation of a text can be approached in a variety of ways. Firstly, it could take the form of a straight page-to-stage (or page to score, et cetera), or inter-medium adaptation. Secondly, it may be an intra-medium⁴⁷ adaptation, in the form of a reboot (a restarting of the source premise with awareness of the previous text) or a reimagining (a new development from the source premise with a deliberate emphasis on exploring new territory). Thirdly, it may be a response to the original text in the form of parody or overt reply⁴⁸. The latter two groups are not 'adaptations' in the strictest sense, but they contain many of the considerations that an adaptor would have to address: they are all a re-approaching of a known quantity with a new intention.

The immediate advantage of the adaptation is that the audience already has an informed view of what they are going to be seeing. Any prospective author or producer spends a great degree of time and money to create a window of approachability. Books, plays and films have all suffered from crossing too many genre lines: not for the aesthetic result, but the ability to advertise the product.

⁴⁶ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006) p.XII

⁴⁷ Term coined for this thesis, to refer *specifically* to the re-adaptation process that occurs when a film/play is re-written.

⁴⁸'Manifest intertextuality', as previously stated.

Films such as James Gunn's horror/comedy *Slither*⁴⁹ or William Goldman's fantasy/comedy *The Princess Bride*⁵⁰ suffered greatly from diluted advertising campaigns, as the studios had no strategy for marketing such genre-bending fare. Science fiction may attract science fiction fans, and romantic comedies rom-com fans, but how does one then advertise a science fiction romantic comedy? These lines can also stretch to mainstream versus experimental texts; a conventional drama is much more accessible than an experimental film such as Lars von Trier's *Dogville*⁵¹. Adaptation faces a parallel set of problems and considerations. Depending on the mode of adaptation (Transposition, Commentary, Analogy), the adaptor can choose to capitalise on the known quantity, or use it as a powerful tool of parody. The danger in this is the alienation of an established fan base: to remain faithful to the genre territory of the source text unless they wish to risk clashing with the audience's expectations⁵².

What are the other limitations of adaptation? When a tale is adapted from the page to the screen, there is the well-known truism that 'the book is better than the movie'. Is there something about the shift from page to screen that loses some essential ingredient? At first glance, film offers a more complete sensory experience: the ability to see and hear a concept concurrently. On the other hand, it is limited in its ability to display the internal processes of characters⁵³, and almost totally lacks the capacity to represent 'the undefined': by its very nature, it defines things. An interview with historical fiction writer Steven Pressfield⁵⁴ reveals a succinct summary of the problem:

...the form demands truncation, condensation, and simplification – and none of these helps any work of fiction...Movies, except via the awkward medium of the voiceover, can't get inside characters' heads literally. Film

⁴⁹ *Slither* significantly underperformed despite moderate to positive reviews – Borys Kit, '*Slither*' leaves gloomy trail, Hollywood Reporter. Retrieved 04/01/2012

⁵⁰ A film adapt by the original author, *The Princess Bride* performed badly at the box-office due to advertising confusion. It was only after it was released on VHS that it became a cult classic.

⁵¹ *Dogville* was an experimental film set on soundstage with the blueprint of the town emblazoned on the ground. At any given time in the film, the audience can see beyond the main action to the town behind. It was difficult to market outside of the film festival community – *Dogville*, dir. by Lars Von Trier (Zentropa Entertainments, 2003)

⁵² An example of 'Constitutive intertextuality' and also Fidelity – faithfulness to the 'spirit' of the text.

⁵³ Though this may be argues that *realistic* film has difficulty displaying internal monologue.

⁵⁴ Speaking on the challenges facing the adaptation of his book *The Profession* into a screenplay.

communicates interior life in two ways – by dialogue and by action. That's all the adaptor has.⁵⁵

One could argue that it removes the capacity of the human imagination to create a visual component; that no director can imagine something as resonant as what your own mind can. But what of film tropes that play upon that very idea of the 'unseen'? Can these tools be retasked to address the issues of amorphousness that is part of Lovecraft's style? One such tool is *Pulp Fiction's* use of a MacGuffin, (a term coined by Alfred Hitchcock to describe a deliberately undefined payoff item that advances the plot by revealing character motivations, but serves no subsequent purpose⁵⁶) which engages the imagination as surely as a written version of the text could. The suitcase is opened, golden light floods out and the audience imagines anything from gold bars to material for nuclear bombs. It is a tool created for and by the cinema to address a narrative problem. But this is limited to being a trope: for an author like H. P. Lovecraft, whose literature thrives on the amorphous nature of his descriptions, there is a mystery of description that remains even in scenes where 'the undefined' is overtly shown, that remains tied to the reader's imagination. This effect is specific to the written word, and can only be approximated by stage or screen, thus remaining a strong limitation in the adaptation process.

Whilst adaptations can be pre-defined in an audience's eyes, the opposite can also become true. Texts are defined by the imagination of the reader, which has the ability to hone and create a host of characters, locales, effects and ambiances that are completely specific to them. If one were to ask any two readers of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*⁵⁷ what they thought the character Sauron looked like, it would be highly unlikely that their projections would match up, or even approximate the depiction seen in Peter Jackson's adaption. Yet a prominent adaption like Jackson's can define an original text in retrospect – the strong visual design becomes inseparable from text. The imagery of the screen is often more

⁵⁵ <http://www.wordandfilm.com/2011/06/why-books-are-almost-always-better-than-movies-plus-a-giveaway/>, retrieved 05/01/2012

⁵⁶ <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/MacGuffin>, Retrieved 8/4/2011

⁵⁷ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), first published 1954

memorable and decisive than the imagery of the page. Personally, I can now no longer read any of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series without visualising Daniel Radcliffe in the titular role, despite having a very different visualisation of the character on first reading. This extratextual relationship can become one of the chief obstacles an adaptor needs to consider: how will previous adaptations influence a new one?

Defining 'Appropriation':

This is a prudent point to approach the concept of 'appropriation'⁵⁸, a component within the adaptation process that could also function outside of a standard adaptation, within an original work. 'Appropriation' is the act of identifying and removing a piece or pieces of an original text or texts and inserting it into a new work, or as Sanders puts it:

...appropriation...affects a more decisive journey (than adaptation) away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain. This may or may not involve a generic shift, and it may still require the intellectual juxtaposition of (at least) one text against another...⁵⁹

This may be as part of an adaption of that original text, or may be a deliberate *homage* within an original piece. Playwrights will often take small sections of Shakespeare plays and base new ideas around them, sometimes using them as a narrative framework, as evident in Michael Gow's play *Away*⁶⁰, which uses *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *King Lear* as parallels to chapters of life for the characters of the piece. A film example of appropriation over adaptation is the 1997 film, *Starship Troopers*⁶¹. It appropriates multiple characters, themes and ideas from Robert A. Heinlein's novella of the same name⁶², yet it could not in good faith be said to be a direct adaption. Rather, it is film created as a commentary *on*,

⁵⁸ First used in this context by J. La Farge in *Considerations on Painting (1895)*, according to the Oxford English Dictionary.

⁵⁹ Sanders, p.26

⁶⁰ Michael Gow, *Away* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1986)

⁶¹ *Starship Troopers*, dir. by Paul Verhoeven (TriStar Pictures, 1997)

⁶² Robert A. Heinlein, *Starship Troopers* (New York: Ace, 1987)

not an adaption of the original book. Heinlein's original primary theme: that of a military meritocracy rising from the ashes of a failed democracy, is parodied with hyper-patriotic news broadcasts: a modern reaction to an older text. This is what Sanders refers to as an 'Embedded Text'⁶³ – the original text is absolutely implicit to the function of the film, yet it is not a direct adaptation.

By comparison, a 'Sustained Appropriation'⁶⁴ wanders into more muddy ground: it can often be abused as to become plagiarism, and in the inverse, where an original idea appears to be borrowed without reference. A modern example of this is the movie studio 'The Asylum', dedicated to piggybacking their films onto the advertising of larger-budget contemporaries. Rarely however, is their output a direct adaptation of the original work or a direct copy of the Hollywood equivalent: they are the very definition of sustained appropriation⁶⁵. There are, however, different scales of appropriation: it is inherently unavoidable, and permeates all forms of media. All works borrow themes and ideas from other sources without directly referencing them. Every author, on creating an original work, is recycling and percolating that which he or she has read and enjoyed during their lifetime. Adaptations, like 'original' works, are consciously or unconsciously a *pastiche* of ideas drawn from multiple sources. The difference is that adaptations are by their very nature a sustained and embedded appropriation of the source text. Beyond that core text, many adaptations are the deliberate blending of multiple original works by the same or related authors (as later discussed about *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth*⁶⁶). Computer games are particularly rich in appropriated material, referencing film, text and play with equal abandon. This is perhaps due to the extended duration of these products, requiring denser writing. Bungie Software's 1994 game *Marathon*⁶⁷ is notable for its frequent, seemingly paradoxical use of classical Greek, Roman and Medieval poetry, as well as

⁶³ Sanders, p.26-27

⁶⁴ Sanders, p.33

⁶⁵ Examples of these film pairings are 'Transmorphers'/'Transformers' and 'The Amityville Haunting/The Amityville Horror'. A complete list of their specific brand of films can be found at <http://www.theasylum.cc>

⁶⁶ Video-game adaptation of Lovecraft's works. Combines elements of 'The Shadow Over Innsmouth', 'The Shadow Out of Time' among others.

⁶⁷ *Marathon*, Art Dir. by Rob McClees (Bungie 1994)

references to modern films such as James Cameron's *Aliens*⁶⁸ while remaining a distinct and original intellectual property.

Let's create a statement to define 'Appropriation' in the most straightforward language possible:

Appropriation is the borrowing of, or reference to, a section or whole text in order to illuminate a related idea within a new text.

Defining 'Fidelity':

Though there may be any number of technical considerations for different genre adaptations; from page to stage, page to musical, page to film; the fundamental aim remains the same: the identification of the core themes and ideas, and the translation of those ideas into a new framework, or as Sanders states '(the) reinterpretations of established texts in new generic contexts...'⁶⁹. This is known as the pursuit of 'fidelity', or the attention paid to preserving original characters, passages of text and the themes they support. As discussed in the glossary, there is a gradient along which adaptors may place their adaptation intentions. But whatever the target, preserving fidelity in the face of drastic media change can be a trying challenge. What effect does converting written text into a musical number have? Is the original idea or concept warped or enhanced by the various musical considerations of genre, instrument composition, pace and staging? As Hutcheon points out, adaptations divide form from content. Form is the vehicle for the delivery of the tale, whereas content is that collection of ideas and signs that the adaptor wishes to preserve. The adaptor must find new ways of storytelling, specific to their new media, in order to remain true to the *intention* of the original text. In this process '..."equivalences" are sought in different sign systems...'⁷⁰. The film director must find visual or aural equivalents to internal impressions and the like.

But if the primary aim of an adaptation is to be faithful to the source material, what is the point of an adaptation that transfers an existing text to a new form, if it does not

⁶⁸ *Aliens*, dir. by James Cameron (20th Century Fox, 1986)

⁶⁹ Sanders, p.19

⁷⁰ Hutcheon, p.10

explore and expand those original ideas? Is it a stagnant creation? Adaptation can exist along a gradient ranging from intrusive (or perhaps slavish) fidelity to a loss of focus completely. Some adaptations, notably director Zack Snyder's 2009 film *Watchmen*⁷¹, hold so closely to the source material (with the exception of the conclusion), by author Alan Moore⁷², that it can be compared shot-for-shot to the graphic novel. Philip Kennicott of *The Washington Post* commented that this respect for the original material suffocated the growth of the adaption: '...for 162 minutes, the usual question arises: Has the film added anything?'⁷³. Can Snyder claim to be anything more than a conduit of Alan Moore to the screen? Yet the film adaption⁷⁴ of the award winning narrative video game *Doom 3*⁷⁵ swings to the other end of the spectrum: whilst screenwriter Dave Callaham captured approximations of characters, locations and technical considerations like effects, sets and props, he completely failed to capture the primary theme of the franchise: the blending of medieval-style hell imagery with science fiction. Instead, an invasion by Hell was swapped for a mutative virus, and as a result, alienated the film's primary audience: the fans of the games. It became a hollow adaptation: the appearance of the original text with none of the themes behind it. While in an academic sense, this may seem to be a fairly lowbrow comparison, we should not restrict discussion of adaption to the domain of 'high art'. Video games are becoming an increasingly viable story-telling medium. Indeed, one of the most accurate adaptations of H. P Lovecraft's work was the 2005 game, *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth*.

Play adaptations, too, can suffer from adaptation stagnation. Jane Austen's *Pride & Prejudice* has undergone many attempts at adaptation by various playwrights (Helen Jerome⁷⁶, Jon Jory⁷⁷, Paula K. Parker⁷⁸, to name a few). Yet the challenge most often encountered is not the retaining of events and characters, but in finding interesting ways of showing them on stage. The book itself reads like a play script,

⁷¹ *Watchmen*, dir. by Zack Snyder (Warner Bros, 2009)

⁷² Alan Moore, *Watchmen* (New York: DC Comics, 1986)

⁷³ P. Kennicott, "Blight 'Watchmen'". *The Washington Post*. Retrieved 8/4/2011

⁷⁴ *Doom*, dir. by Dave Callaham (John Wells Productions, 2005)

⁷⁵ *Doom 3*, dir. by John Carmack, written by Matthew Costello (id Software, 2004)

⁷⁶ Helen Jerome, *Pride & Prejudice: A Sentimental Comedy in Three Acts* (New York: Samuel French Inc, 1936)

⁷⁷ John Jory, *Pride & Prejudice* (New York: Playscripts, 2006)

⁷⁸ Paula K. Parker, *Jane Austen's Pride & Prejudice* (New York: WordCrafts, 2009)

with an abundance of dialogue and indoor scenes. Indeed, the issue of geography, and the representation of it onstage, are relatively minimised. It is, however, a text so well anchored in the public consciousness that any new versions of it struggle to define themselves.

So is there a 'correct' way to approach adaptation fidelity? The answer is arguably a commercial one: what is the author of the created work attempting to achieve, and what are the restrictions placed upon him or her? Films such as David Lynch's 1984 adaptation of Frank Herbert's *Dune* proved that a screenplay that tried to engage too much of the original material than a wider audience could handle resulted in a film that was not accessible enough to the general public, yet was not complex enough and had too many compromises to reach cult-film status among *Dune* fans. By comparison, the Sci-Fi Channel's miniseries adaptation of the same source material proved to be a great success, aiming to 'faithfully adapt the novel'⁷⁹, with the fan base in mind rather than reaching a wider audience. The success of the adaptation could be attributed to director John Harrison's wise choice of a longer form of film medium (miniseries), and willingness to deviate from the novel in the interest of clarification⁸⁰. This plays into the earlier idea of 'What has it added?' Adaptation is as much about the road mapping of a text as it is the act of transferring ideas from one medium to another. As such, we'll modify the running definition from earlier:

Adaptation is the act of taking an existing text and exploring the characters, ideas and narrative within a new set of parameters and mode. This can be as a direct adaptation, or partially, through the use of Appropriation.

'The Educated Audience':

Through some of the examples mentioned (*Watchmen*, *Doom*, *Dune* and *Call of Cthulhu*), a very important consideration in adaptation is introduced: fan-bases, and the reintegration of concepts. Modern media (though not limited to) often attract devoted groups of fans. In the age of easily accessible Internet information

⁷⁹ S. Fritz, "DUNE: Remaking the Classic Novel" *Cinescape.com*. Retrieved 8/4/2011

⁸⁰ Fritz, Retrieved 8/4/2011

and fan-generated 'wikis', we see a breed of audience emerge that knows the original material as well as, or better, than any prospective adaptor. This acute familiarity with the source material can have a very potent effect on how adaptations are received by the public. Die-hard fans, more than any other audience, are the most likely to value fidelity above all other considerations. This does not necessarily mean fidelity to the *letter*, but certainly fidelity to the *spirit*. Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* is a perfect example of the page/fanbase/film dynamic, as explored in Ernest Mathjis's book *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in a Global Context*⁸¹. Mathjis comments on his investigations into fan versus non-fan perception of the film. One of the findings, which is particularly relevant to this thesis, was how the commercial and narrative sacrifices in the script were perceived by the fan delegation, and the non-fan participants:

"G (fan group 2): He (the director) left parts out, because the book was like 3,000 pages long...you have to maintain a certain pace in the movie, otherwise people will start falling asleep."⁸²

What 'G' is referring to here, perhaps without even realising it, is the issue of expository re-assignment – that is what would slow down a film's plot progression. With a narrative as long and as complex as *Lord of the Rings*, Peter Jackson had to not only re-assign a vast amount of expository information to visual and background data, but also discard entire plotlines without jeopardising the primary arc. Fan bases are quite aware that this is necessary, because they understand the material. So what makes them a different audience? Mathjis postulates that it is an unspoken contract between fans – they share the experience *together* rather than individually⁸³. The success of an adaptation, thus, is to make the fan base feel that they have that same connection with the adaptor that they have with each other. Has the adaptor removed something because they *had* to, or because they don't understand its importance?

⁸¹ Ernest Mathjis, *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in a Global Context* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2006)

⁸² Mathjis, p.195

⁸³ Mathjis, p.193

The Character and The Decoding of Exposition:

Within the context of adaptation, characters are far more fluid than in original fiction. They serve a modified purpose; not only do they provide a vehicle for viewpoints and plot pressure, in adaptation they also serve as plot infrastructure. Expository sections in the original text can present a significant challenge to staging. Long narrative sections are preferably used sparingly, thus expository information needs to be re-routed through another form of delivery system. Virtually all information on the stage is delivered via the character and therefore the actor, be it physical or spoken information. This will be a primary consideration for the practical component of this thesis. Supporting this is the set and special effects, consisting of light, sound and physical effects. The challenge for the adaptor, therefore, is in disassembling an expository sequence, taking those findings, and adapting them into a more active form: dialogue and physical action.

This information, I postulate through experience, can be divided into three major categories: personal, plot or setting information. Personal information includes facts and insights into both the 'speaker' and the people he/she mentions. It defines characters' internal logic. Plot information does *not* pertain to the overarching plot, but rather to character information that will *shape* the action (for example, a religious character facing a reality-shattering revelation may react differently to an atheist) and influence how it progresses. Setting refers to clues the text might provide into the locations of the story that are not immediately obvious, which may be used to shape character. Additionally, it also includes clues into the *atmosphere* of the story, which can affect the play script style. To demonstrate these principles, here is an example from the beginning of *The Thing On The Doorstep*, one of Lovecraft's short stories:

I have known Edward Pickman Derby all his life. Eight years my junior, he was so precocious that we had much in common from the time he was eight and I was sixteen. He was the most phenomenal child scholar I have ever known, and at seven was writing verse of a sombre, fantastic, almost morbid cast which astonished the tutors surrounding him. Perhaps his private education and coddled seclusion had something to do with his premature flowering. An only child, he had organic weaknesses which startled his doting parents and caused them to keep him closely chained to their side. He was never allowed out

*without his nurse, and seldom had a chance to play unconstrainedly with other children. All this doubtless fostered a strange secretive life in the boy, with imagination as his one avenue of freedom.*⁸⁴

The personal information this section provides us with helps the adaptor to build a picture of both Edward Derby and also the narrator. Let's name the narrator 'Harold' for ease of explanation. Derby, we learn, associates above his age, is a borderline genius, is obsessed with things fantastic and otherworldly, and is physically afflicted. The clues we can glean about the narrator are subtler: because he is in the same social circle as Derby, and because he can accurately describe Derby's abilities, we can assume he is also educated and intelligent. We can also tell that he has a fascination with Derby: a friendship of adoration.

In terms of plot information, there is weight placed on Derby meeting a dark fate (if we also include the paragraph proceeding this one, which places it in harsher context). We also know that the early plot will involve a demonstration or even a paraphrasing of the evolution of the two men's friendship, and that a demonstration of Derby's lack of physical competence (or, alternatively, of the narrator's *increased* physical competence so as to contrast with Derby) will feature as a plot point.

Finally, the setting information we can find in this section includes a strong indication of fantasy and the prevalence it will have in the plot, and a clue into what style the play might use. Lovecraft's use of language is archaic and ponderous, even for the period in which he wrote⁸⁵. This was due to his obsession with imitating such literary influences as Edgar Allan Poe and Lord Dunsany, though ironically he warned other writers not to do the same. The atmospheric setting information informs us of the tone arc that the play will undergo: whereas comedies go from light to dark to light again, and romances go from dark to light, tragedies and gothic horror start with a foreshadowing of the dark, proceed into that tone, then end in a slightly more neutral, contemplative space. The preceding

⁸⁴ H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Thing on the Doorstep' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005) p. 692

⁸⁵ 1920s

paragraph to our example text outlines this more explicitly:

It is true that I have sent six bullets through the head of my best friend, and yet I hope to show by this statement that I am not his murderer.

Reverting to the topic of 'character': how would the new information be implemented? Often, when exposition is adapted into action, a third party is required to embody a concept. This character may not exist in the original text, but is created to add texture, and frankly, options for the playwright. The character may be entirely fictional, or composed of multiple influences and personalities, blended together. This breed of character is known as an 'amalgamated character', or simply, an 'Amalgam'⁸⁶. In the case of this hypothetical *The Thing on the Doorstep* adaptation, a likely amalgam character would be a university official or senior student, inserted to establish the location and social standing of the narrator through conversation:

PROFESSOR WILLS: We have a new student joining the faculty. Mr Derby will be part of your laboratory group, Harold. I trust you'll be able to acquaint him with the necessary rules and procedures.

HAROLD: Has he much experience?

PROFESSOR WILLS: Oh, certainly. His record shows significant achievement – he already publishes a scientific supplement in Boston. We hope to continue his very promising education.

This example demonstrates how information can be re-routed. Through the use of an amalgam character (Professor Wills), several things have been inferred: Darby is intelligent and he is younger than Harold. Harold has been defined as part of a university hierarchy, and also as an anchored, responsible student, by the

⁸⁶ Curiously enough, a coining author of this term could not be found. Its use in this context, however, can be demonstrated by DC and Marvel Comic's long-running series of comics dedicated to amalgamating pairs of heroes into new ones – this series was known as 'Amalgam Comics'.

responsibility Professor Wills has imbued him with. Wills also embodies the *idea* of the university, and thus by extension, the stability of science (a theme that will be more fully discussed in the Lovecraftian Themes section). The manner in which Wills speaks, with a quite archaic and sharp word arrangement, places the script within a period other than the present. Unnatural or stilted grammar can also be used to simulate a foreign language whilst still using English.

Amalgamated characters also serve another purpose: simplification. As is often the case when adapting a novel-length piece of literature, there can be too many characters and plot arcs to explore in a standard length play or film (two hours, roughly). Multiple smaller characters can be combined into larger ones. This can both eliminate or blend sub-plots, and serve the practical problem of actor numbers. In some longer texts, a very long plot-arc needs to be truncated, removing whole sections. Amalgam characters can enable this, by providing them with the traits and motivations to jump from one place in the original story to another.

The Origins of the Original Text:

Although 'adaptation' is usually associated with the translation of a literary text or play to the screen, the process has been evolving since the early days of both theatre and written text. In the "Allure & Desecration" section, the concept that popular ideas are continually reproduced was mentioned. Every story is a retelling or an existing idea, with additional themes, plot and characters inserted over time. But these original tales can be traced back to their earliest incarnations, which is in the form of myth. Myths and folk tales of many cultures are and have been expressed through the medium of theatre as often, if not more so, as they are through written text. There are only a certain amount of themes that are of interest to virtually all civilisations. Ideas such as Humanity vs. The Other, The Relationship of Love and Hate or Virtue vs. Sin pervade any number of stories throughout the ancient world. Many religious myths share common denominators, which tells us that regardless of geopolitical location, humans often have the same questions

about life. It is a reasonable statement to say that all subsequent tales are re-workings, expansions or inversions of these fundamental themes.

Adaptions work within this logic, but in a specific role. Whilst new texts may recycle these concepts, perhaps unconsciously, adaptions are a reworking of a very defined set of themes: those that are contained in the source text. New ideas may emerge within the adaption, but they are inherently commentary *on* the source. An adaptor must identify exactly what they are writing about, and also place that within a literary 'genealogy' of sorts. How have previous authors addressed those themes? From what source 'myth' might the themes have sprung? As an example of this in action, we can use *Dracula* as an excellent Gothic example. The idea of a vampire, or 'stealer of life' is at its core, a personification of the 'Other', and specifically the danger of 'the stranger'. In their earliest appearances, as the Greek *vrykolakas* or any number of Eastern European incarnations, vampires are considered revenants rather than demons (revenants are unsettled dead, whilst demons are non-human entities). With the rise of Christianity, vampires join the plethora of defined minor demons: this in itself is an adaptation. Vampires in fiction were relatively rare, surfacing in John Polidori's 1816 book, *The Vampyre*⁸⁷ and several others. But in 1897, Bram Stoker wrote what would become the definitive vampire tale⁸⁸. He would appropriate the mythology of vampires and use it to provide leverage: something against which he could juxtapose the values of eighteenth century England. Stoker's adaptation of the earlier vampire myth is a period example of what many films are doing today: taking popular myth (be they ancient, or 'modern myth') and reworking them within a modern context.

An important aspect of cataloguing the literary lineage of a given theme (for example, *The Other*) for an author and thus by extension the adaptor, is where *their* focal point lies. Stoker anchors his book in 1897, imagining the events as occurring in the (then) modern age. The plot's primary development is Count Dracula's shift from Transylvania to London, bringing into direct conflict the avatars of the Old and the New.

⁸⁷ John Polidori, 'The Vampyre' in *The New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register*, 63 (1819)

⁸⁸ Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (London: Archibald Constable and Company, 1897)

Dracula has, since its publication, become a myth in its own right. To the modern author, it is as much enshrined as a 'holy book' of Gothic horror as any earlier work, yet it is only the most successful adaption of an earlier idea. Perhaps a reason for its poignancy is its hybridity: it links the spiritual supernatural with social deviancy. Count Dracula's stalking and killing of young women are not symptoms of his being undead; rather he is a hyper-inflated version of a real human condition. *Dracula*, thus, is an example of a landmark text. It is a cultural milestone on which any subsequent works cannot help but base themselves. Many examples mentioned earlier fall into this category of 'modern myth', including *Dune*, *Doom* and *Watchmen*.



CHAPTER TWO:

THE GOTHIC & ADAPTATIONS THEREIN

Chapter Introduction: The Gothic & Adaptations Therein

The Gothic is a genre that holds a very special place in this thesis' heart. In order to understand Lovecraft, it is important to explore the territory from which he rose. In this chapter, a background to the Gothic, as well as its early contributors, is set down, followed by a brief tour through history up to the present day. This helps demonstrate not only the effect Lovecraft had on continuing Gothic evolution, but also the effect post-Lovecraftian developments can have on a modern adaption of his work. Also included is the history concerning 'Weird Fiction', the sub-genre of Gothic that Lovecraft inhabits.

Secondarily, this section also highlights the strong link between the Gothic and stage effects, using *Frankenstein* as a case study. In this study is analysis of intertextual artefacts⁸⁹ and an exploration of geography and how it is explored on the stage.

Aims of this Chapter:

- A History of Gothic
 - o Significant academics
 - o Divisions in theory
- A History of Weird Fiction
 - o The Lovecraft Circle
 - o The birth of pulp magazines
- *Frankenstein*, a Case Study
 - o Depictions of the Creature
 - o Geography on Stage
- *Dracula*, a Case Study
 - o Stage adaptations
 - o The supernatural on stage

⁸⁹ Intertextual Artefacts – elements of an intellectual property that form over time as a text is reinterpreted repeatedly.

Entrails of 'The Gothic':

'The Gothic' is not an easy genre to define. It makes use of various components that one might associate more strongly with other genres: for instance, the supernatural components (ghosts, spectres, etc) are as linked with Fantasy as they are with Gothic. Yet, it distinguishes itself by defying the good/evil binary that typifies Fantasy, instead concerning itself with the transient 'morality' of the internal human landscape. If pressed to make an attempt to boil the genre down to a single description, the most adequate would be 'inverted aesthetic'. In contrast to the Enlightenment aesthetic paradigm: the pursuit of beauty and light, Gothic finds its own aesthetic in darkness and decay. Physically, it has utilised brooding landscapes and crumbling ruins, but more importantly than those superficial symbols, it is concerned with *history*. That appears to be the common prerequisite in Gothic tales, especially since relatively modern interpretations of the genre, such as Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*⁹⁰, have moved away from the more mouldy geographic trappings of *The Castle of Otranto*⁹¹ or *The Fall of the House of Usher*⁹², but still retain a similar cultural complexity in their locations. Homes and locales are still steeped in history, primarily of a negative and/or hereditary nature. Secondarily, *isolation* is a major driving force in the Gothic, as much a geographic limitation as a disconnection from functional society. It is rare for protagonists to feel 'normal'; often they'll have repressed inherited traits (*The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* by H. P. Lovecraft) or be on the verge of a metamorphic change that cuts them off from the public (*Cabal*⁹³, *The Hellbound Heart*⁹⁴ by Clive Barker). In terms of emotional and mental themes, and often in conjunction with physical isolation, the Gothic concerns itself with mental abnormality, deviancy and decadence. Functioning hand-in-hand with the remote or crumbling geography, Gothic characters often suffer conditions ranging from mild disconnection with reality to full-blown paranoia. Roderick Usher is a perfect example of this: a aristocrat of an ancient family, living with his sister in a decrepit

⁹⁰ Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987)

⁹¹ Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (New York: John B. Alden, 1889)

⁹² Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Fall of the House of Usher' in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* (Philadelphia: William Burton, 1839)

⁹³ Clive Barker, *Cabal* (London: HarperCollins, 1988)

⁹⁴ Clive Barker, *The Hellbound Heart* (London: HarperCollins, 1986)

old house and as a result of his (debatably) hypochondriac tendencies, going slowly mad.

As early as the 1790s, authors began to attempt a codification of Gothic, or at the very least an understanding of its base intentions. Ann Radcliffe, considered by many to be the founder of the genre proper, sought to craft it with a distinctively Romantic bent. She linked it with the idea of the 'sublime'⁹⁵, that the strength of the Gothic was to describe the supernatural or psychological in such an amorphous way so as to inspire true terror in the reader, elevating them to a state beyond which the words could describe⁹⁶. Lovecraft would likewise become famous for his vague and spectral descriptions of feelings and creatures in his works, tantalising the reader with concepts that were as unhelpful as they were inspiring. Radcliffe's contemporary, Matthew Lewis, pursued the Gothic along different lines. He invoked what Radcliffe defined as 'horror'⁹⁷: a psychic and physical reaction of revulsion to a corporeal event. This would evolve into what could be argued as the modern 'Horror' genre, with more emphasis on gore and the threat of physical violence, than on the mind's ability to alter perception and inspire terror. Robert Miles, in his article 'Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis'⁹⁸, postulates that the tags 'Male' and 'Female' in describing Gothic sub-genre stems from this original horror/terror division⁹⁹. Radcliffe wrote stories imbedded with a woman's concerns for rights and liberty¹⁰⁰, whilst Lewis dealt with personal identity and external threats upon it.¹⁰¹ It only takes a modicum of biographical evidence to explain these objectives: Radcliffe was a woman in a time of very few, if any, women's rights, whilst Lewis was exploring the 'open secret' of his own homosexuality. One could postulate, then, that Radcliffe was preoccupied with the possibility of escape, while concerned and enlightened with what she might find there (sublime terror), whilst Lewis was both in pursuit of physical sensation as an identifier, but terrified at what the penalty for being publically 'outed' would be –

⁹⁵ As appropriately defined in Edmund Burke's, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1759)

⁹⁶ Ann Radcliffe, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' in *New Monthly Magazine* (1826) p. 6

⁹⁷ Radcliffe, p. 6

⁹⁸ Robert Miles, 'Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis' in *A Companion to the Gothic* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001)

⁹⁹ Miles, p.43

¹⁰⁰ As embodied by Radcliffe's *A Sicilian Romance* (London: Hookham and Carpenter, 1790)

¹⁰¹ Paraphrased from Leslie Fiedler's definition in *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960)

the threat of physical suffering. The relevance of this background to early Gothic is where these two schools of thought would lead. 'Female Gothic' would explore mental metamorphosis and psychic injury, whilst 'Male Gothic' would further the themes of physical metamorphosis and threat of physical injury. Lovecraft would succeed in combining the two, perhaps due to his androgynous upbringing (see 'Life of Lovecraft').

Oddly enough, the root word of this definition, 'gothic', refers to a race that has no relationship with the common Gothic themes. Rather, it is a reference to a cultural result. The Goths themselves were a Scandinavian-based Germanic people¹⁰², though the term 'Goth' has become an all-encompassing word for groups ranging from the Scythians to the Vandals. The rise of the Gothic in the form we think of it today (spearheaded by such authors as Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis) was a product of the 1800s, stemming from a reaction to the Enlightenment¹⁰³. In an era where Europe venerated the Classical period as a semi-fictional utopia of beauty and art, Gothic rose as a contrast, nostalgia for medieval mysteries and superstitions. The importance of these people within a study of Gothic genre is the effect they had on Greece and Rome during their invasions. Libraries and other works of learning and art were collected and devastated. In the resultant cultural void, to a modern observer at least, there remained only barbarism. In an anthropological sense, this may not be the whole truth, but with a lack of written Gothic sources or examples of their art, they appeared only to pitch the Classical nations into darkness. In this landscape, we can see the emergence of the Gothic aesthetic: ruins, disillusionment and failed decadence. Indeed, Gothic exists in binary explorations, not in either extreme. A character is rarely 'sane' or 'insane', but instead is somewhere along the continuum between the two. Likewise, geographic locations like brooding castles are examples of a location existing long before its total demise, but long after it has been inhabited. The relevance of the Goths can thus be crystallised: one must understand the Enlightenment Europe obsession with the Classical civilisations in order to appreciate what the destruction of them means.

¹⁰² A simple history of this can be found at the Online Encyclopaedia Britannica - <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/239637/Goth>, retrieved 30/1/2012

¹⁰³ Chris Baldick & Robert Mighall, 'Gothic Criticism' in *A Companion to the Gothic* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001) p. 215

To the authors and audiences of the 1800s, the Gothic represented a reluctant admission that the utopian promises of the Enlightenment had not banished the realities of poverty, illness and death. It helped explain and recognise the conditions surrounding them via parables. The grim trappings of a Medieval past were now home to the 'Other'. Particularly in France, the aristocracy and the deeply ingrained virtues that they traditionally 'possessed' were exposed to sudden and comprehensive review. Those that weren't mobbed and executed faced a grim reality that no longer had a place for them. Likewise, the widespread reality of anti-religious sentiment inspired a two-fold literary exploration of religion. At one end of the spectrum, the Gothic nostalgia for Medieval spiritualism led to a re-discovery of Catholic devils, demons and rituals as a source of fiction, whilst at the other, an open discourse about religious disillusionment and the psychological shift of an individual towards atheism. This secular discussion would lay the foundations for 'Weird Fiction', and would permeate much of modern Gothic. A fine modern example of this is Anne Rice's 1985 novel *The Vampire Lestat*¹⁰⁴, which dealt with the religious disillusionment of the aristocracy when literally confronted with the Gothic (being turned into a vampire), set against the background of the French Revolution, a reflection of the same process. This linking of mental metamorphosis from Christian-to-Atheist, Living-to-Undead and Human-to-Other shows in no uncertain terms the usefulness of the genre as a parable for real-world personal and societal issues. Adding to this is the increasing popularity of psychological analysis as an explanation for previously 'supernatural' conditions and events (possession, mental illness, etc): as the century rolled onward, the works of Freud allowed the genre to look increasingly inward into the mental landscape¹⁰⁵.

The Emergence of 'Weird Fiction':

'Weird Fiction', coined by the Irish Gothic writer, Sheridan Le Fanu, is both an extension and a refinement of the umbrella Gothic genre. In many ways, it heralds the rise of secular Gothic, which is traditionally associated with spirituality and

¹⁰⁴ Anne Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985)

¹⁰⁵ Michelle A. Massé, 'Psychoanalysis and the Gothic' in *The Companion to the Gothic* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2001) p.229

Medieval Christianity. This is not to say that it precludes religion entirely, but it is stamped with a *self-awareness* and active utilisation of religion that one would normally expect in the fantasy genre. That is to say, it either explores it as a human condition that can contribute to mental deviancy, or ignores it completely. Coming into being as a concept in Lovecraft's 1927 essay *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, it describes much of the emerging 1930s pulp fiction, though Lovecraft retroactively draws writers such as Lord Dunsany and Edgar Allan Poe into the fold.

Authors of Weird Fiction, such as Lovecraft or Clark Ashton Smith, are particularly concerned with creating alternative religions that are inversions or imitations of actual religions, such as the 'Cult of Cthulhu' (*Call of Cthulhu*), or the 'Cult of Tsathoggua' (*The Tale of Satampra Zeiros*¹⁰⁶). An even greater number of 'Weird Fiction' authors fall within 'The Lovecraft Circle'¹⁰⁷, created as way of mutually supporting a group of amateur authors within the pulp circuit¹⁰⁸. Beginning as personal correspondence and constructive criticism between Lovecraft and individuals, he soon fashioned a close-knit group consisting of himself, Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, Robert Bloch, August Derleth, Frank Belknap Long, and later Henry Kuttner and Fritz Leiber.¹⁰⁹ This group would often borrow each other's concepts and characters, building a veritable conspiracy of literature. Where a fan of Lovecraft could slowly build a patchwork understanding of his universe, each tale also provided a portal into the works of others, and vice versa.

Weird fiction is, at heart, an expansion of the Gothic. It is a new generation of authors exploring new territory within a known framework. Introducing elements of fantasy and science fiction into the Gothic style, weird fiction warps the traditional supernatural antagonists (ghosts, spectres, vampires, werewolves) and transforms them into avatars of a new order – chaotic neutrality. The theme of Order vs. Chaos is finally unlinked from Good vs. Evil, and also decoupled as a binary. Order, in Lovecraft's tales, is simply a state of being as transient as any other. Chaos is the normal state of things.

¹⁰⁶ Clark Ashton Smith, 'The Tale of Satampra Zeiros' in *Weird Tales* (1931)

¹⁰⁷ This term has an unspecified creator. Possibly created within the circle itself.

¹⁰⁸ Mark Finn, *Blood & Thunder* (Austin: Monkeybrain Inc, 2006)

¹⁰⁹ David Schultz, 'Notes toward a History of the Cthulhu Mythos' in *Crypt of Cthulhu* #92 (1996)

The Prestige: Special Effects in Gothic Horror:

The Gothic Horror genre, in a modern context, is hard to define. It is not anchored in any specific period of time: while names such as Edgar Allen Poe and Lord Dunsany are important to its formation, more modern names such as George A. Romero or Guillermo Del Toro define it just as strongly. Gothic has moved beyond mouldy castles and benighted graveyards without transitioning into a new genre: the objectives remain the same. Horror, as postulated by Anne Radcliffe in her 1826 essay *On 'The Supernatural in Poetry'*, can be divided into two emotional actions. The first is 'terror', the psychological build-up to an event. Horror, specifically film, preys on the audience's familiarity with its conventions. We become scared because we have seen the situations *before*, but are not sure how it will be executed this time. Lovecraft's fiction in particular utilises a long-form style of terror by presenting us with a vague initial horror situation, then jumps backwards chronologically. It is the knowledge of what *will* happen that creates the necessary tension: the reader feels a sensation of 'terror'. The second emotional action is that of 'horror', the empathetic reaction of the reader with a gruesome or emotionally scarring moment.

I would expand this analysis, as I don't think that 'terror' is the correct word to describe the sensation accurately. 'Dread', I would submit, describes a feeling of prescient horror: knowing how a scenario will proceed. 'Terror' better describes the moment of panic one feels when faced with a disturbing or unbalancing situation, and thus reacts irrationally or ineffectually. Radcliffe's description of 'Horror', however, I think is still entirely accurate. 'Terror' is a concept that can vary from medium to medium.

Generally, one does not encounter terror whilst reading, yet a film can inspire a nail-biting tenseness. Theatre embodies both ends of the spectrum. Film can be terrifying because of its ability to present horrifying scenarios within a totally realistic world. Theatregoers have to buy into the illusion much more willingly; the presence of other audience members, visible lighting apparatus and compromised sets can all dilute the *realistic* verisimilitude of a play. Like the written word, the audience has to choose to believe in the visually imperfect. However, film suffers from the handicap of physical separation: for all of its realism, film is still displayed on a 2D surface (3D films aside) that creates a firm degree of division between the

audience and the world of the film. This is where the specific strength of the theatre lies. A strongly written and executed horror device can shock the audience out of their mental safety net (the allowing of theatre to be real) and into a state of terror. An example of this can be drawn from *The Catacombs of Monte Cassino*¹¹⁰. In the final act, a previously unseen entity emerged in near darkness on back-bent stilts, with extended claws and orange LED eyes. Unbeknownst to the cast, when the monster character looked in the direction of an audience member, the LEDs appeared much brighter, giving the illusion that it could *see* that person. On the second night of performance, a female audience member, having been shocked into a state of terror, started screaming. This was not a simple mechanic of spatial surprise, which films often use, but an unexpected moment of dread fulfilling itself.

These points dovetail when one considers the staging of 'Weird Fiction', the sub-genre of Horror that Lovecraft's work falls under. The majority of his tales revolve around a menagerie of fantastic creatures, which are placed within a science fiction, rather than fantasy, logic. The climax of each of these stories tends to be encounters with one or more of these creatures, accompanied by a sanity-destroying moment of revelation. These, in a theatre adaptation, are the moment of 'terror'. A weird horror plot, then, traditionally begins with a declaration of intent, a transitory period, then a culmination of the promise. This is extremely similar to the terminology some writers use to describe the structure of magicians' performances¹¹¹. First, the 'Pledge' establishes simply what the magic trick will be, then the 'Turn' adds texture and scope, and finally the 'Prestige' provides a moment of wonder when the expected is combined with a twist to make it unexpected. It makes sense to use the term 'Prestige' to describe the climax of a Weird Fiction play.

The Prestige on stage would be the moment where the audience is presented with something they don't expect *in that medium*. It is rare for plays to show the fantastic in a realistic way – generally a cosmetic and symbolic gesture is made, due to the difficulty in both creating the effect and making the audience accept it. In the case of *The Whisperer in Darkness*, it is the blunt emergence of the Mi-Go.

¹¹⁰ An Apocalypse Lounge production, written and directed by Brendan West, performed Nov 2010, New Place Theatre, University of Waikato.

¹¹¹ Christopher Priest, *The Prestige* (New York: Tor Books, 2005)

Because the text has promised something alien and horrific, a symbolic Mi-Go would not be acceptable. Furthermore, the nature of the genre as fantasy masked in realism would be disrupted. A careful balance must be struck between revealing enough of the Mi-Go to create the Prestige, whilst not showing it long enough, or in enough light, for the audience to be able to breach the illusion by seeing how it was done.

Frankenstein Case Study – Between The Text and The Stage

Sometimes, in contrast to a first-time adaptation, there are multiple layers of known quantities. For example, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*¹¹²: whilst it has been adapted to the stage many times over the years, it achieved much of its fame from the 1931 film adaption of the same name¹¹³. This version, spearheaded by the iconic Boris Karloff performance of 'The Creature', set the benchmark for the public's perceptions of the tale. Stiff, green and square, neck pierced by a bolt, Karloff's monster, while emotive, stripped away the spoken qualities of The Creature. Considerations for the film adaption included a reduced duration compared to the novel, which led to a condensed and less complex version of the Creature's development and life. From the beginning, we see the danger inherent in him because his physical size is visually available. We are only let so far into his internal torture, because his language-less internal monologue is hidden. This particular film version was adapted from a play script by Peggy Webling, who had already had considerable difficulty adapting it to the stage.

The principal issue in the translation of the Creature from the page is in how he is perceived by other characters. The book describes him from multiple viewpoints: Victor, Walton, etc. We see him as repulsive because *they* do, yet their perceptions are coloured by their relationship to him. In stage or film versions, we see the Creature personally, and thus we must be repulsed by his appearance and physical mannerisms sufficiently to achieve the same level of discomfort as the novel achieves. This appearance of non-humanity needs to be strong so that his

¹¹² Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus* (London: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor & Jones, 1818)

¹¹³ *Frankenstein*, dir. by James Whale (Universal Pictures, 1931)

tenderness and vulnerability can be juxtaposed with it. It is understandable then why the Karloff Creature leaned so heavily on the undead interpretation, borrowing the connotations of zombies and liches in order to reinforce the idea of the Other.

Because of this shift of emphasis, the film tale was mutated from an exploration of scientific responsibility and the nature of humanity into a spectacle of scientist taboos and the concept of the Other. The monster became a sweet tragedy, childishly killing and suffering the consequences in moaning horror: in effect, it becomes a horror-tragedy. A different interpretation of the original text can be seen in the 2011 National Theatre LIVE! *Frankenstein*¹¹⁴, adapted by Nick Dear. This new stage performance explores The Creature as being fundamentally human, possessing of all the desires and insecurities that accompany the condition. He is capable of cruelty, cunning and violence, yet also a desire to be loved, and to find a place within the world.

But for all its earnestness in reinterpreting *Frankenstein*, the 2011 production is still subject to a cultural heritage: an audience who have at some point been exposed to the iconic Karloff performance, or at the very least, the Creature image it inspired. As a result, this NTL production is as much a commentary on that early film as much as a re-approaching of Shelley's themes. The Creature is notably more mobile than Karloff: more agile yet damaged, and possessing of eloquence and reason. Is this physical and emotional build remarkable because it is faithful to the original text, or because it is contrasting to what we expect? It is much the same concept as gender-swapped Shakespeare. A female Hamlet is mainly interesting because she is *not* a male. It challenges our perceptions: we automatically compare it to our ingrained 'original' and draw conclusions from that juxtaposition.

Specific to the issue of page-to-stage, *Frankenstein* has two major obstacles for consideration. First is the manner in which it is originally told, and second is the projection of geography. In Shelley's novel, the entire narrative is conveyed in epistolary fashion; filtered through letters, journals and re-tellings by characters. Unless the play is going to consist of a long series of monologues, this web of sources needs to be stripped down and re-assigned. The events need to be staged,

¹¹⁴ *Frankenstein*, Adap. by Nick Dear, dir. by Danny Boyle (National Theatre LIVE!, 2011)

not related by post. This does, however, raise the issue of fidelity? How does one preserve the feel of the story whilst doing away with static storytelling? Often, a compromise is the answer – the inclusion of significant letters without using them as the primary story-telling device.

Geography is another major issue for play adaptation. Whilst film has the option of filming in the appropriate location, theatre can only *represent* geography. *Frankenstein*, or indeed *Dracula*, is heavily reliant of locations to drive the narrative. The Creature's physical separation from Victor provides the necessary parental vacuum in which he can grow and develop. We see his change in status, while Victor remains static, increasing the tension for their eventual meeting. *Frankenstein* utilises a wide range of locations, from Switzerland to the Antarctic. The NTL production is a fine example of using the technical resources of the theatre to *imitate* geography. Switzerland is represented by a boardwalk and water theme, utilising blue lighting (contrary to the orange 'birth' location). Antarctica, meanwhile, uses dry ice and bright white lights. The significance of this is that they do not reproduce the environment, they *represent* it. The geography is crystallised by the contrast between states – it is all, after all, a meta-space. But – we are given clear signals that certain space has real-world equivalents. This is the theatrical agreement.

***Dracula* Case Study – The 'Other' Story:**

This case study is an examination of William McNulty's adaption of *Dracula*¹¹⁵. A relatively modern work (2008), it is a fine example of an alternate or parallel storyline. This concept will become an integral part of the *Whisperer* exercise, and reflects a departure from direct adaptation. McNulty himself had performed with the Actor's Theatre of Louisville for a substantial amount of time, playing the character of Van Helsing in their dedicated Halloween season. After discussion with Artistic Director Marc Masterson, it was decided that a new play would be interesting, eventuating in this adaption.

It should be noted that this version *Dracula* addresses the problems of geography and exposition with particular ruthlessness. The classic Transylvanian scenes are

¹¹⁵ McNulty, William, *Dracula* (Louisville: Actor's Theatre of Louisville, 2008)

pared down to only Jonathan Harker's escape, removing the need for additional set, and more importantly, by truncating the chronology of the play, avoiding the extended epistolary exchanges that occur. In many ways, McNulty unshackles himself from the standard audience expectations of the play because he knows its lineage so well. In a direct adaptation, the chronology would serve as follows:

Act One: Transylvania

- Jonathan Harker enters Transylvania, journeying by train to the Carpathian Mountains.
- Count Dracula (as The Driver) transports him to Castle Dracula, introducing the mountain Wolves and the Gypsies.
- Dracula and Harker hold conference with each other regarding Carfax Abbey, interspersed with unusual occurrences regarding the castle.
- Wandering the castle, Jonathan exposes himself to the attentions of the Three Sisters, Dracula's vampire brides. All pretence of normality is dropped.
- Harker witnesses the Gypsies preparing Dracula's goods for travel, including the boxes of earth. Harker makes his escape down the walls of the castle, barely escaping.

Act Two: England

- Lucy and Mina are introduced via correspondence. This is a pivotal shift in narrative.
- The passenger ship *Demeter* is reported to come ashore at Whitby, following a strange plague onboard. A huge black dog is witnessed leaving the ship.
- Lucy's suitors are introduced, including Seward (and via him, Renfield, Dracula's first attorney), Morris and Holmwood.
- Dracula begins to stalk Lucy. The resulting anaemia prompts Seward to call in Abraham Van Helsing. Van Helsing recognises the symptoms almost immediately. Multiple blood transfusions fail to contain the situation.
- Van Helsing leaves briefly for Amsterdam, and in his absence, Dracula completes his kill.

- Lucy's body is laid to rest, rising as a vampire to prey on local children.
- Seward, Holmwood, Morris and Van Helsing go to destroy her. Holmwood is nearly seduced by her, before staking, beheading and 'garlic-ing' her.

Act Three: England

- Mina retrieves Jonathan from Budapest, where he has surfaced. They rejoin the company of conspirators.
- Dracula becomes aware of the company, choosing to prey on Mina. Despite the efforts of the men, she is assaulted three times.
- Kept alive by blood transfusions and the careful defences of the rest of the company, she nevertheless is fed Dracula's own blood, beginning the vampiric transition, and connecting their minds.
- The company realises that time is growing short, and they launch a campaign against Dracula, raiding Carfax Abbey and destroying Dracula's castles of earth.
- Dracula departs for Transylvania, choosing to fight on his own turf. It is also postulated that he is fighting a battle of attrition, knowing Mina will eventually die and come to him.

Act Four: Transylvania

- The company races Dracula to the castle, using trains and Mina's connection to speed their progress.
- Arriving at the castle first, Van Helsing secures Mina and slays the Three Sisters.
- Harker and Quincy attack the Gypsy caravan carrying Dracula. Quincy is wounded.
- Before he can reach the protection of the castle, Dracula is stabbed in the throat and heart by Harker and Quincy.
- An epilogue speaks of the Harker couples' lives after the tale.

McNulty renovates this arrangement with precision – the Transylvanian scenes are disposed of almost completely (except, as previously mentioned, Jonathan's escape, which is performed as a flashback). Moreover, Dracula himself is never pursued back to Transylvania; instead he is slain at Carfax Abbey. Other geographical shifts

include an extra emphasis on Seward's Sanatorium, and the removal of Lord Godalming's (Holmwood) estate. Now the chronology looks like this:

Act One:

- Seward recounts the events of her death, and the arrival of the *Demeter*.
- Dracula feeds on Mina (Lucy)
- Van Helsing arrives, meeting Renfield as an equal before realising he is an inmate.
- Seward informs Van Helsing of Dracula's occupancy.
- Lucy (Mina) is introduced.
- Dracula visits in a social capacity.
- Seward and Van Helsing discuss Lucy (Mina's) symptoms.
- Jonathan arrives back in England, driving off Dracula.
- Briggs and Sullivan are introduced.
- Dracula enslaves Sullivan.
- Van Helsing interviews Jonathan, who re-enacts his escape from Castle Dracula in Story Theatre style.
- Dracula openly confronts the company and infects Lucy (Mina) with his own blood.

Act Two:

- Renfield makes a gambit to throw off Dracula's thrall.
- Dracula confronts Van Helsing in a battle of magic.
- Seward is taken to destroy Mina's (Lucy) body, now risen as a vampire.
- Sullivan's enthrallment is discovered.
- Lucy (Mina) attempts to seduce Jonathan. She returns to her senses.
- Dracula confronts Renfield about his treachery. Seward interrupts. Dracula holds him hostage. Seward disembowels himself to break the stalemate.
- Van Helsing nearly stakes Dracula, but his trickery allows him to escape.
- Brigg's is killed by Dracula.
- The company raid Dracula's lair at Carfax. They slay him.
- Renfield is free, but is killed by a child vampire, progeny of Mina (Lucy).

The characters were also subjected to ruthless pruning – Most notably, Lucy and Mina are swapped (in first name only). The reason is not obvious, and can only be assumed to be an internal joke on the part of McNulty. Lord Godalming is removed, as is much of the onstage character of Mina (Lucy in the original), effectively removing the early ‘Lucy’ subplot. The characters do, however, mention the period in hindsight. Morris the American is also removed, possibly due to his close linkage with Mina (Lucy) as a suitor, and his general irrelevance until the end of the original tale.

Most poignant to the *Whisperer* adaption is McNulty’s use of amalgam and created characters. He chooses to base his adaption primarily around the Sanatorium, greatly expanding the part of Renfield. Where previously Renfield was a curiosity, providing insight into Dracula’s mind via ravings, it was usually through the mediation of Seward. In McNulty’s version, he is much more active, providing much of the comic relief and providing important information about where Dracula is and what he is doing. He also provides much of the Gothic build-up, heralding the arrival of Dracula in lieu of the missing Transylvanian scenes. In addition to Renfield’s expansion, two new characters are introduced – Briggs the orderly, and Sullivan, Seward’s assistant. These two are important to this adaption because of their innocence – they are lower class, honest workers, who are, by their ignorance, both vulnerable to Dracula’s manipulation and in a position to comment on the events surrounding their upper-class brethren. In some ways, they are vehicles through which several ‘acting effects’ (special effects utilising acting rather than technical rigs) are realised. Most notable of these is Act 1, Scene 2, where Sullivan and Dracula engage in a series of echoes – an exploration of Dracula’s mesmerism. They also (particularly in Brigg’s case) provide Dracula with kill-fodder. Being a very violent and visually grotesque play, they provide extra opportunities for Dracula to showcase his feral strength.

Dracula’s violence, however, is counterbalanced by another addition to the script – normal, social interaction with the group. Before the hunt proper begins, we get to see Dracula in his ‘innocent’ guise. Visiting Lucy’s (Mina) house, he expresses what I interpret to be quite genuine interest in her, and exchanges philosophical conversation with the men folk. This adaption manages to express a side of Dracula that many of the film versions eschew – loneliness. We also see a much wider array

of powers, including transformation, mesmerism, flight and possession. Likewise, Van Helsing is empowered to a similar extent. Instead of the purely physical resistance the company puts up in the source text, McNulty turns Van Helsing in a sort of paladin, armed with religious texts that directly negate or repulse Dracula's powers. These are very modern modifications – the audience, usually familiar with both the original story and the subsequent interpretations, expects the stakes to rise. Also, as consumers in the age of CGI, we have an expectation for more visible expressions of power.

McNulty tends to use the audience's existing knowledge to blindside them – in the same way that Dracula is given more range, and Van Helsing is more directly powerful, the arrival of Jonathan Harker is suitably elegant. Upon the first overt unmasking of Dracula, he is driven out the window by the sudden arrival of a 'Man' wielding a revolver, who delivers a single line, 'Stand back, stand back, dammit! Sorry, I missed' and faints. Thus the entire discarded history concerning Jonathan is reinserted into the play (which many of the audience would be familiar with), without the inconvenience of staging it.

The lessons that can be learned from *Dracula*, specifically to inform an adaption of *Whisperer* is that geography is a luxury, not a necessity. Before working out how to portray geographic change onstage, what can be discarded without jeopardising the narrative? Secondly, the story can exist as a tangential reality – focussing on smaller segments of the original to better highlight features that the theatre can utilise. Characters can exist in the same fashion, filling gaps in the lineup, as required by the playwright, to explore and expand new ideas. Most importantly of all – the most powerful tool in the adaptor's toolkit is familiarity with the text, and the themes it embodies.



CHAPTER THREE:

**H. P. LOVECRAFT
&
THE CTHULHU MYTHOS**

Chapter Introduction: H.P. Lovecraft & The Cthulhu Mythos

As we approach the adaption proper, it seems prudent to lay down a foundation of Lovecraft's life and work. His early life shaped his worldview very profoundly, which in turn influenced his writing. This chapter briefly describes his life and career, and then moves on to the Mythos he created. The purpose of this grounding is so that the adaption section and the development surrounding it is not filled with mysterious words like 'Nyarlathotep' without apparent meaning.

The second part of this chapter contains two case studies of previous Lovecraft adaptations. The first is perhaps the most accurate and faithful adaption of his work, the video-game *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth*. It contains useful insights into mixing Mythos tales into a workable narrative, and the evocation of horror within a true 3D space. The second case study is the Stuart Gordon/Brian Yuzna film adaptations of Lovecraft's tales, which explore the solidification of amorphous concepts and the re-assigning of exposition.

Aims of this Chapter:

- The Life & Development of H. P. Lovecraft
 - o Childhood
 - o Religion
 - o Illnesses
- The Mythos Cycles
 - o Dunsanian-Poe
 - o Arkham
 - o Cthulhu
- *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* Case Study
 - o Horror & the audience
 - o Lovecraftian narrative
 - o Translation of effects
- *Reanimator* and *From Beyond* Case Studies
 - o Narrative distillation
 - o Reassigning exposition
 - o Physical effects

The Life of H. P Lovecraft:

In order to approach the adaptation of *The Whisperer in Darkness* directly, it is necessary to know Lovecraft. Much of his writing style is informed by his academic, spiritual and scientific pursuits, which are in turn informed by his upbringing. Despite the fact that his writings have enthralled countless literary enthusiasts and pulp magazine readers, Howard P. Lovecraft never believed he would achieve any lasting success. Instead, he considered himself a gentleman author, living in veritable poverty¹¹⁶. The few times he submitted manuscripts for publications, the initial rejection notices would cripple his confidence, resulting in very few released works. The passage of time, however, has revealed both an immense influence on popular culture and a cult of near-secret fans that stretch world-wide. In order to understand *The Whisperer in Darkness* from an internal viewpoint, one must first understand his Mythos. The Mythos, in turn, can only be understood if one has a grasp of Lovecraft's personality and upbringing. To begin, one must make the important distinction between the 'Lovecraft Mythos', as termed by Lovecraft scholar S. T. Joshi, and the 'Cthulhu Mythos' formulated by August Derleth.

Early Childhood & Religion:

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born August 20th, 1890. Lovecraft barely knew his father, Winfield Scott Lovecraft, a travelling salesman who became psychotically ill whilst lodging in Chicago¹¹⁷. Although there is no concrete evidence, researchers such as Dr. David H. Keller have found the symptoms suspiciously similar to those of long-term syphilis¹¹⁸. Lovecraft always claimed to correspondents and friends that it was 'nervous exhaustion', something he himself would later manifest. Because his mother (Susan Phillips Lovecraft) had no means of supporting herself or her young son, they lived with her father and two sisters at his place of birth: 194 Angell Street in Providence, Rhode Island¹¹⁹. For the rest of his life, Lovecraft held great affection for this house, becoming bitterly homesick if separated from it. Whilst Lovecraft's grandfather, Whipple Van Buren Phillips, was not a substantial

¹¹⁶ L. Sprague De Camp, *Lovecraft: A Biography* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1975) p. 54

¹¹⁷ De Camp, p. 15

¹¹⁸ De Camp, p. 16

¹¹⁹ De Camp, p. 17

landowner, he did maintain a healthy fortune, allowing Howard to grow up with what the ancient Romans (and Lovecraft) would consider a *patrician* education and standing. Indeed, his fascination with the ancient world manifested quickly, as he spent his childhood browsing the substantial library his grandfather maintained. His first literary love was a young-adult edition of *The Arabian Nights*; Lovecraft fashioned himself as 'Abdul Alhazred', who would later appear in the Mythos as the writer of the *Necronomicon*, the famed book of forbidden lore¹²⁰. This alter ego also extended to his religious beliefs, if only superficially. His early religious education, as a Baptist, ended when Howard declared that Santa Claus did not exist, and by the same logic, neither did God¹²¹. Instead, he declared that he was a Moslem to annoy his family. Soon, he began replacing any form of religious education with even wider reading, engrossing himself in *The Illiad* and other collections of Greek and Roman myth. The result was a brief conversion to pantheism and a quite sincere belief that he had witnessed fey creatures and gods in the woods around Providence¹²². Eventually, Lovecraft confided in his close confidant and fellow writer, Robert E. Howard, that he was in every aspect an atheist, something that would emerge prominently in his writings. The central creature of his Mythos is 'Azathoth', sometimes referred to as the 'Demon Sultan', is a representation of his non-belief: he is an anti-God. Referred to as gibbering and insane, Azathoth sleeps in the centre of the universe, dreaming reality. Were he to wake, all would end.

Illnesses & Parallels:

A large portion of Lovecraft's childhood is paralleled in his stories; though he attended good local schools, he was frequently withdrawn with illness, though possibly only psychosomatic illness. His mental afflictions also extended to a rare form of parasomnia: 'night terrors'.¹²³ This condition is typified by semi-conscious dreaming accompanied by a deep sense of panic. Lovecraft had frequent recurring nightmares of creatures, named 'night-gaunts', which would carry him away into a

¹²⁰ De Camp, p. 18

¹²¹ De Camp, p. 18

¹²² De Camp, p. 20

¹²³ De Camp, p. 31

dream world full of horrors¹²⁴. Indeed, these night terrors would be the inspiration for his poetic story *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*¹²⁵. Characters from this epic would surface many times in his later stories, notably Randolph Carter in *The Statement of Randolph Carter*¹²⁶ and Richard Pickman in *Pickman's Model*¹²⁷. Lovecraft's illnesses were varied and many. When he returned to high school, he found that while he was very advanced in the fields of Classics, English and Chemistry (read: Alchemy), he had great difficulty with advanced mathematics, resulting in a mental breakdown and withdrawal¹²⁸. Combined with this, he was extremely sensitive to the cold, manifesting an incredibly rare condition called 'poikilothermism'¹²⁹. Sufferers, for all intents and purposes, function as cold-blooded creatures, unable to generate heat. As a result, Lovecraft would rarely emerge from bed until mid-day or later, and during winter, if he were not adequately dressed, would quickly pass out from rapid cooling. This theme would appear in his story *Cool Air*¹³⁰, where the character Dr. Muñoz is in fact dead, and must keep his body below a certain temperature to prevent decomposition. Also, Lovecraft was staying in New York while he wrote *Cool Air*, provoking great homesickness, which transposed itself onto the protagonist.

The Mythos – Understanding Lovecraft's World

The cycles of Lovecraft reflect the evolution of his work through his life. Beginning with a distinctly more traditional Gothic bent, Lovecraft began creating his Mythos proper during the 'Arkham' cycle. What are now known as his most popular works fall between this cycle and his final development – the Cthulhu cycle. *Whisperer* draws from the second two cycles (Arkham and Cthulhu) primarily, with passing reference to the Dunsanian-Poe.

¹²⁴ De Camp, p. 30

¹²⁵ De Camp, p. 138

¹²⁶ H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Statement of Randolph Carter' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005) p.1

¹²⁷ H. P. Lovecraft, 'Pickman's Model' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005) p. 197

¹²⁸ De Camp, p. 42

¹²⁹ De Camp, p. 53

¹³⁰ H. P. Lovecraft, 'Pickman's Model' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005) p. 158

The Dunsanian-Poe Cycle:

To the exclusion of comfort, income and social acceptance, Lovecraft styled himself to be a gentleman who only indulged in literature as a hobby. He formed an early fascination with Lord Dunsany's (Edward Plunkett, 18th Baron of Dunsany) style of writing, envying the leisure with which he could pursue fantastic worlds, free from critical approval or financial dependence. Robert Price, whilst researching Lovecraft, was able to divide his total works into three sub-groups: the Dunsanian, Arkham and Cthulhu cycles¹³¹. The Dunsanian Cycle, which includes the Dream-cycle stories (*Polaris*, *The White Ship*, *The Doom That Came to Sarnath*, *The Cats of Ulthar*, *The Silver Key*, among others) and other self-contained tales, such as *The Lurking Fear*¹³² and *The Rats in the Walls*¹³³ could be associated with a monster-of-the-week style that is identifiable in Lord Dunsany's wider fantasy works. Though it is certain that scholars such as Price are familiar with Lovecraft's deep affection for Edgar Allen Poe's writings¹³⁴, it is surprising that they do not attribute the significant stylistic similarities in this period of Lovecraft's literature to Poe's influence. *The Rats in the Walls* shares markedly similar themes of ancestry, mental illness and ancient architecture with Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, whilst *The Outsider* contains a distinct flavour of isolation and futility, shared with *The Pit and the Pendulum*. As a result, it would be apt to refer to this period of time as the Dunsanian-Poe Cycle. To further strengthen this assertion, one only has to look at the language that Lovecraft used in his tales. Despite his advice to others to avoid affectation, Lovecraft wrote in an antiquated 1800s style, deliberately using archaic spellings, such as 'shew'. The relationship this cycle has with the play adaptation of *The Whisperer in Darkness* is one of cross-pollination, much like the relationship it has with Lovecraft's other Cycles. Elements, specifically names and locations, appear in later works, but rarely as canon. Similarly, the play references some of my own earlier Lovecraftian work, most notably *The Catacombs of Monte Cassino*. It was common for Lovecraft and his circle of author-friends to borrow names, deities and locations from each other, yet it should be noted that this did

¹³¹ Robert M. Price, 'H. P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos' in *Crypt of Cthulhu #35* (Mount Olive: Cryptic Publications, 1985) p. 9

¹³² H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Lurking Fear' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005) p. 55

¹³³ H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Rats in the Walls' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005) p. 77

¹³⁴ H. P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (Unedited, 1935) Chapter III

not make them part of their respective Mythoi¹³⁵. An example of this is Lovecraft's mention of Robert Howard's land of 'Hyperborea' (of *Conan* fame) or direct reference to Clark Ashton Smith himself in *At The Mountains of Madness*¹³⁶. This would later be altered by August Derleth when he re-arranged the Mythos. (SEE: August Derleth: The Reworking of the Mythos)

The Arkham Cycle:

Next in the evolution of Lovecraft's writing is what Robert Price calls 'The Arkham Cycle'. During his adult life, Lovecraft wrote only a few stories under contract, most notably *Herbert West: Re-Animator*, using his own name. He did, however, contribute a substantial amount of ghost written work, including *Imprisoned With The Pharaohs* for Harry Houdini¹³⁷. Although the names of deities and characters appear in his ghost written works, the area known as 'Lovecraft Country' (coined by Chaosium, the publishers of the RPG game) only appears in his own tales. Lovecraft Country includes the imaginary city of Arkham, the Miskatonic and Manuxet Rivers, and the towns of Innsmouth, Dunwich and Kingsport. The 'Arkham Cycle' uses these locations as the primary backdrop. Notable stories include *The Colour Out of Space*, *The Dunwich Horror* and *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. *The Colour Out of Space*, Lovecraft's favourite tale, evoked horror using the landscape itself. When a strange light falls out of the sky into a farm well, the surrounding vegetation gradually becomes minutely *wrong*. Slowly, the family that owns the farm becomes insane, ending with the local council turning the area into a reservoir. This is a perfect example of Lovecraft's style of creeping horror, which centres on the withholding of information, rather than the nature of the explanation. This theme appears regularly in Lovecraft's writing during the Arkham Cycle, particularly in his descriptions of otherworldly denizens. An important distinction to make between the entities of the Arkham Cycle and the Cthulhu Cycle is their nature. Whereas the Cthulhu Cycle deals with non-human terrestrial and extra-terrestrial civilisations such as that of the Elder Things, Mi-Go

¹³⁵ Robert M. Price, 'H. P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos', *Crypt of Cthulhu* #35 (Mount Olive: Cryptic Publications, 1985), p. 9

¹³⁶ H. P. Lovecraft, 'At The Mountains of Madness' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005) p. 481

¹³⁷ Harry Houdini, 'Imprisoned With The Pharaohs' in *Weird Tales* (Wildside Press, May 1924)

and Deep Ones, the Arkham Cycle generally invokes trans-dimensional entities such as Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep and Azathoth. The non-physical nature of these beings allows for Lovecraft's trademark amorphous descriptions, such as that of Azathoth: '...that amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which blasphemes and bubbles at the center of all infinity...'¹³⁸.

The Cthulhu Cycle:

By the latter part of Lovecraft's career, a coherent chronology began to emerge. Beginning with *The Call of Cthulhu*, it is an alternate history of the Earth in which humanity is a miniscule and transient player. Whilst previous stories mention components of the later Mythos, *Dagon*¹³⁹ for example, it is in the Cthulhu Cycle that Lovecraft begins to form them into a quotable continuum. It also marks a change in his style of narrative: throughout the Arkham Cycle, the descriptions of places and extra-dimensional beings are deliberately vague and suggestive. This later style contains a far more solid faux history, sacrificing the horror of the unknown in favour of a sense of human futility. The chronology begins around one billion B.C, with the Elder Things (*At the Mountains of Madness*) arriving from space and colonising the Earth. While capable of living on land, most prefer to dwell in the ocean, their major cities located in the Atlantic Ocean and on the Antarctic Plateau. Soon after establishing themselves, they begin genetic experiments, creating protoplasmic slave beings named 'shoggoths' and all other early life. The shoggoths would later rebel, annihilating the Elder Things a few million years before humanity arises. Two hundred and fifty million years later, the Flying Polyps arrive, but are driven out of the oceans by the Elder Things and the shoggoths. Soon after this, the Great Race of Yith (*The Shadow Out of Time*) appears. The Yithians, capable of time travel by swapping minds with most beings anywhere in history, became aware of their impending doom by supernova. To save themselves, they migrate *en masse* into the bodies of a vaguely sentient race of pyramidal beings on Earth, leaving the displaced minds to perish on Yith. Though they quickly establish cities, they are drawn into a war with the Polyps,

¹³⁸ H. P. Lovecraft, *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (Boston: Arkham House, 1943)

¹³⁹ H. P. Lovecraft, 'Dagon' in *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* (Sauk City: Arkham House, 1986)

forcing them underground and capping the entrances with stone tablets. Three hundred and fifty million years B.C, Cthulhu and his kin arrive on Earth after a massive upheaval raises the landmasses of R'yleh and Panope from the ocean, destroying several Elder Thing cities. Quickly, the Deep Ones ally themselves with Cthulhu in time for a war to break out with the Elder Things, which ultimately results in a pact. Cthulhu retains rule over his new domains whilst the Elder Things get the rest of the ocean. R'yleh, the great Deep One city, thrives for several million years before sinking beneath the waves during a global cataclysm, imprisoning Cthulhu. Soon the Mi-Go, insectoid creatures, establish a mining base on Earth. The Elder Things attempt to oppose them in space, but genetic stagnation has robbed them of the ability to traverse the 'ether' (an outdated theory of space). The Mi-Go maintain a low profile, shipping resources to Yuggoth/Pluto. Meanwhile, the Yithians, aware of the Flying Polyyps' impending escape, migrate to the minds of a race of 'beetle-folk'; the dominant species on Earth after humanity becomes extinct.

The Interaction of Humanity & the Mythos:

The Cthulhu Mythos gods and creatures, including the Great Old One himself, subscribe to no objective definition of 'good' or 'evil', but rather individual breeds of motivation. The salience of this alien neutrality theme in Lovecraft's writings lies in its effect on one's ability to categorise. The categorisation of the 'Other' into 'good' or 'evil' is a natural cultural process, present particularly in religion. Thus, by making his monsters neither good nor evil, Lovecraft warps the popular concept of the antagonist, which at the time of his works' publication was an extremely unsettling and modern idea. Though authors and playwrights had written morally questionable protagonists, for example Shakespeare's Falstaff, Lovecraft was among the first to write a morally *unknowable* antagonist (Cthulhu, Nyarlathotep, etc), which by its own nature is a reflection of the protagonist. The horror generated by Cthulhu is based not on his malevolence, but rather that he is unfathomable and unstoppable. Lovecraft leaves no suggestion of victory over the eldritch ancients, only frightening glimpses at their inhumanity.

An important change within the Mythos resides in how humans interact with non-humans. During the Arkham Cycle, virtually no humans survive contact with the Outside, either being corrupted by Yog-Sothoth (*The Dunwich Horror*), or driven mad by Nyarlathotep (*Dreams in the Witch House*). The Cthulhu Cycle, however, offers new themes of co-existence and conflict. Two particular examples of this interaction are the Mi-Go in *The Whisperer in the Darkness*, who have a benevolent relationship with human collaborators, and the Deep Ones, who subjugate their human allies in order to breed. While it may be argued that Lovecraft's shift from horror to a style of science fiction¹⁴⁰ sacrifices his trademark vagueness, it also changes his creations from the unnatural 'Other' to the rightful owners of Earth. This effective dismantling of an anthropocentric ideal serves to generate more horror and uncertainty in the reader than his earlier Dunsany Cycle ever managed. This thesis's adaptation of *The Whisperer in Darkness* tries to play on the theme of 'Ownership': one can predict the possible interaction between human and invader alien, but how would two species that have equal ownership act towards each other?

August Derleth: The Reworking of the Mythos:

Many of Lovecraft's later works were posthumously 'co-written' by August Derleth, Lovecraft's friend and protégé. Using fragmentary notes, Derleth wrote a series of tales, mostly adjoining to existing Lovecraft creations, for example *The Shadow Out of Time* and *The Shadow Out of Space*¹⁴¹, which extends the Yithian narrative. However, Derleth provoked mixed reactions from other contributors to the Lovecraft Mythos and fans alike by his treatment of 'good' and 'evil'. Possibly to harmonise the existing canon with his Christian beliefs¹⁴², Derleth began to categorise the denizens of the Mythos¹⁴³, dividing them into elemental groupings. Cthulhu and the Deep Ones are 'Water' creatures, opposed to the 'Air' beings 'Hastur', 'Ithaqua', 'Zhar' and 'Lloigor'. Other gods are assigned to 'Earth' and 'Fire'.

¹⁴⁰ De Camp, p.333

¹⁴¹ H. P. Lovecraft & August Derleth, 'The Shadow Out of Space' in *The Watchers Out of Time and Others* (Sauk City: Arkham House, 1974)

¹⁴² Robert Bloch, *Heritage of Horror* (New York: Ballantine Books)p. 9

¹⁴³ The categorisation of the Mythos was contained within Derleth's *The Trail of Cthulhu* series, published in *Weird Tales* between 1944 and 1952.

This simplification of the various beings' motives fundamentally changes the meanings and themes of Lovecraft's universe, by destroying the uncertainty the science fiction elements create. Derleth also decided to formalise the casual referencing that Lovecraft and his writing circle made a habit of. Any mention of a place, location or character was fitted into the newly formed 'Cthulhu Mythos', making it many times larger than the original 'Lovecraft Mythos'. Whilst it was logical to solidify the Mythos in order to create a virtual sourcebook for new writers, it also destabilised the established chronology and geography of Lovecraft's Earth and wider universe. The strangest addition to the Mythos was the linking of Robert E. Howard's 'Conan'¹⁴⁴ universe. In order to accommodate the world of 'Hyperborea', literal magic had to be introduced into the Mythos, a strong contrast to the meta-science and alchemy that Lovecraft favoured. While scholarly opinion is divided¹⁴⁵, it is my personal belief that the Derleth model of the Mythos is incorrect; it disempowers Lovecraft's creations by diluting them. *Whisperer* is dependent on the premise that the Mi-Go are neither good nor evil – by Derleth's assertions, they are evil.

Lovecraft & The Original Myth

On the topic of myth being the original text, Lovecraft warps this logic to become an internal as well as external force in his literature. His works, and the Mythos they make up, are in themselves a deliberate attempt at obscuring the literary genealogy of his own writing. The Mythos includes a plethora of fictional books, including the *Book of Eibon*¹⁴⁶, *Pnakotic Manuscripts*¹⁴⁷, *De Vermis Mysteriis*¹⁴⁸, *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*¹⁴⁹ and the infamous *Necronomicon*. Excluding the *Necronomicon*, Lovecraft's companion authors, creating a joint fictional library, invented each of these books. This library is a McGuffin: it contains all the dark lore

¹⁴⁴ The *Conan* series began with 'The Phoenix on the Sword' in *Weird Tales* (1936)

¹⁴⁵ Yōzan Dirk W. Mosig, David E Schultz, Richard L. Tierney and S. T. Joshi all hold positions that Derleth's categorisations don't mesh with Lovecraft's personal beliefs. Mosig's 'H. P. Lovecraft: Myth Maker' (1976) is particularly salient.

¹⁴⁶ Borrowed from Clark Ashton Smith's 'Ubbo-Sathla' in *Weird Tales* (1933).

¹⁴⁷ First appearing in Lovecraft's 'Polaris' in *The Philosopher* (1920).

¹⁴⁸ 'The Cult of the Worm', borrowed from Robert Bloch's 'The Shambler From The Stars' in *Weird Tales* (1935)

¹⁴⁹ Borrowed from Robert Bloch's 'The Children of the Night' in *Weird Tales* (1931)

that drives Lovecraft's fiction, yet we get to see almost nothing of its contents, and ultimately serves no purpose beyond its mention. They are also part of a timeline; an imitation of the way literature is reworked and revisited over time. Each book was written by different cultures from different times, all on a similar topic: the unseen universe. The *Necronomicon* itself is given a multi-layered history, beginning with its original edition by Abdul Alhazred, then a subsequent translation to Greek by Theodorus Philetas in 950AD, Latin by Olaus Wormius in 1228AD, then finally into English by John Dee.

Likewise, the deities and events that Lovecraft invents to tell a secret history of the world are deliberate attempts to mimic creation myths. However, this is an example of inverted adaptation – it is a commentary on existing myths by imitating their style and content. With the exception of a bare few, Lovecraft is careful to place his deities' motivation squarely outside of the human. As his immediate religious experience was the Christian and Classical Greek creation myths, Lovecraft saw his 'gods' (which are, of course, only perceived as gods) as being chaotically neutral. Their actions are never driven by the human concepts of 'good' and 'evil', and any killing or damage on their part is generally a case of miscommunication or total indifference.

Lovecraft Adaptions – Case Studies:

Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth:

Lovecraft has never been a stranger to the medium of computer games. It was only a small logical leap for the tabletop role-playing game, *Call of Cthulhu*¹⁵⁰, to be realised in a graphic, simulated form. Components of the Mythos have been appearing in computer games since their earliest days (*Pathways Into Darkness*¹⁵¹ by Bungie Software, for instance), yet it was the rise of 3D, and by extension the first-person perspective, which saw Lovecraft's works fully realised. For a long period, no direct attempt to translate one of his tales was made, but Mythos settings became increasingly familiar. Popular games, such as id Software's

¹⁵⁰ *Call of Cthulhu* (Chaosium, 1981)

¹⁵¹ *Pathways into Darkness*, created by Jason Jones (Bungie Software, 1993)

*Quake*¹⁵² or Infogrames's *Alone in the Dark*¹⁵³ made specific reference to the Old One, Shub-Niggurath. *Alone in the Dark* itself spearheaded the 'Survival Horror' genre alongside the Japanese *Sweet Home*¹⁵⁴. This new style of game took the story-heavy approach of RPGs and married it with a new component: dread. *Alone in the Dark*, and its spiritual successor series, *Resident Evil*¹⁵⁵, would play with dread in two ways: the fear of un-killable opponents, and the fear of limited supplies (or, more precisely – the power to affect things). Popular action games of the time (the original *Doom*¹⁵⁶ games, *Wolfenstein 3D*¹⁵⁷, etc) would carefully mete out medical supplies and ammunition to the player as they reached and overcame challenges, making sure that they were prepared for the next section. *Alone in the Dark* would provide the player with very few weapons late in the game, and for the limited amount of firearms, virtually no ammunition. The result was a constant feeling of under-preparedness. As the genre continued to grow and evolve, more and more Lovecraftian material emerged, including *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem*¹⁵⁸, a very close analogy of the Mythos, until finally Headfirst productions devised a direct adaptation of *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, which would become *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth*. Unfortunately, Headfirst Productions dissolved before it could realise the profits of the venture, which has removed the chance to use their proposed game, *Call of Cthulhu: Destiny's End*, in this thesis. In their stead, however, Frictional Games have produced a slew of admirable Lovecraftian games, namely the *Penumbra*¹⁵⁹ series, and *Amnesia: The Dark Descent*¹⁶⁰.

Call of Cthulhu is ultimately a combined adaptation of *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* and *The Shadow Out of Time*, skilfully weaving various locations, characters and creatures into a logical and thoughtful pastiche. Perhaps its greatest success is the fact that it makes the players forget that they are playing a *game* – rather, it becomes a rite of passage; a dare. The game opens with a cinematic of the

¹⁵² *Quake*, dir. by John Romero (id Software, 1995)

¹⁵³ *Alone in the Dark*, dir. by Frédérick Raynal & Franck de Girolami (Infogames, 1992)

¹⁵⁴ *Sweet Home*, dir. by Juzo Itami (Capcom, 1989)

¹⁵⁵ *Resident Evil*, dir. by Shinji Mikami (Capcom, 1996)

¹⁵⁶ *Doom*, dir. by Tom Hall (id Software, 1993)

¹⁵⁷ *Wolfenstein 3D*, dir. by John Romero (id Software, 1992)

¹⁵⁸ *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem*, dir. by Denis Dyack (Silicon Knights, 2002)

¹⁵⁹ *Penumbra: Overture*, dir. by Thomas Grip, Jens Nilsson & Tom Jubert (Frictional Games, 2007)

¹⁶⁰ *Amnesia: The Dark Descent*, dir. by Thomas Grip, Jens Nilsson & Mikael Hedberg (Frictional Games, 2010)

protagonist, Jack Walters, preparing to commit suicide in Arkham Asylum. The chronology then jumps back to a prequel section to the main action, where Jack is assigned to investigate a cult manor where the police are engaged in a standoff. As he attempts to enter, at the request of the cultists, a gun battle ensues with the police, killing most of the cultists. Jack continues into the manor, journeying down in a basement area containing strange architecture and peculiar equipment. Turning on one of the machines, he witnesses several gigantic creatures (Yithians) exit through a portal. Overcome, he faints, and is committed to Arkham Asylum, released years later. Throughout the game, during intense moments of stress or dementia, players find themselves suddenly transported into Jack's mental space, forced to stroll through the Asylum, warped by other memories. Alterations include hands grasping from the cells, and the silhouettes of tentacles at the end of the hallway. This becomes a powerful reflection of not only the central 'sanity' theme of the game, but also of the player's own unease with the situations they are placed in. After returning to public life, Walters agrees to investigate the case of a missing youth in Innsmouth, Massachusetts. Journeying on a bus driven by a sullen Innsmouthian, he proceeds to wander the town, populated by locals who either refuse to talk to him, or are too scared to exchange more than a few words in public – resulting in a clever 'drip-feeding' of information, much as Lovecraft chooses to do in his tales. Throughout the 'first day' of the game, the player's viewpoint continuously swaps to that of *something* on the rooftops, trailing the player during their investigations. Eventually, after an interview with Zadok Allan (directly appropriated from the original text of *Shadow Over Innsmouth*), and an encounter with the 'mother' of a household whom he accidentally releases from the attic (a Deep One), resulting in the death of a young girl, he stays the night at Gilman House, narrowly escaping a murderous attempt by the locals. This early section in particular offers rich adaptation examples – while several of the locations in Innsmouth were described by Lovecraft, Headfirst Productions have made educated guesses and leaps of logic to populate the rest of the town. This process of parallel plot lines to the original tale, while avoiding a slavish recreation, leads to an atmosphere that positively *drips* with Lovecraftian intention, but still offers new and interesting innovations within that scope.

As the journey continues, the writers weave more and more of Lovecraft's extant works into the game world - Jack, evading capture, flees from Innsmouth and is apprehended by Agent Hoover of the FBI, who forces him to aid them. This re-anchoring of the narrative within the real time period helps settle the player, only to use this new credibility to counter-balance a fresh wave of fantastic and horrific creations. Journeying back into Innsmouth, the FBI assault a factory owned by the Waites, the ruling family of Innsmouth. Lovecraft laid down the foundations for this plot arc in *Shadow Over Innsmouth*, mentioning a raid on the Waites' holdings, but again, Headfirst give themselves artistic license to explore *what the factory says about the Waites*. Separated from the group, he explores the factory, encountering a Shoggoth and a temple to Cthulhu. These are the first glimpse (other than the Yithians, who have taken on a dream-like or imagined quality in the mind of the player) of the wider Mythos. The sense of achievement and discovery on the part of the player is thwarted however - the world will never get to share the truth because of Hoover's plan to level the factory. This plot decision is not hollow however - the ever-growing threat of the un-killable Shoggoth barreling through the factory gives the player a valid and persuasive *reason* to buy into the games' logic and destroy a chance at exposure to the public.

This cat-and-mouse dialogue with the player is an extremely effective ploy - as an active participant in the illusion, the player wants nothing more than for Jack's fears and experiences to be justified. This is perhaps exacerbated by our conditioned desire for the 'Good' to win and the 'Evil' to be exposed. *Call of Cthulhu*, however, refuses to indulge this desire - it consistently and ruthlessly isolates the player in their knowledge of the Mythos. The various characters that appear and interact with Jack either fall victim to the creatures, or kill themselves. Where other games try to evoke the sense of the lone hero taking on a quest, *Call of Cthulhu* succeeds because Jack is *not* a hero, but a normal person as scared as the players inhabiting him.

After successfully blowing up the factory (and all evidence of the creatures within) Jack is asked to assist as a guide for the army, who invade the town, heralding the last vestige of outside intervention. When the soldiers are repulsed from the Order of Dagon (a large repurposed Masonic hall), he infiltrates and subdues several cult leaders. As a result, he is washed out to sea, only to be retrieved by a Navy cutter

on-route to Devil's Reef, reputed to be the overland access to the submarine city of the Deep Ones. One especially interesting thing about these sections is the *lack* of supporting information. Often, games of the RPG persuasion (or at least, games that focus on plot) provide a wealth of extra reading material that fill in the gaps that the main story has no time to explore. This is a video-game approach to repurposing exposition, by making it available *if the audience is interested*, but not slowing down the primary narrative. *Call of Cthulhu* does the opposite of this, as it expects the player to already be somewhat knowledgeable in the Mythos. While this is not always a reality, the game is not hampered by that possibility. The result is that a fresh player is oppressed and confused by their surroundings, whilst Mythos enthusiasts can spot all manner of additional details and references to Lovecraft's other tales.

The final chapter disconnects the player completely from reality, fulfilling their fear of isolation and forcing them to contend with it. This, in the genre of horror, makes *Call of Cthulhu* quite unique. A common criticism of horror games is that as the player reaches catharsis, said game becomes ineffective and more action-oriented. Headfirst avoid this through this clever plot progression. The player finally *knows* what they are meant to be fighting against, and are now more or less on their own terms. The texture of this section's atmosphere reflects this change, with very few shock-horror moments being utilised, and an increasing abundance of odd Mythos references. The final chapter begins with the Navy cutter being boarded by the Deep Ones and eventually being sunk by an angry Dagon¹⁶¹, washing Jack ashore on Devil's reef. Journeying down through the tunnels, he is captured and imprisoned, escaping in an extended stealth section of the game, taunting the player with an abundance of firearms, but a near-suicidal environment in which to use them. Eventually, Jack finds his way down into the 'air-filled tunnels', inhabited by a pair of Flying Polyps (creatures from *The Shadow Out of Time*, supposedly extinct). Fighting his way through, the player faces Hydra¹⁶² and removes the shield protecting the city, rendering it vulnerable to the Navy's submarines. Escaping through the collapsing city, Jack emerges back onto dry land and is apprehended. During this period, he lapses into a suppressed

¹⁶¹ Demi-god of the Deep Ones. Roughly four stories high.

¹⁶² Wife to Dagon and demi-goddess of the Deep Ones. A fertility goddess, similar to Aphrodite.

memory of his time with the Yithians, who tell him that one of them had long ago swapped minds with his father, accidentally at the moment of his conception. Unable to deal with this knowledge of his lineage, and the things he has seen, the game returns to the scene in Arkham Asylum, where Jack hangs himself.

Like any other medium, each individual video game helps to define and develop the genre it belongs to. *Call of Cthulhu* is remarkable in *how far* it pushes survival horror. Played from a first-person perspective, rather than the fixed-point third-person system utilised by *Alone in the Dark* or *Resident Evil*, *Call of Cthulhu* gains the ability to surprise the player by directing their attention then placing a horrific element in their blind spot. This shock-horror mechanism is employed sparsely, and consists mostly of sudden snap-zooms to disturbing elements as the player enters a room, trying to visually recreate the physical sensation of shock. A variation of this concept is easily recreated in the theatre – possibly to even better effect than in a video game. This relies on the identification of the audience's perceived performing space. Where do they expect characters to be? Where are the blind spots that can be utilised? In a standard proscenium arch setup, a simple direct-attention-left, insert-effect-right strategy can be used. This principle in game-space also enables the designers to utilise directional sound to a greater degree, splitting the player's focus and thus preying on their sense of having the situation under control. A theatre audience, too, thinks that they know where to look and when, due to cues they've been trained to recognise (lights up, etc). Subverting these expectations could allow playwrights and directors to appropriate video-game horror techniques for use in the theatre.

Another development of survival horror that has carried across to *Call of Cthulhu* is the treatment of 'sanity'. This is a concept first developed by the *Silent Hill*¹⁶³ series, consisting of sensory manipulation. This can range from subtle perspective warping and the overlaying of 'memories' onto the game space, to manipulations of the gameplay illusion. During sanity-straining sections of the games, the computer or console can appear to switch off, or the television appear to change channel, forcing the illusion of the game to suddenly be realised within the real world. *Call of Cthulhu* does not utilise this, perhaps because the switch from the in-period

¹⁶³ *Silent Hill*, created by Keichiro Toyama (Konami, 1999)

setting to the player's setting is too jarring and counter-productive. It does, however, manipulate the game visually, and occasionally (depending on the amount of 'sanity loss') reverse the control scheme in an imitation of loss of body-control.

The relevance of this adaption in relation to theatre is two-fold: firstly, it is a style of delivery that deals with only partially defined space. Secondly, it is a representation of an adaption that is *aware* of the greater Mythos. To expand the first point, cinema is a medium that exists in three dimensions, but the audience is only able to witness what the camera is pointing at. The theatre, as much it can *suggest* to the audience what to look at, it must be taken into consideration what they will see if they look elsewhere. The video game may draw on the filmic style for cut scenes, but in general, it must use subtler forms of suggestion. The creators of the co-operative horror game *Left 4 Dead* address this issue in their development blog:

"From watching many playtests, we found players instinctively moved towards well-lit areas"¹⁶⁴

The developers wished to create an open environment that had the illusion of being a sandbox (parlance for a large area with no defined route), but in reality, wasn't. Instead, they manipulated player psychology: when stressed and forced to keep moving in the survival atmosphere, players automatically seek out well-lit areas for both comfort and tactical reasons. This allowed them to design their levels with very subtle lighting cues that sub-consciously funnel players in the direction they are meant to proceed. Having played through the game myself, I can concur that this pathing strategy is both subtle and barely perceptible. Theatre likewise cues the audience to observe specific areas, and can also leverage this comfort response by providing inconstant or decoy lighting design. Light, on the stage, is usually not location specific: it is not necessarily imitating reality, but is an emotional tool. We take cues from whether lighting is bright or dim, and what colour quality it has. *Call of Cthulhu* utilizes these techniques – it eschews red light as a sign of danger, instead training the player to fear green and blue, for separate

¹⁶⁴ Left 4 Dead Development blog, <http://www.l4d.com/blog/post.php?id=2129>, retrieved 30/1/2012

reasons. Green is associated with the Yithian component of the game (see Mythos section), whilst blue is used to indicate the presence of Deep One or Cthulhu-related denizens. White, in contradiction to our expectations, is linked with the player character's internal physic damage.

To conclude, *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* is a powerful and nuanced adaption, equally adept at referencing the source texts and creating new and educated material to fill in Mythos gaps. It is deeply aware of its relationship with the player, be they new or Mythos veterans, using this understanding to sculpt the plot pace and content. It explores the Lovecraftian themes of Other and Self-As-Other admirably.

Reanimator & From Beyond:

While there have been numerous attempts at adapting Lovecraft's work to the silver screen, none have been so successful as the *Reanimator*¹⁶⁵ series, and their sister film, *From Beyond*¹⁶⁶. Springing from the collective minds and directing talents of Brian Yuzna and Stuart Gordon, these films have set the benchmark for effective Lovecraftian adaptations. Specifically important to *this* project is their treatment of period, fidelity and physical effects.

Firstly, let's examine the first of the *Reanimator* films. Based on the story serial *Herbert West: Reanimator*, it concerns the invention of a serum designed to bring the dead back to life. It is unique in that it is not concerned with the religious or spiritual implications of death – Herbert believes that all life is a chemical process, and that one only needs to restart these processes to restore life to a corpse. Complications arise when he and his fellow medical student Dan Cain begin experiments to this end, as the trauma of death appears to affect the reanimation process, rendering the resurrected individuals violent and deranged. Events spiral out of control, with Herbert West's nemesis within the hospital (Dr. Carl Hill) blackmailing him, dying, then being resurrected as a form of revenge. The

¹⁶⁵ *Reanimator*, dir. by Stuart Gordon (Empire Pictures, 1985)

¹⁶⁶ *From Beyond*, dir. by Stuart Gordon (Empire Pictures, 1986)

reanimated Hill becomes a headless antagonist, ultimately culminating in the death of Dan's fiancée, Megan.

The two sequels expand on this premise: the second, *Bride of Reanimator*¹⁶⁷ is a homage to the classic *Bride of Frankenstein*¹⁶⁸, following Dan's quest to recreate Megan. The third, *Beyond Reanimator*¹⁶⁹ expands upon the serum, introducing the concept of Nano-Plasmic Energy (NPE), which contains the spark of intelligence that had been missing from the pair's earlier failed experiments.

What is notable about these adaptations is that despite their success, they all depart substantially from the source *form* (not text). In the vein of Ivan Raimi's *Evil Dead*¹⁷⁰ series, *Reanimator* is a combination of horror and comedy. While the horror elements (moving corpses, mental degradation) are perfectly serviceable, and particularly gory, they are mixed with a carefully calculated campiness. Jeffrey Combs (Herbert West) performs with an intentional overbearing intensity, injecting so much 'mad scientist' into his character that it becomes a self-aware parody.

As an adaptation, *Reanimator* has had some substantial renovations performed on it – the most obvious of which is a period shift. The original text occurs in Lovecraft's present day (1921), enforcing upon the science certain limitations. West's serum and means for reanimating the dead appear as alchemy to the modern reader, despite their attempts to seem realistic. Oddly enough, the new period of 1985 doesn't change this effect majorly – rather, it simplifies it. Given the benefit of a visual medium, it is depicted as a virulently glowing green substance, effective to the point of becoming iconic. Within this single visual tool is encapsulated the primary theme of the narrative – mystery, power, responsibility and possibility. This is not an amorphous Lovecraft story – it is remarkably definite and quantifiable by his standards. Rather, the horror lies in the implications of the premise, both positive and negative. Gordon (who also wrote the screenplay) plays with these ideas very competently – with each inciting incident twist (the death of Megan's father, etc), we are tantalised with a potential solution that would solve

¹⁶⁷ *Bride of Reanimator*, dir. by Brian Yuzna (Wild Street Pictures, 1990)

¹⁶⁸ *Bride of Frankenstein*, dir. by James Whale (Universal Pictures, 1935)

¹⁶⁹ *Beyond Reanimator*, dir. by Brian Yuzna (Fantastic Factory, 2003)

¹⁷⁰ *The Evil Dead*, dir. by Sam Raimi (New Line Cinema, 1981)

Herbert and Dan's dilemma: using the serum. Our hopes never come to pass, however, and the serum characteristically renders its new victim violent and unreasonable. With each experiment, however, the chance of *success* increases, rather than the more typical promise of negative escalation. It is this that keeps the audience rooting for the protagonists and the work they do, rather than letting them slip into the role of the tragic protagonist that does not learn. This arc carries across all three films in the series, with Herbert refining the serum and procedures to produce better results. By *Beyond Reanimator*, the promise of success is seductively near, but ultimately foiled. This careful treatment and humanisation of the protagonists is something that is, of course, integral to all good script writing, but in the field of horror, it serves a secondary role: maintaining verisimilitude in the face of the super or extra-natural. *Reanimator* achieves this, and in doing so sets a fine example for adapting *Whisperer*.

Another concept that *Reanimator* demonstrates is the creation of amalgam characters in order to sidestep expository material. The most obvious of these is Dan Cain, the personality built around the unnamed narrator of the original text *Herbert West: Reanimator*. Used as a foil for Herbert, he acts as the access point for the audience, in both a narrative and moral sense. Also, considering Herbert's relative indifference to the grotesque nature of their work, he is the one that expresses discomfort and disgust.

Connected to Dan, and Dean Halsey, the dean of Miskatonic University, is Megan Halsey (played by Barbara Cranston, another Yuzna/Gordon regular). As well as injecting a camp 'scream-queen' sensibility to the film, she acts as the sexual and moral centre. In order to have a clear antagonist/protagonist clash arc, she is both girlfriend to Dan, and lecherously desired by Dr. Hill, Herbert's plagiarist nemesis. This creates the friction needed between *all* the characters to drive the narrative towards chaos. Dan is in love with Megan, who dislikes Herbert. Hill is also covetous of Megan, and disdainful of Herbert, leading him to poison Dean Halsey's opinion of both Dan and Herbert. The result of this pressure leads the pair to work dangerously in private, where they accidentally involve the Dean, killing him. In order to cover the accident up, they revive him. A damaged Halsey is handed over to Hill, who lobotomises him, seeing a chance to assume a paternal position with Megan. Also, suspicious of Halsey's state, he attempts to blackmail Herbert and

steal his research. Herbert kills him with a spade and resurrects the severed head. Hill escapes and animates a horde of bodies, resulting in a final confrontation with Megan being killed. It should be noted at this point that only Herbert West and Dean Halsey are defined in this way in the original text. The potent combination of Dan, Megan and Hill create the necessary single major plot arc that Lovecraft's tale lacked (being a serial publication). Why is this setup preferable to the existing narrative? It is because the frictions between characters allow for *dramatic*, rather than expository, advancement. This is an important dynamic to consider, when shifting narrative from a literary to visual medium.

From Beyond is a slightly different proposition. Spawned from one of Lovecraft's lesser-known works of the same name¹⁷¹, it makes significant and complex alterations to the narrative. The original tale is extremely simple, reflecting a similar single-string narrative as *The Statement of Randolph Carter* with linear build-up to a single climactic revelation. In it, the narrator (unnamed) works alongside Crawford Tillinghast, the inventor of a resonance wave emitter, a device that stimulates the pineal gland of nearby humans. This effect allows them to perceive a parallel alien reality, and vice versa. The tale ends with the narrator fleeing the house, having shot the machine and caused Tillinghast's death by apoplexy. The film expands this premise in much the same way as *Reanimator*, shifting it to the present day and creating a host of amalgamated characters. Most important in the division of Crawford Tillinghast into two characters – a protagonist version (played by Jeffrey Combs, and bearing the same name), and a crazed antagonist named Dr. Edward Pretorius (played by Ted Sorel). Pretorius inherits the irrational desire for knowledge that the original exhibited, while the new Tillinghast is shifted into the realm of the redemptive hero. Also appearing is Barbara Cranston in the sharply contrasting role (from her character in *Reanimator*) of Dr. McMichaels. What I want to draw from this film, however, is its treatment of Lovecraft's creatures. *From Beyond* is a good example for this in that it takes the amorphous, and crystallizes it in a variety of ways. The original text describes two groupings of creatures:

¹⁷¹ H. P. Lovecraft, 'From Beyond' in *The Fantasy Fan* (1934)

Indescribable shapes both alive and otherwise were mixed in disgusting disarray, and close to every known thing were whole worlds of alien, unknown entities. It likewise seemed that all the known things entered into the composition of other unknown things and vice versa. Foremost among the living objects were inky, jellyfish monstrosities which flabbily quivered in harmony with the vibrations from the machine. They were present in loathsome profusion, and I saw to my horror that they *overlapped*; that they were semi-fluid and capable of passing through one another and through what we know as solids. These things were never still, but seemed ever floating about with some malignant purpose. Sometimes they appeared to devour one another, the attacker launching itself at its victim and instantaneously obliterating the latter from sight.¹⁷²

This first group is portrayed in the film as a form of aerial eel (to coin a phrase!), a relatively benign demonstration of the resonance field. The second group is even more curious, as they are never actually seen by the narrator in the text, but simply described as 'them'. The film presents a series of 'greater' creatures, but attaches the idea of the ultimate 'monster' to Dr. Pretorius, in the role of the transformative villain. Thought lost after the initial scenes of the movie, he periodically reappears as an increasingly altered person, spawning elongated hands and a partially melted face. Ultimately, he turns into a worm-like beast.

The significance of this treatment is that it links the design of the creatures back to the human drama. Much of the script deals with physical and sexual deviancy, transposing Pretorius' BDSM fetish (found in video form in his living quarters, and later impressed upon Dr. McMichaels) onto his own physical person. Thus, much of the transformative aesthetic is phallic or vaginal in nature. The pineal gland concept is expressed in an extremely phallic design, especially. Added to this is copious use of slime and fluids, quite different to the work done in *Reanimator*, which revolved around internal/external transposition and the dry, cold aesthetic of cadavers.

¹⁷² Lovecraft, 'From Beyond', p.4

A conclusion we can draw from the *Reanimator* and *From Beyond* films is that the success of an adaption springs from its narrative foundations – what is the story we are trying to tell? What characters do we need in order to show that story rather than tell it? Correspondingly, what are the narrative arcs of the characters? These questions reflect the importance of simultaneous simplicity of intention, and complexity of implementation.



CHAPTER FOUR:

SECTION A ANNOTATED PLAYSRIPT

Chapter Introduction: Annotated Playscript

Here is the primary part of the thesis – the playscript. Though the process behind it is extremely organic, and thus difficult to quantify, this is an attempt to do just that. It consists of the play text, with notes of three different natures. The first are purely informative Mythos notes, explaining some of the more curious terms and concepts. These may also include non-Mythos definitions. The second outline important writing decisions in the adaptation process. The third type of note consists of directing annotations relating directly to the script, even though that isn't the purpose of the exercise. They are included to illuminate considerations and character motivations a *potential* director might need to know when constructing a dramaturgy.

In order to distinguish these notes from each other, the following coding system is used to easily identify their purpose:

Mythos and Explanatory Notes – Black text, white background.

Adaptation Notes – Grey background, black text.

Production Notes – Italics, white background.

The script itself is not the very latest – it is the version that the actors and I went into rehearsal with. Through that period, additional cuts were made as parts proved too long-winded or unnatural.

ACT I, Scene 1

Wilmarth stands centre stage. Lights come up. None of the set is visible: he is standing in a void.

WILMARTH: (1) Most people live perfectly normal lives, untouched by doubt. That changed for me on the night of the 12th of September, 1927.

He ponders.

(2) The whole matter began, so far as I am concerned, with the historic and unprecedented Vermont floods of November 3rd, 1928. I was working as an instructor of literature at **(3)** Miskatonic University in Arkham, Massachusetts. In my spare time, I indulged in studying the rich folklore of New England and Vermont. A friend and fellow enthusiast, Henry Akeley, lived up in those parts, and I wondered whether he was in good health following the deluge. The floods, unheard of normally, offered a mystery like no other. Thus, I braved the rain and visited the offices of the Arkham Advisor-

Light up on the full stage set as he turns. He is standing in an office. Helen Treanor sits at a desk, typing.

ACT I, Scene 2

HELEN: May I help you?

ALBERT: (4) I have an appointment with Mr. Treanor. Could you let him know that I've arrived.

HELEN: Certainly.

She does nothing except type. Wilmarth waits uneasily.

ALBERT: Excuse me...

HELEN: Yes?

ALBERT: Could you let Mr. Treanor kn-

HELEN: I have.

ALBERT: I'm sorry, you are...?

HELEN: Miss. Treanor.

1. Wilmarth's Introduction:

This is one of the few sections of the script that contains the original text. It seemed prudent to begin with the same starting point, and then grow the drama (rather than more exposition) from there. It has been edited down substantially. Refer to the opening paragraph of the original text.

2. Hokum:

U.S. Theatrical slang. Deliberately loaded language intended to appeal to the audience with melodramatic but believable information. Rachel Weisz once described Stephen Sommer's *The Mummy* as a perfect example of hokum. It managed to portray a perfectly believable Ancient Egypt even in the face of glaring inconsistencies. Lovecraft's tales are a form of scientific hokum.

3. Miskatonic University:

The centre of the Lovecraft hokum establishment. Lovecraft generates this sense of legitimacy by identifying the underlying support structure for our trust in science, universities and academia in general – history. The Miskatonic University is named for the Miskatonic River, a fictional inlet similar to the Mississippi. The Arkham

She holds out her hand, pointedly.

ALBERT: Ah. I see.....I'm looking for information pertaining to the recent flood. They told me at reception that a Mr. Treanor wrote the column-

HELEN: Did they.

ALBERT: Yes, and that he was the authority on...folklore...and...

HELEN: The crackpot articles?

ALBERT: The unusual occurrences, yes.
Helen studies him for a long moment. She comes to an internal decision.

HELEN: You aren't here to jest at my expense, are you.

ALBERT: No, madam, I am not.

HELEN: ...I appreciate that, Mr...?

ALBERT: Wilmarth. Albert.

HELEN: Mr Wilmarth. I ask you to understand: I treat my work as a journalist with the utmost seriousness. Even if the leads I am given are the most patronising tripe you can imagine. For example:
She takes on of her files and opens it. Wilmarth looks at it.

HELEN: From Winooski River (5), Montpelier. Do you notice anything?

ALBERT: No...it appears to just be a patch of marsh.

HELEN: Exactly. Some yokel had this photograph taken after the floods. He sent the Advisor the negatives with an attached explanation about the corpse in the shot.

ALBERT: ...But there is no corpse.

HELEN: No. There isn't. There are also no corpses in any of the other correspondence I've received. West River, Newfane. Passumpsic, Lyndonville. All from the Vermont area, and every contributor has claimed that there was. I have nine photographs from four different sources, all of which claim that there should be a body in them. Is this the sort of

area is founded on the Miskatonic Delta, including the villages of Innsmouth and Kingsport. The university houses a substantial number of faculties, centring around the physical sciences and literature in general. It is described as possessing well-built and history-filled buildings, like those that only Otago can boast in New Zealand.

4. Meeting Helen:

Being a relatively anti-social person, Albert is not used to meeting new people. His field of expertise requires him to do so, however, and to that end, he has a sort of pre-rehearsed set of questions and polite responses. Helen breaks this pattern almost immediately. The intention is that Albert finds this strangely refreshing, even though he periodically remembers his discomfort and makes small offerings of resistance. Helen, by comparison, is in full defensive mode from the word go. She is expecting yet another male visitor that will minimise her input and patronise her work.

Arkham Advisor:

A simplification of *The Arkham Advertiser*, the original newspaper used in the tale. I disliked the use of *Advertiser*, as it reads as a cheap or amateur tract, used for private trading.

5. Winooski River:

All of the locations

'information' you were searching for?

ALBERT: It just might be. The body - was the photo of a man, or a woman?

HELEN: Neither. Read this. Third paragraph. *She hands him the document from the folder.*

ALBERT: 'You may wish to forward these to the Kingsport Oceanographic Society for identification, or perhaps the Entomology Faculty at (6) Arkham University.'

HELEN: So whatever was in these photos is either a fish...or an insect.

ALBERT: Not terribly specific, is it? Did any of your sources describe these 'bodies' in more detail?

HELEN: Well...no. They expected the photographs to make their case.

ALBERT: How utterly curious. And you think this is 'patronising tripe'?

HELEN: I don't think you realise, Mr Wilmarth, how little ability our editor thinks I possess. Over my career, I have reported on society drivel, the opinions of farmers and house hands. When I complained, it changed to interviewing the old and ignorant about local folklore.

ALBERT: Well, that doesn't sound too bad-

HELEN: Devils. Fishpeople. Cults. (7) Faceless flying horrors. You name it, I've heard it.

ALBERT: I wonder...Ms Treanor-

HELEN: Helen, please.

ALBERT: ...Helen. These...things, in Vermont. Were any of your contacts from Arkham or hereabouts? It all seems so darn mysterious - I'd like to delve a little deeper. Assuming I'm not intruding. *Helen looks surprised.*

HELEN: This all genuinely interests you?

ALBERT: Well, I have a confession to make, Ms Treanor - Helen. I'm not here for information about the floods, per se. I'm a fellow at Arkham University. I study the local folklore for both

mentioned here in the script are real places, also mentioned in the original text. Montpelier is the state capital of Vermont.

6. Arkham:

The city itself, centrepiece of Lovecraft Country. Combining many forms of architecture, it is notable for its mouldering ghettos, separate from the more affluent areas. Tales like *The Haunter of the Dark* indicate that there are clear ethnic divisions, with churches of various denominations showing the architectural culture of those ethnicities.

7. Devils, Fishpeople, Cults:

This is a reference to the other tales of the Arkham Cycle. Specifically, *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*. The inhabitants, humans who have been coerced into an alliance with an aquatic race, and later forced to interbreed, limit their visits to Arkham, but are still known to be strange and taciturn.

Kindred Spirits:

This section of the script is intended to be one of those rare moments where you meet someone with the same strange specialisation. Both Albert and Helen are quite used to those around them treating their work as a kind of fiction, whereas they have witnessed far too much to treat it as such. The difference between them is

academic, and, I must admit, personal reasons.

HELEN: Personal. I see. You've seen something odd, haven't you?

Rapid-fire dialogue (8)

ALBERT: ...I'm sorry?

HELEN: I said 'you've seen something'.

ALBERT: Some what?

HELEN: Something strange.

ALBERT: Look, I don't kn- (ow what you're talking about)

HELEN: Well, have you, or haven't you?

A long considering pause.

ALBERT: It...is a difficult thing to talk about. I don't know you.

HELEN: Yes you do. You know my name, and I know yours - we know each other. I'd like to hear your tale, if you don't mind...professional interest. Consider it a trade for. (Indicates file)

Wilmarth exhales.

ALBERT: I'm not comfortable with this.

HELEN: Well, sometimes we have to go above and beyond the call of duty, Mr Wilmarth. Now what will it be?

He paces, undecided, then launches into his story.

ALBERT: It started with the stories my family groundskeeper used to tell me as a child. Tales about the cults that were rumoured to hold rituals in the forest - worshippers of Shub-Niggurath (9), Jethro would say.

HELEN: You'd be surprised. There are many I've talked to that say those rituals never stopped. Plenty of voodoo cults worshipping the Black Goat.

ALBERT: Perhaps there are, but around my home? I never believed it, but...

HELEN: But?

Albert hesitates.

ALBERT: I'm not sure. When I was young, I was plagued with night terrors (11).

HELEN: I see. Not unusual - carry on.

that Albert is quite happy to talk openly, whereas Helen stays carefully objective, being used to dealing with her newspaper superiors.

8. Rapid-fire Dialogue:

One of the difficulties in the transferral of expository information to dramatic action was the consideration of pace. Knowing that many of the scenes would, by necessity, be static, I endeavoured to insert semi-unnatural pace 'spikes'. One of these was the utilisation of the 1920s detective-style rapid exchanges. The lines are overlapped just slightly, giving the illusion of an incredibly intense connection. I wanted to avoid a protracted 'discovery' section between Albert and Helen - that process is for the audience to undergo, not the characters.

9. Worshippers of Shub-Niggurath:

One of the Great Old Ones (other examples being Cthulhu or Yog-Sothoth), Shub-Niggurath is a subversion of the 'Gaia' type of gods. Usually referred to as female, but resembling a huge, fibrous protoplasm, Shub-Niggurath is the patron goddess of fertility - but in the more sinister of Dionysus' molds. She represents unbridled reproduction, justifying her other guise - The Black

ALBERT: My parents would often find me screaming in the night. I felt like a great dark hand squeezing my heart - I'd wake, sweating, screaming. I could never remember what I had been dreaming...I knew that it wasn't real - that it would pass in time. Then...something changed. People around the area started disappearing. Lumberjacks. The botanist that lived down the road. The police had no idea...

HELEN: Wait a moment - I take it that you didn't grow up in Arkham.

ALBERT: No, no - we lived in the country, a manor on the road between Arkham and Ipswich. Thick forests around our grounds - you can imagine how that worried me as a child. During the day, well it was every boy's dream, but at night...at night it was just another haunt for boogiemen. After Jethro (10) told me those stories, I fancied I could hear chanting.

HELEN: So you only felt uneasy at night?

ALBERT: (thinking) No...no, I do remember there being a few places that I never visited...in the woods. There was one where a huge spruce tree had fallen against a waterfall. It had a cave behind - I never went in: it was unreachable, but I remember walking into that clearing, and feeling the most peculiar feeling of the world being wrong. No insects - no birds.

HELEN: But you say it was worse at night time?

ALBERT: A child's fears...but the disappearances gave me something concrete to fear. There were only a few of them - people who went into the forests. Everyone assumed there was an accident, or a pack of wolves in the area. My parents kept me close to home. But then the nights changed..I don't remember it at all, but my mother said...that I started started talking about a shadow that would visit at night...I get flashes of the memory sometimes...I would be lying in my bed, and I'd feel uneasy. Like static before a storm. Then the whispers would begin. At first, the shadow would stay in the forest. 'Albert', it would say, 'Albert.' I wouldn't dare move - I couldn't. Then one night,

Goat With A Thousand Young. Cults of Shub-Niggurath are generally more common than the other Mythos deities, particularly in the Americas. It is often linked with Voodoo, and the freed black community. Shub-Niggurath, like the other deities, is truly neutral - the evil that can be perceived in her is due to her chaotic nature, seeing no moral difference between procreating and killing.

10. Jethro:

In early scripts, the character swapped frequently between a groundskeeper and Albert's grandfather. The former became the final decision in order to keep Albert's family connections to a minimum. Jethro is modelled on *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* character Zadok Allan. Lovecraft had a love of lower class, half-mad, and sometimes drunk characters. These characters usually herald an outpouring of important information about the Mythos in question. As the watchword of this adaptation was writing parallel plot, it seemed both amusing and appropriate to put a Zadok-esque scene in, but in its own reverse-parallel plotline (i.e. one you don't see).

11. Night Terrors (Previous Page):

Also known as *pavor nocturnus*, night terrors are

mother said I screamed the most horrific scream, and when they came to my room, I told them that the shadow had come right up to the window and tapped on the glass.

HELEN: That sounds terrifying.

ALBERT: It was. The last thing it said was 'Fear is not necessary' **(12)**. Had the completely opposite effect. But this has all only made me more curious. Mother said that that the terrors stopped after a few months.

HELEN: Is your house still there?

ALBERT: The house is, yes. The woods are gone, though. There was a bad forest fire **(13)** - I've always wondered if that is what stopped the incidents.

HELEN: And that was what started your interest in folklore?

ALBERT: Oh, yes. Now, when I come across something like this mystery in Vermont, I see it as a chance to peel back that childhood fear. Establish some order in the world.

Helen suddenly stands up.

HELEN: Mr Wilmarth, there is someone I think you should meet.

She takes a piece of paper and writes an address on it.

This is the address of Ezekiel Browne. It was he that delivered the photos to me.

ALBERT: A mailman?

HELEN: Not quite. He's a mountain guide. A bit rough around the edges, but reliable to a tee. The floods destroyed most of the Vermont roads. He was one of the few that picked up the mail duty across the mountain range. Strange man - though I'm sure you'll find that out soon enough. He's staying at Noisewater House. If anyone can tell you what's happening in Vermont, it is Browne.

ALBERT: I don't know how to thank you...

HELEN: (Waving away his words) None necessary.

simply a form of dream-paranoia that remains potent even after the sleeper wakes. It would have been extremely likely that Albert, suffering from experiences that sound similar, would be misdiagnosed by a physician and come to believe in that diagnosis. This concept of childhood trauma being buried by adulthood was inspired by such horror fear at Stephen King's *It*.

12. Fear is Not A Necessity:

This line was constructed with the logic that the Mi-Go speak English with all-too-literal sentence construction. The combination of an emotional object (fear) with a coldly logical modifier (is not a necessity) makes the statement inherently unnatural, and rings strangely with the rest of Albert's tale. This was to create the illusion of a traditional ghost tale, but to subvert it. This again plays into the purview of 'hokum', in multiple layers.

13. A Bad Forest Fire:

It may seem strange that creatures as advanced as the Mi-Go would be displaced by a forest fire, but the question has to be asked - how would they suppress it without the public seeing a large band of aliens with hoses? More seriously - the Mi-Go were not there for mining

It is pleasure to meet someone interested in my work. Just don't forget to forward any leads to me. This may make quite a column.

Light down on Helen's 'office'. Wilmarth steps back out into 'narrator' position in a spotlight. (15)

ACT I, Scene 3

ALBERT: I took Helen's advice and sought out Ezekiel Browne the following day. A message sent ahead organised a meeting at Noisewater House (14), a shabby establishment in the Lower Southside of Arkham, about an hour walk from the newspaper offices. Before I went to meet him, however, a disturbing new development emerged. My long-time friend from Vermont, Henry, finally sent me a letter to report his wellbeing. He assured me that the floods had not affected his property, high in the mountains as it was, but that he had matters to discuss with me. Matters of... 'cosmic importance', as he would put it. Though he did not specifically state the nature of the problem, he hinted that something elusive was threatening him. I remedied to ask Browne if he knew anything of the situation, for he was well-known as having explored the heights thereabouts.

Wilmarth exits into the dark. Light expands out to encompass the new scene. It is a private bar room. Browne sits at a table, while another man, Bernie, leans against a wall. Browne is slightly drunk.

BROWNE: I kin' say I'm-a not too keen on these un'iversity types. All-as struck me a' false. D'ja agree there, Bern?

Bernie grunts.

BROWNE: Ne'r a full day's work in 'em. No' like 'onest folk. No' like you an' me, eh, Bern?

Bernie grunts.

BROWNE: But I'll-a tell you, the mountain' ain't no place fer 'onest folk no more, neither. I bin all ov'r near all the earth 'tween here an' Montreal. Nothin' up'n thar bu' Frenchies an' ice. We could do wi' a few less'n those Frenchies, too, d'ja agree, Bern? *Bernie grunts. Wilmarth enters furtively. He holds out his hand to Browne, who stares at it for slightly too long before shaking it.*

ALBERT: Ezekiel Browne?

BROWNE: You're tha' un'iversity type, are ya?

ALBERT: I'm Albert Wilmarth, yes...you are Mr

purposes. Albert states his home as being between Arkham and Ipswich, which is not a mountainous area. More likely, they were there are a sociological expedition, or to liaise with human agents in the Arkham area.

14. Noisewater House:

Part of immersing this play within the period was intentionally using outdated naming conventions. This is one of them – whereas a pub/hotel setup might now be called an inn or simply 'a hotel', it was common in the 1920s and 1930s for inns/bars to be referred to as 'houses' named after their owner. Lovecraft himself uses this convention in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, where he describes 'Gilman House'.

15. Negative Theatrical Space:

Here is the first example of non-specific geography. Whisperer takes place in what I like to term 'negative theatrical space', named after the design concept – the contrast of small, tight spots of light and action compared to the yawning black space of the wider theatre creates a very focusing effect. The secondary effect is the reinforcement of 'the tale' – this is intended to be an oral history more than a myth. Thus the negative space could be considered mental space in which Albert's

Browne?

BROWNE: ...are ye soft in th' head, boy?

ALBERT: No, no. I'm just making certain. I've had new acquaintances turn out to be women lately.

BROWNE: (Threatening) Are ye gettin' all smart on us'n's?

ALBERT: Not at all. At all. Mr Browne.

BROWNE: I hope not. Norm'lly I'm Browne. Now I'm MISTAH Browne. Ain't that right, Bern?
Bernie grunts.

BROWNE: Now what is't you're lookin' to be knowin'?

ALBERT: Helen Treanor of the Arkham Advisor said you may be able to help me with some of Vermont's history.

BROWNE: Oh, itsa h'stry you be lookin' fo'? Let's cut thro' the squib, Mistah Wiltharth-

ALBERT: Wilmarth.

BROWNE: I get the suspi'cion that you're afta' mo' than book learnin'. Nobody wo' be askin' the likes of ME for hi'stry less'ns.

ALBERT: You want to get right to the point. I see - well, if that is the way this needs to proceed, then perhaps you'd like to introduce your associate, instead of letting him hover like a large, menacing barrage balloon (16).

BROWNE: Bernie there'd turn you int'a gumbo in less time'n you'd have ta' make it out tha' door. Ain't tha' right, Bernie?

Bernie grunts and shifts his weight. He has an extremely large knife strapped to his leg.

BROWNE: Don't have much o' words, 'least in front o' strang'rs. I use ta' trav'l on my lone thro' the mount'ns. Lately, though, it's become a bit o' an occ'pational haz'rd. Bernie, here. He giv'n a bit o' pause to tha' haz'rd.

ALBERT: That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I understand you travel the route from here to

memories are visited.

Clashing Worlds:

Albert and Ezekiel are meant to be quite uncomfortable around each other. This scene is, underneath the rhetoric, a battle for dominance. The problem is, Albert is both not aware that it is happening, and thus not participating. It takes Ezekiel a certain amount of time to realise this. The logic I use is that he gradually forgets his dislike for Albert as he gets no material to work off. Albert, on the other hand, attempts to begin the exchange with levity, something he isn't used to. Browne's rather brutal rejection of this causes him to simply switch off - he barely reacts to Ezekiel or Bernie as people, focussing instead on the conversation itself.

16. The Barrage Balloon:

This is referring to the balloons used throughout World War One as deterrents to bombers and reconnaissance planes. Their extra significance was that they were intended to make the night time safe from bomber raids. Bernie is a passive threat to Albert - he is not dangerous because he hates him, but there should always be a sense of Bernie being ready to do literally anything on Ezekiel's say-so. He is a professional flunkie, to put it bluntly.

Townshend regularly.

BROWNE: I travel alla ov'r. Sometimes fo' tak'n folk places. Sometimes jus' to be up there. The world seems to be...clear'r up'n there. Til' naow, that is.

Pause.

You lookin' t'hear about tha' oth'r ones, ain't cha'? The other folk. **(17)**

ALBERT: Other folk? Red Indians, do you mean?

BROWNE: (To Bernie, laughing) 'Injuns, he says. 'injuns. Y' know what I'm talkin' of, boy. You wouldn't-a be here if'n's y' didn't.

Wilmarth says nothing. Browne becomes serious.

You do know em'. I wouldn'a tho't a un'iversity fellow'd a gon' far enough afield ta' meet em'. Bernie 'ere. E' got one o' em' real good on our las' trip. They came in the night atop o' Devil's Ridge. Ripped upa my leg real good before he got to me. Didna barely slow it down, tho'.

ALBERT: Is that why you've stayed here so long?

BROWNE: (Exhales) B'fore, 'twas only a nuisance. We left them alone, they left us alone. Noaw, tho'. There's folk goin' missin' all ov'r tha' ground.

ALBERT: Look, can we slow down a little? Can I simply ask you some questions in order? For my notes?

BROWNE: (To Bernie) Heh. This one's a cool one. Lotsa men say we be soft in th' head when they hear.

ALBERT: I have...previous experience with these matters. Now, can you tell me how long these...other folk have been inhabiting the Vermont area?

BROWNE: I bin' up tha-aways since I was a young-un. Nigh on three-score years. When I wa' but a boy, my pappy used t' tell my brother an' I noawt to nev'r bring home keepsakes **(18)** an' the like. Said it would ang'r the dark folk in the mount'ns. Likewise, if they made their pres'nce known, t' leave tha' place quick-like, fo' they loathed intrud'rs.

17. Ezekiel & The Mi-Go:

Ezekiel assigns no particular importance to the presence of the Mi-Go. There should, in this early section, be no pretence that what he is saying is intentionally mysterious or dark. He is just wary that an outsider would neither understand, nor respect what, to him, is a normal state of being. Browne should also have a quality of, to use the vernacular 'experiential bullshit'. Everything he says is true, but only a facet of it. The rest is embroidery – his own form of hokum. For example, his memories of his brother and father could be a total fabrication – we never find out if he had a brother at all. It is quite likely that all of Ezekiel's tales are the blended result of his own and other people's memories.

18. Keepsakes:

There needs to be a lot of emphasis on Ezekiel's 'never take home no keepsakes'. The the people of the area, it is not just a moral. It is quite literal - everyone who removes evidence of the Mi-Go from their territory disappears, and everyone always knows why. There is also the implication that the Mi-Go are not above signalling people directly when they are encroaching on forbidden places. While this wouldn't consist of showing themselves, it would at least take the form

ALBERT: So, this is not a new phenomenon?

BROWNE: Tis' no, fo' sure. The ol' Abenaki 'injuns (19) used t' trade wi' the towns. They would leave offerings fo' the 'spirits'. Same manner of beast. Jus' from sup'rstitious injuns. I said sup'rstitious injuns, eh Bernie?

Bernie grunts.

BROWNE: The Pennacook 'injuns used 'ta say tha' the beasts came from th' Bear.

ALBERT: The Bear? You mean the animal?

BROWNE: Heh. No, from th' stars. The Great Bear. Arcturus in the latin.

ALBERT: You seem to know a lot about them.

BROWNE: I knaow my share.

ALBERT: What do they look like?

BROWNE: (Looks at Bernie, then back) ...I couldna tell you w' they be lookin' like. Jus' because I knaow they're there, don' mean I seen em' inna light.

ALBERT: You said they attacked you on your last trip... (20)

BROWNE: It ain't tha' simple, boy.

BERNIE: (slow and haltingly - lower class English accent) In the dark. It looked like just a shadow. Up on Devil's Ridge. Only thing I saw was the eyes. It grabbed Zeke. Started pulling him away. Into the dark. I put this through it.

Unsheathes huge knife, goes through the motions

Took off its arm. Least I should've. Went right through it. It felt it, though. Screamed. Couldn't see nuffick. Just the eyes.

BROWNE: Must've been somethin' o' worth in you, boy. Bernie don' talk to many.

ALBERT: You stabbed it and it didn't react?

Bernie just stares at him.

ALBERT: They feel pain, but you couldn't actually hurt it?

Bernie continues to stare.

of speech and/or visitation by a human agent.

19. Indigenous Peoples:

The Pennacook are the most central Indian people to the Mi-Go territory. They are based in the South of Vermont, bordered to the north by the Abenaki. The particular significance of Ezekiel mentioning both tribes is that they are very politically and culturally different – the fact that they share knowledge of the Mi-Go cannot be part of collusion. The American Indians of the area are likely to have had direct contact with the Mi-Go in a time before modern civilisation. Due to a general lack of communication with the outside world, it would not matter to them if the Pennacook were aware of their presence. It should be noted, however, that the Pennacook refer to them as a 'Dark People', *not* as a deified force.

20. The Ambush:

Though they don't usually attempt direct and violent action, the Mi-Go were desperate following the floods. With such a major breach of secrecy following the bodies washing downstream, it would have been prudent to completely cut off contact with the outside world: they attempted to snatch Ezekiel and Bernie in the night. It is testimony to Bernie's

ALBERT: (to Browne) Is this normal for him?

BROWNE: (nodding) Oh, aye. E' don't give 'way nothin' that he don't wan' to.

A knock at the door.

ALBERT: (Calling offstage) We're quite fine for drinks, thank you, barman.

Helen enters.

HELEN: That's convenient, because I'm afraid I haven't brought any. Zeke.

BROWNE: Ma'am.

HELEN: I assume this is your business associate.

BROWNE: Bernie, Ma'am.

Bernie grunts.

HELEN: (Amused) Charmed, I'm sure.

ALBERT: What are you doing here?

HELEN: Why thank you, Albert. And you?

ALBERT: I'm sorry - no, I'm not. Why are you here?

This was meant to be a private meeting.

Helen frowns, holding up a letter.

HELEN: This was left for you at the office.

ALBERT: The office? Why wasn't it sent to my house?

HELEN: It was. But the postman found your house broken into and dishevelled. **(22)**

ALBERT: WHAT!?

HELEN: I've already dealt with the police. I thought it was least I could do for a fellow...enthusiast.

ALBERT: Oh hell. Shitting hell.

HELEN: I'm sure. I think you'd like to read this letter.

ALBERT: You opened my letter, too?

HELEN: I'm a journalist. **(21)**

Wilmarth glares, opening the letter. He reads, then looks up in shock.

ALBERT: It's from Henry Akeley.

awareness that he was able to physically resist them. This quality in him is hard to manifest, and relies more on prudent casting than anything else.

21. I'm A Journalist:

Helen has no reservations about busting in on Albert's investigation. This is perhaps the closest she'll ever get to substantiating her work. Though it seems like a joke for her to read Albert's mail and claim it as 'being a journalist', she is being quite serious. Indeed, all of Helen's humorous lines should be played with a total disregard for social niceties.

22. Intercepting The Mail:

The Mi-Go's infiltration of human infrastructure is not terribly insidious. No human agent would be able to pass themselves off as normal in the postal service, so it stands to reason that they either intercept the mail before it reaches Townsend, or interfere with the shipping between cities. Henry is able to circumvent this interference partially by personally delivering the mail to Townsend and seeing it off. The events in Arkham (the rifling of Albert's house) are another indication of the Mi-Go's desperation. It should be noted, however, that the rock was recovered by the robbery.

BROWNE: Akeley? I know tha' name. Fro' near Townshend.

ALBERT: Yes, he's a friend of mine. He just began writing to me recently, about some sort of discovery.

BROWNE: (Darkly) I kin' guess.

HELEN: Read it out.

ALBERT: My Dear Albert, the time has come to make a revelation known to you that I have feared since my last letter. I do hope that *this* letter reaches you in good time: there have been outside agents screening my mail, and much of my correspondence has simply disappeared. I write to you because you may draw certain connections to your studies. In short, you may be one of the few people in the world able to understand my situation. You can see that I am having a hard time getting to the point. It is this: I have certain evidence that monstrous things do indeed live in the woods on the high hills, which nobody visits. I have seen footprints, and of late have seen them nearer my own home-

BROWNE: Ay', tha' footprints. (23)

ALBERT: - than I dare tell you now. I have overheard voices in the woods at certain times that I can not even begin to describe on paper. By the caves at the mouth of the Minnow Stream, I heard them so clearly that I took a phonograph there with a dictaphone attachment and wax blank - I have included the record with this letter. It is true - terribly true - that there are non-human creatures watching us all the time (24); with spies among us gathering information. It is from a wretched man who, if he was sane, was one of those spies, that I got a large part of my clues to the matter. He later killed himself, but I have reason to think there are others now. They hound my house every night. I've bought myself several rifles, a pack of German Shepards, and plenty of ammunition, but I can only hold out by myself for so long.

HELEN: This...Akeley friend of yours...he doesn't...you know...

23. The Footprints:

A quite sizable section of the evidence given in the original story is the Mi-Go footprint. This was incredibly hard to duplicate on stage in a naturalistic style. I simply couldn't find a way to transmit the visual data to the audience. The only logical way was by projection, which I simply couldn't countenance within the style I was using. The other option was also less than desirable - adding more exposition. The end result was to commit plot triage and minimise the mention of the footprints, concentrating instead on the effect of the Mi-Go voice, which seemed to have more applications on stage.

24. Non-Human Creatures:

Part of writing the Mi-Go in this script was to deal with them in a pre-science fiction fashion. The people of this world aren't fettered by the pre-conceptions that would later define the genre. By 1928, science fiction was firmly rooted within pulp fiction, soon to become the staple *Buck Rogers* and *Flash Gordon* serials. But it was because of this focus on a younger readership that adults of the time would probably consider aliens to be both an unlikely and a slightly ridiculous concept. It is a breath of fresh air that Ezekiel, having no experience of science

ALBERT: What? Doesn't what?

HELEN: Think he's Napoleon, or Abraham Lincoln?

ALBERT: Henry is one of the most canny people I know. He's not insane.

HELEN: But...non-human creatures? Space men?

BROWNE: 'Scuse me Ma'am, but I don' see no difference 'tween ghoulies or sky beasts. If'n's they touch you, an' talk to you, they're real as you or I.

ALBERT: I have an idea. Why don't we all hold our tongues and finish the disturbing letter from a very dear friend?

HELEN: Sorry, Albert. Carry on.

ALBERT: I will tell you about this later if you do not dismiss me at once as a madman.

Looks pointedly at Helen.

ALBERT: (25) They come here to get metals from mines that go deep under the hills, and I think I know where they come from. They will not hurt us if we let them alone, but no one can say what will happen if we get too curious about them. Of course a good army of men could wipe out their mining colony. That is what they are afraid of. But if that happened, more would come from outside - any number of them. They could easily conquer man, but have not tried so far because they have not needed to. I think they mean to get rid of me because of what I have discovered. There is a great black stone with unknown hieroglyphics half worn away which I found in the woods on Round Hill, east of here; and after I took it home everything became different.

BROWNE: S'like the ol' folk used ta' say. Nev'r take no keepsakes.

ALBERT: I can hear them through most of the night, though my dogs have kept them away, so far. If things get any worse, I shall have to move to my son's house in California. Also, I would hardly dare sell this house to anybody now that the creatures have taken notice of it. Hoping that I am not bothering you unduly, and that you will decide to

fiction, and being used to the Mi-Go as a certain thing, completely circumvents the doubt Helen expresses. There is simply no time or interest in showing the audience the process by which an individual comes to terms with something that they already know to be true. The purpose of this adaptation is not to tread ground already explored. In addition to this, I believe that both Albert and Helen are already in a state of flux that allows them to very quickly suspend their disbelief.

25. Letter Reading:

Even though the letters between Albert and Henry have been pared down massively from the original text, a certain amount of exposition was ultimately unavoidable. I decided to include one major letter in the play, covering the general situation at Henry's end, and creating the goal for their quest. As previously mentioned, part of the Gothic mode is to establish an ending, then move towards it. This is a physical realisation of that principle - we establish the final location, and the ambience of that location, then bend the story towards it. This letter reading is potentially one of the biggest challenges for a prospective director - it is static. But it is also very rich in cues for internal work for each of the characters. Considerations

get in touch with me rather than throw this letter into the waste basket as a madman's raving, I am yours, very truly, Henry W. Akeley.

HELEN: That poor, poor man. Alone in the mountains.

Pause.

BROWNE: Wi' all manner o' beasties knockin' on his door, by the sounds of it.

HELEN: This sounds all too familiar, Albert. Do you think these are the same things?

ALBERT: I...don't know. I genuinely do not know. It would be a huge coincidence if they were. I'm intrigued. I'm scared for Henry.

HELEN: This sounds bigger than any of us. If this man needs our help, is it not our duty to help him?
(26)

ALBERT: ...yes. It is.

HELEN: Well, why don't we ask the landlord for a phonograph to play Akeley's record **(27)**. If it rings any bells, we go and find him.

BROWNE: I kin' admit, ma'am, tha' I'm no' too keen on-a hearin' this recordin', if it'n is all the same to you an' Mr Wilmarth here. Me'n Bernie'll retire, methinks, an' leave you to it.
He starts to leave. Before he exits, he turns.

BROWNE: If ya'all are thinkin' of journeying outta thataways, let me an' Bern know. You won't make it two steps outta the door wi'out us. But, tha' bein' said, it be the righ' thing t'do.
They exit.

ALBERT: Well. Shall we?

HELEN: Please do. **(28)**
They wait awkwardly.

HELEN: A phonograph.

ALBERT: Yes. Of course. I'll go and ask Mr. Noisewater.

HELEN: And Albert?

ALBERT: Yes?

include how they react to some of Henry's blunt admissions of contact. The characters should function roughly in pairs – Albert/Helen, Browne/Bernie.

26. Taking Command:

Helen is the rational being among these characters. Though she is terrified on the inside, she combats that by taking charge and formulating a plan. This should not be performed apathetically though – there needs to be real tension in her.

27. The Record:

Henry's recording is a very specific effect. As well as being multi-layered on a technical level, it has a purpose beyond the ordinary in the plot. For a start, it is not meant to be clearly heard – the audience should struggle to interpret what is happening. As first contact with the Mi-Go, the primary effect should be the contrast of the human (voice), and the Mi-Go + ritual. The overall effect should be one of oppression – from both a lack of definable meaning, and from an overdose of perceived effect on Albert.

28. Helen's Sarcasm:

Being the leader can be a hard job, so Helen tends to relive the pressure by throwing courtesy to the wind. She is genuinely amused by her own comments.

HELEN: Some gin, I think.

ALBERT: Amen.
Lights down.

ACT I, Scene 4

Lights up on Albert and Helen, sitting opposite each other at a table. Between them is a phonograph with a record. They sit in silence a moment.

HELEN: Well. Go ahead.

ALBERT: What do you think we'll hear?

HELEN: Probably the content of the record.

ALBERT: Sarcasm doesn't become you. **(29)**
Helen looks non-plussed.

HELEN: Cowardice doesn't become you.
Albert clears his throat irritably and puts the record on.

Indistinguishable Sounds

A male Bostonian voice cuts in. The sound quality varies, with some of the record fading enough to be indistinguishable. Helen and Albert's dialogue in this section is spoken over the recording.

VOICE: (Shub-Niggurath)...is the Lord of the Wood **(30)**, even to...(those who know him not. We receive from him the wisdom)...and the gifts of the men of Leng...

HELEN: Sounds like our new friend is from Boston.

ALBERT: Indeed.

VOICE: **(31)** (From His kin we receive the growth of Ages)...so from the wells of night to the gulfs of space, and from the gulfs of space to the wells of night, ever the praises of Great Cthulhu are sung. Ever Their praises, and abundance to the Black Goat of the Woods. Ia! Shub-Niggurath! The Goat with a Thousand Young!
Buzzing Mi-Go voices join him. As they talk, Albert becomes rigid with recognition.

MI-GO: Ia! Shub-Niggurath! The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young!

ALBERT: (Simply) It's them.

29. Albert's Growth:

This is a new development for Albert, probably prompted by exposure to Helen's peculiar sense of humour. The prolonged period of stress has manifested as a wry wit. He gets no joy from his jokes, however they should be delivered with a cold quality.

30. The Ritual:

The quality of the Mi-Go ritual should be a blend of religious ceremonies. Good ones to use are Catholic, Buddhist and other pageantry-based rituals twisted subtly to accentuate the sinister aspects. There should be a strange sense of familiarity about the Bostonian reader's sections. As an overall effect, however, should be one of normalcy for the participants in the recording. This is not a special event for them. Consider it as Sunday services for aliens.

31. References from Beyond:

*Much of the ritual is not codified in the Mythos. Lovecraft would often make oblique references to his poetry. The onyx steps, seven and nine, among other things, are references to the poems *Azathoth*, *The Fungi From Yuggoth* and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*. The record text is pieced together from the original*

VOICE: And it has come to pass that the Lord of the Woods, being...(well pleased with our offerings of)...seven and nine, down the onyx steps...(permits our Ambassador, bearing our)...tributes to Him in the Gulf, Azathoth (**32**), He of Whom Thou has taught us marv(els)...(borne)...on the wings of night out beyond space, out beyond the...(Gulf of Tombs, father to the Old ones)...to That whereof Yuggoth is the youngest child, rolling alone in black aether at the rim...

MI-GO: ...go out among men and find the ways thereof, that He in the Gulf may know. To Nyarlathotep (**33**), Mighty Messenger, must all things be told. And He shall put on the semblance of men, the waxen mask and the robe that hides, and come down from the world of Seven Suns to mock...

VOICE: Nyarlathotep, Great Messenger, bringer of strange joy to Yuggoth through the void, Father of the Million Favoured Ones, Stalker among... (Speech Cut Off by End of Record)

HELEN: I would like to never hear that record again.

She notices that Albert is still rigid.

HELEN: Albert...Albert, are you okay?

ALBERT: One of those things...it used to talk to me.

HELEN: Shhh. Calm down. I know this must be...hard.

ALBERT: Hard?! Of course it's bleeding hard! I was a child. What if I had listened? What if I had gone with it? Jesus Christ, this puts things into very harsh perspective.

HELEN: I'm not sure Jesus Christ is who you need to be worrying about, considering the situation.

ALBERT: (snorts)

HELEN: Now, it is fairly clear, I think, that your friend, this Akeley fellow, needs our intervention, and he needs it now.

ALBERT: My God! Henry! He's up in the mountains with these things! We have to help!

text, the gaps filled (for the purposes of voice acting) with what I felt were appropriate guesses at Lovecraft's intended text.

32. Azathoth:

This entity is where Lovecraft's amorphous Dunsanian-Poe and Arkham cycles meet the more epoch-centred Cthulhu cycle. Azathoth fills the role of a creator-deity without actually *being* a creator. He is an evolution of Mana-Yood-Sushai from Lord Dunsany's *The Gods of Pegana*. Described as an amorphous, gibbering nuclear mass, he also represents the meeting of Lovecraft's childhood love for Arabia and Greece being transcribed into his new, science fiction setting; Azathoth is often called 'The Daemon-Sultan', or 'Caliph'.

33. Nyarlathotep:

This being is unusual in the Mythos in that he *is* sinister. Linked more strongly with the Arkham and Cthulhu cycles, he is characterised as 'The Messenger', or as a prophet. He is most certainly a conduit between humans and the Outer beings. His aims can sometimes be quite nefarious, however, as seen in *Dream in the Witch-House* and *Nyarlathotep*. Also of note is that he is the most human of creatures in appearance. His involvement with the Mi-Go is never explained clearly –

HELEN: That's exactly what I just said. Now Albert. Pay attention.

Albert pulls himself together and focusses.

HELEN: We need to do our research on this one. This record provides us with some fairly familiar names. Cthulhu, Nyarlathotep. Leng. I've heard them used before by local nuts.

ALBERT: As have I. As far as I've ever found, they're...parables, maybe. Ancient ramblings.

HELEN: Clearly, they're not. Do you know where we can investigate this more fully?

ALBERT: (looks unwilling to share) ...I do. There's a book in the Miskatonic University Library.

HELEN: A book. Grand. Can you get access to it?

ALBERT: I'm sure I could, but I'm not sure I want to.

HELEN: I'm sorry?

ALBERT: This book. The 'Necronomicon' (35). It has a reputation. More than being the foremost authority on the occult...It is said that many who read it...don't fully recover.

Beat.

HELEN: I'm sorry, what are we saying, here?

ALBERT: It can send you mad.

HELEN: Albert, if it sends you mad, then why aren't all the librarians mad?

ALBERT: I see your point. But I don't take the stories lightly. I've read other volumes that have shaken my view of the world substantially.

HELEN: ...

Motions Albert to continue.

ALBERT: I once had the opportunity to read the papers of the late Francis Wayland Thurston (34).

HELEN: The historian?

ALBERT: The same. Never since have I encountered such a disturbing, yet artful

the references to him in the rituals are likely to be paying homage through necessity. The Mi-Go are certainly in contact with other races, and thus Nyarlathotep is likely the conduit between them and Azathoth's sphere of being.

34. Francis Wayland Thurston:

This section of text is an exploration of one of Lovecraft's most famous quotes. This particular one is from *The Call of Cthulhu*, filtered through the 'papers' of the main character. I find it to be the most accurate summing up of Lovecraft's ethos – humanity is merely a small pocket of insignificant, unaware creatures surrounded by darkness and mystery. But – that does not mean we shouldn't devise ways of managing and comprehending that world.

35. The Necronomicon:

Albert's reluctance to consult the Necronomicon is not bluster. It is quite familiar to all those who study at Miskatonic, but is rarely released for perusal. It has no power by itself, but the secrets within it are quite capable of extending the reader's viewpoint beyond what they can safely handle. For this reason, researchers occasionally find themselves driven to obsession, leading them to

description of the world as it he saw it: '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 voyage far.'

HELEN: That's rather pretty, I think. But it misses one glaring issue. Just because we live, or at least should live, on an island, doesn't stop the sea from being deep, and full of dangerous things. If we're to stay on the island of our supposed ignorance, we should make quite sure nothing else is here with us.

ALBERT: You really do cut to the core, don't you?

HELEN: When you've interviewed enough insane people, Albert, you too will learn how to sift the wheat from the chaff. Now, I propose we make a list of the terms we heard on the record. While you consult this... 'Necronomicon', I'll contact Mr Browne, and we'll outfit for an expedition **(36)**. We'll leave upon the morrow.

ALBERT: You don't think-

HELEN: -That I'm coming with you? Of course I am, Albert. You would be a quivering wreck without me.

ALBERT: How kind.

HELEN: Quite. We can take the train to Brattleboro **(37)**, but we'll have to cross the mountain range to Akeley's farm. For that, we shall need Mr Browne. Are you with me, Albert?

ALBERT: ...alright.

HELEN: I know that voice has shaken you up. But this is the only way to face that fear. We must tell Akeley what danger he's in, and fetch him away from this madness.

ALBERT: Are you sure that you-

HELEN: Off you go.

ALBERT: I'm sorry?

make contact with the Outer beings without the correct perspective to survive the encounter. Also, the librarians are suitably cautious.

36. The Expedition:

A modern reader is not likely to fully comprehend the scale of Albert and Helen's expedition at face value. It involves (if you plot the location of Arkham on a real map) a trip by train for 142km, followed by a cross-country hike of 33km. in reality, it would take longer than the script claims to traverse that much landscape, but it seemed too much of a script alteration to add *another* day of travel, where they would no doubt have another encounter with the Mi-Go.

37. Brattleboro:

Transitioning to the exterior environments in Whisperer is a fairly subtle business. I would recommend the use of lighting and gobos, specifically, though the addition of foliage to break up lighting would work well, providing the budget allows. Careful attention should be paid, regardless to designing the lighting to distinctly change quality. The major difference between indoor and outdoor lighting, particularly in the 1920s, is that indoor lights are more yellow in composition.

HELEN: Off you go. Go find your book. Everything is under control.

ALBERT: Do you mind?

HELEN: Not at all. Go on. Book.
Albert glares and exits. Lights down.

Act II, Scene 1

Train station. Albert and Helen enter, lightly laden.

HELEN: Well, that was an experience. I've never seen such dusty seats. What is the time, Albert?
Albert checks a pocket watch.

ALBERT: 2:43.

HELEN: I don't think we have any chance of making our way to Mr. Akeley's house today. Would you agree, Mr. Browne?
Browne rushes to join them.

BROWNE: There'd be no chance that we could make it across'n those mountains a'fore dark.

ALBERT: Is there anything else we need?

HELEN: We can pick up the last of the food from the general store.

ALBERT: Now would be a prudent time to go over our travel plan. Ezekiel?
Browne takes a map from his pack and crouches.

BROWNE: We be here, at Brat'lboro. We kin make our way Nor'west up th' Divvil's Mount **(38)**. Best we skirt Achearon's Basin. 'Tis a hard hike.

ALBERT: But look, if we go around, that must surely take much longer.

BROWNE: It does. But I think you'd be best pleased to stay clear o' th' Basin. Tha's where me'in Bern were when we seen them.

HELEN: Where you got attacked, you mean?

BROWNE: Tha's right.

ALBERT: I don't think we want any visitors on this little voyage. It's agreed, then. We'll go around the Basin.

38. Landmarks of Vermont:

None of the locations surrounding Brattleboro are real places – I consider the land between the town and Akeley's farm to be Lovecraft country, and had no compulsion to use real topography. Instead, I wanted to give a feeling of local superstition and project that superstition onto the landscape to explain the Mi-Go's occupancy. It made sense to use infernal references – the Christian folk of Vermont would certainly have interpreted the Mi-Go as devils.

Travelling Equipment:

Considering the time period, I made the assumption that the equipment that the troupe uses are surplus WWI packs and boots. In the years following the war, the Allied armies had a massive stockpile of clothing, food and general tools that were bled off into the public sector. Neither Albert nor Helen is likely to own their own travelling equipment, so the logic that they've bought cheap surplus is quite logical.

BROWNE: We kin' make it as far as Grand Arch 'afore it get too dark. It's an overhangin' cliff'n face. We kin' make camp there an' make our way daown the hill t' Akeley's farm the next day.

HELEN: What happens if...we're noticed? On the way? Ezekiel?

ALBERT: Actually, I may have that eventuality covered.

Browne and Helen look at him questioningly. Albert takes oof his pack and rummages through it.

ALBERT: I had a long think about how we might avoid another incident like that that Ezekiel and Bernard suffered.

BROWNE: Bern. Or Bernie.

ALBERT: Isn't that short for 'Bernard?' (39)

BROWNE: No.

ALBERT: Oh. Well - Bernie, then. He said that his knife did no damage to the beast. That makes sense, if they don't exist in the same way we do. I thought back to Helen's photos. If they can't be photographed, perhaps they are made of something that doesn't react the same way to light as things of this earth.

HELEN: How could that be?

ALBERT: We exist in only three and a half dimensions. Explained simply, they consist of forward/backwards, up/down, left/right and forwards through time. We're carbon based, as well as any number of our specific things. These creatures could be any other combination. (40)

HELEN: How would we hurt them, then?

ALBERT: I brought with me a revolver, which admittedly may not work.

HELEN: What if that doesn't work?

ALBERT: Then we are in a hard place, I think. I wanted to bring sulphuric acid (41) as well, but it might be a bit hard to climb mountains with. *Browne notices a man watching them.*

39. Isn't Short For Bernard:

The idea for making Bernie's name *not* short for 'Bernard' actually came from Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs*. The idea of making a mistake on a birth certificate, and then defending that mistake vehemently appealed to me greatly. It is a fine example of the very special sense of pride that people born into the lower class can exhibit.

40. Dimensional Theory:

This little speech from Albert is not as Science Fiction-y as one might think. Dimensional theory, particularly in M-Theory, calls for 11 interlinked dimensions to exist. These dimensions (put simply) describe how the components within atoms exist and interact with space-time. The logic behind Mi-Go is that they exist outside of regular time and space – the visible part of them is simply a protrusion of their greater being into the dimensions that we can perceive. Thus, when Bernie stabs one of them, the knife only affects that part of them that exists physically. The 'other' bit is unaffected.

41. Sulphuric Acid:

This is an artefact of an earlier script version. Originally, this section contained a reference to *The Shunned House* in which the protagonist and

HELEN: And no battleship, either, I notice.

BROWNE: There's someone a-watchin' us. What ho, thar?

Noyes steps into the light. (42)

ALBERT: Can we help you?

He says nothing for a long moment.

ALBERT: Sir?

Noyes speaks with a curious cadence.

NOYES: You...are friends of Henry Akeley?

ALBERT: Yes, we are.

HELEN: Albert, shush.

ALBERT: Don't tell me to shush. Yes, we are friends of Henry. Why do you ask?

NOYES: Why are you here?

ALBERT: We're visiting the area.

NOYES: You are visiting him?

ALBERT: Yes-

NOYES: Why?

ALBERT: I'm sorry, who are you?

NOYES: Are you visiting him because of the...disturbances?

The group exchange glances.

ALBERT: We are.

Noyes suddenly becomes more animated, but remains mechanical in his speech.

NOYES: There is no need for that. Everything is now fine. **(43)** It was all a misunderstanding. Akeley sent me here to tell you. You can stay here, perhaps, then go home tomorrow.

ALBERT: What do you mean 'it was a misunderstanding'?

NOYES: It was all a joke. Children from the town playing at fun.

ALBERT: I don't accept that.

NOYES: It is confusing, I know. But it is only child's

his uncle stay the night in the basement of 135 Benefit Street, the real-life residence of Lovecraft's aunt. In preparation for their stay in the potentially haunted house, they duo take a flamethrower, a jug of sulphuric acid and a Crooke's Tube – a real-life radiation cannon. Albert originally took a Crooke's tube with him on the journey to Henry's farm, but it was removed when I realized it gave him too much leverage over the Mi-Go (assuming it worked). This is a good example of Weird Fiction characters acting rationally in the face of the peculiar.

42. Noyes:

The logic behind Noyes is that he is a human too long absent from Earth. A director preparing an actor for this role should ask them to imagine that Noyes has been away so long that he's forgotten how humans act, and has refreshed his memory from a book. The result is a terrible actor (who has seen the horrors of the universe) doing a parody of humanity. The sinister effect of this charade should have a touch of innocence to it. And yes, his name is a pun on 'Noise'.

43. Everything is Now Fine:

Noyes and the Mi-Go have no idea how much Albert knows. A long history of handling humanity with a subtle touch leads them to

play. He doesn't need you any longer.

BROWNE: (quietly) Albert, he's one o' theirs.
Albert nods gently to Browne.

ALBERT: Just a joke, you say?

NOYES: Yes, exactly. Akeley is sorry you have had to come such a long way. He said you would be embarrassed by being taken in. You should give me his letters, if you have them. He will want them thrown away.

ALBERT: Oh, we haven't brought any of them with us, I'm afraid. But I'm glad you were here to warn us, Mr...?

Noyes looks lost for a moment.

NOYES: Mr. Noyes.

ALBERT: Mr. Noyes. I'm glad. We all are. We'll all catch the next train back to Arkham, shan't we?

HELEN: Oh, yes. I was dreading having to walk up these dreadful hills.

NOYES: That is good. I'm sure Akeley will send you a letter soon.

He leaves. Bern enters laden with packs, looking at Noyes as he leaves.

HELEN: What a strange man.

ALBERT: If that's what he was.

BROWNE: So we're not taekin' the nex' train?

ALBERT: Certainly not. I think Henry is in very great danger. Let's hurry - there's a long way to go.
Lights down.

ACT II, Scene 2

Stage is shifted while Albert narrates. The back of the stage becomes reminiscent of a forest (44), with tree-trunks seen in silhouette.

ALBERT: We made good time, after our 'encounter' with Noyes. The woods, full of gnarled, ancient trees, seemed unnaturally quiet as we climbed. It was as though there were voices on the very brink of speaking, but stayed perpetually silent. Ezekiel pointed down into Achearon's Basin, to the clearing

assume that Albert would believe their story rather than believe that aliens exist. Thus they weave the most gentle illusion possible. This is not the Mi-Go being benevolent – it is a fundamental understanding of how humans think. Remember – humanity is as alien to them as they are to humans.

44. Creating the Forest:

All the scripts I write are done with full knowledge of what important special FX are required, and how to achieve them – coming from a tech background makes it hard not to. The forest can be created visually any number of ways, but it is the sound-scape that I think is critical. Devised during The Catacombs of Monte Cassino, a sound rig that alters the acoustics of the theatre can provide an almost imperceptible feeling of isolation to the audience. A microphone is placed behind the scenery, capturing the live speech on stage. A mixer takes this signal, shelved so as to only react to speech of a certain volume, and reverb it back through a sound system placed at the far recesses of the theatre, using the back corners as a soundshell. Specific settings need to be adjusted according to the theatre being used. The result is that when the characters in the forest yell or speak loudly, their voices echo as though off distant

where he and Bernie had been attacked in the night. We could imagine their terror, and a pall of uneasiness stayed with us as we crossed between the Grand Arch, two cliff faces broken from the surrounding landscape.

Lights down half. Albert steps back into the dark. Browne appears and stops centre-stage. He looks into the distance, poised. Albert arrives behind him, shortly followed by Helen and lastly Bernie.

ALBERT: (breathing heavily) Why is there not a road here? Isn't this America? Isn't this the Twentieth Century?

BROWNE: We can' go no more further.

ALBERT: Are you sure?

BROWNE: 'tain't good to travel aft'r dark (45). We'd leave a trail tha' anybody an' anything could follow. Anyways, we all need food an' drink.

ALBERT: There's no chance of reaching the farm soon?

BROWNE: No' at all. Long way a-yet. This'n be a good camp spot. Sheltered. No' too many ent'ry points.

HELEN: Now I can remember why I have never been a tourist. These insects are eating me alive! *Browne absently takes a small flask from his pack and hands it to her.*

HELEN: What is this?

BROWNE: Castor oil. Rub it on your skin. (46) *Helen takes a sniff and recoils.*

HELEN: I'm not sure which would be worse.

BROWNE: Bring th' light, Bern. *The lights very gradually lower to a night-time state. Bern takes a lamp from a loop on his pack and lights it.*

ALBERT: Shouldn't we start a fire?

BROWNE: Noawt unless y' want everything in ten miles t' knaow we be here.

ALBERT: You're right, I'm sure. *They all sit in a loose circle, Bernie excepted, who remains standing. Browne passes a canteen around,*

hills. The intention of this effect is to make the campfire scene more intimate, divorcing the warmth felt between the characters and the isolation of the Vermont mountains.

45. 'tain't Good Aft'r

Dark:

Whisperer was written with three phases in mind. The first, consisting of Act One, is the 'day phase', where the backdrop is mainly human civilisation – the comfortable locale from which Albert and Helen survey both their pasts and their journey ahead. The second, consisting of Act Two, Scene Two to Act Three, is the 'night phase'. This phase, characterised by Browne's line 'tain't good to travel aft'r dark', is an unbalancing act – an unravelling of the safety they've created in their group, and in Helen's uncomfortable past. The third stage is the 'beyond night phase'. Henry's house, in theatrical logic, is not *anywhere*. It is a limbo between two possible outcomes – Albert and Helen's escape, or their assimilation by the Mi-Go.

46. Castor Oil & Tinned Beans:

Mosquito bites can actually be averted with castor oil – I wanted to insert some actual bushman's business into the script to separate how Browne acts in the forest as opposed to the city. Here, he is in his

then takes out several tins of beans and hands them around.

HELEN: Are these surplus from the Civil War?

BROWNE: Yes.

HELEN: ...Food of patriots.
They start to eat.

HELEN: So what do you think we should call these things?

ALBERT: I think 'tin of beans' is traditional.

HELEN: (unimpressed) You know what i mean.

ALBERT: It's hard to say.

HELEN: Did the 'Necronomicon' say anything about them?

ALBERT: It may have. It talks about a lot of things from beyond this world. But the writings of Nethaniel Peaslee, who transcribed the Pnakotic Manuscripts (47), describes them as 'The Fungi From Yuggoth'. Amusing name, no?

HELEN: Yuggoth?

ALBERT: Peaslee claimed that there was a ninth planet in the solar system. Beyond Neptune. He didn't say anything more informative than that.

HELEN: How curious. I wonder if we'll find it, one day. What else?

ALBERT: Nothing else.

HELEN: There must have been something-

ALBERT: There was, Helen. A lot of other somethings. None of it pleasant, and none of it relevant.

HELEN: I think it is relevant, if it keeps us safe. Now stop your mystery-games and tell us what you know.

ALBERT: ...alright. I'll try.

HELEN: Take your time.

element – literally, he is at home. We also see his idea of cuisine – vintage beans. It is not wholly incredible that they *are* from the Civil War – tinned good tend to last indefinitely, but more likely, they are WWI surplus. This scene was written with the intention of actually having the actors eat onstage – this form of what might be called 'theatrical honesty' lends credence to the atmosphere of the campfire scene and the intimacy it embodies.

47. Pnakotic Manuscripts:

Written in the 4th Century AD by the Greek Hypatia, the Pnakotic Manuscripts are a record of her time possessed by a Yithian. While it went about its business on Earth, she was allowed to browse the libraries of Pnakotus (the Yithian city in primordial Australia). She is one of the rare people that the Yithians did not mind-wipe upon de-possession. They contain a history of early Earth, including the arrival of the Mi-Go. The Pnakotic Manuscripts have been added to over the years by additional victims (in the loosest sense) of the Great Race of Yith, and occasionally by Yithians themselves.

ALBERT: Now I obviously don't know if any of this is true.

HELEN: Of course.

ALBERT: I had to read several different books to make any sense of it all. I started with the *Necronomicon*, then moved on to the Pnakotic Manuscripts and *The Book of Eibon* - look, I'll give you the basic points. The *Necronomicon* was written by a mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred (**48**).

HELEN: Pleasant.

ALBERT: Yes, especially how he eventually died. Witnesses in Yemen say that he was seized by an invisible something, in broad daylight, and torn apart.

HELEN: My god! How horrid!

ALBERT: He was a connoisseur of the occult and the weird. Spent most of his life gathering the mysteries of the world and bringing them together to write that one horrid volume.

HELEN: The *Necronomicon*.

ALBERT: Yes. Once, long before (**49**) humanity came into being, the world was peopled by a race described only as 'the Elder Things'. They lived all over the world in cities that are now only memories...mostly. The Mi-Go arrived from across the eather, ready to claim Earth's riches for their own. War broke out, one that forced the Mi-Go to go about their business in secret.

HELEN: It all sounds like a fairy tale..

BROWNE: Ain't that the truth. But where did all these beasties come from?

ALBERT: That's an older story still. Somewhere, far beyond what we know. The book says they worship a being called 'Nyarlathotep', but that's one strange name in a whole pantheon.

HELEN: Nyarlathotep...why does that name sound so familiar?

48. Abdul Alhazred:

Choosing which Mythos elements to include, and which to merely reference was a major consideration in this adaptation. The result was a sort of 'Mythos triage'. This section, concerning the *Necronomicon* and its genesis was, I felt, critical to evoking a vision of the world as it actually is (in Lovecraftian terms). Abdul Alhazred's death is a perfect example of Lovecraft subverting the Gothic norm - to be haunted by invisible 'things' is one thing, to be torn apart by them in broad daylight, and in public, is extremely Lovecraftian.

49. Once, Long Before...

This section was once much longer, giving an account of all the major players in Earth's history (Elder Things, Cthulhu, Mi-Go, Flying Polyps and Yithians). In editing, however, I found the section to be not only too long-winded, but also too revealing. It is a commonly held belief among Lovecraft fans that the short stories *The Shadow Out of Time* and *At The Mountains of Madness* (which contain these accounts) should be read last, or the slow, mysterious release of information is ruined. This proved to be good advice, even in adapting a composite story like this play.

ALBERT: Do you even study Egyptian history?

HELEN: Yes, I took night classes when I applied to be a journalist.

ALBERT: Then you'll be remembering it from that. He appeared in the court of Ramses the First, trying to secure a bastion on Earth for the use of 'celestial beings'. He would appear several times before some monks rendered him down into a sort of salt used by alchemists to store people. That was around 1918. At least, so they say. God only knows where his prison is. The records say he is being kept in a monastery somewhere in Italy (50). Anyway, he's a patron deity of these Mi-Go.

HELEN: I'm almost sorry I asked for any of that. I hope for all our sakes that it is just talk.
A long pause.

ALBERT: You've never said where your involvement in this started, Helen.

HELEN: Ah. That is a story.

BERNIE: I'd like 'ta hear it, missus.
They all look up in surprise. Bernie offers no more speech.

HELEN: Well, where to start. My name, I suppose. My name wasn't always Treanor. I took it when I was adopted - before that, I was Helen Gardner. My family and I - mother, father and brother - lived out in the country north-east of Arkham. We were like most in those parts. We grew a little bit of everything (51). Carrots, beets, potatoes. Even blueberries.

BROWNE: Mm, I coould sure go f' some bluebry's right ababout naow.

HELEN: Oh they were just delicious. Sweet, too. We weren't rich by any standard, but we made a living. I was but seven or so when the meteor came. My brother, Nathaniel, came running into the house, and we all went out to watch. There in the sky was a biiiig long comet tail. Green. As we watched, little pieces split off and fell to earth. Then, one of them came towards us. Took us a while to realise it, so we stood there like startled rabbits. Then - 'whoomph!' - it landed. Shot down our well. A huge

50. Somewhere In Italy:

This is a reference to my earlier play *The Catacombs of Monte Cassino*, where Nyarlathotep is resurrected from alchemical salt by accident. This happens in 1944, during the Battle of Monte Cassino. German *Fallschirmjager* (paratroopers) are sent to check the abbey for occupants when the Allies bomb the area, trapping them in the vaults. They unwittingly release Nyarlathotep, who uses the body of the Leutnant, Adler, to escape the war-torn country unobserved. It seemed appropriate to imitate the cross-pollination of the Lovecraft Circle authors.

51. A Little Bit of Everything...

An adaptation within and adaptation, this section (Helen's story) is a version of Lovecraft's *The Colour Out of Space*. None of the original text survives, having been transposed from third-person narrative to a first-person recollection from childhood. To that end, I wanted to imbue the story with a lot of rural observation - a pride in the crops, and an understanding of the animals' habits. Writing *The Colour Out of Space* from the point of view of a young girl, it takes on a very uncomfortable and

gush of steam came up.

ALBERT: Incredible! In your well? That must have been worth a pretty penny!

HELEN: We thought so, too, but the next day, when Papa dredged it, there was nothing to bring up. We reasoned that it might have all been burnt up on the way down, and dissolved in the water.

BROWNE: (suspiciously) Wha' happen'd then?

HELEN: We thought no more of it, though the water tasted...odd. Like it had no taste at all. Then we noticed the animals acting odd, too. Our cows would mutter in the night; the chickens, too. Now, any farm child knows that the animals sleep through the dark, but these - they were always restless.

ALBERT: Maybe they were disturbed by the meteor landing.

HELEN: It was more than that. The landscape, too - it changed. The grass and the trees (52) looked wrong. The colours were too bright, but not in a healthy way. Oh, this all sounds ridiculous!

ALBERT: Not at all. Especially considering what I was saying!

HELEN: I suppose not. Well, the wild animals, too - they became less cautious. I swear I saw a hare just sit and stare at me as I walked past it, not four feet away!

ALBERT: Did your family notice all of this?

HELEN: Oh, yes. Mama came down with the most horrible of nervous disorders. She wouldn't sleep. She wouldn't even go outside. In the end, she convinced my father to send me away to Arkham (53), as the oldest, to stay with her sister and her husband. I only received a few letters, and none of them painted a better picture. Mother went mad. She locked herself in the attic. One week later, Nathaniel disappeared. Nothing has been found of him since. Father wrote that the nights were full of odd noises. Crickets singing new tunes and birds calling to each other in the middle of the night.

emotional hue. It also provides both the strength in Helen to face the challenges of the story, and also a personal obstacle for her to overcome.

52. The Grass and Trees...

The corruption of the landscape makes for a good parable - the slow deterioration of Helen's home life around her, mirrored by the farm. I find that even during the most abstract of theatre concepts requires an internal logic for the author, cast and crew - the framework I use for the strange animals and plants of *Colour* is the same as that of the Mi-Go. The entity that arrives with the asteroid bestows extra-dimensional qualities on the surrounding landscape, possibly as an illusion more than an infection - a 'bubble' that alters our perception of the world around us and unsettles the animals.

53. Send Me Away To Arkham...

Helen has a fear of becoming her mother - a fear of madness. For that reason, she has only dealt with her experiences from a distance. This section should have quite an impact on Helen, because her trauma is now suddenly in context. It need not reach a total breakdown, but the story should appear increasingly internal.

ALBERT: What happened to your father?

HELEN: (now quite distressed) He...he killed himself. His last letter made no sense. The police said he shot himself (54) with his shotgun, by the well. They must have found something, though, because the county council voted to flood the whole basin for a reservoir. It covered all of our land, and more for miles around.

BROWNE: Sounds like a wise plan.

HELEN: My uncle and aunt (55) adopted me, and I took their name. I couldn't bear thinking about how close I was to ending up like Nathaniel, or Mama. Years later, I wrote a column about it, to purge it from my brain. Ironically, that's how I came to be employed as a I currently am.

ALBERT:(looking off into distance) There are so many tales. Just when you think that you know how this world works, the hills have a new surprise for you. Thank you, Helen. I'm sorry - I shouldn't have asked.

HELEN: No matter. Now you know why I said I understood when you told me you your experience.

BROWNE: We best stop all this'n chatt'r and sleep. Bern'll keep watch (56) - see if you kin stop him. Right, Bern?
Bernie grunts.

ALBERT: That sounds like a good idea.
They all lie down to sleep, covering themselves with blankets and using their packs for pillows.

HELEN: Albert?

ALBERT: Mmm?

HELEN: Do you think these things...might be from the same place as that meteorite? (57)

ALBERT: ...maybe. Who knows.

HELEN: You know, you're far too good a story teller.

ALBERT: Thank you.

54. Shot Himself:

Suicide is quite a common theme in Lovecraft's fiction. Being an atheist, he saw death as an escape – a way for his characters to cheat the realities of the Lovecraftian world.

55. Uncle and Aunt:

Mentioned specifically in an earlier script, Margaret and Malachi Treanor are Helen's adoptive parents, having emigrated from Ireland to America after WWI. They were removed to simplify the play – I didn't feel that they needed to be explained beyond this mention. This does, however, lead to the concept of Arkham as humanity's bastion – though other real-life cities and towns are mentioned, Arkham is the principle strongpoint of 'normality'. This is added to later, when Bernie mentions his daughter.

56. Bern'll Keep Watch:

Bernie is one of those odd people who don't require much sleep. It may be because when he does sleep, he sleeps soundly. This tells us something about him: he is simple, methodical and effective. The performance of him should reflect that.

57. The Same Meteorite:

The simple answer to this is 'no', but the sentiment that Albert's experience and Helen's are similar is

HELEN: You're welcome. Though, I'm not too bad, either.

ALBERT: (hurrumphs with laughter)

ACT II, Scene 3

Darkness. All but Bernie are asleep. He sits, his knife out, listening. In the distance, we hear a buzzing, like giant wings, then thumps as several somethings land heavily. He jerks his head in shock, but doesn't move. A series of clicking noises. He gently wakes Browne, clapping a hand over his mouth before allowing him up. (58)

BROWNE: (sotto voce) They here?
Bernie nods. Browne quietly shifts onto his haunches. He taps Helen and Albert, hushing them as they wake.

BROWNE: Don't ye be makin' a sound, now. We be havin' visitors.

HELEN: You mean...them?
He nods and holds a finger to his lips. Pause. A rustling movement circles them. They huddle together. The footfalls of the Mi-Go are very pronounced. Clicking rattles when they speak to one another. When they finally speak to the group, their voices are buzzing with odd cadence. Four eyes (of one Mi-Go) appear lit in the dark behind them. Helen and Albert gasp. (59)

MI-GO: You have come here?
The group is too scared to answer.

MI-GO: You were told not to come. The land is ours.
Albert cautiously answers, loud and clear.

ALBERT: What do you want?

MI-GO: You will leave.

ALBERT: We come to stop your harassment of Henry Akeley.
There is a prolonged silence. The Mi-Go paces. It is never seen clearly.

ALBERT: Let us pass. We don't want any quarrel with you.

MI-GO: The Akeley does not need you. You will

correct. Lovecraft never explains where *The Colour Out of Space* is from – to him, it was the ultimate expression of the Gothic.

58. Sounds in The Forest:

This section of the play requires a quite complex sound effects rig. As well as the previously noted reverb effect, there are set sound sequences to be recorded. The sound engineer tasked with creating these sound effects should make full use of channels, specifically panning from left to right, for the fly-over sequence. The final result can be a mixture of sound effects and the actor physically playing the Mi-Go.

59. Playing the Mi-Go:

The Mi-Go are quite an acting challenge – they can speak English in the same way that a foreign linguistics expert could, assuming they had had no actual contact with an English speaker. By this, I mean that their grasp of human languages is theoretical, and undergoes a period of translation not only between languages, but between species as well. Depending on what their costuming rig is, the actor could either pre-record their voice or perform it live. In terms of physicality, the most important thing is to break the lines and stance of a human, transforming it into something alien. Good physical study templates

leave. Tomorrow is the time we allow.

ALBERT: Or you will do what? We shan't abandon Henry. Not to some inhuman beasts!

HELEN: Don't antagonise them, Albert!

BROWNE: She's right, boy. This be their ground. There'll be more than tha' one about.

ALBERT: (to group) We can't! (to darkness) We can't. We will not leave our friend to you. We ask only that you let us take him with us.

MI-GO: He has seen and done too much. It will be fixed.

ALBERT: We will not let you take him! Let us pass!

MI-GO: That is unacceptable.

Pause.

ALBERT: What does that mean?

Silence.

HELEN: I don't like this.

Behind them, another set of eyes opens. Suddenly, Bernie is yanked from his feet. He doesn't scream - the struggle is silent. Browne and Albert grab hold of him, arresting his movement. (60)

BROWNE: Hold him!

HELEN: No! Let him go, you beasts! Let him go! *Bernie grabs hold of Browne specifically. He locks eyes with him.*

BERNIE: (strained) Take care of Marie. *His strength fails, and he disappears, dragged off into the dark without a sound. The others fall back in a heap, gasping.*

ALBERT: You inhuman savages! BERNIE!

MI-GO: He is the example. Leave tomorrow. *The eyes turn away. The sudden loud sound of buzzing wings launching out of foliage, fading. Browne runs upstage after the noise, shouting. He stops before he exits the light.*

BROWNE: Bern! BERN!
He throws his cap into the dark before standing motionless for a long moment. Softly, we hear him begin to weep, and he falls to his knees. Albert and Helen awkwardly wait.

BROWNE: They took em'. Dear Lor' Jesus, they

would be praying mantises, crustaceans or lizards. A combination of these should produce a unique quality of movement. When designing the costume rig, the utmost importance should be on breaking the lines of a human silhouette above all other things. While it is possible to produce the play with a relatively simple costume (because the Mi-Go is able to be mostly concealed), it is also possible to make it as complex as the director wishes.

60. Bernie's Abduction:

Fairly early in the writing process, I realised that one of the characters would have to be abducted by the Mi-Go as a way of bypassing all the expository narration about their general abduction-related activities. There are two branches of the early scripts, one where Bernie is the abducted, and one where Browne is the victim. Both have their own strengths dramatically – Bernie without Browne's guidance would have been an interesting character to develop, but I thought that the sudden and violent removal of Bernie, the largest and most physically able of the group, would pitch the script into a more uncomfortable state. Bernie is built up to be the only person who has had an effect on the Mi-Go.

took him.

ALBERT: I'm sorry, Lepidus.

BROWNE: Don't say nuthin'. Don't you dare be sayin' nuthin'. Yew don't know any of what this means.

Helen moves to cradle him, still kneeling.

HELEN: He knew this might happen. He went bravely. Not a sound.

BROWNE: He allus' was too quiet fer his own good. Oh Jesus, I gotta tell Marie.

HELEN: Who's Marie, Ezekiel? His wife?

BROWNE: Naw, Bern ain't got no wife. She passed on years ago. Died o' the influenza.

Helen waits patiently while he collects himself.

BROWNE: Marie be Bern's daughter. **(61)**

HELEN: (looking to Albert) My god. That's horrible.

BROWNE: She be a dyer's apprentice in Ipswich. She be only thirteen.

HELEN: Ezekiel, you aren't alone. We won't let Bernie's daughter go hungry and homeless, will we, Albert?

ALBERT: Never. Bernie came with us because he knew what these beasts are capable of. We shall honour that.

BROWNE: I can't go wi' you.

HELEN: What? No, Ezekiel! We can't do this without you.

BROWNE: I kin' point you on the way. Come sunrise, y'all be able to see Akeley's farm doawn the mounta'n. But I can't risk going on.

ALBERT: But we must! We can't bow to these things' demands!

Browne rounds on him in sudden anger.

BROWNE: An' what would you have me do? Alla us'ns end up like Bern? Huh? Leave Marie alone in this world? Those critters be dead serious, or did yew not get their point? They gave us'ns a chance

Bernie's Abduction (SFX):

This effect has the potential to look hokey. It needs to be handled with an element of efficiency and dismissiveness. Bernie's last line is not meant be a melodramatic moment - it is a demonstration of his personality. A physical rig needs to be designed that can very swiftly and violently remove Bernie from the stage. The actor playing Bernie is, by dint of the character, likely to be quite large. Suggested rigs could include a harness for bodily removal, or section of floor cloth that can be dragged. In terms of lighting, the drag needs to be necessarily brief (visually). Sharp contrast lighting from above or beside Bernie can back the distance between lit and blackness suitably short.

61. Bernie's Daughter:

The decision to add Bernie's daughter emerged from a definite sense of emotive disconnection at this point in the script. I wanted his disappearance to mean *more* than a than an excuse for a special effect. To explore this, I went back to Bernie's character - what is he in and of himself? He is an object of mystery. What makes someone mysterious? That we know nothing of them or about them. After our initial contact with a mysterious character though, unless

to leave, and I intend to do just that!

ALBERT: You would really do that? Let Helen go on without your protection?

BROWNE: Guilt games won't truss my decision, Wilmarth. Tha' lady has as much courage as you or I, any day o' the week. You kin' come with me, or go on. Akeleys prob'ly dead already.

ALBERT: I can't do that, Lepidus. I gave my word.

BROWNE: (To Helen) An' you?

HELEN: I gave my word to Albert.

BROWNE: Then I suppose this be where our paths part. I'm wasting no time. Look to the East when the sun rises. You'll see it.

ALBERT: Thank you, Mr. Browne.

He offers his hand. Browne eventually takes it.

BROWNE: Good luck to you (62), boy. Ma'am. *He shoulders his pack, stares at Bernie's, then takes that, too. He exits. Albert turns to look at Helen.*

ALBERT: Thank you for staying.

HELEN: If I never sleep again, at least I will be able to blame you.

They hug.

ALBERT: We'll stay awake together.

Lights down.

Act III, Scene 1

The interior of Akeley's house. A table and chairs, with a pair of armchairs. We hear a knock. No response. Then another. Finally, Albert and Helen enter. (63)

ALBERT: Henry? Hello? Henry?

No answer.

HELEN: Maybe we're too late.

ALBERT: Maybe. I haven't seen any of his dogs.
HENRY?

HELEN: I don't like this.

ALBERT: Neither do I. Get out the revolver.

the narrative is *about* them, we simply accept that they are mysterious and forget that they have a wider life. This thus seemed the perfect moment to remind the audience that Bernie has a background, and in this case, quite a tragic one. Marie is the reason that Bernie left England, and also why a person of his peculiar talents is working in his current profession – escape and responsibility, respectively.

62. Good Luck To You:

The altercation and departure following Bernie's abduction is also Browne's most intense moment. Any previous anger or resentment that he demonstrates in front of Albert is a smokescreen – that curious trait of some older people to rise to any bait, imagined or not. This moment is his comfortable world being removed. Being already aware of the Mi-Go, this, to him, is the equivalent of a companion shouting in an avalanche-prone area – he is hurt and aggravated by ignorance. All that being so, he does depart with dignity, seeing the event as new responsibilities rather than a moment to shut down.

63. Creating Henry's House:

There needs to be a drastic change between the feel of the forest and the feel of Henry's house. This can only really be achieved by using a

Helen goes to open her bag.

HENRY: (From the shadows, sitting in a chair) You won't need that.

They start. Henry's voice a little weak.

ALBERT: Henry? Is that you?

HENRY: Yes, old friend. It is me.

ALBERT: Where are you?

HENRY: Over here, in the armchair. Don't turn on the light.

ALBERT: ...I see?

HENRY: I have a severe allergic reaction **(64)** to the season. All the stress of late has aggravated it.

HELEN: Oh, you poor thing!

ALBERT: Oh, yes, this is Helen Treanor, of the Arkham Advisor.

HELEN: Pleased to meet you, Mr Akeley.

ALBERT: She helped me to journey here. As well as...others. It's been a very long journey.

HENRY: I'm sure. Not that it is not wonderful to see you, and to meet you, too, Miss Akeley, you needn't have come. This business with the outsiders has been one big misunderstanding. **(65)**

ALBERT: I hardly think that is the case, Henry. Not after what you said in your letter. Not after what we've been through.

HENRY: Ah yes, my letters. You have them with you, I hope? We'll need them to piece together this mystery after you have eaten. I apologise that I am too weak to answer all your questions this minute.

ALBERT: What exactly is wrong, Henry?

HENRY: I have mightily swelled joints. I have to bandage and immobilise them. My eyes and lungs are also inflamed. It's the pollen. Happens every year. I'll be just fine. Please, in the meanwhile, there's food on the table. I set it out earlier. Pay me no while - we'll talk more after you have sated your

wildly different lighting palette. Harsh whites and oranges can create the dual requirements of warm, with a distinct sinister undertone. Care should also be taken to isolate specific areas of the stage in a manner that contrasts with the earlier 'spot' lighting. Squaring off the lights with barn doors would be a viable solution.

64. A Severe Allergic Reaction:

Henry's 'swollen joints' are prominently mentioned in the story, creating the question – is it really Henry or not? I chose to create the logic that yes, it is him, but only up until a specific point. The mystery, however, can be retained - keeping the question open (from the audience's point of view) whether or not it is Henry that they've been presented with. He is never lit directly – rather, the lighting and stage plan should attempt to prolong the doubt as long as possible.

65. One Big Misunderstanding:

In some ways, this section of the play is a political analogy. The Mi-Go at first appear as unknowable boogiemens, whereas here they are disarmed and empathised with. After a lengthy discussion about how they are just misunderstood and are just different, the coin is flipped again. Are they just insidious liars, inherently evil? In a very roundabout

hunger. Go on - eat.

ALBERT: Would you like us to leave our things somewhere?

HENRY: Oh, anywhere you like. Rooms have been made up for you. If you could just put the letters in the basket by me.

They do so, then sit at the table. They pick at the food in silence, then Helen leans in to whisper.

HELEN: This smells fishy to me, Albert. How would he have known to make up rooms more more than one person?

ALBERT: Maybe he assumed I'd be bringing a guide. I didn't mention anything in my letter.

HELEN: But what about the yard? His dogs are gone. There were those queer footprints everywhere. Everywhere, Albert. Bulletholes in the walls. Something serious has happened here.

ALBERT: (to Henry) We see that your dogs have gone, Henry. **(67)**

No answer.

ALBERT: Henry?

HELEN: I think he's asleep. This is all most peculiar. Phew, it's warm in here. **(66)**

ALBERT: ...for his allergies?

HELEN: Perhaps he's trying to boil it out.
Silence.

ALBERT: Maybe it was all a misunderstanding. Those creatures did ask us to leave before they took Bernie.

HELEN: Oh, yes, very reasonable of them. Go away or we'll abduct you? Use your head, Albert.
Henry suddenly speaks up.

HENRY: You gave them no choice.

ALBERT: You're awake?

HENRY: It seems the questions can't wait. Come over here, by me. There are lamps for you.
They move to the lounge. Henry shifts into the light more. He is bandaged and wan.

HENRY: Now, I suppose you'd like to know what's

way, this is a discussion of Moderate viewpoints: it seems that they are the most intelligent way of dealing with a non-human mind – both ends of the spectrum imbue the Mi-Go with human traits that they simply don't have. It is better to assume that any course of action they take is *intentional* or *not intentional* rather than benevolent or malevolent.

66. It's Warm In Here:

Many of the lines delivered in this first section (of Henry's house) are pure red herrings. I wanted the audience to actively be building a consensus in their minds about whether they believe Henry is Henry or not.

67. The Dogs Are Gone:

Fear of dogs, for the Mi-Go, probably stems from the noise they make rather than the dogs' capacity to hurt them. It is never clear whether the Mi-Go have ears in the normal sense, or indeed how they speak. Likely, they find the noise and jostle of dogs disturbing. Also, the dogs are quite capable of mauling human agents, something that the Mi-Go can't afford (there being relatively few of them).

been going on.

ALBERT: You might say that, yes.

HENRY: Well, the whole affair reached a crescendo three nights ago. I had been driving the things off with gunfire and dogs, until they started shooting back. **(68)**

ALBERT: They use guns? **(69)**

HENRY: Not them per se, but their human agents do. There are a few that work with them.
Albert looks across at Helen.

HELEN: Yes, I think we met one of them in Brattleboro.

HENRY: That would be Mr. Noyes, I should think. It was he that approached me under a white flag. Damn near shot him before I realised.

ALBERT: Had you killed any of the things?

HENRY: No. I hit one of them square between the eyes. Next day, nothing. The bullets seemed to be very uncomfortable to them, though. And the dogs as well. Anyway, Noyes told me their intentions, and organised a parley. **(70)**

ALBERT: You've met with them?

HENRY: I reacted the same as you have, at first. But then, when I met them, and they explained, everything changed. All this behaviour - it's all a frightful misunderstanding. The creatures, you see -

ALBERT: The Mi-Go.

HENRY: ...yes. How did you know?

ALBERT: I read of it in th-

HELEN: We found some old folklore that spoke of them.

She looks pointedly at Albert. (71)

ALBERT: Ah, yes.

HENRY: The Mi-Go are benign. They are here to mine various things from the Earth not found elsewhere.

68. Started Shooting Back:

The human agents' use of firearms is in no way meant to be a threat to Henry, but rather his dogs. This was a way to reach Henry with a diplomat rather than simple cruelty.

69. They Use Guns:

It should never be assumed that the Mi-Go are not technologically superior, but rather that they eschew the use of weapons against human civilians - Earth is an extremely remote outpost with minimal resources and personnel. In many ways, the Mi-Go's actions are that of a militia or organised workforce - they are not Mi-Go military or especially important individuals.

70. Organised a Parlay:

Henry is a significant inconvenience to the Mi-Go, and obviously the Mi-Go to Henry, also. It is, however, a huge shock to Henry that he would ever be negotiated with. This surprise should carry through to his performance.

71. Keeping the Secret:

Helen, in this scene, is far more suspicious of Henry than Albert. She is not prepared to let the odd circumstance of their

HELEN: You would think they'd be polite enough to ask.

HENRY: Can you imagine the world's reaction? There would be panic, then accusations and recriminations. Somebody would attack them, and then where would we be? They'd be forced to conquer us (72). No, they live in secret. One day, when they deem us ready, they will reveal themselves. But until then, they converse only with specific individuals.

HELEN: Like Mr. Noyes.

HENRY: Yes.

HELEN: And what does Mr. Noyes gain from this arrangement?

HENRY: Apart from the prestige of being an ambassador of our species? A great deal of wealth, I imagine. They have no use for gold or silver, but they are sure to come across it in their doings.

ALBERT: Wait - you have made a similar deal with them?

HENRY: A similar one, yes.

ALBERT: Are they in the house?

HENRY: ...no. They dislike leaving the camouflage of the woods.

HELEN: Oh thank Heaven. You gave me a heart attack, Albert!

ALBERT: I'm sorry. It just dawned on me. Henry, I'm not convinced they're telling you the whole truth. They made every effort to stop us getting here.

HENRY: They are ruthless, yes, but you have to understand that they are not human. Their motives and morality is something totally alien to use. Something that might seem borne of anger or viciousness might in fact mean something totally different to them.

arrival slip, and thus cautions Albert to keep their own research secret – that way the potential Mi-Go can't know exactly how much they know.

72. Forced To Conquer Us:

In many ways, this tale is a parable about resource conflict. If it weren't written when it was, it could serve as a good metaphor for the second Iraq War. The Mi-Go are being, in this exchange, very reasonable. We must remember that they are meant to be vastly more complex than humanity, both intellectually, and culturally. They have no particular reason to leave individual humans to themselves other than an alien sense of humanity – whether or not it *is* empathy that drives this, is not clear. The implication in the Mythos (and bluntly stated in Delta green) is that the Mi-Go, if provoked, would simply move in, exterminate an appropriate safety area around their holdings, then return to their business. Further provocation would lead to extermination on a global scale. The significance of this in terms of the script is its bearing on Mi-Go psychology – they are being *very* gentle with Henry. In fact, they are almost the 'good guys' in the play, were one to look at the situation objectively. In script terms, it meant

ALBERT: When did you make this agreement with them?

HENRY: Only this morning, why?

ALBERT: They sent one of their agents to us several days ago saying that all this had been resolves. While you were still in a shootout with the. The man, too - he spoke in the most peculiar fashion.

HENRY: I'm sure he was harmed. Most likely they have wiped the memory from his mind. They are very skilled surgeons and biologists. (73)

HELEN: You're sure of this?

HENRY: They have no need to hurt him.

HELEN: Oh, thank god.

ALBERT: Even if this is so, what have they offered you?

HENRY: The chance of a lifetime, Albert. They select individuals and take them with them, back to Yuggoth, their outpost in this solar system. From there, who knows? They do this in the spirit of scientific exchange.

HELEN: What could humans teach them, if they are as advanced as you claim?

HENRY: Oh, plenty. For instance, we know much of metallurgy that they do not. They have no need of metal. But it is not just science, but philosophy. You see, it is not just them that I shall have the chance of conversing with.

ALBERT: What do you mean?

HENRY: They have ambassadors from all over the universe! They all meet on hundreds of worlds. Imagine - I can meet any number of other species.

HELEN: This all seems a little large to me. I'd prefer to stick with just the one species, thank you.

ALBERT: How in the world do they take you there?

trying to question the audience's expectations of the Mi-Go as antagonists, and to leave the question open as long as possible - is this a trick on their part, or honest negotiation. The answer is somewhere between: very cautious honesty with a backup plan.

73. Surgeons and Biologists:

Mi-Go technology is based primarily around biological tools. Humans, existing in only three and a half dimensions make for extremely simple surgical subjects. Consciousness, however, is valuable to them in all its forms. The last thing they can be described as is xenophobic, whilst the humans of the play *are*. The Mi-Go are genuinely interested in dialogue with humans, but on their own terms.

The Chance of a Lifetime:

When writing Henry, I wanted to make him much more than a victim - I wanted him to be a deeply reasonable man caught in a state of intellectual siege. Throughout this piece, you can see him struggle with his own beliefs - does he really see the Mi-Go as intergalactic scientists, or is it a comforting state of positivity?

HENRY: Ah - that's the trick of it. You see, they have wings - not so well suited to flying in our atmosphere, but designed to carry them through the aether between planets. (74)

ALBERT: That's what that infernal buzzing was. That doesn't explain how they would take you, though.

HENRY: Ah, yes. They left a few of their devices here. They are there, on that table.
He refers to a series of canisters (75). Helen picks one up.

HENRY: These are what they use. I told you that they were very skilled surgeons. They remove your brain, quite safely, and place it in one of these canisters.

HELEN: That is revolting.

HENRY: Maybe, but it protects you from the elements, and more importantly, the conditions that exist outside of this reality. It is a transportation device. They would keep my body here, in hibernation, until my return. On my travels, they have devices for sight, sounds, smell and tactile function.

ALBERT: How do you know this to be true? Perhaps they are just drawing you in to butcher you.

HENRY: Each of those canisters contains a brain already. They have demonstrated that form of existence.

HELEN: Are you saying there's a person in this?

HENRY: In that one, no. There's a Yithian in that one (76). If you want a good scare, try talking to one of them.
Helen quickly puts it down.

HENRY: And that one over there - that is waiting for me. I will leave within the week.

ALBERT: Are we bound by this compact, as well, because we came here?

HELEN: I don't really fancy being disembodied...

74. Aether:

An outdated concept. In the early modern age (1800-1900s), the ancient 'fifth element' became the basis of a new scientific theory - that a substance filled the space between planets/ It was thought that this substance was necessary to conduct electromagnetic waves. Lovecraft interpreted this as an appropriate travelling plane for both the Mi-Go and Cthulhu, who fly through the aether with specialised wings.

75. Canisters:

The apparatus that resides in Henry's house is intended to be the opposite of what one might imagine. Coming from a time where science fiction machines were complex and camp (by modern standards), it unbalances the audience to have a simple and functional design instead. There is something particularly sinister about plain, aluminium canisters.

76. There's a Yithian in That:

Here is an example of almost playful multi-layering of the Mythos. As previously stated, the Great Race of Yith swap minds with other entities, in different times and places. For the Mi-Go to have one, one of two things must have happened: either a) They removed the brain of a possessed creature, or b) A Yithian accidentally

HENRY: No, not at all. You are known to them now, however. They may use you as a contact from time to time. To keep them informed of...goings on.

ALBERT: No, Henry. No. We are not some sort of interstellar information bureau. Why the Devil did you get involved in this?

HENRY: I didn't ask for this, Albert! This is my home! **(77)** It's been my home, and my family's home for generations. That might not mean as much to city folk, but out here, lineage is everything. I've done what I have to survive. If that means taking the opportunity of a lifetime, and seeing the stars, then I welcome that.

HELEN: You fool of a man! Don't you realise that there's no going back from this? Once you see beyond **(78)** this comfortable existence, it never leaves you. Both Albert and I know that.

ALBERT: She's right, Henry.

HENRY: And how does that help me, now? I know too much. I can't tell them the deal has been nullified.

ALBERT: Then leave with us. Can't we slip away?

HENRY: How far do you think we'd get? They can fly, Albert. Not to mention the fact that it is already nearly dark. We would just disappear, like the Waites and and Morelunds further up the valley.

ALBERT: What did you say?

HENRY: We'd just disappear?

ALBERT: No, about your neighbours. They were taken by these things?

HENRY: I have no doubt about it.

ALBERT: Jesus, it's exactly like before.

HELEN: Could we hide? Make them think we've made a run for it? **(79)**

HENRY: They'd find us soon enough

brain-swapped itself into a brain *already* in a canister. Either way, it would be a very peculiar experience having a conversation with it.

77. This Is My Home:

This section defines Henry more than any other – this is the reason he hasn't run from the Mi-Go, or involved the authorities. Much as *The Colour Out Of Space* or *The Dunwich Horror* explores rural values and the tenacity of the people, so does this script.

78. Once You See Beyond:

This is a central theme of the play, as previously expressed by Albert's quote from Thurston. Here, however, there is an illusion of rationality in the 'beyond' – the Mi-Go are a remarkable organised and principled part of the Mythos, a far call from Shub-Niggurath or Azathoth. Albert and Helen have seen the deep dark with no rationality – Albert through his childhood visitations, and Helen through the nameless, shapeless thing that destroyed her family. Their point in telling Henry this is to inform him (which is a paradox in itself) that you only need to *know* about what lurks out there to be affected by it.

79. Make A Run For It:

This section of the script is rather interesting in that it

ALBERT: If they're as reasonable as you say...perhaps we could negotiate with them. Explain that we just want to leave, and that we would keep their secret.

HELEN: Yes, but they could never be sure that we would.

ALBERT: Who would believe us anyway? We'd just end up another crackpot story in your column.
Helen glares at him.

ALBERT: You know what I mean.

HENRY: I know what to promise them.

ALBERT: The army perhaps? Whould this be serious-

HENRY: -I know what to promise them.
Albert stops.

HENRY: I'm already too far involved in this, but I could save the two of you. **(80)**

HELEN: Henry, you can't.

HENRY: It's not as bad as you think. Perhaps I could agree to be an informant, and a hostage in exchange for the two of you. They've been honest with me so far. They said that they didn't harm you out of respect for me.
Albert looks at Helen.

ALBERT: They did hurt us. One of our guides was dragged off into the night. Torn from our arms, for Christ's sake.

HENRY: They didn't mention any of this...wait. What was his name?

ALBERT: Bernie.

HENRY: Was his surname Crowe?

ALBERT: I don't know. He never told us. Why?
Henry turns one of the canisters around. On the other side is a neat label reading 'Bernie Crowe'. (81)

HELEN: Oh, no, Albert. Not like this.

ALBERT: That - that is Bernie? They cut his brain from his body and brought it into your house?

should have been foreseeable – what could Albert or Helen possibly do to break Henry's siege? This is a classic Lovecraftian deviation from traditional investigator fiction – the plucky heroes are always out of their depth, and are forced to flee from the situation. The only exceptions to this rule are *The Dunwich Horror*, in which the band of protagonists are quite well prepared, but unable to do more than restore the status quo, and *The Horror At Red Hook*, where the police intervene, but only glimpse the supernatural antagonists escaping.

80. Self Sacrifice:

The significance of this concept in Lovecraftian works is what it is *not*. It is not a sacrifice to serve a greater cause (for example, religious martyrdom), but a raw, personal and *human* gift to another. Lovecraft makes use of sacrifice very rarely, to avoid a cliché common among the adventure fiction at the time.

81. Bernie's Canister:

This is a very conscious horror 'hook' in this script. By placing a *known character's* brain into the canister, we move the horror of the situation away from the rather hokey concept of 'mad surgery' towards the genuinely interesting and disturbing idea of mental bondage –

Didn't you ask about them?

HENRY: They said they were simply a group of individuals ready for travel. They let me speak to a couple of them.

ALBERT: But not Bernie?

HENRY: No, not him.

ALBERT: I'm not surprised. Look, to you see the danger now, Henry?

HENRY: It would be hard to ignore it. They lied. They lied after we finally reached an agreement.

ALBERT: Face it, Henry. At best, you're a liability to them, at worst, a science experiment. **(82)**

HENRY: (sighing) You're right. But this doesn't change anything. Our only chance is to negotiate. I'll promise them all of our correspondence. All evidence we have of their existence. They might be happy to just keep an eye on us.

ALBERT: Christ, man. Just lie. **(83)** Tell them anything you want that gets us away from this place. We can leave the country if we need to.

HENRY: Alright. Alright.

HELEN: When are you expecting them?

HENRY: They come every night at sundown **(84)**. One of them, with Mr. Noyes, usually.

HELEN: What is the time now?

HENRY: Almost seven. They'll be here soon.

ALBERT: Do you want us to stay with you? Help...talk to them?

HENRY: I think that might just aggravate the situation. You'd best wait in your rooms.

HELEN: Rooms? I think not. I'm staying right beside Albert, decency be damned.

HENRY: Top of the stairs, on the right, then.

The Mi-Go have done to Bernie what no human has managed to do to another – censor their mind. They have not only gagged his body, they have totally removed his ability to experience the outside world or communicate with it. The situation puts particular dramatic pressure on Albert and Helen, who know that person they thought lost is so close, yet infinitely unreachable.

82. A Science Experiment:

The internal logic of whether or not the Mi-Go are playing Henry is totally up to the director. The logic I personally use is that they have no concept of lying, only objectives and degrees of withholding information. Thus, they are never liars, and never honest.

83. Christ, Man, Just Lie:

Pertaining to the previous annotation, because the Mi-Go don't have a sense of truth, they can't perceive it in others. In fact, They tend to assume that everything they are told is true, by default. Dishonesty is both anathema, and extremely aggravating to them.

84. They Come At Sundown:

The linking of the Mi-Go with the night-time is for practical reasons. They don't habitually wander around in the day where

They turn to go. There is a knock at the door, offstage.

HENRY: Wish me luck.

Albert shakes his hand.

ALBERT: Good luck, old son.

Helen takes his hand, then shifts her palms to his face, holding it for a moment.

HELEN: You're a good man.

HENRY: Go. Hurry.

They exit. The light pool for the lounge dims to black. A new pool, representing the bedroom upstairs (85), rises.

ACT III, Scene 2

They take an appropriate amount of time to transit. They then pace the room fretfully, listening to the noise 'downstairs'.

A second knock, then the front door opening.

Henry's voice, muffled, answered by a buzzing voice. Footsteps.

Henry, sounding hesitant. A conversation ensues.

Albert: (to Helen) Are you alright?

HELEN: No, I'm not.

She is shivering.

ALBERT: It'll be alright. I don't know how, but it will.

He hugs her. The stay clasped.

HELEN: You know, I've not thought about dying since I was sixteen.

ALBERT: That's good, isn't it?

HELEN: No. I feel quite unprepared.

ALBERT: We won't die, necessarily.

HELEN: No, we might be mugged by giant alien insects.

Albert chuckles gently. (86)

ALBERT: What do you think you'll do, if you make it back to Arkham?

HELEN: Apart from sorting through my stack of work?

ALBERT: Yes.

they can be easily seen by hunters or travellers. In adaptation terms, it allows the director to control exactly what they want the audience to see of the Mi-Go, and what keep hidden. Also, in a physiologically sense, the Mi-Go spend an enormous amount of time (when not on Earth) in the dark. Their outpost on Yuggoth (Pluto) is likely to be wreathed in darkness all year round.

85. The Bedroom Upstairs:

Though this location exists in the original text, and in the same basic capacity, in this script it serves an additional purpose. It is a moment where realism can be temporarily suspended and the protagonists get a chance to step back from the narrative. It also has an effect of being quite claustrophobic. Physically, it consists of a tight warm pool of light – a surrogate womb of safety beset by the situation downstairs.

86. Levity Under Pressure:

Humour is not something totally alien to Lovecraft (he wrote several comic horror stories, most notably *Herbert West: Reanimator*) but not something he would typically employ in his longer, more serious works. I felt however (as demonstrated by the earlier jokes) that humour was critical to both developing

HELEN: I think I'll go out to dinner. Duck, I think. Get squiffy on champagne. Then buy a pumpkin and smash on the street. **(87)**

ALBERT: Smash a pumpkin?

HELEN: It's very therapeutic. Think about it.
He does so.

ALBERT: I suppose it would be.

HELEN: And you?

ALBERT: Me? I'm not sure. I think perhaps I'd catch the first boat to England, grow a moustache, change my name, then come back and do exactly what you said.

HELEN: Even the pumpkin?

ALBERT: Perhaps not that. I have a lingering respect for horticulture.

HELEN: You know, you have much more wit when you're terrified.

ALBERT: No fear of failure, I'd think.

HELEN: Thank you for letting me come along. It has been an adventure, no matter how grim.

ALBERT: I wasn't aware I'd let you come. You just came.

HELEN: It pays to be forceful in my line of work.

ALBERT: Thank you for coming along.
They look at each other for a length of time. Downstairs, the buzzing continues. Gently, Albert leans in to kiss Helen. They stare at each other a second. (88)

HELEN: No, I don't think so.

ALBERT: I agree with you whole-heartedly.

HELEN: If anyone asks, we'll blame the situation.
He goes to release her. She stops him.

HELEN: But this is still fine.
Downstairs, voices are raised.

ALBERT: It sounds like Henry has broached the subject.

the characters of the piece, but also to moderate pressure. It is extremely hard to write a script containing fantastic themes without relieving the pressure on the audience.

87. Buy A Pumpkin:

I won't even attempt to justify this as Lovecraftian – it sprang from my stranger impulses of my writing. I wanted Albert and Helen to have very different sense of humour – as such I divided my own into sarcasm of the obvious, and absurdity. Albert tends to give obvious answers to stupid questions, while Helen occasionally thinks in a very lateral fashion. This also appears in her earlier habit of pretending that a totally different conversation is taking place (e.g 'Why thank you Albert, and how are you?'). This particular pumpkin reference is meant to demonstrate those curious moments when one is under stress.

88. The Aborted Romance:

Something that sprang from watching horror films and wondering just how long the romantic leads would survive after the exciting events had blown over, Albert and Helen drop

HELEN: I do hope he's okay.

ALBERT: Shh.

There are a series of heavy footsteps, and more loud voices.

HELEN: What if they kill him?

ALBERT: We can't afford to think like that.

A thump, then footsteps, a final buzzing voice, then the front door closing.

HELEN: ...are they gone?

ALBERT: Wait a moment.

They wait in painful silence.

ALBERT: We'd better go check.

Transition back to lounge, as before.

ACT III, Scene 3

They enter the lounge, which no longer contains the canisters or the basket. The shape of Henry can barely be seen in the armchair. (89)

ALBERT: ...Henry?

HENRY: It is all worked out, Albert.

HELEN: What did they say?

HENRY: That you could leave tonight and not be molested.

ALBERT: Tonight? We'd never get anywhere tonight.

HENRY: You can take torches. They would prefer it that way.

HELEN: You couldn't pay me any amount of money to make me go back out into those woods.

HENRY: Then you can stay here, for tonight. Yes, perhaps that would be best.

ALBERT: Are you alright, Henry? You sound shaken.

HENRY: Oh, I...am shaken. Forgive my strangeness.

HELEN: Why did they agree?

the ball before they've even caught it. Part of their attraction springs from being in a high-risk situation together, but we also see the seeds of a peculiar relationship emerging earlier. Helen immediately assumes a motherly or dominant-partner position with Albert as soon as they embark on the voyage, something that apparently chafes with Albert. This moment is rather powerful in reminding us how the real world functions – sometimes the love interest I fleeting, or not at all. Placing this in the midst of the play's climax (and conclusion), it serves as a moment for the audience to let down their guard and invest one last time with the protagonists.

89. Setting The Final Scene:

Unusually for Lovecraft, The Whisperer in Darkness has an anticlimactic conclusion – Albert simply runs away after hearing the Mi-Go and seeing the flaccid hands and face of Henry. Though it does have a twist – that Henry isn't Henry, it lacks the short action segment normally seen in Lovecraft's later works. Because in this script we are working with a visual medium, I thought it necessary to insert the Mi-Go proper in the scene. The audience has spent the second half of the play building a picture of them from short interactions and

HENRY: They are...kind. I will stay with them.

ALBERT: What about the other part? About us?

HENRY: ...agreement?

ALBERT: Yes, whether they will leave us alone once we've left.

HENRY: It is all arranged. Fear is not a necessity.

ALBERT: I'm sick of...wait. Wait, what did you say?
Henry doesn't reply.

HELEN: Henry, are y-

ALBERT: Get back, Helen.
He draws the revolver from his pocket and points it at Henry.

ALBERT: You sly son of a bitch. **(90)**

HELEN: What are you talking about?

ALBERT: (to Henry) What have you done with Henry?
'Henry' slumps forward, as though all strength has done out of him. A Mi-Go suddenly emerged from the dark behind him, having been 'puppeting' his body. Helen screams. Albert freezes. (91)

MI-GO: Put your implement down.

ALBERT: ...No. Stay back.

MI-GO: We listen.

ALBERT: What have you done with Henry?

MI-GO: The Akeley is being transported. He will leave with us. The pact cannot be changed.

ALBERT: Where does that leave us?

MI-GO: You will be silenced.

ALBERT: I will shoot you through your cockroach head in a heartbeat.

MI-GO: We have no vital organs in our head. **(92)**

hints. This scene tries to satisfy (but not completely!) that curiosity. In production terms, it needs a different lighting feel from the previous downstairs scene. While the existing design can be used, it needs to be augmented or diminished in a way that distorts the original ambience. I would suggest deceptively warm tones, or softer focus.

90. You Sly Son of A Bitch:

This moment could be construed as 'actiony', from Albert's seemingly brave use of a revolver to defend Helen. It is not intended to be so. Albert is not a terribly brave or decisive person, and this section should reflect that quality. He is as terrified as Helen, but driven to the point of not caring.

91. The Reveal:

Coming out of the darkness, this final reveal of the Mi-Go is very important. It needs to be swift but contained. This is to mask where the Mi-Go is hiding, and to keep the manner in which it is 'puppeting' Henry a secret. It also heralds a shift in the Mi-Go's strategy – they are now stressed enough to blatantly confront Albert and Helen. They have them in a firm trap, and feel no reason to continue the charade. The actor playing the Mi-Go should use this opportunity to greatly expand the range of movement the Mi-Go

ALBERT: I'll take pot-luck, then.
Helen steels herself and speaks.

HELEN: Why can't you let us go?

MI-GO: We must prevent...interference.

HELEN: We know too much, is that it?

MI-GO: That is accurate.

HELEN: So you think that by killing us (93), or whatever you plan to do, you'll wipe the threat out? Because it isn't that simple.

The Mi-Go advances on her suddenly.

ALBERT: Hey! Hold up there!

MI-GO: (to Helen) Explain your meaning!

HELEN: Before I left, I placed copies of all of our letters and the recording in a safety deposit box. The keeper is under strict instructions that in the event of our disappearance, they are to go straight to the authorities with it.

MI-GO: This information will be extracted from you. The proof will be obtained.

HELEN: No, it won't. The box is in escrow. (94)

MI-GO: Explain this 'escrow'.

HELEN: It is never recoverable. It can be released to the authorities, or kept in perpetuity. None of us can lay our hands on it.

The Mi-Go swings its body in frustration.

MI-GO: What does it ask? A pact must be made.

HELEN: Simple. Safe passage. We will hold our peace, you will hold yours. We respect the borders, just as before.

MI-GO: One must stay with us. As hostage.

ALBERT: No. We shan't. No pact. You have nothing to bargain with.

MI-GO: There is other proposition.

ALBERT: Go on.

costume is capable of. They should also strategically allow parts of the costume that were previously unseen to be revealed in the light.

92. We Have No Vital Organs (Previous page):

Not a lie – as previously stated, Mi-Go don't lie, they only withhold information. It took Nr. Noyes' input to generate the fairly pathetic lies witnessed in the train station scene. If Mi-Go *do* have organs in their heads (which one assumes they do to operate their eyes) they potentially exist extra-dimensionally.

93. Killing Us:

The Mi-Go very rarely kill people – rather they abduct them to interrogate them, then place the disembodied brains in storage/ The person is then likely to enter a dream state until they expire from old age, much like in a sensory deprivation chamber. The insinuation that they simply wish to 'kill' them is what enrages the Mi-Go into advancing on Helen.

94. Escrow:

This is a real concept used frequently in high-risk business transactions. The one-way transfer of money can protect anonymous or otherwise vulnerable parties. The most important thing to remember is that the depositor *cannot* retrieve the article placed in escrow

MI-GO: If you go, we let you after you destroy evidence here.

ALBERT: What? Why?

MI-GO: You are resourceful. You will know how to make Akeley's vanishing look...human.
Albert looks at Helen. She nods to him.

ALBERT: We accept.

MI-GO: The pact is made. We will watch from the green. Leave nothing. **(95)**

The Mi-Go retreats into the dark, its eyes closing. Helen and Albert don't move for a long moment.

ALBERT: Do we do it?

HELEN: Now is not the time to question providence.

ALBERT: We need kerosene.

Helen looks more closely at the flaccid Henry. She gasps as she realises he is dead and hollow.

HELEN: Oh God, Henry. Poor Henry.

ALBERT: Come on. Leave it. We'll wipe this place off the face of the earth.

He motions Helen out. Just before he leaves himself, he turns and looks at the armchair.

ALBERT: Goodbye, Henry.

He steps out of the light

ACT III, Scene 4

Albert steps into a narrow pool of life, as at the beginning.

ALBERT: We left the house ablaze, a beacon in the dark. Neither of us remembers much of the journey back to Brattleboro. To add to our unease, Mr. Noyes had organised an automobile to take us back to Arkham. We opted for the train. To this day, Helen has never admitted to me whether her safety deposit box exists. She certainly has the forethought to have done it. We don't speak much since she married and moved to Boston. I myself emigrated to England, as I said I would. But even here, I daren't go near the woods.

Lights down. End.

under any circumstances. As a plot device, it resembles a 'deus ex machina' (seemingly miraculous solution to an insurmountable problem) but lacks spontaneity – this is an action Helen is both quite capable of, and quite likely to do. Her business as a journalist has probably led her to do the same thing over the years. The use of this new weapon helps to flip the narrative around, shifting the power and initiative back from the Mi-Go to the protagonists. It is not, however, a way to achieve victory, but to force a return to the status quo.

95. The Deal:

The fact that the Mi-Go are quite happy to cut a deal helps unbalance the audience. In a traditional binary of good/evil conflict, good defeats evil, in however an unlikely fashion. The Mi-Go are not defeated, or even thwarted in any meaningful way – in fact, Albert and Helen might remain in danger for the rest of their lives. This is a n ultimate expression of moral and intellectual neutrality – in the end, neither side is in the wrong, rather the only difference is we can read Albert and Helen, while the Mi-Go remain totally alien.



CHAPTER FOUR:

SECTION B SCRIPT DEVELOPMENT

Chapter Introduction: Script Development

This section contains my equivalent of a development journal. As a writer, I tend to record my process in mini-essays, which conveniently group together considerations under headings. Any questions included in these segments are open question posed to myself as I encountered them. They do not necessarily have answers, but illustrate the growth of characters and concepts, emphasising the crossroads they reached at various times. I have included relevant illustrations in the hope that they will provide the same stimuli to readers of this thesis.

It should be of note that these reflections are not in chronological order – they have been added to and altered as more information or considerations have emerged, but not to obscure the process. Between this section and the previous adaptation annotations in the script, a fairly clear picture of how the play formed should emerge.

Specific Points of Interest:

- The injection of the female character into Lovecraft literature
 - Defining the indefinable
 - Geography and travel
 - Identifying time and place
 - Character breakdown
 - o Conception and inspiration
 - o Internal logic
 - o Inter-character relations
 - Mi-Go Construction and Analysis
 - o Breakdown as 'character'
 - o Breakdown as race
 - o Effect design
 - o Costume
- construction

Writing Whisperer – A Reflective Log

The primary issue with adapting this particular (and indeed others) Lovecraft story is how to convey large quantities of exposition to the lead character, in order for the horrific realisation to occur. Whilst a script may be written for a single character where only one exists in the original text, it can only convey an emotional arc, not an informative one. There needs to be new characters (or reworking existing ones) that can supply the rich lore, and more specifically, the rumours that make up the story. In the latter part of the narrative, Akeley serves as this font of knowledge, yet we can't easily see Wilmarth's reaction to it if he can't discuss it with a second party (other than Akeley). For the first section, the original story is simply Wilmarth stating a set of events in which he is very static: sending letters back and forth and of course the initial discovery of the Mi-Go bodies by farmers. My engine for conveying this information is the character Helen Treanor. Because of the newspaper-clipping origin of these tidbits, the logical place to stage them was at the offices of the *Arkham Advisor*, a newspaper I created in my adaptation of *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* (if I can't be loyal to Lovecraft, at least I can maintain an internal logic). Helen Treanor herself is quite a tragic character: she is a female journalist working in a time where it is highly unusual, and more poignantly in a time long before any concerted effort to recognise women's rights. It is because of this gender disability that she is exposed to the 'crank file' and thus gains access to the Mythos. Her bitterness stems not from the expectation to be treated equally to a man, but to be respected for the work she can clearly do.

- Will Helen accompany Wilmarth, or simply be his Arkham contact?
- How much information will she help reveal?
- Is she a love interest?
 - o Does that place her in a stereotypical position as a female character?

Crystallisation of Concepts:

One of Lovecraft's primary themes is the threat of the suggested unknown. What can't be seen, but can be sensed and has many clues leading to its realisation is enough to unbalance the mind, descending into a mental state rivalling the bizarre nature of reality. The difficulty of realising this idea in play form is the inability to

stage amorphous ideas, or a sense of dread without running into excessively expository dialogue. What I have been experimenting with is the distillation and crystallisation of concepts within the text. For example, I have identified the 'horror of the familiar': the ability of Wilmarth to find a sordid familiarity in the siege of his friend. In order to create a sense of palpable dread, he needs to have an unknown connection to the revealed mythos cell¹⁷³. This is a deliberate mimic of Lovecraft's habit of beginning his stories with his main character 'recalling' the events. They start in a place of awareness, already having seen the final horror. It made sense, then, to place the audience in a very similar position early in the play. Thus, Wilmarth describes a childhood affliction to Treanor: being visited by the Mi-Go at his home. This places them in the childhood fear zone of the audience's experience: everyone has been afraid of the dark, afraid of looking out the window for fear of seeing something unearthly. It also helps neutralise an awkward incredulity most modern audiences have towards aliens; it helps to redefine them as quasi-ghosts.

Setting:

One of the primary differences of stage versus screenplays is the geographical scope they can encompass. It is relatively simple for films to display vast scene-setting vistas, be it through actual photography or CGI. In the same way, establishing shots can be used to anchor locations in a quick-moving narrative. This freedom opens many options in the way of architectural significance, geographical specificity and thus character development. To say that theatre uses 'tricks' to achieve these same effects would be a disservice to the art, but is not altogether an inaccurate description. Famous methods for geographical specificity, such as Shakespeare's 'There's a battle just offstage' mean that certain themes, such as war of scale, cannot be explored *onstage* in a realistic context. While there are methods to circumvent this barrier, for instance the use of miniatures or shadow puppetry, they require the playwright to break the illusion of reality – they disrupt the 'hokum' of the story. Thus the playwright must find ways of

¹⁷³ Characters rarely have knowledge of the entire Mythos – more often, they only discover the art directly accessible to them. The Innsmouth conspiracy, or the Mi-Go insurgence, are two examples of a Mythos cell.

circumventing the circumvention. Plays that revolve around travel and specifically the onstage presence of locations or unusual entities (non-human in the case of *Whisperer*) have to find a way to choose their battles – what locations can be shown or suggested economically? What is the level of detail required in the creature effects to make them viable without breaking verisimilitude?

On The Creation of New Characters:

It is a paradox that the adaptation of a particular work requires the creation of new characters in order to realise certain literary features on stage, yet by their nature, they are a betrayal, or at least a subversion of the base text. I would postulate that they are a necessary evil: without them, the drama becomes static and lacks dynamism. But how can they be approached with justification? At a very basic level, they can be divided into two functions: Expository, and Aesthetic. Whilst these characters may move beyond this initial tasking, I am here only referring to their conception. An expository character is simply a delivery device for expository narration – a way of taking the vast amount of information Lovecraft is wont to include at the start and mid points of his stories, and convey them to the protagonist, and thus the audience. Great care must be taken to deliver this information in an organic way, as it is extremely simple for the character to seem hollow or downright dishonest. The exception to this may be if the playwright chooses to include a character that has total awareness of the Mythos – a sort of Macbeth witch – whose function is to inform the protagonist, and thus the audience of what is to come. This character may also be aware of the fourth wall to varying degrees, and would be necessary in order to convey some of Lovecraft's more amorphous texts.

The second function of a created character is purely aesthetic. Sometimes, in order to either promote non-static dramatic action, additional characters are required to challenge or support the expository material. They allow the playwright to explore interaction with the protagonist to a greater degree, the foundation of organic characters. Most importantly, aesthetic characters act as a screening device. One of the primary thrusts of Lovecraft's work is a slow dissemination of 'truth', eventually leading to a sudden and violent realisation. Aesthetic characters help

create normal, non-Mythos ambience: the illusion of the 'real' world through which the protagonist must break. They also allow an exploration of *different* reactions to weird or fantastic stimuli. How would different individuals respond to the Mi-Go? In *Whisperer*, Wilmarth responds with cold terror, but Bernie responds with an animalistic violent revulsion. If anything, this juxtaposition demonstrates how intellect is a burden when considering the Mythos, whilst a baser individual fights – and dies – rather than succumbing to the implications.

New characters, then, are an expression of plot trajectory. The source material informs us of a start and end point, but it is through external, added characters, that the trajectory is maintained. Without them, we would see an extended period of narration, which does not contain dramatic action, followed by a culminating scene – essentially, the protagonist would arrive at its destination immediately.

On The Expression of Setting:

One of the great limitations of the stage, or at least the stage not funded by 1900s nobility, is the inability to visually and realistically convey setting. Specifically, geographical setting, but in terms of a Lovecraftian mode, cultural and religious setting as well.

Lovecraft's stories, in the majority, revolve around a fictional area – Lovecraft Country – consisting of the Miskatonic River, surrounded by Arkham City, Ipswich, Innsmouth, Kingsport and extending north-west into Vermont. But while these areas may not actually exist, they are placed very specifically in the Rhode Island / Providence locale. This area has very specific architectural personality, as well as a distinct accent, ethnic mix and religious base. Lovecraft's protagonists tend to be internal outsiders within this setting: people who have grown up there, but are sufficiently upper class and educated so as to not associate with a large portion of society. This is, of course, a self-portrait of the author himself.

So how can one express this setting without actually using images of the geographical location, while still remaining faithful to the author's intention? An answer, invariably, is via character. This is not to say that the characters must refer constantly to the 'Georgian Gambrels' – offstage reference must be used, as with

anything, in moderation. The use of character I am referring to is in accent and position. While it is usually quite rare for playwrights to place strict instructions for *acting* within their scripts, in the case of Lovecraft's work I feel it is quite necessary. The character of Ezekiel Browne, for instance, has a very specific role within the script – he is Wilmarth's connection to rural and wild Vermont. He must, as a result, be extremely different to Wilmarth in accent and bearing: he comes from both a different time in New England's history, and has no direct English influence. To try and portray him without the proscribed thick New England accent would very effectively sever his purpose in the script. Other characters, such as Helen Treanor and Bernie, can be far more malleable in the interpretation of their characters.

Characters:

This section deals with the people of this adaptation. It describes where they came from, and much of the internal logic I developed to drive them within the storyline. As a writer, many of my decisions and ideas are annoyingly organic: I can no more pin down every decision than a painter could describe why he or she used a colour on a whim. We should also be aware that none of these characters was developed



Figure 0: Early conceptual work, pen and charcoal, photoshop render.

before or after one another – they all evolved in diffuse fashion. This section will make a valiant attempt at documenting as much of this development as possible, however, and draw the lines back to the earlier sections of the thesis.

Lovecraft's protagonists have always been men and women of education. It stands to reason that he wanted to divorce his work from that of superstition. I endeavoured to give my characters *good reason* to do what they do, and to stay sane doing it. Unlike one of my previous Lovecraft adaptations, *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, where I focused on the protagonist's descent into madness on discovering that he *was* one of the Deep Ones awaiting metamorphosis, *Whisperer* endeavoured to be a small group of intelligent people investigating limited contact with the Mythos. All four of the rescue troupe have faced their respective demons before, and lived to continue. What new complications and advantages bring? Can any of them be truly immune to the effects of insanity?

Albert Wilmarth

The original protagonist of Lovecraft's story is, to be blunt, a fairly bland fellow. Like most of his Lovecraft characters, Albert is a narrative convenience, and a borderline 'Mary Sue' character.¹⁷⁴ When I started writing him as a stage character, the first consideration I encountered was 'will he survive this story mentally?' The literature suggested that he was not overly damaged by the encounter: the effects of insanity played more on Henry, whose story is poignantly left half-told. With this in mind, it was necessary to equip Albert with the tools and mental armour to withstand the ordeals of the script.

The origins of what I term the 'Mi-Grundel' history reach back much further than this project. From very early in my writing life, I followed a number of written and TV horror series. One of them was the 1990s animated series, *Extreme Ghostbusters*¹⁷⁵ (named as such by the terrible 90s propensity for 'upping the ante', and because the original copyright for 'The Ghostbusters' is held by an early Hanna-Barbara cartoon) based on the film series by Dan Akroyd and Harold Ramis¹⁷⁶. Scholars wanting to explore the competing pressures of horror integrity with ratings restrictions would find this series most compelling. One of the episodes that stuck with me long after I viewed it was 'Grundelesque', the main antagonist being a composite mythical creature, perhaps derived from the Greek

¹⁷⁴ The colloquial term for a character exhibiting many similarities to the author, and generally devoid of significant character flaws. A reflection of the author's self-image.

¹⁷⁵ *Extreme Ghostbusters*, dir. by multiple directors (Adelaide Productions, 1997)

¹⁷⁶ *Ghostbusters*, dir. by Ivan Reitman (Black Rhino Productions, 1984)

*lamia*¹⁷⁷, or the Spanish *hupia*¹⁷⁸. In the episode, it was a ghostly creature, clothed in a long raincoat that whispered to children at night, luring them out of their rooms in order to slowly metamorphose them into new Grundels into forest cocoons. When I was reading *The Whisperer in Darkness*, this resonated very strongly with the line: ‘...and of children frightened out of their wits by things seen or heard where the primal forest pressed close upon their door-yards...’ combined with the strong image of whispering in the dark. This led to the desire for a strong, half-conscious memory in Albert’s past – something against which he can compare the evidence as they gather it. The result was his testimony to Helen at the *Arkham Advisor*:

...I get flashes of the memory sometimes...I would be lying in my bed, and I’d feel uneasy. Like static before a storm. Then the whispers would begin. At first, the shadow would stay in the forest. ‘Albert’, it would say, ‘Albert.’ I wouldn’t dare move – I couldn’t. Then one night, mother said I screamed the most horrific scream, and when they came to my room, I told them that the shadow had come right up to the window and tapped on the glass.

The significance of this prior contact also extends to the very nature of bravery in this script. Bravery in the face of dread, rather than terror, is a totally different beast. A real life comparison could be made between standing fast in the face of someone leaping out of a closet at you versus awaiting the sting of a needle when being immunized. Both are forms of bravery, but they entail a different sort of steadfastness. Albert is vulnerable to the former, as testified by the record scene (Act 1, Scene 4), and the first Mi-Go encounter (Act 2, Scene 3), but stoic in the face of the latter. Helen is the inverse. His ability to remain calm in the face of universe-scale horror is due to his experiences, his lack of religion, and his profession. Being a practical atheist (like Lovecraft himself), Albert views the Mi-Go as an extension of reality, not a violation of it. Compared to a monotheist, where the existence of

¹⁷⁷ Child-eating demon – <http://www.theoi.com/Ther/Lamia.html>, accessed 08/01/2012

¹⁷⁸ Taino myth, a vampire-like creature with no face that kidnaps children - <http://www.kislakfoundation.org/prize/200103.html#ref22>, accessed 08/01/2012

these entities would be a negation of human deities, Albert is capable of assimilating this new information and react to it calmly. Being a scholar augments this: much of what Albert sees, reads and hears simply doesn't register on an emotional level. He does, however, have what I call 'reality shunts', or moments of revelation where everything floods in on him. Examples of these shunts can be found in the record scene (Act 1, Scene 4) and the Necronomicon reveal scene (Act 2, Scene 2).

Albert's character is built very strongly around his early experience – the logic for not giving him family, and ultimately not pursuing Helen as a romantic interest, is that he has become, out of necessity, a deeply independent person (though not necessarily a very successful one). It is safe to assume that his memories and fears as a child would have been ignored and explained away with fervour, and so the most definitive memory of his life to date is one he can't share with anyone else. It is because of this underdeveloped sense of self-empathy and a strong desire for companionship (and probably female companionship due to a disconnection from his mother after the events) that he bonds so readily and strongly with Helen. She is the first person he has encountered that has as deep an understanding of the Mythos as himself.

Whether or not Albert and Helen *do* have a relationship was one question that I allowed myself to ask all the way up to writing the upstairs-at-Henry's scene (Act 3, Scene 2). From Albert's point of view, he simply does not have the emotional equipment or experience to gauge the issue. A lifetime of work-obsession and disconnection from women via academia has rendered him a form of asexual – a gender-role that is awakened in him by his protective relationship with Helen. But even though he knows he's interested in her intellectually, there is a quality to their interactions that places them in a mother/son or brother/sister binary. It is a common stereotype that men work well under pressure while women do not – whatever my personal beliefs on the matter, I wanted to invert the audience expectation, compounded by years of horror-film exposure, that Helen would be following Albert. In this script, the opposite is more true – though Albert is the primary protagonist, Helen practically hijacks the story.



Figure 0: Albert Wilmarth, as played by Ross MacLeod.

Albert's reaction to Helen's powerful personality was one that was fairly easy to write. It is a socially taboo subject – emasculation via belittlement – but one that every male is familiar with. What advertisement on television does not characterise men as childish and ineffectual? What effective resistance to this stereotyping is there? Helen employs these tactics in a partially unconscious way (see the section on Helen below for more on this), and Albert's reaction to it is a very common one: passive resistance. He very rarely rises to the occasion when she baits him, and even resorts to calmly commenting on it the longer he knows her. It should be

noted, however, that it was always intended that these characters be inherently equal: neither is the 'sidekick' of the other.

Albert's relationship with Ezekiel and Bernie is one that is far less overt. I had intended Albert to be a mirror of Lovecraft in his racial prejudices, which were quite unusual for the time. A professed Anglophile, Lovecraft became convinced by pseudo-scientific arguments of the time that hypothesised that the non-white races of America were devolutions and stagnations of humanity. There appeared to be no venom in his beliefs beyond the intellectual, however, as later in his life, when he was forced to live in progressively more multi-cultural areas, it would simply not occur to him that the people he was meeting were not white. Albert, too, was meant to be an intellectual racist and classist person, but as the script lengthened, it seemed more and more like an extant theme. It also became more apparent that a modern audience simply wouldn't accept a protagonist with these qualities easily. The original theme, however, was to show a neutralisation of Albert's racism by juxtaposing the well-meaning if gruff Bernie with the genetically more viable, yet more alien, Mi-Go. Racism, after all, generally springs from xenophobia –

a theme already explored to great effect in Neill Blomkamp's *District 9*¹⁷⁹.

Ezekiel is anathema to Albert's upbringing. He literally exists in a different sphere. Whereas Albert grew up a person of minor fortune, with a good education and income, Ezekiel is the quintessential mountain man. The result is a mutual dislike tempered by the professionalism of their respective professions. During the Mi-Go introduction scene (Act 1, Scene 2), Ezekiel's knowledge fascinates Albert greatly, as much for its content as for its straight delivery. In spite of this initial attraction, however, he finds Ezekiel's incessant power plays tiresome, not feeling the need to protect his own masculinity from someone from a lower class. In many ways, Albert's interactions with Ezekiel were meant to mirror the unwanted fathering that can occur between young and older men, disguised as the country/town or lower/upper class binaries. It is for this reason that he so quickly uses Browne's allusions of country honour and valour against him when Bernie is killed, trying to guilt-trip him into remaining with the group.

To conclude, Albert is an extremely flawed and peculiar person, but all of his oddities combine in an odd form of alchemy to produce a very functional human being. It is because he is so insular that he has no trouble expressing what he is thinking, and because he's had no close relationships from which a fear of betrayal might spring, he has no trouble investing in new people. If he has any serious weaknesses, it is his inability to foresee the effect of what he says, as witnessed by his ill advised questioning of Helen's past (Act 2, Scene 2) and his pressuring of Henry over the agreement with the Mi-Go (Act 3, Scene 1).

¹⁷⁹ *District 9*, dir. by Neill Blomkamp (Tristar, 2009)

Helen Treanor:

In my opinion, the most developed of the characters in *Whisperer* is Helen Treanor. Designed originally to be a female presence in a totally male play, she emerged as an amalgamation of three sources: Lovecraft's wife, Sonia Greene (ironically a Jewish-Ukrainian), and the two local actresses I planned to portray her, Adrienne Clothier (who would), and Sarah Knox. Sonia Greene was an extremely unusual woman for the age that she lived in, losing her husband relatively early in her life and continuing to live as a professional individual woman for many years before marrying Lovecraft. She originally worked as a milliner, but in her spare time, Sonia sponsored and edited for several amateur writing groups. This association with literary types even led her to pen her own weird tale, *The Horror at Martin's Beach*. The marriage was rocky, however, and they split after only two years¹⁸⁰ at her bequest, sick of Howard's general uselessness and dependency. For Albert, like Lovecraft, she represents a female counterpart – a companion with no limitations of gender. Helen, in being a journalist in the 1920s, faces a rather bizarre form of bigotry. While no laws prohibited a woman from holding such a position, it was considered unseemly, and men in the industry would often work to block women from the profession. To succeed then takes a certain type of drive: Helen is motivated and intelligent, but does not emulate masculine power, and thus never oversteps her mark. Instead, she employs a mother's authority over the men around her, expecting their compliance out of automatic respect.



Sonia Greene - 1921

The advantage of basing a character on real people is the naturalism it can bring to the result. When writing a composite character, I try to pick two observable examples that embody the two ends of that character's normal emotional range. In this case, Sarah Knox represents the extroverted Helen, and Adrienne represents the introverted facet. I won't assign Helen's personality traits to either of her

¹⁸⁰ A complete recounting of Sonia and Howard's marriage can be found in S. T. Joshi's *H.P. Lovecraft: A Life*, or Sonia's own (auto)biography, *The Private Life of H. P. Lovecraft*.

composite contributors, that perhaps being impolite, but I will describe them. She has several speaking habits that manifest in the writing regardless of performance – one is her tendency to speak at cross purposes. An example:

ALBERT:

What are you doing here?

HELEN:

Why thank you, Albert. And you?

ALBERT:

I'm sorry- no, I'm not. Why are you here? This was meant to be a private meeting.

Helen frowns, holding up a letter.

HELEN:

This was left for you at the office.

The logic of this habit is that it is a combination humorous/defensive tactic. Though she finds Albert's surprise and lack of niceties amusing, Helen very quickly becomes offended by not having her contribution acknowledged. She enjoys making Albert defensive, giving her the upper hand in their dealings. It also manifests as not answering questions that she doesn't want to.

As previously stated, Helen does not react well to learning new and disturbing things. She is perhaps the most damaged by revelation. Though this does not manifest as panic in the face of cosmic horror, it does result as a cumulative unbalancing throughout the play. By the end, she loses her poise. Part of this is owed to her early life. Helen's childhood is an adaptation in itself – the wonderful thing about adapting a short story like *Whisperer* is that it is so easily interlinked with the others in the Mythos. For her childhood, I appropriated Lovecraft's favourite tale: *The Colour Out of Space*. The choice was simple – it would have been cumbersome to use another story with additional extra-natural creatures. Instead, *The Colour Out of Space* embodies the very essence of Lovecraft's amorphous brand

of horror, a fine counterpoint to the very readily identifiable Mi-Go. Helen's major weakness is her desire to investigate strange occurrences, but only at a surface, journalistic level. It is the nature of her childhood trauma that on a deeper level she *doesn't want to know*. She even intimates this consciously to Henry (Act 3, Scene 3), saying that the barrier of knowledge is one-way. You can't unlearn what you already know. It should be of note, however, that in the original short story of *The Colour Out of Space*, none of the family survived. It seemed interesting territory to explore – how would a child coming out of this situation grow up viewing the world, and would they ever achieve catharsis? The answer to those questions in Helen's case is that she imposes order on chaos, and as a result, never comes to be comfortable or at least at peace with her family's demise.

In the face of immediate challenges, however, Helen is very proficient at staying calm. Her brain functions very much along the lines of logistics and investigation. In many ways, this allows her to understand and get along with Ezekiel well. She is, however, very aware (as women of the time would have been expected to) of her physical limitations. This is not to say that she is delicate, but she is aware of the male characters' role in protecting her. To her credit, this is a reality that she does not either care about, or fight. In general, she performs an internal triage of what she can affect and what she can't, a reflex borne of working in a male industry – an example of the adage 'pick your battles'.

Henry Akeley:

Henry is, in many ways, the hidden protagonist of the play. One of the earliest considerations that I had to face was whether to write the story from his perspective looking out at the world, or from Albert's looking in. The former would have led to a far more pensive and melancholy script, dealing with Henry's isolation and oppression by the Mi-Go siege. I had several reasons for not pursuing this version – the first was that I didn't feel that this version could be done justice without building a realistic set of Henry's house to isolate his 'secure' area from the dangers of the woods. Furthermore, considering the nature of the siege, use of firearms would be necessary. The budget I was allocated for the praxis part of this project would not have allowed me to create these two effects, by any stretch of

the imagination. Aside from these material obstacles, I also had major concerns about placing so much of the action in one actor's hands – quite simply because male actors of the correct age for Henry are not common in Hamilton, and of those that are available, very few have the acting range to sustain a long one-man performance. Finally, I feared that this version of the play would render the action too static – the original tale is one of geography and travel.

Henry, thus, became a character that experiences an entirely additional play in his absence. By translating his experiences through the filters of writing and expository speech, I was able to preserve the indescribable nature of events. The audience simply knows that a fierce and tense battle has been fought night after night, cut mysteriously short on the arrival of Albert and Helen. It was with regret that I had to write for a partial set: had I the funds and time, I should have liked to build Henry's living room, then spend a substantial amount of effort creating the look of a prolonged struggle: boarded up windows, firing-loops in the walls, bullet damage and supplies stashed in caches. Henry has been part of a miniature war: it was a shame I couldn't pursue that feature.

The character was quite curious to write, in that his living conditions lay contrary to his ability and education. He is every bit as academic as Albert, but chooses to live in a relatively isolated area. His primary motivation for this (in my script – Henry's back-story in the original material is almost non-existent) was cross-pollinated from an original Gothic I was writing at time, *Lepidus Browne*. *Lepidus* was written around the concept of American rural communities springing up around hereditary seats of power. A British or European family of wealth but not lineage would move to the New World, buying large tracts of land for tiny amounts of money. After building a manor in imitation of nobility, the land around it would be rented to settlers. The result – a community simply appearing, rather than evolving. This logic was transplanted into the *Whisperer* world as a way of explaining the Akeley's education, and his reason for staying through the siege. The Akeley home is not a mansion, but rather a well-equipped, well-built farming homestead, but never the less, it represents everything his family has achieved since immigrating.

Henry, as a result of his family's purchased status, has studied at Miskatonic University. I placed his specialisation as geology and biology for no particular

reason other than to explain his easy descriptions of the landscape, fauna and flora of Vermont. He is a fading style of person – the practical academic (sort of an Indiana Jones without the Nazis). For internal logic purposes, I created a back-story to keep his dialogue consistent. Henry's wife passed away eight years before the events of the play, his son leaving the isolation of Vermont for California. Their relationship is strained, with Henry being disappointed that his heir shows no interest in inheriting his home. This manifests as a reluctance by Henry to leave the area, secretly hoping that his son will come to his senses, and is the issue that drives him to confront Albert about leaving in the final act.

Having grown up in the Vermont region, Henry was aware of the Mi-Go as much as any local. This does not mean he had any knowledge of their true identity, instead believing them to be local superstition. Only the Mi-Go's migration to his area of the mountains led to contact – Henry spends copious amounts of time studying the local geology and flora. Being well versed with the area, and being an observer of animals in the wild, he very simply escaped their notice until it was too late. His expertise also meant he noticed the presence of new denizens in the local valleys by their spoor. Mi-Go are not more stealthy than any other regular animal – their only undisputable advantage is a keen sense of night-vision and the ability to fly. Henry's forays into their territory could not go unnoticed forever, however: the Mi-Go's habitual tap on the local phone-lines led them to notice some unusual traffic. The floods that alerted so many of the locals to their definite presence also had them on guard.

The Mi-Go, initially, had no interest in negotiating with Akeley. They posted sentries to observe his comings and goings, waiting for a chance to simply abduct and interrogate him. His precautions, and a sudden abstinence from forest voyages led them to consider other options. Mr. Noyes was brought back into play (see Noyes' section for the full story) to cut his lines of communication, including the murder of several mail officials. After an attempted shooting of Akeley during his journey by automobile back to his home, the situation escalates. Henry purchases several hunting rifles and supplies, laying in for a siege. Though Henry doesn't understand it completely, it is not his guns that keep the Mi-Go at bay, but rather the dogs. Though their vital organs are oddly placed and well armoured enough to

avoid the danger of bullets, the prospect of being mauled over what the Mi-Go consider to be a minor information leak does not appeal to them at all.

When Henry finally meets with the Mi-Go, they genuinely interest him, possibly to the point of naivety. It is with surprise that he realises that Albert and Helen, whom he regards equals who might understand him, are fiercely opposed to a deal with the Mi-Go. After learning this, he internally elevates himself above their level, believing that no one could possibly understand his situation. Indeed, there is a great degree of bitterness written into Henry's character. He feels abandoned by his family through death and separation, abandoned by the outside world when he realises that no one other than Albert has bothered to check on him following the floods, and finally abandoned by Albert emotionally when he had sunk so much hope into his arrival. It is not terribly hard for him, then, to invest in the Mi-Go's promises, seeing it as a final step – a finally abandoning of his humanity to ascend to a world where he no longer has to feel.

Henry is potentially the strongest of all the characters, being able to equally rationalise terror and dread, allowing neither to sap his ability to survive. He is, however, the most damaged – he is the most likely to succumb to the temptation of the unknown and disappear. An early draft of the story had a scene where he attempts suicide in his home with a rifle, having not slept for days and full of dread that Mi-Go are already in the house. This scene was never fully realised, as I decided not to give the audience any contact with Henry prior to the arrival scene, and considered it too clumsy to handle in expository fashion. The logic of what happens downstairs during Act 3, Scene 3, is that Henry offers the Mi-Go the protagonists' counter-proposal, which they regard as a double-cross, choosing to liquidate him and drive Albert and Helen in to the open.

Lastly is Henry's past relationship with Ezekiel. Though they never meet in the play, that was not decided until relatively late in the writing process. One potential option that I considered was to reveal on arrival (through dialogue with Henry) that he used to be the Akeley groundskeeper, choosing to leave his employment because of the Mi-Go (see more in Ezekiel's section). Their relationship was made much more extant for script economy. The internal logic that is in operation in the final draft has Ezekiel knowing Henry professionally, having been his guide into the deeper mountains on scientific expeditions.

Ezekiel Browne:

'Zeke is the embodiment of Vermont, and the play as a whole. He was conceived to explore the idea of living with horror on a day-to-day basis, and coming to terms with that reality. For him, the Mi-Go have been as real as anything else in his life. Like the weather, or traveller's providence, they are simply another consideration for his journeys. Ezekiel is, despite what he might like to impart to others, not very bright. His power comes from experience, and in that respect he is extremely knowledgeable.

The character stems from the original tale *Lepidus Browne*. He appears in the following extract as Linus Crowe:

"That thar is Linus. Linus Crowe. He travels all ov' these parts for the makin' o' maps and such. Quiet feller, but polite an' never takin' too much o' the drink."

With the promise of a companion that had visited Fellswaine, I ordered a whiskey, which the barman assured me was Linus' fare, and moved to join him. Crowe sat beside a sizable leather rucksack, enshrouded by various equipment of all sorts: pots, pans, climbing equipment, spyglass and bedroll. The page I realised to be a map he was marking by hand, frequently consulting a small notebook.

'Ken I help ye, sir?' he asked.

I introduced myself and gave him his drink, which he sniffed carefully before imbibing. We spoke of this and that. He told me that he made a living as a mapmaker and guide, often taking hunters up into the mountains.

'There's always some city feller that wants to shoot some manner of beast or another. Most o' them couldn't hit a fowl if they were inside o' it! I take em' all over this here region, tho' I never go as far north as Townshend or

that whereabouts. Too many folk get lost in them hills, an' not all o' them of natural means, if you get my meanin'.'¹⁸¹

Many of Linus's features were preserved and transferred, though none of the actual *Lepidus* text was used. Oddly, in spite of the total re-writing, the name *Lepidus* appears in many of the script drafts as an artefact, unconscious testimony to the link between him and Ezekiel. I wanted to use a figure that was very organic and strongly linked to the Vermont area as a way of bypassing exposition. Lovecraft delights in describing the peculiar vocal, genetic and visual character of country folk: transferring that theme directly to the stage seemed a natural progression. An older character allows for both a wealth of stories and local flavour, but also the motivations to hide some of what they know. I also wanted to leverage that geriatric habit of being overly verbose – he speaks at length, and buried within his pointless comments, racisms and judgements are some very important Mythos truths.

The naming of Ezekiel may be easily mistaken for biblical – it is not. I deliberately avoided any religious allusions out of respect for Lovecraft's beliefs, and also a personal opinion that classical inbreeding can be the death of an otherwise fresh and new idea. I did, however, want a name that seemed alien to the modern sensibility. Whilst 'Browne' is a very common name (though the 'e' at the end has generally been dropped from modern usage), 'Ezekiel' carries with it undertones of superstition and primitive secrecies.

One of the major decisions that had to be made very early in the writing process was how to imbed Ezekiel's accent and speaking habits into the script. I knew, from experience teaching accents, that many actors would struggle learning a bastardised North-Eastern American dialect. After searching around from ways of addressing the problem, I happened upon Irvine Welsh's novel *Trainspotting*, which very effectively confers upon the reader an understanding of varying Scottish accents by displaying it phonetically. For example:

Sick Boy wis on his feet. His eyes bulged oot like a frog's. That's what he reminded us ay, a frog. It was the wey he sort ay hops up, becomes suddenly

¹⁸¹ Brendan West, *Lepidus Browne* (unpublished)

so mobile fae a stationary position. He looks at Lesley for a few seconds, then nashes through tae the bedroom. Matty and Spud look around uncomprehendingly, but even through thir junk haze, they ken thit somethin really bad's happened. Ah kent. Christ, ah fuckin knew awright. Ah said whit ah always sais when somethin bad happens.¹⁸²

The effect that this style of writing has is that the reader cannot help but hear the Scottish accent informing it. When actors learn accents, it is common practice to memorise a phrase that contains many of major sounds to jump-start their vocal muscles. But writing *in* the accent, a large portion of their memorised lines become an expanded version of this techniques. The accent is continually bumped into the actor's conscious brain. Ezekiel is a particularly important character to play in-accent. In many ways, he is a partial Other, at least to Albert. He represents a different culture, and a portal into that world.

Ezekiel's accent is actually a combination of multiple North-Eastern locations. Due to the large amount of time spent all over the country, he has picked up many oddities. The base accent I used was the Vermont accent, characterised by very broad 'a' and 'e' sounds, and a tendency to drop the 'r' from the end of words (example: 'over' as 'ove-uh'). A secondary effect is the glottal swallowing of the 't' in the middle of words (for example the word 'cattle' as 'cayt-ull') and the *addition* of an 'r' on the end of words that finish with a vowel (example 'idea' as 'eye-dair'). To this foundation, I added the Maine habit of removing the 'g' from the 'ing' sound, and slowing the speech down to a drawl, accentuating 'Zeke's verbosity. The result could pass as anything from a Massachusetts to a New Hampshire accent.

A casual racist, Ezekiel doesn't connect with the views he holds (much as Lovecraft did). Indeed, he is surprisingly accepting of the people around him considering the things he says ("Darn Frenchies"). His work wouldn't be possible, otherwise, being a mountain courier. This cognitive dissonance extends, of course, to Bernie, who he never registers as being black.

¹⁸² Irving Welsh, *Trainspotting* (Secker & Warburg: London, 1993) p.23

Reason stands, also, that Ezekiel is quite stable in a monetary sense. Working as a courier constantly leaves no time to actually spend his pay – his thrift in using Civil War era cans of beans is testimony to this.

Bernie Crowe:

In the spirit of large, silent body-guard-like men, Bernie was created. Simple and powerful, both in word and deed, he is an observer before all else. He is more than a companion to Ezekiel: a more accurate description would be a father/son relationship. Being free and black, Bernie left the city (Arkham) to find work during the lead-up to the Great Depression. An immigrant from London (under very questionable circumstances), his skills as a survivor led him to his current profession. It is stated that he is an accomplished knife-fighter, though the weapon he uses is a heavy Gurka knife. My decision to use such a specific knife came from my experience as an armourer. Having just performed as a stunt-actor using an Iberian *falcate* (A fore-curved short sword), I became very interested in not only the logistics of using a fore-curved weapon, but the psychological effect it has on an audience; there is little subtlety to the weapon. We are used to seeing knives and swords on stage, and thus partially immune to the danger they present. Peculiar weapons tend to break this layer of numbness we build up as audience members. From personal experience, both the *falcata* and the Morning Star¹⁸³ are examples of these ‘exotic curiosity weapons’. We imagine the damage they can do – especially if we never see it actually used.

Mr. Noyes:

The amalgamated representative of various agents in the original story, Mr. Noyes was designed as a dedicated acting exercise. Whereas the play generates a lot of its unease and horror moments through SFX segments and characters, Mr. Noyes was created to give the actor playing him the chance to compete with more spectacular strategies. As a character, Mr. Noyes is more or less ephemeral – he could have any

¹⁸³ Sometimes referred to as a ‘flail’, the Morning Star is a spiked ball joined by chain to a handle. Notoriously hard to safely fight with onstage due to its unpredictability.

number of back-stories. He is what could be called a ‘former human’. This doesn’t necessarily mean that he is physically different (though that likelihood is not a terribly large leap of logic), but that he has transcended the state of *being human*. The variety of places he has been and things he has met has set him apart from any other of the species. This was the place to start when writing him – what does he think of normal life, surrounded by normal people? Very early in the process, I worked out some logic to drive him – he has genuinely forgotten how to both act and to speak. What English he does speak has been relearned, probably from such divorced sources as textbooks and prisoners.

The flipside of using a human that is rusty at *being human* is that he trusts literally everything that Albert says. When writing his section of the play, I worked from the angle that he is desperately struggling to understand the conversation, just not showing it. He genuinely thinks he’s fooled the group about Henry’s situation.

The Mi-Go:

When analysing the Mi-Go, it is hard to miss the fact that they share their name with the Bigfoot-like creatures of the Himalayas. This was intentional – Lovecraft defined the word as Nepalese for “man-swift”¹⁸⁴. The more traditional



Conceptual art for the Mi-Go. Top: Initial sketch in graphic pen. Bottom: Render.

¹⁸⁴ Anthony, Pearsall, *The Lovecraft Lexicon* (Tempe: New Falcon Publications, 2005) p. 278

understanding is 'The Abominable Snowman'. Lovecraft wanted to capture the mystery of cryptozoology, repurposing it for his own nefarious schemes. Partly, he is anchoring his creation in meta-reality. Most readers would have heard of the 'Bigfoot' Mi-Go, and thus already has a basis to believe in them. The leap of logic to say that these creatures are aliens is less than that of saying that there are large, intelligent, previously unknown humanoids lurking in Nepal.

The Mi-Go appear only in *The Whisperer in Darkness* as characters (in the original mythos). Their origins are revealed in *At The Mountains of Madness*, a development from Lovecraft's early Earth history:

During the Jurassic age, the Old Ones met fresh adversity in the form of a new invasion from outer space – this time by half-fungous, half-crustacean creatures from a planet identifiable as the remote and recently-discovered Pluto; creatures undoubtedly the same as those figuring in certain whispered hill legends of the north, and remembered in the Himalayas as the Mi-Go, or Abominable Snow-Men.¹⁸⁵

Beyond this terrestrial history, the Mi-Go are from spheres uncharted. As mentioned in *The Whisperer in Darkness*, the Mi-Go consist of unrecognised matter, which conducts light in a different way to things of Earth¹⁸⁶. Henry Akeley's subsequent attempt to photograph one of them simply results in a picture of a woodshed.

The Mi-Go are expanded greatly in the wider Mythos, particularly in the Delta Green materials that make up the role-playing game of the same name¹⁸⁷. Though this adaptation does not deal with these expansions out of a desire for source simplicity, the role playing games do offer useful insights into how investigators and scholars already familiar with the Mythos might react to an otherwise world-shattering revelation. This is particularly salient to this cast of characters, all of who are partly aware of the existence of the extra-natural.

¹⁸⁵ Lovecraft, H. P., 'At The Mountains of Madness' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (Library of America: New York, 2005) p.547

¹⁸⁶ Lovecraft, H. P., 'The Whisperer in Darkness' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (Library of America: New York, 2005) p.443

¹⁸⁷ An overview of these materials is most easily accessed at <http://www.delta-green.com>

Physical Characteristics:

Lovecraft only gives us the briefest of descriptions of the Mi-Go's physical traits:

...nearly all the rumors had several points in common; averring that the creatures were a sort of huge, light-red crab with many pairs of legs and with two great batlike wings in the middle of the back. They some times walked on all their legs, and sometimes on the hindmost pair only, using the others to convey large objects of indeterminate nature. On one occasion they were spied in considerable numbers, a detachment of them wading along a shallow woodland



watercourse three abreast in evidently disciplined formation. Once a specimen was seen flying - launching itself from the top of a bald, lonely hill at night and vanishing in the sky after its great flapping wings had been silhouetted an instant against the full moon.¹⁸⁸



They were pinkish things about five feet long; with crustaceous bodies bearing vast pairs of dorsal fins or membranous wings and several sets of articulated limbs, and with a sort of convoluted ellipsoid, covered with multitudes of very short antennae, where a head would ordinarily be.¹⁸⁹

Many artists have attempted to visualise the Mi-Go over the years since their creation, and the results are often as varied as they are similar. The features that

¹⁸⁸ Lovecraft, H. P, 'The Whisperer in Darkness' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (Library of America: New York, 2005) p.417

¹⁸⁹ Lovecraft, H. P, 'The Whisperer in Darkness' in *Lovecraft: Tales*, p.416

tend to appear consistently are the antennae, wings and insect-like construction. Also, the feet of the Mi-Go are well established as three-toed. Different artists, however, choose to include eyes or not. I chose to include eyes, as I wanted a recognisable feature to identify with in the darkness. This evolved into a four-eye arrangement in imitation of spider eyes and to break the illusion of being humanoid. Some artists (including myself) discard the idea of multiple limbs. This is often for practical reasons – extra arms and legs make stance and perspective mapping much more difficult because there are few real-life equivalents (that stand on their hind legs). In my case, this was compounded with operational limitations – the conceptual drawings had to eventuate into a costume that could be worn comfortably. While additional limbs (namely, arms) could conceivably be added, they would not be functional, and thus put that much more pressure on the costume's believability.



Character Costume Design:

Early conceptual work for the Mi-Go costume began not long after the play was half-written. Consultation with my co-designer Andrea Hows led to a wide search of existing designs. The primary inspiration was a sketch by Nathan Rosario (see above), notable for its angular and lanky limbs, infinitely more suitable for a human actor than the more lobster-esque creations. Particular features survived all the way through to the final build, including the long primary antennae and mandible jaws. The wings also provided a strong basis. Oddly enough, the jointed and plated back was not inspired by this design – it emerged from my experience in armouring. Steel plate is extremely difficult to bend in more than one direction, so a set of interlocking plates forming into a curve is a simple and effective answer. In order to imitate the extreme length of the arms and legs, it was decided to both retain the back-jointed legs in the form of stilts, and to mount the head well forward of the actor's real head. The resulting augmented upper body also provides proportional distortion, making the pelvic and thigh area look correspondingly thin and unnatural. It also would provide camouflage for my (as I

was to be the Mi-Go actor, for convenience reasons) quite thick chest region, which would otherwise break up the long, slender silhouette. Hands were a major consideration, spending several months in design limbo. The two concepts we explored were drastically extended fingers (limited by their rigidity) or large mantis-like blades. The second concept was selected for its inhuman connotations, briefly swinging between three-blade and one-blade configurations.

Secondary Inspirations, Materials & Obstacles:

With our primary design blueprint in place, we began to flesh out the costume, working out the specifics. First was how many pieces would be necessary and in what order they would stack onto the actor. Having had previous experience with ‘morphsuits’ (full body spandex suits incorporating gloves and hood into one



piece), I recommended that as the primary build surface. Onto this, Andrea would build a series of latex plates, altering the body silhouette and creating the illusion of an exoskeleton (as per the Mi-Go crustacean influences). This ‘platelet’ look was inspired by ‘The

Collectors’, an alien race from the Mass Effect video game series¹⁹⁰. As can be seen in this image, the eye layout and colour, not to mention the shape of the head, inspired the Mi-Go design. It also provided convenient solutions for the plating on the hip and groin areas.

¹⁹⁰ *Mass Effect 2*, dir. by Casey Hudson (Electronic Arts, 2011)

The materials we used were intended almost from the beginning. Knowing that it was a sizable rig that had to be carried by a single actor, we mapped out an array of light and strong building materials. The combination of latex sown onto spandex allowed us to achieve good flexibility and durability for the 'soft' body. To construct the rigid body pieces, I learned how to mix, shape and set carbon fibre, building the



separate plates over cardboard templates. These plates were then joined together with nylon-based string, allowing a modicum of flexibility. This string was then hardened using the same resin as the plates. These would later be sanded down flat and painted. The carapace only weighs about half a kilogram, a respectable weight for a prosthetic of its considerable size. Attached to the front of this is a similar series of plates, connecting the carapace to the Mi-Go head. These plates were again connected by string, but were left supple to allow neck flexibility. The arm scythes were likewise cast out of carbon fibre over cardboard template. Each scythe is about a foot long, adding an extra joint to the overall silhouette. An additional pad of latex fits over the hand, joining the scythe to the actor's index and fore fingers, while leaving the thumb free (but camouflaged) so the actor can manipulate their costume backstage.

In addition to the carapace is the wing rig. This is the heaviest part of the costume, designed to securely hold the wings at full extension. It consists of a triangular steel plate, point downwards, that sits over the actor's upper back, supported by their shoulder blades. Two steel pipes are welded to the plate, providing a base for the wings to be slotted into. These two pipes are aligned with the holes in the carapace. Several belts are attached to the plate, secured with clips around the actor's chest and waist, like a backpack. Disguising these straps is a large latex plate that forms the chest of the Mi-Go. The wings themselves are constructed from fibreglass tent poles, providing strength and flexibility, with a relatively heavy synthetic cloth stretched between the ribs. The ribs and area around the steel

pipes are disguised with latex 'tendons' to make them look organic. Finally, the wing 'skin' material is airbrushed with veins.

The head of the Mi-Go is a large hunk of foam carved into the right shape. Latex creates a hardened, leathery skin. The aforementioned head plates attach to the top with a mixture of latex and glue. The back of the head is hollowed out, containing a battery pack and four yellow LED eyes in a parallel circuit. The eyes are set in their sockets with hot glue, which captures and refracts the light for a more organic look. A series of antennae, fashioned out of plastic tubing and latex complete the face.

The final piece of the Mi-Go rig is the feet. These posed the greatest design challenge, as they needed to both double-joint the legs and yet provide a stable platform for the actor to bear the weight of the whole costume. Two design features were used to achieve this - firstly, a heavy wooden base to help the actor balance, and secondly, greatly extended toes and back joint to lengthen the foot. The point of contact where the actor's weight really is, is disguised by black colouring, making the foot appear to be much further forward than it really is. The contraction phase of the feet consisted of a roughly rhomboid section of wood, surmounted by an army surplus paratrooper boot (appropriate for its strength and flexibility). These are both taped and then fibre glassed together, with additional cardboard/carbon fibre facades forming the dual toes and rear joint extension. When the boots are worn, the actor has to stand with their legs bent, their pelvis canted back, as though leaning back while sitting on a bicycle. This relatively natural double-joint position allows the actor to take long, supple strides without an awkward centre of gravity. Finally, foam pads are attached to the bottom of the feet, allowing silent steps when necessary.

Painting & Conditioning:

This portion of the build took two solid days to complete. Layered airbrushing achieved the textures we desired - smooth bone exoskeleton plates over rough, leathery underskin. The outer carapace was grooved and painted to resemble beetle chitin, using a combination of black through to pink-orange. The main body reflects the pink-red description Lovecraft gave, studded with yellow-white bone

surfaces. The decision to combine an insectile chitin look with a reptilian leather foundation was an attempt to break away from obvious alien connotations. The result, I feel, falls well outside of either the eponymous 'Greys' look, or the infamous *Aliens* Xenomorph model, the two most ready comparisons an audience can make.



CHAPTER FIVE:

PRODUCTION RECORD

Chapter Introduction: Production Record

This section is a record of *Whisperer* on stage. It contains an array of interesting photography and design work, covering the production process. More than anything else, it demonstrates *Whisperer's* potential as a production script. Also included are assorted folios that were used to brief the cast and crew.

Specific Points of Interest:

- Folios
 - o Characters
 - o Creatures
 - o Locations
 - o Props
- Poster
- Mi-Go Construction Photography
- Production Photography

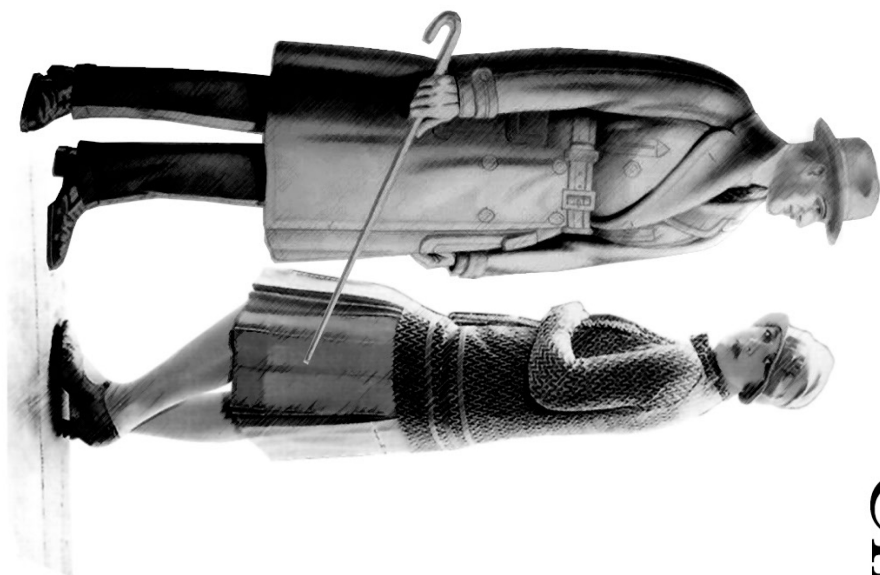
Characters

Left:

Arthur Wilmarth &
Helen Treanor

Right:

Bennie &
Ezekiel Browne



Characters.psd

Mythos Beasties

- Top Right: Mi-Go
- Bottom Left: Dunwich Horror
- Bottom Middle: Mi-Go
- Bottom Right: Flying Polyp

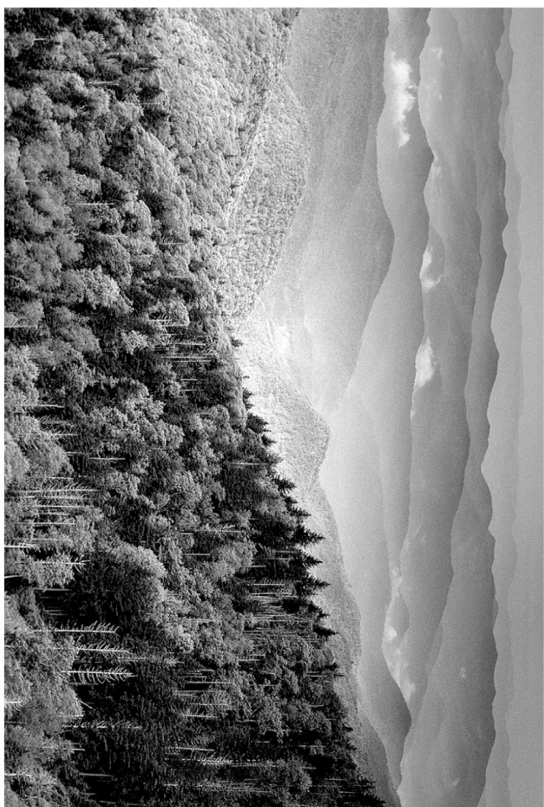


Mythos Beasties.psd



People & Places

Top Left: Insmouth Harbour
Top Mid: Edgar Allan Poe
Top Right: H. P. Lovecraft
Bottom Right: Appalachian Mountains



People & Places.psd

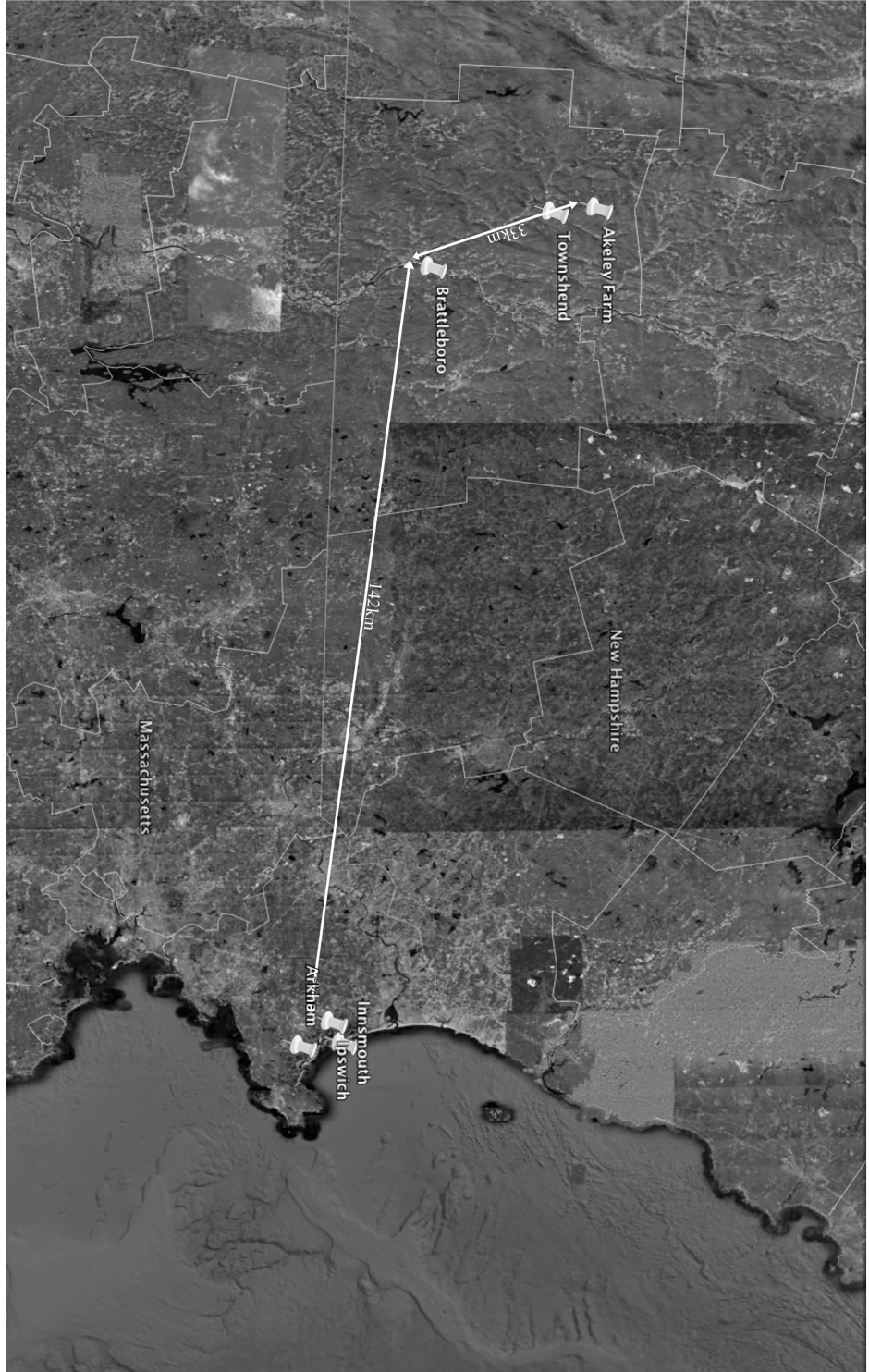



Tools Of The Trade


- Left: Wax Dictaphone
- Top: The Black Stone
- Top Right: .38 Revolver
- Right: Necronomicon
- Bottom Right: Crookes' Tube

Tools of the Trade.psd

Map of 'Lovecraft Country'?







THE UNIVERSITY
OF WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato
SIR EDMUND HILLARY
Scholarship Programme

THE WHISPERER IN DARKNESS

By H. P Lovecraft
Adapted & Directed
by Brendan West

24th/25th November
7pm, New Place Theatre,
University of Waikato
Admission Free



Director's Note:

'Whisperer' is, at its heart, a tale about perspective. As humans we spend an alarming amount of time in a state of denial: our awareness of the universe around us is generally restricted to the tiny dramas of our lives. Ironically, this is a medium-sized drama about exactly that. What do we refuse to see? The terrifying prospect that we don't know what lies just beyond our sphere of knowledge? The parts of our internal landscape that are too uncomfortable to explore? Perhaps we refuse to explore our own motivations: to truly admit what we would do in trying situations.

The advantage of engaging the theatre instead of film for this project is the perceptual honesty it embodies. Everything in the theatre is an illusion, with no hope of truly fooling the audience. Where cinema can present a near-perfect imitation of reality, theatre distils it down into an organic discussion. This makes the horrific and unrealistic elements of this piece a compact: the audience agrees to participate in the emotion, and as a reward, they are *really there*. They are in the room with the object of horror.

They're also in the room with some quite imaginative special effects, a pursuit that has declined in theatre as it has tried to define its position versus cinema. I hope to resist that impulse for technical simplification, and this play is a vehicle for that resistance. Enjoy.

Brendan West

Note about the Author:

Howard Phillips Lovecraft is, in his own hidden way, a literary titan. Many people have heard the name, but can't specifically name any of his works or what they are about. His ideas and style, however, have permeated horror and science-fiction, making them what we see today. Creatures such as Cthulhu appear so often in popular art forms that it's a wonder he isn't more widely known.

Born August 20th, 1890, Lovecraft grew up as a kind of successor to Edgar Allan Poe, utilising much of his Gothic trappings. A relentlessly conservative and insular man, Lovecraft was raised in an upper-class household, giving him access to limitless literary and scientific resources. In his later life, he lived in relative poverty, supporting his interests by writing for pulp magazines and working as an editor, among other things.

His work is concerned mainly with the wider state of the universe and the ignorance of humanity to the reality of it. Told through tiny tidbits and amorphous descriptions, Lovecraft's horror prevails on the human mind's habit of filling the gaps with its own ideas. Though nearly all of his creations are 'aliens' in the modern sense, the way he presents them is frighteningly reasonable and totally divorced from our expectations for spaceships and lasersguns. He has bridged the divide between the supernatural and extra-terrestrial. In his world, humanity is just a small blip in a chronology that ignores us completely. Woe be to those who find that out.

'The Whisperer in Darkness'

Based on the short story by

H. P. Lovecraft

Adapted & Directed by

Brendan West

Cast:

Albert Wilmarth - Ross MacLeod
 Helen Treanor - Adrienne Clothier
 Ezekiel Browne - Kevin Harty
 Bernie Crowe - Benny Marama
 Mr. Noyes - John Hunter
 Henry Akeley - Henry Ashby
 Mi-Go - Brendan West

Production Crew:

Lighting Technician - Danielle Appleton
 Sound Installation - Peter West
 Physical Effects - Andrea Hows / Brendan West
 Digital Sound Effects - Brendan West

Thanks & Acknowledgements:

Gaye Poole - Mark Houlahan - William Farrimond
 Andrea Hows - Robyn Winder - Peter West
 Alec Forbes - Greg O'Carroll - Nicola Clayden
 The Sir Edmund Hillary Scholarship Programme

Theatre Studies at the University of Waikato

Theatre has been practiced by many cultures for thousands of years and it remains as the heart of much artistic expression today, searching for new ways of creating meaningful relationships between actor and spectator as well as re-presenting the stories of the past.

The live encounter at the centre of a performance makes theatre unique, perhaps more so at a time when film and television media are so enhanced by technological advances, and it is this uniqueness which shapes the nature of Theatre Studies at the University of Waikato. The Theatre Studies Programme has established the study of performance as its primary objective in both teaching and research.

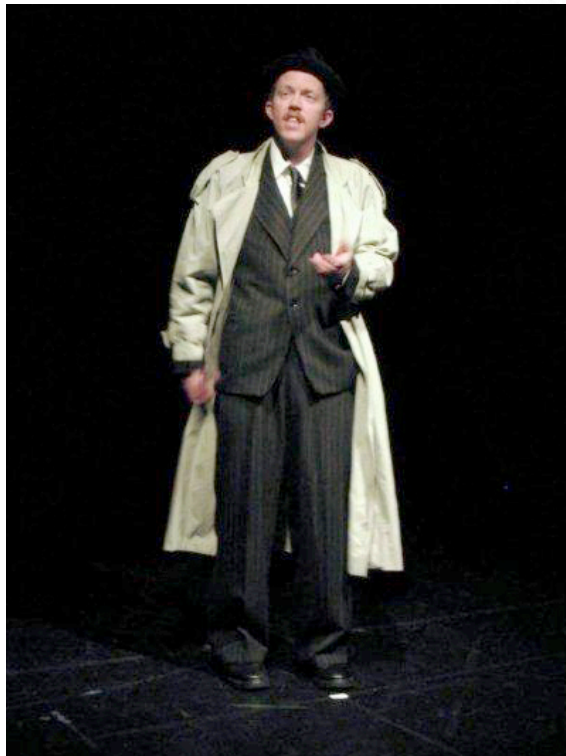
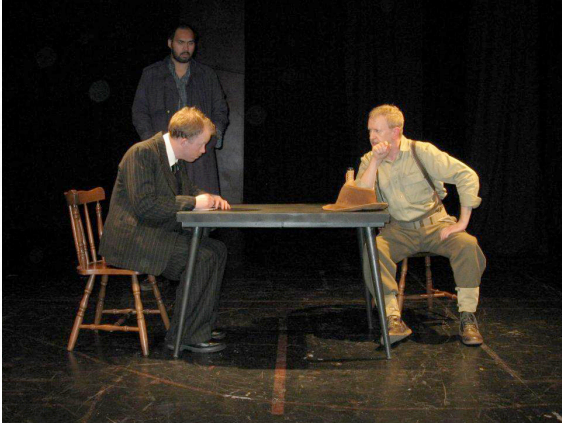
The Programme of study uses a theory-through-practice approach to teaching and learning to enable students to gain an informed understanding of theatre. A Major in Theatre Studies is a rich and challenging pathway to an undergraduate Arts degree which can have a wide range of vocational applications. Many papers offer the opportunity for a focused practical study of performance while others offer analytical approaches to the theories which have informed theatre practice over the centuries, including the work of contemporary practitioners in Aotearoa and other countries and cultures. Three papers have public performance seasons as the principal outcomes, and their study programmes are closely linked to the process of page-to-stage or idea-to-stage which creates a performance.

Programmes of Graduate and Postgraduate studies are also available, leading to Honours, Masters and Doctoral degrees.

The practical tutorials, seminars and rehearsals which are at the centre of the teaching and learning take place in a fully-equipped theatre laboratory space, The New Place Theatre/ Te Tapere Hou, and in The Playhouse Theatre of the Academy of Performing Arts, the venue for most of the public performances.

Further information about study opportunities is available from the Dr William Farrimond, Theatre Studies Convenor (williamf@waikato.ac.nz).







CHAPTER SIX:

EXEGESIS

Chapter Introduction: Exegesis

The final section of the thesis, this exegesis ties together the extant strands of study. It contains observations about the adaption script, its successes and failures at conveying some of the concepts discovered earlier in the process, and commentary on how additional drafts could enhance it. Specific examples are drawn from both the script and the production.

Specific Points of Interest:

- Production reflections
 - o Limitations of the production
 - o Technical faults and solutions
 - o Thematic successes and failures
- Adaptation reflections
 - o Fidelity and paying homage to the author
 - o Justified sacrifice of material
 - o Redrafting *Whisperer*
 - o Starting over, a hypothetical rewrite
- Academic reflections
 - o Redefining 'adaptation'

Staging *Whisperer*:

First and foremost in analysing this project is the question – did it encompass its initial production aims? Ultimately, both writing and staging *Whisperer* was a struggle between two forces: a desire to duplicate the ponderous wordiness of Gothic literature, and the pursuit of theatrical dynamism. I found that these two requirements tended to oppose each other to the detriment of the script. Feedback from audience members usually fell to either side of a line – some enjoyed the florid Gothic segments, others found them oppressive. Ultimately, one could draw the conclusion that Gothic theatre is very much a niche – a Theatre of Literature, much in the manner of how adaptations of Jane Austen and similar authors appeal to a select audience. This quality was offset, however, by the inclusion of substantial modern action and horror elements. Positive comments included the utilisation of live special effects, risky staging (such as Bernie's abduction) and the naturalisation of characters, specifically Helen Treanor.

From the photography, and partial recording, of the show, I felt that the overall visual design succeeded as intended – the result was a very harsh, film-noir effect, complemented particularly by sparse staging and intricate costumes. It was certainly advantageous to have such simple staging, with important props like Bernie's lamp malfunctioning on the first night of performance (failing to light due to a reduced wick), but beyond that, it helped reduce visual clutter, counteracting the verbal clutter. The staging of Bernie's abduction, too, proved simple and effective, allowing the performer (Benny Marama) to execute a rather dangerous-looking move without discomfort or injury.

Overall, the script turned out to be much more actor-oriented than I anticipated, despite the substantial technical requirements. This is a double-edged sword – whilst actor-intensive scripting allows for diverse interpretations between different productions, it also means that actor selection is paramount – a limitation for this particular production, being over such a short rehearsal schedule. That being said, the cast I did secure performed admirably, pushing the intention of a practical stage demonstration of the adaptation surprisingly close to a full-blown performance. The major limitations were in crew familiarity audience management and scene changes (accomplished with only the cast plus one additional crew member). Considering the nature of the project, these were low-

priority issues, but would certainly need to be addressed in the event of a full production.

Perhaps the most substantial criticism I could make of the production is with the sound effect integration. From the sound desk, located to the rear, above and to the left of the audience, a cable was run from the primary mixer down to a secondary desk at the back of the stage. This was slaved to an effects mixer that provided environmental reverb (serviced by a microphone in the central back set entrance), and was played through two speakers placed at either extremity of the stage. This suffered from one major issue – both the primary mixer and the primary amplifier are in a bad state of repair. The unavailability of appropriate cables to bypass this (given the very limited pack-in time), coupled with the difficulty of diagnosing the problem, led to sound that was both plagued by intermittent ‘noise’, and a falsely off-centre balance of the sound-system. This had to be ‘forced’, as such, to the centre by using the secondary mixer as a balance adjustor. Also, additional sound chokes and shelves were added to the mixer, limiting high or low-pitched noise. The result was bearable, but greatly affected the legibility of the Mi-Go voice, rendering much of it indecipherable. The LP sound recording was likewise limited by our inability to add an easily transportable speaker system (so that it would originate from the correct location). I had previously enquired about simple, practical solutions like actually having an LP *pressed* of the sound effect, but this proved too expensive.

The Mi-Go itself proved to be highly effective, despite the significant obstacle of heat management. Due to the arrangement of the theatre, I (as the actor inside the Mi-Go) was unable to don the costume close to its scripted appearances, and was thus forced to sit backstage in full regalia, insulated by up to two inches of latex over my body in addition to my entire upper half being encased in a mixture of latex, carbon fibre, steel and lycra. The result was I had to barely move for two hours, in order to keep my body temperature from reaching fainting levels. This obstacle would need to be taken into consideration in any production of *Whisperer*, as the Mi-Go suit is an integral part of the overall design. Perhaps strategic venting in the costume, or a backstage silent fan could alleviate the heat problem.

In terms of performance effectiveness, the Mi-Go received quite curious feedback – the audience almost universally wanted to see more of it. Whether or not that was

as a result of the script, or of the costume, I can't be certain. It does raise the question however – is it prudent to let the audience see too much of it? The mystery and menace of the Mi-Go stems from its *unknowability*, rather than from its physical attributes. While I had no way to know quite how much of the creature was visible in its two appearances (other than my own estimation, and the observations of the cast), I knew that only its silhouette would be certain. This, I think, could be further emphasised in the script – because, after all, revealing too much of it and breaking the illusion is far too high a price to pay in exchange for audience gratification.

The Script, Revisited:

As with any writer, I have found it to be a curious activity, revisiting a script I have not actively worked on for five months. Both the strengths and weaknesses come into sharp focus – more specifically, the rhythm and pace of the script are easier to judge. This has led me in a subsequent draft (which is not included due to word restrictions) to quite heavily modify many of the large speeches. I will however, include notable sections that demonstrate the type of adjustments I did make. In particular, McNulty's adaption of *Dracula* inspired me in this later draft, taking inspiration from his ruthless culling of Bram Stoker's original text.

While the main structure of *Whisperer* remains intact in this version, I did attempt to make some of the chunks of exposition that remained far more dynamic than they had previously been. This is mainly centred on Albert's childhood monologue, which I wanted to make more visceral, and to differentiate it from either Henry's letter in storytelling style. The result is far more stream-of-consciousness, taking inspiration from the type of living-while-telling quality that hypnotherapy sessions produce. Here is an example of the change:

ALBERT:

A child's fears...but the disappearances gave me something concrete to fear. There were only a few of them – people who went into the forests. Everyone assumed there was an accident, or a pack of wolves in the area. My parents kept me close to home. But then

the nights changed..I don't remember it at all, but my mother said...that I started talking about a shadow that would visit at night...I get flashes of the memory sometimes...I would be lying in my bed...a feeling...like static before a storm. Shhhh...a whisper. At first, the shadow would stay in the forest. 'Albert', it would say, 'Albert.' I wouldn't dare move - I couldn't. Then one night - the only night I remember clearly. I woke. Everything was black. Then the whispers began. I hid my head beneath the covers. But then, I peeked out. It was tapping on my window. Yellow eyes, tapping at my glass, calling to me.

HELEN:

That sounds terrifying.

ALBERT:

It was. I screamed until my parents came running. The last thing it said before disappearing into the dark was 'Fear is not necessary'.

If one were to compare this to the version included in this thesis, it is easy to see not how much *shorter* it is, but how many more opportunities it gives the actor to show rather than tell. Cutting is not necessarily to reduce length, but often to remove unneeded complexity. This section also works to strengthen the link between his childhood and the Mi-Go that he'll eventually encounter, something that sacrifices the genre-centric ideal of mystery in favour of stronger narrative connections. I'd like the alteration to increase the amount the audience 'ticks off' clues that I've laid as to Albert's past as they come to the forest (yellow eyes - Act 2, Scene 3) and final (fear is not a necessity - Act 3, Scene 3) scenes.

A more explicit example of reassigning exposition to a more dynamic delivery medium is the addition to Bernie and Browne's introduction scene of an Appalachian mountain ditty, a development inspired by show feedback:

High above the mountain track,
The watcher sits and waits,
Nevermore the whispers come,
Since they flew far away.
Leave a pinch of salted bread,
Upon the rock at dawn,
To keep the mountain folk at bay,
If you wish to see the morn.

I felt that this little addition lends extra credibility to the Mi-Go being embedded in Vermont's local folklore, as well as being an interesting new way of delivering information. In terms of design, it also gives the director a musical theme that could potentially be repeated later in the show, with the audience understanding the lyrics more in hindsight.

If this project were started over, how would I have approached it differently? The answer to this question depends totally on what the script was *for*. For example, if I were producing a script that I would use commercially (or perhaps creatively) I would be very tempted to venture further from the source material, perhaps even creating an amalgamated adaption consisting of *The Whisperer in Darkness* and *The Dunwich Horror*. If it were within the same restrictions, however, I feel that a stylistic change would be critical. While a shift from Realism would be a mistake, I think it would be possible to simplify the script, compacting it into two acts. This alteration, however, would require a perspective shift to make Henry the primary protagonist. With the right actor, a script punctuated by silence and mostly visual development could be far more stark (and thus more mysterious). The reason for this shift, I believe, is because the current version of the script is trapped between two things: time and budget. With limited time to develop the show, it is simpler to be more text-oriented, so at least you have a framework from which your actors can work. Budget, however, restricts a production of this script from fully realising naturalistic sets and paraphernalia. Assuming a desire to move away from Realism and a similar budget to this production, a text-light, single-set, character-driven script derivative is a good compromise.

The main advantage of this swapped narrative is that the audience is *allowed* to know what is happening to Albert (and Helen, if her character is retained, which is not strictly necessary) in Arkham. With Henry being the recipient of letters, it would be possible to either not include the content verbally (have Henry react or refer to them, but not read the text), or to have it read by Albert's character as a narrative cut-away. This option was simply not available with the current script, as Henry's circumstances and person had to be kept uncertain, in order to preserve the mystery of what his state of health is – is he a Mi-Go? Within this logic, we get to see Henry's discoveries firsthand, and more excitingly, see his battles and conversations with the forest-bound Mi-Go. It would even be possible, in the manner of McNulty's ruthless alterations of the *Dracula* narrative, to dispense with Albert's visit entirely, or to change the capacity in which he supplies the conclusive shock. The major difference, in terms of dramatic action, is that we have an existing location (which also solves the problem of changing geography) to which new *conditions* are added. First, we have Henry's home and work, based around his family territory. Secondly, we see the arrival (or more specifically, revealing of) the Mi-Go. Third, the inciting incident of Henry's exportation of the black rock and record, which riles the Mi-Go into a state of frenzy. Fourth, the aggressive interaction between Henry and the outsiders. Finally, the conclusion of this interaction, however this were to eventuate. Characters come *to* the action, altering it, rather than *moving* the action to a new location. I think that this is a *major* limitation – and conversely, strength - of theatre over the film and novel media. The theatre (via the playwright) has the power and license to renovate the narrative to make the setting revolve around the characters, rather than the characters travel around the setting. Again, McNulty's script is a perfect example of this. Rather than Transylvania being the source of Dracula's mystery, Dracula himself is a representative of Transylvania, *in England*. We still get the exotic impact (particularly via Harker's re-enactment of the Transylvania scenes), without the difficulty of staging it. The comparison here is that Henry ceases to be the object of the quest, but instead becomes the quest himself.

The script, as it exists, does achieve the objective of this project, I feel. For all the modifications and renovations I would make if I staged it again, as an exercise in adaptation, it is both workable onstage, whilst preserving a huge amount of the

original text. Thus, it still exists as Lovecraft's tale, but also demonstrates a variety of adaptation and writing techniques and skills, from the creation of new, but authentic characters, through to the logistics of alternate narrative. It also lays some groundwork for approaching modern Gothic horror on the stage through integrated special effects within the script, and demonstrating the physical solutions to such large and complex concepts as the Mi-Go, as both prop and character. All things considered, it is a massively interdisciplinary project, with the academic, dramaturgical, theatrical and technical components being equally integral to the play.

Conclusion:

The conclusion of this project leads us to ask some questions that take us right back to the start – what is adaptation? This is something I feel the need to redefine in the wake of the creation and production of *Whisperer*. Firstly is how imprecisely *film* adaptation (which comprises much of modern discussion) translates to describing adaptation for the theatre. For this project, while Dudley Andrews' 'Fidelity of Transformation' and 'Intersection' subdivisions do describe much of this adaptation, they fail to address some major aspects. I believe that the reason for this is the perspective of the study – it is in retrospect. Film tends to be easier to study in retrospect – it undergoes a period of creation, and then is published, becoming finite. Theatre, on the other hand, evolves more continually. Playwrights redraft their work, produce it, redraft it, etc. Also, multiple directors may interpret the play differently, leading to a unique take. Stage adaptation theory must thus take into account two primary differences – one, that the adaptation in question may be a transitory form that fits in one subdivision, but may shift over time towards another – two, a stage adaptation must, by dint of being *on the stage*, be more drastically different from film or page in order to function effectively as theatre. This is not to say that screenplays are more or less faithful than stage plays, but they also have more variety in their treatment of narrative (being able to utilise flashbacks, etc, with greater verisimilitude). I think it is necessary thus to divide plays along two separate continuum – one being fidelity to the concepts of the material (ranging, like the previous discussed systems, from high degree of duplication to extant homage), the other being the form of the original material. It

is, after all possible to create an adaption with the majority of characters, locations or events intact, but renovated to fit a new narrative shape. Conversely, an adaption may exist with a very similar narrative arc, but with the concepts culled for simplicity.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books & Electronic Resources:

- Andrew, Dudley, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1984)
- Angell, George Gammell, 'Cthulhu Elsewhere in Lovecraft' in *Crypt of Cthulhu #9* (Miskatonic University Press: Bloomfield, 1982)
- Anonymous, *Historia von D. Johann Fausten*, published 1587 by Johann Spies
- Baldick, Chris & Mighall, Robert, 'Gothic Criticism' in *A Companion to the Gothic* (Wiley-Blackwell: London, 2001)
- Barker, Clive, *Cabal* (HarperCollins: London, 1988)
- Barker, Clive, *The Hellbound Heart* (HarperCollins: London, 1986)
- Bloch, Robert, *Heritage of Horror* (New York: Ballantine Books)
- Bloch, Robert, 'The Children of the Night' in *Weird Tales* (1931)
- Bloch, Robert, 'The Shambler From The Stars' in *Weird Tales* (1935)
- Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1759)
- Davis, Sonia H, *The Private Life of H. P. Lovecraft* (Necronomicon Press: Boston, 1985)
- Deutalbaum, Marshall, *A Hitchcock Reader* (Iowa State University Press: Ames, 1986)
- De Camp, L. Sprague, *Lovecraft: A Biography* (Doubleday & Company: New York, 1975)
- Fairclough, Norman, *Discourse and Social Change* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 1992)
- Fiedler, Leslie, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (Stein and Day: New York, 1960)
- Finn, Mark, *Blood & Thunder* (Monkeybrain Inc: Austin, 2006)
- Fritz, S., "DUNE: Remaking the Classic Novel" *Cinescape.com*. Retrieved 8/4/2011
- Gérard, Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Univeristy of Nebraska Press: Lincoln, 1997)
- Grahame-Smith, Seth, *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies* (Quirk Books: New York, 2009)
- Houdini, Harry, 'Imprisoned With The Pharoahs' in *Weird Tales* (Wildside Press, May 1924)
- Howard, Robert E, 'The Phoenix on the Sword' in *Weird Tales* (1936)
- Heinlein, Robert A, *Starship Troopers* (Ace: New York, 1987)
- Hutcheon, Linda, *A Theory of Adaptation* (Routledge: New York, 2006)
- Hutcheon, Linda, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (Methuen: New York, 1985)
- Irwin, William, 'Against Intertextuality' in *Philosophy and Literature* (John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 2004)
- Joshi, S. T., *The Rise and Fall of the Cthulhu Mythos* (New York, Mythos Press, 2008)
- Joshi, S. T., Schulz, David S, *An H. P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia* (Boston: Arkham House, 2001)
- Kennicott, P., "Blight 'Watchmen'". *The Washington Post*. Retrieved 8/4/2011
- Kit, Borys, 'Slither' leaves gloomy trail, *Hollywood Reporter*. Retrieved 04/01/2012

- Klein, Michael, *The English Novels and the Movies* (Ungar Pub Co, New York, 1981)
- Kristeva, Julia, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1980)
- Le Fanu, Joseph Sheridan, *The Watcher and Other Weird Stories* (Downey: London, 1894)
- Left 4 Dead Development blog, <http://www.l4d.com/blog/post.php?id=2129>, retrieved 30/1/2012
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'At the Mountains of Madness' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'Cool Air' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'The Call of Cthulhu' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'The Case of Charles Dexter Ward' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'The Colour Out of Space' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'The Dunwich Horror' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (Boston: Arkham House, 1943)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'The Dreams in the Witch House' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'From Beyond' in *The Fantasy Fan* (1934)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'The Lurking Fear' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'Pickman's Model' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'Polaris' in *The Philosopher* (1920).
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'The Rats in the Walls' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (Unedited, 1935)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'The Shadow Out of Time' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'The Shadow Over Innsmouth' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'The Statement of Randolph Carter' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'The Thing on the Doorstep' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P., 'The Whisperer in Darkness' in *Lovecraft: Tales* (New York: Library of America, 2005)
- Lovecraft, H. P. & Derleth, August, 'The Shadow Out of Space' in *The Watchers Out of Time and Others* (Sauk City: Arkham House, 1974)
- Massé, Michelle A., 'Psychoanalysis and the Gothic' in *The Companion to the Gothic* (Wiley-Blackwell: Oxford, 2001)
- Mathiis, Ernest, *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in a Global Context* (Wallflower Press: New York, 2006)
- McFarlane, Brian, *Novel to Film* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1996)

- Miles, Robert, 'Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis' in *A Companion to the Gothic* (Wiley-Blackwell: London, 2001)
- Moore, Alan, *Watchmen* (DC Comics: New York, 1986)
- Morrison, Toni, *Beloved* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1987)
- Pearsall, Anthony, *The Lovecraft Lexicon* (New Falcon Publications: Tempe, 2005)
- Poe, Edgar Allan, 'The Fall of the House of Usher' in *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* (William Burton: Philadelphia, 1839)
- Polidori, John, 'The Vampyre' in *The New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register*, 63 (1819)
- Price, Robert M., 'H. P Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos' in *Crypt of Cthulhu #35* (Cryptic Publications: Mount Olive, 1985)
- Priest, Christopher, *The Prestige* (Tor Books: New York, 2005)
- Punter, David, and Byron, Glennis, *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004)
- Radcliffe, Ann, *A Sicilian Romance* (London: Hookham and Carpenter, 1790)
- Radcliffe, Ann, 'On the Supernatural in Poetry' in *New Monthly Magazine* (1826)
- Rice, Anne, *The Vampire Lestat* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1985)
- Sanders, J., *Adaptation & Appropriation* (Routledge: New York, 2006)
- Schultz, David, 'Notes Toward a History of the Cthulhu Mythos' in *Crypt of Cthulhu #92* (1996)
- Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus* (Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor & Jones: London, 1818)
- Smith, Clark Ashton, 'The Tale of Satampra Zeiros' in *Weird Tales* (1931)
- Smith, Clark Ashton, 'Ubbo-Sathla' in *Weird Tales* (1933).
- Spooner, Catherine and McEvoy, Emma, *The Routledge Companion to Gothic* (London: Routledge, 2007)
- Spies, Johann, *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* (1587)
- Stanton, S. & Banhan, M., 'Middle East & North Africa' in *Cambridge Paperback Guide to Theatre* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge)
- Tolkien, J. R. R., *The Lord of the Rings* (HarperCollins: London, 1999), first published 1954
- Wagner, Geoffrey, *The Novel and the Cinema* (Fairleigh-Dickinson University Press: Madison, 1990)
- Walpole, Horace, *The Castle of Otranto* (John B. Alden: New York, 1889)
- Wohleber, Curt, 'The Man Who Can Scare Stephen King' in *American Heritage Magazine* (New York: Heritage Press, 1995)

Stage Plays and Musicals:

- Gow, Michael, *Away* (Currency Press: Sydney, 1986)
- Jerome, Helen, *Pride & Prejudice: A Sentimental Comedy in Three Acts* (Samuel French Inc: New York, 1936)
- Jory, John, *Pride & Prejudice* (Playscripts: New York, 2006)

- Marlowe, Christopher, *Doctor Faustus*, premiered 1592
- McNulty, William, *Dracula* (Actor's Theatre of Louisville: Louisville, 2008)
- Müller, Heiner, *Hamletmachine*, translated by Dennis Redmond (2001), originally published 1979
- Parker, Paula K, *Jane Austen's Pride & Prejudice* (WordCrafts: New York, 2009)
- Porter, Cole, *Kiss Me Kate* (Broadway, 1948)
- Welsh, Irving, *Trainspotting* (Secker & Warburg: London, 1993)
- West, Brendan, *The Catacombs of Monte Cassino* (unpublished: Hamilton, 2010)
- West, Brendan, *Lepidus Browne* (unpublished)

Films & TV Series:

- 10 Things I Hate About You*, dir. by Gil Junger (Touchstone Pictures, 1999)
- Aliens*, dir. by James Cameron (20th Century Fox, 1986)
- Beyond Reanimator*, dir. by Brian Yuzna (Fantastic Factory, 2003)
- Bride of Frankenstein*, dir. by James Whale (Universal Pictures, 1935)
- Bride of Reanimator*, dir. by Brian Yuzna (Wild Street Pictures, 1990)
- District 9*, dir. by Neill Blomkamp (Tristar, 2009)
- Dogville*, dir. by Lars Von Trier (Zentropa Entertainments, 2003)
- Doom*, dir. by Dave Callahan (John Wells Productions, 2005)
- Extreme Ghostbusters*, dir. by multiple directors (Adelaide Productions, 1997)
- Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas*, dir. by Terry Gilliam (Rhino Films, 1998)
- Frankenstein*, dir. by James Whale (Universal Pictures, 1931)
- Frankenstein*, Adap. by Nick Dear, dir. by Danny Boyle (National Theatre LIVE!, 2011)
- From Beyond*, dir. by Stuart Gordon (Empire Pictures, 1986)
- Ghostbusters*, dir. by Ivan Reitman (Black Rhino Productions, 1984)
- Kiss Me Kate*, dir. by George Sidney (Leow's Incorporated, 1953)
- Reanimator*, dir. by Stuart Gordon (Empire Pictures, 1985)
- Scream*, dir. by Wes Craven (Dimension Films, 1996)
- Starship Troopers*, dir. by Paul Verhoeven (TriStar Pictures, 1997)
- The Evil Dead*, dir. by Sam Raimi (New Line Cinema, 1981)
- The Princess Bride*, dir. by Rob Reiner (20th Century Fox, 1987)
- Watchmen*, dir. by Zack Snyder (Warner Bros, 2009)

Video & Roleplaying Games:

Alone in the Dark, dir. by Frédérick Raynal & Franck de Girolami (Infogames, 1992)

Amnesia: The Dark Descent, dir. by Thomas Grip, Jens Nilsson & Mikael Hedberg (Frictional Games, 2010)

Call of Cthulhu (Chaosium, 1981)

Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth, designed by Christopher Gray (Headfirst Productions, 2005)

Doom, dir. by Tom Hall (id Software, 1993)

Doom 3, dir. by John Carmack, written by Matthew Costello (id Software, 2004)

Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem, dir. by Denis Dyack (Silicon Knights, 2002)

Marathon, Art Dir. by Rob McClees (Bungie, 1994)

Mass Effect 2, dir. by Casey Hudson (Electronic Arts, 2011)

Pathways into Darkness, created by Jason Jones (Bungie Software, 1993)

Penumbra: Overture, dir. by Thomas Grip, Jens Nilsson & Tom Jubert (Frictional Games, 2007)

Quake, dir. by John Romero (id Software, 1995)

Resident Evil, dir. by Shinji Mikami (Capcom, 1996)

Silent Hill, created by Keichiro Toyama (Konami, 1999)

Sweet Home, dir. by Juzo Itami (Capcom, 1989)

Wolfenstein 3D, dir. by John Romero (id Software, 1992)



APPENDIX

THE WHISPERER IN DARKNESS ORIGINAL TEXT

The Whisperer in Darkness
By H. P. Lovecraft

I.

Bear in mind closely that I did not see any actual visual horror at the end. To say that a mental shock was the cause of what I inferred—that last straw which sent me racing out of the lonely Akeley farmhouse and through the wild domed hills of Vermont in a commandeered motor at night—is to ignore the plainest facts of my final experience. Notwithstanding the deep extent to which I shared the information and speculations of Henry Akeley, the things I saw and heard, and the admitted vividness of the impression produced on me by these things, I cannot prove even now whether I was right or wrong in my hideous inference. For after all, Akeley's disappearance establishes nothing. People found nothing amiss in his house despite the bullet-marks on the outside and inside. It was just as though he had walked out casually for a ramble in the hills and failed to return. There was not even a sign that a guest had been there, or that those horrible cylinders and machines had been stored in the study. That he had mortally feared the crowded green hills and endless trickle of brooks among which he had been born and reared, means nothing at all, either; for thousands are subject to just such morbid fears. Eccentricity, moreover, could easily account for his strange acts and apprehensions toward the last.

The whole matter began, so far as I am concerned, with the historic and unprecedented Vermont floods of November 3, 1927. I was then, as now, an instructor of literature at Miskatonic University in Arkham, Massachusetts, and an enthusiastic amateur student of New England folklore. Shortly after the flood, amidst the varied reports of hardship, suffering, and organised relief which filled the press, there appeared certain odd stories of things found floating in some of the swollen rivers; so that many of my friends embarked on curious discussions and appealed to me to shed what light I could on the subject. I felt flattered at having my folklore study taken so seriously, and did what I could to belittle the wild, vague tales which seemed so clearly an outgrowth of old rustic superstitions. It amused me to find several persons of education who insisted that some stratum of obscure, distorted fact might underlie the rumours.

The tales thus brought to my notice came mostly through newspaper cuttings; though one yarn had an oral source and was repeated to a friend of mine in a letter from his mother in Hardwick, Vermont. The type of thing described was essentially the same in all cases, though there seemed to be three separate instances involved—one connected with the Winooski River near Montpelier, another attached to the West River in Windham County beyond Newfane, and a third centring in the Passumpsic in Caledonia County above Lyndonville. Of course many of the stray items mentioned other instances, but on analysis they all seemed to boil down to these three. In each case country folk reported seeing one or more very bizarre and disturbing objects in the surging waters that poured down from the unfrequented hills, and there was a widespread tendency to connect these sights with a primitive, half-forgotten cycle of whispered legend which old people resurrected for the occasion.

What people thought they saw were organic shapes not quite like any they had ever seen before. Naturally, there were many human bodies washed along by the streams in that tragic period; but those who described these strange shapes felt quite sure that they were not human, despite some superficial resemblances in size and general outline. Nor, said the witnesses, could they have been any kind of animal known to Vermont. They were pinkish things about five feet long; with crustaceous bodies bearing vast pairs of dorsal fins or membraneous wings and several sets of articulated limbs, and with a sort of convoluted ellipsoid, covered with multitudes of very short antennae, where a head would ordinarily be. It was really remarkable how closely the reports from different sources tended to coincide; though the wonder was lessened by the fact that the old legends, shared at one time throughout the hill country, furnished a morbidly vivid picture which might well have coloured the imaginations of all the witnesses concerned. It was my conclusion that such witnesses—in every case naive and simple backwoods folk—had glimpsed the battered and bloated bodies of human beings or farm animals in the whirling currents; and had allowed the half-remembered folklore to invest these pitiful objects with fantastic attributes.

The ancient folklore, while cloudy, evasive, and largely forgotten by the present generation, was of a highly singular character, and obviously reflected the influence of still earlier Indian tales. I knew it well, though I had never been in

Vermont, through the exceedingly rare monograph of Eli Davenport, which embraces material orally obtained prior to 1839 among the oldest people of the state. This material, moreover, closely coincided with tales which I had personally heard from elderly rustics in the mountains of New Hampshire. Briefly summarised, it hinted at a hidden race of monstrous beings which lurked somewhere among the remoter hills—in the deep woods of the highest peaks, and the dark valleys where streams trickle from unknown sources. These beings were seldom glimpsed, but evidences of their presence were reported by those who had ventured farther than usual up the slopes of certain mountains or into certain deep, steep-sided gorges that even the wolves shunned.

There were queer footprints or claw-prints in the mud of brook-margins and barren patches, and curious circles of stones, with the grass around them worn away, which did not seem to have been placed or entirely shaped by Nature. There were, too, certain caves of problematical depth in the sides of the hills; with mouths closed by boulders in a manner scarcely accidental, and with more than an average quota of the queer prints leading both toward and away from them—if indeed the direction of these prints could be justly estimated. And worst of all, there were the things which adventurous people had seen very rarely in the twilight of the remotest valleys and the dense perpendicular woods above the limits of normal hill-climbing.

It would have been less uncomfortable if the stray accounts of these things had not agreed so well. As it was, nearly all the rumours had several points in common; averring that the creatures were a sort of huge, light-red crab with many pairs of legs and with two great bat-like wings in the middle of the back. They sometimes walked on all their legs, and sometimes on the hindmost pair only, using the others to convey large objects of indeterminate nature. On one occasion they were spied in considerable numbers, a detachment of them wading along a shallow woodland watercourse three abreast in evidently disciplined formation. Once a specimen was seen flying—launching itself from the top of a bald, lonely hill at night and vanishing in the sky after its great flapping wings had been silhouetted an instant against the full moon.

These things seemed content, on the whole, to let mankind alone; though they were at times held responsible for the disappearance of venturesome

individuals—especially persons who built houses too close to certain valleys or too high up on certain mountains. Many localities came to be known as inadvisable to settle in, the feeling persisting long after the cause was forgotten. People would look up at some of the neighbouring mountain-precipices with a shudder, even when not recalling how many settlers had been lost, and how many farmhouses burnt to ashes, on the lower slopes of those grim, green sentinels.

But while according to the earliest legends the creatures would appear to have harmed only those trespassing on their privacy; there were later accounts of their curiosity respecting men, and of their attempts to establish secret outposts in the human world. There were tales of the queer claw-prints seen around farmhouse windows in the morning, and of occasional disappearances in regions outside the obviously haunted areas. Tales, besides, of buzzing voices in imitation of human speech which made surprising offers to lone travellers on roads and cart-paths in the deep woods, and of children frightened out of their wits by things seen or heard where the primal forest pressed close upon their dooryards. In the final layer of legends—the layer just preceding the decline of superstition and the abandonment of close contact with the dreaded places—there are shocked references to hermits and remote farmers who at some period of life appeared to have undergone a repellent mental change, and who were shunned and whispered about as mortals who had sold themselves to the strange beings. In one of the northeastern counties it seemed to be a fashion about 1800 to accuse eccentric and unpopular recluses of being allies or representatives of the abhorred things.

As to what the things were—explanations naturally varied. The common name applied to them was “those ones”, or “the old ones”, though other terms had a local and transient use. Perhaps the bulk of the Puritan settlers set them down bluntly as familiars of the devil, and made them a basis of awed theological speculation. Those with Celtic legendry in their heritage—mainly the Scotch-Irish element of New Hampshire, and their kindred who had settled in Vermont on Governor Wentworth’s colonial grants—linked them vaguely with the malign fairies and “little people” of the bogs and raths, and protected themselves with scraps of incantation handed down through many generations. But the Indians had the most fantastic theories of all. While different tribal legends differed, there was a marked

consensus of belief in certain vital particulars; it being unanimously agreed that the creatures were not native to this earth.

The Pennacook myths, which were the most consistent and picturesque, taught that the Winged Ones came from the Great Bear in the sky, and had mines in our earthly hills whence they took a kind of stone they could not get on any other world. They did not live here, said the myths, but merely maintained outposts and flew back with vast cargoes of stone to their own stars in the north. They harmed only those earth-people who got too near them or spied upon them. Animals shunned them through instinctive hatred, not because of being hunted. They could not eat the things and animals of earth, but brought their own food from the stars. It was bad to get near them, and sometimes young hunters who went into their hills never came back. It was not good, either, to listen to what they whispered at night in the forest with voices like a bee's that tried to be like the voices of men. They knew the speech of all kinds of men—Pennacooks, Hurons, men of the Five Nations—but did not seem to have or need any speech of their own. They talked with their heads, which changed colour in different ways to mean different things.

All the legendry, of course, white and Indian alike, died down during the nineteenth century, except for occasional atavistical flareups. The ways of the Vermonters became settled; and once their habitual paths and dwellings were established according to a certain fixed plan, they remembered less and less what fears and avoidances had determined that plan, and even that there had been any fears or avoidances. Most people simply knew that certain hilly regions were considered as highly unhealthy, unprofitable, and generally unlucky to live in, and that the farther one kept from them the better off one usually was. In time the ruts of custom and economic interest became so deeply cut in approved places that there was no longer any reason for going outside them, and the haunted hills were left deserted by accident rather than by design. Save during infrequent local scares, only wonder-loving grandmothers and retrospective nonagenarians ever whispered of beings dwelling in those hills; and even such whisperers admitted that there was not much to fear from those things now that they were used to the presence of houses and settlements, and now that human beings let their chosen territory severely alone.

All this I had known from my reading, and from certain folk-tales picked up in New Hampshire; hence when the flood-time rumours began to appear, I could easily guess what imaginative background had evolved them. I took great pains to explain this to my friends, and was correspondingly amused when several contentious souls continued to insist on a possible element of truth in the reports. Such persons tried to point out that the early legends had a significant persistence and uniformity, and that the virtually unexplored nature of the Vermont hills made it unwise to be dogmatic about what might or might not dwell among them; nor could they be silenced by my assurance that all the myths were of a well-known pattern common to most of mankind and determined by early phases of imaginative experience which always produced the same type of delusion.

It was of no use to demonstrate to such opponents that the Vermont myths differed but little in essence from those universal legends of natural personification which filled the ancient world with fauns and dryads and satyrs, suggested the kallikanzari of modern Greece, and gave to wild Wales and Ireland their dark hints of strange, small, and terrible hidden races of troglodytes and burrowers. No use, either, to point out the even more startlingly similar belief of the Nepalese hill tribes in the dreaded Mi-Go or "Abominable Snow-Men" who lurk hideously amidst the ice and rock pinnacles of the Himalayan summits. When I brought up this evidence, my opponents turned it against me by claiming that it must imply some actual historicity for the ancient tales; that it must argue the real existence of some queer elder earth-race, driven to hiding after the advent and dominance of mankind, which might very conceivably have survived in reduced numbers to relatively recent times—or even to the present.

The more I laughed at such theories, the more these stubborn friends asseverated them; adding that even without the heritage of legend the recent reports were too clear, consistent, detailed, and sanely prosaic in manner of telling, to be completely ignored. Two or three fanatical extremists went so far as to hint at possible meanings in the ancient Indian tales which gave the hidden beings a non-terrestrial origin; citing the extravagant books of Charles Fort with their claims that voyagers from other worlds and outer space have often visited earth. Most of my foes, however, were merely romanticists who insisted on trying to

transfer to real life the fantastic lore of lurking “little people” made popular by the magnificent horror-fiction of Arthur Machen.

II.

As was only natural under the circumstances, this piquant debating finally got into print in the form of letters to the Arkham Advertiser; some of which were copied in the press of those Vermont regions whence the flood-stories came. The Rutland Herald gave half a page of extracts from the letters on both sides, while the Brattleboro Reformer reprinted one of my long historical and mythological summaries in full, with some accompanying comments in “The Pendrifter’s” thoughtful column which supported and applauded my sceptical conclusions. By the spring of 1928 I was almost a well-known figure in Vermont, notwithstanding the fact that I had never set foot in the state. Then came the challenging letters from Henry Akeley which impressed me so profoundly, and which took me for the first and last time to that fascinating realm of crowded green precipices and muttering forest streams.

Most of what I now know of Henry Wentworth Akeley was gathered by correspondence with his neighbours, and with his only son in California, after my experience in his lonely farmhouse. He was, I discovered, the last representative on his home soil of a long, locally distinguished line of jurists, administrators, and gentlemen-agriculturists. In him, however, the family mentally had veered away from practical affairs to pure scholarship; so that he had been a notable student of mathematics, astronomy, biology, anthropology, and folklore at the University of Vermont. I had never previously heard of him, and he did not give many autobiographical details in his communications; but from the first I saw he was a man of character, education, and intelligence, albeit a recluse with very little worldly sophistication.

Despite the incredible nature of what he claimed, I could not help at once taking Akeley more seriously than I had taken any of the other challengers of my views. For one thing, he was really close to the actual phenomena—visible and tangible—that he speculated so grotesquely about; and for another thing, he was amazingly 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. Of course I began by considering him mistaken, but gave him credit for being intelligently mistaken; and at no time did I emulate some of his friends in attributing his ideas, and his fear of the lonely green hills, to insanity. I could see that there was a great deal to the man, and knew that what he reported must surely come from strange circumstances deserving investigation, however little it might have to do with the fantastic causes he assigned. Later on I received from him certain material proofs which placed the matter on a somewhat different and bewilderingly bizarre basis.

I cannot do better than transcribe in full, so far as is possible, the long letter in which Akeley introduced himself, and which formed such an important landmark in my own intellectual history. It is no longer in my possession, but my memory holds almost every word of its portentous message; and again I affirm my confidence in the sanity of the man who wrote it. Here is the text—a text which reached me in the cramped, archaic-looking scrawl of one who had obviously not mingled much with the world during his sedate, scholarly life.

R.F.D. #2,
Townshend, Windham Co.,
Vermont.
May 5, 1928.
Albert N. Wilmarth, Esq.,
118 Saltonstall St.,
Arkham, Mass.,

My dear Sir:—

I have read with great interest the Brattleboro Reformer's reprint (Apr. 23, '28) of your letter on the recent stories of strange bodies seen floating in our flooded streams last fall, and on the curious folklore they so well agree with. It is easy to see why an outlander would take the position you take, and even why "Pendrifter" agrees with you. That is the attitude generally taken by educated persons both in and out of Vermont, and was my own attitude as a young man (I am now 57) before my studies, both general and in Davenport's book, led me to do some exploring in parts of the hills hereabouts not usually visited.

I was directed toward such studies by the queer old tales I used to hear from elderly farmers of the more ignorant sort, but now I wish I had let the whole matter alone. I might say, with all proper modesty, that the subject of anthropology and folklore is by no means strange to me. I took a good deal of it at college, and am familiar with most of the standard authorities such as Tylor, Lubbock, Frazer, Quatrefages, Murray, Osborn, Keith, Boule, G. Elliot Smith, and so on. It is no news to me that tales of hidden races are as old as all mankind. I have seen the reprints of letters from you, and those arguing with you, in the Rutland Herald, and guess I know about where your controversy stands at the present time.

What I desire to say now is, that I am afraid your adversaries are nearer right than yourself, even though all reason seems to be on your side. They are nearer right than they realise themselves—for of course they go only by theory, and cannot know what I know. If I knew as little of the matter as they, I would not feel justified in believing as they do. I would be wholly on your side.

You can see that I am having a hard time getting to the point, probably because I really dread getting to the point; but the upshot of the matter is that I have certain evidence that monstrous things do indeed live in the woods on the high hills which nobody visits. I have not seen any of the things floating in the rivers, as reported, but I have seen things like them under circumstances I dread to repeat. I have seen footprints, and of late have seen them nearer my own home (I live in the old Akeley place south of Townshend Village, on the side of Dark Mountain) than I dare tell you now. And I have overheard voices in the woods at certain points that I will not even begin to describe on paper.

At one place I heard them so much that I took a phonograph there—with a dictaphone attachment and wax blank—and I shall try to arrange to have you hear the record I got. I have run it on the machine for some of the old people up here, and one of the voices had nearly scared them paralysed by reason of its likeness to a certain voice (that buzzing voice in the woods which Davenport mentions) that their grandmothers have told about and mimicked for them. I know what most people think of a man who tells about “hearing voices”—but before you draw conclusions just listen to this record and ask some of the older backwoods people what they think of it. If you can account for it normally, very well; but there must be something behind it. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*, you know.

Now my object in writing you is not to start an argument, but to give you information which I think a man of your tastes will find deeply interesting. This is private. Publicly I am on your side, for certain things shew me that it does not do for people to know too much about these matters. My own studies are now wholly private, and I would not think of saying anything to attract people's attention and cause them to visit the places I have explored. It is true—terribly true—that there are non-human creatures watching us all the time; with spies among us gathering information. It is from a wretched man who, if he was sane (as I think he was), was one of those spies, that I got a large part of my clues to the matter. He later killed himself, but I have reason to think there are others now.

The things come from another planet, being able to live in interstellar space and fly through it on clumsy, powerful wings which have a way of resisting the ether but which are too poor at steering to be of much use in helping them about on earth. I will tell you about this later if you do not dismiss me at once as a madman. They come here to get metals from mines that go deep under the hills, and I think I know where they come from. They will not hurt us if we let them alone, but no one can say what will happen if we get too curious about them. Of course a good army of men could wipe out their mining colony. That is what they are afraid of. But if that happened, more would come from outside—any number of them. They could easily conquer the earth, but have not tried so far because they have not needed to. They would rather leave things as they are to save bother.

I think they mean to get rid of me because of what I have discovered. There is a great black stone with unknown hieroglyphics half worn away which I found in the woods on Round Hill, east of here; and after I took it home everything became different. If they think I suspect too much they will either kill me or take me off the earth to where they come from. They like to take away men of learning once in a while, to keep informed on the state of things in the human world.

This leads me to my secondary purpose in addressing you—namely, to urge you to hush up the present debate rather than give it more publicity. People must be kept away from these hills, and in order to effect this, their curiosity ought not to be aroused any further. Heaven knows there is peril enough anyway, with promoters and real estate men flooding Vermont with herds of summer people to overrun the wild places and cover the hills with cheap bungalows.

I shall welcome further communication with you, and shall try to send you that phonograph record and black stone (which is so worn that photographs don't shew much) by express if you are willing. I say "try" because I think those creatures have a way of tampering with things around here. There is a sullen, furtive fellow named Brown, on a farm near the village, who I think is their spy. Little by little they are trying to cut me off from our world because I know too much about their world.

They have the most amazing way of finding out what I do. You may not even get this letter. I think I shall have to leave this part of the country and go to live with my son in San Diego, Cal., if things get any worse, but it is not easy to give up the place you were born in, and where your family has lived for six generations. Also, I would hardly dare sell this house to anybody now that the creatures have taken notice of it. They seem to be trying to get the black stone back and destroy the phonograph record, but I shall not let them if I can help it. My great police dogs always hold them back, for there are very few here as yet, and they are clumsy in getting about. As I have said, their wings are not much use for short flights on earth. I am on the very brink of deciphering that stone—in a very terrible way—and with your knowledge of folklore you may be able to supply missing links enough to help me. I suppose you know all about the fearful myths antedating the coming of man to the earth—the Yog-Sothoth and Cthulhu cycles—which are hinted at in the Necronomicon. I had access to a copy of that once, and hear that you have one in your college library under lock and key.

To conclude, Mr. Wilmarth, I think that with our respective studies we can be very useful to each other. I don't wish to put you in any peril, and suppose I ought to warn you that possession of the stone and the record won't be very safe; but I think you will find any risks worth running for the sake of knowledge. I will drive down to Newfane or Brattleboro to send whatever you authorise me to send, for the express offices there are more to be trusted. I might say that I live quite alone now, since I can't keep hired help any more. They won't stay because of the things that try to get near the house at night, and that keep the dogs barking continually. I am glad I didn't get as deep as this into the business while my wife was alive, for it would have driven her mad.

Hoping that I am not bothering you unduly, and that you will decide to get in touch with me rather than throw this letter into the waste basket as a madman's raving, I am

Yrs. very truly,

HENRY W. AKELEY

P.S. I am making some extra prints of certain photographs taken by me, which I think will help to prove a number of the points I have touched on. The old people think they are monstrously true. I shall send you these very soon if you are interested. H.W.A.

It would be difficult to describe my sentiments upon reading this strange document for the first time. By all ordinary rules, I ought to have laughed more loudly at these extravagances than at the far milder theories which had previously moved me to mirth; yet something in the tone of the letter made me take it with paradoxical seriousness. Not that I believed for a moment in the hidden race from the stars which my correspondent spoke of; but that, after some grave preliminary doubts, I grew to feel oddly sure of his sanity and sincerity, and of his confrontation by some genuine though singular and abnormal phenomenon which he could not explain except in this imaginative way. It could not be as he thought it, I reflected, yet on the other hand it could not be otherwise than worthy of investigation. The man seemed unduly excited and alarmed about something, but it was hard to think that all cause was lacking. He was so specific and logical in certain ways—and after all, his yarn did fit in so perplexingly well with some of the old myths—even the wildest Indian legends.

That he had really overheard disturbing voices in the hills, and had really found the black stone he spoke about, was wholly possible despite the crazy inferences he had made—inferences probably suggested by the man who had claimed to be a spy of the outer beings and had later killed himself. It was easy to deduce that this man must have been wholly insane, but that he probably had a streak of perverse outward logic which made the naive Akeley—already prepared for such things by his folklore studies—believe his tale. As for the latest developments—it appeared from his inability to keep hired help that Akeley's humbler rustic neighbours were

as convinced as he that his house was besieged by uncanny things at night. The dogs really barked, too.

And then the matter of that phonograph record, which I could not but believe he had obtained in the way he said. It must mean something; whether animal noises deceptively like human speech, or the speech of some hidden, night-haunting human being decayed to a state not much above that of lower animals. From this my thoughts went back to the black hieroglyphed stone, and to speculations upon what it might mean. Then, too, what of the photographs which Akeley said he was about to send, and which the old people had found so convincingly terrible?

As I re-read the cramped handwriting I felt as never before that my credulous opponents might have more on their side than I had conceded. After all, there might be some queer and perhaps hereditarily misshapen outcasts in those shunned hills, even though no such race of star-born monsters as folklore claimed. And if there were, then the presence of strange bodies in the flooded streams would not be wholly beyond belief. Was it too presumptuous to suppose that both the old legends and the recent reports had this much of reality behind them? But even as I harboured these doubts I felt ashamed that so fantastic a piece of bizarrerie as Henry Akeley's wild letter had brought them up.

In the end I answered Akeley's letter, adopting a tone of friendly interest and soliciting further particulars. His reply came almost by return mail; and contained, true to promise, a number of kodak views of scenes and objects illustrating what he had to tell. Glancing at these pictures as I took them from the envelope, I felt a curious sense of fright and nearness to forbidden things; for in spite of the vagueness of most of them, they had a damnably suggestive power which was intensified by the fact of their being genuine photographs—actual optical links with what they portrayed, and the product of an impersonal transmitting process without prejudice, fallibility, or mendacity.

The more I looked at them, the more I saw that my serious estimate of Akeley and his story had not been unjustified. Certainly, these pictures carried conclusive evidence of something in the Vermont hills which was at least vastly outside the radius of our common knowledge and belief. The worst thing of all was the

footprint—a view taken where the sun shone on a mud patch somewhere in a deserted upland. This was no cheaply counterfeited thing, I could see at a glance; for the sharply defined pebbles and grass-blades in the field of vision gave a clear index of scale and left no possibility of a tricky double exposure. I have called the thing a “footprint”, but “claw-print” would be a better term. Even now I can scarcely describe it save to say that it was hideously crab-like, and that there seemed to be some ambiguity about its direction. It was not a very deep or fresh print, but seemed to be about the size of an average man’s foot. From a central pad, pairs of saw-toothed nippers projected in opposite directions—quite baffling as to function, if indeed the whole object were exclusively an organ of locomotion.

Another photograph—evidently a time-exposure taken in deep shadow—was of the mouth of a woodland cave, with a boulder of rounded regularity choking the aperture. On the bare ground in front of it one could just discern a dense network of curious tracks, and when I studied the picture with a magnifier I felt uneasily sure that the tracks were like the one in the other view. A third picture shewed a druid-like circle of standing stones on the summit of a wild hill. Around the cryptic circle the grass was very much beaten down and worn away, though I could not detect any footprints even with the glass. The extreme remoteness of the place was apparent from the veritable sea of tenantless mountains which formed the background and stretched away toward a misty horizon.

But if the most disturbing of all the views was that of the footprint, the most curiously suggestive was that of the great black stone found in the Round Hill woods. Akeley had photographed it on what was evidently his study table, for I could see rows of books and a bust of Milton in the background. The thing, as nearly as one might guess, had faced the camera vertically with a somewhat irregularly curved surface of one by two feet; but to say anything definite about that surface, or about the general shape of the whole mass, almost defies the power of language. What outlandish geometrical principles had guided its cutting—for artificially cut it surely was—I could not even begin to guess; and never before had I seen anything which struck me as so strangely and unmistakably alien to this world. Of the hieroglyphics on the surface I could discern very few, but one or two that I did see gave me rather a shock. Of course they might be fraudulent, for others besides myself had read the monstrous and abhorred Necronomicon of the

mad Arab Abdul Alhazred; but it nevertheless made me shiver to recognise certain ideographs which study had taught me to link with the most blood-curdling and blasphemous whispers of things that had had a kind of mad half-existence before the earth and the other inner worlds of the solar system were made.

Of the five remaining pictures, three were of swamp and hill scenes which seemed to bear traces of hidden and unwholesome tenancy. Another was of a queer mark in the ground very near Akeley's house, which he said he had photographed the morning after a night on which the dogs had barked more violently than usual. It was very blurred, and one could really draw no certain conclusions from it; but it did seem fiendishly like that other mark or claw-print photographed on the deserted upland. The final picture was of the Akeley place itself; a trim white house of two stories and attic, about a century and a quarter old, and with a well-kept lawn and stone-bordered path leading up to a tastefully carved Georgian doorway. There were several huge police dogs on the lawn, squatting near a pleasant-faced man with a close-cropped grey beard whom I took to be Akeley himself—his own photographer, one might infer from the tube-connected bulb in his right hand.

From the pictures I turned to the bulky, closely written letter itself; and for the next three hours was immersed in a gulf of unutterable horror. Where Akeley had given only outlines before, he now entered into minute details; presenting long transcripts of words overheard in the woods at night, long accounts of monstrous pinkish forms spied in thickets at twilight on the hills, and a terrible cosmic narrative derived from the application of profound and varied scholarship to the endless bygone discourses of the mad self-styled spy who had killed himself. I found myself faced by names and terms that I had heard elsewhere in the most hideous of connexions—Yuggoth, Great Cthulhu, Tsathoggua, Yog-Sothoth, R'lyeh, Nyarlathotep, Azathoth, Hastur, Yian, Leng, the Lake of Hali, Bethmoora, the Yellow Sign, L'mur-Kathulos, Bran, and the Magnum Innominandum—and was drawn back through nameless aeons and inconceivable dimensions to worlds of elder, outer entity at which the crazed author of the *Necronomicon* had only guessed in the vaguest way. I was told of the pits of primal life, and of the streams that had trickled down therefrom; and finally, of the tiny rivulet from one of those streams which had become entangled with the destinies of our own earth.

My brain whirled; and where before I had attempted to explain things away, I now began to believe in the most abnormal and incredible wonders. The array of vital evidence was damnably vast and overwhelming; and the cool, scientific attitude of Akeley—an attitude removed as far as imaginable from the demented, the fanatical, the hysterical, or even the extravagantly speculative—had a tremendous effect on my thought and judgment. By the time I laid the frightful letter aside I could understand the fears he had come to entertain, and was ready to do anything in my power to keep people away from those wild, haunted hills. Even now, when time has dulled the impression and made me half question my own experience and horrible doubts, there are things in that letter of Akeley's which I would not quote, or even form into words on paper. I am almost glad that the letter and record and photographs are gone now—and I wish, for reasons I shall soon make clear, that the new planet beyond Neptune had not been discovered.

With the reading of that letter my public debating about the Vermont horror permanently ended. Arguments from opponents remained unanswered or put off with promises, and eventually the controversy petered out into oblivion. During late May and June I was in constant correspondence with Akeley; though once in a while a letter would be lost, so that we would have to retrace our ground and perform considerable laborious copying. What we were trying to do, as a whole, was to compare notes in matters of obscure mythological scholarship and arrive at a clearer correlation of the Vermont horrors with the general body of primitive world legend.

For one thing, we virtually decided that these morbidities and the hellish Himalayan Mi-Go were one and the same order of incarnated nightmare. There were also absorbing zoölogical conjectures, which I would have referred to Professor Dexter in my own college but for Akeley's imperative command to tell no one of the matter before us. If I seem to disobey that command now, it is only because I think that at this stage a warning about those farther Vermont hills—and about those Himalayan peaks which bold explorers are more and more determined to ascend—is more conducive to public safety than silence would be. One specific thing we were leading up to was a deciphering of the hieroglyphics on that

infamous black stone—a deciphering which might well place us in possession of secrets deeper and more dizzying than any formerly known to man.

III.

Toward the end of June the phonograph record came—shipped from Brattleboro, since Akeley was unwilling to trust conditions on the branch line north of there. He had begun to feel an increased sense of espionage, aggravated by the loss of some of our letters; and said much about the insidious deeds of certain men whom he considered tools and agents of the hidden beings. Most of all he suspected the surly farmer Walter Brown, who lived alone on a run-down hillside place near the deep woods, and who was often seen loafing around corners in Brattleboro, Bellows Falls, Newfane, and South Londonderry in the most inexplicable and seemingly unmotivated way. Brown's voice, he felt convinced, was one of those he had overheard on a certain occasion in a very terrible conversation; and he had once found a footprint or claw-print near Brown's house which might possess the most ominous significance. It had been curiously near some of Brown's own footprints—footprints that faced toward it.

So the record was shipped from Brattleboro, whither Akeley drove in his Ford car along the lonely Vermont back roads. He confessed in an accompanying note that he was beginning to be afraid of those roads, and that he would not even go into Townshend for supplies now except in broad daylight. It did not pay, he repeated again and again, to know too much unless one were very remote from those silent and problematical hills. He would be going to California pretty soon to live with his son, though it was hard to leave a place where all one's memories and ancestral feelings centred.

Before trying the record on the commercial machine which I borrowed from the college administration building I carefully went over all the explanatory matter in Akeley's various letters. This record, he had said, was obtained about 1 a.m. on the first of May, 1915, near the closed mouth of a cave where the wooded west slope of Dark Mountain rises out of Lee's Swamp. The place had always been unusually plagued with strange voices, this being the reason he had brought the phonograph, dictaphone, and blank in expectation of results. Former experience had told him

that May-Eve—the hideous Sabbat-night of underground European legend—would probably be more fruitful than any other date, and he was not disappointed. It was noteworthy, though, that he never again heard voices at that particular spot.

Unlike most of the overheard forest voices, the substance of the record was quasi-ritualistic, and included one palpably human voice which Akeley had never been able to place. It was not Brown's, but seemed to be that of a man of greater cultivation. The second voice, however, was the real crux of the thing—for this was the accursed buzzing which had no likeness to humanity despite the human words which it uttered in good English grammar and a scholarly accent.

The recording phonograph and dictaphone had not worked uniformly well, and had of course been at a great disadvantage because of the remote and muffled nature of the overheard ritual; so that the actual speech secured was very fragmentary. Akeley had given me a transcript of what he believed the spoken words to be, and I glanced through this again as I prepared the machine for action. The text was darkly mysterious rather than openly horrible, though a knowledge of its origin and manner of gathering gave it all the associative horror which any words could well possess. I will present it here in full as I remember it—and I am fairly confident that I know it correctly by heart, not only from reading the transcript, but from playing the record itself over and over again. It is not a thing which one might readily forget!

(INDISTINGUISHABLE SOUNDS)

(A CULTIVATED MALE HUMAN VOICE)

... is the Lord of the Woods, even to ... and the gifts of the men of Leng ... so from the wells of night to the gulfs of space, and from the gulfs of space to the wells of night, ever the praises of Great Cthulhu, of Tsathoggua, and of Him Who is not to be Named. Ever Their praises, and abundance to the Black Goat of the Woods. Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Goat with a Thousand Young!

(A BUZZING IMITATION OF HUMAN SPEECH)

Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young!

(HUMAN VOICE)

And it has come to pass that the Lord of the Woods, being . . . seven and nine, down the onyx steps . . . (tri)butes to Him in the Gulf, Azathoth, He of Whom Thou hast taught us marv(els) . . . on the wings of night out beyond space, out beyond th . . . to That whereof Yuggoth is the youngest child, rolling alone in black aether at the rim. . . .

(BUZZING VOICE)

. . . go out among men and find the ways thereof, that He in the Gulf may know. To Nyarlathotep, Mighty Messenger, must all things be told. And He shall put on the semblance of men, the waxen mask and the robe that hides, and come down from the world of Seven Suns to mock. . . .

(HUMAN VOICE)

. . . (Nyarl)athotep, Great Messenger, bringer of strange joy to Yuggoth through the void, Father of the Million Favoured Ones, Stalker among. . . .

(SPEECH CUT OFF BY END OF RECORD)

Such were the words for which I was to listen when I started the phonograph. It was with a trace of genuine dread and reluctance that I pressed the lever and heard the preliminary scratching of the sapphire point, and I was glad that the first faint, fragmentary words were in a human voice—a mellow, educated voice which seemed vaguely Bostonian in accent, and which was certainly not that of any native of the Vermont hills. As I listened to the tantalisingly feeble rendering, I seemed to find the speech identical with Akeley's carefully prepared transcript. On

it chanted, in that mellow Bostonian voice . . . “Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Goat with a Thousand Young! . . .”

And then I heard the other voice. To this hour I shudder retrospectively when I think of how it struck me, prepared though I was by Akeley’s accounts. Those to whom I have since described the record profess to find nothing but cheap imposture or madness in it; but could they have heard the accursed thing itself, or read the bulk of Akeley’s correspondence (especially that terrible and encyclopaedic second letter), I know they would think differently. It is, after all, a tremendous pity that I did not disobey Akeley and play the record for others—a tremendous pity, too, that all of his letters were lost. To me, with my first-hand impression of the actual sounds, and with my knowledge of the background and surrounding circumstances, the voice was a monstrous thing. It swiftly followed the human voice in ritualistic response, but in my imagination it was a morbid echo winging its way across unimaginable abysses from unimaginable outer hells. It is more than two years now since I last ran off that blasphemous waxen cylinder; but at this moment, and at all other moments, I can still hear that feeble, fiendish buzzing as it reached me for the first time.

“Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young!”

But though that voice is always in my ears, I have not even yet been able to analyse it well enough for a graphic description. It was like the drone of some loathsome, gigantic insect ponderously shaped into the articulate speech of an alien species, and I am perfectly certain that the organs producing it can have no resemblance to the vocal organs of man, or indeed to those of any of the mammalia. There were singularities in timbre, range, and overtones which placed this phenomenon wholly outside the sphere of humanity and earth-life. Its sudden advent that first time almost stunned me, and I heard the rest of the record through in a sort of abstracted daze. When the longer passage of buzzing came, there was a sharp intensification of that feeling of blasphemous infinity which had struck me during the shorter and earlier passage. At last the record ended abruptly, during an unusually clear speech of the human and Bostonian voice; but I sat stupidly staring long after the machine had automatically stopped.

I hardly need say that I gave that shocking record many another playing, and that I made exhaustive attempts at analysis and comment in comparing notes with Akeley. It would be both useless and disturbing to repeat here all that we concluded; but I may hint that we agreed in believing we had secured a clue to the source of some of the most repulsive primordial customs in the cryptic elder religions of mankind. It seemed plain to us, also, that there were ancient and elaborate alliances between the hidden outer creatures and certain members of the human race. How extensive these alliances were, and how their state today might compare with their state in earlier ages, we had no means of guessing; yet at best there was room for a limitless amount of horrified speculation. There seemed to be an awful, immemorial linkage in several definite stages betwixt man and nameless infinity. The blasphemies which appeared on earth, it was hinted, came from the dark planet Yuggoth, at the rim of the solar system; but this was itself merely the populous outpost of a frightful interstellar race whose ultimate source must lie far outside even the Einsteinian space-time continuum or greatest known cosmos.

Meanwhile we continued to discuss the black stone and the best way of getting it to Arkham—Akeley deeming it inadvisable to have me visit him at the scene of his nightmare studies. For some reason or other, Akeley was afraid to trust the thing to any ordinary or expected transportation route. His final idea was to take it across county to Bellows Falls and ship it on the Boston and Maine system through Keene and Winchendon and Fitchburg, even though this would necessitate his driving along somewhat lonelier and more forest-traversing hill roads than the main highway to Brattleboro. He said he had noticed a man around the express office at Brattleboro when he had sent the phonograph record, whose actions and expression had been far from reassuring. This man had seemed too anxious to talk with the clerks, and had taken the train on which the record was shipped. Akeley confessed that he had not felt strictly at ease about that record until he heard from me of its safe receipt.

About this time—the second week in July—another letter of mine went astray, as I learned through an anxious communication from Akeley. After that he told me to address him no more at Townshend, but to send all mail in care of the General Delivery at Brattleboro; whither he would make frequent trips either in his car or

on the motor-coach line which had lately replaced passenger service on the lagging branch railway. I could see that he was getting more and more anxious, for he went into much detail about the increased barking of the dogs on moonless nights, and about the fresh claw-prints he sometimes found in the road and in the mud at the back of his farmyard when morning came. Once he told about a veritable army of prints drawn up in a line facing an equally thick and resolute line of dog-tracks, and sent a loathsomely disturbing kodak picture to prove it. That was after a night on which the dogs had outdone themselves in barking and howling.

On the morning of Wednesday, July 18, I received a telegram from Bellows Falls, in which Akeley said he was expressing the black stone over the B. & M. on Train No. 5508, leaving Bellows Falls at 12:15 p.m., standard time, and due at the North Station in Boston at 4:12 p.m. It ought, I calculated, to get up to Arkham at least by the next noon; and accordingly I stayed in all Thursday morning to receive it. But noon came and went without its advent, and when I telephoned down to the express office I was informed that no shipment for me had arrived. My next act, performed amidst a growing alarm, was to give a long-distance call to the express agent at the Boston North Station; and I was scarcely surprised to learn that my consignment had not appeared. Train No. 5508 had pulled in only 35 minutes late on the day before, but had contained no box addressed to me. The agent promised, however, to institute a searching inquiry; and I ended the day by sending Akeley a night-letter outlining the situation.

With commendable promptness a report came from the Boston office on the following afternoon, the agent telephoning as soon as he learned the facts. It seemed that the railway express clerk on No. 5508 had been able to recall an incident which might have much bearing on my loss—an argument with a very curious-voiced man, lean, sandy, and rustic-looking, when the train was waiting at Keene, N.H., shortly after one o'clock standard time.

The man, he said, was greatly excited about a heavy box which he claimed to expect, but which was neither on the train nor entered on the company's books. He had given the name of Stanley Adams, and had had such a queerly thick droning voice, that it made the clerk abnormally dizzy and sleepy to listen to him. The clerk could not remember quite how the conversation had ended, but recalled starting into a fuller awakesness when the train began to move. The Boston agent added

that this clerk was a young man of wholly unquestioned veracity and reliability, of known antecedents and long with the company.

That evening I went to Boston to interview the clerk in person, having obtained his name and address from the office. He was a frank, prepossessing fellow, but I saw that he could add nothing to his original account. Oddly, he was scarcely sure that he could even recognise the strange inquirer again. Realising that he had no more to tell, I returned to Arkham and sat up till morning writing letters to Akeley, to the express company, and to the police department and station agent in Keene. I felt that the strange-voiced man who had so queerly affected the clerk must have a pivotal place in the ominous business, and hoped that Keene station employees and telegraph-office records might tell something about him and about how he happened to make his inquiry when and where he did.

I must admit, however, that all my investigations came to nothing. The queer-voiced man had indeed been noticed around the Keene station in the early afternoon of July 18, and one lounge seemed to couple him vaguely with a heavy box; but he was altogether unknown, and had not been seen before or since. He had not visited the telegraph office or received any message so far as could be learned, nor had any message which might justly be considered a notice of the black stone's presence on No. 5508 come through the office for anyone. Naturally Akeley joined with me in conducting these inquiries, and even made a personal trip to Keene to question the people around the station; but his attitude toward the matter was more fatalistic than mine. He seemed to find the loss of the box a portentous and menacing fulfilment of inevitable tendencies, and had no real hope at all of its recovery. He spoke of the undoubted telepathic and hypnotic powers of the hill creatures and their agents, and in one letter hinted that he did not believe the stone was on this earth any longer. For my part, I was duly enraged, for I had felt there was at least a chance of learning profound and astonishing things from the old, blurred hieroglyphs. The matter would have rankled bitterly in my mind had not Akeley's immediate subsequent letters brought up a new phase of the whole horrible hill problem which at once seized all my attention.

IV.

The unknown things, Akeley wrote in a script grown pitifully tremulous, had begun to close in on him with a wholly new degree of determination. The nocturnal barking of the dogs whenever the moon was dim or absent was hideous now, and there had been attempts to molest him on the lonely roads he had to traverse by day. On the second of August, while bound for the village in his car, he had found a tree-trunk laid in his path at a point where the highway ran through a deep patch of woods; while the savage barking of the two great dogs he had with him told all too well of the things which must have been lurking near. What would have happened had the dogs not been there, he did not dare guess—but he never went out now without at least two of his faithful and powerful pack. Other road experiences had occurred on August 5th and 6th; a shot grazing his car on one occasion, and the barking of the dogs telling of unholy woodland presences on the other.

On August 15th I received a frantic letter which disturbed me greatly, and which made me wish Akeley could put aside his lonely reticence and call in the aid of the law. There had been frightful happenings on the night of the 12-13th, bullets flying outside the farmhouse, and three of the twelve great dogs being found shot dead in the morning. There were myriads of claw-prints in the road, with the human prints of Walter Brown among them. Akeley had started to telephone to Brattleboro for more dogs, but the wire had gone dead before he had a chance to say much. Later he went to Brattleboro in his car, and learned there that linemen had found the main telephone cable neatly cut at a point where it ran through the deserted hills north of Newfane. But he was about to start home with four fine new dogs, and several cases of ammunition for his big-game repeating rifle. The letter was written at the post office in Brattleboro, and came through to me without delay.

My attitude toward the matter was by this time quickly slipping from a scientific to an alarmedly personal one. I was afraid for Akeley in his remote, lonely farmhouse, and half afraid for myself because of my now definite connexion with the strange hill problem. The thing was reaching out so. Would it suck me in and engulf me? In replying to his letter I urged him to seek help, and hinted that I might

take action myself if he did not. I spoke of visiting Vermont in person in spite of his wishes, and of helping him explain the situation to the proper authorities. In return, however, I received only a telegram from Bellows Falls which read thus:

APPRECIATE YOUR POSITION BUT CAN DO NOTHING. TAKE NO ACTION
YOURSELF FOR IT COULD ONLY HARM BOTH. WAIT FOR EXPLANATION.

HENRY AKELY

But the affair was steadily deepening. Upon my replying to the telegram I received a shaky note from Akeley with the astonishing news that he had not only never sent the wire, but had not received the letter from me to which it was an obvious reply. Hasty inquiries by him at Bellows Falls had brought out that the message was deposited by a strange sandy-haired man with a curiously thick, droning voice, though more than this he could not learn. The clerk shewed him the original text as scrawled in pencil by the sender, but the handwriting was wholly unfamiliar. It was noticeable that the signature was misspelled—A-K-E-L-Y, without the second “E”. Certain conjectures were inevitable, but amidst the obvious crisis he did not stop to elaborate upon them.

He spoke of the death of more dogs and the purchase of still others, and of the exchange of gunfire which had become a settled feature each moonless night. Brown’s prints, and the prints of at least one or two more shod human figures, were now found regularly among the claw-prints in the road, and at the back of the farmyard. It was, Akeley admitted, a pretty bad business; and before long he would probably have to go to live with his California son whether or not he could sell the old place. But it was not easy to leave the only spot one could really think of as home. He must try to hang on a little longer; perhaps he could scare off the intruders—especially if he openly gave up all further attempts to penetrate their secrets.

Writing Akeley at once, I renewed my offers of aid, and spoke again of visiting him and helping him convince the authorities of his dire peril. In his reply he seemed less set against that plan than his past attitude would have led one to predict, but said he would like to hold off a little while longer—long enough to get his things in order and reconcile himself to the idea of leaving an almost morbidly cherished birthplace. People looked askance at his studies and speculations, and it

would be better to get quietly off without setting the countryside in a turmoil and creating widespread doubts of his own sanity. He had had enough, he admitted, but he wanted to make a dignified exit if he could.

This letter reached me on the twenty-eighth of August, and I prepared and mailed as encouraging a reply as I could. Apparently the encouragement had effect, for Akeley had fewer terrors to report when he acknowledged my note. He was not very optimistic, though, and expressed the belief that it was only the full moon season which was holding the creatures off. He hoped there would not be many densely cloudy nights, and talked vaguely of boarding in Brattleboro when the moon waned. Again I wrote him encouragingly, but on September 5th there came a fresh communication which had obviously crossed my letter in the mails; and to this I could not give any such hopeful response. In view of its importance I believe I had better give it in full—as best I can do from memory of the shaky script. It ran substantially as follows:

Monday.

Dear Wilmarth—

A rather discouraging P.S. to my last. Last night was thickly cloudy—though no rain—and not a bit of moonlight got through. Things were pretty bad, and I think the end is getting near, in spite of all we have hoped. After midnight something landed on the roof of the house, and the dogs all rushed up to see what it was. I could hear them snapping and tearing around, and then one managed to get on the roof by jumping from the low ell. There was a terrible fight up there, and I heard a frightful buzzing which I'll never forget. And then there was a shocking smell. About the same time bullets came through the window and nearly grazed me. I think the main line of the hill creatures had got close to the house when the dogs divided because of the roof business. What was up there I don't know yet, but I'm afraid the creatures are learning to steer better with their space wings. I put out the light and used the windows for loopholes, and raked all around the house with rifle fire aimed just high enough not to hit the dogs. That seemed to end the business, but in the morning I found great pools of blood in the yard, beside pools of a green sticky stuff that had the worst odour I have ever smelled. I climbed up on the roof and found more of the sticky stuff there. Five of the dogs were killed—

I'm afraid I hit one by aiming too low, for he was shot in the back. Now I am setting the panes the shots broke, and am going to Brattleboro for more dogs. I guess the men at the kennels think I am crazy. Will drop another note later. Suppose I'll be ready for moving in a week or two, though it nearly kills me to think of it.

Hastily—

AKELEY

But this was not the only letter from Akeley to cross mine. On the next morning—September 6th—still another came; this time a frantic scrawl which utterly unnerved me and put me at a loss what to say or do next. Again I cannot do better than quote the text as faithfully as memory will let me.

Tuesday.

Clouds didn't break, so no moon again—and going into the wane anyhow. I'd have the house wired for electricity and put in a searchlight if I didn't know they'd cut the cables as fast as they could be mended.

I think I am going crazy. It may be that all I have ever written you is a dream or madness. It was bad enough before, but this time it is too much. They talked to me last night—talked in that cursed buzzing voice and told me things that I dare not repeat to you. I heard them plainly over the barking of the dogs, and once when they were drowned out a human voice helped them. Keep out of this, Wilmarth—it is worse than either you or I ever suspected. They don't mean to let me get to California now—they want to take me off alive, or what theoretically and mentally amounts to alive—not only to Yuggoth, but beyond that—away outside the galaxy and possibly beyond the last curved rim of space. I told them I wouldn't go where they wish, or in the terrible way they propose to take me, but I'm afraid it will be no use. My place is so far out that they may come by day as well as by night before long. Six more dogs killed, and I felt presences all along the wooded parts of the road when I drove to Brattleboro today.

It was a mistake for me to try to send you that phonograph record and black stone. Better smash the record before it's too late. Will drop you another line

tomorrow if I'm still here. Wish I could arrange to get my books and things to Brattleboro and board there. I would run off without anything if I could, but something inside my mind holds me back. I can slip out to Brattleboro, where I ought to be safe, but I feel just as much a prisoner there as at the house. And I seem to know that I couldn't get much farther even if I dropped everything and tried. It is horrible—don't get mixed up in this.

Yrs—AKELEY

I did not sleep at all the night after receiving this terrible thing, and was utterly baffled as to Akeley's remaining degree of sanity. The substance of the note was wholly insane, yet the manner of expression—in view of all that had gone before—had a grimly potent quality of convincingness. I made no attempt to answer it, thinking it better to wait until Akeley might have time to reply to my latest communication. Such a reply indeed came on the following day, though the fresh material in it quite overshadowed any of the points brought up by the letter it nominally answered. Here is what I recall of the text, scrawled and blotted as it was in the course of a plainly frantic and hurried composition.

Wednesday.

W—

Your letter came, but it's no use to discuss anything any more. I am fully resigned. Wonder that I have even enough will power left to fight them off. Can't escape even if I were willing to give up everything and run. They'll get me.

Had a letter from them yesterday—R.F.D. man brought it while I was at Brattleboro. Typed and postmarked Bellows Falls. Tells what they want to do with me—I can't repeat it. Look out for yourself, too! Smash that record. Cloudy nights keep up, and moon waning all the time. Wish I dared to get help—it might brace up my will power—but everyone who would dare to come at all would call me crazy unless there happened to be some proof. Couldn't ask people to come for no reason at all—am all out of touch with everybody and have been for years.

But I haven't told you the worst, Wilmarth. Brace up to read this, for it will give you a shock. I am telling the truth, though. It is this—I have seen and touched one of the things, or part of one of the things. God, man, but it's awful! It was dead, of course. One of the dogs had it, and I found it near the kennel this morning. I tried to save it in the woodshed to convince people of the whole thing, but it all evaporated in a few hours. Nothing left. You know, all those things in the rivers were seen only on the first morning after the flood. And here's the worst. I tried to photograph it for you, but when I developed the film there wasn't anything visible except the woodshed. What can the thing have been made of? I saw it and felt it, and they all leave footprints. It was surely made of matter—but what kind of matter? The shape can't be described. It was a great crab with a lot of pyramided fleshy rings or knots of thick, ropy stuff covered with feelers where a man's head would be. That green sticky stuff is its blood or juice. And there are more of them due on earth any minute.

Walter Brown is missing—hasn't been seen loafing around any of his usual corners in the villages hereabouts. I must have got him with one of my shots, though the creatures always seem to try to take their dead and wounded away.

Got into town this afternoon without any trouble, but am afraid they're beginning to hold off because they're sure of me. Am writing this in Brattleboro P.O. This may be goodbye—if it is, write my son George Goodenough Akeley, 176 Pleasant St., San Diego, Cal., but don't come up here. Write the boy if you don't hear from me in a week, and watch the papers for news.

I'm going to play my last two cards now—if I have the will power left. First to try poison gas on the things (I've got the right chemicals and have fixed up masks for myself and the dogs) and then if that doesn't work, tell the sheriff. They can lock me in a madhouse if they want to—it'll be better than what the other creatures would do. Perhaps I can get them to pay attention to the prints around the house—they are faint, but I can find them every morning. Suppose, though, police would say I faked them somehow; for they all think I'm a queer character.

Must try to have a state policeman spend a night here and see for himself—though it would be just like the creatures to learn about it and hold off that night. They cut my wires whenever I try to telephone in the night—the linemen think it is

very queer, and may testify for me if they don't go and imagine I cut them myself. I haven't tried to keep them repaired for over a week now.

I could get some of the ignorant people to testify for me about the reality of the horrors, but everybody laughs at what they say, and anyway, they have shunned my place for so long that they don't know any of the new events. You couldn't get one of those run-down farmers to come within a mile of my house for love or money. The mail-carrier hears what they say and jokes me about it—God! If I only dared tell him how real it is! I think I'll try to get him to notice the prints, but he comes in the afternoon and they're usually about gone by that time. If I kept one by setting a box or pan over it, he'd think surely it was a fake or joke.

Wish I hadn't gotten to be such a hermit, so folks don't drop around as they used to. I've never dared shew the black stone or the kodak pictures, or play that record, to anybody but the ignorant people. The others would say I faked the whole business and do nothing but laugh. But I may yet try shewing the pictures. They give those claw-prints clearly, even if the things that made them can't be photographed. What a shame nobody else saw that thing this morning before it went to nothing!

But I don't know as I care. After what I've been through, a madhouse is as good a place as any. The doctors can help me make up my mind to get away from this house, and that is all that will save me.

Write my son George if you don't hear soon. Goodbye, smash that record, and don't mix up in this.

Yrs—AKELEY

The letter frankly plunged me into the blackest of terror. I did not know what to say in answer, but scratched off some incoherent words of advice and encouragement and sent them by registered mail. I recall urging Akeley to move to Brattleboro at once, and place himself under the protection of the authorities; adding that I would come to that town with the phonograph record and help convince the courts of his sanity. It was time, too, I think I wrote, to alarm the people generally against this thing in their midst. It will be observed that at this

moment of stress my own belief in all Akeley had told and claimed was virtually complete, though I did think his failure to get a picture of the dead monster was due not to any freak of Nature but to some excited slip of his own.

V.

Then, apparently crossing my incoherent note and reaching me Saturday afternoon, September 8th, came that curiously different and calming letter neatly typed on a new machine; that strange letter of reassurance and invitation which must have marked so prodigious a transition in the whole nightmare drama of the lonely hills. Again I will quote from memory—seeking for special reasons to preserve as much of the flavour of the style as I can. It was postmarked Bellows Falls, and the signature as well as the body of the letter was typed—as is frequent with beginners in typing. The text, though, was marvellously accurate for a tyro's work; and I concluded that Akeley must have used a machine at some previous period—perhaps in college. To say that the letter relieved me would be only fair, yet beneath my relief lay a substratum of uneasiness. If Akeley had been sane in his terror, was he now sane in his deliverance? And the sort of "improved rapport" mentioned . . . what was it? The entire thing implied such a diametrical reversal of Akeley's previous attitude! But here is the substance of the text, carefully transcribed from a memory in which I take some pride.

Townshend, Vermont,
Thursday, Sept. 6, 1928.

My dear Wilmarth:—

It gives me great pleasure to be able to set you at rest regarding all the silly things I've been writing you. I say "silly", although by that I mean my frightened attitude rather than my descriptions of certain phenomena. Those phenomena are real and important enough; my mistake had been in establishing an anomalous attitude toward them.

I think I mentioned that my strange visitors were beginning to communicate with me, and to attempt such communication. Last night this exchange of speech

became actual. In response to certain signals I admitted to the house a messenger from those outside—a fellow-human, let me hasten to say. He told me much that neither you nor I had even begun to guess, and shewed clearly how totally we had misjudged and misinterpreted the purpose of the Outer Ones in maintaining their secret colony on this planet.

It seems that the evil legends about what they have offered to men, and what they wish in connexion with the earth, are wholly the result of an ignorant misconception of allegorical speech—speech, of course, moulded by cultural backgrounds and thought-habits vastly different from anything we dream of. My own conjectures, I freely own, shot as widely past the mark as any of the guesses of illiterate farmers and savage Indians. What I had thought morbid and shameful and ignominious is in reality awesome and mind-expanding and even glorious—my previous estimate being merely a phase of man’s eternal tendency to hate and fear and shrink from the utterly different.

Now I regret the harm I have inflicted upon these alien and incredible beings in the course of our nightly skirmishes. If only I had consented to talk peacefully and reasonably with them in the first place! But they bear me no grudge, their emotions being organised very differently from ours. It is their misfortune to have had as their human agents in Vermont some very inferior specimens—the late Walter Brown, for example. He prejudiced me vastly against them. Actually, they have never knowingly harmed men, but have often been cruelly wronged and spied upon by our species. There is a whole secret cult of evil men (a man of your mystical erudition will understand me when I link them with Hastur and the Yellow Sign) devoted to the purpose of tracking them down and injuring them on behalf of monstrous powers from other dimensions. It is against these aggressors—not against normal humanity—that the drastic precautions of the Outer Ones are directed. Incidentally, I learned that many of our lost letters were stolen not by the Outer Ones but by the emissaries of this malign cult.

All that the Outer Ones wish of man is peace and non-molestation and an increasing intellectual rapport. This latter is absolutely necessary now that our inventions and devices are expanding our knowledge and motions, and making it more and more impossible for the Outer Ones’ necessary outposts to exist secretly on this planet. The alien beings desire to know mankind more fully, and to have a

few of mankind's philosophic and scientific leaders know more about them. With such an exchange of knowledge all perils will pass, and a satisfactory *modus vivendi* be established. The very idea of any attempt to enslave or degrade mankind is ridiculous.

As a beginning of this improved rapport, the Outer Ones have naturally chosen me—whose knowledge of them is already so considerable—as their primary interpreter on earth. Much was told me last night—facts of the most stupendous and vista-opening nature—and more will be subsequently communicated to me both orally and in writing. I shall not be called upon to make any trip outside just yet, though I shall probably wish to do so later on—employing special means and transcending everything which we have hitherto been accustomed to regard as human experience. My house will be besieged no longer. Everything has reverted to normal, and the dogs will have no further occupation. In place of terror I have been given a rich boon of knowledge and intellectual adventure which few other mortals have ever shared.

The Outer Beings are perhaps the most marvellous organic things in or beyond all space and time—members of a cosmos-wide race of which all other life-forms are merely degenerate variants. They are more vegetable than animal, if these terms can be applied to the sort of matter composing them, and have a somewhat fungoid structure; though the presence of a chlorophyll-like substance and a very singular nutritive system differentiate them altogether from true cormophytic fungi. Indeed, the type is composed of a form of matter totally alien to our part of space—with electrons having a wholly different vibration-rate. That is why the beings cannot be photographed on the ordinary camera films and plates of our known universe, even though our eyes can see them. With proper knowledge, however, any good chemist could make a photographic emulsion which would record their images.

The genus is unique in its ability to traverse the heatless and airless interstellar void in full corporeal form, and some of its variants cannot do this without mechanical aid or curious surgical transpositions. Only a few species have the ether-resisting wings characteristic of the Vermont variety. Those inhabiting certain remote peaks in the Old World were brought in other ways. Their external resemblance to animal life, and to the sort of structure we understand as material,

is a matter of parallel evolution rather than of close kinship. Their brain-capacity exceeds that of any other surviving life-form, although the winged types of our hill country are by no means the most highly developed. Telepathy is their usual means of discourse, though they have rudimentary vocal organs which, after a slight operation (for surgery is an incredibly expert and every-day thing among them), can roughly duplicate the speech of such types of organism as still use speech.

Their main immediate abode is a still undiscovered and almost lightless planet at the very edge of our solar system—beyond Neptune, and the ninth in distance from the sun. It is, as we have inferred, the object mystically hinted at as “Yuggoth” in certain ancient and forbidden writings; and it will soon be the scene of a strange focussing of thought upon our world in an effort to facilitate mental rapport. I would not be surprised if astronomers became sufficiently sensitive to these thought-currents to discover Yuggoth when the Outer Ones wish them to do so. But Yuggoth, of course, is only the stepping-stone. The main body of the beings inhabits strangely organised abysses wholly beyond the utmost reach of any human imagination. The space-time globule which we recognise as the totality of all cosmic entity is only an atom in the genuine infinity which is theirs. And as much of this infinity as any human brain can hold is eventually to be opened up to me, as it has been to not more than fifty other men since the human race has existed.

You will probably call this raving at first, Wilmarth, but in time you will appreciate the titanic opportunity I have stumbled upon. I want you to share as much of it as is possible, and to that end must tell you thousands of things that won't go on paper. In the past I have warned you not to come to see me. Now that all is safe, I take pleasure in rescinding that warning and inviting you.

Can't you make a trip up here before your college term opens? It would be marvellously delightful if you could. Bring along the phonograph record and all my letters to you as consultative data—we shall need them in piecing together the whole tremendous story. You might bring the kodak prints, too, since I seem to have mislaid the negatives and my own prints in all this recent excitement. But what a wealth of facts I have to add to all this groping and tentative material—and what a stupendous device I have to supplement my additions!

Don't hesitate—I am free from espionage now, and you will not meet anything unnatural or disturbing. Just come along and let my car meet you at the Brattleboro station—prepare to stay as long as you can, and expect many an evening of discussion of things beyond all human conjecture. Don't tell anyone about it, of course—for this matter must not get to the promiscuous public.

The train service to Brattleboro is not bad—you can get a time-table in Boston. Take the B. & M. to Greenfield, and then change for the brief remainder of the way. I suggest your taking the convenient 4:10 p.m.—standard—from Boston. This gets into Greenfield at 7:35, and at 9:19 a train leaves there which reaches Brattleboro at 10:01. That is week-days. Let me know the date and I'll have my car on hand at the station.

Pardon this typed letter, but my handwriting has grown shaky of late, as you know, and I don't feel equal to long stretches of script. I got this new Corona in Brattleboro yesterday—it seems to work very well.

Awaiting word, and hoping to see you shortly with the phonograph record and all my letters—and the kodak prints—

I am

Yours in anticipation,

HENRY W. AKELEY.

To Albert N. Wilmarth, Esq.,

Miskatonic University,

Arkham, Mass.

The complexity of my emotions upon reading, re-reading, and pondering over this strange and unlooked-for letter is past adequate description. I have said that I was at once relieved and made uneasy, but this expresses only crudely the overtones of diverse and largely subconscious feelings which comprised both the relief and the uneasiness. To begin with, the thing was so antipodally at variance with the whole chain of horrors preceding it—the change of mood from stark terror to cool complacency and even exultation was so unheralded, lightning-like, and complete! I could scarcely believe that a single day could so alter the psychological perspective of one who had written that final frenzied bulletin of

Wednesday, no matter what relieving disclosures that day might have brought. At certain moments a sense of conflicting unrealities made me wonder whether this whole distantly reported drama of fantastic forces were not a kind of half-illusory dream created largely within my own mind. Then I thought of the phonograph record and gave way to still greater bewilderment.

The letter seemed so unlike anything which could have been expected! As I analysed my impression, I saw that it consisted of two distinct phases. First, granting that Akeley had been sane before and was still sane, the indicated change in the situation itself was so swift and unthinkable. And secondly, the change in Akeley's own manner, attitude, and language was so vastly beyond the normal or the predictable. The man's whole personality seemed to have undergone an insidious mutation—a mutation so deep that one could scarcely reconcile his two aspects with the supposition that both represented equal sanity. Word-choice, spelling—all were subtly different. And with my academic sensitiveness to prose style, I could trace profound divergences in his commonest reactions and rhythm-responses. Certainly, the emotional cataclysm or revelation which could produce so radical an overturn must be an extreme one indeed! Yet in another way the letter seemed quite characteristic of Akeley. The same old passion for infinity—the same old scholarly inquisitiveness. I could not a moment—or more than a moment—credit the idea of spuriousness or malign substitution. Did not the invitation—the willingness to have me test the truth of the letter in person—prove its genuineness?

I did not retire Saturday night, but sat up thinking of the shadows and marvels behind the letter I had received. My mind, aching from the quick succession of monstrous conceptions it had been forced to confront during the last four months, worked upon this startling new material in a cycle of doubt and acceptance which repeated most of the steps experienced in facing the earlier wonders; till long before dawn a burning interest and curiosity had begun to replace the original storm of perplexity and uneasiness. Mad or sane, metamorphosed or merely relieved, the chances were that Akeley had actually encountered some stupendous change of perspective in his hazardous research; some change at once diminishing his danger—real or fancied—and opening dizzy new vistas of cosmic and superhuman knowledge. My own zeal for the unknown flared up to meet his, and I

felt myself touched by the contagion of the morbid barrier-breaking. To shake off the maddening and wearying limitations of time and space and natural law—to be linked with the vast outside—to come close to the nighted and abysmal secrets of the infinite and the ultimate—surely such a thing was worth the risk of one's life, soul, and sanity! And Akeley had said there was no longer any peril—he had invited me to visit him instead of warning me away as before. I tingled at the thought of what he might now have to tell me—there was an almost paralysing fascination in the thought of sitting in that lonely and lately beleaguered farmhouse with a man who had talked with actual emissaries from outer space; sitting there with the terrible record and the pile of letters in which Akeley had summarised his earlier conclusions.

So late Sunday morning I telegraphed Akeley that I would meet him in Brattleboro on the following Wednesday—September 12th—if that date were convenient for him. In only one respect did I depart from his suggestions, and that concerned the choice of a train. Frankly, I did not feel like arriving in that haunted Vermont region late at night; so instead of accepting the train he chose I telephoned the station and devised another arrangement. By rising early and taking the 8:07 a.m. (standard) into Boston, I could catch the 9:25 for Greenfield; arriving there at 12:22 noon. This connected exactly with a train reaching Brattleboro at 1:08 p.m.—a much more comfortable hour than 10:01 for meeting Akeley and riding with him into the close-packed, secret-guarding hills.

I mentioned this choice in my telegram, and was glad to learn in the reply which came toward evening that it had met with my prospective host's endorsement. His wire ran thus:

ARRANGEMENT SATISFACTORY. WILL MEET 1:08 TRAIN WEDNESDAY. DON'T FORGET RECORD AND LETTERS AND PRINTS. KEEP DESTINATION QUIET. EXPECT GREAT REVELATIONS.

AKELEY.

Receipt of this message in direct response to one sent to Akeley—and necessarily delivered to his house from the Townshend station either by official messenger or by a restored telephone service—removed any lingering subconscious doubts I may have had about the authorship of the perplexing letter.

My relief was marked—indeed, it was greater than I could account for at that time; since all such doubts had been rather deeply buried. But I slept soundly and long that night, and was eagerly busy with preparations during the ensuing two days.

VI.

On Wednesday I started as agreed, taking with me a valise full of simple necessities and scientific data, including the hideous phonograph record, the kodak prints, and the entire file of Akeley's correspondence. As requested, I had told no one where I was going; for I could see that the matter demanded utmost privacy, even allowing for its most favourable turns. The thought of actual mental contact with alien, outside entities was stupefying enough to my trained and somewhat prepared mind; and this being so, what might one think of its effect on the vast masses of uninformed laymen? I do not know whether dread or adventurous expectancy was uppermost in me as I changed trains in Boston and began the long westward run out of familiar regions into those I knew less thoroughly. Waltham—Concord—Ayer—Fitchburg—Gardner—Athol—

My train reached Greenfield seven minutes late, but the northbound connecting express had been held. Transferring in haste, I felt a curious breathlessness as the cars rumbled on through the early afternoon sunlight into territories I had always read of but had never before visited. I knew I was entering an altogether older-fashioned and more primitive New England than the mechanised, urbanised coastal and southern areas where all my life had been spent; an unspoiled, ancestral New England without the foreigners and factory-smoke, billboards and concrete roads, of the sections which modernity has touched. There would be odd survivals of that continuous native life whose deep roots make it the one authentic outgrowth of the landscape—the continuous native life which keeps alive strange ancient memories, and fertilises the soil for shadowy, marvellous, and seldom-mentioned beliefs.

Now and then I saw the blue Connecticut River gleaming in the sun, and after leaving Northfield we crossed it. Ahead loomed green and cryptical hills, and when the conductor came around I learned that I was at last in Vermont. He told me to set my watch back an hour, since the northern hill country will have no dealings

with new-fangled daylight time schemes. As I did so it seemed to me that I was likewise turning the calendar back a century.

The train kept close to the river, and across in New Hampshire I could see the approaching slope of steep Wantastiquet, about which singular old legends cluster. Then streets appeared on my left, and a green island shewed in the stream on my right. People rose and filed to the door, and I followed them. The car stopped, and I alighted beneath the long train-shed of the Brattleboro station.

Looking over the line of waiting motors I hesitated a moment to see which one might turn out to be the Akeley Ford, but my identity was divined before I could take the initiative. And yet it was clearly not Akeley himself who advanced to meet me with an outstretched hand and a mellowly phrased query as to whether I was indeed Mr. Albert N. Wilmarth of Arkham. This man bore no resemblance to the bearded, grizzled Akeley of the snapshot; but was a younger and more urban person, fashionably dressed, and wearing only a small, dark moustache. His cultivated voice held an odd and almost disturbing hint of vague familiarity, though I could not definitely place it in my memory.

As I surveyed him I heard him explaining that he was a friend of my prospective host's who had come down from Townshend in his stead. Akeley, he declared, had suffered a sudden attack of some asthmatic trouble, and did not feel equal to making a trip in the outdoor air. It was not serious, however, and there was to be no change in plans regarding my visit. I could not make out just how much this Mr. Noyes—as he announced himself—knew of Akeley's researches and discoveries, though it seemed to me that his casual manner stamped him as a comparative outsider. Remembering what a hermit Akeley had been, I was a trifle surprised at the ready availability of such a friend; but did not let my puzzlement deter me from entering the motor to which he gestured me. It was not the small ancient car I had expected from Akeley's descriptions, but a large and immaculate specimen of recent pattern—apparently Noyes's own, and bearing Massachusetts licence plates with the amusing "sacred codfish" device of that year. My guide, I concluded, must be a summer transient in the Townshend region.

Noyes climbed into the car beside me and started it at once. I was glad that he did not overflow with conversation, for some peculiar atmospheric tensity made

me feel disinclined to talk. The town seemed very attractive in the afternoon sunlight as we swept up an incline and turned to the right into the main street. It drowsed like the older New England cities which one remembers from boyhood, and something in the collocation of roofs and steeples and chimneys and brick walls formed contours touching deep viol-strings of ancestral emotion. I could tell that I was at the gateway of a region half-bewitched through the piling-up of unbroken time-accumulations; a region where old, strange things have had a chance to grow and linger because they have never been stirred up.

As we passed out of Brattleboro my sense of constraint and foreboding increased, for a vague quality in the hill-crowded countryside with its towering, threatening, close-pressing green and granite slopes hinted at obscure secrets and immemorial survivals which might or might not be hostile to mankind. For a time our course followed a broad, shallow river which flowed down from unknown hills in the north, and I shivered when my companion told me it was the West River. It was in this stream, I recalled from newspaper items, that one of the morbid crab-like beings had been seen floating after the floods.

Gradually the country around us grew wilder and more deserted. Archaic covered bridges lingered fearsomely out of the past in pockets of the hills, and the half-abandoned railway track paralleling the river seemed to exhale a nebulously visible air of desolation. There were awesome sweeps of vivid valley where great cliffs rose, New England's virgin granite shewing grey and austere through the verdure that scaled the crests. There were gorges where untamed streams leaped, bearing down toward the river the unimagined secrets of a thousand pathless peaks. Branching away now and then were narrow, half-concealed roads that bored their way through solid, luxuriant masses of forest among whose primal trees whole armies of elemental spirits might well lurk. As I saw these I thought of how Akeley had been molested by unseen agencies on his drives along this very route, and did not wonder that such things could be.

The quaint, sightly village of Newfane, reached in less than an hour, was our last link with that world which man can definitely call his own by virtue of conquest and complete occupancy. After that we cast off all allegiance to immediate, tangible, and time-touched things, and entered a fantastic world of hushed unreality in which the narrow, ribbon-like road rose and fell and curved with an

almost sentient and purposeful caprice amidst the tenantless green peaks and half-deserted valleys. Except for the sound of the motor, and the faint stir of the few lonely farms we passed at infrequent intervals, the only thing that reached my ears was the gurgling, insidious trickle of strange waters from numberless hidden fountains in the shadowy woods.

The nearness and intimacy of the dwarfed, domed hills now became veritably breath-taking. Their steepness and abruptness were even greater than I had imagined from hearsay, and suggested nothing in common with the prosaic objective world we know. The dense, unvisited woods on those inaccessible slopes seemed to harbour alien and incredible things, and I felt that the very outline of the hills themselves held some strange and aeon-forgotten meaning, as if they were vast hieroglyphs left by a rumoured titan race whose glories live only in rare, deep dreams. All the legends of the past, and all the stupefying imputations of Henry Akeley's letters and exhibits, welled up in my memory to heighten the atmosphere of tension and growing menace. The purpose of my visit, and the frightful abnormalities it postulated, struck me all at once with a chill sensation that nearly overbalanced my ardour for strange delvings.

My guide must have noticed my disturbed attitude; for as the road grew wilder and more irregular, and our motion slower and more jolting, his occasional pleasant comments expanded into a steadier flow of discourse. He spoke of the beauty and weirdness of the country, and revealed some acquaintance with the folklore studies of my prospective host. From his polite questions it was obvious that he knew I had come for a scientific purpose, and that I was bringing data of some importance; but he gave no sign of appreciating the depth and awfulness of the knowledge which Akeley had finally reached.

His manner was so cheerful, normal, and urbane that his remarks ought to have calmed and reassured me; but oddly enough, I felt only the more disturbed as we bumped and veered onward into the unknown wilderness of hills and woods. At times it seemed as if he were pumping me to see what I knew of the monstrous secrets of the place, and with every fresh utterance that vague, teasing, baffling familiarity in his voice increased. It was not an ordinary or healthy familiarity despite the thoroughly wholesome and cultivated nature of the voice. I somehow linked it with forgotten nightmares, and felt that I might go mad if I recognised it. If

any good excuse had existed, I think I would have turned back from my visit. As it was, I could not well do so—and it occurred to me that a cool, scientific conversation with Akeley himself after my arrival would help greatly to pull me together.

Besides, there was a strangely calming element of cosmic beauty in the hypnotic landscape through which we climbed and plunged fantastically. Time had lost itself in the labyrinths behind, and around us stretched only the flowering waves of faery and the recaptured loveliness of vanished centuries—the hoary groves, the untainted pastures edged with gay autumnal blossoms, and at vast intervals the small brown farmsteads nestling amidst huge trees beneath vertical precipices of fragrant brier and meadow-grass. Even the sunlight assumed a supernal glamour, as if some special atmosphere or exhalation mantled the whole region. I had seen nothing like it before save in the magic vistas that sometimes form the backgrounds of Italian primitives. Sodoma and Leonardo conceived such expanses, but only in the distance, and through the vaultings of Renaissance arcades. We were now burrowing bodily through the midst of the picture, and I seemed to find in its necromancy a thing I had innately known or inherited, and for which I had always been vainly searching.

Suddenly, after rounding an obtuse angle at the top of a sharp ascent, the car came to a standstill. On my left, across a well-kept lawn which stretched to the road and flaunted a border of whitewashed stones, rose a white, two-and-a-half-story house of unusual size and elegance for the region, with a congeries of contiguous or arcade-linked barns, sheds, and windmill behind and to the right. I recognised it at once from the snapshot I had received, and was not surprised to see the name of Henry Akeley on the galvanised-iron mail-box near the road. For some distance back of the house a level stretch of marshy and sparsely wooded land extended, beyond which soared a steep, thickly forested hillside ending in a jagged leafy crest. This latter, I knew, was the summit of Dark Mountain, half way up which we must have climbed already.

Alighting from the car and taking my valise, Noyes asked me to wait while he went in and notified Akeley of my advent. He himself, he added, had important business elsewhere, and could not stop for more than a moment. As he briskly walked up the path to the house I climbed out of the car myself, wishing to stretch

my legs a little before settling down to a sedentary conversation. My feeling of nervousness and tension had risen to a maximum again now that I was on the actual scene of the morbid beleaguering described so hauntingly in Akeley's letters, and I honestly dreaded the coming discussions which were to link me with such alien and forbidden worlds.

Close contact with the utterly bizarre is often more terrifying than inspiring, and it did not cheer me to think that this very bit of dusty road was the place where those monstrous tracks and that foetid green ichor had been found after moonless nights of fear and death. Idly I noticed that none of Akeley's dogs seemed to be about. Had he sold them all as soon as the Outer Ones made peace with him? Try as I might, I could not have the same confidence in the depth and sincerity of that peace which appeared in Akeley's final and queerly different letter. After all, he was a man of much simplicity and with little worldly experience. Was there not, perhaps, some deep and sinister undercurrent beneath the surface of the new alliance?

Led by my thoughts, my eyes turned downward to the powdery road surface which had held such hideous testimonies. The last few days had been dry, and tracks of all sorts cluttered the rutted, irregular highway despite the unfrequented nature of the district. With a vague curiosity I began to trace the outline of some of the heterogeneous impressions, trying meanwhile to curb the flights of macabre fancy which the place and its memories suggested. There was something menacing and uncomfortable in the funereal stillness, in the muffled, subtle trickle of distant brooks, and in the crowding green peaks and black-wooded precipices that choked the narrow horizon.

And then an image shot into my consciousness which made those vague menaces and flights of fancy seem mild and insignificant indeed. I have said that I was scanning the miscellaneous prints in the road with a kind of idle curiosity—but all at once that curiosity was shockingly snuffed out by a sudden and paralysing gust of active terror. For though the dust tracks were in general confused and overlapping, and unlikely to arrest any casual gaze, my restless vision had caught certain details near the spot where the path to the house joined the highway; and had recognised beyond doubt or hope the frightful significance of those details. It was not for nothing, alas, that I had pored for hours over the kodak

views of the Outer Ones' claw-prints which Akeley had sent. Too well did I know the marks of those loathsome nippers, and that hint of ambiguous direction which stamped the horrors as no creatures of this planet. No chance had been left me for merciful mistake. Here, indeed, in objective form before my own eyes, and surely made not many hours ago, were at least three marks which stood out blasphemously among the surprising plethora of blurred footprints leading to and from the Akeley farmhouse. They were the hellish tracks of the living fungi from Yuggoth.

I pulled myself together in time to stifle a scream. After all, what more was there than I might have expected, assuming that I had really believed Akeley's letters? He had spoken of making peace with the things. Why, then, was it strange that some of them had visited his house? But the terror was stronger than the reassurance. Could any man be expected to look unmoved for the first time upon the claw-marks of animate beings from outer depths of space? Just then I saw Noyes emerge from the door and approach with a brisk step. I must, I reflected, keep command of myself, for the chances were this genial friend knew nothing of Akeley's profoundest and most stupendous probings into the forbidden.

Akeley, Noyes hastened to inform me, was glad and ready to see me; although his sudden attack of asthma would prevent him from being a very competent host for a day or two. These spells hit him hard when they came, and were always accompanied by a debilitating fever and general weakness. He never was good for much while they lasted—had to talk in a whisper, and was very clumsy and feeble in getting about. His feet and ankles swelled, too, so that he had to bandage them like a gouty old beef-eater. Today he was in rather bad shape, so that I would have to attend very largely to my own needs; but he was none the less eager for conversation. I would find him in the study at the left of the front hall—the room where the blinds were shut. He had to keep the sunlight out when he was ill, for his eyes were very sensitive.

As Noyes bade me adieu and rode off northward in his car I began to walk slowly toward the house. The door had been left ajar for me; but before approaching and entering I cast a searching glance around the whole place, trying to decide what had struck me as so intangibly queer about it. The barns and sheds looked trimly prosaic enough, and I noticed Akeley's battered Ford in its capacious,

unguarded shelter. Then the secret of the queerness reached me. It was the total silence. Ordinarily a farm is at least moderately murmurous from its various kinds of livestock, but here all signs of life were missing. What of the hens and the hogs? The cows, of which Akeley had said he possessed several, might conceivably be out to pasture, and the dogs might possibly have been sold; but the absence of any trace of cackling or grunting was truly singular.

I did not pause long on the path, but resolutely entered the open house door and closed it behind me. It had cost me a distinct psychological effort to do so, and now that I was shut inside I had a momentary longing for precipitate retreat. Not that the place was in the least sinister in visual suggestion; on the contrary, I thought the graceful late-colonial hallway very tasteful and wholesome, and admired the evident breeding of the man who had furnished it. What made me wish to flee was something very attenuated and indefinable. Perhaps it was a certain odd odour which I thought I noticed—though I well knew how common musty odours are in even the best of ancient farmhouses.

VII.

Refusing to let these cloudy qualms overmaster me, I recalled Noyes's instructions and pushed open the six-panelled, brass-latched white door on my left. The room beyond was darkened, as I had known before; and as I entered it I noticed that the queer odour was stronger there. There likewise appeared to be some faint, half-imaginary rhythm or vibration in the air. For a moment the closed blinds allowed me to see very little, but then a kind of apologetic hacking or whispering sound drew my attention to a great easy-chair in the farther, darker corner of the room. Within its shadowy depths I saw the white blur of a man's face and hands; and in a moment I had crossed to greet the figure who had tried to speak. Dim though the light was, I perceived that this was indeed my host. I had studied the kodak picture repeatedly, and there could be no mistake about this firm, weather-beaten face with the cropped, grizzled beard.

But as I looked again my recognition was mixed with sadness and anxiety; for certainly, this face was that of a very sick man. I felt that there must be something more than asthma behind that strained, rigid, immobile expression and unwinking

glassy stare; and realised how terribly the strain of his frightful experiences must have told on him. Was it not enough to break any human being—even a younger man than this intrepid delver into the forbidden? The strange and sudden relief, I feared, had come too late to save him from something like a general breakdown. 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.

And then I saw that he was trying to talk in the same hacking whisper with which he had greeted me. It was a hard whisper to catch at first, since the grey moustache concealed all movements of the lips, and something in its timbre disturbed me greatly; but by concentrating my attention I could soon make out its purport surprisingly well. The accent was by no means a rustic one, and the language was even more polished than correspondence had led me to expect.

“Mr. Wilmarth, I presume? You must pardon my not rising. I am quite ill, as Mr. Noyes must have told you; but I could not resist having you come just the same. You know what I wrote in my last letter—there is so much to tell you tomorrow when I shall feel better. I can’t say how glad I am to see you in person after all our many letters. You have the file with you, of course? And the kodak prints and record? Noyes put your valise in the hall—I suppose you saw it. For tonight I fear you’ll have to wait on yourself to a great extent. Your room is upstairs—the one over this—and you’ll see the bathroom door open at the head of the staircase. There’s a meal spread for you in the dining-room—right through this door at your right—which you can take whenever you feel like it. I’ll be a better host tomorrow—but just now weakness leaves me helpless.

“Make yourself at home—you might take out the letters and pictures and record and put them on the table here before you go upstairs with your bag. It is here that we shall discuss them—you can see my phonograph on that corner stand.

“No, thanks—there’s nothing you can do for me. I know these spells of old. Just come back for a little quiet visiting before night, and then go to bed when you please. I’ll rest right here—perhaps sleep here all night as I often do. In the morning I’ll be far better able to go into the things we must go into. You realise, of course, the utterly stupendous nature of the matter before us. 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 the conception of human science and philosophy.

“Do you know that Einstein is wrong, and that certain objects and forces can move with a velocity greater than that of light? With proper aid I expect to go backward and forward in time, and actually see and feel the earth of remote past and future epochs. You can’t imagine the degree to which those beings have carried science. There is nothing they can’t do with the mind and body of living organisms. I expect to visit other planets, and even other stars and galaxies. The first trip will be to Yuggoth, the nearest world fully peopled by the beings. It is a strange dark orb at the very rim of our solar system—unknown to earthly astronomers as yet. But I must have written you about this. At the proper time, you know, the beings there will direct thought-currents toward us and cause it to be discovered—or perhaps let one of their human allies give the scientists a hint.

“There are mighty cities on Yuggoth—great tiers of terraced towers built of black stone like the specimen I tried to send you. That came from Yuggoth. The sun shines there no brighter than a star, but the beings need no light. They have other, subtler senses, and put no windows in their great houses and temples. Light even hurts and hampers and confuses them, for it does not exist at all in the black cosmos outside time and space where they came from originally. To visit Yuggoth would drive any weak man mad—yet I am going there. The black rivers of pitch that flow under those mysterious Cyclopean bridges—things built by some elder race extinct and forgotten before the things came to Yuggoth from the ultimate voids—ought to be enough to make any man a Dante or Poe if he can keep sane long enough to tell what he has seen.

“But remember—that dark world of fungoid gardens and windowless cities isn’t really terrible. It is only to us that it would seem so. Probably this world seemed just as terrible to the beings when they first explored it in the primal age. You know they were here long before the fabulous epoch of Cthulhu was over, and remember all about sunken R’lyeh when it was above the waters. They’ve been inside the earth, too—there are openings which human beings know nothing of—some of them in these very Vermont hills—and great worlds of unknown life down there; blue-litten K’n-yan, red-litten Yoth, and black, lightless N’kai. It’s from N’kai

that frightful Tsathoggua came—you know, the amorphous, toad-like god-creature mentioned in the Pnakotic Manuscripts and the Necronomicon and the Commoriom myth-cycle preserved by the Atlantean high-priest Klarkash-Ton.

“But we will talk of all this later on. It must be four or five o’clock by this time. Better bring the stuff from your bag, take a bite, and then come back for a comfortable chat.”

Very slowly I turned and began to obey my host; fetching my valise, extracting and depositing the desired articles, and finally ascending to the room designated as mine. With the memory of that roadside claw-print fresh in my mind, Akeley’s whispered paragraphs had affected me queerly; and the hints of familiarity with this unknown world of fungous life—forbidden Yuggoth—made my flesh creep more than I cared to own. I was tremendously sorry about Akeley’s illness, but had to confess that his hoarse whisper had a hateful as well as pitiful quality. If only he wouldn’t gloat so about Yuggoth and its black secrets!

My room proved a very pleasant and well-furnished one, devoid alike of the musty odour and disturbing sense of vibration; and after leaving my valise there I descended again to greet Akeley and take the lunch he had set out for me. The dining-room was just beyond the study, and I saw that a kitchen ell extended still farther in the same direction. On the dining-table an ample array of sandwiches, cake, and cheese awaited me, and a Thermos-bottle beside a cup and saucer testified that hot coffee had not been forgotten. After a well-relished meal I poured myself a liberal cup of coffee, but found that the culinary standard had suffered a lapse in this one detail. My first spoonful revealed a faintly unpleasant acrid taste, so that I did not take more. Throughout the lunch I thought of Akeley sitting silently in the great chair in the darkened next room. Once I went in to beg him to share the repast, but he whispered that he could eat nothing as yet. Later on, just before he slept, he would take some malted milk—all he ought to have that day.

After lunch I insisted on clearing the dishes away and washing them in the kitchen sink—incidentally emptying the coffee which I had not been able to appreciate. Then returning to the darkened study I drew up a chair near my host’s corner and prepared for such conversation as he might feel inclined to conduct. The letters, pictures, and record were still on the large centre-table, but for the

nonce we did not have to draw upon them. Before long I forgot even the bizarre odour and curious suggestions of vibration.

I have said that there were things in some of Akeley's letters—especially the second and most voluminous one—which I would not dare to quote or even form into words on paper. This hesitancy applies with still greater force to the things I heard whispered that evening in the darkened room among the lonely haunted hills. Of the extent of the cosmic horrors unfolded by that raucous voice I cannot even hint. He had known hideous things before, but what he had learned since making his pact with the Outside Things was almost too much for sanity to bear. Even now I absolutely refuse to believe what he implied about the constitution of ultimate infinity, the juxtaposition of dimensions, and the frightful position of our known cosmos of space and time in the unending chain of linked cosmos-atoms which makes up the immediate super-cosmos of curves, angles, and material and semi-material electronic organisation.

Never was a sane man more dangerously close to the arcana of basic entity—never was an organic brain nearer to utter annihilation in the chaos that transcends form and force and symmetry. I learned whence Cthulhu first came, and why half the great temporary stars of history had flared forth. I guessed—from hints which made even my informant pause timidly—the secret behind the Magellanic Clouds and globular nebulae, and the black truth veiled by the immemorial allegory of Tao. The nature of the Doels was plainly revealed, and I was told the essence (though not the source) of the Hounds of Tindalos. The legend of Yig, Father of Serpents, remained figurative no longer, and I started with loathing when told of the monstrous nuclear chaos beyond angled space which the Necronomicon had mercifully cloaked under the name of Azathoth. It was shocking to have the foulest nightmares of secret myth cleared up in concrete terms whose stark, morbid hatefulness exceeded the boldest hints of ancient and mediaeval mystics. Ineluctably I was led to believe that the first whisperers of these accursed tales must have had discourse with Akeley's Outer Ones, and perhaps have visited outer cosmic realms as Akeley now proposed visiting them.

I was told of the Black Stone and what it implied, and was glad that it had not reached me. My guesses about those hieroglyphics had been all too correct! And yet Akeley now seemed reconciled to the whole fiendish system he had stumbled

upon; reconciled and eager to probe farther into the monstrous abyss. I wondered what beings he had talked with since his last letter to me, and whether many of them had been as human as that first emissary he had mentioned. The tension in my head grew insufferable, and I built up all sorts of wild theories about the queer, persistent odour and those insidious hints of vibration in the darkened room.

Night was falling now, and as I recalled what Akeley had written me about those earlier nights I shuddered to think there would be no moon. Nor did I like the way the farmhouse nestled in the lee of that colossal forested slope leading up to Dark Mountain's unvisited crest. With Akeley's permission I lighted a small oil lamp, turned it low, and set it on a distant bookcase beside the ghostly bust of Milton; but afterward I was sorry I had done so, for it made my host's strained, immobile face and listless hands look damnably abnormal and corpse-like. He seemed half-incapable of motion, though I saw him nod stiffly once in a while.

After what he had told, I could scarcely imagine what profounder secrets he was saving for the morrow; but at last it developed that his trip to Yuggoth and beyond—and my own possible participation in it—was to be the next day's topic. He must have been amused by the start of horror I gave at hearing a cosmic voyage on my part proposed, for his head wobbled violently when I shewed my fear. Subsequently he spoke very gently of how human beings might accomplish—and several times had accomplished—the seemingly impossible flight across the interstellar void. It seemed that complete human bodies did not indeed make the trip, but that the prodigious surgical, biological, chemical, and mechanical skill of the Outer Ones had found a way to convey human brains without their concomitant physical structure.

There was a harmless way to extract a brain, and a way to keep the organic residue alive during its absence. The bare, compact cerebral matter was then immersed in an occasionally replenished fluid within an ether-tight cylinder of a metal mined in Yuggoth, certain electrodes reaching through and connecting at will with elaborate instruments capable of duplicating the three vital faculties of sight, hearing, and speech. For the winged fungus-beings to carry the brain-cylinders intact through space was an easy matter. Then, on every planet covered by their civilisation, they would find plenty of adjustable faculty-instruments capable of being connected with the encased brains; so that after a little fitting

these travelling intelligences could be given a full sensory and articulate life—albeit a bodiless and mechanical one—at each stage of their journeying through and beyond the space-time continuum. It was as simple as carrying a phonograph record about and playing it wherever a phonograph of the corresponding make exists. Of its success there could be no question. Akeley was not afraid. Had it not been brilliantly accomplished again and again?

For the first time one of the inert, wasted hands raised itself and pointed to a high shelf on the farther side of the room. There, in a neat row, stood more than a dozen cylinders of a metal I had never seen before—cylinders about a foot high and somewhat less in diameter, with three curious sockets set in an isosceles triangle over the front convex surface of each. One of them was linked at two of the sockets to a pair of singular-looking machines that stood in the background. Of their purport I did not need to be told, and I shivered as with ague. Then I saw the hand point to a much nearer corner where some intricate instruments with attached cords and plugs, several of them much like the two devices on the shelf behind the cylinders, were huddled together.

“There are four kinds of instruments here, Wilmarth,” whispered the voice. “Four kinds—three faculties each—makes twelve pieces in all. You see there are four different sorts of beings presented in those cylinders up there. Three humans, six fungoid beings who can’t navigate space corporeally, two beings from Neptune (God! if you could see the body this type has on its own planet!), and the rest entities from the central caverns of an especially interesting dark star beyond the galaxy. In the principal outpost inside Round Hill you’ll now and then find more cylinders and machines—cylinders of extra-cosmic brains with different senses from any we know—allies and explorers from the uttermost Outside—and special machines for giving them impressions and expression in the several ways suited at once to them and to the comprehensions of different types of listeners. Round Hill, like most of the beings’ main outposts all through the various universes, is a very cosmopolitan place! Of course, only the more common types have been lent to me for experiment.

“Here—take the three machines I point to and set them on the table. That tall one with the two glass lenses in front—then the box with the vacuum tubes and sounding-board—and now the one with the metal disc on top. Now for the cylinder

with the label 'B-67' pasted on it. Just stand in that Windsor chair to reach the shelf. Heavy? Never mind! Be sure of the number—B-67. Don't bother that fresh, shiny cylinder joined to the two testing instruments—the one with my name on it. Set B-67 on the table near where you've put the machines—and see that the dial switch on all three machines is jammed over to the extreme left.

“Now connect the cord of the lens machine with the upper socket on the cylinder—there! Join the tube machine to the lower left-hand socket, and the disc apparatus to the outer socket. Now move all the dial switches on the machines over to the extreme right—first the lens one, then the disc one, and then the tube one. That's right. I might as well tell you that this is a human being—just like any of us. I'll give you a taste of some of the others tomorrow.”

To this day I do not know why I obeyed those whispers so slavishly, or whether I thought Akeley was mad or sane. After what had gone before, I ought to have been prepared for anything; but this mechanical mummerly seemed so like the typical vagaries of crazed inventors and scientists that it struck a chord of doubt which even the preceding discourse had not excited. What the whisperer implied was beyond all human belief—yet were not the other things still farther beyond, and less preposterous only because of their remoteness from tangible concrete proof?

As my mind reeled amidst this chaos, I became conscious of a mixed grating and whirring from all three machines lately linked to the cylinder—a grating and whirring which soon subsided into a virtual noiselessness. What was about to happen? Was I to hear a voice? And if so, what proof would I have that it was not some cleverly concocted radio device talked into by a concealed but closely watching speaker? Even now I am unwilling to swear just what I heard, or just what phenomenon really took place before me. But something certainly seemed to take place.

To be brief and plain, the machine with the tubes and sound-box began to speak, and with a point and intelligence which left no doubt that the speaker was actually present and observing us. The voice was loud, metallic, lifeless, and plainly mechanical in every detail of its production. It was incapable of inflection or

expressiveness, but scraped and rattled on with a deadly precision and deliberation.

“Mr. Wilmarth,” it said, “I hope I do not startle you. I am a human being like yourself, though my body is now resting safely under proper vitalising treatment inside Round Hill, about a mile and a half east of here. I myself am here with you—my brain is in that cylinder and I see, hear, and speak through these electronic vibrators. In a week I am going across the void as I have been many times before, and I expect to have the pleasure of Mr. Akeley’s company. I wish I might have yours as well; for I know you by sight and reputation, and have kept close track of your correspondence with our friend. I am, of course, one of the men who have become allied with the outside beings visiting our planet. I met them first in the Himalayas, and have helped them in various ways. In return they have given me experiences such as few men have ever had.

“Do you realise what it means when I say I have been on thirty-seven different celestial bodies—planets, dark stars, and less definable objects—including eight outside our galaxy and two outside the curved cosmos of space and time? All this has not harmed me in the least. My brain has been removed from my body by fissions so adroit that it would be crude to call the operation surgery. The visiting beings have methods which make these extractions easy and almost normal—and one’s body never ages when the brain is out of it. The brain, I may add, is virtually immortal with its mechanical faculties and a limited nourishment supplied by occasional changes of the preserving fluid.

“Altogether, I hope most heartily that you will decide to come with Mr. Akeley and me. The visitors are eager to know men of knowledge like yourself, and to shew them the great abysses that most of us have had to dream about in fanciful ignorance. It may seem strange at first to meet them, but I know you will be above minding that. I think Mr. Noyes will go along, too—the man who doubtless brought you up here in his car. He has been one of us for years—I suppose you recognised his voice as one of those on the record Mr. Akeley sent you.”

At my violent start the speaker paused a moment before concluding.

“So, Mr. Wilmarth, I will leave the matter to you; merely adding that a man with your love of strangeness and folklore ought never to miss such a chance as this.

There is nothing to fear. All transitions are painless, and there is much to enjoy in a wholly mechanised state of sensation. When the electrodes are disconnected, one merely drops off into a sleep of especially vivid and fantastic dreams.

“And now, if you don’t mind, we might adjourn our session till tomorrow. Good night—just turn all the switches back to the left; never mind the exact order, though you might let the lens machine be last. Good night, Mr. Akeley—treat our guest well! Ready now with those switches?”

That was all. I obeyed mechanically and shut off all three switches, though dazed with doubt of everything that had occurred. My head was still reeling as I heard Akeley’s whispering voice telling me that I might leave all the apparatus on the table just as it was. He did not essay any comment on what had happened, and indeed no comment could have conveyed much to my burdened faculties. I heard him telling me I could take the lamp to use in my room, and deduced that he wished to rest alone in the dark. It was surely time he rested, for his discourse of the afternoon and evening had been such as to exhaust even a vigorous man. Still dazed, I bade my host good night and went upstairs with the lamp, although I had an excellent pocket flashlight with me.

I was glad to be out of that downstairs study with the queer odour and vague suggestions of vibration, yet could not of course escape a hideous sense of dread and peril and cosmic abnormality as I thought of the place I was in and the forces I was meeting. The wild, lonely region, the black, mysteriously forested slope towering so close behind the house, the footprints in the road, the sick, motionless whisperer in the dark, the hellish cylinders and machines, and above all the invitations to strange surgery and stranger voyagings—these things, all so new and in such sudden succession, rushed in on me with a cumulative force which sapped my will and almost undermined my physical strength.

To discover that my guide Noyes was the human celebrant in that monstrous bygone Sabbat-ritual on the phonograph record was a particular shock, though I had previously sensed a dim, repellent familiarity in his voice. Another special shock came from my own attitude toward my host whenever I paused to analyse it; for much as I had instinctively liked Akeley as revealed in his correspondence, I now found that he filled me with a distinct repulsion. His illness ought to have

excited my pity; but instead, it gave me a kind of shudder. He was so rigid and inert and corpse-like—and that incessant whispering was so hateful and unhuman!

It occurred to me that this whispering was different from anything else of the kind I had ever heard; that, despite the curious motionlessness of the speaker's moustache-screened lips, it had a latent strength and carrying-power remarkable for the wheezings of an asthmatic. I had been able to understand the speaker when wholly across the room, and once or twice it had seemed to me that the faint but penetrant sounds represented not so much weakness as deliberate repression—for what reason I could not guess. From the first I had felt a disturbing quality in their timbre. Now, when I tried to weigh the matter, I thought I could trace this impression to a kind of subconscious familiarity like that which had made Noyes's voice so hazily ominous. But when or where I had encountered the thing it hinted at, was more than I could tell.

One thing was certain—I would not spend another night here. My scientific zeal had vanished amidst fear and loathing, and I felt nothing now but a wish to escape from this net of morbidity and unnatural revelation. I knew enough now. It must indeed be true that cosmic linkages do exist—but such things are surely not meant for normal human beings to meddle with.

Blasphemous influences seemed to surround me and press chokingly upon my senses. Sleep, I decided, would be out of the question; so I merely extinguished the lamp and threw myself on the bed fully dressed. No doubt it was absurd, but I kept ready for some unknown emergency; gripping in my right hand the revolver I had brought along, and holding the pocket flashlight in my left. Not a sound came from below, and I could imagine how my host was sitting there with cadaverous stiffness in the dark.

Somewhere I heard a clock ticking, and was vaguely grateful for the normality of the sound. It reminded me, though, of another thing about the region which disturbed me—the total absence of animal life. There were certainly no farm beasts about, and now I realised that even the accustomed night-noises of wild living things were absent. Except for the sinister trickle of distant unseen waters, that stillness was anomalous—interplanetary—and I wondered what star-spawned, intangible blight could be hanging over the region. I recalled from old

legends that dogs and other beasts had always hated the Outer Ones, and thought of what those tracks in the road might mean.

VIII.

Do not ask me how long my unexpected lapse into slumber lasted, or how much of what ensued was sheer dream. If I tell you that I awaked at a certain time, and heard and saw certain things, you will merely answer that I did not wake then; and that everything was a dream until the moment when I rushed out of the house, stumbled to the shed where I had seen the old Ford, and seized that ancient vehicle for a mad, aimless race over the haunted hills which at last landed me—after hours of jolting and winding through forest-threatened labyrinths—in a village which turned out to be Townshend.

You will also, of course, discount everything else in my report; and declare that all the pictures, record-sounds, cylinder-and-machine sounds, and kindred evidences were bits of pure deception practiced on me by the missing Henry Akeley. You will even hint that he conspired with other eccentrics to carry out a silly and elaborate hoax—that he had the express shipment removed at Keene, and that he had Noyes make that terrifying wax record. It is odd, though, that Noyes has not even yet been identified; that he was unknown at any of the villages near Akeley's place, though he must have been frequently in the region. I wish I had stopped to memorise the licence-number of his car—or perhaps it is better after all that I did not. For I, despite all you can say, and despite all I sometimes try to say to myself, know that loathsome outside influences must be lurking there in the half-unknown hills—and that those influences have spies and emissaries in the world of men. To keep as far as possible from such influences and such emissaries is all that I ask of life in future.

When my frantic story sent a sheriff's posse out to the farmhouse, Akeley was gone without leaving a trace. His loose dressing-gown, yellow scarf, and foot-bandages lay on the study floor near his corner easy-chair, and it could not be decided whether any of his other apparel had vanished with him. The dogs and livestock were indeed missing, and there were some curious bullet-holes both on the house's exterior and on some of the walls within; but beyond this nothing

unusual could be detected. No cylinders or machines, none of the evidences I had brought in my valise, no queer odour or vibration-sense, no footprints in the road, and none of the problematical things I glimpsed at the very last.

I stayed a week in Brattleboro after my escape, making inquiries among people of every kind who had known Akeley; and the results convince me that the matter is no figment of dream or delusion. Akeley's queer purchases of dogs and ammunition and chemicals, and the cutting of his telephone wires, are matters of record; while all who knew him—including his son in California—concede that his occasional remarks on strange studies had a certain consistency. Solid citizens believe he was mad, and unhesitatingly pronounce all reported evidences mere hoaxes devised with insane cunning and perhaps abetted by eccentric associates; but the lowlier country folk sustain his statements in every detail. He had shewed some of these rustics his photographs and black stone, and had played the hideous record for them; and they all said the footprints and buzzing voice were like those described in ancestral legends.

They said, too, that suspicious sights and sounds had been noticed increasingly around Akeley's house after he found the black stone, and that the place was now avoided by everybody except the mail man and other casual, tough-minded people. Dark Mountain and Round Hill were both notoriously haunted spots, and I could find no one who had ever closely explored either. Occasional disappearances of natives throughout the district's history were well attested, and these now included the semi-vagabond Walter Brown, whom Akeley's letters had mentioned. I even came upon one farmer who thought he had personally glimpsed one of the queer bodies at flood-time in the swollen West River, but his tale was too confused to be really valuable.

When I left Brattleboro I resolved never to go back to Vermont, and I feel quite certain I shall keep my resolution. Those wild hills are surely the outpost of a frightful cosmic race—as I doubt all the less since reading that a new ninth planet has been glimpsed beyond Neptune, just as those influences had said it would be glimpsed. Astronomers, with a hideous appropriateness they little suspect, have named this thing "Pluto". I feel, beyond question, that it is nothing less than nighted Yuggoth—and I shiver when I try to figure out the real reason why its monstrous denizens wish it to be known in this way at this especial time. I vainly try to assure

myself that these daemonic creatures are not gradually leading up to some new policy hurtful to the earth and its normal inhabitants.

But I have still to tell of the ending of that terrible night in the farmhouse. As I have said, I did finally drop into a troubled doze; a doze filled with bits of dream which involved monstrous landscape-glimpses. Just what awaked me I cannot yet say, but that I did indeed awake at this given point I feel very certain. My first confused impression was of stealthily creaking floor-boards in the hall outside my door, and of a clumsy, muffled fumbling at the latch. This, however, ceased almost at once; so that my really clear impressions began with the voices heard from the study below. There seemed to be several speakers, and I judged that they were controversially engaged.

By the time I had listened a few seconds I was broad awake, for the nature of the voices was such as to make all thought of sleep ridiculous. The tones were curiously varied, and no one who had listened to that accursed phonograph record could harbour any doubts about the nature of at least two of them. Hideous though the idea was, I knew that I was under the same roof with nameless things from abysmal space; for those two voices were unmistakably the blasphemous buzzings which the Outside Beings used in their communication with men. The two were individually different—different in pitch, accent, and tempo—but they were both of the same damnable general kind.

A third voice was indubitably that of a mechanical utterance-machine connected with one of the detached brains in the cylinders. There was as little doubt about that as about the buzzings; for the loud, metallic, lifeless voice of the previous evening, with its inflectionless, expressionless scraping and rattling, and its impersonal precision and deliberation, had been utterly unforgettable. For a time I did not pause to question whether the intelligence behind the scraping was the identical one which had formerly talked to me; but shortly afterward I reflected that any brain would emit vocal sounds of the same quality if linked to the same mechanical speech-producer; the only possible differences being in language, rhythm, speed, and pronunciation. To complete the eldritch colloquy there were two actually human voices—one the crude speech of an unknown and evidently rustic man, and the other the suave Bostonian tones of my erstwhile guide Noyes.

As I tried to catch the words which the stoutly fashioned floor so bafflingly intercepted, I was also conscious of a great deal of stirring and scratching and shuffling in the room below; so that I could not escape the impression that it was full of living beings—many more than the few whose speech I could single out. The exact nature of this stirring is extremely hard to describe, for very few good bases of comparison exist. Objects seemed now and then to move across the room like conscious entities; the sound of their footfalls having something about it like a loose, hard-surfaced clattering—as of the contact of ill-coördinated surfaces of horn or hard rubber. It was, to use a more concrete but less accurate comparison, as if people with loose, splintery wooden shoes were shambling and rattling about on the polished board floor. On the nature and appearance of those responsible for the sounds, I did not care to speculate.

Before long I saw that it would be impossible to distinguish any connected discourse. Isolated words—including the names of Akeley and myself—now and then floated up, especially when uttered by the mechanical speech-producer; but their true significance was lost for want of continuous context. Today I refuse to form any definite deductions from them, and even their frightful effect on me was one of suggestion rather than of revelation. A terrible and abnormal conclave, I felt certain, was assembled below me; but for what shocking deliberations I could not tell. It was curious how this unquestioned sense of the malign and the blasphemous pervaded me despite Akeley's assurances of the Outsiders' friendliness.

With patient listening I began to distinguish clearly between voices, even though I could not grasp much of what any of the voices said. I seemed to catch certain typical emotions behind some of the speakers. One of the buzzing voices, for example, held an unmistakable note of authority; whilst the mechanical voice, notwithstanding its artificial loudness and regularity, seemed to be in a position of subordination and pleading. Noyes's tones exuded a kind of conciliatory atmosphere. The others I could make no attempt to interpret. I did not hear the familiar whisper of Akeley, but well knew that such a sound could never penetrate the solid flooring of my room.

I will try to set down some of the few disjointed words and other sounds I caught, labelling the speakers of the words as best I know how. It was from the speech-machine that I first picked up a few recognisable phrases.

(THE SPEECH-MACHINE)

“... brought it on myself ... sent back the letters and the record ... end on it ... taken in ... seeing and hearing ... damn you ... impersonal force, after all ... fresh, shiny cylinder ... great God...”

(FIRST BUZZING VOICE)

“... time we stopped ... small and human ... Akeley ... brain ... saying ...”

(SECOND BUZZING VOICE)

“... Nyarlathotep ... Wilmarth ... records and letters ... cheap imposture...”

(NOYES)

“... (an unpronounceable word or name, possibly N’gah-Kthun) ... harmless ... peace ... couple of weeks ... theatrical ... told you that before...”

(FIRST BUZZING VOICE)

“... no reason ... original plan ... effects ... Noyes can watch ... Round Hill ... fresh cylinder ... Noyes’s car...”

(NOYES)

“... well ... all yours ... down here ... rest ... place...”

(SEVERAL VOICES AT ONCE IN INDISTINGUISHABLE SPEECH)

(MANY FOOTSTEPS, INCLUDING THE PECULIAR LOOSE STIRRING OR CLATTERING)

(A CURIOUS SORT OF FLAPPING SOUND)

(THE SOUND OF AN AUTOMOBILE STARTING AND RECEDING)

(SILENCE)

That is the substance of what my ears brought me as I lay rigid upon that strange upstairs bed in the haunted farmhouse among the daemoniac hills—lay there fully dressed, with a revolver clenched in my right hand and a pocket flashlight gripped in my left. I became, as I have said, broad awake; but a kind of obscure paralysis nevertheless kept me inert till long after the last echoes of the sounds had died away. I heard the wooden, deliberate ticking of the ancient Connecticut clock somewhere far below, and at last made out the irregular snoring of a sleeper. Akeley must have dozed off after the strange session, and I could well believe that he needed to do so.

Just what to think or what to do was more than I could decide. After all, what had I heard beyond things which previous information might have led me to expect? Had I not known that the nameless Outsiders were now freely admitted to the farmhouse? No doubt Akeley had been surprised by an unexpected visit from them. Yet something in that fragmentary discourse had chilled me immeasurably, raised the most grotesque and horrible doubts, and made me wish fervently that I might wake up and prove everything a dream. I think my subconscious mind must have caught something which my consciousness has not yet recognised. But what of Akeley? Was he not my friend, and would he not have protested if any harm were meant me? The peaceful snoring below seemed to cast ridicule on all my suddenly intensified fears.

Was it possible that Akeley had been imposed upon and used as a lure to draw me into the hills with the letters and pictures and phonograph record? Did those

beings mean to engulf us both in a common destruction because we had come to know too much? Again I thought of the abruptness and unnaturalness of that change in the situation which must have occurred between Akeley's penultimate and final letters. Something, my instinct told me, was terribly wrong. All was not as it seemed. That acrid coffee which I refused—had there not been an attempt by some hidden, unknown entity to drug it? I must talk to Akeley at once, and restore his sense of proportion. They had hypnotised him with their promises of cosmic revelations, but now he must listen to reason. We must get out of this before it would be too late. If he lacked the will power to make the break for liberty, I would supply it. Or if I could not persuade him to go, I could at least go myself. Surely he would let me take his Ford and leave it in a garage at Brattleboro. I had noticed it in the shed—the door being left unlocked and open now that peril was deemed past—and I believed there was a good chance of its being ready for instant use. That momentary dislike of Akeley which I had felt during and after the evening's conversation was all gone now. He was in a position much like my own, and we must stick together. Knowing his indisposed condition, I hated to wake him at this juncture, but I knew that I must. I could not stay in this place till morning as matters stood.

At last I felt able to act, and stretched myself vigorously to regain command of my muscles. Arising with a caution more impulsive than deliberate, I found and donned my hat, took my valise, and started downstairs with the flashlight's aid. In my nervousness I kept the revolver clutched in my right hand, being able to take care of both valise and flashlight with my left. Why I exerted these precautions I do not really know, since I was even then on my way to awaken the only other occupant of the house.

As I half tiptoed down the creaking stairs to the lower hall I could hear the sleeper more plainly, and noticed that he must be in the room on my left—the living-room I had not entered. On my right was the gaping blackness of the study in which I had heard the voices. Pushing open the unlatched door of the living-room I traced a path with the flashlight toward the source of the snoring, and finally turned the beams on the sleeper's face. But in the next second I hastily turned them away and commenced a cat-like retreat to the hall, my caution this time

springing from reason as well as from instinct. For the sleeper on the couch was not Akeley at all, but my quondam guide Noyes.

Just what the real situation was, I could not guess; but common sense told me that the safest thing was to find out as much as possible before arousing anybody. Regaining the hall, I silently closed and latched the living-room door after me; thereby lessening the chances of awaking Noyes. I now cautiously entered the dark study, where I expected to find Akeley, whether asleep or awake, in the great corner chair which was evidently his favourite resting-place. As I advanced, the beams of my flashlight caught the great centre-table, revealing one of the hellish cylinders with sight and hearing machines attached, and with a speech-machine standing close by, ready to be connected at any moment. This, I reflected, must be the encased brain I had heard talking during the frightful conference; and for a second I had a perverse impulse to attach the speech-machine and see what it would say.

It must, I thought, be conscious of my presence even now; since the sight and hearing attachments could not fail to disclose the rays of my flashlight and the faint creaking of the floor beneath my feet. But in the end I did not dare meddle with the thing. I idly saw that it was the fresh, shiny cylinder with Akeley's name on it, which I had noticed on the shelf earlier in the evening and which my host had told me not to bother. Looking back at that moment, I can only regret my timidity and wish that I had boldly caused the apparatus to speak. God knows what mysteries and horrible doubts and questions of identity it might have cleared up! But then, it may be merciful that I let it alone.

From the table I turned my flashlight to the corner where I thought Akeley was, but found to my perplexity that the great easy-chair was empty of any human occupant asleep or awake. From the seat to the floor there trailed voluminously the familiar old dressing-gown, and near it on the floor lay the yellow scarf and the huge foot-bandages I had thought so odd. As I hesitated, striving to conjecture where Akeley might be, and why he had so suddenly discarded his necessary sick-room garments, I observed that the queer odour and sense of vibration were no longer in the room. What had been their cause? Curiously it occurred to me that I had noticed them only in Akeley's vicinity. They had been strongest where he sat, and wholly absent except in the room with him or just outside the doors of that

room. I paused, letting the flashlight wander about the dark study and racking my brain for explanations of the turn affairs had taken.

Would to heaven I had quietly left the place before allowing that light to rest again on the vacant chair. As it turned out, I did not leave quietly; but with a muffled shriek which must have disturbed, though it did not quite awake, the sleeping sentinel across the hall. That shriek, and Noyes's still-unbroken snore, are the last sounds I ever heard in that morbidity-choked farmhouse beneath the black-wooded crest of a haunted mountain—that focus of trans-cosmic horror amidst the lonely green hills and curse-muttering brooks of a spectral rustic land.

It is a wonder that I did not drop flashlight, valise, and revolver in my wild scramble, but somehow I failed to lose any of these. I actually managed to get out of that room and that house without making any further noise, to drag myself and my belongings safely into the old Ford in the shed, and to set that archaic vehicle in motion toward some unknown point of safety in the black, moonless night. The ride that followed was a piece of delirium out of Poe or Rimbaud or the drawings of Doré, but finally I reached Townshend. That is all. If my sanity is still unshaken, I am lucky. Sometimes I fear what the years will bring, especially since that new planet Pluto has been so curiously discovered.

As I have implied, I let my flashlight return to the vacant easy-chair after its circuit of the room; then noticing for the first time the presence of certain objects in the seat, made inconspicuous by the adjacent loose folds of the empty dressing-gown. These are the objects, three in number, which the investigators did not find when they came later on. As I said at the outset, there was nothing of actual visual horror about them. The trouble was in what they led one to infer. Even now I have my moments of half-doubt—moments in which I half accept the scepticism of those who attribute my whole experience to dream and nerves and delusion.

The three things were damnably clever constructions of their kind, and were furnished with ingenious metallic clamps to attach them to organic developments of which I dare not form any conjecture. I hope—devoutly hope—that they were the waxen products of a master artist, despite what my inmost fears tell me. Great God! That whisperer in darkness with its morbid odour and vibrations! Sorcerer, emissary, changeling, outsider . . . that hideous repressed buzzing . . . and all the

time in that fresh, shiny cylinder on the shelf . . . poor devil . . . “prodigious surgical, biological, chemical, and mechanical skill” . . .

For the things in the chair, perfect to the last, subtle detail of microscopic resemblance—or identity—were the face and hands of Henry Wentworth Akeley.