

Science Fiction

September 23. Lovecraft (2).

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last time

1. “weird”
 - a. a fuzzy category, overlapping with SF
 - b. literariness: long history of the Gothic, but...
2. Lovecraftian language
 - a. alien words
 - b. the ideology of racial contamination
 - c. the unclear is the unclean
 - d. strategic vagueness: duck-rabbits

style

The basis of all true cosmic horror is always violation of the order of nature, and the profoundest violations are always the least concrete and describable.

Lovecraft in 1930

the Eyrie

(i.e. your blog posts)

the question of (scientific) knowledge

form

(Found among the Papers of the Late Francis Wayland Thurston)

the *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred which
the initiated might read as they chose (“Call,” 156)

Indeed that is what I used to call myself when I was five
years old and a transported devotee of Andrew Lang’s
version of the Arabian Nights. (Lovecraft in a 1930 letter,
qtd. by Sorensen, 518)

form

And then there was only a venomous seething astern;
where—God in heaven!—the scattered plasticity of that
nameless sky-spawn was nebulously *recombining* in its
hateful original form. (168)

the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents
(139)

discovery

My attitude was still one of absolute materialism, *as I wish it still were.* (“Call,” 159)

Often I had to recall the speaker from ramblings, piece out scientific points which he knew only by a fading parrot memory... (“Colour,” 173)

He puzzled even at that tense moment over a point which was essentially scientific. (192)

professors

It had acted quite unbelievably in that well-ordered laboratory; doing nothing at all and shewing no occluded gases when heated on charcoal, being wholly negative in the borax bead, and soon proving itself absolutely non-volatile at any producible temperature, including that of the oxy-hydrogen blowpipe. (174)

The failure was total. (176)

What don't the professors get?

what color?

No sane wholesome colours were anywhere to be seen except in the green grass and leafage; but everywhere those hectic and prismatic variants of some diseased, underlying primary tone without a place among the known tints of earth. (180)

Then the stronger-minded folk all left the region, and only the foreigners tried to live in the crumbling old homesteads. They could not stay, though; and one sometimes wonders what insight beyond ours their wild, weird stories of whispered magic have given them. (198)

what color?

Ammi stared blankly at the stars of Cygnus, Deben twinkling above the others, where the unknown colour had melted into the Milky Way. (196)

outside

It was nothing of this earth, but a piece of the great outside; and as such dowered with outside properties and obedient to outside laws. (176)

“It’s some’at from beyond.” (192)

outside

Nahum took some blossoms to Arkham and shewed them to the editor of the *Gazette*, but that dignitary did no more than write a humorous article about them, in which the dark fears of rustics were held up to polite ridicule. (180)

God! how old the house was! Most of it built before 1670, and the gambrel roof not later than 1730. (188)

outside

Ammi would give me no added particulars to this scene...
There are things which cannot be mentioned. (187)

outside

Ammi would give me no added particulars to this scene... There are things which cannot be mentioned, and what is done in common humanity is sometimes cruelly judged by the law. I gathered that no moving thing was left in the attic room, and that to leave anything capable of motion there would have been a deed so monstrous as to damn any accountable being to eternal torment. (187)

outside

The United [Amateur Press Association] aims to assist those whom other forms of literary influence cannot reach. The non-university man, the dwellers in different places, the recluse, the invalid, the very young, the elderly; all these are included within our scope. And beside our novices stand persons of mature cultivation and experience, ready to assist for the sheer joy of assisting.... It is an university, stripped of every artificiality and conventionality and thrown open to all without distinction.

(Lovecraft's UAPA statement,
qtd. by Mark McGurl in "The Posthuman Comedy")

next time

readings in *The Wesleyan Anthology: Hamilton and Stone*
(read headnotes *last*)

compare Hamilton in the magazine

optional: Moore, “Shambleau”
(but highly recommended as sequel to Lovecraft)