

STUDIES IN MODERN HORROR

A Scholarly Journal for the Study of
Contemporary Weird Fiction

Number 3

{ Edited by NGChristakos
Cover Artwork by Hieronymus Bosch }

★ Contributors	2
❶ China Miéville's <i>The Scar: Pulp Weird Fiction Revisited</i> [Part Two: The Others] by NGChristakos	3
❷ Fritz Leiber's <i>Our Lady of Darkness: Lovecraft, the Compound Ghost</i> by Dr. Robert Waugh	7
❸ Trials of Masculinity in Clive Barker's <i>The Thief of Always</i> by Drew Williams	18
❹ The Annotated <i>Mystery of the Worm</i> by John Pelan, annotations by NGChristakos	26

(Studies in Modern Horror, issue #3, 2004, published quarterly by Seele Brennt Publications, New Paltz, NY 12561, www.seele-brennt.com. Copyright © 2004 Seele Brennt Publications. All rights reserved. No parts of this journal may be reproduced in any media without prior permission of the publisher. Printed in the United States of America.
Subscriptions: <http://www.seele-brennt.com/subscribe/>)

Studies in Modern Horror is a quarterly scholarly journal designed to promote the criticism of contemporary horror, supernatural, and weird fiction; dealing exclusively with the work of authors who have been active within the last 30 years. Once per year the editor shall select a specific author as a focus for an entire issue. Contributions are to be e-mailed as a Microsoft Word file to ngchristakos@seele-brennt.com and should contain contributor's contact information (both physical & electronic). Alternative forms of submission are available; please contact the editor for more information. By submitting a contribution, you are agreeing to ownership of the printing/reprinting rights for the article in question as well as granting *Studies in Modern Horror* permission to publish said material. Literary rights for articles will reside with *Studies in Modern Horror* for one year after publication, at which time all rights revert to the respective author(s). Payment is in two (2) contributors' copies of the issue article appears in and 2¢ per word published.

Contributors

Contributors



N G C h r i s t a k o s
 is the editor of *Studies in Modern Horror* and a contributor to various other projects, including annotations for Alan Moore's *The Courtyard* (Avatar Press, 2004), an introduction to Ray Garton's *Eye of the Guardian* (Bloodletting Press, forthcoming), and annotations for *The Black Book of Clark Ashton Smith* (Seele Brennt Publications, forthcoming). As a teacher, he has taught horror literature and film on the University level--though has abandoned academic pursuits for those of a scholar.

J o h n P e l a n
 is an author, editor, and publisher. While he has generated a substantial amount of fiction, some of which was produced in collaboration with Edward Lee, John Pelan's probably best know for his editorial work--which includes a variety of releases on his own Dark Side Press and Midnight House (<http://www.darksidepress.com/>) imprints as well as noteworthy collections from other publishers.

R o b e r t W a u g h
 is a professor of English at the State University of New York at New Paltz. He has contributed various articles to journals such as *Lovecraft Studies* and *Extrapolation*.

D r e w W i l l i a m s
 is a horror novelist and professor. His writing credits include *Night Terrors*, the co-authored *Spectres and Darkness* with Joseph Nassise, and the academic release *Image of Manhood in Early Modern Literature*. To find out more, you may visit his official webpage at <http://www.drewilliams.com/>



China Miéville's *The Scar*: Pulp Weird Fiction Revisited

[Part Two: The Others]

by NGChristakos

While the opening pages of *The Scar*--brimming with descriptions of mysterious and predatory creatures of the deep, watery depths--draw certain allusions to the creations of H.P. Lovecraft, especially Great Cthulhu in his watery prison of R'lyeh, there is nothing in excess of vague impressions to correlate these passages to Lovecraft.

The only plausible direct reference is of the inexplicable presences that are "something between molluscs and deities" (Miéville 1). These creatures are reminiscent of a creation in Carl Jacobi's sole Cthulhu tale: "The Aquarium." Jacobi's contribution to the mythos is that "somewhere in the unplumbed ocean depths there exists a highly developed kind of mollusk capable of emulating certain characteristics of those life forms it devours" (Jacobi, "The Aquarium", *Dark Hearts, Dark Minds*, 143). This notion was embellished in a paragraph-long description (which August Derleth excised from the published version):

That was his original theory. In later years he apparently cloaked it with a pattern of demonology and what amounted to a modern adaptation of prehistoric superstition and folklore. He believed that these super undersea species are the incarnation of those Elder Gods who ruled the antediluvian deep and whose existence has been brought down to us in the dark myths and legends of a primitive past; that commanded by the great Cthulhu, they have lain dormant these eons in the sunken city of Flann, awaiting the time they would rise again to feed and rule. (Jacobi, "The Aquarium", *Fantasy Crossroads* #7, 26)

These deified mollusks of Miéville's may be explained as one of the numerous entities listed from prehistoric existence that still inhabit his fantastical world. Trilobites (Miéville 1) were aquatic arthropods from the Paleozoic era (from 570 to 225 million years ago) that were extinct by the Permian (the final period of the Paleozoic era). Plesiauri (Miéville 32) were aquatic reptiles from the Jurassic period (145 million years ago). [Lovecraft, likewise, used both creatures: the fossils of trilobites are found in *At the Mountains of Madness* and plesiauri are viewed in "The Shadow Out of Time".]

As shown with this initial examination, exploring the influence of early weird fiction on Miéville's *The Scar* is a precarious task; one must comprehend that the majority of conceivable references in the creation of the people,



"Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age
To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort"
(Eliot 54)

Fritz Leiber's *Our Lady of Darkness*: Lovecraft, the Compound Ghost

by Dr. Robert Waugh

Fritz Leiber's last novel *Our Lady of Darkness* is both a profoundly autobiographical and profoundly literary novel. The epigraph and title refer to De Quincy, and the implications of the title form the subjects of several meditations of its characters. Clark Ashton Smith functions within its action, as do more tangentially such San Francisco figures as Jack London, George Sterling, Ambrose Bierce, Nora May French, and Gertrude Atherton. M. R. James is mentioned several times, so often that we must consider his presence one of the fundamental poles of the novel. Edgar Allen Poe, Arthur Machen, Dashiell Hammett, Sax Rohmer, W. B. Yeats, Céline, Colette, Henry Miller, Edgar Rice Burroughs, William S. Burroughs, Jacob Wassermann, Robert Graves, John Keats, S. T. Coleridge, Herman Melville, Aleister Crowley (one of the models for the wizard de Castries), Peter Viereck, Baron Munchausen, the Marquis de Sade, Sacher-Masoch, Diana Vaughan (a hoax figure), Lewis Carroll, and Arthur Conan Doyle appear briefly. Two quotations from *Macbeth* glide past (88, 137), for this is of course a novel by Fritz Leiber, who had memorized the play by the time he was four years old (Byfield), and slight references to *Julius Caesar* and *Othello*; and those two literary triumphs of the French cinema, *Les enfants du paradis* and *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (written by Jacques Prévert and Alain-Robbe Grillet respectively) form a part of the imagery of the work (105, 164). The democracy of the list is breathtaking; some of the authors are canonic, some are cult figures, and some are almost forgotten. One of the major themes of the book is the impact and persistence of the written word, whether for good or ill, despite the death of its author.

The name most frequently mentioned, however, forms the purloined letter of the novel, for it is an open secret that the novel is a loving and contentious debate that Leiber is conducting with H. P. Lovecraft. Thus he returns with a new degree of awareness to the author who had stimulated him since the beginning of his career (Clements 23-24; Byfield 11-25). The main situation, in which a man explores a hill which his window faces across a city, only to have a spirit released from it attack him in his

- Howard, John. "A Universe Shot Through with Invisible Forces: *Our Lady of Darkness* as a Lovecraftian Novel." *Ghosts & Scholars*. 20. 10 March, 2004. <<http://www.waldeneast.fsnet.co.uk/invisibleforces.htm>>.
- Leiber, Fritz. "A Bit of the Dark World" in *Heroes and Horrors*. Ed. Stuart David Schiff. New York: Pocket Books, 1980.
- . *The Dealings of Daniel Kesserich: A Study of Mass-Insanity at Smithville*. Illus. Jason Van Hollander. New York: Tor, 1997.
- . *Our Lady of Darkness*. New York: Berkley, 1977.
- Lovecraft, H. P. *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*. Ed. S. T. Joshi. Sauk City, WI: Arkham, 1986.
- . *The Dunwich Horror and Others*. Sel. August Derleth. Ed. S. T. Joshi. Sauk City, WI: Arkham, 1982.
- . *Miscellaneous Writings*. Ed. S. T. Joshi. Sauk City, WI: Arkham, 1995.
- . *Selected Letters*. Vol. 5. Ed. August Derleth and James Turner. Sauk City, WI: Arkham, 1976.
- Murray, Will. "Behind the Mask of Nyarlathotep." *Lovecraft Studies* #25 (Fall 1991). 25-29.
- The New Encyclopædia Britannica: Micropædia*. 15th ed., 2002.
- Pardoe, Ro and John Howard. "Fritz Leiber's *Our Lady of Darkness*: Annotations." *Ghosts and Scholars*. 21. Rev. 2003. 10 March, 2004. <<http://waldeneast.fsnet.co.uk/annotations.htm>>.
- Pardoe, Rosemary. "Our Lady of Darkness: A Jamesian Classic." *Ghosts & Scholars*. 20. 5 March, 2004. <<http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~pardos/ArchiveOurLady.html>>.
- Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet* in *The Norton Shakespeare*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt. New York: Norton, 1997.



**Trials of Masculinity in
Clive Barker's *The Thief of Always*
by Drew Williams**

Though Clive Barker is one of the most recognizable names in the field of literary horror, his work often enters the realm of fantasy as defined by C. N. Manlove; a fiction "evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds" (17). In the case of *The Thief of Always*, the novel succeeds in eliciting wonder on multiple narrative levels

- Monick, Eugene. *Phallos: Sacred Images of The Masculine*. Toronto: Inner City Books, 1987.
- Wolfe, Gary K. "The Encounter With Fantasy." *The Aesthetics of Fantasy Literature and Art*. Ed. Roger C. Schlobin. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982. 1-15.



The following short story originally appeared, in a non-annotated form, in:

Shadows over Baker Street, ed. Michael Reaves and John Pelan. New York, NY: Del Rey, 2003. 446 pages. \$23.95 (hardcover).

The terrifyingly surreal universe of horror master H.P. Lovecraft bleeds into the logical world of Sherlock Holmes -- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's champion of rational deduction -- in these brand-new stories by twenty of today's top horror, mystery, fantasy, and science fiction writers, including:

Steven-Elliot Altman, Elizabeth Bear, Poppy Z. Brite, Simon Clark, David Ferguson, Paul Finch, Neil Gaiman, Barbara Hambly, Caitlin R. Kiernan, Tim Lebbon, James Lowder, Richard A. Lupoff, Patricia Lee Macomber, F. Gwynplaine McIntyre, John Pelan, Steve Perry, Michael Reaves, Brian Stableford, John P. Vourlis, and David Niall Wilson.

The Annotated Mystery of the Worm¹

by John Pelan

with annotations by NGChristakos

I² have reviewed the remarkable facts of this narrative and conclude that even now, in a world where air travel is considered unremarkable and engines of war can spit death from the skies, the world is not yet ready for the truths exposed in this narrative. The events of that awful night in 1894 shall remain chronicled in these pages, safely among my other papers until such a time as our world is prepared to learn great and terrifying truths.

¹ This title is reminiscent of the Robert Bloch (1917-1994) invented tome *The Mysteries of the Worm*, which was first mentioned in the "The Secret in the Tomb" (1935). H(oward) P(hilips) Lovecraft (1890-1937) supplied the latin title *De Vermis Mysteriis*, which Bloch would reference in the "The Shambler from the Stars" (1935) and Lovecraft would allude to in "The Shadow Out of Time" (1936).

² The individual narrating this tale is Dr. John Watson, the chronicler of Sherlock Holmes' memoirs and adventures throughout the stories written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930).