The Lovecraft Circle and the Inklings: The "Mythopoeic Gift" of H. P. Lovecraft

DALE NELSON

1. Introduction: Could/Should Lovecraft Have Been a Mythopoeic Society Author?

In 1967, in the midst of the Hobbit Craze, the late Glen Goodknight founded the Mythopoeic Society in southern California. Bulletins began to appear in 1968, and the Society's journal, *Mythlore*, was first published in January 1969.

Anyone who knows of the Society will associate it with Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, C. S. Lewis's Narnian books, and the genre of high fantasy. One might also recognize the Society's interest in the mystical thrillers of Charles Williams, such as *The Greater Trumps*, *The Place of the Lion*, and *All Hallows' Eve*. The three authors were the outstanding members of the Inklings, an Oxford group whose participants met in pubs and college rooms to critique their works in progress, swallow pints of draft beer, and talk uproariously. Tolkien's dedication of the first edition of *The Lord of the Rings* included his fellow Inklings.

Early Mythopoeic Society 'zines featured plenty of Inklings-related commentary and also art, including drawings by fan favorites Tim Kirk and George Barr. In the first issue of *Mythlore* and the February 1969 *Bulletin*, Goodknight solicited articles on the three Inklings and kindred authors such as George MacDonald and G. K. Chesterton – and, surprisingly, H. P. Lovecraft.

Lovecraft! As a dyed-in-the-wool racist, indefatigable atheist, and philosophical materialist writer of pulp horror stories, he was an odd addition to a list emphasizing the Christian Inklings and kindred spirits. And, in fact, so far as I have noticed, no article on Lovecraft has appeared in a Mythopoeic Society 'zine, unless perhaps there were, say, a brief report on *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*[1] in one of the Society branch reports that used to appear in *Mythprint*.

Goodknight, rightly in my opinion, didn't invite people to contribute articles on Lovecraft's epistolary-circle friends Robert E. Howard and Clark Ashton Smith to Mythopoeic Society publications. For one thing, there was already a well-established fanzine devoted to sword and sorcery fiction, *Amra*. Although Barr and Kirk contributed art to *Amra* as well as to the Mythopoeic Society 'zines, one wouldn't have expected in *Amra* to see articles on hobbits, the Istari, the Ringwraiths, the Stone of Solomon, Marcellus Victorinus, Simon the Clerk, Meldilorn, Tinidril, and Puddleglum; and no more should one have expected articles in *Mythlore* on King Kull, Crom, Solomon Kane, Maal Dweb, Satampra Zeiros, and Namirrha. Howard's pulp adventures of Conan the barbarian don't qualify as mythic just because they contain gods, dragons, and magicians. As for Smith -- he wrote stories in the Howard vein but with the swordsmanship toned down and the weird morbidness cranked way up.

However, it seems that Lewis and perhaps Tolkien read Lovecraft and that his work left its mark. Perhaps Goodknight's inclusion of Lovecraft made sense. I'll come back to that possibility.

2. The Inklings and the Lovecraft Circle: Any Connections?

Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams and their friends met in person sometimes two or more times a week at the height of the Inklings. Except for his New York City sojourn, Lovecraft lived in Providence, occasionally making bus trips and seeing cronies along the way, but relying on an immense correspondence for most of the contact between himself and members of his circle. I won't attempt to say precisely who was in and who was not in Lovecraft's "circle," but will mention just three of his fellow authors: Howard, Smith, and Donald Wandrei.

Devotees of fantastic fiction have wondered if the Inklings knew the work of the Lovecraft circle, and vice versa. Several points of likely or certain awareness may be summarized as follows:

[1] By sometime late in his life, Clark Ashton Smith, short story writer, poet, and artist, had read *The Hobbit* and some of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, according to a posting by "calonlan" on 30 Nov. 2011, in an Eldritch Dark discussion thread. "Calonlan" appears to have known CAS personally.

[2] Lovecraft himself had read more than one of Charles Williams's spiritual thrillers. Their orthodoxy spoiled them for HPL. He wrote:

> Essentially, they are not horror literature at all, but philosophical allegory in fictional form. Direct reproduction of the texture of life & the substance of moods is not the author's object. He is trying to illustrate human nature through symbols & turns of idea which possess significance for those taking a traditional or orthodox view of man's cosmic bearings. There is no true attempt to express the indefinable feelings experienced by man in confronting the unknown . . . To get a full-sized kick from this stuff one must take seriously the orthodox view of cosmic organisation -- which is rather impossible today. (as quoted in S. T. Joshi, *I Am*

Providence, page 878; I'm indebted to a 21 April 2016 posting by John Rateliff on his Sacnoth's Scriptorium blog for this reference)

Lovecraft could not have read *Descent into Hell* and *All Hallows' Eve*, which contain perhaps the most "Lovecraftian" sequences in Williams's seven novels.

[3] Lewis almost certainly not only read, but was influenced by, a story by Lovecraft correspondent and Arkham House co-founder Donald Wandrei. On one of the last pages in his short novel *The Great Divorce*, Lewis acknowledges his indebtedness to an American science fiction story, the title and author of which he has forgotten. This appears to be "Colossus," which appeared in the January 1934 issue of *Astounding*. Wandrei's story plays with the idea of our universe being of subatomic tininess as compared to a super-universe; the hero journeys from the one to the other. Lewis's novel involves a bus trip from hell to heaven. In the fiction, "'All Hell is smaller than one pebble of your earthly world; but it is smaller than one atom of this world, the Real World.'"

[4] Tolkien evidently read a 1963 paperback anthology called *Swords and Sorcery*, edited by L. Sprague de Camp, who gave him a copy. The anthology contains Lovecraft's tale in the manner of Lord Dunsany, "The Doom That Came to Sarnath," Smith's "The Testament of Athammaus," and Howard's Conan story "Shadows in the Moonlight." According to de Camp, who visited Tolkien in 1967, Tolkien liked the Conan story. Tolkien's own copy of de Camp's anthology was offered for bids on ebay a few years ago. *http://www.tolkienlibrary.com/tolkien-book-store/000971.htm*

[5] It is reasonably likely that Lewis read Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* and "The Shadow Out of Time" in *Astounding*. His reading of American pulp magazines is certain. Below, I'll say something about possible influence of Mountains on Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet* and of "Shadow" on Lewis's *Dark Tower* fragment.

All that doesn't come to a *lot*, but it's more than might have been expected.

Inklings-Lovecraft circle awareness didn't get a good chance really to develop. Robert E. Howard killed himself before the Inklings had produced very much writing. He died in 1936; *The Hobbit* was published in 1937, and Lewis's *Out of the Silent Planet* was published the following year. Lovecraft died in 1937. Smith died in 1961, but it seems that his career as a writer of fantastic fiction had concluded about the same time as the deaths of Howard and Lovecraft. Williams died unexpectedly following surgery in 1945; Lewis died in 1963; and Tolkien died ten years later.

3. Literary Influences: Any in Common?

Tolkien and Lewis on the one hand, and Lovecraft, Howard, and Smith on the other, probably shared an interest in the ersatz myth-making of Lord Dunsany. (Dunsany, in turn, was, I believe, influenced by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. I suspect that Dunsany's dream-worlds came out of the "deep romantic chasm" of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." Rather than attempting any longer argument here, I will simply invite the reader to undertake a thought experiment. Suppose "Kubla Khan" were unknown till now, and was published as a newly-discovered work by Lord Dunsany. I think you'll agree that it's very "Dunsanian" – though Dunsanian *avant le lettre*, as it happens, and better than Dunsany.)

Dunsany seems very important to the American authors but not to the British ones. His cynical outlook would appeal to the Lovecraft circle, not to the Inklings. I see Dunsany as an "anti-Tolkien" because Dunsany flaunts the unreality of his dream-worlds. "The Distressing Tale of Thangobrind the Jeweller, and of the Doom That Befell Him," ends, "And the only daughter of the Merchant Prince felt so little gratitude for this deliverance that she took to respectability of a militant kind, and became aggressively dull, and called her home the English Riviera, and had platitudes worked in worsted upon her tea-cosy, and in the end never died, but passed away at her residence." Admittedly, this is an extreme example. (*Mythlore* published two articles on Dunsany in its first 102 issues.)

I have little doubt that all six authors read stories by Algernon Blackwood. Certainly Lewis, Tolkien, and Lovecraft did. Tolkien mentions Blackwood in his "Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*" (in Jared Lobdell's *A Tolkien Compass*, first edition). In youth, Lewis wrote enthusiastically to Arthur Greeves about Blackwood's *John Silence*, which contains "Ancient Sorceries," mentioned below. Lovecraft praises Blackwood in his survey, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*.

Whether Blackwood influenced any of these authors other than Lovecraft is another question. I have argued for the possibility, for example, that Tolkien's screeching Nazgûl owe something to Blackwood's "The Wendigo." Blackwood's "The Willows" is perhaps the story Lovecraft would most have liked to have written in all the genre of weird fiction: "Here art and restraint in narrative reach their very highest development, and an impression of lasting poignancy is produced without a single strained passage or a single false note." The strange creature glimpsed in the tumbling Vermont flood waters of "The Whisperer in Darkness" may remind readers of something glimpsed in the swollen Danube of "The Willows."

Lewis esteemed William Hope Hodgson's The House on the Borderland and Lovecraft praised it and other works by Hodgson, whose "cosmicism" was probably an important influence on him.

Lovecraft and Tolkien esteemed M. R. James's *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*. For attestation, see Lovecraft's survey Supernatural Horror in Literature and the Extended Edition of Tolkien's *On Fairy-Stories*. There's a strong element of antiquarianism in many of Lovecraft's stories, and the citation of rare occult volumes by Lovecraft probably derives from James, although Lovecraft's grimoires were apt to be invented and James's were sometimes real. I have argued that Tolkien's conception of Gollum may owe something to James's haunter in "Canon Alberic's Scrap-book" (and to the

accompanying drawing by James McBryde).

In *Mythlore* #1 (Jan. 1969), Glen Goodknight mentioned Arthur Machen as an author who might be of interest to Mythopoeic Society readers, and Lee Speth eventually wrote about him in a couple of issues of *Mythlore*.

Machen is best known for a few classic weird horror novellas. David Llewellyn Dodds has prepared a so-far-unpublished edition of the early manuscript commonplace book (Bodleian MS. Eng. e. 2012) kept by Charles Williams with interactive contributions by his friend, Fred Page. An entry (p. 124) citing Machen's horror novella "The Great God Pan" opens up the possibility that Williams entertained the idea of treating Merlin as being the offspring of Pan. It may be mentioned that Machen and Blackwood were involved with Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn for a time, and Williams may have been a member too. (The evidence is not certain; see Grevel Lindop's biography, *The Third Inkling*, page 66.) Of the authors mentioned in this paper, Machen, Blackwood, and Williams were (if only for a time) the most interested in organizations devoted to the occult. Machen's beautiful Grail story, "The Great Return," prefigures some of the exalted passages in Williams's fiction, such as the Mass in *War in Heaven*.

Lovecraft and Howard knew Machen's early horror fiction well enough to seek to imitate it: Lovecraft's "Dunwich Horror" is heavily indebted to "The Great God Pan," which it mentions, and Howard's repulsive "Black Stone" seems to owe a lot to Machen's "Shining Pyramid." It's likely Smith had read Machen, but I don't suppose Tolkien had read the Welsh-born author. The 1969 catalogue of Lewis's library includes Machen's novel *The Secret Glory*, which awkwardly combines the Holy Grail and a bitter satire of English public schools. The catalogue includes books that, I'm sure, had been Joy Gresham Lewis's books; it is possible that CSL never looked at it.

H. Rider Haggard may be the author most worthy of exploring by readers who are interested in a literary predecessor who was really important for the Lovecraft circle and the Inklings.

Tolkien, who seems usually cagey about influences, admitted to the importance, for his own writing, of the Sherd of Amenartas in Haggard's *She* as an intriguing device that gets the adventures started. From Haggard and, probably, Haggard's imitators, and from Jack London, Robert E. Howard would have derived the notion of modern-day protagonists connecting via "racial memory" with heroes inhabiting ancient realms of adventure (cf. Howard's "Valley of the Worm," etc.).

Lewis seems to have read all the Haggard romances he could get his hands on, and is surely recalling *She* in his Victorian-era Narnian tale, *The Magician's Nephew*, when he imagines the formidable beauty Jadis creating havoc in London. I will draw upon his provocative review of a biography of Haggard below. Haggard gets name-checked by Charles Williams when Roger Ingram salutes Inkamasi, chief of the Zulus, in *Shadows of Ecstasy* (Chapter 4). Lovecraft saluted Haggard's *She* as "really remarkably good" in his *Supernatural Horror in Literature*.

Other predecessors were important to the one group and not to the other. For Tolkien and Lewis: William Morris and George MacDonald. For Lovecraft, Howard, and Smith: Poe.

4. Might Lovecraft Have Influenced Lewis and Tolkien?

Lewis almost certainly read Wandrei's "Colossus" in the January 1934 *Astounding Stories* and may have been an habitual reader of the magazine by then or soon afterwards.

It is entirely possible that Lewis read *At the Mountains of Madness*, which was serialized in the February, March, and April 1936 issues. Where Haggard wrote "lost race" novels about ancient civilizations surviving in remote regions of today's world, Lovecraft, here, sends a Miskatonic University expedition to the most remote region of the earth, there to find living vestiges of a civilization predating the appearance of mankind.

Mountains devotes many pages to the expounding of earth's distant past as decoded by Dyer and Danforth, who peruse wall art created by the non-human Old Ones. The art reveals who the Old Ones were, namely ancient scientists from other worlds, who were responsible for the origin of life on earth. John Garth has argued that Lewis began to write *Out of the Silent Planet* in May or June 1937 (*https://johngarth.wordpress.com/2017/03/31/when-tolkien-reinvented-atlantis-and-lewis-went-to-mars/*), and readers may remember how, on a beautiful and ancient Martian island, Ransom puzzles out the primordial history of the solar system by examining carvings. These carvings exhibit the truth of the Christian story of the war in heaven in which Satan was cast out. Writers of adventurous romances such as Haggard could use wall art as a device for hinting at the history of the distant past, but Lovecraft and Lewis use this idea specifically for the depiction of the most antique origins.

There's another incident in Lovecraft's *Mountains* that may have contributed to the first novel of Lewis's space trilogy. Readers of the latter may remember the moment when Ransom, who has sojourned for some weeks among the Malacandrians, sees human beings again, and for a brief moment beholds them through Martian eyes (Chapter 19). In *Mountains*, the narrator comes to the point of imaginatively identifying with a small group of Old Ones – revived after a sleep of many millions of years, and attacked by dogs (which hadn't evolved, yet back in their time), and confronted by human beings for the first time: "frantically barking quadrupeds," "frantic white simians with the queer wrappings and paraphernalia." Of course, just as the carvings that reveal the past may derive from Rider Haggard, the bizarre effect of seeing humans through other creatures' eyes may derive from Gulliver's Fourth Voyage, when the narrator, after his happy sojourn among the Houyhnhnms, sees himself and other humans as ugly Yahoos. And, of course, not every literary effect derives from an earlier one.

In any event, it's true that Lewis never names Lovecraft,

but rather Lindsay, Wells, and Stapledon as spurring his turn to writing science fiction; still, such parallels remain striking.

As does the difference in execution. Lewis integrates Ransom's learning of the truth more deftly into the story, while some readers have probably found the many pages about the history of the Old Ones to be tedious. Lovecraft keeps inserting little promises into the narration to assure the reader that frightening events are yet to be related. It is clumsy, but many readers are willing to go along and enjoy those pages for their own sake.

There's a great deal of affinity between Lovecraft and Lewis, though, in that they were writing highly imaginative, and also very literate, romances marked by their beliefs but also notably by their reading. In *Mountains*, the echoes of Coleridge ("Kubla Khan") and Poe (*Arthur Gordon Pym*) accumulate, while *Silent Planet* draws on Milton (*Comus*) and Wells.

What about Lovecraft's other story to be published in *Astounding*, "The Shadow Out of Time"? Perhaps Lewis read that one too, in the June 1936 issue, and if he did, it seems likely that it left marks on his unfinished science fiction novel *The Dark Tower*, which was probably started soon after Lewis wrote *Out of the Silent Planet*.

Lovecraft seems to have aspired, in his last years, to write stories that transcended horror fiction, even if they were meant to have horrifying finales; he hoped to evoke awe and wonder. This is especially true of "The Shadow Out of Time." Conversely, Lewis was writing, in *The Dark Tower*, a story with strong horror elements. We might expect that "The Shadow Out of Time" and *The Dark Tower* would be the stories in which each author was closest to the other, and I think that is what we do find.

In both stories, the framework includes the possibility of explanation of anomalous memories and dreams. In both, a vaguely-described device effects a transference of consciousness from our contemporary time to another time. There, the contemporary man's mind inhabits a body differing in degree (*Dark Tower*) or utterly in kind ("Shadow") from his rightful body. This character consults the vast resources of a library seeing information about the place and time in which he finds himself, and learns about dreadful possibilities there. It appears from the *Dark Tower* fragment, and is certainly true in "The Shadow Out of Time," that a threat to our own world is revealed as possible. Unusually for Lovecraft, there's even an element in this story relating to one human being's faithfulness to another (a son's loyalty to his father), while Lewis's story was going to develop Scudamour's love for a worthy woman.

Differences between the stories become pronounced. Lovecraft's narrator has little to do in the remote time to which his consciousness has come but to write, read, and look around. Lovecraft trusts mostly to the innate interest of his "world-building" and his description of exotic scenes to keep the reader paying attention to the many paragraphs preceding the final "shock" (when Peaslee, in our time, finds in an Australian ruin a manuscript written millions of years ago in his own handwriting; it's not a shock because the reader has known all along that Peaslee's dreams and memories of his mental sojourn in the distant past were genuine). The disquisition on the Great Race's culture will seem to some readers to belong in an appendix. I think it is justifiable given the story's supposed nature as a testimony of actual experiences.

In contrast, *The Dark Tower* seemed to have been weaving the narrative and the expository material together more smoothly. We're given brisk, if frightening, accounts of the strange goings-on in the Othertime for several pages. Then comes calamity, with a sudden and unplanned swapping of minds between the two times. As soon as Lewis gets Scudamour into the Othertime, the young man finds himself embodied as a Stingingman who is on the verge of stabbing the woman who is the counterpart of Scudamour's fiancée in our world, and Scudamour must act quick-wittedly as his Othertime attendant informs him of a crisis occurring right then, with an attack by White Riders. In fact, Lewis is more like a "pulp writer" than Lovecraft at this point!

Lovecraft's agenda in *Mountains* and "The Shadow Out of Time" includes a depreciation of what he regarded as conventional morality. The narrator in the Antarctic story comes to appreciate that, despite their exotic biology, the Old Ones "were men." That is, they were rational creatures (what the Martians call *hnau* in *Out of the Silent Planet*), actuated by scientific pursuits, but also creators of slaves that are controlled by hypnosis; while the Great Race creatures cull "defectives" and practice "fascistic socialism." Contrary-wise, the morality in *Tower* is Christian, evident in the abhorrence with which the good characters regard the Othertime's Nazi-like use of human beings as subjects for medical experimentation and their conditioning as slaves of the state without wills of their own.

Although Lewis and Tolkien didn't set themselves to write methodical retellings of Christian doctrine and the Bible in the modes of science fiction and fantasy, they wrote from deeply Christian imaginations, and this fact is abundantly evident in various ways in their fiction. For example, in *The Lord of the Rings* Aragorn is an ancient *type* of Christ the Savior; in *That Hideous Strength* corrupt human beings try to raise a new "Tower of Babel."

I don't think that Lovecraft set himself to write a body of stories that systematically mocked and parodied Christianity, but it's reasonable to consider *At the Mountains of Madness* as a discovery of the genesis of mankind that flouts the First Book of Moses, with mankind being evolved from ancestors that were created by the Old Ones; or to consider "the Dunwich Horror" as a parody of the Incarnation; or to consider the various occult books of the Mythos, such as the *Necronomicon*, as parodies of the Bible, with revelations around which cults form, and which hint at eschatological calamities due when the stars are right again. Lovecraft also employed occasion, incidental references to the Bible, as when, in "The Colour Out of Space," the weird lights that appear on the tips of tree-branches are likened to the tongues of fire that rested on the heads of the apostles at Pentecost.

What about Tolkien, by the way – did he write anything along late-Lovecraftian lines? Yes indeed: the unfinished *Notion Club Papers*. Here we have a group of male scholars gathering for cultivated conversation, notably about the possibility of time- and space-travel; one scholar theorizes that it might be possible to become "attuned" to a meteorite and become psychically aware of alien worlds, not just in our solar system but beyond. One could easily imagine Lovecraft writing a story developed from just such an idea.

As with Lovecraft's "Shadow," the reality of dream-glimpses is basic to the developing story. Notion Club scholars begin to correlate their dreams and nightmares, which, it transpires, are putting some of them into contact with a primordial catastrophe on Earth involving transgressive contact with a superhuman entity called Zigūr. They study fragments of an archaic language that provides hints of a disaster that happened before the sinking of Númenor/Atlantis – and that bursts violently into the modern world of the scholars, unleashing destructive winds that, for most meteorologists, are inexplicable. One recalls the terrible wind-forces that Peaslee fears will emerge from the ancient Australian ruins, in "The Shadow Out of Time."

I don't know if Tolkien read Lovecraft's story. It isn't very fanciful to hypothesize that Lewis owned that issue of *Astounding* and passed it on to his friend. Lovecraft would have agreed fervently with Tolkien's remark, in "On Fairy-Stories," that a story may address the hunger "to survey the depths of space and time" and the wish "to hold communion with other living things." The former desire is one of the main things in Lovecraft's mature fiction, and he put his own spin on the latter in "The Shadow Out of Time," by imagining the members of the Great Race as sending out psychic feelers in order to connect with rational beings of other species. Lovecraft didn't believe in the Creator, but he would have had some respect for Tolkien's notion of the literary artist as "sub-creator," since, like Tolkien, he was at pains to produce a sense of the reality of his "secondary worlds."

I think that, when Lovecraft began to write stories that have become identified as "Cthulhu Mythos" stories, he improvised books, entities, etc. in a fairly *ad hoc* and tongue-in-cheek manner, but became preoccupied by the possibilities of a corpus of *lore* as he wrote the two stories that this paper has discussed at most length. "The Shadow Out of Time" is certainly a sequel to *At the Mountains of Madness*, and, conservatively, it would be easy also to integrate material from "The Whisperer in Darkness" into a scheme of Lovecraftian cosmic lore.

If the editor of *Astounding* had pressed Lovecraft for more novellas and novels, Lovecraft would, I believe, have been likely to have deliberately elaborated and explored a sort of "Cthulhu Legendarium" – grandiose science fiction in which Cthulhu himself might have had little to do. Certainly a fascination with imagined *lore* emerges late in Lovecraft's career. Had Lovecraft lived for several more decades, might he even have run into something like the perplexities of Tolkien, as regards reconciling the "facts" published so far and proposing new ones? We know from *The History of Middle-earth* that Tolkien eventually worried about the Orcs: how could they be a rational but irredeemable species? Similarly, Lovecraft might have become uneasy about the consciousness-transference aspect of his late fiction; is it possible to square that with strict materialism?

However, as things were it was easier to write another horror story for *Weird Tales* rather than to write a further story with long stretches of lore. "The Dreams in the Witch-House" and "The Haunter of the Dark" may be better written than some of Lovecraft's earlier fiction, but they seem to add little to Lovecraft's achievement. I'm reminded of Lewis's remark, in "The Mythopoeic Gift of Rider Haggard," that *Ayesha*, the long-delayed sequel to *She*, is better written but lacking in mythopoeic power as compared to the earlier book.

5. What About Lovecraft's Literary Deficiencies?

At this point, having contended for Lovecraft as something of a peer of Lewis and Tolkien, I should emphasize that, in important respects, this isn't the case. Lewis's *Experiment in Criticism* helps us to see why Lovecraft may often fairly be considered a bad writer. The *Experiment* also helps to explain his work's appeal to readers who know, and love, works of high literary quality.

Everyone who cares about literature should read Lewis's book. He asks us to start, not from the idea of good or bad books, but with reading. What are the characteristics of good reading, and what are those of bad?

Bad reading desires the same old thing and yet insists upon superficial novelty (hence, a bad reader prizes formulaic fiction but promptly puts aside a book upon remembering that he or she has already read it); it uses literature to as a means to pass the time for want of something better to do, and may use literature to get a train of ego-pleasing fantasies started; it is inattentive to words. The corollary is that those who habitually read badly will be put off by good writing, which invites, requires, and rewards attention.

Lovecraft has often been characterized as a bad writer. One might amuse oneself by critiquing a number of Lovecraft's relatively earlier efforts. Rather, let's take what is probably his best story, "The Colour Out of Space." In this story Lovecraft exercises a grave and effective style, but, to consider just one sentence, he slips here: "It was a monstrous constellation of unnatural light, *like a glutted swarm of corpse-fed fireflies dancing hellish sarabands over an accursed marsh*" (my italics). Here the simile runs away with the story, *weakening* the description of the eerie light pouring from a well because the figurative expression is so distracting. It is tactless to compare a real frightening and bizarre thing to a hypothetical frightening and bizarre thing. And it will be seen that one should *not* read this sentence attentively. If one does really pay attention to what it says, one may reflect that fireflies don't eat flesh. It is awkward to refer figuratively to an "accursed marsh" given that a literal well and a reservoir are so important to the story's plot.

Lovecraft has the bad habit of using an intense rhetoric

too soon. In another of his best efforts, *At the Mountains of Madness*, his narrator describes his first sight of the tremendous range: "In the whole spectacle there was a persistent, pervasive hint of stupendous secrecy and potential revelation; as if these stark, nightmare spires marked the pylons of a frightful gateway into forbidden spheres of dream, and complex gulfs of remote time, space, and ultradimensionality." He's over-egging the pudding, as far as that early point in the story in concerned, since so much more has yet to happen; and it's clumsy for him to use the simile about the mountains appearing "as if" they were a gateway into "gulfs of remote time, space, and ultradimensionality," since that's apparently what they more or less turn out to be (Chapter 3, Chapter 12).

Lovecraft also practices a kind of cod-portentousness through a certain overuse of *that* and *those*, which he probably picked up from reading so much pulp fiction. Here are some examples from early in the next chapter of *Mountains*: "that daemon mountain wind must have been enough to drive any man mad," "the hatred of the [explorers' dogs] for those hellish Archaean organisms," "One had to be careful of one's imagination in the lee of those overshadowing mountains of madness," "When we came on that terrible shelter," etc.

And so on. Badness in Lovecraft's fiction may also include inept handling of plot, including supposed "surprise" endings and recycling of situations, and so on. "The Whisperer in Darkness," for example, one of the key Cthulhu Mythos tales, compromises its resourceful use of local color and intriguing recent news (the discovery of Pluto), its uncanny atmosphere and imaginative vistas, with a noticeable prolongation of the final episode that relies on a rather stupid narrator and a disguise that is likely to be obvious to the reader, but, unconvincingly, not to the man on the spot. In *Mountains* Lovecraft awkwardly combines pedantic exposition of the Old Ones' civilization, including conclusions about motives and the like that could hardly have been conveyed by pictorial carvings, with reticences and hints.

Lovecraft didn't finish high school, and his writings occasionally betray the vicissitudes of the autodidact – sometimes extensive learned material that reflects his self-selected studies combines with sketchy or erroneous background. Thus, in *Mountains*, it seems he has got up a lot about geological periods, but may betray a weak grasp of how petrifaction works or the inevitable consequences of aeolian erosion. The narrator and his companion flee over the mountains in an airplane with the windows open, i.e. not a pressurized cabin, at high elevation, and experience nothing worse than cold and racket. When they land, at first Lovecraft remembers to say that they suffer from the rarefied air of a high altitude, but he seems to forget all about this for many pages, and has the two running for their lives eventually. Dyer and Danforth learn that he Old Ones flew to earth from interstellar space by *the beating of their wings*. When Robert E. Howard wrote of the elephant-headed folk, in the Conan story "The Tower of the Elephant," thus flying through space, perhaps he didn't realize the impossibility; but Lovecraft?

6. Does Lovecraft's Mature Cthulhu Mythos Fiction Partake of Lewis's "Mythopoeic"?

If Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos fiction conforms to criteria adduced by C. S. Lewis as qualities of mythopoeia, that might help to show why some readers return to it despite defects that no amount of special pleading can completely excuse. This paper will turn to that task in a moment.

By "Lovecraft's mature Cthulhu Mythos" fiction is meant "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," "The Whisperer in Darkness," *At the Mountains of Madness*, and "The Shadow Out of Time." This is a very short list compared to what many Lovecraft fans would offer for "the Cthulhu Mythos." They would probably add "The Call of Cthulhu," "The Dunwich Horror," "The Dreams in the Witch House," "The Thing on the Doorstep," "The Haunter of the Dark," and perhaps others, as stories that are deliberately related to one another through Lovecraft's use of common references and concepts. The "Mythos" elements in these, however, seem more incidental, or the story to lack gravity, as compared to the ones I have selected. Someone new to Lovecraft who reads the four I have cited and wants to read more will probably enjoy these other stories without feeling that they add much to the lore of the Mythos, and probably will feel that they are relatively conventional horror stories by comparison. Perhaps there is more "Mythos" in "The Mound," conventionally regarded as a collaboration between Lovecraft and Zealia Bishop. The detestable subterranean K'nyan civilization wallows in slavery, cruelty, mutilation, etc., so this story is more gruesome than the four stories I've chosen.

I've ignored Lovecraft's "Dream-World" stories such as *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* and relatively conventional horror stories such as "The Picture in the House" (which Dickens's Fat Boy – "'I wants to make your flesh creep'" -- in *Pickwick* should have related), the Ambrose Biercesque "In the Vault," the Poesque "Cool Air," and the Satanist *Case of Charles Dexter Ward*.

Although the term "Cthulhu Mythos" has become widely used, it isn't Lovecraft's coinage, and readers should not assume that he took pains to make everything consistent as between every story that mentions Cthulhu, the *Necronomicon*, etc. However, the details in the four late stories I've focused on are probably consistent. Lovecraft seems originally to have had two motives in repeating names of places, forbidden books, entities, and persons in his stories: to provide a (bogus) sense of "lore," and to amuse himself and his writer-friends in a playful in-group way, a little as Lewis did, not to his friend's liking, when he alluded to Tolkien's "Numinor" in one of the Ransom books, *That Hideous Strength*.

Tolkien is sometimes said to have desired to create "a mythology for England." Lovecraft evidently wanted to evoke a sort of "mythology for New England," since the Mythos stories usually have connections to that region.

For example, if a long quotation may be allowed, here is the opening (after an epigraph from Charles Lamb) of Lovecraft's "Dunwich Horror"; in some moods, the reader may find it to be the best thing in the story:

> When a traveller in north central Massachusetts takes the wrong fork at the junction of the Aylesbury pike just beyond Dean's Corners he comes upon a lonely and curious country. The ground gets higher, and the brier-bordered stone walls press closer and closer against the ruts of the dusty, curving road. The trees of the frequent forest belts seem too large, and the wild weeds, brambles, and grasses attain a luxuriance not often found in settled regions. At the same time the planted fields appear singularly few and barren; while the sparsely scattered houses wear a surprisingly uniform aspect of age, squalor, and dilapidation. Without knowing why, one hesitates to ask directions from the gnarled, solitary figures spied now and then on crumbling doorsteps or on the sloping, rock-strown meadows. Those figures are so silent and furtive that one feels somehow confronted by forbidden things, with which it would be better to have nothing to do. When a rise in the road brings the mountains in view above the deep woods, the feeling of strange uneasiness is increased. The summits are too rounded and symmetrical to give a sense of comfort and naturalness, and sometimes the sky silhouettes with especial clearness the queer circles of tall stone pillars with which most of them are crowned.
>
> Gorges and ravines of problematical depth intersect the way, and the crude wooden bridges always seem of dubious safety. When the road dips again there are stretches of marshland that one instinctively dislikes, and indeed almost fears at evening when unseen whippoorwills chatter and the fireflies come out in abnormal profusion to dance to the raucous, creepily insistent rhythms of stridently piping bull-frogs. The thin, shining line of the Miskatonic's upper reaches has an oddly serpent-like suggestion as it winds close to the feet of the domed hills among which it rises.
>
> As the hills draw nearer, one heeds their wooded sides more than their stone-crowned tops. Those sides loom up so darkly and precipitously that one wishes they would keep their distance, but there is no road by which to escape them. Across a covered bridge one sees a small village huddled between the stream and the vertical slope of Round Mountain, and wonders at the cluster of rotting gambrel roofs bespeaking an earlier architectural period than that of the neighbouring region. It is not reassuring to see, on a closer glance, that most of the houses are deserted and falling to ruin, and that the broken-steepled church now harbours the one slovenly mercantile establishment of the hamlet. One dreads to trust the tenebrous tunnel of the bridge, yet there is no way to avoid it. Once across, it is hard to prevent the impression of a faint, malign odour about the village street, as of the massed mould and decay of centuries. It is always a relief to get clear of the place, and to follow the narrow road around the base of the hills and across the level country beyond till it rejoins the Aylesbury pike. Afterward one sometimes learns that one has been through Dunwich.
>
> Outsiders visit Dunwich as seldom as possible, and since a certain season of horror all the signboards pointing toward it have been taken down. The scenery, judged by any ordinary aesthetic canon, is more than commonly beautiful; yet there is no influx of artists or summer tourists. Two centuries ago, when talk of witch-blood, Satan-worship, and strange forest presences was not laughed at, it was the custom to give reasons for avoiding the locality. In our sensible age—since the Dunwich horror of 1928 was hushed up by those who had the town's and the world's welfare at heart—people shun it without knowing exactly why. Perhaps one reason—though it cannot apply to uninformed strangers—is that the natives are now repellently decadent, having gone far along that path of retrogression so common in many New England backwaters. They have come to form a race by themselves, with the well-defined mental and physical stigmata of degeneracy and inbreeding. The average of their intelligence is woefully low, whilst their annals reek of overt viciousness and of half-hidden murders, incests, and deeds of almost unnamable violence and perversity. The old gentry, representing the two or three armigerous families which came from Salem in 1692, have kept somewhat above the general level of decay; though many branches are sunk into the sordid populace so deeply that only their names remain as a key to the origin they disgrace. Some of the Whateleys and Bishops still send their eldest sons to Harvard and Miskatonic, though those sons seldom return to the mouldering gambrel roofs under which they and their ancestors were born.

What may for the sake of convenience be called "Lovecraft Country" is, like Mervyn Peake's Gormenghast, a real addition to the inventory of imaginary places. One might compare to the Dunwich description, the loving evocation of the grounds of Bracton College in Lewis's *That Hideous Strength*. There, of course, Lewis is not playing the ominous organ pedal that Lovecraft foots in the "Dunwich" passage; but in both cases the reader is invited to *slow down* and enjoy the antiquarian description:

> The only time I was a guest at Bracton I persuaded my host to let me into the Wood and leave me there alone for an hour. He apologised for locking me in.
>
> Very few people were allowed into Bragdon Wood. The gate was by Inigo Jones and was the only entry: a high wall enclosed the Wood, which was perhaps a quarter of a mile broad and a mile from east to west. If you came in from the street and went through the College to reach it, the sense of gradual penetration into a holy of holies was very strong. First you went through the Newton quadran-gle which is dry and gravelly; florid, but beautiful, Gregorian build-ings look down upon it. Next you must enter a cool tunnel-like pas-sage, nearly dark at midday unless either the door into Hall should be open on your right or the buttery hatch on your left, giving you a glimpse of indoor daylight falling on panels, and a whiff of the smell of fresh bread. When you emerged from this tunnel you would find yourself in the medieval College: in the cloister of the much smaller quadrangle called Republic. The grass here looks very green after the

aridity of Newton and the very stone of the buttresses that rise from it gives the impression of being soft and alive. Chapel is not far off: the hoarse, heavy noise of the works of a great and old clock comes to you from somewhere overhead. You went along this cloister, past slabs and urns and busts that commemorate dead Brac-tonians, and then down shallow steps into the full daylight of the quadrangle called Lady Alice. The buildings to your left and right were seventeenth-century work: humble, almost domestic in charac-ter, with dormer windows, mossy and grey-tiled. You were in a sweet, Protestant world. You found yourself, perhaps, thinking of Bunyan or of Walton's *Lives*.

There were no buildings straight ahead on the fourth side of Lady Alice: only a row of elms and a wall: and here first one became aware of the sound of running water and the cooing of wood pigeons. The street was so far off by now that there were no other noises. In the wall there was a door. It led you into a cov-ered gallery pierced with narrow windows on either side. Looking out through these, you discovered that you were crossing a bridge and the dark brown dimpled Wynd was flowing under you. Now you were very near your goal. A wicket at the far end of the bridge brought you out on the Fellows' bowling green, and across that you saw the high wall of the Wood, and through the Inigo Jones gate you caught a glimpse of sunlit green and deep shadows.

I suppose the mere fact of being walled in gave the Wood part of its peculiar quality, for when a thing is enclosed, the mind does not willingly regard it as common. As I went forward over the quiet turf I had the sense of being received. The trees were just so wide apart that one saw uninterrupted foliage in the distance but the place where one stood seemed always to be a clearing: surrounded by a world of shadows, one walked in mild sunshine. Except for the sheep whose nibbling kept the grass so short and who sometimes raised their long foolish faces to stare at me. I was quite alone; and it felt more like the loneliness of a very large room in a deserted house, than like any ordinary solitude out of doors. I remember thinking, "This is the sort of place which, as a child. one would have been rather afraid of or else would have liked very much indeed." A mo-ment later I thought, "But when alone — really alone — everyone is a child: or no one?" Youth and age touch only the surface of our lives.Half a mile is a short walk. Yet it seemed a long time before I came to the centre of

the Wood. I knew it was the centre, for there was the thing I had chiefly come to see. It was a well: a well with steps going down to it and the remains of an ancient pavement about it. It was very imperfect now. I did not step on it, but I lay down in the grass and touched it with my fingers. For this was the heart of Bracton or Bragdon Wood: out of this all the legends had come and on this, I suspected... the very existence of the College had originally depend-ed. The archaeologists were agreed that the masonry was very late British-Roman work, done on the eve of the Anglo-Saxon invasion. How Bragdon the wood was connected with Bracton the lawyer was a mystery, but I fancy myself that the Bracton family had availed themselves of an accidental similarity in the names to believe, or make believe, that they had something to do with it. Certainly, if all that was told were true, or even half of it, the Wood was older than the Bractons. I suppose no one now would attach much importance to Strabo's *Balachthon*, though it had led a sixteenth-century Warden of the College to say that, "We know not by ancientest report of any Britain without Bragdon." But the medieval song takes us back to the fourteenth century.

In Bragdon bricht this ende dai
Herde ich Merlin ther he lai
Singende woo and welawai.

It is good enough evidence that the well with the British-Roman pavement was already "Merlin's Well," though the name is not found till Queen Elizabeth's reign when good Warden Shovel surrounded the Wood with a wall "for the taking away of all profane and hea-thenish superstitions and the deterring of the vulgar sort from all wakes, may games, dancings, mummings, and baking of Morgan's bread, heretofore used about the fountain called in vanity Merlin's Well, and utterly to be renounced and abominated as a gallimaufrey of papistry, gentilism, lewdness and dunsicall folly." Not that the Col-lege had by this action renounced its own interest in the place. Old Dr. Shovel, who lived to be nearly a hundred, can scarcely have been cold in his grave when one of Cromwell's Major Generals, conceiv-ing it his business to destroy "the groves and the high places," sent a few troopers with power to impress the country people for this pious work. The scheme came to nothing in the end; but there had been a bicker between the College and the troopers in the heart of Bragdon, and the fabulously learned and saintly Richard Crowe had been killed by a musket-ball on the very steps of the Well. He would be a brave man who would accuse Crowe either of popery or "gentilism"; yet the story is that his last words had been, "Marry, Sirs, if Merlin who was the Devil's son was a true King's man as ever ate bread, is it not a shame that you, being but the sons of bitches, must be rebels and regicides?" And always, through all changes, every War-den of Bracton, on the day of his election, had drunk a ceremonial draught of water from Merlin's Well in the great cup which, both for its antiquity and beauty, was the greatest of the Bracton treasures.

Since Lewis has treated us to a couple of pseudo-antiquarian quotations, we may read a bit of pastiche also from "The Dunwich Horror." Lovecraft's narrator writes:

In 1747 the Reverend Abijah Hoadley, newly come to the Congregational Church at Dunwich Village, preached a memorable sermon on the close presence of Satan and his imps; in which he said:

"It must be allow'd, that these Blasphemies of an infernall Train of Daemons are Matters of too common Knowledge to be deny'd; the cursed Voices of *Azazel* and *Buzrael*, of *Beelzebub* and *Belial*, being heard now from under Ground by above a Score of credible Witnesses now living. I my self did not more than a Fortnight ago catch a very plain Discourse of evill Powers in the Hill behind my House; wherein there were a Rattling and Rolling, Groaning, Screeching, and Hissing, such as no Things of this Earth cou'd raise up, and which must needs have come from those Caves that only black Magick can discover, and only the Divell unlock."

Mr. Hoadley disappeared soon after delivering this sermon […].

A little later in the story, we get this:

"Nor is it to be thought," ran the text as Armitage mentally translated it, "that man is either the oldest or the last of earth's masters, or that the common bulk of life and substance walks alone. The Old Ones were, the Old Ones are, and the Old Ones shall be. Not in the spaces we know, but *between* them, They walk serene and primal, undimensioned and to us unseen. *Yog-Sothoth* knows the gate. *Yog-Sothoth* is the gate. *Yog-Sothoth* is the key and guardian of the gate. Past, present, future, all are one in *Yog-Sothoth*. He knows where the Old Ones broke through of old, and where They shall break through again. He knows where They have trod earth's fields, and where They still tread them, and why no one can behold Them as They tread. By Their smell can men sometimes know Them near, but of Their semblance can no man know, *saving only in the features of those They have begotten on mankind*; and of those are there many sorts, differing in likeness from man's truest eidolon to that shape without sight or substance which is Them. They walk unseen and foul in lonely places where the Words have been spoken and the Rites howled through at their Seasons. The wind gibbers with Their voices, and the earth mutters with Their consciousness. They bend the forest and crush the city, yet may not forest or city behold the hand that smites. Kadath in the cold waste hath known Them, and what man knows Kadath? The ice desert of the South and the sunken isles of Ocean hold stones whereon Their seal is engraven, but who hath seen the deep frozen city or the sealed tower long garlanded with seaweed and barnacles? Great Cthulhu is Their cousin, yet can he spy Them only dimly. *Iä! Shub-Niggurath!* As a foulness shall ye know Them. Their hand is at your throats, yet ye see Them not; and Their habitation is even one with your guarded threshold. *Yog-Sothoth* is the key to the gate, whereby the spheres meet. Man rules now where They ruled once; They shall soon rule where man rules now. After summer is winter, and after winter summer. They wait patient and potent, for here shall They reign again."

That must be the text that launched a thousand fics – fanfic efforts, that is. It must be the longest stretch Lovecraft

composed as from his well-known and (to judge from its frequent appearances in his stories) fairly readily available *Necronomicon*. The *Necronomicon* is not only a conjurer's grimoire, but a work of the "real" pre-history of the earth. The latter aspect of it (only that!) makes it akin to Tolkien's *Red Book of Westmarch*.

An important difference between the Inklings and the Lovecraft circle authors must lie in their sense of their audience. Williams's novels were, for the most part, intended as "holiday" fiction, but at any rate for publication in book form, from Gollancz (also George Orwell's publisher) or Faber. Other Williams books were published by Oxford University Press. Lewis and Tolkien were also published by Oxford, and their fiction generally appeared in hardcover book form and from respectable publishers. Lovecraft, Howard, and Smith, however, wrote with hope of publication in pulp magazines, notably *Weird Tales*, with its inevitably trashy cover paintings of pinup girls threatened by sadistic heathen priests and the like. They'd have known that the majority of their readers evidently wanted crude sensationalism.

From his letters, it appears that Lovecraft liked to shock readers but eventually aspired to something more poetic, as with stories such as Blackwood's "The Willows." The conflict can break out into the open in Lovecraft's stories. In "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" he is at pains to create a strong element of regional flavor and a whole implied secret history of an obscure New England port town. One might compare the importance of setting in this story with that in Blackwood's much-anthologized tale of an autumnal French hill-town, "Ancient Sorceries." Lovecraft's narrator learns a great deal about the history of Innsmouth, a reclusive Massachusetts town dating to colonial times. But despite his labors over these matters, Lovecraft's inner pulpster will not be suppressed. The narrator questions an alcoholic geezer who imparts swatches of important background information regarding Innsmouth's inhabitants, economy, etc. The scene culminates, however, in the geezer looking past the narrator's shoulder and seeing something frightening; whereupon he screams, and Lovecraft actually *sounds out* the screams: "'EH—AHHHH—AH! E'YAAHHHH. . . E—YAAHHHH! . . . YHAAAAAAA!'" One supposes that Lovecraft, if he had known that his story was going to appear in a book published by, say, Knopf, would have caught himself and omitted them. How astonishing it would have been if Tolkien had sounded out the screeches of the Nazgûl. The closest any Inkling comes to transcribing some horrible sound is Tolkien's spelling-out of Gollum's unpleasant swallowing-noise in The Hobbit, where children were intended as his primary audience.

7. Lovecraft as a Mythpoeic Writer Continued: Who Are His Peers?

In several places, C. S. Lewis discussed fantasists who wrote works that are compelling despite serious literary faults. These remarks might help us to understand why readers, perhaps including ourselves, read and reread Lovecraft -- despite criticisms of his philosophy and recognition of defects in his style and characterization.

In "On Stories," "On Science Fiction," "The Mythopoeic Gift of Rider Haggard," and other pieces, Lewis championed the legitimacy of science fiction and fantasy. Lovecraft, whom Loewis never mentions, is not a peer of Coleridge ("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," "Kubla Khan," "Christabel"), Stevenson (*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*), or Tolkien (*The Lord of the Rings*). Lewis cited these as works in which the gift for great fantasy has been complemented by "specifically literary powers." But the mythopoeic gift can exist where an author lacks literary powers or is unwilling to take the trouble to exercise them.

I'd like to suggest that Lovecraft is best understood as a peer, usually a lesser peer, of mythopoeic authors such as George MacDonald, Rider Haggard, and David Lindsay.

First, I'll quote from Lewis's remarks on the literary defects of these three mythopoeic authors. I think many readers will perceive a relevance to Lovecraft. I'll note that each author held to some kind of philosophy. Then I'll present some of what Lewis had to say about what he calls the "mythopoeic gift." I'll conclude by suggesting that Lovecraft makes a fourth with the three authors listed at the beginning of this paragraph.

[a] MacDonald (1824-1905)

MacDonald wrote several book-length fantasies, including *Lilith* (Lovecraft fans should read the first few chapters and see if they aren't gripped by them), *Phantastes*, *The Princess and the Goblin*, *The Princess and Curdie*, and *At the Back of the North Wind*, as well as some fantastic short stories (such as "The Golden Key") and novellas ("Photogen and Nycteris") that Lin Carter reprinted in the Ballantine Adult Fantasy series. I think that the style in these works is often better than unobjectionable, but occasionally (perhaps in "The Wise Woman," for example) he drifted into the faults evident in his many long realistic novels. Lewis may be thinking specifically of the novels, when he says, in the introduction to his MacDonald anthology, that "the texture of his writing as a whole is undistinguished, at times fumbling," sometimes verbose, sometimes showing a Scottish "weakness for florid ornament," sometimes "an oversweetness picked up from Novalis."

Incidentally, when W. H. Auden introduced readers to MacDonald's two great fantasies for adults, *Phantastes* and *Lilith*, he said the Scottish author was equal to, or even superior to, the best of Poe. That should intrigue Lovecraft fans, who of course know of their idol's devotion to Poe.

[b] Haggard (1856-1925)

Lewis bemoaned "the clichés, jocosities, frothy eloquence" in which Haggard indulged in his romances about Ayesha. Lewis noted an irony – that Haggard seems amused, when writing of Allan Quatermain, of the "unliterary" manner of the narratives related by the "simple hunter. It never dawned on him that what he wrote in his own person was a great deal

worse – 'literary' in the most damning sense of the word."

By the way, if this isn't too much of a digression -- Haggard and Lovecraft are alike in that the unexpected never happens in their stories. Yes, of course, plot developments occur that we might not have seen coming. A first-time reader of She doesn't expect its appalling climax. But these developments are the sort of thing that is to be expected in fantastic adventure. By "the unexpected" I mean something that is truly of value in the story but that we hardly think was foreseen by the author during the time the work was being written and that is, in a sense, "gratuitous," and yet pleasingly right. In *Perelandra*, during Ransom's chthonic battle with the Un-man, he glimpses a bizarre segmented creature much farther down, and realizes how little he knows of this young world. Earlier he has glimpsed peculiar merpeople and cannot tell whether they are rational creatures or animals. There are several such unexpected incidents in *The Lord of the Rings.* When Tom Bombadil puts on Sauron's dreadful Ring – and *nothing happens*; when Galadriel could have taken the Ring from Frodo -- and renounces it; when Sam sees Gollum studying the sleeping Frodo and reaching a tentative and tender hand towards him – these are truly unexpected moments, and they manifest the greatness of *The Lord of the Rings* in a way different from, and complementary to, the rigor and reality of its imaginary languages and other oft-noted, carefully-worked-out features of the book do. In Chapter 5 of Williams's *Greater Trumps* there's the conception of a hidden game-board with splendid golden figures in motion – a marvelous enough image, in itself; and then we see that one of the figures, the Fool, is either motionless or moving so rapidly that its motion is beyond the power of the human eye adequately to perceive. There's something wonderful in this. This kind of invention seems to me to be on a whole higher level than anything in Haggard or the *Weird Tales* authors.

Perhaps this digression, if that's what it is, can be carried farther. Something Haggard supplied and that Tolkien and Lewis understood, probably intuitively, was the value of the "point of rest" in literary art. I derive this concept from an illuminating essay in Coventry Patmore's *Principle in Art*. As I wrote years ago in an issue of *Beyond Bree*: beginning with examples derived from paintings, Patmore finds a *punctum indifferans*, a "point, generally quite insignificant in matter, on which, indeed, the eye does not necessarily fix itself, but to which it involuntarily returns for repose." This object is, in itself, "the least interesting point" in the whole canvas, but "all that is interesting" in the picture "is more or less unconsciously referred to it." In a landscape it might be the "sawn-off end of a branch of a tree." In Raphael's "Dresden" Madonna, it is the Infant's heel. The point of rest doesn't create harmony where it does not exist, but where it does exist, "it will be strangely brought out and accentuated by this in itself often trifling, and sometimes, perhaps, even accidental accessory." Patmore proposes this test: "Cover [these points] from sight and, to a moderately sensitive and cultivated eye, the whole life of the picture[s] will be found to have been lowered."

Patmore includes literary examples drawn from Shakespeare – the "unobtrusive character of Kent" in *King Lear*, etc. Kent is "the eye of the tragic storm which rages round it; and the departure, in various directions, of every character more or less from moderation, rectitude, or sanity, is the more clearly understood or felt from our more or less conscious reference to him." Other Shakespearean characters also serve as a "peaceful focus radiating the calm of moral solution throughout all the difficulties and disasters of surrounding fate: a vital centre, which, like that of a great wheel, has little motion in itself, but which at once transmits and controls the fierce revolution of the circumference."

I think this helps us to understand Bombadil's very real contribution to our enjoyment of *The Lord of the Rings*. Always in the back of our minds, while we are occupied by the hurry and tumult of so many persons and events, we have the sense of that one "insignificant" but whole, innocent, incorruptible person in his realm that is only a pinpoint on the map of Middle-earth. Gandalf emphasizes just this in his comments at the Council of Elrond. If summoned to the Council, Bombadil "'would not have come.'" If the dreadful issues bound up with the Ring were explained to Bombadil, "'he would not understand the need.'" If the Ring were given to him, he would forget it or discard it, because "'[s]uch things have no hold on his mind.'"

Patmore says that "a point of rest and comparison is necessary only when the objects and interests are many and more or less conflicting." If he had had a copy of *The Lord of the Rings* at hand, he would have been able to cite a perfect example of such a "point" in the character of Tom Bombadil. (Patmore's strong dislike of *She* is explained in his essay "Unnatural Literature," in *Courage in Politics and Other Essays*.)

In Haggard's *She*, the manservant Job may serve as the point of rest. Haggard kills him off (from sheer terror) at the point when he is no longer needed for such a function. It might be granted that a "peaceful focus radiating the calm of moral [he may mean here what we call "psychological"] solution throughout all the difficulties and disasters of surrounding fate" might have been alien to Lovecraft's literary aims.

In "On Stories," Lewis contrasts a dramatic high point in Haggard's novel *King Solomon's Mines* with a movie version he'd seen. In the former, the heroes face the prospect of starving slowly in a cold, pitch-black tomb surrounded by the dead (Chapter 18). In the movie, they are threatened by earthquake and volcanic eruption. Lewis deplored the substitution, which meant, instead of "a hushing spell on the imagination" imparted by the sense of the deathly, that one was given a "rapid flutter" of nervous excitement, soon dispelled.

Something like this distinction applies within some Lovecraft stories. For example, in "The Whisperer in Darkness," the narrator listens to a recording surreptitiously made at night, and then mailed to him, by an isolated, elderly correspondent in rural Vermont. The recording is evidence that beings not of this earth, who moreover traffic with dark

and terrible powers, are meeting a human agent and communicating with him in weird, buzzing voices. Lovecraft conjures a sense of dread. But at the end of the story there's some rigmarole in which the elderly correspondent has been impersonated by one of the creatures, using imitation hands and face made of wax, sitting in the shadows. This preposterous pulp-magazine "thrill" is a real letdown, each time the story is read. Lewis praised Haggard: "From the move of his first pawn to the final checkmate, Haggard usually plays like a master. His openings – what story in the world opens better than *She*? – are full of alluring promise, and his catastrophes triumphantly keep it." The same isn't true of Lovecraft.

[c] Lindsay (1876-1945)

In *A Voyage to Arcturus*, the only one of Lindsay's books that Lewis seems to have known, the "style is appalling," etc. To Ruth Pitter, Lewis said *Arcturus* was "diabolical, mad, childishly ill-written in places" (letter of 9 July 1956). And there are places, in Lovecraft's earlier writings, where the style is so bad that one remembers the Inklings' game of reading aloud from Amanda McKittrick Ros's *Irene Iddesleigh* to see who could go the longest with a straight face. That book is available online, and one might amuse oneself by reading from it about Little Hugh ("At the age of six, Sir John, abhorring the advice of his many friends," etc., in Chapter 15) and then perusing Section 2 of Lovecraft's "Arthur Jermyn."

Lindsay, Haggard, and MacDonald possessed a mythopoeic gift, as I think Lovecraft did to some degree, and also held, like Lovecraft, to non-mainstream philosophies that their admirers often champion despite criticism. MacDonald contended for an unorthodox version of Christianity. Haggard held, Lewis says, to "an eclectic outfit of vaguely Christian, theosophical and spiritualistic notions, trying to say something profound about that fatal subject, 'Life.'" Lindsay's "intolerable" novel propounds a "ghastly vision," as Lewis said. About Lindsay's "vision" in *Arcturus* there has been some controversy. It seems to be Gnostic, along the lines that the world we know is somehow a false world, but some souls, perceiving this great truth, may glimpse the ineffable Sublime to which their true selves are akin. Lewis perceived a kinship between Lindsay's thought and that of Schopenhauer or the Manicheans, and, uncharacteristically, suggested that adults should "think twice before introducing it to the young" because a "youngster" could "damage himself" by reading it (letter of 31 Jan. 1960 to Alan Hindle).

Lovecraft's mechanistic materialism is widely recognized. However, it's in his letters that Lovecraft most copiously expounded it. In his stories, his concern is primarily with readers' emotions and imagination, and he doesn't much argue with them. Lewis offered remarks in "On Science Fiction" that could apply to Lovecraft's better Mythos stories: "It is sobering and cathartic to remember, now and then, our collective smallness, our apparent isolation, the apparent indifference of nature, the slow biological, geological, and astronomical processes which may, in the long run, make many of our hopes (possibly some of our fears) ridiculous." Lovecraft would have approved everything here except the two uses of "apparent."

Lewis said that Charles Williams wrote a kind of novel in which the everyday and the marvelous are brought together. This kind of writer, Lewis said, shows the "marvelous" (or perhaps the strange, the uncanny, the weird, the terrible….) invading the everyday world, so that there is a "violation of frontier." In "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction," Lovecraft said, "I choose weird stories because they suit my inclination best—one of my strongest and most persistent wishes being to achieve, momentarily, the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law which for ever imprison us and frustrate our curiosity about the infinite cosmic spaces beyond the radius of our sight and analysis."

It may be a matter for debate, to what degree in a given story the philosophical agenda may be distinguished from the mythpoeia. Writing of George MacDonald, Lewis declared: "What he does best is fantasy – fantasy that hovers between the allegorical and the mythopoeic. And this, in my opinion, he does better than any man."[2] "MacDonald is the greatest genius of this [mythopoeic] kind whom I know. But I do not know how to classify such genius. To call it literary genius seems unsatisfactory since it can coexist with great inferiority in the art of words… It is in some way more akin to music than to poetry… It goes beyond the expression of things we have already felt. It arouses in us sensations we have never had before, never anticipated having…. It gets under our skin, hits us at a deeper level than our thoughts or even our passions," etc.

Lewis adds: "The critical problem with which we are confronted is whether this art – the art of myth-making – is a species of the literary art. The objection to so classifying it is that the Myth does not essentially exist in *words* at all. We all agree that the story of Balder is a great myth, a thing of inexhaustible value. But of whose version – whose *words* – are we thinking when we say this?" Lewis continues,

> For my own part, the answer is that I am not thinking of anyone's words. No poet, so far as I know or can remember, has told this story supremely well. I am not thinking of any particular version of it. …What really delights and nourishes me is a particular pattern of events, which would equally delight and nourish if it had reached me by some medium which involved no words at all – say by a mime, or [relatively few words, such as] a film. … To be sure, if the means of communication are words, it is desirable that a letter which brings you important news should be fairly written. But this is only a minor convenience. …In poetry the words are the body and the "theme" or "content" is the soul. But in myth the imagined events are the body and something inexpressible is the soul.

And here, from Lewis's "On Stories": "In inferior romances, such as the American magazines of 'scientifiction'

supply, we often come across a really suggestive idea. But the author has no expedient for keeping the story on the move except that of putting his hero into violent danger. In the hurry and scurry of his escapes the poetry of the basic idea is lost. In a much milder degree I think this has happened to [H. G. Wells] in the *War of the Worlds*. What really matters in this story is the idea of being attacked by something utterly 'outside'. As in *Piers Plowman* destruction has come upon us 'from the planets'. If the Martian invaders are merely dangerous – if we once become mainly concerned with the fact that they can *kill* us – why, then, a burglar or a bacillus can do as much." The key to the story is that the danger is of *extraterrestrial* origin.

This is often a problem for a writer such as Lovecraft. He has difficulties contriving what to *do*, with the mechanics of plots, when probably the real center of gravity is the *idea* of a "cosmic" weird menace. And so he resorts, once again, to the narrator who is falsely accused of insanity, or who fears that mankind will go mad when it learns what he knows -- and which has evidently *not* caused him to lose his reason – Lovecraft's narrators never, in fact, do go mad. (Perhaps the narrator of "The Rats in the Walls" hallucinates the sound of scurrying rats; if so, the trauma apparently allows him to reason accurately in every other respect.) Lovecraft deserves some sympathy for his struggles with the requirements of plot, particularly when writing for the pulps, given that the imaginative center of his stories is often something not, in its essence, narrative in nature.

The mythopoeic gift, Lewis came to believe, is distinct from literary artistry. "This gift, when it exists in full measure [as in Haggard's *She*], is irresistible. We can say of this, as Aristotle said of metaphor, 'no man can learn it from another'. It is the work of what Kipling called 'the daemon'. It triumphs over all obstacles and makes us tolerate all faults. It is quite unaffected by any foolish notions which the author himself, after the daemon has left him, may entertain about his own myths." Though Lewis saw Lindsay as a bad writer – his style is, "at times (to be frank) abominable" -- he found *Arcturus* (that word again)"irresistible."

In that very valuable late work *An Experiment in Criticism*, Lewis turned to the discussion of myth. Here he was thinking primarily, I suppose, of the ancient stories we usually think of as myths. Again he states that the "mythical quality" may come through despite defects of literary artistry. "The man who first learns what is to him a great myth through a verbal account which is baldly or vulgarly or cacophonously written, discounts and ignores the bad writing and attends solely to the myth. He hardly minds about the writing. … The value of myth is not a specifically literary value, nor the appreciation of myth a specifically literary experience."

Lewis adds – and this is surely significant for Lovecraft, given the oft-mentioned objection that HPL "telegraphs" the endings of his stories such that what apparently is meant to be a surprise is no surprise, "The pleasure of myth depends hardly at all on such usual narrative attractions as suspense or surprise. Even at a first hearing it is felt to be inevitable. And the first hearing is chiefly valuable in introducing us to a permanent object of contemplation – more like a thing than a narration – which works upon us by a peculiar flavour or quality.… Sometimes … there is hardly any narrative element."

Lovecraft had to write *something* in order to capture the mood of "a strange sense of adventurous expectancy" that he cherished from his dreams; and so also for "cosmic outsideness."

Moreover, Lewis adds, "Human sympathy is at a minimum. We do not project ourselves at all strongly into the characters." Critics may sometimes have condemned Lovecraft's characters for lacking depth and complexity. It would be profitable to ask how much depth and complexity a given character should have for a given story. In "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," we need to be able to take an interest in the protagonist-narrator as a plausible college student because, insofar as Lovecraft pulls off what he is aiming for (cf. Aristotle's *anagnorisis*), appalling moments of recognition for himself and for the reader are supposed to happen simultaneously. In *At the Mountains of Madness* the characters need to be believable as scientists, but that will come primarily by means of the narration's use of geologic, topographic, etc. detail – which Lovecraft got up conscientiously. Those who have read about how bad Lovecraft's style is supposed to be might read the first few pages of this short novel. They will find that Lovecraft could command a disciplined and specific but haunting style. Thereafter, their feeling about photographs of Antarctic regions may be affected by Lovecraft.

Lovecraft's central characters in the Mythos stories are usually scholarly bachelors. As with M. R. James's antiquarian ghost stories, this is economical and appropriate; the problem arises when too many of the stories are read at the same time so that repetitiveness becomes an issue.

Lewis says that the persons in a mythic story "are like shapes moving in another world." Odysseus, as a clever and strong Hero, is a "mythic" shape himself. Ludwig Horace Holly, in Haggard's *She*, is not. He is one of us, who finds himself in "another world." The same is true of Mr. Vane in MacDonald's *Lilith*. Lovecraft's Mythos protagonists are of this latter type. Perhaps this difference would help us to see how the truly mythic differs from the mythopoeic.

8. What Factors Disqualify HPL (and Members of His Circle) as Mythopoeic Authors Comparable to the Inklings?

I think the essence of the Lovecraftian mythopoeic quality, as opposed to the inevitable trajectory of the stories towards horror, can be stated concisely: *the great secret is that the universe, including this planet, was – and is – haunted* – or even "infested."

The logic of Lovecraft's futilitarian mechanistic materialism tended to work against the mythopoeic sense, and this might have complicated things for him if he had lived to keep on writing. Lovecraft said that beholding a glorious sunset could produce in him a sense of "adventurous

expectancy." But his philosophy works all the other way. It is reductive. It collapses all experience into something that is "nothing but" something else that is *finally less interesting*. He would have to accept that the sunset that moves him is "nothing but" an excitation of his nerves and a corresponding stimulation of associated memories. If he is to be consistent, the sense of wonder must not be privileged as an exception; he may "feel this way" and it matters to him, but his experience is really no more meaningful or valid than that of anyone else in any state of attention and imaginative activity. For Lewis, the experience of sudden joy was a pointer to some greater thing. His heroine Psyche in *Till We Have Faces* knows how profound imaginative experience has a beckoning quality that blessedly troubles our everyday moods; and when she enters the realm of the gods, she knows whence that beckoning has come. The mythopoeic sense and the sense of wonder are expansive: *there's more!*, they suggest to us. But mechanistic materialism is reductive: it's *nothing but*, it says to us.

The Inklings and the Lovecraft circle authors differ as regards the depiction of the horrible. The former are restrained in their presentation of horrible things. Consider Tolkien's Orcs. Really very little is written about their appearance. When Williams wishes to indicate the dreadful judgment that overtakes the wicked Giles Tumulty, in *Many Dimensions*, he writes, "When they found him, but a few moments after that raucous scream had terrified the household, he was lying on the floor amid the shattered furniture twisted in every limb, and pierced and burnt all over as if by innumerable needle-points of fire" (end of Chapter 16). That's about all. Perhaps the most gruesome passage in the writing released by the Inklings in their lifetimes comes in *That Hideous Strength* – the escaped laboratory animals, maddened through Merlin's magic, wreaking the vengeance of the gods upon the N.I.C.E. banqueters. The episode has been too much for some readers. Others find it fully justifiable. In any event, it may be noticed that the emphasis, in Lewis's rendition, is upon the confounding, ruinous movement of the animals and the panic and dismay of the wicked, not upon dismembered bodies. The climax of Milton's *Samson Agonistes* is rightly recalled.

In contrast, the *Weird Tales* authors exploit the gruesome. One may direct the curious to Smith's "The Vaults of Yoh-Vombis," Howard's "The Black Stone," or Lovecraft's "The Thing on the Doorstep" for samples of these authors' wallowing in revolting detail. To quote Joseph Koerner's recent *Bosch and Bruegel: From Enemy Painting to Everyday Life* on the former artist: "yet hell's gruesome fascinations are the quintessential objects of the mindless curiosity of visual desire. According to its Christian critics (and these were legion), curiosity is primarily about unrest, dissatisfaction, and dispersion, and only secondarily about delight. Saint Augustine wrote that humans evince the vicious lust of the eye, or *concupiscentia oculorum*, not only in face of erotic enchantments but (more inexplicably) in their uncontrollable fixation on the ugly: on mangled carcasses, cruel sports, 'a lizard catching flies'" (p. 186).

The Lovecraft story in which some gruesome detail seems most justifiable is "The Colour Out of Space," perhaps his finest, though marginal at most to the Cthulhu Mythos. A meteorite falls and soon living things in its vicinity sicken, become brittle, and die. It seems to me, with its evocation of trouble from the stars, that this story possesses the mythopoeic quality. A genuine element of pathos develops, a remarkable achievement for the author of rubbish such as "Pickman's Model." But that pathos coexists with what may be called a Classical detachment from the sufferers; there is something here that might suggest Sophocles. Edwin O'Brien selected "The Colour Out of Space" for the Roll of Honor appendix to *The Best American Short Stories* for 1928.

I've said little here about Howard and Smith, though I did want to consider the Lovecraft circle. A difference between Lovecraft and Howard may be brought out if we place together Lovecraft's *Mountains* and Howard's Conan novella "Red Nails."

In Lovecraft's story, it eventually becomes evident that the Old Ones, for whom we come to have some sympathy, have been in perennial conflict with the shoggoths after the latter evolved greater intelligence and their creators entered cultural decline. This conflict-element is important for the story, but Lovecraft keeps it subordinate to the sense of primordiality and wonder that he has been at pains to conjure. In the Howard story, the barbarian hero discovers an almost Gormenghast-like city-building, within which two factions have been at war for many years. The conflict ends with extinction. The story wallows in violence and sexual perversity, and Howard doesn't attempt the somber sublimity of Lovecraft.

In fact, Howard freely indulges in clichés and slapdash, anachronistic locutions. A giant lizard attacks Conan and a she-pirate, "snapping off saplings as if they had been toothpicks." Conan signifies his agreement with Valeria by saying "'Sure!'" and taunts the lizard, Howard writing thus: "'What are you waiting down there for, you misbegotten offspring of questionable parents?' was one of his more printable queries" (Chapter 1). An inner corridor is "black as night" (Chapter 2). "Conan saw red" (Chapter 7). Characters complain, " 'Wait a minute,'"and so on.

Smith was the most misanthropic and decadent of the three *Weird Tales* authors, relishing rotting corpses, dusty mummies with dry voices, skeletons with furred creatures in their ribcages, and protracted scenes of horror and bizarre cruelty, as in his relatively well-known revenge story "The Dark Eidolon." The pleasure Smith offers is like that of some burning gin that, temporarily at least, could make a good wine seem insipid. Smith's fantasy tends to be marked by, even pervaded by, nastiness.

The Lovecraft stories in which the mythopoeic quality is minimal or nonexistent, such as "The Tomb," may be entertaining, but if he had written only such thrillers, his reputation would be nothing like what it is. Lovecraft did, on occasion, display considerable skill in managing suspense, as in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth." Also, I'll assert, without arguing the point, that Lovecraft's

mature stories generally seem to be told at the right pace and to be of the right length. These literary qualities shouldn't be discounted even though they're distinct from the mythopoeic gift.

If Lewis had read Lovecraft's "Colour Out of Space," *At the Mountains of Madness*, and "The Shadow Out of Time," maybe he would have recognized the American author as a peer or near-peer of MacDonald, Haggard, and Lindsay as a writer of mythopoeia. It is pleasant to think that there is a very decent chance that Lewis did get to read at least the last two of these stories in *Astounding*, even if it shouldturn out that he didn't read them in time to be influenced by them.

Lewis's library contained August Derleth's 1948 anthology *Strange Ports of Call*, which reprinted At the Mountains of Madness. I presume that the book had been Joy Lewis's. She was interested in science fiction and in America had been a member of the circle around Fletcher Pratt, and when she relocated to England had connected with the London science fiction scene (see John Christopher's "Notes on Joy" in Encounter, April 1987). A shared interest in science fiction must have been one of these things that drew Lewis and Joy together. One wonders if they ever discussed Lovecraft. In any event, Lewis might well have read the Lovecraft novel in *Strange Ports of Call* and found it enjoyable. (For what it's worth, the anthology also includes a science fiction horror story by Smith, "Master of the Asteroid." From its jingly title to its trite conclusion, it's a mediocre thing, but it's probably the Smith story most likely to have been read by Lewis.)

If Lovecraft's Mythos fiction shows such conformity to, or affinity with, the qualities Lewis discerned in mythopoeic fiction, should it have been integrated into the Mythopoeic Society? I doubt that anyone by now will be thinking strongly that it should. After all – Lovecraft always works with the horror story template. Whatever the atmosphere of wonder he engenders, the story must progress towards the evocation of fear, horror, terror. He's writing dark fantasy, not high fantasy.

Tolkien coined the term eucatastrophe in *"On Fairy-Stories"* – the consoling happy ending. But Lovecraft's stories end dyscatastrophically. The protagonist, and probably the human race, are worse off at the end than they were to begin with, or realize that they always were worse off than they have suspected till now. The sense is that the best one can hope for is a delay in the inevitable demise. The narrator is confined, under suspicion of madness or murder; or he is physically free but convinced that mass insanity and barbarism, or indeed extinction, are imminent. ("The Shadow Over Innsmouth" may seem to be an exception, because the narrator accepts, at last, that in his veins flows the blood of the hybrids, and anticipates being able to join them in their aquatic worship of Dagon. But however happy the narrator feels when he accepts his destiny, readers are supposed to be horrified. The narrator has impressed upon them the repulsive appearance, foul odor, etc. of the Innsmouthites as their nonhuman genetics become more and more manifest in maturity. Thus, this story too ends dyscatastrophically.) The dyscatastrophic Lovecraft ending is meant to suggest, not consolation, but the brutal exposure of the false consolations of what we have ordinarily thought was life; the more we learn, as we apply the scientific method, the less the universe will appear to us to be a good place.

The Inklings' understanding was radically different. They believed in a beautiful, orderly cosmos that is a radiant hierarchy, where even the least of things has its own beauty and goodness, and which is permeated by divine love. They would have said, of the vision of glory that concludes Dante's *Comedy*, that it errs only in falling short of what the reality shall be.

The Latin motto of the Mythopoeic Society during Goodknight's presidency was *Laeta in Chorea Magna*, "Joyful in the Great Dance," the Great Dance being the image of the beautiful, orderly, living cosmos in Lewis's *Perelandra*. In Lovecraft's late story "The Haunter of the Dark," we are offered a notion of the final nature of things that could sounds like a dismal parody of the Great Dance. We read there of "the ancient legends of Ultimate Chaos, at whose center sprawls the blind idiot god Azathoth, Lord of All Things, encircled by his flopping horde of mindless and amorphous dancers, and lulled by the thin monotonous piping of a demoniac flute held in nameless paws."

Yet it seems to me that when we put Lovecraft's best work alongside Lewis's space trilogy and Tolkien's Middle-earth fantasy, our enjoyment of the work of all three writers may be enhanced because this may impress us again with the capacity they all had for the writing of imaginative, even mythopoeic, fiction.

Notes

1 Some readers of this article will believe that it should have dealt with Lovecraft's fantasy stories such as "The Quest of Iranon," "The Cats of Ulthar," The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath, etc. They might even hold that these stories, and not the ones I discuss, comprise Lovecraft's best claim to be a mythopoeic author. The "dream" or "Dunsanian" Lovecraft stories may have their charms, but they seem to me minor efforts in both bulk and literary achievement as contrasted with Lovecraft's mature writings or the books of Haggard, Lindsay, MacDonald, etc.

2 Lewis was writing years before The Lord of the Rings was finished, let alone published, so I am not sure that he would always have said MacDonald was the greatest of all fantasists.

Works Cited

Sources for Lewis quotations: "The Mythopoeic Gift of Rider Haggard," "On Science Fiction," "On Stories," and "Unreal Estates" in *Of Other Worlds*; Preface to *George MacDonald: An Anthology; An Experiment in Criticism*. See also the three volumes of his Collected Letters.

Dale Nelson is an Associate Professor of English at Mayville State University in North Dakota.