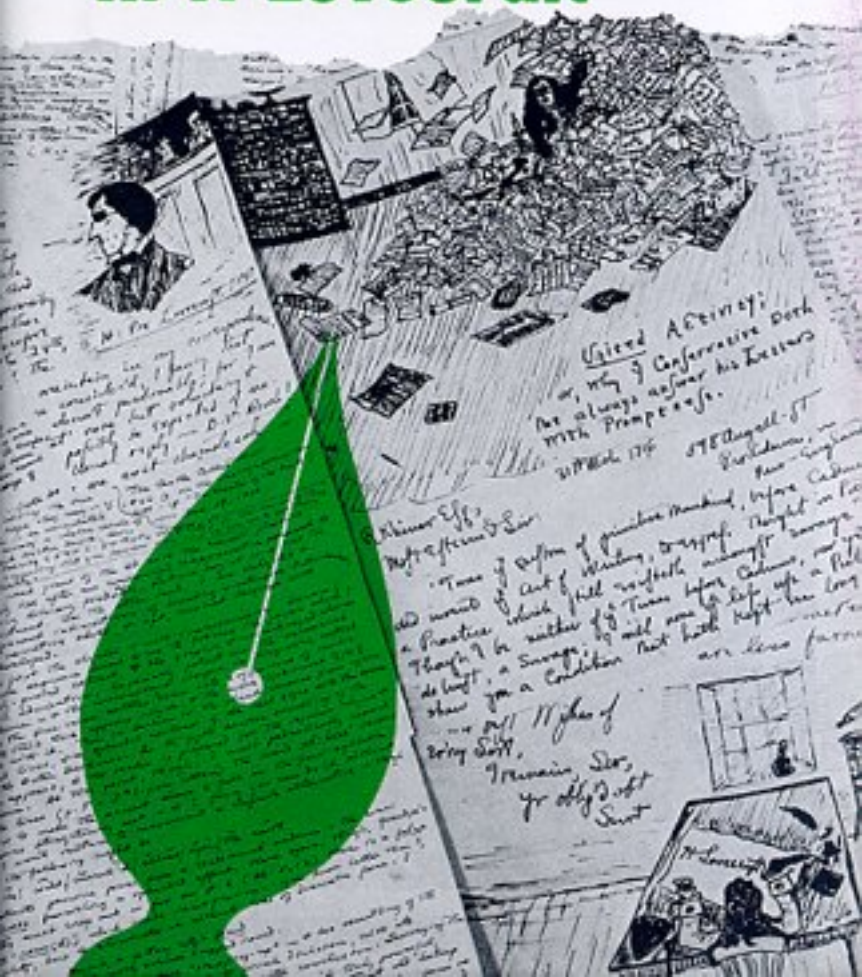


# Selected Letters

## H. P. Lovecraft



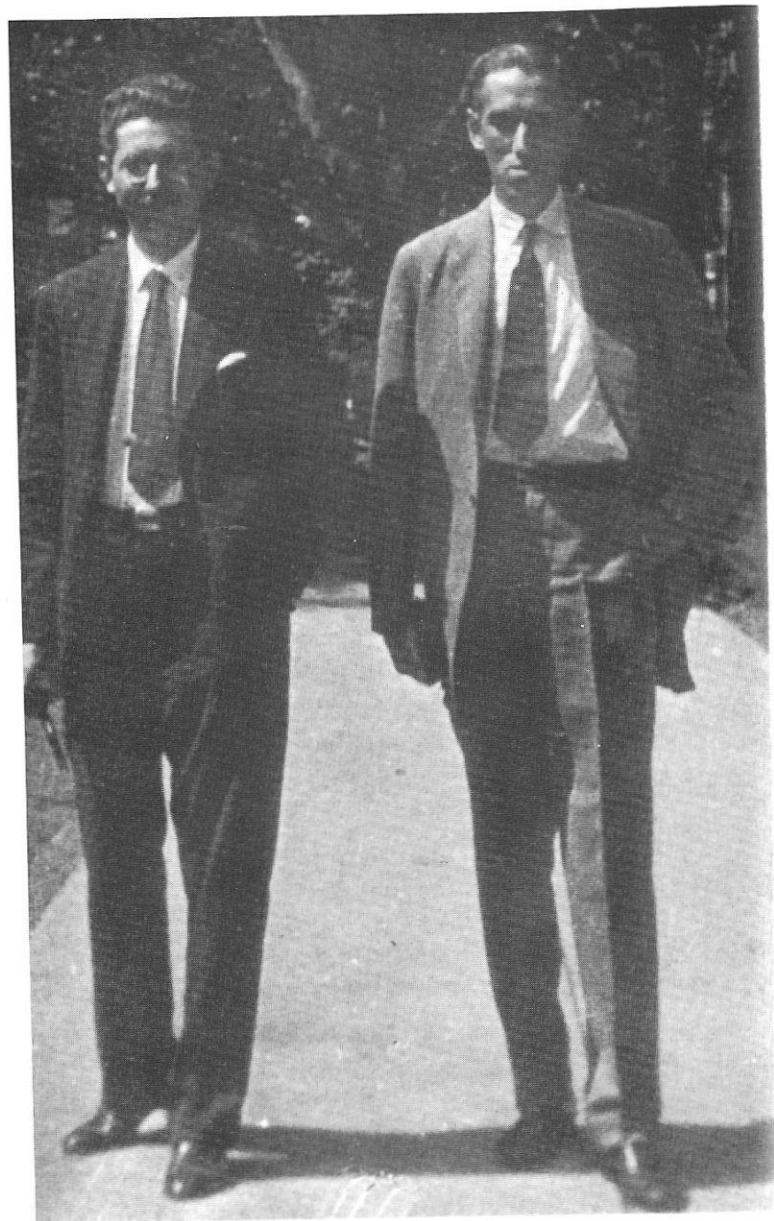
United Activities  
or, why I Conference Desk  
has always before his letters  
with Prompts.

Minor Effs,  
Next afternoon Sir

Time of primitive mankind, before Cadmus,  
and want of art of writing, & graph. Thought in  
a practice which still suffices amongst savages  
Though I be rather of Times before Cadmus, nor  
delect, a Savage, I will now to help with a Phil  
show you a Condition that hath kept her long  
are less far

off Myths of  
Bring Soft,  
I remain Sir,  
Yr Obedt Servt





*Frontispiece:*

FRANK BELKNAP LONG and H. P. LOVECRAFT

**H. P. LOVECRAFT**

**SELECTED LETTERS**

**1929-1931**

**Edited by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei**



**ARKHAM HOUSE: Publishers**

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**1971**

## PREFACE

**DURING** the period covered by this third volume of selected letters—July, 1929 through December, 1931—Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) continued to live in his native Providence, Rhode Island. After the amicable separation in 1926, and divorce in 1929, from his wife, Sonia, his closest kin were his two beloved aunts, Mrs. F. C. Clark and Mrs. A. E. Phillips Gamwell, his mother's sisters, who resided in the same house at 10 Barnes Street, from which these letters were for the most part written.

When weather permitted, Lovecraft took his writing materials to a favorite haunt, the Quinsnicket woods park area, where he wrote scores of his letters. He went on antiquarian walking tours of exploration through sections of old Providence that he had never seen, and into rural areas like his ancestral country of Howard Hill. When his friends, the Longs of New York, visited him, he accompanied them on a motor trip to Cape Cod. Occasionally he attended lectures. At rare intervals he returned to New York and saw the members of his "old gang"—Rheinhardt Kleiner, Arthur B. Leeds, Samuel Loveman, Frank Belknap Long, George Kirk, and James F. Morton. He extended his excursions, more rarely, into colonial America southward to Richmond, Charleston, and St. Augustine. In New York he met his fellow-author, Seabury Quinn; in Florida the author of many fine macabre tales with a West Indies setting, the Reverend Henry S. Whitehead.

Historians agree that 1929 marked the end of the post-war era after World War I. Years of global depression had begun, accompanied by great social, economic, and political upheavals. Rapid advances in technology and mechanization further intensified the deep changes altering

western civilization. These changes were reflected in Lovecraft's life and letters.

The old family-owned stone quarry in East Providence became exhausted and the income from it came to an end. Retrenchment at *Weird Tales*, resulting in a more limited publication schedule, from monthly to bi-monthly issue, restricted the principal market for Lovecraft's stories; and the editor, Farnsworth Wright, while accepting his *The Dunwich Horror* and several of his *Fungi from Yuggoth* sonnets, rejected both his new long novelettes, *The Shadow over Innsmouth* and *At the Mountains of Madness*. Revision work for clients furnished irregular income, and occasionally a revision, largely his own work, like *The Curse of Yig*, by Zealia Brown Reed, was published in *Weird Tales*. By 1931 he wrote to his correspondents that he could live on less than anyone he knew—a mere \$15.00 a week, for lodging, food, and clothing, though he had, in fact, lived sparsely—"close to the bone," as Thoreau had put it almost a century before, all his life.

He became increasingly dissatisfied with his past literary efforts. He experimented with styles of writing, attempting four or five different treatments of his Antarctic tale, toward his goal of raising fantasy fiction to the status of genuine art and literature, by basing it on observed reality and authentic life, and progressing from that basis to some violation of natural cosmic law by the defeat of time or space or corporeal limitations. His *Fungi from Yuggoth* sonnets he regarded as essentially the crystallization of ideas or themes to be developed at some later date as tales of the macabre.

But by far the bulk of his writing was in correspondence. He viewed letters in the same way that the average person uses conversation for the exchange of ideas or to debate opposing beliefs. Letters were, in fact, his windows to the world; he wrote them swiftly and with ease, and in precisely the same manner that he spoke when in the company of his "old gang," and drawing upon an impressive and broad fund of knowledge equalled by no one within his circle of correspondents. Lacking congenial friends in Providence, he used letters as a substitute to clarify his own views, or to challenge a view he considered based on error or false information.

His letters became more fluent and more learned as he wrote to his older correspondents—such as Frank Belknap Long, James F. Morton, Elizabeth Toldridge, Maurice W. Moe, Clark Ashton Smith, and Au-

gust Derleth—and to such newcomers as Robert E. Howard, Woodburn Harris, and J. Vernon Shea. His lifelong sense of placement in the 18th century continued, as well as his identification with the ancient Roman Republic. But new themes became recurrent and dominant, notably his relentless search for truth and reality, the "is-or-isn't" test of fact, his challenge of inherited traditional beliefs, popular folklore, religious myths, superstition, and supernaturalism.

Again and again he defined himself as a "truth-seeker," a rational materialist in his philosophy, an "indifferentist" in his view of human history, a "cosmicist" in his overall conception of the known, observable universe. "Cosmic-mindedness" was his coinage to identify his own perspective, as though he looked at the cosmos from some even remoter point beyond known space and conjectured time.

AUGUST DERLETH  
DONALD WANDREI

April 7, 1971

360. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.  
July 1, 1929

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... Incidentally—there's nothing about "anarchists" to be afraid of! Most aesthetic radicals are *not* anarchists but advocates of some socialistic or communistic system—yet in any case, be they socialists, bolsheviks, or anarchists in truth, they are very harmless folk. Such people are simply idealists without a balance-wheel—people who see the crudity & absurdity of our present social-political order, but who fail to see that any other order is certain to be equally crude & absurd, & even more unsatisfactory because ungrounded in natural evolution. They are as sincerely well-meaning as any other reformers, & like all such are at once comic & pathetic because of their belief in human perfectibility. Despite their bold talk they are timid & ineffectual creatures, most of whom would not hurt a fly if they could. I know many of them by correspondence—delightful persons when kept off the subject of their hobby. As a matter of fact, all benevolent persons have the instincts of socialists & anarchists; whilst the Christian religion literally interpreted, is communistic in every particular. Social & political conservatism are the products of hard common sense & stern experience—of the practical & cynical side of mankind, whereby he recognises realities instead of chasing illusions. I myself am a conservative because I am a cynic & a pagan. You may have heard the epigrammatic saying—"If a man isn't a socialist *before* he's 25, he has no heart; & if he *is* a socialist after 25 he has no head!" The real trouble with Greenwich Village "radicals" isn't any real radicalism, but a slovenly insincerity & cheap posing habit which merely uses the guise of radicalism as an easy way of attracting attention. Such radicals aren't *dangerous*, but merely *wearisome*—& occasionally disgusting when their manners too repeatedly contravene the inconspicuous average. Once in a while real talent crops out amongst them, so that they can't be dismissed *en masse*; but in gen-

eral they are charlatans who thump tubs & kettles because they can't play violins. Cheap & pitiful—but scarcely formidable! . . .

The cave discovery in New Mexico is also highly interesting & important, forming a new link in the chain of facts concerning the lost cultures of the western world. The last two or three years have certainly upset a good many established anthropological hypotheses—especially as regards the remote primitive periods of which bones & flint implements, embedded in rock & gravel, are the only surviving relics. Recent discoveries of fully developed human remains in very ancient geological strata push back the date of man's evolution astonishingly—making the existence of the race a matter of *millions* of years instead of the scant 500,000 assumed by conservative biologists of the last quarter-century. Also, the *distribution* of early man seems vastly wider than at first conjectured—including Africa & America as well as Asia. Biologists are now beginning to think that before the glacial ages several different human species or genera (too distinct for intercrossing) existed, our own among others; & that the hard economic competition imposed by the sudden ordeal of glacier-dodging brought about a struggle for survival from which only our species & the Neanderthaloid species (annihilated in Europe & Africa about 30,000 B. C.) succeeded in emerging. Our species seems to have been fully developed & distinct in its mental superiority over a million years ago—so that its own infancy must extend far back into the age of the great mammals. We seem to be the oldest of all the biped stocks which sprang from the ground-apes—having a head start over our rivals which enabled us to annihilate them all before the dawn of recorded history. All the undeveloped semi-human skulls that have been dug up are not those of our ancestors, but of other races which existed when our species was much as it is now. Somewhere in the bleak steppes of Mongolia, under vast layers of sand & earth & other fossils, we shall probably find in the future the skeletal vestiges of the immensely remoter dawn-men who really were our lineal forbears. The account of the lineage of the children's songs is very interesting. Only since the era of the great philologists—Max Miller & the brothers Grimm—have we realised the vast antiquity of our commonest juvenile folklore. Now we realise that the greater part of our popular jingles & fairy-tales belongs to the very oldest fabric of Aryan myth, so that the prototypes of many a well-known rhyme or legend of today may be

found in the most primitive Sanscrit literature of India. . . . .

Yr obt hble Servt  
HPLovecraft

361. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Visitation B. V. M. 1929 (July 2)

To Athenagoras Kosmokrates, All Hail!

As for domesticity—I'm no dealer in dogmatisms and blanket generalities. Some things suit some temperaments, others others. I haven't a doubt but that matrimony can become a very helpful and pleasing permanent arrangement when both parties happen to harbour the potentialities of parallel mental and imaginative lives—similar or at least mutually comprehensible reactions to the same salient points in environment, reading, historic and philosophic reflection, and so on; and corresponding needs and aspirations in geographic, social, and intellectual milieu—but I must add that I don't see how the hell any couple outside of professional psychiatrists can ever tell whether or not they possess this genuine parallelism until the actual test of two or three years of joint family life has brushed aside all the transient and superficial reactions due to novelty and rashly assumed adaptability, and revealed the basic, rock-bottom motivating mental and imaginative influences on each side—the influences actually constituting the inmost respective personalities involved, and forming inviolable nuclei of identity whose safeguarding is the inevitable and fundamental aim of every human being's intellectual-emotional mechanism. It is all a matter of chance—in greater or less degree as the parties have or lack a lifelong acquaintanceship, or are naturally good or poor judges of human temperament—whether a given marriage will develop into a true and lasting domestic harmony, or become an intolerable mental irritant until cancelled by a sane and benign court action. Fortunately people are beginning to realise this as time passes and philosophic outlooks broaden, so that in most enlightened states like Rhode Island the divorce laws are such as to allow rational readjustments when no other solution is wholly adequate. If other

kinds of states—such as New York or South Carolina, with their mediaeval lack of liberal statutes—were equally intelligent in their solicitude for the half-moribund institution of monogamy, they would hasten to follow suit in legislation; for certainly, the disillusioned future generations will never tolerate a blind trap which offers ten chances of disaster to one of success. If the divorce laws of a region be not sufficiently intelligent to provide for the necessary readjustment of lives misplaced in good faith, then the result will be a gradual disuse of legal marriage and an almost complete reign of that type of semi-clandestine extra-legal relationship which has indeed already displaced the older system to some extent, yet which is infinitely less desirable from a social, political, economic, and aesthetic point of view. To my mind, any acceleration of this “new morality” is an unwise thing, even though the new system may be the normal rule in the remote future. Too quick a transition tends to uproot some of the deepest emotional anchorages of the Anglo-Saxon race—and the loss of the well-known values of domestic tranquillity seems very likely to outweigh the corresponding gain in erotic normality to such an extent that the net result will be an impoverishment rather than an enrichment of life as a whole. No—I am in favour of the established order; old-fashioned marriage with its Roman regularity of registration and its wholesome absence of the element of furtiveness. But if it is to survive, it must clean house—must purge itself of primitive superstition and Victorian hypocrisy, and reorganise itself as a rational institution adapted to human needs rather than remain an impossible Procrustean bed to which all human temperaments must be fitted through crippling and torture. It must allow for the mistakes and false starts which all but savants and clairvoyants are certain to make now and then, and must not pose as a romantic ideal when in truth it is at best merely a social compromise. The very intelligent and conscientious Judge Lindsey has about the right idea. Marriage should *aim* at permanence, but should not be bound to it—especially in the case of the young and the inexperienced—with superstitious rigidity. And if any shudder at the possible abuses of such a liberalised system, let him reflect that an occasionally abused system is vastly better than a system contemptuously discarded in favour of no system at all. Nothing is abuse-proof, and the true conservative would prefer to see an intelligently historic background, possibilities of family harmony, and favourable conditions for offspring, even if it did lead to occasional cases of

premeditated consecutive polygamy; rather than witness the total collapse and repudiation of lawful wedlock, and the adoption of an unregulated type of companionship perilous to posterity and to the state. Under a rational regime, a very fair number of persons would—according to the laws of chance—need only one plunge in order to hit the target of a passable permanent marriage. More, perhaps, would succeed at the second plunge—having learned much of their orientation-possibilities from the first. Others, like Paul J. Campbell, would ring the bell only on their third shot. And anybody that tried more than three shots would be the sort of person to experiment anyway—under any system, or outside all systems! A good way to cut down the percentages of abuse would be to make divorces for purely temperamental reasons (i.e., for reasons other than those specific and acute ones already recognised by the laws of most states) available only for couples married long enough (say two or three years) to have truly demonstrated their essential incompatibility. The one kind of divorce which sometimes strikes me as a bit fishy and premature is where the marriage date itself is only a year or less in the past. Weed these out, and there is not the least modicum of sense in denying divorce to any couple who mutually desire it—custody of offspring to be determined by the court if not decided by the joint petitioners. And *alimony* is a relique of obsolescent economics and a source of ridiculous extortion which ought to be laughed off the statutes in favour of a very restricted programme of financial responsibility to be applied by the court when called for in a few individual cases. Ho, hum—it’s easy to be a Lycurgus on paper! Descending to the merely concrete—I’ve no fault to find with the institution, but think the chances of success for a strongly individualised, opinionated, and imaginative person are damn slender. It’s a hundred to one shot that any four or five consecutive plunges he might make would turn out to be flivvers equally oppressive to himself and to his fellow-victim, so if he’s a wise guy he “lays off” after the collapse of venture #1 . . . . . or if he’s very wise he avoids even that! Matrimony may be more or less normal, and socially essential in the abstract, and all that—but nothing in heaven or earth is so important to the man of spirit and imagination as the inviolate integrity of his cerebral life—his sense of utter integration and defiant independence as a proud, lone entity face to face with the illimitable cosmos. And if he has the general temperament that usually goes with such a mental makeup, he will not be apt to consider a haughty celibacy

any great price to pay for this ethereal inviolateness. Independence, and perfect seclusion from the futile herd, are things so necessary to a certain type of mind that all other issues become subordinate when brought into comparison with them. Probably this is so with me. And yet I didn't find matrimony such a bugbear as one might imagine. With a wife of the same temperament as my mother and aunts, I would probably have been able to reconstruct a type of domestic life not unlike that of Angell St. days, even though I would have had a different status in the household hierarchy. But years brought out basic and essential diversities in reactions to the various landmarks of the time-stream, and antipodal ambitions and conceptions of value in planning a fixed joint milieu. It was the clash of the abstract-traditional-individual-retrospective-Apollonian aesthetic with the concrete—emotional—present-dwelling—social—ethical—Dionysian aesthetic; and amidst this, the originally fancied congeniality, based on a shared disillusion, philosophic bent, and sensitiveness to beauty, waged a losing struggle. It was a struggle unaccompanied by any lessening of mutual esteem or respect or appreciation, but it nevertheless meant the constant attrition and ultimate impairment of two personalities revealed by time to be antipodal in the minor overtones and deep hidden currents that count. I could not exist except in a slow-moving and historically-grounded New England backwater—and the hapless sharer of the voyage found such a prospect, complicated as it was by economic stress, nothing short of asphyxiation! Trying to exist in N. Y. drove me close to madness, and trying to think of living in Rhode Island drove the late missus equally close to despair. Each, obviously, formed an integral and inextricable part of a radically different scene and life-cycle—so the distaff side of the outfit, for whom the initiative in such matters is traditionally reserved, proffered increasingly forcible arguments in favour of a rational and amicable dissolution. Without wishing to retreat from any historic responsibility of an English gentleman, I could not for ever be deaf to such logic; hence last winter agreed to do what I could to further a liberation and a fresh start all around. Rhode Island, as a really civilised commonwealth, did its duty—so oil returns to oil and water to water! And I would, despite my profound theoretical regard for the custom of wedlock, be rather a Nilotic saurian if I used peeled onions to register my emotions at getting back to the comfortable old Rhode Island basis of contemplative independence with congenial blood-kinsfolk hovering benignly by! After

all, when a guy has been a secluded and sot-in-his-ways bachelor for thirty-three-and-one-half years, as I had been when I risked the plunge in 1924, the chances are that he won't take kindly to any radical domestic change. A bird as old as that is past the age of weaving new kinds of nests, and had better not try it. Be a Benedick before twenty-five or not at all, is my grandpaternal advice to conservative youth. . . .

Yr. obt. Servt.,  
LO.

362. TO MAURICE W. MOE

July 27, 1929

Pantheon of Prosody:—

..... What I am thankful for, is that it is in the Georgian rather than in the Victorian past that I am stranded. The nineteenth century never existed so far as I am concern'd—its smugness, affectation, decorum, purposefulness, preciosity, mock-mediaevalism, optimism, hypocrisy, progressivism, inhibitions, and so on having rebounded from me as an 1870 rubber ball might rebound from a 1720 brick wall. My spirit is of the eighteenth century—my scientific information and philosophick perspective of the twentieth. Between them yawns a void—a gulph of nightmare symbolised by French roofs, side-whiskers, "limbs," "gentlemen-cows," "moral purpose," bustles, "elegance," unreality, and pose. Of its feelings and outlook I have less genuinely sympathetick knowledge than I have of the feelings and outlook of Tyre and Persepolis, Bactria and Sogdiana, Sabo and Palmyra, Timbuctoo and The Solomon Islands. . . . .

Yrs. for 1900-04,  
Lo.



363. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

July 30, 1929

Culminating Cog-Wheel of Chautauquan Conformity:—

... Our good ol' pal Maurice W. Moe gave me the "perfesh" job of rounding out his forthcoming text book on poetick appreciation . . . a marvellous volume—even before I condescended to offer coöperation. Incidentally, I'm not going to take pay from Moe, even though he insists. It goes against the grain for a gentleman to charge money for a favour extended a friend. But the job does take time, confound it!

My aunt is better than at the time of my former bulletin; but has to have the landlady help her dress, and can't get downstairs. My services are now narrow'd to the routine of toting up dinner things and carting 'em down again some time in the late afternoon. When I go out for the aft—as I occasionally do on warm and sunny days when the woods and fields beckon to me and my writing-case—I shift responsibilities to one or another of the kindly old souls inhabiting this shadowy Victorian backwater.

About Brown rioting—yes, I did take a genuine pride in the virile energy and healthy antinomianism displayed on Memorial Day. We're not quite decay'd yet, when unbroken Nordick spirits can take a fling of that sort at the stultifying oppressiveness of routine and deadening discipline! 'Rah for the young Mohocks . . . lineal heirs of the fashionable bloods who upset sedan-chairs and roll'd excessively serious folk down hill in barrels in my day! It makes me sad to reflect that I've grown too old and grey to mix into inspiring rough-and-tumbles like this. I'd love to crack skulls in the name of free individualism, and smash office-appliance-shop windows as a symbolic nose-thumbing at the age of commerce, machines, time-tables, and aeroplane-speeded cosmic tail-chasing. Whoopee! I'll wager Dean Mason was damn'd sorry he had to go through the gesture of expelling those virile young bucks as a sop to the curst tyrants of convention and uniformity! Here's hoping the boys do better next year—ploughing up the new airport, burning the Rotary Club, and ducking a score of mill-owners and efficiency experts in the most oil-polluted spot in the Providence river! Sing ho for simplicity, strength, lusty freedom, gentlemen's privilege, agriculture, lei-

sure, and the square-rigg'd India trade! Narragansett cheese and pacers, Cumberland copper, Newport spermaceti, and Cranston iron. Rum, negroes, and molasses! God Save the King!

By the way—some recent heroicks of mine, on the departed glories of 1904, are about to be seen by every member of the U. of Wis. class of '04! How come? This way. Moe told me he was going to prepare a festive booklet to give each member of the class—commemorating the twenty-fifty anniversary—and the idea of '04 memories mov'd me to write him a reminiscent letter about old days and ways. It happen'd to be composed entirely in heroicks, and Moe liked it—so he took all the impersonal couplets and put 'em in his booklet! More anon—

Yr. obt. Servt.,  
 ©EOBAAΔOΣ  
 Theobaldus

364. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

July 31, 1929

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

As for the archaisms & inversions whose elimination I am advising—I really do not think you will miss them as much as you imagine. Certainly straightforward verse will soon come to '*feel like poetry*' to you; since the poetic essence is not a superficial thing of outward trappings, but a deeply-seated type of pattern & symbolic vision whose force is all the greater for simple & unbedizened formulation. So much more effective will you find this sincere way of writing, that in time it is the artificial & inverted sort of thing which you will consider ineffective & unpoetic. The revolt against artificiality of diction began very far back, but was slow in gaining headway. Wordsworth violently attacked the pseudo-classicism of 18th century verse, & made great headway against inversions. Indeed, despite the crop of new & still tawdrier affectations which Victorianism produced, we may still give the Victorian bards credit for improving on the Georgians in the one matter of *inversions*. In a numerical count, it is clear that Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Morris, Swinburne &c. assay far fewer inversions per 100 lines than Addi-

son, Pope, Young, Thomson, & Goldsmith. They undeniably came measurably *closer*—though not very close, alas—to the living speech of cultivated people. Another thing you will notice is that the sheer *aesthetic instinct* of the greater Victorians saved them from the most excessive affectations of their period. Even when artificialities were freely permitted, some inward prompting of sensitive taste prevented bards of the *very first rank* from overindulging in them beyond very moderate limits. To use a paradox, Tennyson was not half so Tennysonian as his lesser imitators! All that one needs to do to prove this point is to look over a volume of the really great Victorians—& then compare it with the inferior magazine verse of the same period. Beside the orgy of rococo affectation in the *minor* material, even Rossetti or Kingsley or Whittier or Longfellow sounds highly “modern” & straightforward. This really proves that inversion & artificiality form a *basic & intrinsic weakness*—since it shews that really capable poets *naturally & unconsciously* react against such “licence” even when it is a popular & universally sanctioned custom. Artificial “poetic diction” is a direct departure from that spontaneous reflection of real life & feeling which constitutes true poetry. Essentially, it doesn’t mean anything.

The final revolt against artificiality seems to have begun in those chaotic & transitional ’nineties when all extremes met. Some of the bards—like Wilde & Dawson—clung rather belatedly to the outworn languors of the hothouse school, but Kipling was an immeasurably healthy influence in breaking the spell. Gradually we see that serious poets begin to drop the affected archaisms & inversions almost instinctively—before any formal critical precepts on the subject are formulated. Francis Thompson & A. E. Housman have very few. As the 20th century gains headway, we find the practice of straightforward diction conscious & triumphant, so that virtually no major work since 1910 has had any dominant idiom other than that of natural & living conversation. Text-books now begin to enunciate the precept, & teachers caution their classes against the use of baroque phraseology—a very necessary caution, since of course the final change is of such recency that the bulk of the models in any curriculum must necessarily belong to the ages of artificiality. You can find an excellent summary of the whole thing in one of those convenient little five-cent Haldeman-Julius Blue Books—No. 514—Clement Wood’s *Hints on Writing Poetry*. I think that booklet would

interest you—as would other booklets of the series. You ought to send to the Haldeman-Julius Co., Girard, Kansas, for a catalogue of their 5¢ publications. Incidentally—the revision job I am doing now is on a splendid poetical handbook—a treatise on the appreciation of poetry—by a Wisconsin high-school teacher. You would undoubtedly enjoy it, & I shall probably be able to send you a complimentary copy when it is published. I never saw a clearer & more graphic study of the essence of poetry than this volume—which will be called *Doorways to Poetry*. The author, M. W. Moe, is one of my old “amateur journalistic” circle.

I remain—  
Yr most obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

365. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Onset, Cape Cod,  
Aug. 14, 1929

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

Your letter with enclosures arrived just as I was leaving the house for my Cape Cod trip, hence I am enabled to reply amidst the comparative leisure of “hookey-playing” from the piled-up revision work at home. I met young Long & his parents in ancient New Bedford, & we all did that quaint old port rather fully. The waterfront streets are still ineffably quaint despite the decline of the whaling industry, & the little Seaman’s Bethel on Johnnycake Hill described in Melville’s *Moby Dick* is absolutely unchanged in every particular. Of chief interest, perhaps, is the great whaling museum with its vast rotunda containing a perfect copy of an old-time New Bedford whaler—an absolute facsimile in every respect save reduced size, & open for the inspection of visitors. Nothing has ever given me so perfect a glimpse of old-Yankee maritime colour as this unusual exhibit—though there is a *real* whaling ship open as a museum some distance from New Bedford; a thing I must see some time. From New Bedford we came north through the very picturesque old seaport villages of Mattapoisett, Marion, & Wareham, & are now stopping at Onset, at the base of Cape Cod. With this as a base we hope

to explore most of the Cape's scenic & antiquarian regions in the Long motor. Then Providence—where I speed my hosts upon their New-Yorkward way. It bids fair to be a phenomenally pleasant outing.

Aug. 16

My Cape Cod sojourn is turning out to be wholly delightful. Wednesday we made a circuit of the lower arm of the cape; taking in Sandwich, Barnstable, Yarmouth, Orleans, Chatham, & Hyannis, & seeing many ancient dwellings & windmills. Of all the towns, Sandwich is the most fascinating—with its old white steeple, colonial houses, spreading common, old mill & brook, & general air of well-preserved survival. Yesterday we went to Woods' Hole & explored the U. S. govt. marine museum. Tomorrow we shall edge toward Providence—where, alas, the Longs can stop but briefly. . . . .

I remain  
Yr most obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

366. TO MRS. ZEALIA BROWN REED (BISHOP)

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
August 28, 1929

My dear Mrs. Reed:—

What you want is a reading-course in several parallel lines, mapped out with care by some competent scholar and followed attentively and conscientiously by yourself. I'd say, offhand, that about five parallel streams would be about right—*elementary science*, to give you an idea of man's place in nature; *psychology and philosophy*, to shew you how people think, why they do what they do, and what they do under given conditions; *history*, to give you an intelligent perspective on possible fictional backgrounds; *literary method*, (critical essays, textbooks on writing and appreciation) to teach you how to translate thoughts, events, pictures, and moods into language to the greatest possible advantage; and *literature itself*—in its most *standard* form—to enlarge your au-

*thetic* knowledge of life, and at the same time to accustom you unconsciously to the most effective devices of linguistic expression. Of these five streams, the last-named is by far the most important and necessary. Above *everything else* comes good literature. And of course, a concomitant to all this would be a complete swearing-off of the cinema and of cheap magazines. You can't bury that stuff too deeply out of sight and memory for your own artistic good!! I may add, that these reading courses aren't by any means difficult. They only *sound* so when described in advance. There are pleasant popular manuals and outlines covering all the needed subjects, which are a delight rather than a burden to read. I could send you the printed reading-course leaflets issued by Brown University library if you had any trouble about getting hints nearer at hand.

This, then, is the writer's fivefold problem:

1. To get the facts of life.
2. To think straight and tell the truth.
3. To cut out maudlin and extravagant emotion.
4. To cultivate an ear for strong, direct, harmonious, simple, and graphic language.
5. To write what one really sees and feels.

Yr. most obt. Servt.,  
H P LOVECRAFT

367. TO MAURICE W. MOE

September 1, 1929  
Melancholy harbinger of autumnal chill!

Magister:—

.....

Well—my ancestral pilgrimage of last Wednesday was a highly pleasing event, and one which I design to repeat in amplified form ere long. It was only three years ago that I decided to begin a systematic study of the lovely rural realm of Foster whence all my maternal forbears came, and where they were predominant in the eighteenth century; and you will recall my travelogue of the expedition which my younger

aunt and I took in October, 1926. I had at that time intended to revisit the region soon, but chance caus'd the second trip to be deferr'd till now. My 1926 voyage was to territory largely connected with the Place, Casey, and Tyler streams of my heritage. Now, to equalise matters, I chose a region in which Phillipses and Howards were thickest—the lovely slopes of Howard Hill, which on the N. W. merge into the Place country—Moosup Valley—cover'd by my earlier trip. This is not the *oldest* Phillips region; for that terrain, containing the very ancient homestead now falling to ruin, lies to the south, on the old abandon'd section of the Plainfield Pike, and is being sav'd by me as a climax. In the graveyard I shall find the early Georgian slab of James Phillips Jun., my great-great-great-grandfather, and probably that of my great-great-great-great-grandfather James Phillips Senior; which I have never seen, but of whose carven cherubs others have told me. For this trip I took a region easier of access, (tho' never before seen by me) where between 1788 and 1790 my great-great grandfather Asaph Phillips settled, and where his descendants are represented both by permanent residents and by persons who spend only their summers there for old heritage's sake. The day was ideal, and my aunt and I had an exquisite rural walk from the stage-coach on the Plainfield Pike to the idyllick reaches of Howard Hill. We alighted at the semi-abandon'd village of Mt. Vernon, whose chief house has a splendid Georgian doorway with festoon'd fanlight, and which still holds the crumbling cellar walls of the ruin'd bank whereof my great-uncle Raymond Place was cashier in the 1830's. Helpful rusticks—who remember'd my grandfather well—directed us to the proper road, and we were soon rambling northward along one of the loveliest country lanes I have ever seen—a lane which now and then dipped into oak copses, and now and then emerg'd to grassy heights whence one might survey the countryside for miles around, spying distant farmhouse gables, lines of stone walls, winding brooks, and gnarl'd hillside orchards whose combined glamour produc'd a picture finer than anything in any eclogue I ever read. This lane at length debouch'd upon the Howard Hill Road thro' a picturesque farmyard with an old mill and mill stream close by. Then came a walk along the hill crest, where every lane ended in a noble prospect of distant horizons and where sentinel elms and pines, swinging meadow gates, walls and bars, and a little old white schoolhouse with small-pan'd windows, help'd to promote the pastoral beauty of the scene. At last the site of the Asaph Phillips

homestead hove in sight, (recognis'd by my aunt, who had been there before) and we knew we had arriv'd at the focal point of our journey. The old house, built about 1790, was some time ago burn'd down; but the present owner of the estate, William Henry, Esq., a civil-engineer of Providence (who marry'd the great-granddaughter of Asaph Phillips) who dwells there summers, hath erected a new house of antient design, with interior woodwork taken from demolish'd colonial buildings of the region. There are lovely orchards, picturesque old barns and byres, rambling stone walls, noble groves, and magnificent prospects on every hand; so that, recalling that my grandfather (Whipple V.) and great-grandfather (Capt. Jeremiah) were both born here, and that the seat of my Place ancestors down the slope toward Moosup Valley is equally beautiful, (cf. travelogue of Oct. 26, 1926) I again assur'd myself that I come naturally and honestly by my pastoral predilections and love of fine bucolick landscapes. The old Phillips graveyard, which I have long'd to see for years, is situated on the crest of a meadow hill which drops abruptly to an exquisite wooded valley with a brook. It is girdled by a low stone wall, and commands a splendid vista of meads and groves—one particularly impressive cluster of trees lying shortly westward. On its hillward side it drops to a lower terrace which juts boldly out from the slope and ends in a high bank wall—a terrace devoted to the newer interments, and maintain'd in as elegant and sophisticated a state as the smartest urban cemetery; with close-shav'd lawn, trim beds of gay flowers, tasteful urns, and polished granite monument and markers of the most metropolitan pattern. In this lower terrace area are interr'd many Providence Phillipses who cherish a wish to lie on ancestral soil despite their lifetime separation from the ancestral scene. It is very lovely in its way, but forms a rather incongruous note in the agrestick Foster landscape. Naturally, my chief interest lay in the upper and older burying-ground with its Georgian slate slabs bearing weeping-willows, cinerary urns, and neatly rhym'd epitaphs, and its white marble slabs of the 1840's with their brief, pious, and sentimental observations. This place was much like the old Place cemetery in Moosup Valley, which I describ'd in my 1926 travelogue. I now copied with great pains several ancestral epitaphs—in some cases having to clear away moss, earth, and creepers in order to reach the bottom lines. . . . . Tho' the head of the household was absent in town, his visiting daughter (my third cousin) from New Jersey and several grandsons extended pleasing hos-

pitality. I had met none of them before, and was very favourably impressed by their kindness and cultivation. They produc'd some genealogical books and charts which help'd me very materially in defining my exact relationship to several collateral Phillips lines, and I in turn was able to tell them much they did not know about the Whipples (whose blood we get thro' Asaph's wife) and their descent from the Whipleys of Norfolk in Old England. I blazon'd the Whipple arms for them—a thing they were very grateful for, insomuch as they had not previously known the exact design. Here the heraldick knowledge taught me by my young friend Talman stood me in good stead . . . . . tho' I must concede that his precepts in the art of actual heraldick delineation were less successful, as the above bunglings attest! Being regal'd with cordiality, coffee, data, and pears from a tree planted by Asaph Phillips, we departed over Howard Hill in quest of a short road to Moosup Valley and the Place country, insomuch as I wish'd to behold again the antient and sightly birthplace of my mother, grandmother, and Place great-grandfather. At the top of the hill we paus'd at the newer Howard homestead, where we made ourselves known to the gentleman of the estate, Whipple Howard, Jun., son of Whipple son of Leonard son of Judge Daniel Howard, whose wife was Asaph Phillips' daughter Anna—my third cousin by that link, and a remoter cousin by an earlier link. He prov'd a man of middle age, wide information, and much affability; who remains on his ancestral soil in the manner of those who went before him. His house is of early nineteenth century date, and in fine repair—one of the most attractive New England rural places I have ever beheld. By his directions we found the Moosup-Valley short cut, and at once plung'd into a deserted countryside of utterly dreamlike loveliness. The lane we follow'd was formerly the main high-road to Moosup Valley and the country westward, but was abandon'd about the time of the revolution in favour of the present route. During its existence houses had been built upon the Howard Hill half of it, so that the perpetuation of that part as an accessible lane was necessary. The other half, in the valley beyond the Lyon burying ground and toward the James Phillips place, was suffer'd to fall into desuetude; so that today not a trace remains of it. Entering the still-preserv'd part of the route from the top of Howard Hill, we found ourselves in the most marvellous and magical colonial territory it hath ever been my good-fortune to behold. Other old roads have such signs of modern decadence as telegraph-poles and

mail-boxes, but here nothing of the kind had intruded. Just the quaint, narrow, stone-wall'd line of the antient road, now carpeted with soft, delicate grass and mosses and rambling in curves and twists through an incredibly exquisite variety of meadows, orchards, woods, valleys, and sleepy Georgian farmsteads. Birds sang, and the westering sun pour'd a flood of almost unreal and theatrical glamour over the graceful verdure and undulant pastures. The feeling that one walked in a sheer vision became more and more intense as the chromatick pageantry of fresh greenery, deep-blue sky, and fleecy cumulus clouds spread more and more thoroughly within one's consciousness. The grace of the antient farms with their white-gabled houses, old-fashion'd gardens, stone walls, sloping orchards, and picturesque lines of barns and sheds became so overwhelmingly pervasive that one felt almost opprest for lack of opportunities for instant lyrical utterance. Here, indeed, was a small and glorious world of the past *completely* sever'd from the sullying tides of time; a world *exactly* the same as before the revolution, with *absolutely nothing* changed in the way of visual details, currents of folk-feeling, identity of families, or social and economick order. Where Howards or Lyons or Phillipses and Places settled in the first half of the eighteenth century, there Howards and Lyons and Phillipses and Places live now—tilling the same fields in the same way, living in the same houses and thinking the same thoughts. Horse-drawn vehicles predominate still, and the drowsy hum of summer is unvext by any discordant note of urbanism or mechanism. A gentle, elusive fragrance unknown either to towns or to ordinary countrysides pervades the whole scene, and so stimulates the imagination that even I, whose fancy is so preponderantly visual, found myself living with several senses rather than with one. The lines of Milton came into my head, and I found myself muttering:

“As one who long in populous City pent,  
Where Houses thick, and Sewers, annoy the Air,  
Forth issuing on a Summer's Morn, to breathe  
Among the pleasant Villages, and Farms  
Adjoyn'd, from each Thing met conceives delight:  
The Smell of Grain, or tedded Grass, or Kine,  
Or Dairy, each rural Sight, each rural Sound.”

Verily, I told my aunt, there is no need to marvel at that circumstance notic'd by Horace, when he say'd:

"Scriptorum Chorus omnis amat Nemus et fugit Urbes."

.....I am sorry that my direct personal line did not stay on the antient soil; for as it is, my affection and loyalty are divided betwixt these pastoral meads of ancestral memory, and the ancient hill and Georgian spires and roofs of that Old Providence to which my own infant eyes were open'd. By birth urban, I am by every hereditary instinct the complete rural squire. God Save the King!

Yr. obt. Servt.,  
H. Phillips Lo.

368. TO MRS. ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

September 3, 1929

Dear Mrs. Toldridge:—

About the nature of poetry—I surely did not mean to belittle it by calling it "simply an elegant amusement," because I believe that nothing in existence is more important than elegant amusement. What I wished to recommend was that you beware against making a *burden* of the art; for if you do that, you make it fail of its purpose, which is to amuse the creator. I wished to make it clear that the fun and function of poetry are all comprised within the process of creating it, and that it is needless and unwise to worry about what happens to it once it is written. Its importance resides in the pleasure it gives you during the writing—the mental and emotional satisfaction of self-expression. Once it has given you this, it has fully and adequately performed its function; and there is no need to bother about who else sees it—although it is of course pleasant to have others see one's work, so that there can be criticism and helpful discussion about it. And so I say, this does not imply any triviality on the part of the art; for is not emotional satisfaction the only supreme goal of any intellient life? The cosmos contains nothing of greater importance for the negligible atoms called human beings than the condition of being elegantly amused. It is the only mental laziness and artificial convention which can lead us to measure "accomplishment" by the approval of others. All these things mean nothing. The very idea of "accomplishment" is basically an artificiality

and an illusion. However, if we need a set of empirical working-standards—and protective illusions, as it were—we can very logically say that *the satisfaction of our own emotions* is the one solid thing which we can ever get out of life; the only thing we have any rational right to call "success" or "accomplishment" in a quasi-absolute sense. Each thinking person is really a solitary entity facing the formless and illimitable cosmos. None of the other entities really count except as minor decorative factors. Naturally "success" and "accomplishment" can not be the same for any two persons, since each individual has a distinctive set of emotional needs wholly peculiar to himself. The only constant and homogeneous element behind the verbal abstractions is that of *emotional equilibrium*—a subjective state of satisfaction. If we can attain this, we have "success" and "accomplishment"—but it doesn't matter how we do it so long as we attain it somehow, and each person's particular "success" is a different objective entity or condition from any other person's "success." Certainly, life can have no greater gift than emotional contentment during the aimless years from nothingness to nothingness again! However—this is not to imply that the business of acquiring contentment is an easy or frivolous matter. Only the psychology of Victorian illusion and hypocrisy tries to invest trivial and meaningless things with the insipid glamour of a pretended jollity and happiness. In stern fact, the relentless demands prompted by our glandular and nervous reactions are exceedingly complex, contradictory, and imperious in their nature; and subject to rigid and intricate laws of psychology, physiology, biochemistry, and physics which must be realistically studied and familiarly known before they can be adequately dealt with. So real and fixed is this state of things, that we may easily see how futile it is to expect anything to produce emotional satisfaction—or to pretend that it does—unless all the *genuine* laws of emotion and nerve-reaction are recognised and complied with. False or insincere amusement is the sort of activity which does not meet the real psychological demands of the human glandular-nervous system, but merely affects to do so. Real amusement is the sort which is based on a knowledge of real needs, and which therefore hits the spot. *This latter kind of amusement is what art is*—and there is nothin more important in the universe. You may clearly see that there can be no frivolity in this element, because it implies a close knowledge of real psychological demands, and a strict adherence to them. As soon as the artistic expression diverges from the

sphere of natural demand it becomes trivial, insincere, and artificial—ceasing in fact to be artistic at all. This means exactly the same thing that you mean when, using the older conventional terminology, you speak of art as “the very language of the soul.” What used to be called the “soul” in the days of religious myth, is in fact simply the fixed sum total of human instincts and emotions, as motivated and directed by sense-impressions, gland-secretions, and nerve-reactions. Art is, surely enough, the one authentic language of this sharply-patterned, exacting, and complex congeries of natural processes; and as such is as serious as anything else in life. But life itself is not very serious—not even worth counting in a general survey of the cosmos—so we must not make ourselves ridiculous by imputing too grave an importance to anything we do or feel. And as I have said, the fact that art is the natural language of the “soul” or sense-gland-nerve system, does not by any means imply that it depends for its effectiveness upon an audience. It is a serious matter as such things go—but its only true province is to satisfy the producer’s emotions. And when its producer takes it too seriously, he defeats its purpose by annulling its possibly satisfying effect through a fresh load of worry! As for art’s relation to “prophecy and truth”—not much can be said for that. Truth is something which can’t be got at except by a slow piecing-together of data, little by little, through the gradual, cautious operation of those rigid cognitive processes whereby we know that two and four are different things, and that black and white are not the same. Any other use of the word is elliptical, figurative, relative, or emptily meaningless—though we often employ it to express the real conformity of a work of art to the emotions it is designed to satisfy. This “truth to the emotions” of a work of art of course has nothing to do with actual, absolute *truth* as a delineator of what is or isn’t so in the domain of reality. What it is “true” to is merely the emotional demands of the average sense-gland-nerve system of average people—and these demands have no relation to the absolute facts of the universe. A work of art must be “true” to human feeling, but it need not be at all true to actual objective fact. This sounds like ambiguity until we stop to consider that we use the word “true” to express two antipodially different things—a circumstance which leads me to condemn the use of the word except in its literal sense of objective, scientific reality. “Prophecy” is the business of the scientist and philosophic historian—not of the poet. All the poet can do is to guess, absorb other

people’s conclusions, and set forth his feelings in symbolic form. Naturally he is quick to absorb impressions—the quality that makes him a poet gives him this facility—and sensitive in his reaction to them; so that when he sets them forth symbolically he is usually reflecting a section of current opinion in a more than commonly graphic and poignant way. This makes his voice more clearly audible than the average, and gains him the reputation of “prophet” when he happens to touch upon the territory generally covered by the conception of “prophecy.” But there is no exactitude, authority, or close cerebration in what he “prophesies”—and he is in truth more often wrong than right, since he is always led by unreliable sympathies and caprices rather than by the coolly intelligent analysis of the events concerned, and a calmly rational estimate of the probable result of their interaction. It is never the glowing bard, but always the steel-cold man of intelligence, who gets closest to the *truth*—the question of *what is and what isn’t*—and has the best chance of constructing a sound forecast of what will be. Poetry and art for *beauty*—but science and philosophy for *truth*. It was a glowing, misty-minded young poet, and not a sober man of analytical intellect, who muddled matters by fastening a false linkage of truth and beauty upon the popular consciousness! However—this isn’t to say that poets and artists are less important than men of science, for in hard fact we must admit that *truth* is nothing of any intrinsic importance. It doesn’t matter a hang whether we know anything about anything or not, so long as we can be contented. If we can happily do it, we might just as well believe in Santa-Claus, God, a green-cheese moon, fairies, witches, good and evil, unicorns, ghosts, immortality, the Arabian Nights, a flat earth, etc., etc., as learn the real facts about the universe and its streams and patterns of eternal and alternately evolving and devolving energy. Truth becomes important *only when it is necessary to establish our emotional satisfaction*. Emotional satisfaction is the one big thing; and the greatest person is the one who can create the thing most emotionally satisfying, whether or not it has any relation to truth or prophecy. On the whole, I think that beauty is more often satisfying than truth; so that the poet and artist are really somewhat ahead of the scientist and philosopher in a sound and exquisite culture. It is certain that the human personality never attained a greater height of satisfying realisation than in the age of Pericles—yet we know that Periclean Athens was in many respects childishly naive and ignorant in its conception of the universe. The present

age, though, has its natural emotional demand for truth very keenly developed; so that no classic parallel will work very exactly. Successful emotional adjustment or equilibrium today undoubtedly requires a far greater proportion of realistic fact-comprehension than an equally successful adjustment in the Hellas of 400 B. C.—or even in our own mutable civilisation a generation or two ago. This does not imply any especial *advance*, but merely a *change*. We can't regulate our emotional demands, and there is no reason to prefer any one set to any other. All we can do is to note their slow, automatic, deterministic change, and to meet them as best we may in the art-forms and folk-ways of each new generation. There is nothing more to life than that.

Art, then, is really very important—perhaps the most all-inclusive and important single element in life—though it abrogates its function and ceases to be art as soon as it becomes self-conscious, puffed with illusions of *cosmic* significance, (as distinguished from local, human, emotional significance) or burdened with ulterior considerations and worries based on its possible reception by the world and its effect on the creator's position. There is an old epigram which defines a gentleman as "a man who doesn't give a damn whether he's a gentleman or not"—and I would extend its principle to other arts than that of living, by averring that an artist is one who doesn't give a damn whether he is creating art or not, but who succeeds through not trying to succeed; who aims simply to express himself, and only incidentally finds himself creating real beauty. We may describe the successful aesthete in a very free paraphrase of Waller—

"He sought content, and fill'd his arms with bays."

Certainly, all true poetry comes out of experience and emotion; for we cannot have an authentic urge for expression unless we have really lived or felt what we want to say. This does not mean that every poem must describe some specific objective incident in our history, but merely that it must adhere to territory with which we are sufficiently familiar to harbour *really profound and poignant* feelings concerning it.

H. P. Lovecraft

369. TO AUGUST DERLETH

On a high wooded bluff above a broad river a mile west of my house—a spot unchanged since I haunted it in infancy.

Sept. 4, 1929

Dear A. W.:—

. . . . Last week I took an all-day trip into the idyllic countryside of Western Rhode Island; covering a region endeared to me by hereditary memory, insomuch as it is the place where most of my maternal ancestors dwelt in the 18th and early 19th centuries. I visited a number of ancient family homesteads, and two family burying-grounds—at which latter I continued a task begun three years ago, of copying all the *epitaphs* of my progenitors. Worked on Phillipses this time, getting back to my great-great-grandfather Asaph, whose old slate slab bears a doleful weeping willow, and the touching lines

The sweet remembrance of the just  
Shall flourish when they sleep in dust.

Before winter I shall make another trip—to an older burying ground far south of this one which I have never seen—and get the epitaphs of Asaph's father (d. 1807) and grandfather (d. 1746)—both named James. Then later I shall renew my hitherto vain search in Newport for the grave of Michael, the elder James's father, who died in 1686. After that I shall tackle Mike's old man—the Rev. George—whom the wind colic bumped off at Watertown, Mass. in 1644. And then I'm out of luck unless I can dig up a trans-oceanic ticket; for George's pa Christopher, and all of his predecessors, are planted in and around the ivied parish church of Rainham St. Martin's, in the hundred (sic) of Gallow, Norfolk, Old England. . . . .

Yr. most Obt. Servt.—HPL



370. TO AUGUST DERLETH

friday  
September 1929

my dear e. e. cummings:—

. . . the scenery of new england has, for its keynote, a sort of settled restfulness and quiet beauty; a great luxuriance of vegetation uniting with a gently rolling terrain studded with rocks to achieve a high degree of variety and loveliness without ever breaking into violence. it approaches the landscape of old england more closely than does any other american scenery. added to this natural setting are the ancient white farmhouses, gnarled orchard trees, narrow, winding roads, rough, low stone walls, and embowered village steeples and belfries which the hand of pastoral mankind brought in the first two centuries of colonisation, and which have blended harmoniously and almost indistinguishably with the landscape to form a highly characteristic and reposefully lovely type of scene. on every hand calm, long-seated, and wisely adjusted life is suggested—the net effect being more old-world and european than anything else south of french canada on this continent. of course the fringes of cities are now spoilt by cheap bungalows and tawdry mechanisation, but the back woods sections of the state roads retain a marvelous amount of the pristine colonial charm. these remarks apply mainly to southern new england; in northern new england we see the same type of landscape features on an enhanced scale—with a ruggedness which now and then (as in the white mountains and some parts of vermont) ascends into positive grandeur. northern new england is likewise much less vitiated by modernism and mechanisation. . . . .

yr. obt. servt.—HPL (hpl)

371. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.  
Sept. 16, 1929

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . The cuttings you enclosed are all interesting. That Roman coin in the Indian grave could be used fictionally to sustain a notion on which I have been ruminating for years—a forgotten colony of Rome on American soil, including a city of Roman architecture with temple-crowned citadel, columned forum, & marble arenas & baths. I would have it come in conflict with the representatives of some native civilisation—Maya, Aztec, &c.—& perhaps suffer extirpation in a desperate battle, or sink amidst an earthquake. The Malaysian temple item also has fictional possibilities—for a story could connect it with the unknown & primordial Pacific-island culture whose cyclopean masonry & colossi are found in places like Ponape, in the Carolines, or Easter Island. I suppose you have seen the Easter Island images in the National Museum of your city—the only specimens in the United States. They formed a high spot of my last spring's visit, for I had never seen them before. Few objects are so imaginatively provocative.

Had a call from one of "the gang" week ago yesterday, when George Kirk & his wife passed through Providence on the last lap of a long New England motor tour. I took him to the ancient & unchanged fishing village of Pawtuxet, down the bay. Very shortly I may have another & longer-term visitor in the person of one of the "gang's" youngest members—Donald Wandrei of St. Paul, Minn., who turned 21 this summer. He has been working for a year in the advertising dept. of Dutton's in New York—& receiving very good remuneration for one of his age & inexperience—but the unimaginative cheapness of commercialism so preyed on his nerves that he has just resigned in disgust, & resolved to turn back to his own natural field of weird poetry & prose fantasy, even though he starve in the process. He has just begun what he calls 'a novel of age-old horror', & wants a quiet environment to develop it in—hence his idea of visiting Providence for a time, & taking an attic room in this house, as he did during the summer of 1927. I

shall be very glad indeed to have him here, if he so decides, for he is one of the most pleasing & bright of all my "adopted grandsons"!

With best wishes—  
Yr most obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

372. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Octr. 1, 1929

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... The cuttings you enclosed are all of interest. I am glad to know that Arlington will be restored, since it has always been an object of my admiration. I went through it—or as much of it as was publicly open—in 1925, but it was then totally unfurnished. Even then, though, I could appreciate its architectural excellence. That item about the 2500-year-old lily-seed goes at once into my weird files—although I have my doubts about the actuality of the germination. Similar tales used to be told about wheat-grains from Egyptian tombs, but scientific opinion has shewn them all to be apocryphal. That Quincy House item—which had appeared in my local paper—was indeed melancholy news; for I had often stopped at the old tavern, & the amateur press associations used often to hold conventions there. It was on the site of the ancient Brattle St. church—which in early colonial times displayed its Puritan zeal by refusing the gift of an organ—which it termed "an ungodly chest of whistles." The organ went to St. John's in Portsmouth, N. H., where it still remains in good condition. The Quincy is the second old Boston hotel to go this year—the old U. S. Hotel, built in 1826 (& where Loveman & I stopped only last January) having closed down about a month ago. Only one or two of the famous old hostelries are left now. As for Dr. Hredlicka—he leaves the Indian origin question about where it was before. Asiatic migration is a virtual certainty, though details & technical confirmations are still to be secured. It is also still an open question as to whether any non-Indian stocks had a foothold in America in prehistoric times. That article on bell-ringing re-

minds me of my frequent wish to master some of the quaint terminology of the vanishing craft. The late John Ravenor Bullen knew it fluently, & used it in one of his tales. It would be a pity if the nomenclature & the art were alike to die out, & I hope some Henry Fordlike person will intervene to save them—if only in a museum way. America never had this bit of colour, for Puritan steeples generally boasted only a single bell. Still—even those unvarying peals sound highly picturesque & attractive across a rural valley through the haze of summer or over the crisp Christmas snows. In the second lot of cuttings I note one item which reveals a temperament enviably dissimilar to my own—namely, the statement of Mr. Temple Thurston that writing is something which can be done at *any* time. It may be so with him, but I must regretfully say that it is not so with me. Of course, I can write straightforward prose on any given subject at any time—plain essay prose, which simply relates facts already formulated in my mind. But when it comes to fiction, or anything calling upon the creative imagination, I find that my mind is not always equally in shape. It pays to make the most of spells of particular ability when they come, & to save the dull periods for hack work. That autumn idyl by D.C. Puttie is exceedingly appealing. I am very fond of gardens—in fact they are among the most potent of all imaginative stimuli with me. ....

I remain  
Yr most obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

373. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

early Oct., 1929

Dear C A S:—

By the way—if you want to see a new story which is practically mine, read *The Curse of Yig* in the new *Weird Tales*, next your verses. The "authoress", Mrs. Reed, is a client for whom Long & I have done lots of work, & this specimen is well-nigh a piece of original composition on my part, since all I had to go by was a synopsis of notes describing a pioneer couple, the attack on the husband by snakes, the bursting of his corpse in the dark, & the subsequent madness of the wife. All the plot

& motivation in the present tale are my own—I invented the snake-god, the curse, the prologue & epilogue, the point about the identity of the corpse, & the monstrosly suggestive aftermath. To all intents & purposes it's my story—though not my latest, for I wrote *The Dunwich Horror* afterward.

Yr most obt Servt  
H P L

374. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Oct. 6, 1929

Dear A. W.:—

... Home is one's ideal setting if one is to develop one's best attributes, and New York is no place for a white man to live. The metropolis is a flurried, garish dissonance of aimless speed and magnitude, hybrid and alien to the core, and without historic roots or traditions. It is an emotional and aesthetic island—and a desert island in the long run. A man belongs where he has roots—where the landscape and milieu have some relation to his thoughts and feelings, by virtue of having formed them. A real civilisation recognizes this fact—and the circumstance that America is beginning to forget it, does far more than does the mere matter of commonplace thought and bourgeois inhibitions to convince me that the general American fabric is becoming less and less a true civilisation and more and more a vast, mechanical, and emotionally immature barbarism de luxe. But there's a good deal of the elder atmosphere left, and we may enjoy it while it lasts. . . . . Yr. most obt. HPL.

375. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Tuesday the 19th, 1929  
(October)

Parallel-less Paramount-point of Petrifica-Pierian Peripateticism:—

... I do like to have myself down on paper and know just where I stand in relation to the stone-wall'd rolling meads and white farmhouse gables of the Arcadian realm of Western Rhode-Island. The visible beauty and dignity of a settled, aesthetically integrated region take on a fresh degree of poignancy and motivating stimulation when one can feel one's own hereditary blood-stream coursing through the scene as through the veins of some vast and exquisite organism. One can say not only, "I love these waving grasses and towering elms and brook-threaded valleys and stone-wall'd farmsteads and white village steeples," but "these waving grasses and towering elms and brook-threaded valleys and stone-wall'd farmsteads and white village steeples are ME, MYSELF, I, THE CONSCIOUS EGO"! And what more can any guy ask than that? Isn't all art an effort of the artist to *identify himself* with the burning beauty and strangeness he depicts? Why, then, reject such identification as Nature provides?

The past is *real*—it is *all there is*. The present is only a trivial and momentary boundary-line—whilst the future, though wholly determinate, is too essentially unknown and landmarkless to possess any hold upon our sense of concrete aesthetic imagery. It is, too, liable to involve shifts and contrasts repugnant to our emotions and fancy; since we cannot study it as a unified whole and become accustomed to its internal variations as we can study and grow accustomed to the vary'd past. There is nothing in the future to tie one's loyalties and affections to—it can mean nothing to us, because it involves none of those mnemonic association-links upon which the illusion of meaning is based. So I, for one, prefer Old New England and Old Virginia to the unknown mechanised barbarism that stretches out ahead of us—as meaningless and alien to men of our heritage and memories as the cultures of China or Abyssinia or ancient Carthage or the planet Saturn. There's no use pretending that a standardised, time-tabled machine-culture has any point in common—any area of contact—with a culture involving human freedom,

individualism, and personality; so that it seems to me all one can do at present is to fight the future as best he can. Anybody who thinks that men live by *reason*, or that they are able consciously to mould the effect and influences of the devices they create, is behind the times psychologically. Men can use machines for a while, but after a while the psychology of machine-habitation and machine-dependence becomes such that the machines will be using the men—modelling them to their essentially efficient and absolutely valueless precision of action and thought . . . . . perfect functioning, without any reason or reward for functioning at all. One can't dodge this issue in glittering generalities, or through an habitual hopefulness of attitude which after all springs merely from a certain type of gland-functioning. Certain causes produce certain results, and a look ahead is not reassuring from what we know of the laws of human action and reaction. Read *The Modern Temper*, by Joseph Wood Krutch, and *The Dance of the Machines*, by Edward J. O'Brien. One almost certain outcome of America's accepted system of plutocratic despotism and democracy of opportunity will be rather ironic from the point of view of your own democratic wishes. That will be the crystallisation of an *absolutely unbreakable caste system* based on *fixed mental and biological capacity*, as democracy opens the upward path to competent individuals and leaves the menial places to the naturally incompetent. With this system operating, a thousand years will see a wholly new social-political-industrial order composed of a highly intelligent ruling and administrative stratum on top, (descended from the intelligent elements of *all* classes of today) plus a vast residue of mentally inferior material (drained steadily, through opportunity to rise, of all the naturally capable material it has ever produced) wholly at the mercy of the superior class—well-fed, well-housed, well-clothed, well-treated, well-leisured, well-amused, and all that—but essentially brainless and relegated to a position of virtual parity with the well-oiled and well-treated machines with which it will share its burthen-bearing. The effect of machine-standardisation on *literature* is well shewn by O'Brien in his *Dance of the Machines*. Quantity-production devoid of individualities and subtleties, or of genuine personal vision, is an inevitable result. The *Saturday Evening Post* with its bland, superficial callousness and lack of true appraisals or analyses, is a good symbol of future writing and publishing. The standards of uniformity, quantity, and monetary reward overshadow everything else. . . . .

Make no mistake—this is what lies ahead of us! All the national standards are shifting toward it—in the fields of politics, science, and even art. Values today are not humanistic—i. e., not based on the standard of human personality and emotion, and of the rewards inherent in self-realisation—but *mathematical and quantitative*; based on *measurement as applied to material function*, without regard for the significance of that function in producing the emotional-imaginative state of adjustment which philosophers call "the good life." The modern standard of a man is not his whole, rounded personality as expressed in his individual angle of vision, balance of emotions, background-acquirements, and the like; but merely the mechanical speed and precision of his calculative intellect alone, as coolly measured and plotted out in "graphs" and tables by standardised wielders of the Binet-Simon intelligence test. In other words, we no longer measure men as human beings, but as effective fractions of a vast mathematical machine which has no goal or purpose save to increase the precision and economy of its own useless and rewardless motions. That is why the inevitable coming of the new machine-age aristocracy of mentally-superior rulers gives me no hope of a renewed civilisation. This future aristocracy—whose pioneers are already among us in the persons of such industrialists as Ford, Firestone, Rockefeller, Stinnes, Lever, etc., etc.—will be one of wealth, splendour, power, speed, quantity and responsibility alone; for, having been erected on the basis of acquisition and industry, it will naturally draw all its streams of feeling from the empty ideal of size, measurement, precision, and activity-for-its-own-sake . . . the crude ideal of *doing* as opposed to the civilised ideal of *being*. Upon this foundation will arise such art as it will possess—the hard, unsatisfying, geometrical aesthetic whose pictorial manifestations you can see in the massed planes and cubes and angles of "modernistic" and expressionistic painting. Of course it will be a kind of "civilisation", in the loosest sense of the term; but it will be *no civilisation of ours*. We can't look forward to it with any more sense of personal pride or pleasure than we could look forward to the triumph of any other alien civilisation on territory which has known our own. Wouldn't we fight an attempt of the Japanese—cultured though they are—to occupy and flourish on New England and Virginia soil? Didn't our forefathers fight the French to keep them from spreading over us from Canada and the Ohio-Mississippi valley? Shades of Sir William Phipps, Governor Shirley, Sir Wm. Pepperrell,

Gen. Wolfe and Capt. Daniel Fones of the Rhode-Island arm'd sloop *Tartar!* For what did the bells in the Georgian steeples of Salem and Boston and Providence ring out when Louisburg fell in 1745? God Save the King! No, damn it! If we fought the menacing culture of the French, which was undoubtedly *superior* to our own, shall we not fight this even more alien and immeasurably inferior barbarism of the machine? . . . .

I am desolated that you and Talman miss'd seeing good old Mac because of that date slip-up. It is possible that Mac's general shakiness caused him to give Sonny the wrong figures—just as he wrote his future address "South *Dakoma*" instead of "South Tacoma." . . .

As for bookplates—I certainly don't think that Talman would soak you an hundred fish for a good pachydermatous torchbearer. He's no organised professional, and is not the sort to be a Shylock amongst the gang. He gave me my plate as a sort of recognition of the help I've given him with his short stories—although I told him at the time that he was more than welcome to whatever assistance I could extend. Ask him about his rates some time, for I'm hang'd if his best work isn't good enough for anybody—be he "profesh" or not! The printing from a plate like mine, on stock like that of the sample you have, is only \$3.75 for 500 copies—at a firm in Montague St., Brooklyn. Of course, if anybody wants something sweller and doggier—engraved plate, old Japanese vellum, and all that—one must pay in proportion; but for a plain, democrattick guy like me, this ordinary kind of cut and stock is plenty good. I've got five hundred copies—but I shan't plaster the more tatter'd and less important items in my modest library.

Sorry a gang meeting can't be rounded up, and hope you'll get around to Little Belknap's oftener. They enjoy your calls immensely—in fact, they remarked last August that they wished your programme allowed you to get around oftener. It certainly is a delightful household—including my friend Felis, and even the usurping Canis! . . . Haven't had a word out of Samuelus since his transfer of commercial affiliations—I'll bet he let somebody else get that pile of Farmer's Almanacks that he was saving for me until the owner quoted a price, and that he's ashamed to write the Old Gentleman after such a lapse! But hell—he needn't worry about that! Grandpa is a cynical and moderately forgiving old goof, with too low an opinion of the human will and intelligence to be disappointed or disillusion'd by small lapses. Glad Georgio-

circus still flourishes. He hasn't written me since his passage thro' Providentium, but I hope he saw and enjoy'd WICKFORD, as he meant to do when I bade him adieu in East-Greenwich. Orton, as I think I said, is getting out a Dreiser bibliography—which you'll no doubt see in time. But after all, it's a denatured sort of gang-skeleton with nice old Mac off the scene!

Our friend Clark Ashton Smith—Klarkash-Ton, Emperor of Dreams, whom you appreciate *so keenly*—has turned to short story writing of late, and is producing a surprising quantity of good items—several of which Wright has accepted. See what you think of them when they appear in *Weird Tales*—especially *A Night in Malneant*, and *The End of the Story*. Still better ones are due to follow.

Very shortly the daily literary column of the *Providence Journal*—*The Sideshow*—may feature a discussion bringing in the names of myself and of my small grandsons Belknap and August W. Derleth of Wisconsin! A coupla weeks ago the literary editor—Bertrand K. Hart—had some dope about what the best horror story in all literature is. I couldn't resist sending him a copy of my *Recluse* article, plus transcripts of lists of "best weird tales" (with my own omitted in decent modesty) which Sonny and Derleth had prepared—as a matter of pure coincidence—not long before. Hart came back with a very pleasant letter; expressing his intention of discussing the subject futher in his "colyum", and asking permission to refer to my grandsons and myself by our real names. Assuming that nobody was especially keen on secrecy, I extended the desiderate imprimatur—hence expect to see the annals of the gang perpetuated in the cultivated press of a *real town*. If you have any ideal list of best weird tales to send along, come ahead and send it! I'm sure Hart would welcome any augmentations to the genial melee.

Yr. Oblig'd obt. hble. Servt.,  
Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus

376. TO AUGUST DERLETH

The Quinsnicket Country 6 miles north  
of Providence

Octr. 21, 1929

My dear A. W.:—

Let me thank you with the utmost sincerity for the generous batch of landscape photographs you so kindly lent—and which I shall return in tomorrow's mail. At this moment I am appreciating them in the least invidious and most appropriate manner possible—namely, viewing their transmitted beauty in the midst of the glowing, first-hand, autumnal beauty of the finest landscape vista in New England! I am seated on a hillside—on the browning turf beside a road which spirals down before me to an eastward valley with a blue, glimmering mere at its bottom. The descent is undulant and variegated, with picturesque granite outcroppings, gay-foliaged trees, and rambling, old-fashioned stone walls here and there. On my right is the edge of a forested ravine with a brook at the bottom whose placid coursing I can just hear. In that ravine—now out of sight, but to be visited by me later in the afternoon—are the picturesque ivied ruins of an ancient mill which I knew in youth . . . raw material for some future *Evening in Spring* study of my own! On my left the ground sharply ascends in a series of graceful slopes now dotted with the sheaves of harvest-time, whilst peeping through the gnarled trees of red and gold hillside orchards are the time-stained gables of two venerable farmhouses—the Richard Comstock house, built in 1670, and the Benjamin Arnold house, built in 1732. But the most fascinating of all is the panorama straight ahead, across the pool-bottom'd valley. There the opposite slope arises in the distance, rich with autumnal foliage, and shewing through the treetops the sun-gilded roofs and steeples of far-off Saylesville—an old-world prospect which carries the fancy back to old England and the peaceful meads and vales along the Thames and Wye and Avon. Truly, I do not know of any landscape on earth which more appeals to me than this. It satisfies almost every major longing in my imagination. The charm could not possibly be captured by photography—and I would give nearly everything I possess for the power to draw or paint it. . . . .

Yr. most obt. Servt. HP

377. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Octr. 25, 1929.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . The cuttings proved exceedingly interesting—especially the one about Fredericksburg, which I explored so thoroughly last May. The town fascinated me tremendously—even more so than Williamsburg, since its archaism is a natural survival rather than a self-conscious restoration—& I'm sure I'd choose it as a residence if I were ever to settle outside New-England. It has some fine old doorways—with rectangular transoms more often than semicircular fanlights—whose details are highly esteemed by architects; & across the Rappahannock is the still older & quainter hamlet of Falmouth, which retains much charm despite its slum decadence. Fredericksburg contains the mansion of Kenmore, long the home of Genl. Washington's sister, & the cottage where his mother spent her last days. . . . .

Weather hereabouts has not been as genial as in Washington, so that I have not had so many woodland writing sessions as I had last autumn. At prevailing temperatures, one has to keep moving outdoors. I hope, however, to get a few good walks before the foliage is all gone. It is in the spring & fall, I imagine, that the difference in latitude between R. I. & D. C. becomes most manifest. Last spring I found Washington very cold at a time when the north was still uncomfortable. The best days here have been Oct. 20-21, when I had glorious afternoons amidst the gay leafage & rustic & village vistas of the Quinsnicket region. All this makes me especially appreciative of the October landscape items in the latest batch of cuttings. There is one place in Quinsnicket—on the side of a hill—where I could sit for hours gazing at the landscape without being bored. The road spirals down to an eastward valley with a glassy mere at its bottom—beyond which rises another hill now gay with autumn splendour—on which the idyllic gables & spires of the village of Saylesville can be seen in the distance. On the right are rolling meadows with quaint stone walls, & the forested edge of a deep, brook-traversed ravine; whilst on the left are terraced uplands with frequent outcropping of rock & at present dotted with the corn-sheaves of harvest

time. At the rim of these uplands the ancient roofs of two farmhouses—one built in 1670 & the other in 1732—can be glimpsed through the scarlet & gold of gnarled orchard-trees. A place like this makes me regret, more than anything else, my inability to draw & paint. It looks something like this:



I can appreciate, too, the editorial on *White Moon's Wizardry*, since the Hunter's Moon last week was exceptionally fine. I took several walks to get the benefit of the mystic moonbeams on particular bits of landscape & architecture—river reflections, &c.—& could well appreciate the expression "burning moonlight"—used by Flecker in the last act of his *Hassan*.

Other cuttings of much interest are those connected with extinct cultures. I had seen a short item about the Esquimau discovery before, but this account is ampler. Lost Arctic & Antarctic civilisations form a fascinating idea to me—I used it once in *Polaris*, & expect to use it again more than once. The Maya question is absorbingly interesting, too. Le Plongeon is hardly to be taken seriously, yet even without his chimerical notions the history of the ancient culture, with its sudden shift from Central America to Yucatan about 500 A. D., is dramatic & mysterious enough. The origin of the Mayas is almost indisputably Asiatic, & their

art will be found, on analysis, much closer to that of India & Indo-China than to any art-stream of Africa or Western Asia. It is very doubtful whether an inhabited Atlantis ever existed, although vast areas in the Atlantic have undoubtedly sunk at one time or another. It seems likely that the classic Atlantis of Plato was in North Africa, on the shores of a lagoon now dried up. The fabled Poseidonis was in all probability somewhere near the later Tunis. But a sunken land is a great theme for fiction, & I always like to read Atlantean tales. There is a new one by A. Conan Doyle just out—*The Maracot Deep*—which I want to read as soon as possible.

I have ye honour to subscribe myself,

Yr most obt hble Servt  
HPLovecraft

378. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Harvest-Home Day  
October 30, 1929

Apotheosis'd Aërial of Anthropological Aspiration:—

..... As for the future of Western Civilisation—and of any other cultures which the planet may preserve or develop—far be it from me to be dogmatick. All I deal in is probabilities. In the last analysis, nobody don't know nothin' about nothin'. Contrary to what you may assume, I am *not a pessimist* but an *indifferentist*—that is, I don't make the mistake of thinking that the resultant of the natural forces surrounding and governing organic life will have any connexion with the wishes or tastes of any part of that organic life-process. Pessimists are just as illogical as optimists; insomuch as both envisage the aims of mankind as unified, and as having a direct relationship (either of frustration or of fulfilment) to the inevitable flow of terrestrial motivation and events. That is—both schools retain in a vestigial way the primitive concept of a conscious teleology—of a cosmos which gives a damn one way or the other about the especial wants and ultimate welfare of mosquitoes, rats, lice, dogs, men, horses, pterodactyls, trees, fungi, dodos, or other forms of biological energy. And I fear the meliorist is not altogether free from this illusion, either. But the *indifferentist* is. He alone of all thinkers is

willing to view the future of the planet *impartially*—without assigning (as indeed there is absolutely no ground for assigning) any preponderance of evidential value to such factors as appear to argue a course pleasant to himself. Not that he is especially looking for anti-human outcomes, or that he has any pleasure in contemplating such. It is merely that, in judging evidence, *he does not regard the quality of favourableness to man as any intrinsic mark of probability*. Neither does he regard it as any intrinsic mark of *improbability*—he simply knows that this quality has nothing to do with the case; that the interplay of forces which govern climate, behaviour, biological growth and decay, and so on, is too purely universal, cosmic, and eternal a phenomenon to have any relationship to the immediate wishing-phenomena of one minute organic species on our transient and insignificant planet. At times parts of this species may like the way things are going, and at times they may not—but that has nothing to do with the cosmically fixed march of the events themselves. Human liking or welfare is no probability-factor at all—and no person has a right to express an opinion on the future of the world, so long as he has the least tendency to consider a man-favouring course as *intrinsically* more likely to be probable than any other course. If he lets the quality of man-favouringness serve in lieu of real evidence to predispose him toward belief in any direction, then his opinion is null and void as a serious philosophic factor. The real philosopher knows that, *other* evidence being equal, favourableness or unfavourableness to mankind means absolutely nothing as an index of likelihood—that is, that a future hostile to man is precisely as probable as one favourable to him. And of course this works the other way around as well—so that no one is justified in thinking a theory probable *merely because it opposes man*. The indifferentist laughs as much at irresponsible calamity-howlers and temperamental melancholiacs as he does at smirking idealists and unctuous woodrowilsonians. For example—nothing makes me more amused than the hypersensitive people who consider life as essentially an *agony* instead of merely a cursed bore, punctuated by occasional agony and still rarer pleasure. Life is rather depressing because pain and ennui outweigh pleasure; but the pleasure exists, none the less, and can be enjoyed now and then while it lasts. And too—many can build up a crustacean insensitiveness against the subtler forms of pain, so that many lucky individuals have their pain-quota measurably reduced. Uniform melancholy is as illogical as uniform cheer. Another thing—it is quite

absurd to think that the decline of civilisation means instant savagery and suffering. *On the contrary*, (to use my favourite forensick phrase) these letdowns are nearly always gradual and partial—so that it took Rome fully four-hundred years to slip from the Antonine peak to the utter cultural disintegration of—say—600 A. D. And even then, of course, there were rudimentary fragments of mental and aesthetic life left—together with the prospects of another civilisation around the corner. The only element of real *calamitousness* is for the member of the declining civilisation as an individual—or for his generation as a group. He, and his kind, know that the near future will not be such as to call forth so much of man's imaginative and emotional resources as the present and immediate past have called forth—that life, while not necessarily a matter of complete misery and sterility, will be conducted on a lower potential, with less rich rewards for the ordeal of remaining conscious—and that the resurgent civilisation of the remoter future, beyond the slack period, will—while its height cannot be predetermined—be so completely alien to him, that—high or low—it will mean no more to him than an hypothetical civilisation on Saturn's third satellite. It's no civilisation of his—so that nothing connected with it can compensate for the sense of loss inherent in the realisation that his own set of conditions and values and secondary instincts is not going ahead unimpededly. Naturally there are many unimaginative people whose emotional adjustment depends so little on their orientation in time and space that matters like this mean relatively little to them so long as they can have their chosen conditions during their own lifetimes. Indeed, there are even people of greater sensitiveness who—while foreseeing the changes—manage to dramatise themselves in such a way as to avoid pain at the thought of their culture's ending. There may be some—such as the 19th century decadents in France—who can derive a sort of pleasurable tragic exaltation from the picture of themselves as the crew of a sinking ship—a ship which is sinking, no matter how many other ships may later put to sea from other ports. To be a Psamattickus in a dying Egypt, a Lucian in a fading Hellenistic world, a Boëthius or a Venantius Fortunatus in a doomed Rome—there is quite a kick in the idea for those who like that kind of thing. In fact, we may say quite certainly that anyone's emotional attitude toward the future is essentially a matter of chance and of taste. The only thing about which any representative array of clear thinkers—an array involving the temperamental heterogeneities



inevitable among individuals—can be expected to approximate similarity, is the impersonal and objective matter of calculating what the future is likely to be, whether one hates or relishes it. And even here the similarity can be only approximate, since different emotions give different individuals different habits of perception, appraisal, and reasoning—habits which importantly affect all conclusions save those depending on the very simplest, clearest, and most concrete data. One really ought to think of the future apart from all likes, dislikes, and personal perspectives. He would then see a transformation in process; likely to invalidate most of our present standards, thought-habits, and pleasure-sources, and to substitute another set of these things which—though no doubt satisfying to those born under its aegis—will call forth less of the varied pleasure—and thought-potentialities of mankind than the systems of the past and present have called forth. He needn't call this a tragedy if he doesn't wish to—for of course he will not live to reap its worst effects, while his great-grandchildren will be too steeped in the newer order to miss any other. But it would be hardly scientific of him to deny that a decline in the intrinsic level of civilisation is involved. We know well enough that different civilisations have different levels as judged by the amount of mental and emotional energy they draw forth from their component individuals—scale Greece against Persia, Egypt against Assyria, Rome against Carthage, France against India, and so on—and we likewise know that low-potential cultures often supplant cultures of higher potential. Hellenism gave way to Romano-Alexandrianism, Mayan culture to Nahvatlin-Aztec culture, and so on. The illusion of steady collective "progress" toward any desirable end is of relatively recent origin, and becomes absurd when we reflect that Periclean Greece lies some 2400 years behind our own essentially mediocre age. So far as we can see, there lies ahead of the western world a period of great material comfort and ostentation; amidst which a real culture will come to exist as a leisure class develops, but which will find its satisfactions on a less complex and poignant plane than that of the dying Renaissance culture. Then will come a Dark Age—precipitated either through ennui-collapse or external conquest—and after that an entirely different mongrel world beginning over again; though perhaps with intermediate stages involving the decreasingly vital use of various elements of the existing culture. And after the overthrow of all these fragments, there will be another building up from the nomad-pastoral state—with priest-king-war-chief, council of nobles, and all the other familiar

anthropological forms which spring from the basic species—instincts against the background of unartificialised Nature. These people will gape at the legends which their old women and medicine-men will weave about the ruins of concrete bridges, subways, and building-foundations—and about the Sphinx and the pyramids and the rock-temples of Petra. How many times this patterned drama will be repeated, we cannot tell. It does not really matter, since quantity is really a very insignificant thing. Possibly the level of the highest previous civilisation will be surpassed—especially if a return to the primitive ever sets biologically evolutionary factors into motion again, producing types superior to any of the past and present. But all this means nothing to us—no more than as if the events took place on another planet—and if evolution does resume sway over us, the resultant beings will not be *men* in the strictest sense, any more than we are the apes who preceded us ancestrally. More—if the sun gives heat long enough, there will certainly come a time when the mammal will have to go down to subordination as the reptilia went before him. We are not nearly so well equipped for combating a varied environment as are the articulata; and some climatic revulsion will almost certainly wipe us out some day as the dinosaurs were wiped out—leaving the field free for the rise and dominance of some hardy and persistent insect species—which will in time, no doubt, develop a high specialisation of certain functions of instinct and perception, thus creating a kind of civilisation, albeit one of wholly different perceptions, (when other species view a given object, their ocular image of it differs—sometimes widely—from ours) emphases, feelings, and goals. Probably the period of human supremacy is only the prologue to the whole drama of life on this planet—though of course some cosmic collision is always capable of smashing up the theatre before the prologue is done. All this sort of thing has undoubtedly happened an infinity of times in the past—planets being born and spawning a varied life; evolution and culture ensuing; and death and oblivion eventually overtaking all. Probably there are one or two other cases existent even at this moment; for although the newer conceptions of the cosmos have destroyed the old-time notion of "a plurality of worlds," it is always likely that the tidal accident which produced the solar system had counterparts sufficiently near in time to make probable the survival of their living results. If not in our galactic universe, these survivals may exist in remoter units of the Einsteinian space-time continuum.

As for your aesthetic conception of the history of all human branches

as a single pattern or continuous process in which you can take a citizen-like pleasure and pride—of course, the picture is a pretty one, and was much cited in the naïve and non-analytical Victorian days when sentimental over-extensions of the evolutionary idea took the place of the disinterested anthropology of the XXth century. It is, as an emotional attitude, perfectly sound and historically interesting—and is even comprehensible to me, since it bears analogies with my own sense of the whole cosmos rather than the earth as a working unit. But unfortunately it deals too much in unrealities, and in subjective illusions based on primitive and obsolete value-conceptions, to have a vital relationship to the problem of environment for the individual in real life. The actual individual—apart from a small group of theorists who specialise in this kind of feeling and derive certain artificial emotional-imaginative satisfactions from it as I do from my “infinite-cosmicism”—can form no more of a satisfying conception of himself as a member of an hypothetical biology-stream than a hen-louse can form satisfying conceptions of himself as a proud unit in the whole pedicular pageant of cat, dog, man, goat, and sand parasites. It all may be theoretically so—all men certainly have a vague common origin in one or two earlier primate species, while a few isolated culture-ideas are occasionally passed along—or taken over in a more or less garbled and fragmentary way—from one group to another—but, from the point of view of the normal member of any existing human group, what the hell of it? It simply doesn't *mean* anything. All our feelings and loyalties are based on the special instincts and inherited values of our immediate racial and cultural group—take these away, and absolutely nothing remains for any average person to anchor his sense of direction, interest, or standards to. What do you care about the mean annual temperature of Jupiter? Or I about the welfare of some lousy Chinaman or god damn negro? Nothing but *artificial sentiment*, of a thin, unreal sort insufficient to hold any but a few imaginative individuals like you or me, could make any normal terrestrial Aryan care a hang about either Jupiter and Saturn's Rings on the one hand, or Chinamen and negroes on the other hand. Nothing means anything vitally to us except something which we can interpret in the light of conditions we know. Empty words and their similarities mean very little—and we are very much mistaken if we think, upon reading the precepts of some ancient and exotic sage, that these words mean the same to us that they did to the people whose minds and feelings were fed from the same back-

ground as the Sage's. Spengler points this out with tremendous force—though it was highly apparent to me long before I ever heard of Bre'r Oswald. We live, always, by two codes—the external and professed code based on an artificially cosmopolitan culture; and the inner, real, and motivating code, based on the true response of our instincts to their habitual stimuli. It is all very well to theorise decoratively from the outer code—but we must apply the inner code when we wish to calculate actual results. Stripping off the mask of nineteenth century euphemism and decorum, we know damn well that the human race is divided into many groups whose whole instinctive conceptions of what is desirable and what is undesirable are so antipodally apart in half to three-quarters of the affairs of life, that they cannot possibly be thought of as having any goal or complete set of standards in common. And to *pretend* that such a community can exist, is to complicate the matter all the worse. We misunderstand all the more, when we feign to understand what we do not understand. Half the tragedies of history are the result of expecting one group to conform to the instinctive reactions of another, or to cherish its values. One of the worst examples of this is the cringing Semitic slave-cult of Christianity which became thrust upon our virile, ebullient Western stock through a series of grotesque historic accidents. Obviously, we whose instinctive ideas of excellence centre in bravery, mastery, and unbrokenness, and whose ultimate fury of contempt is for the passive, non-resistant, sad-eyed cringer and schemer and haggler, are the least fitted of all races for the harbourage of a Judaeo-Syriac faith and standards—and so the whole course of history proved; with Christianity always a burden, handicap, misfit, and unfulfilled mockery upon our assertive, Thor-squared, Woden-driven shoulders. We have mouthed lying tributes to meekness and brotherhood under Gothic roofs whose very pinnacled audacity bespeaks our detestation of lowliness and our love for power and strength and beauty, and have spouted hogsheadfuls of hot air about “principle” and ethics, and restraint at the same time that our hobnailed boots have kicked around in utter loathing the broken Jews whose existence is based upon these principles. That is the hypocrisy of the altruistic and humanitarian tradition—talking and theorising against Nature as she actually works within us. From our attempt to assimilate Semitism we have gained nothing but misery—and the attempt itself has not succeeded, because it was based upon impossibility. Far more sensible is it to recognise that such an alien tradition has

nothing for people of our blood and inheritance—that it presupposes goals and instincts which we do not and cannot possess; exalting that which we must always despise, and condemning that which we must always cherish as the supreme criterion of respect—worthiness. It is found by experience that Aryan and Semitic individuals and groups cannot get on side by side until one of the two has thoroughly obliterated its heritage and instincts and value-sense—and yet some idealists still think that an Aryan culture can really feel the Semitic ethics it outwardly professes; or that, more absurd still, it can have understanding and sympathy with still remoter racial and cultural streams. The question of relative status among different cultures is of wholly minor importance—it is the *difference* which makes cultural amalgamation a joke. China of the old tradition was probably as great a civilisation as ours—perhaps greater, as Bertrand Russell thinks—but to fancy that more than a tenth of the emotional life of China has any meaning for us, is as foolish as to think that more than a tenth of our emotional life has any meaning for a Chinaman. Each can take over isolated points from the culture of the other; but these are always subtly altered in the process of naturalisation—never meaning the same thing in the adopting civilisation that they meant in the one which developed them. And when such adoptions exceed a certain limit of safety, the result is always culturally disastrous to the nation attempting them. More is bitten off than can be chewed—and the outcome is a slackening or dispersal of the feelings and creative imagination which can lead only to sterility, unrest, and dissatisfaction. China and Japan are in the midst of this danger now—happy the one which knows how to beat a retreat! Even those people who maintain the gesture of universalism and cosmopolitanism would—ironically enough—suffer as much loss and bewilderment as the rest if such a chaos were actually to exist. Every one of them is, unknown to himself, a holder of an illusion *fashioned wholly in the manner of his own especial culture*; so that when he talks with a cosmopolitan from another culture he is only exchanging *words, not deep feelings and image-perceptions genuinely shared*. If the especial culture of any one of these idealists were to vanish, he would find himself just as lost as anybody else—and would realise at last—too late—just how much of his emotional life and sense of comfortable placement really was due to the existence of his own background as a setting for his life and thoughts; however much he may have verbally repudiated that back-

ground in favour of a theoretic, meaningless hash made up of fragments of that and everybody else's backgrounds. There is no more *reality* in anybody's primary attachment to a mythical world-stream of all mankind, than there is in my primary loyalty to the whole cosmos as distinguished from our galaxy and solar system and planet. It sounds all right as an abstract principle—but there is no ponderable and authentic instinct to back it up so that it means nothing in the real alignment of groups. The doctrine can be admirably interesting to the one who decoratively holds it, so long as he keeps it free from application to the real world of events—just as a doctrine of cosmic feeling can be admirably interesting though of comparatively slight terrestrial significance. But it all belongs to aesthetics rather than to history or sociology. Its unreality is always manifested in the retinue of sentimental illusions and bursts of artistic expansiveness found around it. You can't pick a case that isn't cluttered up with grandiose emotion and naive beliefs in such illusions as good, evil, unified human nature and goal, justice, etc., etc. This delusion is the nineteenth century's expression of the same feelings that the seventeenth expressed in the delusion of religious faith, the eighteenth century in the delusion of ethical rights, and the twentieth in the delusions of mysticism (on the part of aesthetes) and industrial democracy. It is all part of an eternal comedy, at which the gods would laugh uproariously if they existed. Meanwhile each of the old cultures flickers along in its decadent way—each reacting in its individual and separate fashion to the common experience of mechanisation and easy transportation so suddenly encountered by all. And may god save New England, Virginia, and Old England from a total loss of their familiar motivating-springs and standard-moulding reference-points till Grandpa Theobald is safely fed to the worms of Swan Point Cemetery! . . . . . It is an utter piece of hokum to apply half the dope of some simple-minded, half-epileptic Oriental mystic or prince or fisherman or tent maker of the agricultural, half-nomadic age, to the utterly antipodal life and problems of an increasingly mechanised western world. We forget that, although human nature itself is unchanging, all codes and reaction-formulae governing human beings involve not human nature alone, but human nature in relation to the immediate objective background of facilities and folkways, needs, occupations, previous fund of intellectual ideas and emotional habits, and prevailing customs of mental and emotional discipline. Half of what Buddha or Christus or Mahomet said is

either simply idiocy or downright destructiveness, as applied to the western world of the twentieth century; whilst virtually *all* of the emotional-imaginative background of assumptions from which they spoke, is now proved to be sheer childish primitiveness. Most of their sonorous blah was based on certain ideas of the "dignity" (whaddyamean, dignity?) of human personality, and the "cosmic significance" of emotional experience and objective conduct, which the psychology of today shews to have been rooted altogether in illusion and unreality. None of this truck has any value for us, *except so far as the habit of listening to it has become natural to us through personal and ancestral associations immediate enough to form parts of our genuine heritage and motivating and value-breeding environment.* Thus Christ is worthless to us except as his myth is mixed up in our childhood memories—infantile prayers, Christmas-trees, shiny pennies at Sunday-School—and our elder aesthetic appreciations—Georgian steeples and Gothick apses, organ litanies, incense, emotional mysticism, etc., etc. He is of value only as the half-Italian, half-Flemish thin man whom we see in pictures, or the little blond English boy on Christmas cards. This is the contribution of the myth to our own vital heritage. Actually, we don't know yet whether or not any such one person really existed—and in his Coptic or Nestorian or Byzantine form he is a total loss to us westerners. This, then, is the only real value of the past beyond what a few remembered experiences have taught—that it forms a set of emotional sugar-plums and landmarks for us, by choosing a few special things out of infinity's conflicting chaos and setting them up for our immediate attention and preference. But heaven knows *that's value enough and to spare*—since without this subtle and unconscious guidance our emotional dilemma amidst the rival claims of an ungraspable bedlam of crowding, unrelated, and opposite sense-impressions, perception-foci, emotional thrills, and lines of logic would be desperate beyond description. In the blurred field of aimless ideas, images, and feelings offered by the external world past and present, there is no way of getting any kind of clear image save by applying the clarifying diaphragm of *traditional feeling*—the especially selected and coloured view of the past given us as a legacy by these who have gone before us—people whose blood and milieu were like ours, and whose choice of images and prejudices is more likely to fit us than anybody else's choice. Tradition can change and grow with time, of course; and it must occasionally admit new elements or discard certain

old elements when they are proved contrary to fact. But the mutation and substitution must be gradual. It must not be so rapid or radical as to pry the individual loose from everything which gives him a sense of placement, interest, motivation, and direction—not so rapid or radical as to *destroy* tradition instead of properly *modifying* it. Once *destroy* a tradition, and what becomes of those who have held it? The only *absolute* value of any precept or belief is the part it plays in our emotional life. In bald truth, there is not any goal or idol of mankind which can be said to be intrinsically and collectively good—or bad, either—for the species. Goals shift slowly—just now we have *physical comfort* and *safety* as prime illusions; but it is almost certain that life would offer more and richer gratifications to imaginatively developed men if we could have a little less of these modern idols, and a little more of that divine *freedom, adventure, and vivifying sense of uncertainty and irregularity* which the virile individual enjoyed in less plumbed and policed days. What we have chosen as a goal is just as empty as what any former age chose—we shall have another goal tomorrow, and still another the next day—but meanwhile our good rotarians will think in terms of bathrooms and bodyguards; tobacco, trials, and time-tables. I refuse to be hood-winked by temporary fashions in belief and feeling and aspiration—and see more healthy vitality in an outlaw who kicks over the traces in the blind protest of personality against the herd, than in the tame, social-minded conformer who bows to the will of the mass and helps that mass put across its milk-toast ideal of regularity, safety, comfort, justice, democracy, and big sales, and dividends. I spit upon any man who cringes to the herd because of the herd's will. The only reason for a gentleman to do anything except what his fancy dictates, is that he can best sustain his illusions of beauty and purpose in life by falling harmoniously into the pattern of his ancestral feelings. The *individual*—feudal, proud, aloof, unfetter'd, and dominant—that is all that matters, and society is of use to him only so far as it enlarges the pleasures he might enjoy without it. He owes it only enough to make it capable of forming a suitable background for him—and to societies other than that from which he has sprung, he owes absolutely nothing. By the way—don't make the mistake of fancying that I recommend the Georgian age as a single period for all men's emulation. I never do so—but always try to make it clear that my own mental-emotional kinship to it is purely an individual accident, of significance to nobody but myself. I

happen to belong to the eighteenth century—probably because of the effect of colonial doorways and long-s'd books upon me during my earliest and most impressionable years—but only the other day I caution'd a would-be poet against Georgian mannerisms. The eighteenth century is my illusion, as all mankind is yours—but I don't believe in mine any more than I do in yours! I don't believe in any! What the eighteenth century really was, was the *final* phase of that perfectly unmechanised aera which as a whole gave us our most satisfying life. It was not so aesthetically great as the Elizabethan age, and in no way comparable to Periclean Greece and Augustan Rome. Its hold upon moderns is due mostly to its *proximity*, and to the presence in it of certain kinds of taste which former and succeeding ages of modern history have lacked. *Proximity* is its main lure—for it is the *nearest* to us of all the purely pre-mechanical periods; the only one with which we have any semblance of a *personal* contact, (surviving houses and household effects in large quantity; association (for Americans) with high historic tension; fact that we can still talk with old men who in their youth talked with living survivors; vestigial customs and speech-forms in greater number than from earlier periods, etc., etc.) and whose ways are in any manner familiar to us save through sheer archaeological reconstruction. Moreover—it is brought still closer to us through the fact that the intervening nineteenth century was largely a blank in general civilisation—bequeathing us only a vast bulk of exact science and a few lone names in some of the arts. To all intents and purposes, we are chucking out the nineteenth century as an accidental grotesque; so that the eighteenth is a hundred years culturally nearer to us than it would ordinarily be. It is the eighteenth century, not the nineteenth, whose tradition we are now continuing—whether toward destruction or amplification history will later say. Naturally, in looking back over the Victorian desert of illusions, pomposities, and hypocrisies, we are pretty damn glad to strike the shores of a real culture—*any* real and rational culture. And since the eighteenth century (or very early nineteenth) is the *first* sound thing we hit in this backward quest, we are naturally rather predisposed in its favour! In cutting loose from 1890, we find 1790 the most convenient thing to re-hitch to in order to make a fresh start—but of course, it is really 1790 and 1690 and 1590 and 1490 and 1390 as well, that we are continuing. We're merely cutting out a bad piece in the rope and making a new splice. But all this is aside from my personal linkage. I, in-

deed, have special affinities with Georgian times—but these affinities in no way involve any claims of intrinsic superiority for those times. It is merely that I am more at home then than at any other period. Probably I'd be better off, aesthetically, if my natural inclinations were Elizabethan—but I'm as gawd (i.e., accident and temperament) made me. Might as well let it go at that, for I'll be dead soon, and then it won't matter a damn what age I belong'd to! As for the really important sources of our civilisation—I think we can spot most of 'em by including Teutonic and Celto-Druidic cultures for deep blood impulses, and Greece and Rome, relay'd by France, for intellectual and emotional surfaces. Syria gave us our mockery of a religion, and produced certain types of character among us, especially in the seventeenth century; so we'll have to count in the Hebraic stream as a spasmodic influence. Back of Greece and Rome the streams get damn thin, and there isn't one whose absence would change us much. Greece got more from the Minoan or Cretan culture than from anywhere else, though fragments from Egypt, Assyria, and Phoenicia are not absent. Rome got a damn lot from Etruria but still more from its central Italic tribes, and picked up many dubious acquirements—among them the conception of the non-racial political empire upheld by mercenary troops—from that goddam bunch of pawnbrokers and tradesmen call'd Carthage. Then in the Middle Ages the Arabs kicked in with a couple of useful tricks—and that about fixes us up. What China or India or the Aztecs gave us wouldn't keep anybody up nights computing. And what is more, it is only *as collocated parts* of our own English stream that the contributions of the earlier or alien streams have any meaning for us. We owe seven-eighths of all our civilisation to Greece—yet for all that we'd be fishes out of water in Periclean Athens. What we cherish is not Hellenism but Anglo-Hellenism. That natural culture-lines are based upon the soundest and most profoundly essential elements in every civilisation, is well shewn by analysing the types most prone and least prone to override them into the nebula of cosmopolitanism. Who are the instinctive cosmopolitans? Clearly, the artificially cultivated social elite and the specialty-engrossed artistic-scientific class at one end of the scale, and the purely animal workman-peasant rabble at the other end—in every case, persons wholly removed from the massed humanistic life of their group; by artificial manners and interests on the one hand, and by sheer lack of any mental-imaginative life on the other hand. And who are the instinctive provin-

cial and nationalists? Always those who are most deeply absorbed in the normal general activities and interests of their region, and in the currents of thought and feeling engendered by real associations and tangible objects—the devotees, that is, of reality and of real perception, as opposed to those with artificialised or specialised perceptions, or with no perceptions at all. For my part, I'm no more ashamed to be a provincial *in time* than to be one *in space*—hence I hate and oppose the encroaching machine-barbarism as much as I'd hate and oppose any other alien civilisation that tried to find a foothold on the English soil of Rhode Island or Massachusetts or Maryland or Virginia. I don't expect to keep it off—but at least I don't pretend to like it. I defy, abhor, and repudiate it—as many a Frenchman in Alsace and Lorraine defied, abhorred, and repudiated the new culture that the Prussians brought in 1870.

I'm not the only one to see a really serious problem ahead for the sensitive aesthete who would keep alive amidst the ruins of the traditional civilisation. In fact, an attitude of alarm, pain, disgust, retreat, and defensive strategy is so general among virtually all modern men of creative interests, that I'm sometimes tempted to keep quiet for fear my personal feeling may be mistaken for affected imitativeness! God, man—look at the list . . . Ralph Adams Cram, Joseph Wood Krutch, James Truslow Adams, John Crowe Ransom, T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley, etc., etc., etc., etc. . . . Each has a different plan of escape, yet each concedes the same thing to be escaped from. Cram favours mediaevalism and the ivory tower, Krutch the grim and gritted bicuspid, Adams the resigned superiority of contemplation, Ransom the return to the older spirit where it *can* be saved, Eliot the wholesale reoption of tradition—blindly, desperately undertaken in a mad escape from the Waste Land he so terribly depicted, (he says he is now a classicist, royalist, and Anglo-Catholic), Huxley in a kind of belatedly 1890-ish New Hedonism or neo-Hellenism, and so on, and so on. And still more tragic are the ostrich-heads who shut off their reason altogether at a certain point—beyond which they prattle in the artificial twilight of a pretended mental infancy . . . G. K. Chesterton with his synthetic popery, Prof. Eddington with his observation-contradicting slush, Dr. Henri Bergson with his popular metaphysical pap, and so on, and so on. And Wood-wilsonites . . . ye gawd! These fools, when a real man like old Georges Clemenceau, who knew how to face the blank infinite unflinching, had

to be snuffed out! About the only trained leaders of thought who pretend to retain the "da-da-da—all's right with the world" illusion without some degree of ostrichry are the old boys like Wells and Shaw, whose minds are petrified in the Utopian woods of the exploded XIX century—though even G. Bernardus is waking up a bit, to judge from some of his recent utterances. He no longer fancies that man's only foes are stupidity and capital . . . . deadwood of a temporary Fabian perfectionism. No question—the vital contemporary thought of the twentieth century's third decade will be almost one hundred percent anti-future—differing only in its prescriptions for circumventing or evading or annihilating or denying that future as doped out by commercial and industrial determinism. And the damn funny thing is that this retreat will probably breed a grotesque form of mental hypocrisy more offensive than mechanicalism itself, and almost as bad a type of intellectual illusion as Victorianism was of moral-aesthetic illusion. This hypocrisy, of course, has to do with the new mysticism or neo-metaphysics bred of the advertised uncertainties of recent science—Einstein, the quantum theory, and the resolution of matter into force. Although these new turns of science don't really mean a thing in relation to the myth of cosmic consciousness and teleology, a new brood of despairing and horrified moderns is seizing on the doubt of all positive knowledge which they imply; and is deducing therefrom that, *since nothing is true*, therefore *anything can be true* . . . . whence one may invent or revive any sort of mythology that fancy or nostalgia or desperation may dictate, and defy anyone to prove that it isn't *emotionally* true—whatever that means. This sickly, decadent neo-mysticism—a protest not only against machine materialism but against pure science with its destruction of the mystery and dignity of human emotion and experience—will be the dominant creed of middle twentieth century aesthetes, as the Eliot and Huxley penumbra well prognosticate. Little Belknap is already falling for it. And it will exist only because life has become unbearable through its increasing traditionlessness. As for me—I won't indulge in silly metaphysical "let's-pretend-ism", but I'll take tradition at face value as a purely emotional bulwark.

. . . What will come, will come—and wishes and sentimental values and grandiose conceptions of a theoretical unity haven't anything to do with the likelihood or unlikelihood of any particular course. I don't foresee an instant age of anguish and barbarism—but neither do I fore-

see anything sufficiently favourable to Anglo-Saxon culture to justify any attitude but one of hostility in the real friends of high-potential human life and expression in our civilisation. . . I simply draw the hard, cold, inevitable conclusions from a visible world undergoing certain definite phenomena, and from a cosmos in which there is not the slightest shred of probability that a governing consciousness, set of absolute values, or "spiritual" side exists. Of course, I respect equally the opinions of anyone who, from the same realistic data, builds up different conclusions. I'm nothing much as an intellectual heavyweight, and you've perhaps a rather better chance to be right than I have. But I won't pretend to see what I don't see—and the opinions I hold are the honest ones which, be they right or wrong, I get directly from the facts. My only *boast* is that I keep my line of reasoning free from certain *extraneous* elements such as emotional predisposition. Of my *acuteness* in reasoning I make no claims and hold no high notions. All I am proud of is that I keep my facts straight *at the start*. Now sail in and give me hell—as you undoubtedly can! The only thing I insist on is that separate elements be kept separate, and that man's course be invested with no mystical and mythical "larger drift" which only *analogy* and *wishfulness* could conceive, and against rather than toward which all the facts of observed reality point. We must not confuse the ceaseless course of the cosmos, with its alternate building-up and breaking-down of worlds and suns and galaxies, with the momentary individual course of any of the transient manifestations which break out accidentally once in an age upon the surface of one or two dust-grains. The natural course of any one of these transient manifestations—such as organic life on the earth—has about the same relationship to the course of the whole galactic system that a pimple's course has to the whole career of the man on whose nose it breaks out.

I certainly hope that nice old Mac got to Tacoma all right, and that he's resting up profitably at present. Neither Belknap nor I has heard from him yet—Belknap's report to that effect being as recent as last Monday. I dropped him a card regretting the mistake in dates. . . It is provoking to reflect that he left wholly uncheered by calls, when at least three were guaranteed him under the supposed date-arrangement. I hope he doesn't take this circumstance as a sign that the gang has deserted him!

. . . If there's anything that makes me see red, it's inability to draw—

for dozens of times a day I see dream-vistas of strange landscapes and curious architectural effects that I'd give ten bucks to be able to pin down on paper in good black and white line form. . .

. . . Meanwhile some malign influence—prob'ly revising that Moe text book on poetick appreciation—has got me invadin' one of Klarkash-Ton's provinces—and relapsin' back into my antient weakness of attempted prosody. . . . . Well—here's one . . . . typed all legible-like and carefully enclos'd . . . . . The title of this beautiful lil' bullet is *The Outpost*, and the scene is the celebrated continent of Africa—in the days when great cities dotted the eastern coast, and smart Arab and Phoenician Kings reign'd within the walls of the great Zimbabwe—now a mass of cryptic ruins overrun by apes and blacks and antelope—and work'd the illimitable mines of Ophir. But far, far in the interior . . . . on the never-glimps'd plain beyond the serpent-shunn'd swamp . . . . . rumour hinted that a frightful and unmentionable outpost of THEM brooded blasphemously—and so K'nath-Hothar the Great King, who fear'd nothing, stole thither in secret one night . . . . though whether he did so in body or in his dreams, not even he can certainly tell. N. B.—K'nath-Hothar was *not* oulothrix—and he had *thin lips*, a *very large* aquiline nose, and a *light* complexion inherited from his *Nordick* stream. And P. S.—his father's hair was *straight*, and the paternal nose *long* and the paternal lips *thin*. This father, the late great King Zothar-Nin, was born in Sidon of pure Phoenician stock. . .

I am, Sir, ever yr. mos. oblig'd, most obt. Servt.—

Θεοβαλδος

379. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Saturday, 1929  
(November)

Titanick Top of Terrestrial Tremendousness:—

Sire! Despotes! Master! Your slave grovels, cringes, implores, pleads, begs, curries favour . . . . Aië! Aië! Aië!

You may recall, Sir, that last July, when I told you of my desperate

campaign to save the old brick warehouses in S. Water street, you offer'd in a spirit of divine generosity to assist in the hopeless fight to the extent of signing a letter of protest to the *Sunday Journal*, and thus lending the weight of discriminating curatorialism to the cause so sorely in need of succour. Now a salaaming helot weeps for the promis'd aid!

What hath started me up afresh is the renew'd report of the brick row's doom—plus the enclos'd article in *The Netopian*, (house organ of Providence's most influential bank) which brings up the tears of nostalgia and melancholy, and rubs salt in the wounds of bereavement. Aië! Aië! Aië!

To let this priceless heritage go without the most extreme resistive measures, were almost as grave a vandalism as the active vandalism of the nameless barbarians responsible for the impending outrage; hence at last I am putting forth my final despairing wail, and calling upon the most potent of my allies. Succour, Great King! Fail not a kneeling vassal!

So here is the thing to sign! Pray put the official Jawn Hancock just above the printed signature—that's the way highpower officials end up their letters nowadays, so that they can both register their personality, and have the reader know who's talking. And don't fail to send it in a printed, return-address envelope with the academick musaeum aroma clinging about it. The more ponderously Savantish, the more influential! . . . . .

With renew'd obeisances—

Θεοβαλδός

Theobaldus

380. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Novr. 8, 1929

Mountaintop of Mandevillian Mile-Munching:—

. . . Hell! I don't believe I *am* alive, at that! There's certainly a decomposed, charnel look about the claw that convulsively scrawls these hideous last words. . . . .

. . . Old England's heritage—God Save the King! And Virginia is keeping it better than New England. We are about ready to sink for the

third time, but the old Dominion has hardly begun to be waterlogged. I fear it's doomed, though, along with the rest of this continent. Even now there's altogether too much blather about progress and money and industry in the South, and another generation or two will do the mischief—introduce a speed-quantity-cash standard and substitute machine-age barbarism for one of the only two real civilisations Anglo-America ever produced. It'll get at the *parvenu* south first—Georgia and Alabama, and then the Carolinas. Virginia, where American civilisation began, will be the last place to sink. God Save the King!

. . . But I *do* envy you that *aéroplane* jaunt—for the redimentary \$3.50 taste I got at Onset in August has given me quite a taste for super-nubian soaring; a taste which I ain't yet had the opportunity to reindulge. I'd hate to see *aéroplanes* come into common commerical use, since they merely add to the goddam useless speeding up of an already over-speeded life; but as devices for the amusement of a gentleman, they're oke!

I did, however manage to improve the warmer, summer days of September and October, and on many afternoons took my books and writing out to the pastoral meads and groves of Quinsnicket, or to the Arcadian slopes that tower above the antient Seekonk. In Quinsnicket I chiefly haunted a region quite newly open'd up—a deep wooded ravine, on whose banks one may spy the picturesque ivy'd ruin of a forgotten mill. Ah, me! I well recall that mill when it was standing—but it hath gone the way of all simple, beauteous things. I also haunted a roadside terrace whence I obtain'd one of the finest landskip vistas in the world—the steepled, sunset-gilded town of Saylesville in the distance, rising above a lake-carpeted valley to which the road beside me spirall'd down. On my right was the edge of the wooded ravine; on my left a rocky upland with stone walls, rows of harvest-sheaves, and gnarled orchards thro' which peep'd the trim gables of antient farmhouses. Hell, but I'd have given anything for the skill to draw such a scene! And at evening when the Hunter's Moon came out!!! Oh, baby! Now I know what Jim Flecker meant when he pulled that one about "burning moonlight" in the last act of *Hassan!*

Each distant mountain glows with faery grace,

The flame-lit lakelet laps the level strand;

Lur'd by dim vistas beck'ning out of space,

We take the Golden Road to Samarcand!



And now the skies they are ashen and sober, and the leaves they are crisped and sere. Eheu! Done are the outings, and Grandpa's hibernation's on! But I hope to gawd I can get this damn revision cleaned up and start some stories pretty soon. That's the way to spend an hibernation-period! . . . .

Yours for cheaper negroes—  
Valentine Bolling Fitz-Randolph Byrd,  
of Virginia

381. TO WOODBURN HARRIS

10 Barnes Street  
November 9, 1929

*WARNING!* Don't try to read this all at once! I've been gradually writing it for a week, & it comes to just 70 pages—being, so far as I recall, the longest letter I have ever written in a lifetime now numbering 39 years, 2 months, & 26 days. *Pax vobiscum!*

My Dear Harris:—

The way it looks to me is that American civilisation is almost extinct, but genuine so far as it does survive—in certain groups of people all over the country, & in certain geographic areas, especially Eastern Virginia & parts of New England. What conservative people are deploring & fighting is not our ancestral culture at all, but a new & offensive parvenu-barbarism based on quantity, machinery, speed, commerce, industry, wealth, & luxurious ostentation, which has sprung up among us like a noxious weed since the rise of the tasteless multitude in the 1830's. It has no more to do with our civilisation—the main stream of English & classic thought & feeling established in these colonies by over two centuries of continuous life, 1607—1820 + —than have the barbarisms of Polynesia or the Sioux Indians. It is simply a plague to stamp out if we can, & to flee from if we can't. But it would be a libel on our ancestors to call it "American civilisation." It is "American" only in a geographic sense, & is not a "civilisation" at all except according to the Spenglerian definition of the word. It is a wholly alien & wholly puerile barbarism;

based on physical comfort instead of mental excellence, & having no claim to the consideration of real colonial Americans. Of course, like other barbarisms, it may some day give birth to a culture—but that culture will not be ours, & it is natural for us to fight its incursions over territory which we wish to preserve for our own culture. We would fight if the Japanese tried to spread their undoubtedly high culture over the United States—& so do we fight when we see another alien system trying to establish itself on the soil that has known New England & Virginian influences. In the late 17th & early 18th centuries we fought the French culture as it crept toward us from Canada & the Mississippi Valley. Today we fight the machine "culture" as it creeps toward us from the hives of artificially nursed industry & stunted taste. That we are probably foredoomed to defeat, does not alter the essential aspect of the case. The impending victory of the intruding order does not alter its intrinsic status. What is to be, is to be, but we are not obligated to grin & pretend we like it. Personally, we can do all in our power to stave off the calamity, & then step aside with the resignation of a dying man, or of a 6th century Roman confronted by the Dark Ages. We can still choose as places of residence those parts of the country least affected by decay, or we can return to England, the source of our culture, where its death will be slower than in this colonial region.

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. . . There is no question but that the classic Greek feeling toward the universe differed from the naturalistic modern or post-Renaissance feeling; so that the highest artistic expression of that feeling must necessarily differ greatly from ours. The Greeks envisaged a tight-woven rhythm & overshadowing conscious fatality in life which we do not so poignantly feel. To them, the outcroppings of this universal pattern & law were of greater emotional import than the varied play of surface events about which the modern mind is chiefly concerned—hence in order to be true to human feeling, Greek tragedy had to be more ponderous & patterned & artificial than modern (i. e., *historically* modern, & including Elizabethan) tragedy. That these *apparently* conventional qualities were in truth vital reflections of the contemporary emotional life, & *not* mere sterile crystallisations of expression, can be seen from the whole course & history of Greek tragedy. Tragedy was never static, but moulded itself unerringly to the changing feelings of its age. Begin-

ning at a period of intense ceremonial devotion not far removed from archaic naivete—and indeed originating in religious ritual—it is inevitable that early tragedy should have been ponderous & artificial & naive. *Nothing else would have expressed the sincere feelings of the people about the universe & its relation to them.* Observation shows us that the art was indeed adequate, & that the earliest generation of tragic writers (as surviving in its chief figure Aeschylus) captured with perfect & perhaps matchless authenticity those feelings of awe & majesty & thunderous grandeur which characterise a simple race's response to the thought of infinity. Any other sort of expression would, at that time, have been bad art; because it would have belied the real feelings of the culture out of which it grew. As Athenian civilisation broadened, tragedy altered to match it—the change of tone from the thunderous to the merely stately & from the stately to the pathetic being clearly observable as we look through Sophocles and Euripides. Now it is very obvious that the main difference between Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, & Shakespeare—or if you wish, between the three Greeks on the one hand & the Elizabethan on the other\*—is simply the fact that they worked from different backgrounds of knowledge & feeling about the cosmos & about life. You can't say that any one was greater than any other—for each interpreted supremely well the reservoir of feeling within & around him. As artists, the four men stand almost on a level; for it is clear that Shakespeare's greater significance for us is due merely to our greater closeness to the world of thought & feeling which was his. The Greek culture is not our own, but the Elizabethan culture is—that is, it represents the opening phase of the era in which those of us who are forty or more are still emotionally living. The reason that the Greeks never produced as naturalistic a dramatist as Shakespeare is that, unfortunately, their art-impulse began to fade before their general understanding of life was as broad as that of Elizabethan England. It was the ill luck of the Greeks to have their age of art come before the climax of their experience—and our good luck to have our art-apex & experience-apex come closer together. Of course, even with us the coincidence is not perfect—for obviously the Elizabethan age knew less about life than our own present moment. But it is at least a better approach to a coincidence than the Greeks had. If the Greek art-tide had run high a century or two later—

\* For of course, the periods of the three Greeks overlapped and half-coincided.

thus coinciding with the disillusioned & naturalistic Alexandrian age—there might have been some approximate equivalent of an Hellenistic Shakespeare. Likewise—if our own art-tide were running high now, amidst our exact knowledge of human motives & values, we could get an utterly unprecedented pitch of humanistic tragedy from any artist of the calibre of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, or Shakespeare. But before leaving this topic, let me correct your *diametrically wrong* impression that Shakespeare was a "highbrow" in attitude or method. Great God! Don't you realise that the fellow was the EXACT OPPOSITE of all this—a careless, non-academic, spontaneous, hit-or-miss, uneducated poet who thought he was following the popular fashions & who used the commonest & most colloquial language of his period? Shakespeare, as an immortal artist, was a *pure accident of genius*. He was gifted with a natural combination of language-sense & insight into human motives which few men have ever had—but he didn't know it himself, & lived all his life as a cheap ham actor & literary hack—taking the popular tales he found around him (cheap ballads, catchpenny historic chronicles, & popular translations of classic & foreign authors) & doctoring them up in the racy idiom of the day for mass consumption. He was a great artist *in spite of himself, & without meaning to be*. All his ambitions were social, not aesthetic. He simply wanted to rise above the burgher-yeoman class & found a country family with a coat-of-arms. It was toward nobility & place, not toward art & scholarship, that he was looking. It would have pained him to be taken for a serious scholar or aesthete—gentlemen never pursued learning or art beyond the dilettante level in his time. Analyse any of his works & you'll find more absurd mistakes per square inch than in any other accepted author in our language. And compare his diction with Jonson's or Webster's or Beaumont's or Sidney's to see how far he was from the literary or academic in style. He was as free-&-easy & colloquial as Sherwood Anderson or Ring W. Lardner—and the only reason we find him abstruse today is because the language has changed. In his day, he spoke the plain accents he heard around him—allowing of course for the well-understood & popularly acknowledged difference between literal prose & metaphor-coloured verse. He was, in truth, regarded as very slovenly & unscholarly by his precise contemporaries. Can't you see the difference between the racy carelessness of his *Julius Caesar* or *Antony & Cleopatra* & the heavy exactitude of Jonson's *Sejanus* & *Catiline*? Hell! If there's any-

thing poor old Bill wasn't, it's a *highbrow!* Before quitting the Elizabethan age, let me remark in passing that we often do its general sophistication & intelligence an injustice because of an historic accident which spoils our perspective—the intrusion of a duller & less balanced age between it & ourselves. Undeniably, the flowering of the Protestant Reformation & the reign of a Puritan culture in the middle 17th century put a tremendous check on the culture-stream set in motion by the Renaissance; so that when we look back to 1650 or so we find a very dull state of things in existence. But that was only a transient eclipse. Go back a little farther—to 1620 or 1600 or 1580—and you'll find the vigorous youth of the same persistent enlightenment-stream which burst to the surface again in the 18th century after its brief course underground. In a way, the transient Puritan period was a fright-reaction against the disconcerting new knowledge which the Renaissance had fished up to pit against the set ideas of mediaevalism.

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Despite the vast *mechanical* progress of mankind, the amount of intelligence capable of being applied to non-immediate and non-concrete problems is no greater today than in Caesar's time. Thought is never the motive-power of the herd—only *feeling*. There aren't enough intellectually *governed* (as distinguished from intellectually *informed* or intellectually *endowed*) people living in this or any other age, under this or any other educational system, to produce so much as a dent in the blind deterministic course of world-history, as shaped by the irrational feelings of the vast emotional majority—both cultivated & uncultivated. The kind of mental energy that plans dynamos & selling forces is not the kind that can weigh imponderable values & make dissimilarly-emotioned groups all want the same thing & work toward the same goal. To fancy that all likelihood of war can be abolished merely because we know of its disastrous results, is to be as naive as to fancy that a heavy gambler will stop gambling merely by pondering on his previous losses. When a group of people want something which another group—or the majority—doesn't want them to have, they will listen to pacific arbitration just as long as they think (a) that they can get what they want by strategy, without combat, or (b) that they haven't any decent chance of winning in a passage-at-arms. But if they want the thing badly enough—as undoubtedly they will from time to time—and feel that they can't get it

without a fight, they will certainly be on the lookout for chances, & start a fight the moment they think they have a good likelihood of defeating such forces as are liable to oppose them. It is useless to fancy that individual independence will ever make such group-greed & daring impossible. There are group-objects which no amount of individualism & democracy on the one hand, & no amount of abstract internationalism on the other hand, can ever really obscure. Once in a while the objectives of different groups will conflict—and then, hell to pay! The closer contact of races will *aggravate rather than palliate* this tendency, since it will magnify the possibilities of friction as points of overlapping increase. The international traffic jam will grow more acute as the nations get oftener & oftener in each other's way through the increased spatial expansion of their activities. And there's no use in hiding the fact that different race & culture groups have ideals & standards & values & goals so fundamentally different that homogeneous coöperation toward a common end can never be more than a political pretence or moralistic myth. With care & coolness, it seems distinctly possible to *reduce the number of wars* considerably below the former average—by investigating causes of friction & adjusting rival claims. But there are deeper & greater troubles once in a while, involving profound attitudes toward life & momentous struggles for supremacy & survival, which cannot well be imagined as having any outcome but physical combat. And *what* combat, as the deadly devices of the machine age multiply! Each new one, of course, will be worse—and it may well be predicted that repetitions will not be likely to come during the life-time of the generation which has suffered from one of them. But of course, as a war-surviving generation dies off, there arises another group of leaders who have not had the personal experience to give them a really acute & motivating war-dread. This new & unscathed generation will again relegate the problem to the abstract, & hold warfare in reserve as a possible means of getting what can't be got otherwise. . . . .

By this time it ought to be clear to you that the force & fervidness of my opposition to the machine age do *not* arise from any question of the latter's relative *merit* as compared with our age. My feelings are based primarily on its *difference*—& take for granted that it can manage to possess *some sort of a culture* in an alien way. At the same time I must continue to insist—not necessarily as part of my anti-machine argument, but as an academic probability of historic interest—that the coming era

is likely to be as much inferior to existing western civilisation as the Middle Ages were inferior to Graeco-Roman civilization. . . . . I have not said that *no culture* will exist, but simply that no culture *comparable to ours* is conceivable. You say, very sensibly that a certain fabric of *new* memory-mellowed folkways is likely to grow into existence; & I agree that a certain number of such palliatives may quite reasonably be imagined. But I tend to look deeper into the structure of a mechanical culture & to note its rate of change *within itself*. Then I ask if it is not conceivable that the conditions of such a fabric (where all usage rests on invention & is subject to revision with each fresh discovery) are so constantly shifting that *no permanent re-crystallisation & tradition-growth can ever be effected* until the culture collapses & gives way to a recurrence of animal simplicity. Say what we may, a rapidly mutable machine-culture is never likely to bring out so much of the human personality—to utilise so many of man's possible sources of pleasure & possible points of removal from animal simplicity—as a slower-moving humanistic culture. It is perfectly naive & absurd to fancy that the new culture *must* be as good as the old—for how often do we ever see a culture replaced by a *precisely equal* one? There are high cultures, which utilise a great many possibilities of the human brain-structure, & low cultures, which utilise relatively few. It isn't hard to tell them apart when our eyes aren't blinded by modernistic theorising—we know that Greece & China & France & Italy have built up marvellously fine edifices, & that our own Anglo-Saxon edifice isn't much below them in many ways—& we also know that the Arabs, Hindoos, Mayans, Egyptians, Persians, Babylonians, etc., built up edifices with greater crudities & limitations, which left more or less extensive tracts of human thought & feeling unutilized & wasted. Life with the first group functioned on a high, full plane; with the latter group, on a distinctly lower & incomplete level. Well—it is the belief of most who coolly analyse the probabilities of the coming machine age, that such a culture essentially belongs to the lower group—the group which utilise only a fraction of man's mental sensitivenesses, & let the rest go to waste. It will be a half-ration culture—a culture which will let only part of a man live. . . . . I'll sum up my position by saying just what I've said dozens of times before—that I think machine culture is inferior to ours because it exalts an *absolute meaningless* group of qualities—speed, quantity, industry *per se*, wealth, ostentation, etc.—to the position of primary virtues, because it

destroys normal memory-relationships with environment & folkways, because it emphasises uniformity in place of individuality, & because its net effect is a vicious circle of activity leading nowhere & sapping continuously at the normal ideals of quality, adventure, personality, & the full expansion of the human spirit in poignant & complex realism remote from animal simplicity.

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. . . . . Evidently the Eastern Indian was of that well-defined anthropological type whose physical eroticism is moderate to start with, & whose emotional life has been too preempted with other things to cherish sex as a major value. We ought to understand this type, because our own Germanic & Celtic ancestors belonged to it. Classical testimony from a vast body of hostile sources—testimony as full & as little liable to biased colouring as the Puritan testimony anent New England Indians—pictures our savage blond forefathers as an erotically sluggish & extremely chaste (not only naturally but by tribal taboo) race of hunters & drinkers & warriors, whose emotional energies were almost wholly expended in warfare, the chase, & the alternating hilarity & oblivion of intoxication. Climate, customs, mode of life, & the absence of provocative beauty in either sex all joined to make eroticism a less successful candidate for our daily thoughts than many another phase of life. You can trace this emotional proportioning in many of the earliest recorded works of Teutonic literature. Glory—conquest—adventure—the spurt of foeman's blood or the lure of the unknown seas—the magic of black oaken forests & the terrific realms of a long drunken slumber—the sense of kinship to the gods & the hope of a long hereafter of Valhallan fighting till the day of Ragnarok, when Bifrost the rainbow bridge shall break & the horn of Heindall shall sound the Twilight of the Gods . . . . . yes, indeed, our revered progenitors had a lot to think & feel about besides the softer Paphian problems which held first place south of the Rhine & Danube.

Now as to the ideal of "romantic love"—of course it was a thorough illusion as envisaged by mediaevalists & Victorians, yet it would be hard to say that the illusion didn't have as many artistic & pleasurable possibilities as the parallel illusion of "god" & the current popular illusions of "justice" & "democracy." None of these things have any real meaning & all are essentially absurd; yet from each one of them it is possible to

extract certain thrills (as long as we can believe the illusion) which are not only sincere while they last, but which are often the basis of authentic art-expression . . . an art, however, which unfortunately loses value & becomes absurd in the eyes of later & disillusioned generations. It would be erroneous to say that a certain emotional value did not exist in the year 1300, or (somewhat modified) in the year 1850, which was unknown alike to the age of Horace, Tibullus, & Propertius, & to our own modern age. That value, based on a series of fallacious associations & assumptions, was of some mystic significance & promised happiness of exalting nature in the emotional reaction of one person to another of opposite sex; & is what we have termed romantic love. Its merit, if any, lay in the sense of wondering & inspiring *expectancy* which it bred in those who harboured it—the sense that life held something strangely lovely & poignant just around the corner, awaiting him who should persevere long enough in seeking it. This sense of expectancy, like the illusion of religion, helped to foster the comfortable delusion that life's boredom is really worth enduring. The fact that nobody ever found the priceless boon of "perfect love" is quite immaterial—for as long as the possibility of its achievement was conceded, it continued to furnish a motivation for the really empty & wearisome existence-process, & it really did heighten the attractiveness of the courtship process—investing eroticism with a mystic & pathetic beauty which it never had before & has never had since. It was an immense stimulus to the always shaky & unsatisfying convention of monogamy, for some of its ramifications directly fostered the naive myth that certain "souls" are "destined" to dwell together in "spiritual love" (cf. the maundering love-letters of Poe & Mrs. Whitman). It was, perhaps, more vital & tangible than religion, because it had more apparent & accessible pseudo-proofs, chief among which was the occasional accident of lasting wedded love—a feeling which in reality arises from the real mental & emotional compatibility of two persons plus the domestic associations productive of family loyalty & the sentimental residue of the originally motivating eroticism. Of course it led to many a bitter disappointment & disillusionment, yet on the whole it probably contributed more to the zest of life than it subtracted from it. The chief trouble with it was that it was so contrary to fact as to be ridiculous to almost everyone not under its influence or hoping to be under its influence. It never could last very continuously, & we can trace many periods since its birth in the Middle

Ages when it was not taken very seriously. It was more of a literary convention than a really believed thing among the Elizabethans, & the Restoration virtually put it out of business for a century & a quarter. It crept back during the Romantic Revival of the later 18th century, & attained its zenith of extravagant swallowing in the Victorian period. The late 19th century clipped its wings, & psycho-analysis & the 20th century have put it out of business for good so far as the present Western Civilisation is concerned. Apparently no other culture than the Aryan-Western stream ever produced anything of quite the same sort—& perhaps no other ever will. We may be pardoned for gently regretting an illusion which was undoubtedly very vivid & very beautiful in our grandfather's eyes—though our regret may well be tempered by the thought that classical antiquity got along very well without it. In time it is likely that various non-erotic matters will take up our emotional attention to such an extent that we shall not miss the excrescences whose removal has again lowered the value of the sex-element to normal. . . . .

As to the limited value of eroticism when divested of its romantic aura—certainly the process ceases to be anything worthy of *primary* exploitation in life & art, as we may easily see by noting how secondary it was in the great human classics of antiquity. When sex is non-mystical & common, it ceases to be a matter of prime concern as in the literature of romantic times; but steps down & takes its minor place among other feelings, thoughts, & motives. Power, glory, pity, fatality, achievement, death, struggle, failure—a thousand basic human things stand out in equality to sex as motive-forces in life & literature, & the ancients made full use of them. It seems to me that both you & Krutch err in different ways—you in imagining that sex amounts to more than it really does, & Krutch in fancying that its admitted subordinateness is anything to regret or worry about. We cannot yet predict what form its expression will ultimately take—either in the machine-culture or in any real culture which may survive in any part of the world—but we may safely say that with the decline of *mystery* in connexion with it, it will not be the live issue that it was in the 19th century. Of course it will always amount to a good deal, especially in relation to the appreciation of beauty; but it won't be any great motivating force capable of making adults swallow the delusion that life is worth living. Made familiar to youth at an earlier age than formerly, & expressed more freely at every period of life, it

soon gets to be "old stuff"—just a little too hackneyed to fill its older place, though of course as much of a diversion as it was to Greeks & Romans. The "kick" of abridged feminine garb will last only as long as that garb remains a novelty; for there is really no *intrinsic* erotic value in nudity. Among many savage tribes it is considered the common-place thing to wear no clothes, & the alluring thing to wear any. Nor does it take a career of libertinism, as you seem to assume for granted, to make the trifles of sex appear rather a stale subject for major exploitation. Sheer repetition & non-mysteriousness are the great slayers of interested emotion, & you'll see quite a let-up in the commercial publicising of "sex-appeal" as soon as the older & youthfully-repressed generation has died off. The sensible thing is not to depend so much upon this one senescent motivation-element, but to cultivate a wider array of life-interests & emotional stimuli.

As to the future of erotic customs in the Western World—as I said before, no person now living can venture a valid prediction. The present age of transition is too unformed & too chaotic to furnish any reliable guide; & *two* generations of biased thinkers (the old guard of Victorians & Edwardians, & the first post-war generation of irresponsible rebels) will have to die off before any signs of stable recrystallisation can appear. Other commentators—especially Bertrand Russell—can prophesy better about this than I can, since I am less interested in this one trend than in the general collective trend of Western Civilisation. My guess would be that society will experiment with a combination of promiscuity & marriage, in which marriage will play a decreasing part until eventually it disappears. Paternity, however, will always be registered; & the state will fix responsibility for the rearing of such offspring as are born—although there will be a disconcertingly small number of the latter, perhaps necessitating a subsidy on births in those nations where small population implies military disadvantages. Among the lower orders promiscuity will in all probability be widespread & absolute—as indeed it no doubt is already. In higher circles the element of aestheticism will probably boil it down to a more or less rapid succession of liaisons—consecutive rather than simultaneous. In general, the many & complex causes of change in erotic standards would seem to include the following:

- a) decline of illusions of religion & romantic love.
- b) discovery of effective contraceptive methods

- c) economic independence of women.
- d) custom of apartment-dwelling, with prepared foods & mechanical conveniences; which eliminates need of home-making in its hitherto understood sense, & renders the family a redundant institution.
- e) availability of automobile as means of popularising & facilitating promiscuity during its early period of necessarily furtive practice.
- f) modern intellectual fashion of ignoring & despising tradition.
- g) effect of democracy in substituting an ideal of cheap physical comfort & sensual pleasure for one of aestheticism as applied to life.
- h) machine-age dulling of sensitive emotional capacity & promotion of a need for simpler, more primitive, & more stupid life-incentives.
- i) fact that *homo sapiens* is a naturally promiscuous rather than monogamous primate.
- j) impossibility of inducing men to live erotically with women over forty except under compulsion of strong aesthetic & ethical obligations which vanish with the economic independence & relinquished chastity of the modern female.
- k) decline in regard for children as principle of hereditary tradition succumbs to machine barbarism; coupled with increasing tendency of state to assume socialistic guidance of such children as are born.
  - l) rise of a sense of ennui & futility, in the absence of belief in cosmic values & life after death, which induces a wish to crowd life with as much violent & ecstatic sensation as possible.
- m) increasing medical control of venereal diseases, & diminishing dangers of promiscuity arising therefrom.
- n) general machine-age sentiment of collectivism & paternalism in social-political organisation; dulling the sense of individuality, independence, & privacy on which family life is founded, & substituting a quasi-publicised, communised life in which state-licensed promiscuity will be much more natural than marriage.
- o) almost certain reign of complete promiscuity in youth, owing to decline of belief in religious-ethical barriers against indulgence of powerful precocious sexuality at ages below that at which old-time marriage is economically possible—& the subsequent re-

luctance of men to assume legal responsibilities toward females whom others have enjoyed without such responsibilities.

- p) unwillingness of the aesthetic-erotic male to feel himself debarred from company of young women as he grows older. Present custom of infidelity to aging wife likely to be held clumsy & needless by a generation devoted to candour & directness—abandonment of the marriage custom likely to be held greatly preferable.
- q) acceptance of the Freudian doctrine with its implications of the importance of sex, & consequent sense of unfairness at the erotic restrictions & unrealisations of wedlock. Marriage without fidelity-obligations will soon be followed by the death of the institution as a whole.

Personally, I don't welcome the changing code; for I am a traditionalist of the old order, with a high aesthetic regard for the ancient New England ideals of chastity & domestic affection. I wish to Heaven the social & economic basis promised enough continuity with the past to ensure the cherishing of these exquisite & delicate phases of art-in-life—but as a realist I have no such illusions. The handwriting is on the wall, & anyone who does not wish to make a naive fool of himself must prepare to witness strange ethical metamorphoses & transvaluations. One may dislike the trend, just as one may dislike the coming of the machine age—but what the devil is one going to do about it?

Here I come upon your argument that a relative coolness on the female's part tends to regulate human eroticism—an extension of mankind of your general (and *undoubtedly erroneous*) theory of vertebrate sexuality. Now I hate to be constantly dynamiting your beliefs, but I really must say a word about this one. My god, man! but where is your medical & sociological reading & classical knowledge? Do you mean to tell me that you are, at your age, still taken in by the hackneyed feminine pose (forced upon her, of course, by masculine taste in the Middle Ages) of coldness, which she adopts in order to seem delicate & superior, & to egg the male on to greater heat? Holy hades—read Havelock Ellis or Bertrand Russell or Lindsey or Forel or Robie or somebody who knows something about the question! Great guns—if you ever pulled that naive theory of female coolness in public discussion, you'd never hear the last of it!!! Of course, there may be two or three couples in every dozen or so where the wife is cooler than the husband in fact as



Frank Belknap Long, H. P. Lovecraft, and James F. Morton  
at the Poe cottage, New York. ca. 1920.

well as pose, for considerable inequality exists in *both* directions—but the *opposite* side! My god, the *opposite* side! *Read, man, read!* *What* a perspective on the whole situation you must have! For Pete's sake get an intelligible slice of data by seeing what competent specialists—physicians, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, psychologists, biologists, etc.—have to say from their wide, deep, careful, & accurate observations! That tendency to go only by what you can smell & touch in your own farmyard will be the philosophic ruin of you if you don't shake it off pretty soon—take off the blinders, boy, & see what the world is thinking & discovering—*read, read*. Pardon my vehemence, but I can't help seeing in this *one* instance a tendency which will hamper your grasp of truth in *all* the various fields of investigation. You are blandly assured & dogmatic . . . but from no adequate data at all! & in this case, *what* a different story the *real* data tells!

First. Far from the female's desiring eroticism "for propagation only", it is *absolutely certain* that *no animal except man above a certain state of savagery has any idea of the connexion betwixt sex-desire & reproduction*. None of the animals who mate in season have the least notion that their excitements & pleasures are connected with the young which the females later bring forth, no do they dream that the male is connected with the young he breeds. This is true even of those monogamous birds whose males guard the nest in the female's absence. These males know that the young belong to their mate, but do not link them with the bygone mating. *And the same ignorance is true of mankind below a certain stage of savagery*. Anthropologists can deduce from many tribal customs that early man did not know, until long after his conquest of fire, that the burgeoning of the females in late winter & later summer had any connexion with the wholesale pleasure-orgies to which nature moved the tribe each spring & fall. In very low races like the miserable Tierra del Fuegians *this ignorance still exists*. No Fuegian today knows why the females bring forth young. Pleasure & reproduction have no linkage in their minds. Moreover, it is an almost certain fact that even among civilised races the thought of offspring is always remote & secondary in moments of pleasure—for the female just as much as for the male, despite her transparent pose of reluctance & idealism. See Havelock Ellis's *Little Essays in Love & Virtus*, & also an article in a recent *Harper's* exploding the myth of a continuous maternal instinct & an intrinsic female desire for young. Don't be taken in by hokum. No living creature of *either sex mates because it wants children*. All creatures mate *to please themselves*—this being the bait that nature sets to ensure propagation. But it is *only nature*, and not male or female, that wants young. As soon as the male & female learn that their pleasure produces young, they at once begin to look about for means of defeating nature.



So much for that! Don't think I'm handing out any arguments of my own—hell, no! I'm only telling you what is as much a matter of commonly accepted scientific fact as the earth's revolution around the sun or the evolution of man from the amoeba!

Now as for human female desire—the plain facts are almost certainly these & just these:

- a) the desire is *more slowly excited* than in the male;
- b) but, once excited, it is *certainly just as strong*, and according to a large group of physiologists, much stronger.
- c) eroticism is *more of a motivating force* in the female than in the male—and there is a more persistent tendency to regard it sentimentally or cosmically.
- d) females, in the absence of the male, experience desires & frustrations just as intense as those of the isolated male—hence the savage sourness of old maids, the looseness of modern spinsters, & the infidelity or tendency thereto of wives left alone by their husbands for more than a week or two. (cf. Ellis, Fielding, Collins, Overstreet, Forel, etc.)
- e) but, due to traditional reasons arising in the Middle Ages & culminating in the Victorian period, refined women of the older generation have thought it necessary to pretend a coldness which only an accidental few of them can really possess—a coldness which they sometimes feign so well that they fool even themselves; sublimating their desire into the psychological field & thus establishing a repression which soon produces a neurosis & in some cases ends in insanity.

Now again—don't think I'm launching any notions of my own. I'm no specialist, & I'm simply repeating the findings of the standard authorities as I've run across them in miscellaneous biological-sociological reading & controversy. Look 'em up for yourself—it may be disillusioning, but you must know the real facts about these things if you are to form intelligent opinions of your own, or apply intelligent criticism to treatises involving the debated matters.

I should think that your college Latin studies would have dispelled your illusions about female frigidity—for of course you realise that, prior to the Mediaeval birth of "romantic love" & the age of the troubadours & troubadours with their conventional stanzas about "my cold &

cruel ladye faire", all poets & satirists & historians & essayists united to describe & deplore the burning & savage lusts of women—which impressed them as being more lawless than their own masculine desires . . . . . The writers of antiquity all recognised woman as a being with very strong & assertive lusts\*, & no one ever hears of any *coolness* on her part until the Christian-romantic myth-weaving of the Dark Ages begins. There is no reason to think woman less naturally promiscuous than man—as the lives of the Renaissance Italian ladies, & the Frenchwomen of the 18th century, well attest. Eros was their god, & they worshipped him at many masculine altars. In 18th century France, birth-control methods were known—hence the prevailing feminine pleasures. In Thibet & Tartary the institution of polyandry exists—one female simultaneously marrying a whole family of brothers & deeming herself ill-served if the number be too small. In Roman Imperial times Messalina, Agrippina, the two Faustinas, & other similar matrons shew the natural bent of their sex with the mask off. They practiced the crude birth-control methods of abortion & infanticide, in which certain Greek & Egyptian practitioners were especially adept. You can judge from Juvenal, Persius, & Martial how vast & widespread this state of things was. Christianity checked it prodigiously—indeed, this faith has been the greatest of all historic curbs upon sex-license—but it did not prevent Theodora, wife of the Byzantine emperor Justinianus, from being a very gallant lady! Since the Middle Ages custom & precept have tried to ensure the monogamousness of woman, & have perhaps made her imagination temporarily less roving than man's—especially since her economic & social security has hitherto depended upon strict monogamy. But in liberal ages the truth has burst through, & as last as the 1740's Pope wrote in his *Moral Essays*:

"Men some to business, some to pleasure take,  
But ev'ry woman is at heart a rake."

You'd understand the background with which he was familiar if you knew the 18th century through contemporary memoirs, Walpole's letters, etc. etc. Well—the present age is liberal beyond the wildest dreams of the 18th century, & the future age is likely to be more so. And it

\* cf. The *myths*, where the Greeks embodied their conceptions of character as fables. Note tales of Pasiphaë, Byblis, Myrrha, Phaedra, the Maenads, the nymphs who ravished the youth Hylas, Circe, Calypso, Salmacis, etc. etc.

won't be women who will check the tendency. I don't suppose you are ignorant of the fact that female freedom has now reached such a pitch that even *old* women are trying to recapture youthful thrills as their husbands do amongst the nymphs of the chorus. Hence the 20th century institution of the sleek *male* prostitute, or gigolo, to whom elderly & unattractive females are resorting in greater & greater numbers in the larger cities. In Paris they are now licensed & medically inspected by police surgeons like their professional sisters of more ancient standing. No—I can't say that I have much hope for monogamy in a traditionless, non-aesthetic, practical, concrete, materialistic, democratic, & mechanised world. But the new system will fit the new age, & it won't be considered inferior by those who grow up under it. Actually, it will mean the depression of sex to the position of a minor issue; for with all the mystery & taboos gone, eroticism will signify no more than eating or drinking. Another thing—the change won't actually be quite as great as we fancy; since all along there has been an enormous amount of furtive licence practiced. Statisticians may some day try to compute the numerical extent of the resistance to monogamous standards in the various ages preceding the present. Hell of a time they'll have, with fragmentary & evasive data, & ambiguous literature, on every hand!

And that's about all I know of the poor, hackneyed, overdone old "sex question"—standby of standbys for callowly modernistic debate in Greenwich-Village basements & attics!

As for Walter Lippmann—I must read that book of his! Of course I am not so much interested in the question of *what people do*, as in that of *how the cosmos is constructed*; but it is nevertheless always interesting to get an intelligent sidelight on the question of relative values in a purposeless & valueless world. . . . .

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Much as you may enjoy the pose of the soil-bound, pedant-baiting, culture-jeering barbarian; the solid fact remains, that you'll never be really contented—never feel really placed or at ease in the world—until you've brushed away the cobwebs & gotten down to the vital essentials of truth & beauty & motivation—the what's what life—in a way that nothing but the poor, despised processes of reading & general fact-gathering & fact-sifting can help you to do. Ridiculous & affected as it may *now seem* to you to be cautious about data & to require a lot of reading

& opinion-comparing before accepting an idea; the stern, unpleasant fact remains, that there's absolutely no other way of getting the straight dope about anything. Either you've got to go after the facts & values in a full, clear, accurate way, or you'll have to wander in a tantalising haze of half-knowledge & put up with mirages, blurred outlines, & eternal uncertainty & bafflement all your life. In the cultivation of perception, it's about the same as in the cultivation of artistic sensitiveness & responsiveness—a man has to take his choice between vegetating along with only a small fraction of his brain & pleasure-capacities in use, & waking up to a fuller employment of the powers & senses with which nature has provided him. For one who hates the idea of deliberate *waste*, it would pay to get busy & begin to hit on all six cylinders instead of merely one or two. And that's all that reading & study really amount to among men of sense. There's no pose or affectation or pedantry in it, heaven knows! It's merely a question of squeezing the lemon of life dry—of cracking the oyster fully open—of walking in sunlight instead of a fog—of knowing where you stand instead of being lost in the woods—of steering by real vision instead of playing blindman's-buff. There's a lot more pose & affectation about the fellow who wears an ostentatiously jaunty front & elaborately clowns along with a studied battery of colloquial flash words & intricate wisecracks, than there is about the man who simply goes after the facts & fundamentals, acts like himself, & talks in the first plain words & phrases that occur to him. You may call the latter a "highbrow" because he now & then uses a word which is neither common nor monosyllabic, *but if you stop to analyse his use of the longer & rarer word, you will see that the motivation behind it is not one of ostentation, but one of boldly practical efficiency & naturalness*. If he uses a "five-dollar word", it is merely because that word expresses something real & important *more briefly & accurately than it could otherwise be expressed*. To avoid the use of the "highbrow jawbreaker", it would be necessary to beat around the bush in a clumsy & verbose way involving *far more pose & artificiality* than the concise, clear-cut, straightforward use of the exactly right word. The only reason that the herd despise & reject such precise words, is that their blurred vision *never grasps the exactitudes which these words express*. They don't know anything about the real facts & distinctions which these words concern—such things do not exist in their limited radius of sight—so that they imagine the accurate thinker is inventing notions & talking nonsense just for effect. . . . . No—the really plain & sensi-

ble & unaffected man is not the low-comedy lowbrow, but the fellow who simply goes after real facts & values, & speaks of them in the clearest & easiest words that come to hand. It doesn't argue any pose or insincerity if these words sometimes include a few which aren't common in conversation—for how can a guy get the facts without reading the books where they are stored, & how can he read many books without picking up a few of the precision-words which the authors have to use in order to put across their facts in the fullest, shortest, easiest, & most accurate way? Hell! a man would be *artificially posing* if he stopped to think of his speech all the time, & elaborately pruned out every word that hadn't the 100% endorsement of corner-drug-store & cracker-barrel lexicographers! There's no use in pulling the old "highbrow" grin about the plain words that a person unstudiedly & unconsciously uses to get his message across in the quickest & best way, even if those words happen to be drawn—through natural necessity—from printed sources outside the radius of Broadway slang or crossroads gossip. It's the motivation & attitude that count—and you can't tell me that a decently cultivated plain-speaker isn't more of a he-man & regular guy than is the trick mucker-poser who stands on his head & walks on his ear in order to be a properly certified member of god's great common peepul. Not, of course, that all decorative or metaphorical jocosity & colloquialism are to be placed under the ban—for of course they have a substantial graphic quality & art-value in their place. The only foolish thing is to regard them quasi-pedantically (for there are pedants in ignorance & frivolity, as well as pedants in primness & learning!) as sacred & exclusive linguistic standards, any departure from which is to invite a general jeering out of court as involving pose, pompousness, and heresy. Really artificial & ridiculous pedantry & scholastic affectation do exist, of course—but common-sense can soon distinguish this cheap stuff from straightforward realism. You can't talk with—or correspond with—a man very long without seeing whether he's really interested in ideas & beauty, or merely anxious to raise himself in his own & others' eyes by a display of the external & superficial paraphernalia of learning & taste. The fake will show out in his language, mood, handling of subject, & so on, before many words are exchanged. . . . . What is material prosperity, that its commonplace physical comforts are to be compared to the vital & fundamental pleasures of a keener cosmic grip? To resign the pleasures of full living for those of fat living is to resign the substance for the shadow, & are you so sensitive to the opinion of

clods and machine-age barbarians that you would be worried by the myopic jackasses who might bray the old peasant standby—'he made a good start and was a good worker, but got to reading & began to let things slide until now he doesn't amount to a damn.' Truly, my own opinion of the mental attitude involved in such a criticism is one of such amused contempt that I could not even be ruffled by the censure. To me, the holder of such a view is *not a person*—not a person in the sense of a member of the civilised community. He is just a mindless voice from the animal herd—monkey's chatter, ox's lowing, peasant's mouthing—all the same. What, pray, could a *good start* be toward, if it did not involve the full life of the mind? And of what value were the things the reader *let slide*, in comparison to those which he *gained* by reading? & if a conscious & humanistic life doesn't constitute 'amounting to a damn', what is there about a machine-age "life" of physical repletion or a peasant existence of animal simplicity that can be said to amount to anything? The truth is, that for natural clods—the kind of people who make such criticisms—a physical mechanicalism or state of animality really *is* better than a state of humanistic realisation & conscious contact with the sources of human stimulation. But what the hell does all that mean to *you*, or any other person naturally reflective & sensitive enough to be a real human being? It doesn't follow that *you'd* get anything out of a purely peasant round, merely because *they* can. Get rid of the democratic fallacy! I'm not one to deny that we might be happier as cats or oxen or monkeys or peasants or savages than as civilised men—indeed, I think the lower orders are greatly to be envied; & that it might be wise to choose membership in them if one could have a set of emotions to match. But given the emotions of civilised man—and a certain percentage of every highly-organised race-stock can't help possessing such evolved emotions as a matter of biologic accident—are we not fools if we think we can get any peace or comfort from the tinsel gewgaws of physical repletion which form the goal & summum bonum of clods? Then why listen to the advice, or resent the jeers, of clods who don't know what they are talking about when they apply their homely platitudes to you? What in hell do those swine know about *your* mind & feelings, & the eternal restlessness of a sensitive & highly-organised personality whose only possible satisfaction is in the perilous adventure of humanism? *Their* heaven would be *your* hell. In trying to grasp *their* kind of happiness, you would be losing the only kind which could ever be real happiness to you, like the dog in AEsop, who dropped the bone

for its reflection in the water. Do you mean to say that you seriously fancy the dull life of a successful, unimaginative worker or business-man holds any true reward for *you* or for any other sensitive & civilised person? If you do, then I can't explain the urge which makes you need to argue & hold opinions about reality. But I don't think you do, when it comes down to close analysis! So I advise you to start a library. You can't imagine how much it will enrich your life—give you a sense of command over gates & doorways of escape from stifling physical limitations into infinite avenues of imaginative freedom & magnificence. . . .

As for what you consider 'fraudulent' in my attitude—i.e., the fact that I hold a few strong personal preferences despite my principle that one's view of the cosmos should be objective, uncoloured, & impartial—hol' yo' hawsses, man! Have I ever objected to personal bias *so long as it does not colour one's perception of the external world?* Haven't I confessed to strong prejudices & enthusiasms in a dozen odd directions here & there? Didn't I freely say that I think Anglo-Saxon culture is worth fighting for, that I'm intensely fond of cats, that ancient Rome arouses my enthusiasm, that India gives me a pain in the neck, & so on, & so on? Hell! Everybody has his personal likes & dislikes—but the point is, that a man of sense doesn't let these things make him believe what ain't so, & disbelieve what is so! There's where I try to be impartial. For instance—I think the old culture with its idea of quality versus size is worth fighting for—perhaps the only thing on earth worth fighting for—but *I don't think it's going to win*. I have as much belief that a blighting barbarism of machinery & democracy is inevitably coming, as has any imaginationless sausage-trust financier or ethics-drunken parlour socialist. I hate it like poison, but I see it ahead. Here is a case of not allowing the very strongest of feelings to sway my intellectual opinion in the least. Another thing—I hate a jabbering Frenchman with his little affectations & unctuous ways, & would defend the English culture & tradition with my last drop of blood. But all the same I can see clearly that the French have a profounder culture than we have—that their intellectual perspective is infinitely clearer than ours, & that their tastes are infinitely farther removed from animal simplicity. What Anglo-Saxon could have written Balzac's *Comedie Humaine* or Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*? It is only in *poetic* feeling of the main stream that we excel the French, so that in point of civilisation it is only figures like Shakespeare & Milton & Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, & Keats, that we can hold honestly above them. They are the Greeks of the modern Western World,

as we are the Romans. *But*—for all that, my blood is eternally on the other side, & my memory full of ancestral images of Old England's hedged fields & willowed brooks, village steeples & abbey chimes. I shout as loudly as any Anglo-Saxon for the stout long-bowmen of the Black Prince, & for the glory of Crécy, Poitiers, & Agincourt. God Save the King! The Frenchman is our superior, god damn him, but he'll never set foot on an inch of English soil—not while Wellingtons & Nelsons, Phippses & Wolfes, hold the frontiers of our race in the old world & the new! . . . not while the Georgian steeples of Boston & Providence ring with joy at the fall of Louisburg & Quebec!—not while Rhode Island breeds men & ships like Capt. Daniel Fones & the sloop *Tartar!*—& so it goes. Do you see any interference between emotion & intellect? I shout at every French prize that Capt. Abraham Whipple (my collateral ancestor) brings into Providence harbour & delivers to His Majesty's prize court of admiralty at Newport—but all the same I coolly concede that the French are more deeply civilised than ourselves.

As for democracy—I don't really see much to add to what I said before. The whole thing is as much an illusion as "romantic love"—only it happens to be the illusion of the 20th century instead of the 19th. It is a mere deification of the ethical abstraction of "justice," plus the crude modernistic devotion to quantity as opposed to quality. If made a cardinal principle, it can do nothing but harm to civilisation—& yet, as I said before, I don't let my opinion interfere with my estimate of the situation. The evil is very definitely on the increase, & will probably spread until it has lowered our culture to a level scarcely endurable to a civilised being—unless, by chance, a counter-movement of intellectual-aesthetic aristocracy can somehow manage to coexist with a state of social-political democracy. The social-political future of the United States is one of domination by vast economic interests devoted to ideals of material gain, aimless activity, & physical comfort—interests controlled by shrewd, insensitive, & not often well-bred leaders recruited from the standardised herd through a competition of hard wit & practical craftiness—a struggle for place & power which will eliminate the true & the beautiful as goals, & substitute the strong, the huge, & the mechanically effective. I'd hate to have descendants living in such a barbarism—a barbarism so tragically different from the old civilisation of New England & Virginia which rightly belongs to this land. Thank God I'm the last of my family—*requiescamus in pace!*

. . . . . *It is my one dominant wish that an Anglo-Saxon cul-*

ture exist, that it be paramount in the world, & that it be so organised as to retreat as far as possible from the primitive toward the fullest utilisation of the manifold & delicate cosmos-exploring & pleasure-experiencing capacities of the human species. Compared to this, all my other wishes are minor ones. . . . .

. . . . . If everybody in a nation could be given the mellow culture that characterises the nation's highest thought, there would of course be no need for social classes. But it simply can't be done. There's no way of establishing a set of influences calculated to ensure the high education, emotional refinement, & civilised living of uncounted millions of people doing thousands of different things. Obviously, if a civilisation is to exist, a certain number of individuals must be given a training & environment above the average, with more than the average opportunities for freedom, influence, & self-expression. This is virtually axiomatic except among utterly irrational & ethics-mad communists & I.W.W.'s. . . . .

. . . At present it cannot be said that the life of any civilised & sensitive man in America is really worth living—except so far as he is able to make an imaginative escape from the encroaching milieu, either into the past of his culture-stream or into a fantastic & hypothetical future of his own dreaming. Clods can stand the usurping barbarism very well—it quite expresses their utilitarian minds & stunted personalities—but fully evolved human beings will have to return to the old world unless something can be done toward restoring the civilisation of the new. Already the exodus of sensitive men to France & England is becoming marked. The quantity ideal of the overspeeded machine "civilisation" of this continent is too utterly sterile to make the process of consciousness bearable to anyone of evolved imagination & delicately attuned emotions. There is no reward for keeping alive—no food for the myriad spiritual hungers of the civilised personality. It became that way in later Imperial Rome, & sensitive men had to flee to the Hellenistic East—to Alexandria & Athens, Pegamus & Antioch—in order to find an air that they could breathe. . . . .

. . . . . Actually, the humanistic I-exaltation of the individual is the *one deadly enemy of democracy* as a permanent system, & would make democracy even temporarily impossible if it were highly developed & coupled with strength in many people. Each I tries to get all he can, & sooner or later *the strongest ones* build up a system favouring themselves & those they choose to succeed them—which lasts until *another*

group of I's becomes strong enough to challenge it. Then the new group wins & reigns until another group gets strong enough to depose & supplant it. . . . . *As long as the humanistic I-element remains a motivating force, democracy cannot exist.* WHAT IS NOW MAKING DEMOCRACY NOT ONLY POSSIBLE BUT SADLY INEVITABLE IS THE DECLINE OF THE HUMANISTIC I-ELEMENT AS THE GROWTH OF THE MACHINE AGE DESTROYS HUMANISM & SPLITS UP THE LIFE OF MEN INTO ROBOT MECHANICALISM & ANIMAL SIMPLICITY. HUMANISM & DEMOCRACY CANNOT COEXIST. Democracy means decadence—the triumph of the machine over the individual. . . .

. . . . . Democracy, we agree, is inevitable in *the early machine age*. BUT WHAT THEN? Here is the situation in a nutshell—2100 or 2200 A. D. Huge machine barbarism with incredible physical luxury & a vast ruling class of highly intelligent men trained to think in terms of money, size, speed, profit, & activity for its own sake. Technique & machinery so perfected that there are *too many intelligent men for the number of directive jobs requiring them*; a wealthy surplus trained to think so materially that aesthetic & intellectual traditions will be virtually closed to them. *A new aristocracy without the souls of aristocrats.* Here is where your common-peepulism breaks down. This aristocracy will be open to all—but who save its own members can mentally qualify? Remember that it was produced by the selection of all the first-rate brains (never a great percentage) in the race. What of the surplus? To me it looks very much like the old story of wine, woman, & chance—just what you object to in the baser elements of the present aristocracy! You see, history has quite a repetitive tendency, & you can't dodge the order of nature—which is essentially stratified—no matter how many ethical illusions you pile on! Of course it is conceivable that even in a machine age a new aristocratic culture might be worked out by the leisure class. That would bely both your wishes & my antimachine predictions, but it is possible. Given a few generations of *enforced* leisure through lack of jobs, the wealthy surplus may at last turn to ways of cultivation & try to recapture the art of life—the art of *being* instead of *doing*, & of enjoying quality instead of quantity. But it will be uphill work, for the lack of traditional background & the standardisation of a mechanised world won't be any myth or joke. Below this administrative & surplus ruling-class there will naturally be a fairly large *subordinate-executive* or *manager* class composed of moderate, third-rate intellects. This may be an independent stratum made up of rising proletarians

belted by limited brains, or it may be a social appendage of the ruling class, recruited from the occasional inferior minds which the superior stock will breed. And below this, infinitely varied within itself according to occupation, but virtually brainless because it will be the residue of a selective process, will be the vast industrial proletariat—well-fed, well-housed, well-amused, well-clothed, well-medicated, well-treated, & well-flattered; living its half-animal, half-vegetable round in perfect physical comfort, & with ample leisure for as much diversion as its brains will enable it to enjoy. It will have the privilege of rising as high as it can, but its potentialities of ascent will have long been exhausted. It will be the utter & implicit property of its intelligent masters. Free in law & tradition—but in fact completely & benevolently enslaved. . . . .

Altogether, it is not likely that you & I could ever agree about the structure of society; because the question is primarily one of *preference* rather than of *fact*. What one thinks on a subject like this is conditioned by his *wishes*—his individual set of emotions & imaginative leanings—& not by any of those rules of *reason* which are binding on all alike. In other words, it isn't a plain *is-or-isn't* matter, but a matter of *opinion* wherein we can say no more than "every man to his taste." All of our natural standards, inclinations, emotions, sympathies, points of view, habits of thought, instinctive enthusiasms, symbolic associations, & so on, are so utterly antipodal & antithetical in every way—as revealed in all our emotional reactions & habits of logic & language—that eye-to-eye vision in fields like this may be regarded as definitely impossible for all time. There are subtleties & overtones on my side that you can never "get," & subtleties & overtones on your side that I can never "get". Emotionally, neither of us is a good receiving set for the other's emotional & imaginative wave-lengths. The difference is basic & architectural & physiological—we're simply not built the same way, & our glands simply don't function the same way. And because all mankind is made up heterogeneously of individuals with just as great & greater dissimilarities, there can never be any unified body of opinion about anything, or any single collective goal or ideal for the entire race. Some people will always be working & fighting heart & soul for the very thing that other people are working & fighting heart & soul against. That's life. Utopian harmony? Hell!!

. . . . . Krutch, on the other hand, is absolutely fearless; & almost alone among well-known philosophers has the guts to give a really

square look at my eternal question of "*what is anything?*" I'd hardly say that Krutch is *trying* to bring about a reign of pessimism—it seems to me that he's really only expressing his own reaction to things as they are now & seem to be. Really, there ought not to be any such inclusive term as *pessimism*. "Pessimism" argues the existence of fixed & universal values which cause a certain outlook to be *intrinsically bad* as judged from every point of view. Actually, so dissimilar are the wishes of different people, there is no kind of "pessimism" which is not somebody's "optimism"—even the chaotic, purposeless, & standardless cosmos which so disturbs Krutch may mean for some people a happy irresponsibility & liberation; whilst the coming machine age, a curse to the highly evolved man, is no doubt very welcome to the callous & insensitive man of practical physical tastes & no imagination. . . . .

. . . . . There is hardly a man living who hasn't *two* distinct pictures of his own ego—the individual picture, comprising his single personal self, & the panoramic picture, comprising his ancestry & posterity either physical or cultural, in which his personal self figures as one of a continuous series of manifestations, all of which possess a poignantly-felt relationship, & which collectively form a kind of physical or cultural immortality very satisfying to the emotions & wholly independent of the myths of supernaturalism & individual post-mortem soul-survival. To minimise this feeling from the point of view of cynicism is perfectly useless—for it exists just the same, whether or not it fits in with our theories to admit it, & has exercised the most powerful influence possible on the history of every race & nation. It is, of course, the basis of all family feeling & patriotism; & has functioned undiminished in many of the most materialistic & disillusioned of races—such as the French, Chinese, & the Graeco-Romans even amidst their greatest scepticism. There is hardly a materialistic philosopher who has not dwelt upon the gratifying nature of the idea of *immortality in one's descendants or in one's national future*. Whether, in its most acute form, it be in part a *secondary* instinct based on illusion, is a relatively minor matter. It is strong & real, & has to be reckoned with in practical life no matter how it came into being. Boyd minimises it, of course, for the sake of his own argument—but the real philosopher or man of science must take it into account. If an illusion, it is at least a far more solid illusion than those of democracy & romantic love, & probably more so than the illusion of justice. When the humanistic man asks of life, "what do I get out of it?", he instinctively includes in that "I" whatever

is, for him, associated with the idea of his personality; & in more cases than not, his family & his race come into this larger *associative ego* somehow. He cannot feel personally placed without reference to the background which gives his thoughts & feelings the illusion of motivation & significance. We may say that every man's ego—the thing he fights to exalt & preserve, is a sphere with his body at the centre, & with its density rapidly diminishing as it extends outward. He cares intensely for his individual self; a little less so for his immediate family; a little less so for his social group; a little less so for his nation or race-stock; a little less so for his major culture-unit; (i.e., Western World, Asiatic World, &c., as the case may be) a little less so for mankind as a whole; a little less so for animal life as a whole; a little less so for life (both animal & vegetable) as opposed to the inorganic; a little less so for the terrestrial as opposed to the non-terrestrial; a little less so for the solar-systemic as opposed to the universal; a little less so for the galactic as opposed to the Einsteinically cosmic; & a little less so for the Einsteinian as opposed to the hypothetically infinite, unplumbed, & unimagined. Of course, the individual ego is at the base of it all—altruism as a principle is a myth & a joke—but in the course of nature the ego cannot avoid having symbolic associations with its environment; associations less & less poignant as distance increases, but all very vivid & real & practically motivating to the man of highly evolved personality & sensitive imagination. One can come to regard the total extirpation of one's individual part with comparative equanimity—that is, the present generation can—but the idea of the extirpation of all that gives one placement & significance is an altogether fresh pang; intrinsically much greater, since it wipes out the *last remaining* moorings to the cosmic stream, & requiring a whole new process of emotional readjustment comparable to that which we & our parents experienced when confronted with the death of the personal immortality idea. As we know, it costs the older people many a bitter pang to lay aside the dream on which they had based all their ideas of a desirable adjustment to infinity. Many cannot accomplish this renunciation even now—as a questionnaire-census among even the most cultivated & intelligent people over fifty or sixty would soon convince you. How, then, can *our* generation be expected to accomplish the *next* step with utter suddenness, & survey the idea of the death of all we cherish with perfect blandness? As a matter of fact it would be absurd & unscientific to imagine that we can do so. Because we are more used to scientific overtures & the scientific

habit of thought than our parents & grandparents, we can of course accomplish the *intellectual* transition more easily than they could accomplish the corresponding one. We can *believe & realise* that our civilisation will end\*, more readily than they could *believe & realise* that man does not possess an immortal soul. But we can't *like* the new idea any better than they could *like* the new idea which was thrust upon them. The next generation—the young fellows now in college—will get used to the new idea better than we; but it'll take still another generation to breed thinkers who accept a transient orientation & constantly shifting order as an absolute matter of course. They'll do it, no doubt, in the end—but that doesn't do *us* any good. And of course there *really is* a great emotional & aesthetic loss. *True or false*, any given imaginative stimulus or form of beauty-feeling *is a thing in itself*; & there's no denying that we've *actually lost* large slices of the heritage of feeling & vision which enriched the imaginative lives of our forefathers. Our emotions have to function on a lower potential—the net amount of energy which flows through them is less, & the net amount of pleasure we get out of them is less. The blasting of our *Immortality-faith* is a *real loss*, & so is the end of our belief in a racial future. . . . .

With profoundest apologies—

Yr obt servt  
HPL

382. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Novr. 26, 1929.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . . *Israfel* turned out to be a splendid piece of biographical writing—the best study of Poe I have ever seen, & the only one to include the new light shed on Poe (all favourable to him & ad-

\* i. e., end in a known & calculable way immediately connected with present trends. Philosophers have always looked ahead to an *ultimate* end of their civilisations, but it has always been in a vague, abstract way—so remote as not to involve personal patriotism. Just as young men are vague & abstract about death.

verse to his penurious & hypocritical guardian Allan) through the discovery of the Poe-Allan letters in the Valentine Museum at Richmond in 1925. The book not only presents Poe with marvellous vividness, but gives a striking picture of his general period—that grotesque age of decline when the Georgian culture of America was breaking down under the impacts of the rich & ignorant parvenu element, & giving place to the nightmare of sentimental barbarism known as the Victorian age. Even more than Mead Minnegerode's well-known *Fabulous Forties*, *Israfil* presents a devastating picture of the intellectual & aesthetic bankruptcy of the Andrew Jackson-Polk-Harrison-Tyler period. Of all the prominent literati, Poe was the only one to glimpse the futile absurdity of the pompous & finical cultural abyss into which the nation was plunging. It was not for nothing that he had lived in Georgian Richmond & gone to school at Stoke-Newington in London. . . . .

The Smithsonian quest for the universe's "mother Stuff" promises to be a merry chase—& yet how much nearer we are even than in 1801, when Dalton discovered the atom! It seems very certain that the actual "mother stuff" (or *protyl*, as Haeckel used to call the hypothetical basic substance) will prove to be something wholly alien to our ideas of *substance*, & closely allied to what we recognise as *energy*. Before its nature can be grasped, our whole notions of *entity* will have to undergo a revision & clarification. The clearest picture we can devise of the cosmos is that of reality that simply *is, always has been, & always will be*; something fundamental & boundless & static as a whole, & utterly outside the realm of such things as time, space, direction, purpose, or consciousness. One of the fixed conditions of this infinite & eternal entity is *pattern* or *rhythm*—certain regular relationships of part to part within the fabric of the unchanging whole; & specialised aspects of this rhythm appear to be the basis of our notions of time, space, motion, matter, & change. We may say that these things—time, space, &c.—are *proximate realities*, because they depend on a fixed & particular cause as envisaged by a fixed & particular perceptive apparatus—i.e., the senses of a certain sub-phase of entity which is well defined though transient, insignificant, & accidental; to wit, the animal organism called man. But we may *not* call these proximate realities *ultimate*; since all their familiar aspects are due wholly to our own accidental structure & position. Even the world of a cat is highly different from ours, while the world of a beetle is abys-

mally different from either. The world of an organism on another planet—especially one in another galaxy—is so different from anything we can conceive that we would probably have difficulty in identifying any of its attributes beyond the simplest abstractions of time, space, & change. And it is wholly conceivable that registering consciousnesses exist, to which the conceptions of time & space, matter & motion, energy & change, cause & effect, are wholly or largely absent. Truly, we approach strange realms of thought & imagination when we embark upon Mr. Rollins' quest, or consider my own *lifelong* & similarly-intentioned query, "what is anything?" Anybody with simple or stereotyped ideas about the universe has a lot of disillusioning reading before him nowadays—Bertrand Russell's *Our Knowledge of the External World*, Eddington's *Nature of the Physical World*, Sir James Jeans' *Universe Around Us*, Krutch's *The Modern Temper*, &c. No wonder one of our gang likes to abridge my question "What is anything?" into the more basic & sceptical question "Is anything?"

With best wishes, & trusting your holiday work will not prove too confining & exhausting,

I remain

Yr most Obt Servt

HPLovecraft

383. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Dec. 3, 1929

To Klarkash-Ton, High-Priest of Tsathoggua, Greetings:

I must not delay in expressing my well-nigh delirious delight at *The Tale of Satampra Zeiros*—which has veritably given me the one archkick of 1929! Yug! n'gha k'yun bth'gth R'lyeh gllur ph'ngui Cthulhu yzkaa . . . what an atmosphere! I can see & feel & smell the jungle around immemorial Commoriom, which I am sure must lie buried today in glacial ice near Plathoë, in the land of Lomar! It is of this crux of elder horror, I am certain, that the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred was thinking when he—even he—left something unmention'd & signify'd by a row of stars in the surviving codex of his accursed & forbidden *Necronomicon*! You have achieved in its fullest glamour the exact Dun-



sonian touch which I find it almost impossible to duplicate, & I am sure that even the incomparable Nuth would have been glad to own Satampra Zeiros as his master. Altogether, I think this comes close to being your high spot in prose fiction to date—for Zothar's sake keep it up . . . my anticipations assume fantastic proportions!

Congratulations on the *Venus of Azombeii*—& I hope Wright publishes it soon. Your description of *The Monster of the Prophecy* sounds ineffably promising, & I am all agog to see the accomplished result. A good interplanetary or interstellar tale has yet to adorn the pages of our sorry old red-cover'd standby, & I fervently hope that Cap'n Farnsworth will permit you to make the innovation! I shall sooner or later get around to the interplanetary field myself—and you may depend upon it that I shall not choose Edmond Hamilton, Ray Cummings, or Edgar Rice Burroughs as my model! I doubt if I shall have any *living* race upon the orb whereto I shall—either spiritually or corporeally—precipitate my hero. But there will be Cyclopean *ruins*—god! what ruins!—& certain *presences* that haunt the nether vaults.

Yes—I hope to get at some more *signed* original fiction within a month. I say "signed", because the "revision" job I'm doing now is the composition of an original tale from a single paragraph of locale & subject orders—not even a plot germ. The only reason I do this kind of thing is that the pay is absolutely certain, whereas on signed original work one has to take one's chances of acceptance or rejection. I'll point out any tales which are unacknowledgedly mine, either wholly or in part, when or if they appear in print. My present job is a Reed yarn to be entitled *The Mound*—with the Oklahoma locale of "Yig," but with ramifications extending to blasphemously elder worlds, & a race of beings that came down from the stars with Great Cthulhu. I also bring in a Spaniard who deserted from Coronado's party in 1541. This job—and the two De Castro jobs preceding it—will tend to limber up my fictional pen for the spontaneous effusions to follow! Meanwhile—by the way—I have for the first time in my life received a bit of literary notice locally. The literary editor of the *Journal*—Bertrand H. Hart—stumbled on my *Cthulhu* in the Harré anthology, (although I hadn't mentioned that I wrote fiction myself when I recently joined in some weird-tale discussion in his daily *Sideshow* column) & was quite excited because he used to live at 7 Thomas Street—the very house in the ancient Providence hill lane where I located the young sculptor Wilcox! That surely

was a record-breaking coincidence—or would have been, had not the house in question been a special centre for all sorts & conditions of aesthetes. He praised *Cthulhu* quite generously in the *Journal* but swore that, in revenge for my saddling a horror on his old quarter, he would confer with the local wraiths & ghouls & send a monstrous visitor to my doorstep at 3 a.m.! This threat—made in last Friday's *Journal*—has caused me to send him the following account of how his nameless messenger was received:

#### THE MESSENGER

—To B. K. Hart, Esq.—

The Thing, he said would come that night at three  
From the old churchyard\* on the hill below;  
But crouching by an oak fire's wholesome glow,  
I tried to tell myself it could not be.  
Surely, I mused, it was a pleasantry  
Devised by one who could not truly know  
The Elder Sign, bequeathed from long ago,  
That sets the fumbling forms of darkness free.  
He had *not* meant it—no—but still I lit  
Another lamp as starry Leo climbed  
Out of the Seekonk\*\*, & steeple chimed  
Three—and the firelight faded, bit by bit.  
Then at the door that cautious rattling came—  
And the mad truth devoured me like a flame!

\* The ancient churchyard of St. John's, where the roots of old trees twine amongst slabs & altar-stones dating back to 1723, lies on the steep hill about 5 blocks from 10 Barnes St. It is wholly hidden from all public streets by the quadrangle of the ancient church & diocesan houses. No more picturesque & sinister necropolis exists in the U. S.—it is a true prototype of the Randolph Carter locale!

\*\* The river forming the eastern boundary of Providence—on whose unchanged wooded banks & bluffs I have been wont to ramble since infancy.

Congratulating you again on *Satampra*, I am

Ever yr most obt  
HPL

384. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Freyr's Day  
Dec. 6, 1929

Kuchinjunga of Knife-Keen Kultur:—

.....

By the way—of the doggerel I slipt into your last epistle, Wright has accepted *The Ancient Track* for eleven bucks, and *Recapture* for \$3.50. He turned down *The Outpost* on the alleged ground of excessive length, but I'm sure the real reason is because he wouldn't believe in the thin-lipp'd non-oulothrixitude of the Great King!

Klarkash-Ton has just writ a masterful tale call'd *Satampra Zeiros*. One glance at it will open your eyes at last!

Thine grovellingly—  
Θεοβαλδός  
Theobaldus

P.S. That Thanksgiving feast was a success, but the goddam cold about knockt me out! The next evening, not knowing how cold it was, I foolishly went outdoors, and nearly perisht on the return trip—lost my dinner (glad it wasn't the day before!) and most of my balance, and have felt kinda sore and run-through-a-wringer-like ever since! I sure gotta getta plantation in Jamaica!

385. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Thor's Day  
Dec. 12, 1929

Florescent Finial of Fonetik Filosofy:—

My gord—so I didn't hit your style even tho' I try'd rather hard to eliminate Theobaldian individualisms! And as for the *spelling*—what the hell! After all my efforts to duplicate your provincial Websterian orthography, leaving the *u* out of honour, and so forth! I thought I'd

caught your system to perfection—indeed, I really don't think the Yankee destroyers leave the *u* out of *glamour*, any more than they leave it out of *amour*. Look it up in some of your new-fangled alleged dictionaries and see! About *aesthetic*—*help! help! help!* O Māna-Yood-Sushāi in Pegāna! Are *you* one of those middle-Western diphthong-choppers, —*you*, James Ferdinand Plantagenet-Morton, of Novanglia's noblest line? O Dios! O Monterey! I knew that Farnsworth Wright and Maurice Winter Moe did that sort of thing—Chicago-Milwaukee brashness—and that the country editors west of the Mississippi sometimes go in for *thru*, *thot*, *altho*, *center*, and all that damned nonsense. But east of the Alleghenies—the erudite curator of a large city's museum—O, take me out and shoot me at sunrise! How in gawd's name do you spell *aesthetic*—“*esthetik*”—“*s-thet-yk*”??? Boy, this is a knockout! “*Honor*” and “*labor*” are bad enough, but all the provincials do that. One can become harden'd, if not reconcil'd, to such things. But *thru* and *thot* and *esthetik* and *sulfur* and *fotograf* . . . . . blah, yah! I guess we'd better take up Esperanto before the Keokuk and Dubuque school of pidgin-English turns our mother-tongue into a chaos of demotic hieroglyphs that a gentleman can't decipher! I have waded through it in *Weird Tales*, and the Valparaiso, Ind., *Unafraid Republican*—but thou too, O Brutus! . . . Once a set of idealists begin tampering with a language, there's no telling where they'll end. All standards and homogeneity of usage disappear for want of an anchor in tradition. Kat, dorg, haurse, kou, bool, howss, boi, skul, . . . . . and so on down the scale to the utter nadir of shifting usage typical of certain Amazon-valley tribes, whose language shifts so rapidly that the young men can scarcely understand the conversation of their grandfathers. I take a reasonable middle course—dropping (in publicly display'd manuscripts) the final *k* on words like *comick* and *musick*, and writing *shore*, *landscape*, *smoke*, etc., instead of *shoar*, *landskip*, *smoak*, etc., but not following individual cliques or detached sections of the Anglo-Saxon world into personal or local perversions of the widely accepted norm. There is no use dragging up theoretical arguments about phonetics—the language is far too full of traps and paradoxes to make any attempt at an Utopian eye-sound scheme more than a joke or a nuisance. It is altogether a matter of arbitrary usage and aesthetic association—and sound conservatism, for lack of any tangible value attached to any other course, sticks to the normal forms we are used to—the forms which connect up with our sense of inconspicuous rightness and easy, unconscious habituation.

Doctrinaires and victims of the barbarian business-efficiency complex can write in any kind of Choctau they like. It doesn't matter much what sort of gibberish is employ'd by the decadent world of mechanised and time-tabled Babbitry. But, by gad, Sir, gentlemen will continue, on the whole, to spell as gentlemen! It isn't so bad to write *honor* and *color*—for that vice has a full century of usage behind it in a region as reasonably civilised as the American Atlantick Coast. But when it comes to *thru*, *tho*, *thoro*, *brot*, *Etna*, *Esculapius*, etc., etc.—well, count me out! . . .

Yrs. in architectural rapport but orthographical rapping  
—Πάππος Θεοβάλδος  
Pappus Theobaldus

386. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Wednesday  
Dec. 18, 1929

Sky-Saluting Spire of Super-Sacramental Sagacity:—

Alas, that I should have to begin this epistle with an answer to your Mac-question which is worse than merely ominous! I had fancied that I would not have to break a piece of bad news which I gained from a newspaper item—*Associated Press*—presumably read by everybody; but both you and Little Belknap seem to have skimmed through last Sunday's papers with an all-too-merciful lightness—hence my melancholy task of becoming the gang's informant in a matter where I wish there were something less depressing to inform.

For our good old friend found his illness too formidable a foe to resist, and passed away on Saturday, December 14, at his sister's home in Tacoma. It gave me a devilish jolt to read it, for I certainly thought the rest and the Pacific climate would do him good; but it seems that he suffered a relapse shortly after his arrival, and was somehow unable to shake it off. . . . It does seem accursedly strange and dismal to try to realise that nice old Mac is no more—and to reflect that he had so short a period of emergence from the utter squalor amidst which so many of his days were spent. I had hoped tremendously that he might have a long and restful evening of life to compensate for the trials he had en-

dured—though, as I have just written Sonny, it is at least something that he had a brief spell of better surroundings toward the close, instead of meeting the dark gulf amidst the pandaemoniac filth of Hell's Kitchen. . . . I hope Mac received all our letters, and was sufficiently conscious to realise the good-will and unbroken solicitude which they contained. I wrote him two letters and several cards at the Tacoma address—the last card, though, may not have found him living. I had a Christmas card, too, all ready to mail in time to reach Tacoma before the holiday. It is almost impossible to feel, even yet, that such a card now has no destination! . . .

It does seem hard to imagine the gang without good old Mac somewhere in the background as a high spot of its general setting—for he was one of the founders; and his naive, individual note formed one of the most characteristic contributions to the entire symphony. At any rate, he will have a kind of modest and affectionate immortality in our reminiscent folklore—as well as in the memory of the thousands of boys who have read his tales. I can hardly think of the N. Y. terrain without his quaint, likeable figure somewhere about—indeed, he is an inextricable part of that earlier and more favourable image of the metropolis which I acquired before familiarity bred disgust and ennui . . . . . the exotic, glamorous, expectant, fantastic, adventurous image of strangeness, magnitude, and complex mystery springing from a first sight of Dunsanian pinnacles, labyrinthine tangles of unknown streets, seething alien-daemoniac vitality, surprising vistas of cryptic terraces and balustrades, unlimited museum-wealth, weird diversity of landscape-impressions, glittering twilights that turned to phantom-haunted nights when the dusk pressed down like a low roof on aisles and halls of supernatural phosphorescence, and the vast, level reaches of the old Dutch marsh country around Sheepshead Bay, brooding with elder mystery in the autumn gloaming, and with the winds of old Holland's canals blowing the sedges that waved and beckoned along strange, salty inlets. That vague, far-off imagery, already pushed back into a kind of dreamland by the lapse of more than seven years, would be a lot less glamorous if deprived of Mac's little plodding figure. I recall the first time I saw him—at Dench's, by the old, curious wharves of Sheepshead Bay. He used to like to go there. . . . And I recall how he shewed Sonny and me Hell's Kitchen—the first time either the Child or I ever saw it. Chasms of Hogarthian nightmare and odorous abomina-

tion—Baudelairian Satanism and cosmic terror—twisted, fantastic Nordic faces leering and grimacing beside night-lapping beacon-fires set to signal unholy planets—death brooding and gibbering in crypts and oozing out of the windows and cracks of unending bulging brick walls—sinister pigeon-breeders on filth-choked roofs sending birds of space out into black unknown gulfs with unrepeatable messages to the obscene, amorphous serpent-gods thereof—Forty-ninth St., Eleventh Ave.—Forty-seventh St.—Tenth Ave.—black eyes painted—police in pairs—filth—odours—fantastic faces in bonfire-flares—swarming and morbid vitality—Ninth Ave. elevated—and through it all the little white-haired guide plodding along with his simple, idyllic dreams of sunny Wisconsin farm-worlds, and green, beckoning, boy-adventure worlds, and wholesome, Utopian worlds of fixed values which never were and never can be. No—that strange, Dunsanian, expansive, mysterious vision-metropolis of 1922—that metropolis so unlike any that one may find around N. Y. in 1929—wouldn't be much without honest old Mac! And because it *is* a vision-metropolis; "out of space, out of time", and without linkage to the mundane, the material, and the perishable; it indeed never need be without him. Through those fantastic streets, along those fantastic terraces, and over those fantastic salt marshes with the waving sedges and sparse Dutch gables, the quaint, likeable little figure may continue to plod . . . . phantom among phantoms, though perhaps not less real in a cosmic sense than the phantoms of electronic patterning which we call matter. Perhaps not less real, and surely more beautiful and exalted, as all things of dream are more beautiful and exalted than things of substance and waking.

. . . Speaking of books—I told you of my new (cheap unpainted) cases. . . The effect isn't quite as bad and crowded as I feared it would be—but damn it all, the new cases do no more than sop up the worst of the pre-existing surplus! Not an inch of spare shelfage, and the two glass-door'd cases *still* as jammed as hell! It's damn lucky that I'm a slow collector.

Yr. oblig'd and obt.,  
Θεοβαλδος  
Theobaldus

387. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
Dece. 19, 1929

Dear C. A. S.:—

By this time I trust that Belknap has safely returned *Satampra Zeiros*. The enclosures preceding this letter will serve to tell you what a genuine kick he got out of the tale. As for me—Tsathoggua made such an impression on my fancy that I am using him in the "revision" (i.e. "ghost-writing") job I am now doing—telling of some things connected with his worship before he appeared on the earth's *surface*. As you know my tale concerns a nether world of unbelievable antiquity below the mound-&-pueblo region of the American southwest, and the visit thereto in 1541-45 by one of Coronado's men—Panfilio de Zamacona y Nuñez. It is a place litten by a blue radiance due to magnetic force & radio-activity, & is peopled by the primal proto-humans brought down from the stars by Great Cthulhu—a forgotten, decadent race who cut themselves off from the upper world when Atlantis & Lemuria sank. *But there was a race of beings in the earth infinitely older than they*—the saurian quadrupeds of the red-litten caverns of Yoth which yawn underneath the blue-litten caverns of K'n-yan. When the first men came to K'n-yan they found the archaeological reliques of Yoth, & speculated curiously upon them. At the point where I introduce our friend Tsathoggua, the Spanish explorer has entered K'n-yan, has encountered a party of friendly natives led by one Gee'-Hthaa-Ynn, & is being escorted to the great city of Tsath—mounted on a monstrous horned & half-human quadruped.

\*\*\*\*\*

About that "interplanetary" idea of mine—it would begin as a dream-phenomenon creeping on the victim in the form of recurrent nightmares, as a result of his concentration of mind on some dim transgalactic world. Eventually it would enmesh him totally—leaving his body to vegetate in a coma in some madhouse whilst his mind roamed desolate & unbodied for ever above the half-litten stones of an aeon-dead civilisation of alien Things on a world that was in decay before the

solar system evolved from its primal nebula. I doubt if I'd handle it as a phantasy so much as a stark, macabre bit of quasi-realism. I would try to achieve what all other interplanetary writers blithely & deliberately reject—namely, the sense of awesome, utter, & almost mind-unhinging *tremendousness* implicit in the *very notion* of transportation to another world either in body or in mind. Virtually all writers wholly miss this point to a degree I cannot but regard as ludicrous. In cold realistic fact, any man with half an imagination would undergo a *frightful mental shock* at the mere idea of any contact with a planet other than this. *This feeling* would be the *central element* of any interplanetary story of mine; indeed, the whole thing would be more of a psychological study than an adventurous narrative—more a Poe-effect than a H. G. Wells or Jules Verne effect. As you see, this affords no possibility of infringement on any idea of yours—either the future's "Planet of the Dead" or the past's "Crypts of Memory." I admired the latter prodigiously in *Ebony & Crystal*. There is one basic difference in our work which would almost automatically eliminate the danger of parallelism, even when we work on identical themes. It is this—that you are fundamentally a *poet*, & think first of all in symbols, colour, & gorgeous imagery, whilst I am fundamentally a *prose realist* whose prime dependence is on the building up of atmosphere through the slow, pedestrian method of multitudinous suggestive detail & dark scientific verisimilitude. Whatever I produce must be the sombre result of a deadly, literal seriousness, & almost pedantic approach. The "art" atmosphere is never in my best stuff—instead, there is an impersonal, unsmiling, minutely *reporting* quality somewhere. I have to see a thing or scene with clear-cut visual distinctness before I can say anything whatever about it—then I describe it as an entomologist might describe an insect. Prose realism is behind everything of any importance that I write—a devilish odd quality, when one stops to think about it, to exist in conjunction with fantastic taste & vision! But I am a paradox anyway—for there have been periods when astronomy, geography, physics, chemistry, & anthropology meant more to me than any form of pure literature or aesthetics.

Yr most obt

HPL

388. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Dec. 20 29

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... Glad the astronomical works proved interesting. To my mind an elementary knowledge of the nature & workings of the universe is a really essential part of any artist's or thinker's background. It is the greatest clarifier of perspective I know of, & is a whole imaginative education in itself because of the stupendous magnitudes & distances it brings up for attention. But all the distances described in the two books I lent you are as nothing compared with the nearly unthinkable chasms envisaged by modern astronomy. To get a hint of these things one must read some very recent treatise—the smallest & clearest of which, I think, is *Starlight*, by Prof. Harlow Shapley. ....

Many thanks for the cuttings—& pray don't apologise for their meagreness. Never bother to look for items which don't happen along of themselves—there are so many topics of interest that one couldn't begin to keep track of all of them. That St. Louis mound item is of especial interest to me just now, insomuch as my current job is the weaving of a tale around a similar thing in Oklahoma. The alleged author intended to let the story go as a simple tale of a haunted mound, with a couple of Indian ghosts around it; but I decided at once that such a thing would be insufferably tame & flat. Accordingly I am having the mound turn out to be the gateway of a primordial & forgotten subterranean world—the home of a fearsomely ancient & decadent race cut off from the outer earth since the prehistoric sinking of fabulous Atlantis & Lemuria. In the course of the tale I introduce a man who descends into the abyss—a Spaniard of Coronado's expedition of 1541—& another, in the present age, who *begins* a descent but *very hastily returns* to the upper air after *seeing a certain thing*.

Dec. 20

That revision job—which really amounts to original composition—is proving to be rather an incubus, for the idea is spinning itself out into a

veritable novelette. Nevertheless I have had to spare time enough to do something about the acute problem of excess books—& have just secured 4 new small cases (cheap unpainted affairs) to set on top of other furniture in the absence of additional floor space. The work of rearranging cases, & absorbing the surplus volumes which were scattered around promiscuously, proved considerable—& even in the end I found the congestion only partly alleviated. Not an inch of shelf space to spare, & several of the older cases still crowded!

I remain

Yr. most oblig'd obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

389. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Friday

Dec. 29, 1929

Era-Excelling Epitome of Erudition, Earthly and Ethereal:—

... Christmas, thank Pegāna, was decently mild—and I succeeded in dragging my elder aunt down town for the first time in a year and a half—to partake of an old-time Christmas feast with plum pudding and all, at the hospitable refectory of that staunch upholder of ancient English tradition—Chin Lee, Esq., (a *very* distant eastern connexion—phonetically at least—of the main Virginia line of Stratford and Arlington!) who so liberally stocked you with chow mein at our little pre-Maxfield supper last June. Downtown seemed rather changed to my aunt—though the front side, at least, of the doomed brick row still stands. May misfortune, leprosy, radium-poisoning, remorse, time-table slavery, sudden death, and everything else pursue the criminals who are destroying this loveliest legacy of old days—pursue them, and all their posterity even unto the time of the great Spenglerian collapse!

De re orthographica—I am the last to maintain the existence of an *inflexible* standard, but I think the collective usage of the most civilised part of the Anglo-Saxon world for the past hundred years is uniform, homogeneous, and continuous enough to serve as a *proximate* standard in the absence of any other logical basis for rule-making. I am not de-

fending the eighteenth century—although it is then that uniform usage first began to develop—so much as the collective custom of late eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. Spelling is so wholly a matter of custom, taste, and ocular appeal, that we cannot well adopt any criterion other than that of *harmonious naturalness* as determined by the group practice of the most cultivated and articulate minds in the most cultivated parts of the civilisation. I don't let *etymology* bother me at all—it means nothing to me that *colour* and *neighbour* have different histories. But it means much that these forms are the spontaneous and natural ones in constant and uniform use in the most enlightened and mature portions of our culture-area. To my mind a barren vowel does not convey the delicate imaginative overtones of association that a diphthong does in places where a diphthong traditionally belongs. No Ence-ladus stirs beneath an "Etna", and no Promethean grandeur was ever evoked for Golden-Age Athens by an "Eschylus". "Medieval" darkness lacks the sublimity of Gothick towers and the fascination of hellish Sab-bats. You can't tell me that an "Eolian" harp plays anything but jazzy blues, and if Paris's early girl-friend spell'd her name "Enone", I don't wonder he quit her cold for a new Jane! It would take an "eon" to cram "Edipus" down my "esophagus", complex and all; nor would I believe that any emasculate "Lestrigonian" could chew me up! No, by gad, Sir, during the few years left to me, I'll spell as gentlemen spell'd in my time! Of course I knew that some Elizabethans used the-or termination. *Honor* occurs in W. S.'s first Folio. But as I said, my criterion is good, civilised eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth century usage!

Yrs. for civilisation and conservatism—

Θεοβαλδός  
Theobaldus

390. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Jany. 1930 (or very late 1929)

Dear A. W.:—

.... As I said when I first saw the *Evening in Spring* sections, I may try to do something of the sort myself some day—although the results I'd obtain would be antipodally different from yours. The idea of

impersonal pageantry and time-and-space-defying phantasy has always—quite literally from the very dawn of consciousness—been so inextricably bound up with my inmost thought and feeling, that any searching transcript of my moods would sound highly artificial, exotic, and flavoured with conventional images, no matter how utterly faithful it might be in truth. What has haunted my dreams for nearly forty years is a *strange sense of adventurous expectancy connected with landscape and architecture and sky-effects*. I can see myself as a child of 2½ on the railway bridge at Auburndale, Mass., looking across and downward at the business part of the town, and feeling the imminence of some wonder which I could neither describe nor fully conceive—and there has never been a subsequent hour of my life when kindred sensations have been absent. I wish I could get the idea on paper—the sense of marvel and liberation hiding in obscure dimensions and problematically reachable at rare instants through vistas of ancient streets, across leagues of strange hill country, or up endless flights of marble steps culminating in tiers of balustraded terraces. Odd stuff—and needing a greater poet than I for effective aesthetic utilisation. . . . Yr. obt. Servt. HP

391. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Wednesday  
Jan. 3, 1930

Summation of Saxiscient Seigneury:—

.....

As for orthography—I can't see where *logic* enters a matter based wholly on custom and emotional associations. The "millions of years of potential civilisation" ahead don't register very big with me, because they have nothing to do with any civilisation which is *ours*. Those millions of years will have many civilisations—but only the first two or three will ever know that an English race and tongue ever existed, while only the first ten or twelve will be likely to involve human or quasi-human creatures at all—you know damn well that the articulata will inevitably supplant us mammalia even as we supplanted the reptilia. Thus the whole planetary drama has nothing to do with this especial case. English orthography is a limited matter connected only with the brief

life of our one civilisation, just as Latin orthography concerned only the single Roman civilisation of—say—B. C. 700—A. D. 700. As measured by the span of our cultural existence, we are not near the dawn of things but damn well along—too cursedly well along to suit anybody who loves our race and folkways. English probably won't exist as a spoken tongue for more years than it has existed already. Our heyday of vitality was the Elizabethan age; and we have since been running down and losing motive force even while we have gained in finesse and delicacy. . . . I resign my Georgian claims to *oeconomic* and *landskip*, but have no inclination to tolerate the neo-chaoticist usage which imperceptibly verges from *eons* and *medieval* through *thot* and *brot* to such already half-tolerated (by that vulgar herd whose jargon later works upward) abortions as *nite* and *naborhood*. . . . Very likely we can't help English much. But it is faintly amusing to adhere to a sound and dying standard oneself whilst the masses wallow in chaos. *Honourable* is the customary form, though the *u* is dropped in *honorary*. The *u* of *vapour* is dropped in *vaporise*. Of course I know that usage is fairly flexible, and shall enter no protest if the civilisation as a whole gradually adopts further modifications along the lines of previous ones. That is the *natural* evolution which nobody objects to. But I'll be shot if I'll follow any arrogant provincials in their freaks of the moment—curst money-minded provincials who are doing their vilest to corrupt our civilisation on this continent and substitute a damn'd bastard machine-and-speed worship which has no more to do with us and our heritage than the *mores* and philosophy of Angkok and Indo-China, Bactria and Sogdiana! I stick to the civilisation my blood and people belong to—the Old English civilisation of Great Britain, New England, and Virginia. To that, and to the language and manners characteristic of it. If the Japanese or French or Germans or machine mongrels capture this continent and impose an alien culture on it, that means nothing to me. The alien culture may be better or worse—I don't give a damn, because it isn't mine! Just as the French in Canada (and their kin in Rhode Island as well!) refuse to adopt our encroaching civilisation, so do I refuse to adopt the encroaching civilisation of mongrel Mechanamerika. I was born a Rhode-Island Englishman, by gad, and I'll die just that. Or if the pox-rotted mongrels turn my civilisation out of Rhode-Island, then by St. Paul, I'll go home to England where my line came from! An Englishman, no matter where he is, never 'goes native' unless something is

the matter with his self-respect! As for my regard for classic diphthongs being based on old associations—why, Sir, *what is anybody's regard for anything based on, if not on just that?* What the hell are values, anyway? *What is anything?* (My old, perennial question!) Amidst the cosmic chaos the only things we have to cherish are the transient shapes of illusion woven from the chance scraps our memories hold. Apart from these, we are lost in the meaningless void! So I guess Grandpa'll keep on bungling along as usual, in the old way!

Yrs. for genial ease—  
 Θεοβαλδός  
 Theobaldus

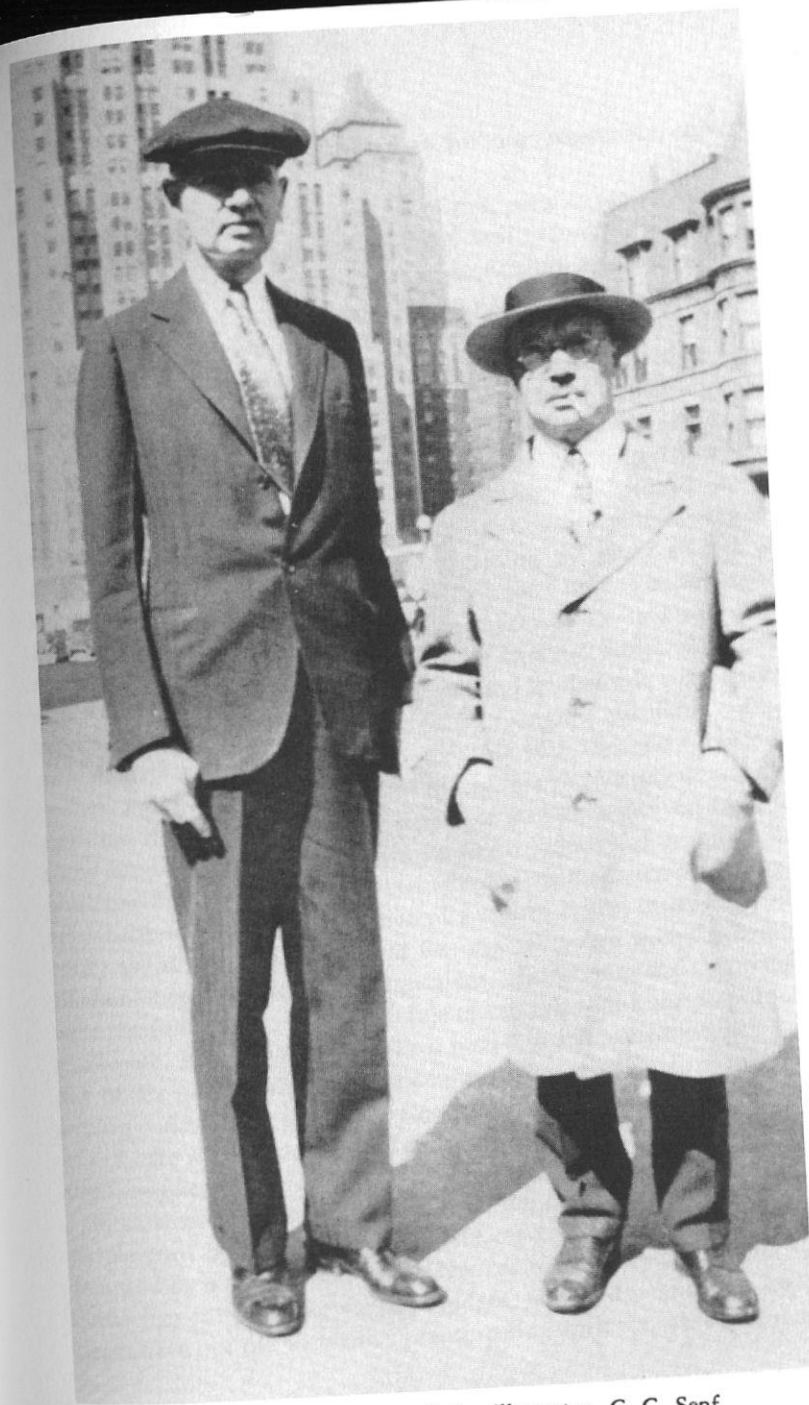
392. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Thor's Day  
 Jan'y 4, 1930

Apex of Academick Acuteness:—

..... I don't get perspectives tangled and blurred by local and transient impressions as I used to—indeed, I often smile ruefully at some of the emphatick dogmatisms and indignations of my early Kleicomolo period. Indignation is a naive and absurd emotion at best—but then, young philosophers were naive and absurd creatures in the dear old 1900's, when the fog of Victorian unrealities still hung over the scene and blurred the hard, clear outlines of things and trends and standards as they are. The baker's dozen of years since 1916 have given Old Theobald plenty of time for reading, reflection, and observation—and the old boy's eyes and faculties still hang on after a fashion.

The fact is, that before passing judgment on the taste of any work of art, we must establish *the validity of the standard by which we judge it*—establish that validity *abstractly and impersonally*, without the least reference to what we ourselves may happen to like or dislike, or what we may have been taught at our mothers' knees or by the especial transient milieu surrounding our early and impressionable years. The "good" of one era may be the "evil" of another, and we must not use such expressions as "filth" and "smut" irresponsibly. Before adopting a



Farnsworth Wright and the illustrator, C. C. Senf



nomenclature, we must see whether it has any reasonably universal meaning or not.

Now when we came to the question of that peculiar rage felt by persons over forty (persons, that is, educated well before the wartime period) concerning the free presentation of erotic matters in art and literature, there are two points visible at the very outset which make us feel that there must be something erroneous and abnormal about it. First—its very *degree and venom*, as contrasted with the comparatively mild attitude of its possessors against such other doubtful trends as democracy, machine-standardisation, futurism, general and violent lawlessness, etc., excite our suspicion. Why all this abnormal, hair-trigger touchiness and *interest* in one particular subject out of many? And second—we are so plainly aware that the people of the generation in question were educated under a system whose position regarding the given subject was flagrantly and fundamentally erroneous. We don't have to be told nowadays that the whole structure of Victorian art and thought and sexual morality was based upon a tragic sham—a criminal denial of the facts and relative values of Nature as they are, and a wholesale conspiracy to represent mankind as being governed by thoughts, standards, wishes, and motives essentially different from his real thoughts, standards, wishes, and motives. Part of this, of course, was pre-Victorian; and honestly inherited from the natural system of standards evolved from the social needs of earlier ages—a system which indeed had genuine value until the discovery of effective contraceptive methods removed its primary basis and made the formation of a revised system increasingly necessary as the aesthetic influence of the original system wore thinner and thinner—but the gravest exaggerations, distortions, and hypocrisies were the fruit of that most despicable of centuries—the unreal, prurient, nineteenth. It was this lousy, hollow period which made the whole subject of sex such an alluringly hidden mystery that its dupes acquired an itching curiosity and abnormal interest in the subject—something which it will take a quarter-century of open air and sanity to wash and aerate and fumigate away.

Now what about standards? Clearly, the feelings of Victorian-born people can't be used as a guide. Their capacity for judgment has been damaged by a very definite cause. Nor can old-time Geogrians and classicists like me be really valuable judges, either—for although we ancients have not the Victorian's preoccupation with sex, (I, for example,

am much less annoyed by the rise of promiscuity than by the rise of democratic standardisation and the gospel of efficiency, although I heartily dislike both) we do inherit a tradition of sexual ethics based on social, philosophic, economic, medical, biological, political, and aesthetic foundations which modern phases of western civilisation have largely overthrown; a primal Roman-Nordic and adoptively Hebraic tradition which was real in its day, but which is now increasingly unreal as civilisation moves farther and farther from the conditions on which it rested. This old Roman-Teuton-English tradition—the pre-Victorian Anglo-Saxon main stream as touched by the habits of elder New England—is what I inherit, and what is likely to govern my own personal conduct and feelings (so far as an analytical philosopher may have feelings as a vital psychological factor) during my few remaining years; but I am not too blind to perceive that it is merely an attribute of an aera now in its final phase—an aera whose knell was sounded a century and a half ago, when scientific knowledge was first applied on a large scale to the daily affairs and utilities of life. We are the Boethii and Claudiani and Symmachi and Cassiodori of a dying world. That old world still exists for us, and will exist in part for our children—but will not exist for our grandchildren. For them will be the real machine age, together with the code of ethics produced by its conditions. Thus as a man of sense I don't try to project my own personal aesthetic "reactions" out of their own period into an hypothetical universal time-stream. I don't like modernistic geometrical art, imagistic poetry, erotic emphasis, or democratic social-political organisation—but what the hell of it? It would be infantile in me to label all these things as intrinsically and universally "bad" merely because they are out of place in the obsolescent world which bred me and my prejudices. The modern age is none of my goddam business—I am an old man lingering amongst the good old 1900's and the eighteenth century and the Ciceronian aera at Rome. And, as I have said, the prurient reticences, hollow "idealism" and hypocritically trashy sentimentalities of the Browning-Tennyson period simply don't count. The nineteenth century was a mistake—to my mind far more disgusting (because more subversive of that straight thinking which is man's only real dignity and claim to respect) than the Restoration or the age of Juvenal and Martial. I had much rather take up wenching or pornography than spout the degrading pap of Victorian idealists and

Baptist or Popish obscurantists. An honest whore is less of an insult to humanity than a sanctimonious prig who ignores the truth and fosters error and illusion.

Who, then, is capable of guessing at possible standards of taste in matters erotic? Well—I'd say, after careful reflection, that the only competent bozo is the cool, impersonal analyst who has shaken free from the local influence of any particular age or culture or thought-stream, and has surveyed the whole problem of interacting historic and psychological forces in the most panoramic possible way—envisaging man as a unit coextensive with the whole reign of his species, past and future. In this way only can one plot a sort of curve roughly answering for a norm in each of the component groups of the race; and finally devise a complex series of approximate value-systems, each good for one especial age in the history of one especial culture. It's a full-sized man's job to do this—but boys like Lecky laid the foundations for some future work of the kind.

Having established this basis, let's see how the present age stacks up . . . . . let's see what, in terms of normal contemporary life, we are justified in saying about the various forms of erotic presentation now current. First, of course, we must classify our subject-matter—seeing how much really comes within the field of our survey, and how many separate categories are embraced in that section which does fall within. We must get rid of the ignorant inclusiveness and unanalytical empiricism of the Victorian obscurantist, eliminating such superficial and meaningless catchwords (terms without foundations in reality) as "dirt", "morality", "propriety", "decency", etc. Now taking the whole field of erotic literature and iconography as defined and reprobated by the Victorian maiden-aunt class, we find that it falls into several sharply differentiated and in some cases *diametrically opposite* groups—which only the morbid lubricity of a repressed Puritan could possibly be stupid enough to confound as one. Here is an offhand list:

1. Impersonal and serious descriptions of erotic scenes, relationships, motivations, and consequences in real life.
2. Poetic—and other aesthetic—exaltations of erotic feelings.
3. Satirical glimpses of the erotic realities underlying non-erotic pretences and exteriors.
4. Artificial descriptions or symbols designed to stimulate erotic feelings, yet without a well-proportioned grounding in life or art.

5. Corporeal nudity in pictorial or sartorial art.
6. Erotic subject-matter operating through the medium of wit and humour.
7. Free discussion of philosophic and scientific issues involving sex.

Of course, the boundaries of these groups frequently overlap, but the distinctions are none the less clear. We can illustrate (1) by Theodore Dreiser or Ernest Hemingway or James Joyce, (2) by Catullus or Walt Whitman, (3) by Cabell, Voltaire, Fielding, etc., (4) by Pierre Louys or Marquis de Sade, (5) by Giorgione or Praxiteles or modern bathing-suite designers, (6) by the dramatists of the Restoration, and (7) by the work of men like Havelock Ellis, Forel, Kraft-Ebing, Freud, etc., etc. Now is any one of these things intrinsically bad in the light of the civilisation of 1930? *Certainly not #1*—for no sane adult since 1910 could possibly wish life to be depicted in serious art in other than its true proportions. Any other sort of depiction would be as meaningless as Victorian literature. Since we now know that the habits of ordinary people are so-and-so, and that the amount of mental and emotional and motivating attention which they give to this-or-that subject is such-and-such, we have come to realise as a matter of course that no artist can give any real or valid interpretation of life without drawing conditions as they are, *and with the same relation to the whole life and motivation of the race which each set, respectively, actually possesses* as judged by the most profound and serious evidence. What do people *really* think and do? And *why* do they think and do thus? If we cannot seriously and honestly touch upon these basic things, *whether or not* they lead us into fields which our grandparents might have disliked, we might as well relapse into savagery and not think about mankind at all. And the most contemptible form of that thoughtless savagery is a blind, ostrich-like retreat into the outmoded prejudice and residual seventeenth century cosmic philosophy of the Victorian age. The only truly valid objection against an erotic theme or description in serious literature, is one attacking its proportioned truth to life. . . . It is not the hazily immaculate teacher or antiquarian, but the hard-headed business-man with his stenographers and "canaries", and the stolid clerk or mechanic with his "dates" and "girl-friends", who must be said to constitute that society-in-general from which the material of art is drawn. To this overwhelming majority must be conceded the function of representing the vast, blind, deterministic trends of the race. And what they think and do, must be spoken and written, if we are to have any sound realistic art or

understanding of life. Personally I am a fantaisiste and cosmicist, and don't care much about realism—but I certainly loathe sentimental hypocrites like Dickens and Trollope far more than honest portrayers and intelligent interpreters like Zola and Fielding and Smollett and Flaubert and Hemingway. . . .

As for point #2—erotic lyrism—one may regard it much as one regards point #1. So long as it rests on genuine human feeling, there's nothing sensible to be said against it; and all our legitimate protests must rest on one of two questions—(a) whether (cf. case of #1) the motivating phenomena be genuine, and (b) whether they be proportionately typical of the culture-group from which the lyric manifestation is evolved. Only a fool talks against Catullus or Whitman on subject-grounds in 1930.

Point #3 is analogous to Nos. 1 and 2. There is art and sanity in psychological deflation. . . . One of the most contemptible ostentations of the human primate is a priggish dignity and particularly about non-essentials of form, custom, convention, regularity, and so on. It is this devastating pusillanimity which has created the repulsive beast called Babbitus Americanus, and which has paved the downward path toward standardisation, time-table helotry, and glorified mass-mediocrity. No saviour is more deserving of praise than one who can jolt and kick these cow-like conformers into something like a semblance of vitality, individuality, and well-proportioned perspective—who can air out their stuffy and meaningless primness and precision, and give them at least a pinch of that basic sense of humour, porportion, relativity, and cosmic irony which makes real *men* as distinguished from grotesque sawdust-stuffed homunculi. All hats off to the lusty deflater! Our only just criticism of a work of deflation is whether or not its content is suitably proportioned to its theme, or whether its theme involves a vital and necessary piece of bubble-puncturing. Judged by this test, Cabell has a sort of half-and-half-status. Much of his work is sound and admirable, whilst other parts (notably *Jurgen*) slop over into an extravagance of innuendo which amounts to no more than an inverted sentimentality.

Group #4—artificially aphrodisiac works of "art" not grounded in nature or in normal harmonics—is where you and I meet. These things are like Harold Bell Wright and Eddie Guest in other fields—pap and hokum, and emotional short-circuits and fakes. They are certainly not genuine art, and may therefore be ranked as just so much waste

material. . . . If someone were to give me a sealed copy of Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* for Christmas, I certainly wouldn't get het up and call in the repressed perverts of the Watch and Ward Society of Boston. Instead, I'd thank my liberal benefactor and sell the damn thing in its original seals for a young fortune!

Point #5—the matter of nudity—is in truth *wholly outside the present question*, because it is not, primarily, an erotic phenomenon at all. No one but a ridiculous ignoramus or a warped Victorian sees anything erotic in the healthy human body, either as revealed in Nature, or as depicted in its normal proportions by painting and sculpture. It is, on the other hand, a basic and powerful form of abstract beauty; to withhold which from appreciative contemplation would be an act of unprecedented clownishness. Only fools, jokers and perverts feel the urge to put overalls on Discobulus or tie an apron around the Venus of the Medici! A beautiful human body is just as necessary and non-erotic a part of life's aesthetic perspective as a beautiful feline, canine, equine or elephantine body. Only old dogs over fifty—sly reliquia of Victorian suppression—get any real erotic kick out of a classical gallery or bathing beach. As for objections—here again we have the sole test of *proportion and truth*. Iconographic pornography in its true sense is limited to the tinsel tawdriness of such effects as depict nudity *out of its normal setting*, or with its sexual aspects slyly exaggerated. For instance—I agree perfectly with you that the covers as well as contents of rags like *Snappy Stories* represent true pornography. The most repulsive forms of pornography are those which bear a veil or an excuse—"art," double entendre, "moral purpose", "intellectual instruction", and so on. But in such cases it is not so much the pornographic content as the obvious sneaking *insincerity* which alienates us. We are equally alienated by the obvious insincerity of Victorianism.

Point #6—criticism operating through wit and humour—is probably the most genuinely debatable of all the seven I am listing. *Absolutely*, I don't think we can make much of a case against it—but we have more available objections than we have against serious erotic literature, since here only the light overtones of the spirit are involved. Our verdict on a bit of risqué wit must always be provisional and tentative—resting wholly on the dominant aesthetic mood of the place and moment. Clearly, there is bad taste in the overdoing of any subject *not necessitated by the laws of truth-telling*, which may contravene the sensibilities

of a large proportion of the possible audience. At present, the dying anti-erotic age is not (in my opinion) quite dead enough to make Restoration wit wholly acceptable to our older generation. . . .

Point #7, on the other hand, is not *debatable at all*. No full-witted adult outside the Popish church or the vestigial backwoods of Georgia and Tennessee could wish to limit the sober scientific investigation of any subject whatsoever, from the geology of Antarctica to the cosmic ray and inner structure of the electron. A puritan who would limit the discussion and study of any phase of biology is simply outside civilisation—outside any argument which can take place among civilised men in 1929 or 1930.

And so it goes. I'd like to be with you, but I can't be. And I predict that you'll "see what I see" before many years are over. I've been through much the same cycle of shifting opinion as fresh data has appeared and old prejudices have slowly revealed their hollowness, subjectivity, and essential localism in space and time. As for the relative debatability of Restoration and recent literature—I think the recent is franker because the age is franker, but that both are equally authentic. And I don't know about that "franker" either, on second thought . . . . . have you seen the less-known "poems" of Dean Swift—especially the one intitul'd *Celia* ——— (rhymes with WITS)? That was a typical piece of sentimental deflation that even an Hemingway cou'd scarcely lead to! One thing about frank writing—remember that the authors and admirers of it don't expect anybody to read it *all the time*. It's only a fraction of the whole aesthetic field, and I can't yet understand why Victorians continue to single it out and make such a cursed hullabaloo over it! But I ought not to wonder about any attitude connected with the generation that produced cast-iron lawn deer, the Boston city hall, the poetry of Robert Browning, and sidewhiskers. As for me I don't give a god damn one way or the other. I *own* Boccaccio—and *read* Poe, Dunsany, and Arthur Machen. What t' hell!

Yr. obt. Servt.,  
Grandpa Lo.

393. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Jany. 14, 1930

Fulgurant Fujiyama of Fathomless Fluorescence:—

..... Cook is now feeling the strain of the autumn and winter—the long illness and eventual loss—so keenly that he says he must get away to a different milieu for a few days, and is planning a motor trip through the icy waste of Northern Vermont to visit steady, consoling old Walter J. Coates. He has asked me to come to Athol and accompany him, but I have had to refuse as a matter of sheer physiological imperativeness. Another accidental experience with the cold (+14°) on Nov. 30th last—when I lost breathing-power, dinner, balance, and three-fourths of my consciousness in an attempt to walk home from my younger aunt's before I learned how the mercury had dropped—has conclusively shewed me that I can never hope to buck up against temperatures much under +20° so that a venture into the nameless Arcticities of Vermont-in-January would be the sheerest foolhardiness, and perhaps the cause of saddling Cook with the responsibility of getting a sick man to an hospital or shipping a corpse back to Providence.....

No—I hardly fancied our orthographical views would chime to the extent of either party's changing his accustomed practice! It is amusing to reflect how many apparently trivial habits are determined—among people who think at all—by what one thinks about the constitution of the universe! I'd damn well like to come out with a book some day, even though I might never win a place beside Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, or Bertrand Russell. I think I'd call it *What Is Anything?*—in spite of the popular catchpenny sound of such a title. I'd like to see your book, too—that's the way to fight, with really heavy artillery! Letters are mere BB shot beside whole books! . .

Yrs. for fewer and lighter rocks—

Θεοβὰλδος  
Theobaldus

394. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
Jany. 17, 1930

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

.... Thanks for the Carlsbad Cavern cutting—it was of unusual interest because I have long known about the cave, & have urged a friend in New Mexico to visit it. What I did not know was its extreme size & antiquity, & its overwhelming precedence over the supposedly peerless Mammoth Cave. Truly, if any abyss be the logical gateway to the hellish & hidden worlds of K'n-yan, Yoth, & N'kai, this is it! The hint of possible primordial human traces is weirdly provocative, whilst the idea of taking in a telephone outfit makes me think of my own old yarn about Randolph Carter. I am placing the item in my most precious idea-files, & hope that some day it may serve as the nucleus of some unprecedented horror. Meanwhile I am anxious to know how the actual cave-probing expedition comes out—ugh! I can picture that party fishing up unhallowed secrets & blasphemous palaeogean artifacts from those monstrous arcades & Cyclopean unlighted crypts.

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As to the difference in our respective styles or moods—one thing that influences mine is my extreme & lifelong *geographic sensitiveness*. I have never been tremendously interested in *people*, but I have a veritably feline interest in & devotion to places. The greater number of my dreams & visions are fantastic syntheses, etherealizations, & rearrangements of the landscape & architectural impressions which impinge on me during waking hours; & during those waking hours there is no pleasure which can compare with the experience of seeing strange old towns & houses & scenic vistas. These things are, & always have been, the most potent stimuli my imagination can possibly encounter; hence they usually form the points of departure for my excursions into the outside cosmic gulfs. Like Gautier "I am one for whom the visible world exists"—though

my chief use of the visible world, unlike his, is simply to provide a spring-board for leaps into abysses & dimensions forever beyond visibility.

Yr most obt & hble

HPL

395. TO MAURICE W. MOE

January 18, 1930  
Thor's Day Again

Salvator:—

One really sad announcement that you'll be pained to hear is that our good old friend Everett McNeil—author of *Tonty* and so on—is no more. . . . Good old Mac! It is an infernal shame that he couldn't have had a longer period of emancipation from Hell's-Kitchen squalor at the close of his career. The N. Y. terrain will never seem the same to the gang without him, for his naive, characteristic note was so inextricably woven into our folklore. He forms a vital part of that first, fresh, fantastically marvellous impression of the metropolis which I receiv'd before familiarity bred disgust—that elusive, ecstatically mystical impression of exotick gigantism and Dunsanian strangeness and seethingly monstrous vitality which I picked up in 1922, before I knew it too well . . . . Cyclopean phantom-pinnacles flowering in violet mist, surging vortices of alien life coursing from wonder-hidden springs in Samarcand and Carthage and Babylon and AEGyptus, breathless sunset vistas of weird architecture and unknown landscape glimpsed from bizarrely balustraded plazas and tiers of titan terraces, glittering twilights that thickened into cryptic ceilings of darkness pressing low over lanes and vaults of unearthly phosphorescence, and the vast, low-lying flat lands and salt marshes of Southern Brooklyn; where old Dutch cottages reared their curved gables, and old Dutch winds stirred the sedges along sluggish inlets brooding gray and shadowy and out of reach of the long red rays of hazy setting suns. And I remember when good old Mac display'd Hell's Kitchen to Little Belknap and me—a first glimpse for both of us. Morbid nightmare aisles of odorous Abaddon-labyrinths and Phlegethonic shores—accursed hashish-dreams of endless brick walls bulging and bursting with viscous abominations and staring insanely

with bleared, geometrical patterns of windows—confused rivers of elemental, simian life with half-Nordic faces twisted and grotesque in the evil flare of bonfires set to signal the nameless gods of dark stars—sinister pigeon-breeders on the flat roofs of unclean teocallis, sending out birds of space with blasphemous messages for the black, elder gods of the cosmic void—death and menace behind furtive doors—frightened policemen in pairs—fumes of hellish brews concocted in obscene crypts—49th St.—11th Ave.—47th St.—10th Ave.—9th Ave. elevated—and through it all the little white-hair'd guide plodding naively along with his head in a simpler, older, lovelier, and not very possible world . . . . a sunny, hazy world of Wisconsin farm-days and green shores of romantick boy-adventure and Utopian lands of fixt, uncomplex standards and values . . . . good old Mac! When will there ever be another like him?

Yr. obt. Loavus.

396. TO MRS. ZEALIA BROWN REED (BISHOP)

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
Jany. 26, 1930

My dear Mrs. Reed:—

. . . . Poor old McNeil's death last month was a depressing shock to us all. The "gang"—or such of it as still retains metropolitan residence—met at Talman's (the chap who designed my new book plate) in Brooklyn last Wednesday, and Sonny writes that the meeting didn't seem quite like the old-time ones. Good old Mac was a character—naive, honest, lovable, plodding, and still full of the kindly, outworn faiths of the 19th century. His life was really a tragedy—for no matter how hard he worked, he could never seem to scrape together enough to keep him out of dire want . . . that is, until the very last, when his books showed better sales and he moved to a cosy new flat in Astoria at the foot of Ditmars Blvd., where his living-room windows looked out on the parklike shore of the East River, with blue water gleaming, boats passing, the green of Ward's and Randall's Islands glowing, and the great Roman-like span of Hell Gate Bridge arching over all. But

this only heightens the tragic irony of his career—for no sooner had he reached this stage of relative peace and comfort, than he was stricken down. Having toiled in squalor all his life for a small reward, even that reward was denied him after the briefest of glimpses! Mac was a son of rural Wisconsin who grew up as a natural story-teller and finally went to New York in wide-eyed expectancy to seek his fortune, like boys in the story-books—the fortune that never came. Too shy and simple to make his way against the push and competition of unctuous sophisticates, he kept on writing his naive boy-tales without knowing how to exploit them among the shark-like publishing fraternity—and vegetated quietly in unknown backwaters—poorer and poorer ones as his fortunes waned, and as the growth of the city made “shabby genteel” quarters harder and harder to obtain. Always a shy, grown-up boy in manner and psychology, his hair whitened and his step weakened with the years, till he looked like an old man before his time. He lived largely as a hermit, fearful that people did not like his plain ways or that they would think him odd and boresome—but he always had a few friends of varying ages who appreciated and admired his qualities, and would not be repelled by shyness. When Sonny and I first met him, in 1922, his affairs were at their lowest ebb, and he dwelt in the frightful slum of Hell’s Kitchen—where Manhattan’s forties slope gradually down to the Hudson. This was and is the toughest slum in New York—toughest in an active sense, being full of fighting Irish, whereas the East Side has gone over to cowed, cringing Jews and affable—even if stiletto-toting—Italians. Policemen in Hell’s Kitchen go in pairs, and report a high casualty list. High in a squalid tenement house amidst this welter lived good old Mac—his little flat an oasis of neatness and wholesomeness with its quaint, homely pictures, rows of simple books, and curious mechanical devices which his ingenuity concocted to aid his work—lap boards, files, etc., etc. He lived on meagre rations of canned soup and crackers, and did not whimper at his lot. We all used to shudder at having to wade through such a neighbourhood to get to his place, but when he entertained a meeting his shy hospitality atoned for all. I can hardly realise even now that, if I went down to 543 West 49th St. and rang the bell in the dismal hall, I would not hear an answering click and find that little grey figure in the doorway after climbing the five squalid flights of iron-and-concrete stairs! Poor old Mac! He had suffered a lot in his day—and at one time had nothing to eat but the sugar which he could pick up

free at lunch rooms and dissolve in water for the sake of its nourishment. That era of malnutrition was what broke him down and paved the way for his death at 67. In 1922, even, his voice and hands trembled like an octogenarian’s, and Sonny and I were genuinely shocked to find in a *Who’s Who* that he was only 60. We had thought him 75, at least. I can see him now, too, as he was on the walks we all used to take—shorter and shorter walks, they had to be, for him. I shall always associate him with the great grey glamorous stretches of sedgy flat lands in Southern Brooklyn—salt marches with inlets, like the Holland coast, and dotted with lonely Dutch cottages with curving roof-lines. All gone now—like Mac—built over by cheap suburbs with flashy cottages and commonplace streets. Then came the glimpse of better fortune—and the end!

Yr. obt. Servnt.,  
H. P. Lovecraft

397. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Jan. 1930

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... As for your own verse—I wouldn’t worry if I were you about the changes incident to a readjustment to the contemporary scene. The essential quality of poetic vision does not depend on period or perspective or theme; & after your view is re-focused to the values & proportions now recognised as sound, you will find yourself reacting to them just as richly & naturally as you formerly reacted to the values & proportions of the preceding age. This does not involve any loss or impairment of personality or individual nature. The individual quality is not a matter of theme, but is simply the manner in which one responds to any theme that one does respond to. The history of poetry is full of cases of writers who have lived from one age into another & changed their styles accordingly. Byron, for instance, first wrote in the Georgian manner & then wholly recast himself in the mould of the romantic revival—as did many another poet who lived in the early XIX century. And in a later age, Amy Lowell discarded the late XIX century

tradition for the imagistic thought of the early XX century. In neither case was the poet's essential personality changed. They merely continued to express in their own respective ways the impressions which impinged upon them. The change was not in them, but in the impinging impressions. . . . .

Returning to the matter of poetry—I am sure that your absence of the joy-motive, as mentioned in your second letter, is merely temporary; or perhaps a maturer observation & expanded perspective arc transmitting the relatively naive & illusory phenomenon of joy into the equally gratifying but more solid & intelligently enduring phenomenon of *interest*. I think, on the whole, that *interest & appreciation*, plus a sense of adventurous expectancy which clearly recognises its phantasmal & unrealisable nature, are perhaps more important than mere unreasoning joy in the poetic motivations of experienced & sophisticated poets. However, the distinction is too slight to be worth bothering about. The right attitude is simply to take what pleasure one can in the visible beauty of the moment, & let everything else in the cosmos go hang.

. . . . . Incidentally—my *Fungi* have just come back, & I am enclosing them herewith. There are 33 here, but I shall probably grind out a dozen or so more before I consider the sequence concluded. I shall re-use a good many of the ideas in later short stories. You will notice throughout the series my effort to break away from tawdry & artificial "poetic diction" & write in the living language of normal utterance. Probably I haven't fully succeeded, but this junk at least implies a start in the right direction. . . . .

Yr obt hble Servt  
HPLovecraft

398. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
Feby. 2, 1930

Dear C A S:-

Oh—here are my Yuggothian Fungi, to be returned at leisure. Nothing notable about them—but they at least embody certain moods & images. Some of the themes are really more adapted to fiction—so that I

shall probably make stories of them whenever I get that constantly-deferred creative opportunity I am always waiting for. You will see something of my scenic or landscape-architectural tendency in these verses—especially suggestions of unplaceable or half-forgotten scenes. These vague, elusive pseudo-memories have haunted me ever since I was an infant, & are quite a typical ingredient of my psychology & aesthetic attitude. . . . .

Yrs in Tsathoggua's name,  
Tomeron the Decayed

399. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Feb. 11, 1930  
*Later*

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

Thanks for the second envelope with its interesting contents & flattering comment on *Yuggoth*. It pleases me to note the analytical reading on which your opinion of the verses is based, & in most cases I think I can agree with your preferences among them. There was no hurry at all about their return—& of course it was entirely all right to copy those which you did. Heaven knows I have no pose or affectations or palpitations about such truck as I grind out—I don't give a hang who sees it or what becomes of it. The fun is in the writing—& beyond that my only interest is in showing it to a few tolerant & appreciative readers. Most of these sonnets represent odd moods & images which have been flitting around in my head for ages—& in several cases I intend to use the themes over again in prose fiction. Oh, yes—aside from the introductory three they are meant for independent publication. I am letting the *Prov. Journal* have a first chance at them, & what they return I shall send to *Weird Tales*. The residue after this will go to *Driftwind* (a Vermont magazine which comes close to the domain of the *Circle & Carillon* class, & which uses the work of many of these groups) & what they don't want I shall dump on the amateur press.

It is interesting to know that your father was an early devotee of Poe—a circumstance highly appropriate in a Baltimorean, in view of Poe's long residence & burial in the city. Possibly you know of the neighbour-



hoods (now declined, of course, & even then declining) where he lived with his aunt & cousins—first in Milk St. (now Eastern Ave.) near the S. W. corner of Patterson Park in the Falls' Point district, & later in Amity St., west of Fremont Ave. He was in Baltimore for a time in 1829, prior to his entrance to West Point, & again from 1831 to 1835, at which time he went to Richmond to take the editorship of *The Southern Literary Messenger*. It was in Baltimore that he obtained his first literary recognition, as a result of the publication of his prize-winning tale—*Mrs. Found in a Bottle*—in the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor*. I have not looked up the Poe houses or localities in Baltimore, but mean to do so some time. That city ought really to have more of a claim to him than Fordham, (now absorbed in N Y City) where so much is made of his cottage. Richmond, however, is really the authentic "home town"—where all the formative influences of youth had their sway. My own taste for Poe preceded the wave of popularity beginning with the 1909 centenary. I came upon him at the age of 7—back in 1897—& was imitating his tales in 1898. Two of my products of that year—*The Mysterious Ship* & *The Secret of the Grave*—are still knocking about the house somewhere. Too bad your father's library was dispersed. It was lucky for me that my old home did not dissolve till I was 14, & able to exert my will toward the preservation of such parts of the Lovecraft & Phillips family libraries as I desired to keep. These units still form from a third to a half of my books, for lack of wall space has made me perform a slow & cautious collector. Your grandmother must indeed have been interesting & delightful—I always liked courtly old people whose experience reached back to the pre-Victorian age before the Georgian tradition had quite expired—or at least, to periods still coloured by memories of those older days. My paternal grandmother was dead long before I was born, but I can well recall my maternal grandmother, who died when I was five. I often wished my line had a greater longevity, so that in youth I might have had more direct living links with Georgian times. One of my friends, now 33, has only just lost his maternal grandmother—an inexhaustible repository of old Vermont lore with whom I conversed interestedly when I visited him in Yonkers last spring.

Yr obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

400. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

10 Barnes St.  
Feby. 27, 1930

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

And now let me thank you most profoundly & eloquently in advance for those bits of *dinosaur bone* which you mention as being tentatively en route! Nothing could be more appropriate to my tastes or more stimulative to my fancy! To think of having by me the mortal remains—in part—of a twenty-foot-high thing which lumbered about the primal Pacific morasses 50,000,000 years ago . . . . a thing which may have trod the vari-colour'd sands of Lemuria, & nosed amongst the fallen obelisks of the Elder Ones . . . . a beast on whose broad back Great Cthulhu himself may have ridden from his palace in blasphemous R'lyeh! . . . . .

Ever yr oblig'd & obt Servt  
HPL

401. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Catacombs of Ptolemides  
Month of the Horn'd Ram  
March, 1930

To Klarkash-Ton, High-Priest of Tsathoggua, Greetings:

Yes, indeed, the dinosaurian reliquiae duly arrived, & I am thankful beyond measure for so provocative an imaginative talisman! I can close my eyes & behold the steaming fungoid morass in Lemuria through which It once floundered—behold that, & the strange cities on the Ocrathian shore from whose triangular basalt gates the serpent-headed Blaphnagidae oozed forth to hunt Its brothers with their electronic tubes. Some of this will have to get on paper some time—but meanwhile I shan't have any Southern trip unless I stick to the mountain of revision whose returns are certain & immediate!

Again thinking you for those aeon-curst remnants of Behemoth, & for the glimpse of the Manichaeon in his crumbling house of evil, I remain

Yr most oblig'd, most obt, most hble Servt  
Tomeron the Accurst

402. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

Mar. 10 '30

Thanks exceedingly for the cuttings—especially the one about London streetnames. Providence, thank heaven, has avoided the stultifying custom of numbering—our only numbered streets being ten obscure ones in the north end of the town. Our principal business thoroughfare is called *Westminster St.*; that of next importance being *Weybosset St.*—the Indian name for “place of fording”. The junction of the two is known as *Turk's Head*, after the sign on one of the old shops there. I recall the old colonial building at *Turk's Head*—in fact, my barber had his shop there—but it has now given way to a 16-story office structure. Around the waterfront we have streets so picturesquely named as *Gold St.*, *Silver St.*, *Doubloon St.*, *Guilder St.*, *Bullion St.*, &c., & on the ancient hill the Quaker influence is manifest by such names as *Benevolent St.* But for the most part old local family names predominate—& sometimes old individual names. Thus we have a *Brown St.*, a *Chad Brown St.*, & a *Moses Brown St.* Our *Broadway* was once a splendid residential street, a mile long & lined with mansions, but is now sunk to a slum & is rapidly being engulfed by the vast Federal Hill Italian colony. Two or three of the ancient families, however, still cling to their old homes—odd cases amidst a desert of Sicilian squalor & Neapolitan noisomeness! Many of the colonial street names have disappeared—*Back St.* becoming *Benefit St.*; *Gaol-Lane* changing successively to *King St.* & *Meeting St.*; *Presbyterian-Lane* to *Rosemary-Lane* & later to *College St.*, *North-Baptist Lane* to *Thomas St.*, (scene of the B. K. H.—*Call of Cthulhu* coincidence) & so on. But it will take many more generations to drain all the quaintness out of old Providence. Incidentally—that #10 cutting amused me. I thought of *Downing St.* when I moved here, but *Stratton St.* is a new one! By the way—enormous thanks for that *Georgetown*

view. I have seen the house many times, & have ordinary postcard views of it; but nothing catches the spirit so well as this etching. Swann seems to have something of the sympathetic antiquarian feeling of Providence's Henry J. Peck.

The second batch of cuttings is phenomenally rich in interesting material. I shall file the *Dunstanborough* legend in a book of old family legends which I have, & the Roman art item will go in a work on Graeco-Roman art. That is one of the ways I keep track of cuttings—though it is a woefully unsystematic one. When I consider my files as a whole, I feel marked sympathy with DeQuincey's method—as so opportunally mentioned in one of the cuttings in this lot!

That crocus picture is alluring in the extreme! We have not yet reached that stage of vernality up here, though the past week has indeed given us a fair imitation of April in temperature. One day it was 68° another day 64°—I have made several walking expeditions, & on one occasion induced my aunt to make a brief excursion to the outer world. However, there is unfortunately much opportunity for frigid weather between now & the real spring. The Peattie article brings out much of the charm of winter, but I had much rather enjoy that charm on paper from the safe distance of Charleston or St. Augustine or New Orleans! The idea that Washington was once an Indian manufacturing centre is highly interesting—indeed there is much material for absorbing speculation in the whole pre-European ethnology of America. Rhode Island undoubtedly had a long & colourful Indian history, for the artifacts & ceremonial rocks of at least one unknown pre-Algonquin race are discernible in several localities. They call it the “red pottery race” after its characteristic product. The false path in the Egyptian tomb is another archaeological fact of great piquancy. And speaking of Egypt—the literal news of the day furnishes one item as good as any weird fictional plot yet written. Have you seen the item of the suicide of Lord Westbury last Friday? He was the father of one of the explorers of Tutankhamen's tomb, & his rooms in London were full of strange Egyptian objects. On Friday he leapt from a 7th floor window, leaving a note in which he said “I really cannot stand any more horrors.” This is no product of imagination, but a literal bit of fact from the day's news! I wish I could see that Viking house reconstruction in Iceland—indeed, I have always wanted to see Iceland under appropriate summer conditions. There is a provocative imaginative fascination about *Ultima Thule*

which has affected me profoundly since childhood. I suppose Reykjavik has much modern architecture, but even so, I fancy there must be a great deal of the mediaeval left in it. The Georgetown article was also of interest. It pleases me to hear that the beauty of this section is beginning to be appreciated, though I fear that, as in the case of Providence, a large amount of destruction as well as preservation will attend the exploitation & development.

..... In the matter of the sentimental "epic"—I would advise caution in offering anything to the public which would tend to suggest moods grounded in exploded fallacy. If I recall the verses aright, they perpetuate the myth of two "souls" which are "destined" for each other—or something to that effect; a temporary decorative idea so plainly contrary to all fact that in this honest age it has implications of humour rather than of seriousness. There is an air of unreality about 19th century material of this sort which one can't get away from, & which becomes glaringly obvious the moment one gives human influences & relationships a serious & open-minded study. It may have had a poetic appeal during the brief period—say 1830-1890—when people deliberately detached reason & observation from their aesthetic life, but it is too far out of the main stream of vital expression to have a permanent significance. There is no such thing as "love" as Victorians understood—or pretended to understand—it; & the too-ponderous treatment of the mere congeniality which comprised the non-erotic side of the nearest corresponding reality is an aesthetic mistake involving the fatal fault of emotional inappropriateness—i.e., the adoption of a manner & medium not adapted to the given material. It is a pity that so much violent "de-bunking" has to be done today—but the chief fault is with the Victorian concocters of the original "bunk" rather than with the modern truth-seekers who have the thankless task of exposing & destroying it!

..... As for "evil" poets—don't be deluded by the myth that artistic merit has anything to do with the artificial & changeable folkway-fashions which we naively call "good" & "evil". Art—including poetry—is simply the language of the imagination raised to the highest degree of poignancy, & it makes no difference whether the imagination contains what a particular age & race may consider "good", or whether it contains what that age & race happens to group as "evil". The greatest of all French poets was the thorough Satanist Baudelaire—

the very title of his principal collection being *Les Fleurs du Mal*. Of all the great poets of the world, a full majority have been unspeakable scoundrels—indeed, most of the bards I chiefly admire, I'd hate to have inside my house! Not that I have any cosmic prejudice against any form of so-called "evil", but that one naturally feels somewhat uncomfortable talking to people whose basic emotions & customs are too widely different from what one's own may happen—through accidents of heredity & environment—to be.

With best wishes,  
Yr most obt hble Servt  
HPLovecraft

403. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

The Ides of Martinus, 1930  
(March 12, 1930)

Crudent Crown of Cerebro-Chronological Coördination:—

Well, I'll be damn'd! So Megalopolis doesn't know its own caffeine-liquefiers! . . . No question, it's about twice as hard to get any unusual nutritive material in N' Yawk as it is in any civilised burg. I suppose the resident fauna are so damn standardised that they only eat certain things dictated by such fashions as caprice and commercialism may create! . . .

How the hell you manage to exist on a chain-gang schedule is beyond my comprehension—it would drive me to suicide in a fortnight! Bondage to the *known*, the *expected*, and the *predictable* removes, so far as I am concerned, every particle of redeeming value, lure, piquancy, and significance from the fatiguing and burthensome ordeal of prolonging life and consciousness. With these things gone, there is left in the existence-process an insufficient array of pleasurable stimuli to make the troublesome experience worth going through. There's no use in claiming that time-table slavery would "give me time to enjoy more things"—because there is nothing I could enjoy if purchased on such soul-annihilating terms. *It is never any definite experience which gives me pleasure, but always the quality of mystic adventurous expectancy itself—the indefiniteness which permits me to foster the momentary illusion that*

almost any vista of wonder and beauty might open up, or almost any law of time or space or matter or energy be marvellously defeated or reversed or modified or transcended. That is the central keynote of my character and personality, and of the character and personality of all men of the symbolic or poetic as distinguished from the intellectual type. It is a matter of *what forms a basic life-value for me*. Obviously, nothing in objective life has any real "value" for anybody. Dry and empty physical-intellectual experience soon becomes an unmeaning repetition of kindred and boresome sensations unless one's imaginative horizon be mercifully limited. What makes *anything* valuable or significant in the life of *any* person is NOT any quality intrinsic in the thing itself. It is simply *what that thing has the power to symbolise for the person in question*—how keenly that thing is able to stir in the especial individual *that sense of expansion, freedom, adventure, power, expectancy, symmetry, drama, beauty-absorption, surprise, and cosmic wonder* (i.e., the illusory promise of a majestic revelation which shall gratify man's ever-flaming, ever-tormenting curiosity about the outer voids and ultimate gulfs of entity) WHICH ALONE MEANS PLEASURE TO HUMANITY, save for the low-grade and soon-exhausted animal pleasures, and the too-soon-monotonous and wearying pleasures of mental exertion as apart from mental adventure. This complex expansion-freedom-adventure-power-expectancy-drama-beauty-wonder-sense is all that makes any sensitively organised man remain alive. What gratifies it is of value. What fails to gratify it is valueless. True, the means to gratification for every different man must necessarily be different; because the symbols evoking this complex sense are in each individual dependent upon his personal heredity, mental-physical organisation, individual history, general background, and education. It is a matter of more or less capricious *association*. Some objective experiences evoke the right symbols for some men, other experiences for others. Apart from this evocative power, no objective experience has any value for anyone. One man's meat is another man's poison. That is why it is silly to call any person's course of action *wise or foolish* until we find out just *what that person is aiming for*, anyway. Only a naively unphilosophic observer laughs at a given individual for adopting a course which stints him on some specific thing commonly regarded as a desideratum. How can such an observer know whether the individual is really suffering any net loss, or whether the "desideratum" would not be wholly worthless to the individual if dis-

joined from the special course which he refuses to abandon? That is, how can any outsider properly weigh the relative values, for another, of a certain fixed course on the one hand, and of a certain objective thing or condition on the other hand? May not the course easily be worth more to the man who follows it, than any other possible desideratum could be? This gets us back to the fundamental truth that *nothing has any intrinsic value*. The only human values are sensations—and what the wise man will seek are simply the objects and conditions which may *for him* serve as symbols to evoke the especial sensations—the complex exaltation of spaciousness, liberation, adventurous expectancy, power, drama, pageantry, symmetry, mystery, curiosity-lure, etc., etc., etc.—whose function it is to make existence seem worth prolonging. Of course the particular objects and conditions will be different for every man, since each of us has a different nature and therefore a different symbolising apparatus. That is why I don't think you're actually *unwise* in accepting a ruled, regimented life, although I personally don't understand how such a life can give you the sensations of expansion, freedom, and wonder which you surely need in order to keep going. I couldn't get the needed sensations out of any *predicted or predictable* course of events, because such events would lack the glamorous *indefiniteness* and *uncertainty* essential to the fostering of the drama-and-pageantry-illusion; the illusion of being poised on the edge of the infinite amidst a *vast cosmic unfolding* which *might* reveal almost anything. This illusion, I have discovered through long experiment and through a close analysis of every experience classifiable as *pleasant* or *joyful* that I have ever had, is *absolutely necessary* to an even tolerable *happiness* on my part. It is the sole and complete key to that elusive and evanescent quality of INTEREST which I have such prodigious difficulty in summoning up toward anything not involving the elements of *surprise, discovery, strangeness, and the impingement of the cosmic, lawless, and mystical upon the prosaic sphere of the known*. Facts as such mean *nothing* to me. Not because I have the maniac's or religious mystic's tendency to *confuse* reality with unreality, but because I have the cynic's and the analyst's inability to recognise any difference in *value* between the two types of consciousness-impacts, *real* and *unreal*. I know which are which, but cannot have any prejudice in favour of either class. Even my *seeming* preference for the *unreal* is only a chance circumstance—arising from the fact that the especial sensations I need are mainly supplied by that

element. Actually, I am just as willing to welcome impressions from the real (such as historic pageantry, astronomical mystery, archaeological darkness and terror) as from the unreal, if they will give me equally poignant expansion-freedom-adventure-beauty-drama-mystery sensations. But it is the sensations only which count. Reality or unreality in themselves—as such—are to me only academic and sterile terms. I am too cynical and analytical to retain the illusion that their actually vast physical difference gives them any difference *in value* as psychological agents impinging on man's consciousness. My one standard of value is imaginative suggesting-power or symbolising-quality. Some people derive pleasure from an empty intellectual operation—from the mere registering and recognition that such a thing is so or that such a thing isn't so. This to me is the tamest and most easily exhausted of all the pleasures—except of course the sensuous pleasures of the primal clod. No sooner does my feeble interest get half-aroused, than the flicker is snuffed out by the query "*what of it?*" And so it goes. What do I get out of travel? Why, simply a more intense and poignant sense of expansion, surprise, and the imminence of unknown wonders, than I could get without such a swift and varied pageantry of physical locale. It is not the objective scenery or things which I encounter that please me, but simply *the mood and circumstances under which they strike my senses*. In themselves they are nothing. Carcassone or the Acropolis itself would be deadwood to me if I knew weeks ahead just *when* I was going to see it, just *how* I was going to see it, and just *how long* I was going to see it. Only in connexion with the gesture of *liberation* and the aura of quivering *mystery* is beauty of any significance to me. There must be *uncertainty, suddenness, surprise* . . . . God! Shall I ever forget my first stupefying glimpse of MARBLEHEAD'S huddled and archaic roofs under the snow in the delirious sunset glory of four p.m., Dec. 17, 1922!!! I did not know until an hour before that I should ever behold such a place as Marblehead, and I did not know *until that moment itself* the full extent of the wonder I was to behold. I account that instant—about 4:05 to 4:10 p.m., Dec. 17, 1922—the most powerful single emotional climax experienced during my nearly forty years of existence. In a flash all the past of New England—all the past of Old England—all the past of Anglo-Saxondom and the Western World—swept over me and identified me with the stupendous totality of all things in such a way as it never did before and never will again. That was the high tide

of my life. I was thirty-two then—and since that hour there has been merely a recession to senile tameness; merely a striving to recapture the wonders of revelation and intimation and cosmic identification which that sight brought. . . . But there must always be the aura of freedom and surprise and indefiniteness and wonder about the impression-absorbing process. I wouldn't pay a half-dollar to see even London or Paris or Rome on a Cook's tour schedule! There must always be a sense of *soaring outward* from all temporal, spatial, and material limitations along broad vistas of slanting yellow radiance from unimagined gulfs beyond the chrysoberyl gates of sunset . . . . soaring outward toward the discovery of stupendous, cosmic, inconceivable things, and toward the envisagement and comprehension of awesome rhythms and patterns and symmetries too Titanic, too unparticled, too trans-galactic, and too overpowering for the relatively flat, tame, and local name of "beauty". When a city or landscape or experience can give me this sense of untrammelled and starward *soaring*, I account it worth my while to go after it. What doesn't give it, I don't consider worth going after. Energy flags so damnably when such a reward is not in sight. Why be alive? What is anything? When I first saw strange and pinnacled New York rising mystic and violet out of its waters in April, 1922, I got this kick to a stupendous degree—as you doubtless recall from the way I rhapsodised around with you and Little Sonny and Loveman and Kleiner and everybody . . . . darting up steps to strange sunward vistas, taking in exotic contrasts and outspread seas of alien roofs and spires, hurtling through interstellar blackness in cryptic subways, never knowing on just what planet or within just what universe I would next emerge to overwhelming light . . . . beholding monstrous inversions of the natural order—lovely white cottages and Georgian mansions of the known, sane, world side by side with pouring tides of swarthy slave-life from the obscene and unimaginable East and beyond the East . . . . squinting faces and jabbering tongues from Antioch, Alexandria, Palmyra, Petra, Hierosolyma, Nineveh, Tyre, Sidon, Ur, Memphis, Thebes, Heliopolis . . . . sinister hierophants and mysteriarchs from Babylon and Bactria, Sogdiana and Scythia . . . . fabulous Samarcand, and the whisper'd-of Irem, City of Pillars, in the forbidden Red Desert of Araby where the daemons dwell and whereof Abdul Alhazred dreamed when he writ his *Necronomicon*. Persepolis, Parsagidae . . . . Ophir and Cambaluc . . . .

Prester John . . . Zimbabwe . . . . . Bethmoora, Merimna . . . Sardathrion, wherefor Pegāna's gods weep . . . . . The mongrel sculptor in his dusty den . . . . . the mystic bookstalls with their hellish bearded guardians . . . . . monstrous books from nightmare lands for sale at a song if one might chance to pick the right one from mouldering, ceiling-high piles . . . . . rattle of the elevated through unknown labyrinths of accursed life . . . sweep of red-gold sun over a luring balustraded hill-crest—and the Home of Poe! Pressure of insane blackness on the insane lights of Times Square at night—like a low, evil ceiling over a monstrously brazier'd and doom-hieroglyphed secret temple of inner AEGYPTUS . . . . . Musaeums with all the evocative symbols of Greece, Rome, and nighted Khem . . . . . that *Pantheon* model! Alas! S. P. Q. R. . . . . CONSUL ROMANUS . . . brazen notes of the tubicen . . . . . tramp of the legions . . . . . AVE · SCIPIO · TRIUMPHATOR . . . . . Gad, what a kick! What a sense of new, exotic worlds opening up before a one-time (and, unknown to me, some-day-to-be-again!) recluse as horizons take form from purple mystery, and marching aeons deposit strange freight before unjaded eyes! That, boy, was what I call a travel-experience! . . . . . but as soon as the sights of New York became *well-known* to me; as soon as the exotick strangeness lost its *distant mystery*; then all was changed. The very cleavage from the known, sane, world became hideous and ingulphing menace, and the very glamour and lure turned to a sense of exile and of loneliness. What gave the original scene its kick was its *freshness, strangeness, and utter remoteness*. It was because I did *not* live there that I found it wonderful. With familiarity, all became garishness and squalor and dead-sea fruit. As the years go by, the sense of remoteness from such abnormal exoticism of course returns; so that next month I shall probably feel a few faint echoes of the glamour and exploration-sense of 1922. The *Palisades* especially have a vague, cosmic, recapturable charm. But there will be no such kick as I got before. To get such a kick again I shall have to go to Quebec or London or Paris or Rome. Strangeness, light, colour, motion, beauty, and a sense of the past hovering near. That is what gives me the supreme urban kick. And even at that I believe that now—with my older, less astonishing personality—I could never get the kick from any large city that I could from a smaller, older, quainter place where hereditary glamour is thicker. It was because I was not past early middle age in 1922 that I got the Manhattan kick I did. Nowadays

it is the still stronger *Marblehead* kick that I am more likely to repeat when I come unexpectedly upon some ancient town of equal beauty, unchangedness, and relation to the Anglo-Saxon stream of history.

All this no doubt sounds damned odd to you—and just to make it amazingly odder I'm going to slip in some reflections of my inner moods which were squeezed out of me by the provocation of revising good ol' Moe's poetry textbook last fall. I had sworn to cut out rhyming—but that bird got me doing jingles for metrically illustrative purposes, and now—confound it—I can't stop! Of this series of *Fungi from Yuggoth* I've sold fifteen—ten to *Weird Tales* and five to the *Providence Journal*—at \$3.50 each; (25¢ a line) which makes my net profit on 'em exactly \$52.50 to date. . . . The items which illustrate my moods and indicate why no mapped out programme could ever be of any value to me are (I should judge) V, XIII, XIV, XVIII, XIX, XXIII, XXVIII, XXX, and XXXIII . . . though all the others no doubt reflect various phases, ramifications, and corollaries of the central mood-nucleus. . . . Gawd knows I ain't no poet—only I have the misfortune (for a non-poet) to think and feel in terms of symbols and sensations instead of facts, as poets generally do. . . .

Yrs. for rocks and gaffarel and the open road—  
Θεοβαλδος  
Theobaldus

404. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

March 14, 1930  
Begun—Freyr's Day  
Finish'd—Sol's Day

Young Man:—

. . . . . Speaking of Poe—I heard Krutch's lecture upon him the 5th of March, tho' the speaker did not say anything not contain'd in his book publish'd in 1926. Krutch, I discover, is 37 years of age; but he is slim and well-preserv'd, and has the appearance of a young man. He is a somewhat nervous person, and on this occasion gripp'd the edge of the desk in front of him—swaying backward and forward as if he design'd

to vault over it! This, *and a small moustache*, are the only things about Joe that I object to . . . except of course his over-emotional pangs about the lost values he so honestly faces. I learn from my beloved Side-show column (in which, by the way, I have receiv'd glancing mention two or three times of late) that Krutch dined with B. K. H. on the evening before the lecture; but the column's subsequent tone does not indicate that the Modern Temperist succeeded in disillusioning any of the sprightliness out of our local oracle! One might know that he couldn't—for if a man can still be cheerful after living all his life in *Fall River*, (as B. K. H. has done) there is nothing in space-time which cou'd shake his unreasoning optimism! Incidentally—it is barely possible that I may meet B. K. H. in the not remote future, since I have indirectly discover'd that he has exprest a wish for such a meeting! This discovery came through my aunt Mrs. Gamwell—who forms this family's sole remaining link with the outside world of gregarious humanity. At a meeting of some club to which she belongs—not the Handicraft, but one called the "Rushlight Club", whatever it's all about—my aunt was introduced to B. K. H.'s wife, and in the course of the subsequent conversation mention'd that her nephew had exchange'd letters with B. K. "And what is your nephew's name?" politely inquired Mrs. Side-show. "H. P. Lovecraft," responded my aunt—whereupon Mrs. B. K. H. exprest signs of distinct recognition! "Why," she exclaim'd, (I quote my aunt's report verbatim) "Bert's crazy about him! He wants to meet him awfully! But how can he be *your nephew*? We thought from his letters that he must be an elderly man!" It seems that Hart himself is 37—just Joe Krutch's age.

. . . . I am still stall'd on p. 26 of my new Vermont horror, since revision (which I can't refuse if I expect to make my trip!) has overwhelm'd me. Our intelligent rustick friend Woodburn Harris has suddenly blossom'd into a prolifick professional client—being intent on saving the country by division and publishing ways and means to repeal the 18th amendment . . . (O why did I bring this up! It reminds me that I must type about 12 pages of the damn stuff before nightfall!)—whilst our old-time fellow-amateur Mrs. Renshaw has reappear'd on the horizon with a lot of overflow theme papers from her school to be criticis'd and graded. All this means cash for coach-drivers, of course—but it also means *work*—and nothing repels and discourages me more than the latter. The primal curse of Adam! Oh, yes—I've let Coates pick

four of my Yuggoth things for *Driftwind*, and Cook will use six in his next *Recluse*. . . . Klarkash-Ton continues to pour forth fiction at a dizzying rate, one recent item—*The Devotee of Evil*—being especially fine. Did I tell you that he was sending me as a gift some fragments of *dinosaur bone*—actual parts of an entity twenty feet high that lumber'd thro' the fungoid morasses of California and Lemuria 50,000,000 years ago? YSSShh . . bugg-shoggog . . . . n'ghah . . . . ? Well—the stuff has come . . . crumbling fragments of organick phosphate material which once grew beneath the slimy hide of

A dark and monstrous lizard-shape that glides  
Along the waters of the inland tides

W'ygh . . . what visions float up malignly from unplumb'd hereditary regions of the subconscious! . . .

. . . . . As for contacts betwixt America and the Old World—it appears to me that these were chiefly across the Pacific rather than the Atlantic, for it is the art of *Southeastern Asia* that Aztec-Mayan remains most overwhelmingly resemble. That casual links with the Mediterranean world did exist, it would be too much to deny; but the results of this linkage certainly do not appear to be obvious on either side of the ocean. . . . As for the race-stock of the Indians—this is clearly composite, with Mongol as a base. . . . It is notable that amongst the Indians the beaked nose is not universal, but seems to predominate mainly in the East—amongst the Algonquins and Iroquois, and cognate tribes. The typical Western Indian of the plains, pueblos, or Pacific coast, is fat and flat-nosed—typically Mongol except for certain strains allied to the more easterly Indians. Altogether, the question of American Indian ethnology must still be reckoned an open one. One theory which I have suggested—as an unscientific layman—is that the hook nose of the Atlantick coast Indian comes from the Phoenician mariners—typical Semites—whom it is natural to suppose must have been washed across the ocean alive during the long centuries of Tyrian and Carthaginian voyaging beyond the Pillars of Hercules. Or if such stray infusions be deemed insufficient to account for the prevalence of the beaked physiognomy, then it is by no means extravagant to presuppose to the existence of some abortive and forgotten attempt at Punic colonisation. I think I have sent you cuttings touching upon the recent reputed discovery of Phoenician inscriptions and pottery-shards in Brazil, along the Cumina

River in the state of Para. Men of science in Rio de Janeiro have thought these reliques worthy of study; and if their decoding seems to justify further research, an expedition will be made to the Cumina region in search of more artifacts and the possible site of a town. This matter interests me, because my own Phoenician speculations date back years before it. . . .

Yrs. for Aryan civilisation—  
PAPPUS THEOBALDOS

405. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Sunday the 23rd  
(March 1930)

Illustrious Doorkeeper:—

. . . . . Still, it is *absurdly easy* to find the cause of that decay in *prose* rhythm of which Dr. Canby speaks—so easy, indeed, that I marvel at his failure to dwell upon it himself. I allude to the *use of the typewriter* in the original composition of manuscripts; a practice which not only discourages good workmanship through its undue speed, distracting noise, (for not everyone hath a SiReen!) and division of the attention, but which insidiously tempts a writer to condone hasty crudities in rhythm on account of the extreme difficulty of making adequate interlineations, corrections, and recastings in the sentences of the rough draught. No writer ought ever to consider a rapidly written sentence as a finished product. It may be that four or five verbal transportations will be needed to produce the desired effect; or that wholesale substitutions of words of diverse length—often demanding still further textural changes for their perfect accommodation—will have to be effected. These needs may be obvious at once, or not until some later passage brings out the asymmetrical quality of the first-evolved version. In any case, an artistically conceived prose manuscript must be in a perpetual state of flux; with unlimited opportunities for every kind of shifting, interpolation, and minute remodelling, and with no sentence or paragraph accepted more than tentatively until the very last word is set down. Now it is clearly impossible to adhere to this standard of *ultimate perfection at any cost*, unless the writer is able to correct and re-correct his manu-

script with the utmost thoroughness and intricacy—adding here, striking out there, substituting here, transposing there; and now and then transforming whole passages of varying length by recasting operations which involve the sacrifice of all the original wording and the substitution of a differently-cast paraphrase. On a hand-written manuscript this process is easily managed through finely-written interlineation, marginal insertions, etc., etc.—but when one tries it with a typewriter a vast number of difficulties arise. Only a limited amount of the correction can be done by the machine itself, even when triple-spacing is used; yet the trouble of removing and reinserting the sheet acts as a deterrent to the proper hand-correction—which of course must be made whilst the creative impulse is fresh, and not postponed till the completion of the page. In other words, no decent prose—or rather, no prose of permanent rhythmical value—can be produced except on a sheet which can *at any moment be subjected to instant emendation, in any degree of extensiveness, in any of its parts whatsoever*; a set of conditions which cannot be met on the typewriter. Of course, it is possible that occasional typed products—casual letters, and so on—of persons with an already-implanted rhythm-sense may accidentally achieve a fair grade of harmoniousness; just as an accomplished musician's idle strumming of piano-keys may produce a chance bar of fair quality. But in this case the merit will be due to a long previous saturation with good melody and cadence, such as can be obtained only through habits of deliberate, fastidious, and constantly-amended longhand composition. Only the generation of writers brought up on cautious pen and ink methods can have any chance of clicking out passable rhythm on a typewriter. This is indeed already sadly obvious—for the newest crop of adults contains from fifty to seventy-five percent of lifelong typewriter-addicts whose tempo and mechanically imposed limitations can be readily traced in short, jerky sentences, staccato near-rhythms, and an utter ignoring of periodic beats and modulations in favour of ideas and images presented by direct intellection and without the aid of sound-appeal. These people often show a perfect *natural* sense of rhythm when they write *in verse* and are *obliged* to keep the prosodick element paramount; but when they turn to prose, the discouraging effect of their mechanical incubus grows too much for them, and they soon succumb to the deadening staccato and careless structure inevitable in not-easily-corrected and over-speeded writing. This is my constant quarrel with Belknap and Loveman—both splendid



*poets*, yet each with characteristic limitations in prose which proceed from a one hundred percent and lifelong use of the machine. If I had a son I would not let him see a typewriter till he had formed a natural and rhythmical prose style of such strength and persistence as to be beyond harm from any source. I myself would no more think of composing any original work on the typewriter, than I would think of composing it in a printing office with galley and type-case or linotype machine. The only stuff I have ever clicked off in rough-draught has been the casual Kleicomolo and travelogue material—not destined for print, and requiring carbon copies. I'll wager you can see the inferiority in style of this over my other writing—and you can well imagine how much *worse* it would be if I had never formed and practiced any other habits of composition. Here, then, is the great cause of the contemporary decline in prose rhythm. It is not so much that the young writers spend their nights amidst the bleat of jazzing saxophones and the jangle of syncopated cow-bells, as that they approach their tasks with a tool which handicaps instead of serving them. . . . .

Yr. obt. Servt. Lo.

406. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Apr. 1, '30

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . As for *When Souls Strike Fire*—the only reason I suggest the postponement for some later volume is that it might puzzle the reader accustomed to contemporary conceptions of values, & impair the acceptance of the purely lyrical items in the book. This might not be true if it were shorter in proportion, but its length would single it out for especial notice. As I believe I said when surveying it a year or so ago, it is excellent as a poem, but rather obviously reflects a philosophy based on a completely exploded conception of the universe & of the basic sources, bearings, linkages, & operation of human emotions. Since the pioneering work of Freud & the still more analytical work of his successors—Pavlov, Jung, Adler, Watson, &c. &c. &c. we have come to see that there is no such thing as "love" in any unified, permanent, or important sense; & recognize that the earlier notions of such matters were due to



H. P. Lovecraft in Brooklyn

sheer lack of scientific knowledge & to certain well-defined poetic or religio-mystical delusions. To speak of the "immortality" or cosmic significance of anything as mythical & illusory as "love", is today essentially meaningless; so that serious poetry can no longer continue to echo the mediaeval-Victorian way of handling such themes. It is notable that the extremely sentimental treatment of "love" has been almost wholly confined to ages of either great ignorance (such as the romantic & squalid Middle Ages) or great affectation & self-delusion. (Such as the Victorian age.) Even in the absence of technical psychological scholarship, all the more rational ages of the past—Greece, Rome, the Elizabethan era, the 18th century—had a healthy instinctive perspective & sense of solid reality which withheld them from the most attenuated & insipid forms of romantic extravagance. Their treatment of amatory themes was robust & lifelike & honest—with a saving sense of normality which always kept clear of spinning illusory cobwebs of cosmic significance about the mating phenomena of mankind. Such is the main line of major poetic tradition, to which the 20th century has very healthily returned. The moonstruck rhapsodisings of the mediaeval sentimentalists, & the similar extravagances of Victorians who assiduously cultivated the mediaeval mood, are distinct variants from the major stream. Most certainly, it would pay the poet to beware of weaving intense ecstasies around things which do not exist—around artificial ideas & delusions which have no counterparts in the world of normal phenomena. The one exception, perhaps, concerns the myths & unrealities of religious faith, whose profound inculcation into the now dying cultural cycle has given them a sort of unity & coherence & spurious life. But even these myths will have to be excised from the poetic field in a century or less, when religion will have ceased to be believed by any people who think at all. It is more than probable, too, that my own type of phantasy will cease to be aesthetically significant when the habit of normal perception & appraisal becomes general & instinctive among the western races. I am sure that the changes in your poem must all be in the right direction, & believe that in any but an important first book it would be pleasantly acceptable as an echo of older attitudes which we all recall, or have heard of, even though we no longer share them.

The cuttings you enclosed are of extreme interest—that about the "star jelly" being absorbingly & superlatively so. No idea has ever fascinated me so much as that of the wafting of alien life across space, & I

have enjoyed reading about these doubtful phenomena in books like Charles Fort's eccentric *Book of the Damned & New Lands*. It is really improbable that any matter in the condition we recognise as "organic" could manage to get from one orb to another under the strenuous conditions of meteoric flight, though these occasional reports certainly do have their puzzling aspects. I have used the idea once—in *The Colour Out of Space*—& may yet use it again in a different way. In fact, I am suggesting it in the Vermont tale now half-completed. This cutting contains a number of points I had not encountered before, & goes at once into my choicest files. Incidentally—you have no doubt read reports of the discovery of the new trans-Neptunian planet . . . a thing which excites me more than any other happening of recent times. Its existence is no surprise, for observers have long known that one or more such worlds probably exist beyond Neptune; yet its actual finding carries hardly less glamour on that account. Keats (thinking no doubt of Herschel's discovery of Uranus in 1781, or perhaps of the finding of the earlier asteroids) caught the magic of planetary discovery in two lines of his *Chapman's Homer* sonnet, & that magic is surely as keen today as then. Asteroidal discovery does not mean much—but a major planet—a vast unknown world—is quite another matter. I have always wished I could live to see such a thing come to light—& here it is! The first real planet to be discovered since 1846, & only the *third* in the history of the human race! One wonders what it is like, & what dim-litten fungi may sprout coldly on its frozen surface! I think I shall suggest its being named *Yuggoth!* Reports make it smaller than Uranus & Neptune, but larger than the earth. I shall await its ephemerides & elements with interest. Probably it will receive a symbol & be treated of in the *Nautical Almanack*—I wonder whether it will get into the popular almanacks as well? Probably the future 200-inch reflector to be set up in California will tell more about it—& perhaps even help in locating still more distant planets. There is still quite a bit of interest in the limited solar system despite the diversion of astronomers' chief notice to the larger problems of the stellar universe. Another thing that pleases me is that the newcomer came to light at the Lowell Observatory, & from Lowell's own calculations. Poor chap! His better known observations & speculations never fared well in the scientific world; but now, thirteen years after his death, it is possible that his calculations may win him a major place among astronomers.

The lost city in Queretaro is another fascinating theme—& still more so is the exploration of the Carlsbad Caverns. This tremendous underground world almost paralyses the imagination—there is no telling what gulfs beyond gulfs the adventurers may not find as they penetrate farther & farther toward the earth's core. One is reminded of Jules Verne's tale of a journey to the centre of the earth. The loss of "Abingdon" is indeed a tragedy—& a warning to those who postpone historic restorations till too late. From the picture, though, I judge that the old house had been badly malformed & modernised at some time during the barbarous neo-gothic period—say 1830-1850. The Bridges material is interesting. Without doubt *The Testament of Beauty* is a very tedious & Victorian thing as a whole—full of arid sentimentousness & tawdry artificialities—yet equally without doubt it must rise at times to heights of genuine vision & authentic beauty. . . . .

. . . . . There is indeed a singular aesthetic & imaginative appeal in painted windows, as most old-world travellers attest—though I am myself not so sensitive to gothic & mediaeval arts as to things of the Graeco-Roman tradition. Many of the older New England churches inserted stained glass during the Victorian age, but they are now removing them very largely in the interest of architectural harmony—since small plain panes are what go with Georgian architecture. Trinity in Newport is the latest church to plan such colonial restoration. On account of your interest in the subject I am reenclosing the item—for you may wish to file it yourself. The Irish "history" is interesting, though Father Dwyer has obviously allowed himself to get a bit ahead of the probable facts amidst his laudable ancestral patriotism. The "Mitesians" are probably pure myth—although of course many waves of prehistoric migration brought various races of Mediterranean, Nordic, & Alpine source stock over both of the British Isles. In the early historic period the peoples of Britain & Ireland were very much alike—& very much like the Gauls of the Continent. Ireland probably surpassed Britain in settled folkways & arts, but the condition was hardly what one could call an actual civilisation. It probably paralleled the advanced barbarian-cultures of Gaul & Spain—which of course included settled town-dwelling & considerable artistic craftsmanship. The new-planet data, naturally, interested me greatly; & I appreciated the references to Poe memorials in Baltimore. The Peattie *nature* articles, too, are perennially full of charm. I could appreciate that reference to the artificial spring & summer obtainable in

florists' shops, because in childhood I used to haunt such places about February, when the strain of hated winter became unbearable. I liked to walk through the long greenhouses & imbibe the atmosphere of warm earth & plant-life, & see the vivid masses of green & floral colour. One of my early doggerel attempts was a description of an hypothetical glass-covered, furnace-heated world of groves & gardens in which one might spend a decently painless winter! . . . . .

*Rue & Ruin* would be a good title for a poem. No need of worrying about subject-matter—whatever exists in the surrounding world is appropriate for poetic treatment, one thing as much as another. Don't let the explosion of Victorian myth & humbug disturb you. There was no real value in the "da-da-da" namby-pamby pretences & fashions of that amusing era. What fun or benefit could anybody get from swallowing a whole scale of milk & water falsities & values—for the most part pitifully sterile, thin, & unimaginative—when there is enough real, pagan, visual beauty in the world to keep any poetic mind busy without them? I can't see that the passing of such sickly lies as the "twin soul" bunk &c. leaves existence especially barren. Not more than a third of the intelligent population ever believed the old stuff anyway—I know I didn't, & I was born far back enough—1890—to catch its death-rattles—& there are too many absorbing realities—colour, form, rhythm, wonder—which nothing can destroy to make one need to mourn a temporary bit of cheap "hokum." In my chosen 18th century people got on very well without the mawkish insincerities & delusions of the age that followed. . . . .

I remain

Yr most oblig'd obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

407. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Tiw's Day, 1930  
All Fools (my patron Saints' day)  
(April 1, 1930)

Flowing Fountain of Factual Fulgence:—

. . . Reality is all right enough so far as it goes—I'm not one of those frantick bozoes who howl that everything is all wrong and poisonous and so on. The only trouble is *that it doesn't go far enough* for a

guy with extreme sensitiveness. The faculty of *interest* is a goddam complex thing. It is perfectly true that mild, conventional, and highly respectable people like the average business or professional man can get enough of a kick out of watching the meaningless routine phaenomena of this pimple on the cosmos to warrant their staying alive—but even with them you can see it wears thin now and then, especially in this latest age of standardisation and decreased variety and adventurousness. That's why more and more people kick over the traces and burst out in wild, anti-social vagaries . . . . . which are just as meaningless as the routine against which they are a protest. And when you leave the amiably respectable class and consider men with individualised imaginations, you can't help seeing that objective phaenomena—endless and predictable repetitions of the same old stuff over and over again—form only the very beginning of what is needed to keep their sense of significance, harmony, and personal adjustment to infinity satisfied. *All* sensitive men have to call in unreality in some form or other or go mad from ennui. That is why religion continues to hang on even when we know it has no foundation in reality. That crazy old half-Tartar bolshevik Lenin stumbled on one snappy mouthful of truth when he said, "Religion is opium for the people." It's just that—and the only reason vast numbers of cultivated men stay cheerful is that they keep doped up on that same obsolete mythology. But that stuff can't last for ever. We know too goddam much about Nature now to have it work. Reaction will try to keep it alive for another generation—we shall see desperate and damn fool movements like "Humanism", neopopery, Harry Emerson Fosdickism, and so on—but all that will peter out with the dying off of the last generations reared in genuinely subjective religious faith. Read Joseph Wood Krutch's *The Modern Temper* if you want the authentick, expert low-down on all this. Then will come the test of whether man can or can't adequately nourish himself with objective reality alone. I, for one, say he *can't*—and I'm not judging from personal experience alone when I say it. Ol' Art Schopenhauer had the straight goods—however you look at it, there's so goddam much MORE pain than pleasure in any average human life, that it's a losing game unless a guy can pep it up with pure moonshine—either the literal 95-proof pink-snake-evoker, or the churchly hootch of belief in immortality and a benign old gentleman with long whiskers (ah, for the debates of yore!!) and a cosmick purpose . . . or else the Dunsanian conjuration of an illusion of *fantastick and indefinite possibility* as shadow'd forth in certain aesthetick in-

terpretations of selected objective phenomena, time-sequences, and cosmical and dimensional speculations. Now of these three refuges, I prefer the third by a long shot—because the first is highly unaesthetic in practice and degrading in symbolism, whilst the second is puerile in substance and insulting to the intellect in its outright denial of plain facts and objective probabilities. For—you will notice—I do *not* share the real mystic's *contempt* for facts and objective conditions, even though I fail to find them interesting and satisfying. *On the contrary*, I am forced to *respect* them highly, and allow for them in every system of imaginative refuge I formulate. It gives me no kick at all to emulate the idealist or religionist and invent false conditions and significances which *actually deny reality*. Like Krutch, I had rather be a man and face reality than be a child and hide my head in a gilded Gothick prie-dieu of absolute pretence. For me, then, is the third course—the consciously artificial manipulation of the theogonist's and myth-maker's privilege in manner of the eighteenth Baron Dunsany . . . . that is, the deliberate exercise of the human instinct for space, reach, adventure, and cosmic identification through the weaving of fantastick aesthetick impressions *as such*, as *not* as to *supplement*, rather than *contradict*, reality. I get no kick at all from *postulating what isn't so*, as religionists and idealists do. That leaves me cold—in fact, I have to stop dreaming about an unknown realm (such as Antarctica or Arabia Deserta) as soon as the explorers enter it and discover a set of real conditions which dreams would be forced to contradict. My big kick comes from *taking reality just as it is*—accepting all the limitations of the most orthodox science—and then permitting my symbolising faculty to *build outward* from the existing facts; rearing a structure of *indefinite promise and possibility* whose topless towers are in no cosmos or dimension penetrable by the contradicting-power of the tyrannous and inexorable intellect. But the whole secret of the kick is *that I know damn well it isn't so*. If I let the process interfere with my *intellectual* perceptions and discriminations in the theistic manner, I'd have no fun at all but merely feel like a damned ass. I'm probably trying to have my cake and eat it at the same time—to get the intoxication of a sense of cosmic contact and significance as the theists do, and yet to avoid the ignorant and ignominious ostrich-act whereby they cripple their vision and secure the desiderate result. But this is wandering from the issue. My point is, *that a highly organised man can't exist enduringly without mental expansions beyond objective reality*. I said it before, and I say it still. You yourself get such expan-

sions though your lingering belief in the religious myths of cosmic purpose, values, and governance; myths which you can accept without ignominy because an early theological environment has enabled you *actually to imagine that such things are real*. I, repudiating the obsolete faiths from the start, can have no such residual illusions—hence if I want to think of the cosmos as a significant thing in which man has no important and symmetrical part, I have to “roll my own”. . . . .

Yrs. indefinitely—  
ΘΕΟΒΑΛΛΟΣ  
Theobaldus

408. TO AUGUST DERLETH

April 9, 1930

Dear A. W.:—

Your novelette *The Early Years*\* duly came, and I have read it with the closest attention. Truly, it is a splendid piece of work, and I can scarcely give an honest opinion of it without seeming to flatter. I knew from your isolated fragments that you had the real stuff of literature at your command; but now that I see some of these arranged in a proper organic relationship, my opinion takes an additional upward soaring! There is profound and subtle beauty, splendidly modulated, in this sequence of dream-glamorous pictures. You have a keen and sensitively selective eye for details and sensations and images, as indeed I realised before. Now I see that you are equally felicitous in arranging these things in a significant, revelatory, and aesthetically satisfying form. It seems to me that you are coming to handle words and sentences more and more skilfully and adequately—you will recall my mentioning, in years past, that carelessness in this field (repeated words, sentences of doubtful trimness, symmetry, and compactness, &C) was one result of your over-voluminous writing which ought to be corrected a bit. Time, I imagine, is supplying this correction—for this novelette has passages of beautiful and musical language as well as of poignant imagery and convincing emotion. There is no mistaking the right of this piece to be

\* *The Early Years*, the initial draft of the novel which was to become *Evening in Spring* (1941).

considered as serious literary expression. I don't know of anything turned out by any of our group which has a clearer claim to substance and authenticity. Keep this up, and you'll be on the map of the major writing world before many years are past!

Replying to your specific questions—yes, indeed, the sketches all have the feel of genuine life and sincerity about them. They create a scene and atmosphere with solid reality in every part—even though it be that ethereal reality which depends on mood and subjective vision for its palpable outlines. You are obviously not trying to give a cross-section of the entire lives of the characters in all their complex humanity. What you are doing is to trace a certain line of emotional activity in them—and in this you succeed with admirable completeness. Most certainly I find all the characters clearly outlined—visible and psychologically realisable. Though each one represents a temperament and emotional life antipodally different from my own at their age, I can detect the earmarks of truthful portrayal throughout the story. There is an impression of authentic life—a feeling that some sort of key is furnished to the fumbling and ambivalent thoughts and motivations of a vast proportion of actual adolescents whom one has observed. I really lack the power to give any specific suggestions for improvement. To suggest that the characters—or at least the boys—are not quite typical of the majority would be quite irrelevant, for art is not concerned with the quantitative. It is for each artist to furnish one stone for the general mosaic which is literature's reflection of the universal. Certainly, this is a marvellously fine piece of delving into the obscure associative imagery and emotional overtones of a certain part of the stream of consciousness of a certain type of introverted and somewhat hyperaesthetic youth. I can see the differences in intention from the Proust and Joyce schools of fiction, and think on the whole that your attitude is somewhat more conservative than the latter's. You preserve a certain coherence and integration, and exercise a measurable degree of selectiveness despite your departure from the superficial and the conventional. It flattered me to note your reference to *Randolph Carter*—but let me remind you that at the conclusion of that horror it is Warren—not the narrator—who is announced as dead! You have the real stuff, and with the progress of time it seems to me overwhelmingly probably that you will produce literature of a major calibre. Keep it up, Son! . . . Yr. most obt. and Hble. servt. HP

409. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Tyw's-Day, 1930  
(April 16, 1930)

Pedulum of Peerless Precision:

Ave, Chronometros! "Friday, April 26th" would be oke for me except for one trifling detail—namely, that it came in 1929 instead of being due in 1930! Being sensible of the relativity of time as well as of space, I've ransack'd my memory to see whether I so spent the day that I might sandwich in a future Paterson trip thro' non-Euclidean geometry—but alas! I find that all the afternoon was consum'd by the latter half of a motor trip with my past and future hosts, so that I shall be—I mean was—somewhere around Bedford, N. Y. at the time I ought to be about to be in Paterson. No use—we'll have to switch the session to 1930 and adhere to the commonplace tri-dimensional system—according to which the 26th falls on *Saturday*. Is this the day of the castbrooding, or is Friday the 25th the allotted season? It seems to me that for the 25th my hosts have planned a duplication of that selfsame Apr. 26, 1929 above mention'd, so I hope Saturday the 26th is the auspicious point on the space-time continuum. But you and Little Belknap can discuss all these mathematical details before Grandpa blows in. It's all one to the old gent so long as you boys suit yourselves!

. . . . The whole truth is, that *nobody could possibly hit on such a crazy notion as cosmic consciousness and purpose if governed solely by the evidence available in 1930*. The cosmos, as manifest to us, *suggests only rhythm and pattern and automatic repetition*. No conceivable link or basis exists for trying to explain the whole unknowable outfit in terms of the one local, transient, and insignificant accident which we call purposive consciousness. *Every attempt* at reading this local jumble of gland-and-tissue-reactions into the infinite cosmic mechanism is an obvious heritage from earlier times when men didn't have the knowledge we have. The very fact that neo-theists, with all their scientific opportunities, still believe that the ignorant ancients could discover the truth which baffles even us, is a final knockout blow to their standing as philosophers. Every detail of their psychology proves that their belief is formed not from contemplation of the existing evidence, but from the

ignorant heritage of primal days—pounded with crippling force into their susceptible mind and emotions when they were too young to resist. It is significant that all theists try to flatten their children's intellectual foreheads in extreme youth, rather than let them form their own ideas when old enough to judge for themselves. No adult could possibly cook up a delusion like religion today if uncrippled by tradition.

Yrs. for exacter clocks and more deities—  
Πάππος Θεοβάλδος

410. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

April 24, 1930

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

..... As for the arctic climate in past ages—despite the recent Berry conclusions I think the question must still be considered an open one. The same problem exists in the Antarctic also, geologists of the Byrd expedition having found many fossils indicating a tropical past. The study of the earth's remote history must still be regarded as in its infancy. The architectural "doo-dad" article interested me—it really contains a vast amount of truth. That State, War, & Navy building represents the lowest level to which human taste can sink—a vicious taste that infested America like a plague from 1850 to 1900. Providence has some hideous specimens left from that period—including the City Hall & the old Superior Court House—but thank heaven the latter is now in the hands of the wreckers. However—it is possible to overdo the matter of objecting to ornamentation. Each of the really fine traditional forms of architecture has its natural decorative elements, naturally evolved through considerations of structural support or harmonious balance of design. These elements, confined to their proper place, are certainly not to be grouped in the "doo-dad" class—which answers your query about Gothic columns so far as structures of true Gothic conception & design are concerned. The Washington cathedral, I might remark, is developing into a splendid work of art—which I think will surpass New York's rival cathedral of St. John the Divine in the end. The trouble is that many builders—especially in the Victorian age—have not confined their use of traditional design to its correct traditional

functions & proportions. Even the modern packing-box architecture is better than ornament of a tawdry, out-of-place, excessive, or misproportioned sort. Washington, on the whole, has been very fortunate architecturally. Most of the northern cities have ten times as much structural ugliness cluttering up their streets—downtown Boston being an especially depressing example. New York until about 1910-20 was a hideous nightmare, but now the skyscrapers have saved it by giving it (at a distance) an exotic & fairylike appearance. The only really lovely places in America—architecturally speaking—are certain old villages which progress has left behind. Luckily Rhode Island has a goodly quota of these—the drowsy little seaport of Wickford, on the west shore of Narragansett Bay, being my nomination for first prize. The Harrow article greatly interested me. It is my opinion that the liberal education of the old public school ought certainly to be retained—to train high-grade minds in the art of getting as much as possible out of the experiences of living—despite the spread of industrial & mechanical interests amongst the majority. Even in a politically & economically socialistic state—the inevitable state of tomorrow—it seems to me that it might be possible to maintain a tradition of genuine cultivation & aesthetic sensitiveness among a more or less limited circle of appreciative & reflective persons. Still—the moods & knowledge of today certainly demand a marked variation from the over-conventionalised curriculum of the public school as hitherto known.

..... Sincere & artistic expression of visible beauty, if plainly & straightforwardly recorded without extravagances or tawdry mannerisms, is always of genuine value, whether or not it is shaped in the mould of any particular period. The best art is timeless—independent of any one age, but reduced to such simplicity & plainness that it belongs to all. Many of the typical mannerisms of our present moderns are just as cheap & artificial in their way as the older Victorian mannerisms against which I constantly preach. It is the best policy to steer clean of them all—to cling to the main stream of plain, vital language & reasonable coherence, eschewing whatever savours of the local, the transient, & the affected. This applies equally to the Victorian *oh's* & *ah's* & *baths* & *erewhiles*, & to the ultra-modern jazz & chaoticist effects. Much of the new stuff will be laughed at in 1980 as heartily as 1880 stuff is laughed at now—& will still be laughed at then. What will escape laughter is the plain recording of images & moods genuinely experi-

enced—whether in 1380, 1580, 1680, 1830, 1880, 1930, or any other time! . . . .

As for philosophic matters—my remarks ought not to have much novelty or shock-effect in 1930, since most of the idols I ridicule have been virtually dead for a third of a century. I think you would find your perspective greatly clarified by a coherent knowledge of the course of human thought since the earliest times—a knowledge which would shew you that the phase of delusion just overthrown has never been a deeply seated or universal thing. Actually, the moderns think much as Democritus did in 450 B. C., as Lucretius did in 65 or 70 B. C., as Spinoza did in the 17th century, & as LaMettrie, Diderot, Helostius, Hume, & dozens of others did in the supremely rational 18th century. You ought most emphatically to read *The Story of Philosophy* by Dr. Will Durant, which has just been added to the list of *Star Dollar Books*—obtainable at any bookshop or Liggett drugstore for a dollar. This is a simple layman's introduction to the subject, & reads as easily, straightforwardly, & fascinatingly as a novel. I don't know of anything which gives a better idea & perspective of the way the various ages have inquired into the nature of things. You can also get this work in separate parts in the Haldeman-Julius Blue Books—a list of which I enclose. These Blue Books include scores of items which you would find most enlightening. If, after reading Durant, you want a fuller idea of the way intelligent contemporaries regard the cosmos & its illusions of value, you can't do better than to read the works of the greatest living philosopher (who is a poet as well)—George Santayana. Begin with his *Scepticism & Animal Faith*, & then proceed to the five-volume *Life of Reason*. A shorter, harsher, & more typically American angle is afforded by Joseph Wood Krutch's *The Modern Temper*. This "love" business is pretty well disposed of by the psycho-analysts—Freud, Jung, Adler,—& the behaviourists of Dr. John B. Watson's school. But the notion of "immortality" has been dead among serious thinkers for an even longer time—no first-rate philosopher in the world's history has ever had a great deal of use for it & for fully fifty years no high-grade thinker of any sort has taken it as more than a poetic dream. Even the professed Christian believers of today—save for a pathetic residue of yesterday's age of orthodoxy—regard a "hereafter" as merely an allegorical crystallisation of an ancient human wish. There is absolutely nothing in the idea of personal immortality—it is the deadest notion in the whole ash-heap of burned-out delusions. But nobody need mourn about it. Even an

ordinary life-span gives most people all the boredom they can stand, & if they had immortality they would eventually find it unendurable. It is significant that the only living race who still *really* believe in future lives—the Hindoos—conceive as their highest final reward a "Nirvana" which implies the ultimate extinction of consciousness after many reincarnations. I'm sure I don't want anything more than non-existence when I round out a few decades more. I had it before I was born—through all the aeons prior to Aug. 20, 1890—& I don't see why it will suit me any less after I die—through all the aeons subsequent to 1960 or 1970 or so. I've no complaint to enter about the way the cosmos treated me in the pre-1890 days when I didn't exist, & the thought of other such days to come doesn't disturb me in the least. On again, off again! And while I do exist—though it be but for a brief moment—I utilise my mind & aesthetic sense in such a way as to gather in all the pleasure & beauty I can. Eat, drink, & be merry—for tomorrow doesn't exist!

By the way—I can't agree that the habit of *normal perception & appraisal* would cause imagination to wither away. The proper province of imagination is wholly removed from the world of objective phenomena which perception & appraisal cover, & I have found that the force of an imaginative image is even *heightened* by juxtaposition with objective images realistically treated. In a word, imagination does not need to *contradict* truth, but preferably reaches out into the abyss of the unknowable & *supplements* truth. Romantic *contradictions of known truth* are always ridiculous; but fantastic *excursions beyond truth* or *excrescences upon truth* are not necessarily so. Thus whilst I cultivate *phantasy*, I laugh at & am sickened by mere *romance*. If one must weave cobwebs of empty aether, let them not constitute puerile denials of what we know to be fact, but rather let them supply a decorative element to those cosmic spaces which would otherwise be an ambiguous & tantalising void. Thus the best religions are toys or soporifics which do not visibly clash with the recognised phenomena of life. Dumas & Walter Scott bore me, but Dunsany, the *Bible*, Grimm's *Fairy Tales*, & the *Arabian Nights* interest & delight me. No—I shan't give up writing phantasy, although I think I shall have fewer & fewer readers as time passes. Fortunately I don't give a hang whether or not anybody reads what I write. . . .

Yr obt hble Servt  
HPLovecraft



411. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Y. M. C. A. Tavern,  
Charles-Town, his Maj'ty's  
Province of South-Carolina,  
4th of May, 1730.

Sapientissime:—

... Never in my eighty or ninety years of existence have I beheld a place which wou'd appeal to me so much if it were more like Providence! The climate is marvellous and summerlike—palmettos, live oaks, creeping vines, wistria, jasmine, azaleas, etc., etc., everywhere, and the thermometer up around seventy-five degrees and eighty degrees. Nearly everyone is array'd in a straw hat, and it is possible to sit outdoors all day and enjoy it. Right now I am in antient Battery Park looking out across the harbour at Ft. Sumter of Civil War fame. The atmosphere makes me feel twenty years younger and one hundred percent better—and I really seem to have a surplus fund of energy for the first time since last August. The sea breeze is always blowing, and I have become as tanned as an Indian in less than a week—I say less than a week after consulting the calendar; tho' I have seen so many sights since arriving on Monday last, that I feel as if I had been here a full decade.

But the climate, O Sage, is *only the beginning* of the miracle from my antiquarian point of view. Indeed—there is nothing about the place so wholly important and distinctive as the astoundingly eighteenth century atmosphere—for in all verity I can say that Charleston is the best-preserved colonial city of any size, without exception, that I have ever encountered. Virtually *everything* is just as it was in the reign of George the Third—indeed, 'tis easier to count the houses which are *not* colonial, than to attempt to count those which *are*. . . . .

Yr. obt. Lo.

412. TO ALFRED GALPIN

Thursday  
May 15, 1930

Son:—

Gad, Sir, I swoon! I swoon with the conscious contemplation of complete and culminant beauty! I can't begin to describe it—for I am without breath and without words—but just look at this folder and at the accompanying postcard. They may faintly suggest, though they can never fully reveal. For Pegāna's sake chuck Peterborough and come down here at once! This is something to see and dream about all the rest of one's life! I am sure I shall think of very little else during my few remaining days! It is Poe's *Domain of Arnheim* and *Island of the Fay* all rolled into one—with mine own Cathuria and gardens of Yin added for good measure. It *must* be a dream, after all. I stumbled on it yesterday afternoon, and have come out today to enjoy it from 11 A. M. to the closing hour of six, bringing some revisory work with me. AEdelpal! But it wholly eclipses the upheaved Wade Park of Birchdale days—and my erstwhile favourite Japanese garden beside the Brooklyn Museum is as nothing to it!

You are perhaps sensible, from many olden observations of mine, that to me the quality of *utter, perfect beauty* assumes *two* supreme incarnations or administrations: one, a mass of mystical city towers and roofs and spires outlined against a sunset and glimpsed from a fairly distant balaustrated terrace; and the other, the experience of walking (or, as in most of my dreams, aërially floating) through aethereal and enchanted gardens of exotick delicacy and opulence, with carved stone bridges, labyrinthine paths, marble fountains, terraces, and staircases, strange pagodas, hillside grottos, curious statues, termini, sundials, benches, basins, and lanthorns, lily'd pools of swans and streams with tiers of waterfalls, spreading gingko-trees and drooping, feathery willows, and sun-touch'd flowers of a bizarre, Klarkash-Tonick pattern never beheld on land or beneath the sea . . . . .

Well, Son, call your Grandpa an aged liar or not—I *have at last actually found the garden of my earliest dreams*—and in no other city than ancient Richmond, home of my beloved Poe! How I wish it could have

been here in his day! I doubt if there is another such realms of faery open to the publick in these American colonies! . . . .

Yr. Obt. Grandsire.

413. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

May 15, 1930  
Thursday

Pattern of Predictable Precision:—

God, I swoon! I swoon with the consciousness of compleat and culminant beauty! ää! Shub-Niggurath! YOG-SOTHOTH!!!! I HAVE SEEN MAYMONT!!!!!!

I have your last summer's travelogue so mixt with mine own experiences, that I recall not whether you spoke of visiting Maymont. If you did not, then drop all your rocks this moment and come right down here!! Zounds, Sir, what a world of delirious, unpredictable loveliness and dreamlike enchantment!! Poe's *Domain of Arnheim* and *Island of the Fay* all rolled into one . . . with mine own *Gardens of Y'm* added for good measure! No—I simply *cannot* be awake! And to cap all climaxes, IT WAS AN UTTER AND UNPREDICTED SURPRISE!!! I stumbled on it yesterday afternoon, *not knowing what I was getting into*. Boy!!! You can bet that today I've come out here to enjoy every minute from eleven a. m. to the closing hour of six! I have my revisory work with me.

Your are no doubt sensible, from many observations of mine, that to me the quality of *utter, perfect beauty* assumes *two* supreme incarnations or adumbrations: one, the sight of mystical city towers and roofs outlined against a sunset and glimps'd from a fairly distant balustraded terrace; and the other, the experience of walking (or, as in most of my dreams, aërially floating) thro' aethereal and enchanted gardens of exotick delicacy and opulence, with carved stone bridges, labyrinthine walks, marble fountains, terraces and staircases, strange pagodas, hill-side grottos, curious statues, termini, sundials, benches, basins, and lanterns, lily'd pools of swans and streams with tiers of waterfalls, spreading gingko-trees and drooping, feathery willows, and sun-touched flowers of a bizarre, Klarkash-Tonick pattern never beheld on sea or land . . . .

Well, by god, Sir, call me an aged liar or not—I vow *I have actually found the garden of my earliest dreams*—and in no other city than Richmond, home of my beloved Poe! Maymont! I shall dream of little else all the few remaining days of my long life!!—

Rapturously thine—  
Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus

414. TO MRS. F. C. CLARK

New York  
May 24-25, 1930

My Dear Aunt Lillian:—

About 8 o'clock the bell rang, & there appeared that tragically drink-riddled but now eminent friend of Loveman's whom I met in Cleveland in 1922, & once or twice later in New York—the poet Hart Crane, whose new book, *The Bridge*, has made him one of the most celebrated & talked-of figures of contemporary American letters. He had been scheduled to speak over the radio during the evening; but a shipwreck off the coast (demanding the use of the ether for important messages) had cut off all local radio programmes & left him free. When he entered, his discourse was of alcoholics in various phases—& of the correct amount of whiskey one ought to drink in order to speak well in public—but as soon as a bit of poetic & philosophic discussion sprang up, this sordid side of his strange dual personality slipped off like a cloak, & left him as a man of great scholarship, intelligence, & aesthetic taste, who can argue as interestingly & profoundly as anyone I have ever seen. Poor devil—he has “arrived” at last as a standard American poet seriously regarded by all reviewers & critics; yet at the very crest of his fame he is on the verge of psychological, physical, & financial disintegration, & with no certainty of ever having the inspiration to write a major work of literature again. After about three hours of acute & intelligent argument poor Crane left—to hunt up a new supply of whiskey & banish reality for the rest of the night! He gets to be a nuisance now & then, dropping in on Loveman for sympathy & encouragement, but Loveman is too conscious of his tragic importance & genuine genius as a man of letters to be harsh or brusque toward him. His case is surely a sad one—

all the more so because of his great attainments & of the new fame which he is so ill-fitted to carry for any considerable time. He looks more weather-beaten & drink-puffed than he did in the past, though the shaving off of his moustache has somewhat improved him. He is only 33, yet his hair is nearly white. Altogether his case is almost like that of Baudelaire on a vastly smaller scale. *The Bridge* really is a thing of astonishing merit. In connexion with this poem—which is on Brooklyn Bridge—a very surprising coincidence was brought to light. It seems that the house in Columbia Heights where Crane lived in 1924 when beginning the poem (& which I visited with Loveman at the time, my first sight of the illuminated Manhattan skyline being from its roof!) turned out—*though he did not know it when he lived there*—to be the *old Roebling house*, where the builder of the bridge dwelt when construction was in progress; & furthermore, that Crane's own room (a shabby, \$7.50 per week affair) was actually the room from which the crippled Washington A. Roebling watched & superintended the work with the aid of a telescope! And to heighten the coincidence, Crane swears that he finished the poem (while in Jamaica, knowing nothing of what was happening in the outside world) on the day that Roebling died at his final New Jersey home in 1926 . . . which also happened to be Crane's own birthday! Personally, I think the matter of finishing the poem on that date is an imaginative exaggeration of Crane's, although his birthday is certainly the day on which Roebling died. The coincidence of the *house* is certainly genuine—& it amuses me because my own first glimpse of the bridge & skyline from a window, was from Crane's window—undoubtedly the one which was Roebling's! Crane, by the way, was interested to hear of my liking for *Charleston*; &, though he has never seen it, talked of going there himself as a refuge from a New York he has come to detest. But alas! I fear it would take more than Charleston to bake the alcohol out of him!

Yr. aff. nephew and obt. Servt.—  
H. P. L.

415. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

En route—  
Kingston, N.Y.,  
June 5, 1930

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . Concerning possible changes in public demand as applied to poetry—I can hardly give an expert opinion, since I make no attempt to follow verse seriously or keep track of contemporary trends. On a guess, however, I would say that what is wanted is simply a sincere & straightforward symbolisation of actual human moods & feelings—taken from real life & experience rather than reflecting literary backgrounds. This principle ought not to militate against regular & traditional verse if it is poignant & sincere, but I suppose in practice most judges tend to question the subconscious first-handness of sentiments which too much resemble the artificial or frequently-exploited sentiments of familiar standard verse. It would take a really profound critic to glimpse the touch of sincerity in poetry whose exterior is thoroughly conventional & seemingly derived from orthodox literary sources. That is the inevitable handicap of the traditionalist today. Don't try to write to order, though. No verse is effective unless it is spontaneous. The thing to do is to cultivate an independent outlook toward the external world; avoiding all traces of artificiality, conventionality, & traditional sentimentality. What then comes out naturally in the way of poetry is likely to be the real stuff. Certainly—I'll be glad to look over your book ms. when it is complete, & surely hope it can get into type sooner or later.

. . . . . In New York I found cheques which gave a financial "second wind" for my wanderings; hence after a 2-weeks' visit with Frank B. Long & frequent meetings with others of the "old gang" I have ascended the Hudson to ancient Kingston—that town of old stone houses in the idyllic Catskill region which I think I described last year—to visit the gifted artist Bernard Dwyer. We are spending every day in the open country—weather having been kind to us—& Dwyer has just presented me with a splendid pencil sketch of our favourite landscape spot—a lonely knoll with a great rock, a giant elm, & a vista of distant rolling plains & purple mountains which could scarcely be duplicated—in point of quiet pastoral beauty—anywhere on the globe. The north is

surely lovely enough when summer does come—but the trouble is that this elusive season arrives provokingly late & departs tantalisingly early. From here I shall cross the Mohawk Trail to Athol, have a look at W. Paul Cook, & then descend to Providence via Worcester. Another week will probably see me at my own hearth after an absence of a month & a half.

Charleston not only equalled but surpassed my brightest expectations. It is a marvellous 18th century survival, & probably preserves more of the colonial architecture & spirit than any other place in the United States. The climate is ideal—I would move there for good in a moment if my attachment to Rhode Island was less strong. Houses date from 1730 to about 1810 in the old section below Broad St., & include many types unknown to the north. Most of them are of stuccoed brick, with steep tiled roofs which give them a sort of continental aspect. Piazzas on all these stories, opening on walled gardens with magnificent wrought-iron gates, (see enclosed card) testify to the outdoor mode of life worked out by the colonists after they had become thoroughly assimilated in this exotic geographic milieu. In cultural tone Charleston is not excelled by any city on this continent. Its relative isolation, & the long seasons spent in it by neighbouring planters whose estates became malarial in summer, made it a peculiarly independent & vigorous centre of taste & learning, & it is today a veritable last stronghold of our dying elder civilisation. I arrived too late to see the gardens at their best, but what I did see was ample enough for one trip!

In Richmond I looked up various sites & objects connected with Poe, & did a good deal of writing in the exquisite Maymont Gardens of which I enclose a descriptive folder. The Japanese section of this marvellous place surpasses in exotic glamour anything I have ever seen before—I get almost maudlin whenever I try to describe it. It is a direct embodiment of a type of dreamlike scene which I have always envisaged as a sort of imaginative phantom—*The Gardens of Yin*, as it were—but which I hardly expected ever to see objectively exemplified on this planet. I hated to return north, & found New York detestably chilly & depressing; but Kingston has given me some delectably warm weather, & has served nobly in taking the taste of Manhattan out of my mouth.

With best wishes, & trusting you have been enjoying the mellow late-spring weather, I remain

Yr most obt hble Servt  
HPLovecraft

416. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Mercury's Day  
June 18, 1930

Ave, Jazzbo the Great!

And as for the phase of ugliness called "indecency"—I haven't had much chance to get shocked by the wholesale, because the direction of my strongly fixed interests doesn't often lead me up against such specimens; but now and then I naturally find a passage or two which I consider a bit thick. Parts of Huysman's *A Rebours* and *La Bas* could have been modelled in a way more pleasing to Anglo-Saxons without any subtraction from the substance or proportioning—yet do you find me ringing the burglar alarm or summoning up the flames of Savonarola? . . . I don't consider either my own distaste, or Br'er Joris-Karl's possible carelessness or poor taste or difference of nationality, of sufficient importance to read the riot act about! Neither do I throw away the whole apple merely because one spot chances to be a trifle mellow. I just let it go at that—conceding, so far as I stop to analyse my own opinions at all, that I don't like this or that point, and then going on with the reading of the bulk of the work. . . . Undoubtedly the emotional stresses of many great and little artists display traces of one-sided education, warped mentality, ill-proportioned impulses, or such things—but does this necessarily make them candidates for the stake or gaol or waste-basket? On the contrary many of these definitely diseased minds have produced much material of the highest artistic value, which only requires the proper mental discounting and interpretation of the reader in order to possess the highest importance as an expression of life and a key to the riddle of human personality. Writers I'd call morbid are D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce, Huysmans and Baudelaire. Yet every one is an indispensable figure in the expression and interpretation of Western Europe between 1850 and 1930. Writers I *wouldn't* call morbid are Theodore Dreiser and Floyd Dell and Ben Hecht. These men simply try to tell straight forwardly what they see and what they think this data signifies in relation to the acts and motives of all people. Dreiser is a really titanic figure—the novelist of the United States. And so it goes. The only rational attitude of a civilized man is to let all the evidence about life go on record impartially, and not to try to tamper

with the books. We each have our own likes and dislikes, but they're of importance only to ourselves individually. Nor need we fear that the free circulation of all the evidence is going to have any especial effect on the direction of the civilisation, one way or the other. That's an exploded psychological fiction, although I believed it once myself. Trends come from deeper sources than what is written on the surface of literature, and the average domestic adjustments of 1980 or 2030 will not depend on the question of whether Ernest Hemingway is suppressed or encouraged in 1930. Indignation, in the light of contemporary knowledge, is a naive and juvenile emotion in any field. All that anyone of us has to bother about is to obey such practical laws as are generally agreed upon, to be true to the traditions of beauty as perceived through the lenses of one's own personality, and to leave others free to follow their visions as one follows one's own. There are not many absolute or basic or intrinsic values, so that a critical or censorious attitude does not well become a philosopher. Amidst the disillusion'd mellowness of my present old age, I smile at some of the bigoted middle-aged carplings I used to pull off in the old Kleicomolo days! I *do* and *like* the same things now that I did and liked then—but with grey hairs has come a knowledge that this is a very diverse world, in which many different systems of action and preference have an equal right to existence.

But all this business is only a drop in the bucket as scaled against other vital trends in civilisation. Here again is a case of old Grandpa Theobald gradually getting adjusted to a new set of facts as unwelcome horizons open up. The more I analyse the future of Western Civilisation, the less hope I see for the survival of any of the conditions and values which for me invest life with what little zest and piquancy it has; yet as my wrinkles accumulate and my shoulders increase their stoop I see increasingly that there is no possible way to alter the chain of inevitable circumstances which arose from the accidental development of the power machine. The natural adjustment of man to the earth, to the landscape, to the conceptions of time and space and proportion, to the social group, to the struggle for existence, to his fellows, to himself and his own imaginative life—all this will inevitably be uprooted by the changes accruing from a mechanised regime which destroys familiar dependences and limitations and economic balances, and substitutes a new set unlinked with that age-long conditions have crystallised, and wholly dependent on a complex technological organisation that ennui or revolt

or conquest or natural convulsions will sooner or later destroy. From now until the next Spenglerian collapse of civilisation we shall have an increasingly grotesque and unsatisfying type of life—a type without sufficient points of contact with ingrainedly hereditary conditions to provide any first-class emotional satisfactions. But I no longer deem it possible to avert this, nor do I think there is any reason to waste breath in whining over it. What must come, must come. New sensations will arise to replace the old; and even if their pleasing poignancy is less, their possessors will have no basis of comparison wherefrom to reckon their inferiority. There will be a deadly stagnation punctuated by a few morbid nervous revolts. Sovietism and capitalism and fascism will meet in a curious triangular paradox to solve the enigma of a culture in which constant machine overproduction will have destroyed the law of supply and demand and made the individual's relation to the economic fabric an arbitrary, unstable, and difficulty determined problem. And sooner or later some revolt, aided by modern mechanism, will play hell with the whole mess. One of the troubles will be that goals and preferred lines of action will have become exceedingly confused and obscure under the strongly artificialised conditions and relations to nature and sensation. Eventually the comedy will be over, as the comedies of Ur and Babylon, Thebes and Memphis, Tyre and Sidon, Knossus and Carthage are now over, and after that there will be another simple world with simple ways and few facts and childlike beliefs. There will be shepherds on the hills, and walled towns of homes on the rivers and seacoasts. Men will pray again to the personified emptiness of space, and the smoke of the sacrifice will ascend. Armies will follow great-bearded priest-kings in defence of primal rights and imagined dignities. Bards will chant to queer pipes and flutes and tympani, and the graver will carve his dreams upon dolomite and chrysoberyl and chalcedony. And then the towns will grow, and the inventions of man multiply. The bow will give way to the bomb, and the skin-saddled horse to the wheeled chariot. Smoke will arise from tall chimneys, and the forge of the smith give way to the vault of the guild. And ways will grow devious, and knowledge great; and what was once known and forgotten will be known again. Steel shall multiply the bodied dreams of men, and clangour and ugliness come once more. And there will again be speed and confusion, futility and alienation. And what was the doom of the world we know, will be the doom of the world by whom our world can scarce be remembered.

Then anew there will be shepherds on the hills, and walled towns of homes on the rivers and seacoasts . . . . . Now for work, dammit!

Yr. obt. Servt.,  
Lo.

## 417. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Home—  
June 19, 1930

Highest Hierophant of Horological Helotry:—

Welcome to our city! Just blew in myself, dead broke, and am trying to cope with the piles of accumulated papers and unforwarded mail ingulphing me on every hand. The old town looks pretty damn good—and by an all-around reckoning beats anything I've seen since I left it on the 24th of April. Wish to hell I could move it bodily down to the climate of Charleston—also taking along the meads and groves of the Quinsnicket region, whither I repair each genial afternoon!

Well—as a result of the financial crisis (I had 15¢ in my pocket when I arrived from Athol!) I shall have to make my immediately future wanderings very modest indeed, hence fear desperately that I can't quite make the Westerly jaunt—at least, not if I expect to look in on the Boston convention next month.

Too damn bad your time is so limited—but if you insist on half-living seven or eight lives in one lifetime instead of really living one, (with the ease, leisure, latitude of choice, adventurous uncertainty, and reflective and assimilative enjoyment-pauses necessary to life in the fullest sense) you have to pay the penalty. It may give you a bigger kick to have a dozen irons in the fire than to grasp thoroughly the limited range of impressions and sensations which one man can adequately grasp in the hours and years allotted him. Many are so made, and more are becoming that way under the influence of this overcrowded and overspeeded machine age. But all I have to say is that I can't see the fun of such feverish clock-slavery. Since it is obviously impossible for one man to grasp the absolute *infinity* of impressions in the external world which surrounds him, he might as well give up the idea of omniscience at the

very start, and settle down to whatever fraction is the most comfortable. No possible reward exists to compensate for the loss of that freedom and opportunity for full, leisurely assimilation which comes from a rational limitation of activities to such as may be pursued without haste or worry or confining calculation. When all mankind is finally crucified on a rigid and relentless calendar, there will no longer be any reason for a civilised person to remain in existence and suffer the burthen of consciousness. Life will have been stripped of everything which constitutes its legitimate returns. Indeed, I am confident that such future slavery and oppression will produce a widespread group-hysteria and display of abnormal and perverted instincts, finally culminating in a revolt against the monotonising and chafing civilisation responsible for the evil. Complex "civilisation" is asking too much of the human animal as he is made, and is growing less and less worth the trouble of maintaining. Society is growing so abnormal that we may almost consider an anti-social attitude the normal one under present conditions. Or rather—the strictly normal attitude is one opposed to *existing and future* society, though favourable toward the *principle* of social organisation so far as it can *really* promote the freedom, pleasure, and interest-possibility of the individual.

. . . Incidentally—I've at last discovered a more hapless slave of the feed-bag than yourself! It is the genial and fantastic Bernard Dwyer, whom I visited in antient Dutch Wiltwyck, up the placid Hudson, and who is now staggering about under a load of 232 pounds. His average dinner is about one and one-half to two times larger than your average, and forms from three to five normal or Theobaldian dinners. I tried to equal him one night, just for the fun of it; but gave out before the end. . . Some day I'll have to get you and Dwyer rounded up at Jake's—for once we could call Jake's bluff and meet his outstanding challenge to the world to consume in one sitting all the hamburg and onions he furnishes for 25¢! Ah, me! How time flies! Upon reflection I've just remembered that I haven't been to Jake's since *September, 1927*, when Talman was here on a reminiscent trip. Hope Jake is still alive!

Yr. obt.  
Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus

418. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Boston—  
July 3, 1930

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

Regarding the nature of contemporary poetry—the sincere & straightforward symbolisation of actual human moods & feelings—I think that this really represents what must form the nucleus of all genuine or serious poetry. The element of music is a valuable addition, but it must not contravene the facts & proportions of the actual life which forms its subject-matter. Otherwise it becomes irrelevant & meaningless, as so much 19th century writing is. Any notion that the worlds of “poetry” & of “life” are separate or different is a false & artistically ruinous one. The form—whether or not in accord with previous habits & traditions of writing—is largely immaterial. Certainly there is no more real harm in being traditional in *manner* than in being radical in manner. The only harm is in being conventional in *ideas*—this being harmful because convention is often meaningless & unrelated to genuine life. Excessive simplicity of outlook is of course an obstacle, but it is something which can generally be surmounted. It is not necessary to depend wholly on one’s own moods for material, since observation & psychological study tell much of the typical moods & emotional nuances of others, & of the part these things play in the collective life of the existing civilisation’s main stream.

I remain  
Yr most obt hble Servt  
HPLovecraft

419. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
July 20, 1930

Dear Mr. Howard:—

One of the best check-ups for legendry is *archaeology*—the intelligent examination and correlation of prehistoric artifacts, considered in relation to the artifacts of other known groups, and to the geological and physiographical qualities of their site. In the British Isles, so far as I know, the testimony of the earliest objects and deposits is such as to indicate a so-called *heliolithic* culture both in Britain and Ireland—i.e., a culture of definite nature, known and identified elsewhere, and having certain unique and unmistakable characteristics such as mummification, the rearing of megalithic monuments in circles or otherwise, the worship and association of the sun and serpent, the use of the “swastika” symbol, etc., etc. Nothing discoverable comes before this—until, of course, we get back to ages definitely pre-human in the fullest sense; the age of Challean, Foxhall, and Sub-red-crag artifacts, and of the Pilt-down skull. Now the heliolithic culture, which extends all the way from Ireland across Europe and North-Africa to Arabia, India, South China, Melanesia, Polynesia, and even Mexico and Peru, is pretty definitely associated with the small, dark Mediterranean race, and is known to have had nothing whatever to do with any branch of Nordics. It probably arose in the Mediterranean region and spread in all available directions—in many cases overriding previous primitive cultures and influencing other races. But where its artifacts are the *earliest*, as in the British Isles, we may reasonably conclude that it was the first culture of any permanence on the given site, and that its users were of the Mediterranean race that evolved it. I believe, therefore, that it will be difficult to prove that the British Isles (possibly a part of the continent at the time of first settlement) had any civilised, half-civilised, or even advancedly savage inhabitants prior to the coming of the dark neolithic Mediterraneans. The sub-human reliquiae represent stocks which could scarcely have survived the glacial periods, and it is my guess that the incoming Mediterraneans found the terrain fairly well devoid of bipedal fauna. There

may have been some of the squat Mongoloids now represented by the Lapps, for it is known that they once reached down extensively into Western Europe; being probably the stock amongst whom the *witch-cult* (a fertility-religion arising in a pastoral and pre-agricultural age) and rite of the *witches' sabbath* took their source. But evidence seems to have been against their having penetrated the British area to any extent. It is true that the Celts share most vigorously the myth-cycle of *fairies, gnomes, and little people*, which anthropologists and all over western Europe (in a distinctive form marking it off from the general Aryan personification system which produced fauns, satyrs, dryads, etc.) and attribute to vague memories of contact with the Mongoloids which was wholly prior to their invasion of Britain. Since these fair Nordic Celts found a smaller, darker race in Britain and Ireland, there is a tendency on the part of some to be misled, and to assume that the "little people" legends allude to contact with *those* dark aborigines. This, however, can clearly be disproved by analysis of the myths; for such myths invariably share with the parallel Continental myths the specific features (or traces of these features) of having the "little people" essentially *repulsive* and *monstrous*, subterranean in their habits of dwelling, and given to a queer kind of hissing discourse. Now this kind of thing does not apply to Mediterraneans—who are not abnormal or repulsive from the Nordic standpoint, (being very similar in features) who did not live underground, and whose language (possibly of a lost branch, but conceivably proto-Hamitic, Hamitic, or even Semitic) could scarcely have suggested hissing. The inevitable probability is that all the Nordics met with this old Mongoloid stock at a very early date, when it shared the continent with the northward-spreading Mediterraneans and with the remnants of other palaeolithic and neolithic races now lost to history; and that after the ensuing conquest the defeated Mongoloids took to deep woods and caves, and survived for a long time as malignantly vindictive foes of their huge blond conquerors—carrying on a guerilla harassing and sinking so low in the anthropological scale that they became bywords of dread and repulsion. The memory of these beings could not but be very strong among the Nordics, (as well as among such Mediterraneans and Alpines as may have encountered them) so that a fixed body of legend was produced—to be carried about wherever Celtic or Teutonic tribes might wander. But this is rather a digression . . . especially since your theory does not deny an early dark race in the

British Isles, but merely postulates that, among the Celtic-speaking invaders, the light-haired element was of earlier advent than the tribes who spoke Gaelic. Whether the Gaels were light or dark when arriving in Ireland would still seem to be an open question; and not an altogether vital one, since a very slight contact with a dark race is sufficient to darken the pigmentation of a blond stock. Thus the Gaels might have had their dark hair before reaching Ireland, yet without having undergone any Oriental wanderings. A very superficial wash of Mediterranean or other brunet blood, obtained in Western Europe, could have turned the trick. Of course the race would still produce many blond specimens, just as the blond type still exists in Britain and Ireland despite the dark races which have contributed their blood; but the presence of a substantial dark element would doubtless attract special notice among the still unmixed Celts, (who had perhaps preceded the Gaels or Milesians to Ireland, and had not so far fused with the aborigines to any degree) causing the latter to regard them as a "dark people" and so describe them in legendry. Dark hair, eyes, and skin pigmentation are certainly the more basic type for *homo sapiens*, so that the few specialised types who have assumed other characteristics easily fall back to the old pattern whenever the least predisposition occurs. That is, it is hard to make brunets blonds, but easy to make blonds brunets. A few blonds coming among a brunet people produce no alteration of the physical type, whereas a few brunets coming along among a blond people will soon cause that people to produce a very high percentage of brunet descendants. There must have been a vast preponderance of blonds among the total invading stock of Ireland, since so many blond types (even in regions unaffected by later Teutonic blood) are produced there today. Just how this blond blood was distributed among the several waves of invaders we cannot now say—nor is it likely that we shall ever know. The old legends, admittedly subject to change and interpolation, cannot well be more than a general indication and source of suggestions. . . .

Most sincerely yrs.,  
H P Lovecraft



420. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Providence  
Aug. 7, 1930

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

Am beginning to get my revision under control, & hope to snatch time for some tales of my own before long. The coming week-end I shall take advantage of a cheap excursion to the quaint & ancient town of *Quebec*—which I have wished to see all my life, & which after all is not so very far from New England. This city, founded in 1608, is perhaps the most traditional & old-world-like place on the American continent, & I look forward to a marvellous time there. It will mark my first excursion outside the territorial limits of the U. S., & my first treading of the soil of that British Empire to which my spirit has never ceased to be loyal despite the secession of the Rhode Island colony on May 4, 1776. Will continue this letter after my return, enclosing any good Quebec views I may happen to come across. Long has just been there, & says it will surpass my fondest expectations—except that I'll find it too French for my ingrainedly English soul.

*Later*

And it *did* surpass all my fondest expectations! Never have I seen another place like it! All my former standards of urban beauty must be abandoned after my sight of Quebec! It hardly belongs to the world of prosaic reality at all—it is a dream of city walls, fortress-crowned cliffs, silver spires, narrow, winding, perpendicular streets, magnificent vistas, & the mellow, leisurely civilisation of an elder world. The enclosed gives hardly more than a hint of the actuality. Horse vehicles still abound, & the atmosphere is altogether of the past. It is a perfectly preserved bit of old royalist France, transplanted to the New World with very little loss of atmosphere. My stay was perforce tragically brief, but in 3 days (from early morning till pitch dark) I managed to see about everything there was to see (aside from interiors) by keeping constantly on the move. I feel as if I had lived there for years—though I must go again & at greater length in order to absorb impressions to a really sat-

isfying degree. The oldest house (view enc.) was built in 1674, but most of the buildings date from the early or middle 18th century. All architecture is French—mostly brick & stucco—and the buildings strongly suggest those of Charleston, S. C.—perhaps because of the strong French Huguenot influence in the latter town. The 400-foot perpendicular cliff with its staircases & steep ascents, the massive & almost perfectly preserved city wall, the dominating citadel, & the strange, ancient tangled streets, all combine to make Quebec an almost unearthly bit of fairyland. Everything I have seen before seems tame in comparison. The only side trip I took was to the great falls of the Montmorency river—on the upper level of which stands the old house in which the Duke of Kent (Queen Victoria's father) lived whilst in military service here in the 1790's. The countryside has some moderately quaint villages dominated by curious French churches, but is too much modernised to be really colourful. The real charm is all concentrated in Quebec city. I imagine, though, that parts of Nova Scotia (as described in the cutting you sent) must retain a quaintness which rural Quebec has lost. On my return trip I stopped off at Boston for the all-day boat trip to Provincetown, at the tip of Cape Cod—which I did not reach during the Cape Codding of the previous month. I found the town nothing notable, but the water-journey (my first sail out of sight of land) was highly impressive. Approaching Boston Harbour in the sunset from the open sea was an utterly novel experience—to see the gray headlands & lighthouses & islands rise out of misty nothingness was to be brought close to the gates of phantasy. I was so pleased that I did not stop to enquire, like the young voyager in the cutting from John O'Ren, whether this sort of thing was really necessary. . . .

With best wishes

I remain

Yr obt Hble Servt  
HPLovecraft

421. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
August 14, 1930

Dear Mr. Howard:—

.... Regarding the solemnly cited myth-cycle of Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, R'lyeh, Nyarlathotep, Nug, Yeb, Shub-Nigguroth, etc., etc.—let me confess that this is all a synthetic concoction of my own, like the populous and varied pantheon of Lord Dunsany's *Pegāna*. The reason for its echoes in Dr. de Castro's work is that the latter gentleman is a revision-client of mine—into whose tales I have stuck these glancing references for sheer fun. If any other clients of mine get work placed in W. T., you will perhaps find a still-wider spread of the cult of Azathoth, Cthulhu, and the Great Old Ones! The *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred is likewise something which must yet be written in order to possess objective reality. Abdul is a favourite dream-character of mine—indeed that is what I used to call myself when I was five years old and a transported devotee of Andrew Lang's version of the Arabian Nights. A few years ago I prepared a mock-erudite synopsis of Abdul's life, and of the posthumous vicissitudes and translations of his hideous and unmentionable work *Al Azif* (called *Τὸ Νεκροβόμικον* by the Byzantine Monk Theodoras Philetas, who translated it into late Greek in A. D. 900!)—a synopsis which I shall follow in future references to the dark and accursed thing. Long has alluded to the *Necronomicon* in some things of his—in fact, I think it is rather good fun to have this artificial mythology given an air of verisimilitude by wide citation. I ought, though, to write Mr. O'Neil and disabuse him of the idea that there is a large blind spot in his mythological erudition! Clark Ashton Smith is launching another mock mythology revolving around the black, furry toad-god *Tsathoggua*, whose name had variant forms amongst the Atlanteans, Lemurians, and Hyperboreans who worshipped him after he emerged from inner Earth (whither he came from Outer Space, with Saturn as a stepping-stone). I am using *Tsathoggua* in several tales of my own and of revision-clients—although Wright rejected the Smith tale in which he originally appeared. It would be amusing to identify your Kathulos with my Cthulhu

—indeed, I may so adopt him in some future black allusion. Incidentally—Long and I often debate about the real folklore basis of Machen's nightmare witch-cult hints—"Aklo letters", "Voorish domes", "Dols", "Green and Scarlet Ceremonies", etc., etc. I think they are M's own inventions, for I have never heard of them elsewhere; but Long can't get over the idea that they have an actual source in European myth. . . .

With best wishes—Yr. most obt. and hble. svt.,

H P L

422. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Thursday  
(Sept. 4, 1930)

Epitome of Erudition:—

.... I don't take the dysoptic world as seriously as I did in 1916. . . . I change my mind oftener, and accept the results of new scientific discoveries with greater readiness. The unimportance of life and effort, and the purposelessness of the whole cosmos, are closer realities to me than they were then, even though I fully realised them and upheld them in argument. I don't get excited about things as readily as I did; for I realise that every different individual has his own subjective world of perspectives and values, and what is it to me whether or not other people's worlds resemble or coincide with mine? I am less attached to mannerisms, and more attached to simplicity. *Style* I now conceive to be a personal property of mind rather than an art to be learnt; and I deem that man wisest, who writes most plainly in the exact language most descriptive of his actual thoughts. My valuation of the element of *sincerity* in works of art and literature has increas'd to such an extent that I now esteem it a necessity to perfect expression. In taste I am coming to value the local more than the universal, a sign no doubt of provincial old age. My standard of literature has slightly risen; so that I impose upon my serious writing a closer censorship than formerly, taking care to delete that which is trite, commonplace, artificial, affected, ornate, or rhetorically involv'd. I demand a more cleanly-cut visual image than formerly, before I will commit any picture or conception to paper. . . .

Yrs. for more classick readers—  
Wash:Irving, Gent.

423. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Sept. 11, 1930

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

..... In my unfinished *Whisperer in Darkness* I have the idea of transplanted brains kept in mutual cylinders for interplanetary transportation, & connected with sensory & speaking machines when arrived at their destinations. Thus a person becomes like a phonograph record—his intelligence easily transportable, & at once available for perception & expression wherever apparatus of the standardised type exists. The race of *things* employing this method come from *Outside*, but they have an outpost in this solar system on the new 9th planet—called by them Yugoth—& a smaller & nearer outpost amidst the hills of Vermont. I must whip this yarn into final shape soon. The effect of striking scenery on one's creative concentration is evidently a highly variable thing. I have heard many refer to it—as you do—as a distraction, but in my case it seems to be precisely the opposite. Outdoor settings & impressive panoramas excite & awaken my faculties, so that I can do things twice as well in the woods & fields as in my study. ....

Yr obt hble Servt  
Ech-Pi-El

424. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Woden's Day  
Sept. 24, 1930

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

I am still full of my trip to Quebec—& wonder whether I can ever get it out of my head long enough to think of anything else! Never before have I seen such a place, & never do I expect to again! All my former standards of urban beauty are superseded & obsolete. As I said on my card, I can scarcely believe that Quebec belongs to the waking world at all. A mighty headland rising out of a mile-broad river & topped by a mediaeval fortress—*city walls* of cyclopean masonry scaling

vertical cliffs or towering above green table-lands—great arching bell-fries & steeples—archaic lanes winding uphill or lurking in the beetling shadow of colossal precipices—horse-drawn vehicles, & all the vestiges of a mature, leisurely, elder civilisation—those things are only a fraction of the marvellous totality that is Quebec. The city is in truth an exotic & unique growth on this continent in this age. Properly it belongs to ancient Bourbon France—to *Averoigne*. I have not a doubt! I almost tried to take a side-trip to the ruined chateau of Fauseflammes! In retrospect the whole 3-day session seems like a fantastic dream covering enormous periods of time. I can correlate Quebec with nothing save those fleeting sensations of former-life glimpses which come to one now & then as subconscious manifestations of images absorbed from childhood reading & picture-viewing. ....

On my reluctant way home I stopped off at Boston for an all-day boat trip to Provincetown, at the tip of Cape Cod. This village I found to be somewhat overrated, but the sail—my first experience on the open sea out of sight of land—was well worth the price of the excursion. To be on limitless water is to have the fantastic imagination stimulated in the most powerful way. The uniformly blank horizon evokes all sorts of speculations as to what may lie beyond, so that the sensations of Odysseus, Columbus, Madoc, Arthur Gordan Pym, the Ancient Mariner, & all the other voyagers of song & story are rolled into one & sharpened to expectant poignancy. Who knows what strange Lemurian or Saturnian or Sfanomoëan port or weed-draped temple upheaved from the sea will loom suddenly ahead? To approach Boston Harbour at sunset from open water is something one can never forget. Grey headlands—monolith-like lighthouses—low-lying, cryptical islets—what vespertine realm of mystery is this which rises mirage-like from vapour-shrouded vacancy? Avalon-Isles of the Blest—Tyre—Carthage—Calpe & Abyla—Atlantis—Alexandria—R'lyeh—the City of Never—Mandaroon—Perdondoris—.....

Ever yr most obt  
Ech-Pi-El

425. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Sept. 26, 1930

Memory-Mocking Marcher after Melioristick Mirages:—

But I do want to make a decent round of the caves. Yes—I noted that mysterious and unexplored side-passage, and have thought of using it in fiction. And as for bodies—trust me to bring in a whole raft of 'em, extending back to 200,000 B. C. and before . . . even to the reign of the pre-human Elder Ones . . . and with appropriate metal artifacts, plus manuscripts in Atlantean and Lemurian cylinders.

Oh, say—before I forget it, take a look at this sample of polite insult, which I have just handed to a dead beat in Chicago, who has owed me a revision bill dating partly from Feb. 1929 and partly from Sept. 1929. He has paid no attention whatever to courteous statements, and in the following words I wash my hands of him and his'n. "Is Chicago a Crime-Ridden City" is the title of an absurd defence of Chi which I knocked in shape for him a year and a half ago.

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Sept. 18, 1930.

Lee Alexander Stone, M. D.,  
Chicago, Illinois  
Sir:

In the matter of your persistently unpaid revision bill—concerning which you so persistently withhold all explanations despite repeated inquiries—I have decided, at the risk of encouraging sharp practices, to forego the use of a collecting agency and make you a present of the amount involved.

This is my first encounter with such a hopelessly bad bill, and I believe I may consider the sum (\$7.50) as not ill spent in acquiring practical experience. I needed to be taught caution in accepting unknown\* clients

\* He was Supt. of a branch of Chi. Pub. Health Service during the war!

without ample\*\* references—especially clients from a strident region which cultivates ostentatious commercial expansion rather than the honour customary among gentlemen.

Meanwhile I am grateful for so concrete an answer to the popular question, "Is Chicago a Crime-Ridden City?"

With such consideration as is appropriate to the situation, and trusting that my small gift may prove of financial aid to you, Believe me, Sir,

Yr. most obedient hble. Servt.,  
H. P. Lovecraft

Your fellow-trencherman Bernard Dwyer lately heard from the *W. T.* author Henry S. Whitehead, who says that Wright uniformly rejects his best stories. Very like Wright—whose bland dumbness transcends my utmost limits of comprehension.

And so it goes. Have hope and tolerance . . . them rocks *will* come before the ground freezes!

Yrs. for cats and Quebec and caves—  
Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus

426. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Open fields near the River  
Octr. 1930

Dear A. W.:—

. . . I am sitting in the glow of a warm autumnal sunset amidst the ancient and unchanging woods and fields which I have known and loved and wandered through since infancy. I surely thank heaven for the fortuitous circumstances which have preserved such a generous and glamorous slice of the primal countryside so close to the thickest part of residential Providence. Beginning on the south is a long stretch of metropolitan park land. Then, contiguous with this (or just across a reedy salt creek) is the parklike domain of a sanitarium which admits the public except on Sunday. Then, piecing out still farther northward is the scenic expanse of Swan Point Cemetery—the borders of which are

\*\* Farnsworth Wright was the guy who wished him onto me.

sheer countryside without graves, kept thus for aesthetic embellishment. Farther north still—over the city line in Pawtucket—is still another river-bank cemetery; but this is not so beautiful. The net result of all this is the preservation of a splendidly rural series of river-bluffs, wooded ravines, and meadows for a space of at least two miles along the shore, and extending considerably inland. Its ownership and conditions are fixed, hence it has been the same throughout my life and is always likely to stay so. I can shed the years uncannily by getting into some of my favourite childhood haunts here. In spots where nothing has changed, there is little to remind me that the date is not still 1900 or 1901, and that I am not still a boy of 10 or 11. Images and ideas and perspectives of that period flood up from subconsciousness with amazing vigour and volume, and do much to prove the relativity and subjectivity of time. Sometimes I feel that if I went home to my birthplace and up the steps, I would still find my mother and grandfather alive, and my old room and things in accustomed 1900 order. At this moment the setting sun is throwing the long shadows of great ancient elms across a broad, level stretch of silent greensward. At the far side is an old New England stone wall covered with ivy, and beyond it a line of trees marks the course of a venerable curving road—half deserted now that newer trunk roads have cut it off as a line of through traffic. In suggestions of a magic annihilative of natural laws and material spatial and temporal restrictions, this scene and hour would be hard to beat. . . .

Yr. obt. & hble. Servt. HP

427. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

October 1930  
Castle Theobald

Jonckheer Arminius:—

I didn't receive the *Star* till after completing my letter to you, but I *thought* I added a very appreciative comment on the envelope. In case I somehow failed to do so, let me here append the intended expressions of approval. Most certainly, it is not a bit too commercial for its purpose—and indeed, it seems to me a thoroughly admirable exponent of its

type. In format, contents, illustrations, and general aspect it stands on a high level; and I must certainly congratulate you sincerely on the enterprise. I read many of its items with keen interest—especially the one on Frio Canyon in Texas, which piece of scenery I certainly hope will escape olefic desecration. . . .

. . . . . I fancy the Standard Co. Has so thoroughly developed the tourist angle of gasoline-sales-promotion that the Texaco's would consider it "old stuff". I imagine that I had better hold off until the indicated readjustments in your personnel take place—especially since I am on the one hand a notoriously poor and unappealing self-salesman, and on the other hand the very last person to handle commercial data from an intelligent, sympathetic, and prepossessing angle.

. . . Howard is the chap who can give you the colour—the sweep of the oil camps across the primal Texas plains, and the pageantry and social developments connected with them. He does not welcome the coming of the derricks and the slimy black ooze, but he is acutely sensitive to their place in the long drama of the Lone Star country. Campbell and Howard are the oiliest guys I know—if I come across any others, I'll pass 'em on. Meanwhile, as you imply, the ultimate 2¢ per would be by no means unwelcome to a fairly deserving case in Providence! I shall have to try to stomach a prow around the Texaco terminal—wherever it is—and a cramming on Chamber of Commerce sawdust and bran. Also—similar things abroad. But even so, I'd scarcely predict my own evolution into a leading trade-journal contributor. One has to be built a certain way to read a zestful story-element into the anfractuositities of a prosaic industry, and I have grave fears that my basic structural frame is not of that profitable sort! Still—one may experiment . . . . . and I shall carefully file your epistle, as well as diligently perusing the November and December *Stars* upon their respective risings.

. . . . . What an ass the boss editor was to raise that silly objection to the non-stenographer point! That shews how remote from reality these stereotyped commercial robots get in the end. This fellow, used to thinking only in terms of large business enterprises, (shall we have 1 or 2½ millions for postage stamps this morning?) has simply lost the power of envisaging the position of a struggling and uncommercial author, or of realising the character of unworldly craftsmen in general. As if it were *illogical* for a writer not to be able to hire a typist, or not to provide for stenographic preservation every time he opens his mouth in

personal conversation, social discussion, or informal story-telling! Hades, think of what our gang has lost in not having its meetings taken down in shorthand, and in not having its personal letters—argumentative and descriptive—copyrighted and sold! Bah! These big-winded office-hounds give me a pain in the neck! I'd have told the fool to go to hell before consenting to adopt his idiotic correction! . . .

Well—more anon. Don't drop any matches into the petrol!

Yr. obt. Servt.,  
Theobaldus O'Casey

428. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
October 4, 1930

Dear Mr. Howard:—

. . . . I agree with what you say about *suggestion* as the highest form of horror-presentation. The basis of all true cosmic horror is *violation of the order of nature*, and the profoundest violations are always the least concrete and describable. In Machen, the subtlest story—*The White People*—is undoubtedly the greatest, even though it hasn't the tangible, visible terrors of *The Great God Pan* or *The White Powder*. But the mob—including Farnsworth Wright—can never be made to see this; hence *W. T.* will always reject work of the finest and most delicate sort. Of course, there is such a thing as *excessive* indefiniteness, especially among novices who do not really understand how to handle cosmic suggestion. Crude writers use the old trick of calling a hidden horror "too monstrous to describe", merely as an excuse for not forming any clear picture of the alleged horror themselves. But the skilled author who knows what he is doing can often hint a thing much better than it can be told. Drawing the line between concrete description and trans-dimensional suggestion is a very ticklish job. In the greatest horror-tale ever written—Blackwood's *Willows*—absolutely nothing takes open and visible form. . . .

It is the night-black Massachusetts legendry which packs the really macabre "kick". Here is material for a really profound study in group-

neuroticism; for certainly, no one can deny the existence of a profoundly morbid streak in the Puritan imagination. What you say of the dark Saxon-Scandinavian heritage as a possible source of the atavistic impulses brought out by emotional repression, isolation, climatic rigour, and the nearness of the vast unknown forest with its coppery savages, is of vast interest to me; insomuch as I have often both said and written exactly the same thing! Have you seen my old story *The Picture in the House*? If not, I must send you a copy. The introductory paragraph virtually sums up the idea you advance.

There is genuine grisliness, all apart from the supernatural legends, in the inside chronicles of Massachusetts. It begins to appear as early as 1642, when the correspondence of Gov. Ballingham with Gov. Bradford of Plymouth reveals a genuine alarm on the part of both executives regarding the wave of utterly abhorrent and unnatural crime—very different from the ordinary offenses common in England, and today classifiable as extreme forms of sadism and other pathological perversions—which had sprung up among the more ignorant orders of the people. "It may bee demanded how it came to pass," writes Bradford, "yt soe many wikked persons and prophane people shou'd soe quickly come over into this land, and mixe them selves amongst them? Seeing it was religious men yt began ye work, and they came for religious sake."

Well—although he doesn't know it—Bradford really gives part of the answer in his own question. The very preponderance of passionately pious men in the colony was virtually an assurance of unnatural crime; insomuch as psychology now proves the religious instinct to be a form of transmuted eroticism precisely parallel to the transmutations in other directions which respectively produce such things as sadism, hallucination, melancholia, and other mental morbidities. Bunch together a group of people deliberately chosen for strong religious feelings, and you have a practical guarantee of dark morbidities expressed in crime, perversion, and insanity. This was aggravated, of course, by the Puritan policy of rigorously suppressing all the natural outlets of exuberant feeling—music, laughter, colour, pageantry, and so on. To observe Christmas Day was once a prison offence, and no one permitted himself a spontaneous mirthful thought without afterward imputing it a "sin" of his soul and working up a veritable hysteria of pathological self-analysis as regarded his possible chances of "salvation". To read of the experiences of the Rev. Cotton Mather, and of his precocious little brother

Nathaniel (who virtually tormented himself to death with hysterical emotional "soul-questioning") is to witness genuine tragedy—the tragedy of ignorance and superstition. Poor little Nat died at 19—I have seen his gravestone in the old Charter St. Burying Ground at Salem. His fortunate escape from life came in 1688, and his epitaph (a tribute to his prodigious learning) reads with unconscious pathos—"An Aged Person who had seen but 19 Winters in the World". Bradford—a Plymouth Pilgrim outside the worst pest-zone of Massachusetts mania—is not without some appreciation of the situation in this respect; and remarks with unusual penetration for his age—"An other reason (for the wave of morbid crime) may be, yt it may be in this case as it is with waters when their streames are stopt or dam'd up, when they get passage they flow with more violence and make more noys and disturbance, than when they are suffered to rune quietly in their owne chanel. Soe wikedness being here more stopt by strict lawes, and ye same more nerly lookt unto, soe as it cannot rune in a commone road of liberty as it wou'd, and is inclined, it serches every wher, and at last breaks out wher it gettes vente." Good old Bradford! But the real Puritans couldn't see it his way; hence (since they were forced to recognise the extent and unprecedented morbidity of the increasing crimes around them) there gradually grew up the commonly-accepted doctrine that the devil was making a special war on Massachusetts because of the holy purpose to which that saintly colony was dedicated by the Lord's Brethren. The Bradford-Bellingham correspondence was in 1642. Exactly fifty years later the Salem witchcraft affair broke out. Can anyone doubt what prepared the masses of the people to regard the matter seriously? As a sidelight on the nearly-unendurable strain to which Massachusetts theocracy subjected the nerves of its victims, we may note the vast numbers who withdrew to Rhode Island soil. It is much less known that really considerable numbers *went over to the Indians*—"went native", as modern slang would put it. This condition was much more frequent in the Puritan zone than anywhere else in Anglo-Saxon America. Authorities say that 100 times more whites were Indianised, than Indians were Europeanised. One Massachusetts man—the Rev. William Blackstone, who had been the first settler on the Boston peninsula—became a hermit; taking his books and family and building a home in the wilderness in 1635, on territory later part of R. I. He said, "I came to Mass. to escape the Lord's Bishops, and now I leave it to escape the Lord's Brethren."

Blackstone was really the first white settler in R. I., but because he did not found a colony he is not considered a rival of Roger Williams as the local pioneer. After Providence was founded, he used to ride in on a white bull and pay visits to Mr. Williams and other friends. It was he who introduced the apple-tree to this colony. He was a great friend of the Indians, and it is merciful that he died in 1674, before King Philip's War convulsed the colony. His house and books were burnt by the Indians two years after his death.

But there was still another reason for Massachusetts crime and abnormality—a reason rather embarrassing to many upholders of the myth that Mass. blood is a kind of unofficial patent of nobility. This was the rapid importation, after 1635, of a vile class of degenerate London scum as indentured servants. We escaped this in R. I., since at first we were too poor to have many servants at all, and later used Indians and negroes (we imported the latter in small numbers from the West Indies before our own "triangular trade" began) instead of low-grade whites. But Mass. needed servants sooner, and did not have our penchant for exotics; hence (in addition to enslaving some local Indians, and importing a *few* negroes and Carib Indians from the West Indies) went in on a large scale for "bound" English labour—paupers, convicts, "floaters", and so on. They had not learned the lesson that more actually anti-social perversion occurs amongst the decadent scum of a high race, than amongst the mentally and physically sound types of an inferior race. We can picture the result of bringing this warped, inhibition-stunted, free and easy degenerate element under the domination of the iron-clad Puritan theocracy and moral strait-jacket. Repression and explosion—just as intelligent old William Bradford of Plymouth saw. 'Wikedness more stopt up by strict lawes . . . . breaks out wher it gettes vente.' It is interesting to see how this same custom of importing inferior Englishmen worked out in less repressive colonies. Virginia had tried it prior to the beginning of the African trade in 1619, and the wretched mass of scum resulting therefrom was gradually settled on small farms. There was never any violence or well-defined clash with authority, and not a trace of any epidemic of morbidity. The inferior whites gradually retreated toward the backwoods, becoming in the course of time that "mean white" or "white trash" element so well-known to sociologists. One may add that an analogous phenomenon ultimately occurred in New England, small colonies of inferior or deca-

dent stock springing up on the fringe of settled regions and receiving such names as "Hardscrabble," "Hell's Half Acre," "Dogtown," etc., etc. In N. Y. and New Jersey too—where the mean whites mixed with negroes and Indians and still survive as wretched semi-barbarians in the Catskills and Ramapos. But this segregation did not occur in Massachusetts till after the decadents had made many complications in the general situation.

Another and highly important factor in accounting for Massachusetts witch-belief and daemonology is the fact, now widely emphasised by anthropologists, that the traditional features of witch-practice and Sabbat-orgies were by no means mythical. It was not from any empty system of antique legendry that Western Europeans of the 17th century and before got their *significantly consistent* idea of what witches were, how they made their incantations, and what they did at their hideous convocations on May-Eve and Hallowmass. *Something actual was going on under the surface*, so that people really stumbled on *concrete experiences* from time to time which confirmed all they had ever heard of the witch species. In brief, scholars now recognise that all through history a secret cult of degenerate orgiastic nature-worshippers, furtively recruited from the peasantry and sometimes from decadent characters of more select origin, has existed throughout northwestern Europe; practicing fixed rites of immemorial antiquity for malign objects, having a governing system and hierarchy as well-defined and elaborate as that of any established religion, and meeting secretly by night in deserted rustic places. It has no inclusive name recognised by its own adherents, but is customarily called simply "the witch-cult" by modern anthropologists. Evidences of its persistent existence and unvarying practices are revealed by multitudes of trials, legends, and historic incidents; and by piecing these together we have today a very fair idea of its nature and workings. Originally it seems almost conclusively to have been simply the normal religion of the prehistoric Mongoloids who preceded the Nordics and Mediterraneans in northwestern Europe. It is based on the idea of fertility, as worshipped by a stock-raising race of pre-agricultural nomads, and its salient features from the very first were semi-annual ritualistic gatherings at the breeding seasons of the flocks and herds, at which primitive erotic rites were practiced to encourage the fecundity of the stock—much as certain savages practice such rites to this day. This religion was once dominant throughout Western Europe; but was naturally

pushed to the wall when the Aryans conquered the land and brought in their own infinitely more refined, evolved, and poetic polytheism. It could not stand up against Druidism or the Northern religion of Asgard and Valhalla, so sunk (like the Mongoloid "little people" to whom it belonged) to the position of a subordinate and despised cult. It was probably never persecuted under the supremacy of the Celts and Teutons, but on the other hand no doubt gained converts from among the degenerate elements of these conquering races. The coming of the Romans—who generally disliked furtive, orgiastic religions, and had suppressed certain Dionysiac and Cybele cults in Italy as early as the 3d century B. C.—somewhat changed the complexion of the matter, and tended to drive the vestigial religion to cover. Yet it seems to have obtained degenerate Roman converts, and was probably carried into the British Isles (where the Mongoloids never were) by the Romans rather than by either Mediterraneans or Celts. It is possible that Sylvanus Cocidius, whose worship the Britanno-Romans discouraged, was connected with this cult. The semi-annual orgies (April 30 and Nov. 30) were what came later to be known as *sabbats*. In the main, they consisted of dances and chants or worshippers—mostly female, but presided over by a male hierophant in shaggy animal disguise, called simply "The Black Man". The conclusion of the ceremony was obscene to an extent which makes even Juvenal's sixth satire seem milk. The cult as a whole was subdivided into local units called *covens*, each with its "black man", and all joined by a common body of tradition and system of passwords and nomenclature. Every member was given a new mystic name for use within the cult. Originally, the distinctly *malign* features probably did not exist; the religion being merely emotional and sensual. When, however, the dominant races began to oppose and persecute it, it began to strike back and specialise in bringing evil to its enemies. This doubtless caused an emphasis to be laid upon the supernatural powers conferred on its devotees by their communion with the gods of Nature through the ritual of the sabbat. Little by little the idea grew up—accepted both by the half-crazed devotees and by the outside world—that the cult was a device for giving people a supernatural means of working evil. When Christianity made its appearance, the persecution of the cult became infinitely strengthened; since this new faith had so fanatical a hatred of everything pertaining to eroticism. For the first time, in all likelihood, the cult became *wholly secret and subterranean*—and correspondingly,



the general fear and hatred of it, and the tendency to regard it as a link with nameless powers of darkness, no doubt vastly increased. Once driven to cover, it seems to have stayed put fairly well, and it probably died out in many places—including Britain. Conquests by Gaels and Saxons finished any remnants of it which may have been left. From the late Roman period to late in the Middle Ages there are only glancing evidences of it, although it certainly maintained a steady existence on the continent of Europe, recruiting many degenerate and discontented people since it promised them so many more simple, understandable, and available boons than did Christianity. It was always waiting, ready to catch anybody who grew tired of the ethics and aesthetics of the ruling European civilisation—just as the Indians were always waiting to take in anybody who sickened of Puritan life in early Massachusetts. The big recruiting came in the 14th and 15th centuries, during that period of despair, degradation, and recklessness following the ravages of the Black Death. This is the period, you know, when the sardonic conception of the "Dance of Death", as exploited by Albrecht Dürer, gained form. Dissatisfied with all that civilised life gave and promised, thousands undoubtedly went over to the witch-cult (a gesture by this time identified with the conception of "selling oneself to Satan") and extracted from its mummeries and its Sabbats what pleasure and excitement they could get. Nor could this be kept wholly secret on so vast a scale. For the first time the cult began to be generally known and feared and identified with the worship of Satan. (Its connexion with the Black Mass would be a good subject for learned research.) Undoubtedly, it would have virtually wrecked European civilisation if left unopposed, for it fostered a spirit of seditious malignity aimed against all existing institutions. Let us appreciate, therefore, that the first mediaeval opposers of witchcraft were *not* mere fanatics fighting a shadow. They were deluded in that they thought themselves to be fighting something supernatural, but they were most certainly right in believing that they were fighting a genuine menace. Of course, *reports* of witchcraft far exceeded the actual number of instances of its practice; so that many individual witch-condemnations were indeed unjust. Also, the legend of witch-ceremonies undoubtedly spread far beyond the actual areas in which the real cult had its activities. For some reason or other, *Germany* was the scene of the most actual cult-doings, though covens undoubtedly extended into France and Scandinavia and perhaps as far south as Italy. The cult does not seem to have crossed into Britain till late in the 15th

or early in the 16th century; and it there found its chief seat in Scotland. It entered Wales, but never seems to have had any foothold in either England or Ireland. From the time of Pope John XXII's bull against witchcraft in the first half of the 14th century, the war of civilisation against the cult gained headway. In 1484 Pope Innocent VIII launched the most tremendous campaign of all—the one during which the Germans Sprenger and Kramer prepared their famous treatise on witchcraft and witch-finding: "Malleus Maleficarum". Nor was it any phantom that Church and State alike were fighting. On the contrary, the degenerate cult gained strength, struck back, and increased in malignancy, until it seemed to be almost beyond control. In southern Germany it attained such magnitude that the wholesale collapse of civilisation seemed to be threatened; hence—amidst the impotence of all legal agencies—many fearless noblemen organised a wholly extra-legal society for detecting and punishing cult-adherents; a sort of mediaeval Ku Klux Klan called the "Holy Vehm", which seized miscreants, tried them at dead of night in lonely forests, and saw that they never appeared again if judged guilty. This very practical "malleus maleficarum" really worked, hence after 1500 cult witchcraft was never a real menace. The scare, however, continued; and prosecutions and executions by both Church and State were exceedingly numerous until far into the 18th century. In Britain the chief witch fright occurred during the reign of James I—early in the 17th century—and was undoubtedly based on actual cult activities in Scotland. The last witch-trial in England occurred in 1712, though such things lasted on the Continent till the beginning of the 19th century. The witch-cult itself is probably now extinct, but no one can say just when it perished—for of course the rumour and legend-form must have persisted long afterward. It is the opinion of most, that no actual conven-meetings or sabbats occurred after the beginning of the 18th century—if indeed after the middle of the 17th. Interestingly enough, the existence of this cult was not suspected by moderns till late in the 19th century; the previous opinion of students being that all witchcraft scares were pure hallucinations. Arthur Machen made splendid fictional use of the discovery before it became widely known or universally accepted. Not until 1921, however, was the matter systematically presented—honour for this step being due to Prof. Margaret Alice Murray of London University, author of *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*.

And now—getting back to the main topic—where does all this hitch on to the history of witch-belief in colonial New England? Well, we may

see at once that all the colonists had minds well prepared by historic experience to believe in the possibility of diabolic manifestations. They knew all about incantations and sabbats, and had had enough glimpses of actual cult-practices to take such things pretty seriously. Naturally—since the cult was always concealed, and never fully admitted by everybody to exist—there were many sceptics about the whole matter; and of course, there were also many well-balanced people who, although admitting witchcraft to be possible, were nevertheless in no danger of imagining cases of it where no true ground for suspicion existed. This latter type probably predominated among the American colonists as a whole. Since they believed in orthodox religion, it was not extraordinary that they should believe in other forms of the supernatural; but they were hard-headed enough not to apply their theoretical speculations to the actual world around them. Not so, however, with the Puritans. The whole nature of their theology taught them to be on the watch for manifestations of the devil; whilst the epidemic of morbid crime and perversion in their midst was to them unmistakable evidence of a Satanic siege. Many believed the swart Indians of the black woods to be diabolic allies of a sort—and of course the customary life of cheerless repression, rustic solitude, wintry cold, and hysterical religious introspection and espionage, all tended to make the population jumpy, and eager to seize on any unusual symptom as an indication of unholy magic. Then, once witchcraft was indicated, there was no choice about the course to follow. Did not Jehovah thunder forth the inexorable command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"?

To me, this background seems to explain all the New England witch trials (the first was in 1648) up to the time of the Salem scare. The witch-cult was not here, but its echoes and traditions were. Trials were by no means numerous, and executions very few. Then came Salem with its 50 trials and 19 executions, and with the strange parallelism of testimony in many cases, which profoundly impressed some of the most scholarly men in the Province. Cotton Mather—a learned man who was no fool for all his extravagant Puritanism—heard and sifted the evidence, and egged on the prosecutions with all his power and influence, believing some new and definite Satanic attack to have been made upon Massachusetts. What is behind all this? Merely a natural outburst and culmination of the mood which produced the early sporadic trials—or something new and systematic and tangible?

Well, we shall never know. Miss Murray, the anthropologist, believes

that the witch-cult actually established a "coven" (its only one in the New World) in the Salem region about 1690, and that it included a large number of neurotic and degenerate whites, together with Indians, negroes, and West-Indian slaves. Of this coven, she maintains, the Rev. George Burroughs was probably the leader or "Black Man"; (detailed legend, testimony, and anecdote certainly prove him by no means saintly!) so that this hanging was perfectly well merited. Of the other victims, some were probably guilty of cult-participation whilst others were innocent and accused only through malice. Thus conjectures the learned author of *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*—though of course without definite proof. Others—Americans who have possibly examined the Salem records more closely than she—think it improbable that any formally organised cult-branch could have been concerned; though all agree that the answers to trial questions shew a vast familiarity with cult-institutions—more than could easily be accounted for by common legend, or by any sort of leading questions. For my part—I doubt if a compact coven existed, but certainly think that people had come to Salem who had a direct personal knowledge of the cult, and who were perhaps initiated members of it. I think that some of the rites and formulae of the cult must have been talked about secretly among certain elements, and perhaps furtively practiced by the few degenerates involved. I would not be surprised if Burroughs were concerned—and also the West-Indian slave woman Tituba, who started the scare in the first place by telling tales to neurotic children. Most of the people hanged were probably innocent, yet I do think there was a concrete, sor-did background not present in any other New England witchcraft case.

Puritan witch-belief by no means ended with Salem, although there were no more executions. Rumours and whispers directed against eccentric characters were common all through the 18th and into the 19th century, and are hardly extinct today in decadent Western Massachusetts. I know an old lady in Wilbraham whose grandmother, about a century ago, was said to be able to raise a wind by muttering at the sky. Nothing of all this, however, reached Rhode-Island. With our colonists witchcraft was always a remote thing—at most, a whimsical thing to joke about or scare children with. Whatever real belief existed here, was confined to Indians and negroes. No witchcraft trial ever took place within our boundaries. . . .

What you say of your ancestry is extremely interesting, and I think it is a great asset from the standpoint of fantastic literature to have so pre-

dominant a share of Celt. . . . . Very early in life I had an opportunity to see the Celtic poetic imagination at its very best, for my mother was a friend of the late Louise Imogen Guiney, a poet of pure Irish blood who now ranks among the really major figures of American literature. When I was three years old we spent a whole winter at the Guiney home in Auburndale, Mass., and I can still recall how the poetess used to teach me simple rhymes which I would recite standing on a table! Another Celtic sidelight of my youth was still nearer home—my next-door neighbours and best playmates being three brothers whose relation to the Irish stream might be said to be your own, *reversed*—that is, they were descended from a line of Irishmen given to marrying Rhode Island Yankees, so that although they were about 80% Anglo-Saxon, they considered themselves heirs to the Irish tradition through descent in the male line and the possession of the name of Banigan. Their family always made it a point to travel to Ireland as often as possible, and were great collectors of Celtic antiquities. Their grandfather had a veritable museum of prehistoric Irish artifacts—indeed, I wish I knew what has become of that collection now that the family has left Providence and the brothers are all dispersed! Observing my admiration for these reliques of unknown yesterdays, they gave me two little greenish figures of a sort quite numerous represented in the collection; figures which they held to be of vast antiquity, but concerning which they admitted very little was known. Some seem to be metallic, whilst others are clearly carved of some light sort of stone. Their average length or height is only an inch and a half, and they are all overlaid with a greenish patina. They are grotesque human figures, sometimes in conventional poses and with curious costume and headdress. Their vast age is held to be indicated by the prodigious depth at which they are found in ancient peat-bogs. My two—one stone and one metal—have always appealed prodigiously to my imagination, and have formed high spots of my own assortment of curiosities. . . . . What are they? Were they ancient and buried and forgotten when Partholan first sighted Iërne's strange green shore? Did some Atlantean colonist, remembering strange secrets from hoary Poseidonis, fashion them in the light of primordial dawns? . . .

Best wishes, and thanks for enclosures. Most cordially

and sincerely yrs.—  
H P Lovecraft

429. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Tiw's-Daag  
Oct. 7, 1930

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

N'ggah-kthn-y'hhu! Cthua t'lh gup r'lhob-g'th'gg lgh thok! G'llh-ya, Tsathoggua! Y'kn'nh, Tsathoggua!

*It* hath come!

Homage, Lord Tsathoggua, Father of Night!

Glory, Elder One, First-Born of Outer Entity!

Hail, Thou Who wast Ancient beyond Memory

Ere the Stars Spawned Great Cthulhu!

Power, Hoary Crawler over Mu's fungoid places!

Iä! Iä! G'noth-ykagga-ha!

Iä, Iä, Tsathoggua!!!

Sir, I am most profoundly your debtor, & know not how I can make you sensible of the extream degree of my pleasure & gratitude! Never, I vow, have I beheld so primal & sinister an idol of the Old Ones; & I can not doubt for a moment that this doth represent no less a being than the Lord Tsathoggua himself; who it is well known came to the stone desert of K'li-Phon-N'yah after the advent of Cthulhu to this planet, & the building of the monstrous fortalice of R'lyeh. Most certainly, this palaeogean eidolon dates from a past anterior to the existence of any life-principle native to this earth or to our three known dimensions; & it carries in every line & angle the spirit & mysteries of its extra-cosmick artificer. It is the full brother of that Rānorāda, carven by the gods, which my L<sup>d</sup> Dunsany tells of as standing in the seventh Desart of Desarts, beyond the camel routes going out of Bodraháhn. I have sett this eidolon most prominently on a shelf, fixt so as to adapt its non-galactick geometry to the tri-dimensional laws of equilibrium; & design to make obeisances before it each midnight—& most especially upon Beltane's Eve & Hallowmass. If from now on my work shall shew any sudden improvement, you may know to whom credit belongs for the phaenomenon! Again, Sir, my most profound & unaffected thanks!

Yrs for additional trembling—  
Ech-Pi-El

430. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Temple of Azathoth  
Octr. 17, 1930

Flaming Youth:—

. . . . Of my general position, you are already fully sensible. I am neither a pessimist nor an optimist, but simply a rational indifferentist. I value tradition as an indispensable adornment of life, though being of course unable to take it seriously as an interpreter of contemporary human motives and acts, since it was evolved when the facts of psychology were obscure, and when the conditions of life and knowledge were such as to elicit from mankind a very differently proportioned set of emotions from those prevailing today.

As for Grandpa's *Whisperer*—it came to 69 pages, so I fancy the rate of remuneration was precisely like that which brought you \$275.00 for Chaugar. The final version was changed, especially at the very end, but not so much as I had expected to change it. The acceptance of this tale encourages me to write more in the near future, though these will doubtless meet with uniform rejection. . . .

Your *Horror from the Hills* is announced as 'coming soon'. But what makes me maddest about this issue, damn it, is the *dinosaur's egg story* given first place and cover design. Rotten—cheap—puerile—yet winning prime distinction *because of the subject matter*. Now didn't Grandpa tell a bright young man just eight years ago this month to write a story like that? Didn't Grandpa go and ask at the American Museum about dinosaur eggs (then known only hypothetically) to see whether they were hard or soft, and didn't he tell flaming youth to write a nightmare of a yarn about what lumbered about in the museum basement at night? And then didn't a timid youth go and refuse to do it just because he'd read H. G. Wells' *AEpyornis Island*? Fie, Sir! Somebody else wasn't so afraid of the subject—and now a wretched mess of hash, just on the strength of its theme, gets the place of honour that Young Genoa might have had! Now, Sir, let this teach you not to be so scared about general similarities in future! You ought to know that the style is the thing, and that subject-matter is relatively immaterial. It's the development which makes a tale one's own or not one's own. Why, damn it,

boy, I've half a mind to write an egg story myself right now—though I fancy my primal ovoid would hatch out something infinitely more palaeogean and unrecognisable than the relatively commonplace dinosaur.

Speaking of literature—as we occasionally do—your Grandpa is getting a real library at last! On returning from the wild domed hills last Tuesday I found in my shadowy chamber a vast cardboard carton on which my aunt inform'd me she had paid \$1.19's express. The Sauk City inscription told the tale, and I knew that Little Augie Derleth had acted on his express'd intention of sending me a gratuitous batch of his bibliothecal discards upon quitting home soil for the gilded editorial palaces of Minneapolis. Opening the package, I found a modest \$1.19's worth of literary matter good, bad, and indifferent, comprising 18 books and a 2-inch stack of short stories torn from magazines—and when I began to survey the titles I saw that I was in luck indeed. Listen, young man, to what your Grandpa now *owns*: Henry James's *Turn of the Screw*, Blackwood's *John Silence*, Chamber's *In Search of the Unknown*, (God! *The Harbour Master!!!*) Marsh's *The Beetle*, Toksvig's *Last Devil*, Busson's *Man Who Was Born Again*, (that picaresque thing Cook lent us, which you liked) Buchan's collection with *Skule Skerry*, etc., etc., etc. And Wakefield's *They Return at Evening* as a duplicate—since you'll recall my getting a copy in your decadent cosmopolis during my late visit. Now, Sir, I don't quite remember whether you got one or not; but in case you haven't it, let me know and I'll be delighted to send you my duplicate. I recall that you like the tales—*And He Shall Sing*, *Seventeenth Hole at Duncaster*, etc., etc. If you have a copy, I'll give this extra to Dwyer. Lots of this Derleth stuff is wholly unknown to me, but one of the items is that mediocre F. Britten Austen collection which we read five years ago. The whole thing is a full winter's reading for a slow old gentleman. . . .

As for our young communist—I have just set Farmer Woodburn Harris of Vermont on to him, and expect some brilliant fireworks. Harris is a political conservative of the traditional Yankee mould—a solid Collidge man—and his keen wit and horse-sense will form a delightful foil to young Weiss's bolshevism. I shall now proceed to send Harris the bulky letter you have just returned, so that he can take his opponent's measure. Certainly Weiss is keenly intelligent and well-informed, and an interesting character despite the bizarre opinions into which his over-developed ethical emotionalism has led him. Like you, I

think his epistolary tome is the least absurd defence of communism I have yet beheld. . . . As for capitalism—as you say, its tolerance of the arts and of a refined mode of living makes it an instant choice when communism is the only alternative. It is probably destined to last in the Western World, albeit with certain self-imposed socialistic (or paternalistic) modifications which will appear as the extent of technological unemployment and revolutionary menace increases. The workman's place in this ultimate order will not be at all bad, and may conceivably be so good—with so much leisure—that it will help to solve the problem of the impecunious man of cultivation. There are simple industrial positions which a penniless artist or author could fill without distraction or exhaustion, especially as the hours and conditions of labour are improved.

As for the problem of the moneyless aesthete in general—it is admittedly painful, yet I fear you give it a certain sentimental exaggeration. In particular, you couple it in some vague way with *blame* of somebody or something or other, when as a matter of fact it is merely an impersonal and unavoidable incident common to all social organisms and remediable in no way whatsoever. In feeling *blame*, or *anger* or *rebellion* you are like the small boy who kicks and scratches the tree which resists his climbing efforts, and pounds and crushes the piece of newspaper which blows in his face when he is trying to read a story-book. . . .

Under a bolshevik regime, of course, the aesthete *would* have a legitimate grievance; but under the existing system he has none. He is free to dream and create as he chooses so long as he is not a charge on the community—and what more could anyone reasonably ask? Does he want someone to support him free of charge? That is rather a large order, and is seldom met with in any age, notwithstanding certain cases of royal pensioning. If any man, aesthetic or not, is poor, that is his own misfortune and nobody's fault. Nobody has money except by the fortunate accident of birth and inheritance, or by the performance of specific services for which there is a demand. How else does anybody *expect* to get money? When a creative artist inherits enough money to free him from economic bondage, that is very fortunate. It happens in many cases, and one may sincerely congratulate—without invidious jealousy—the men who are thus blessed. But when an artist does not inherit money, or loses what he has inherited, what does he expect? Does he fancy anybody is going to feed and clothe him just for the honour of

having such a person in the world? That is not common sense. In a few cases individuals are so prodigiously gifted that they form a national asset and receive a royal pension; but only exceptional aesthetes are as publicly important as all that. Generally speaking, no man can reasonably expect to get cash, food, or clothes unless he pays for them in some commodity of genuine value to the ones who have them to give; so the poor artist might as well realise from the outset that he's got to work—and personal creative art is not work, since it is self-expression not adapted to others' specific needs—if he expects to live. And this isn't anybody's fault, either. It's simply nature and horse-sense. If he has money, all right. If he hasn't, he must get some, like anybody else, in the best way he can. Now there are many ways in which this can be very nicely done. To begin with, one's creative work may *happen* to suit market needs; in which case one is as lucky as if one inherited money. Look at Louis Bromfield, Theodore Dreiser, H. G. Wells, and so on. Scores of creative artists stumble into a good living without departing a bit from the same artistic course they'd have followed if they hadn't had to earn money. This cuts down your quota of suffering aesthetes by a substantial amount. Then another class of artist is able to get hold of a profitable commercial side-line which nets him a tolerable living without using up his creative leisure and energy. Look at Little Augie Derleth right now—the kid is going to coin money hand over fist, yet keep enough time and energy for himself to write sincere and unsalable things like *Evening in Spring*, which form his artistic life and will eventually fix his artistic status. If we can't get hold of these paying jobs on the fringe of literature it simply shews our own lack of mental agility and adaptability and resilience. I can't myself—but I confess that the defect lies in my own psychology and not in the social or cosmic order. If I am a slow, unadaptable, unprogressive pauper-recluse, the trouble is all with me. Society isn't keeping me down—but I'm not naturally buoyant and clever enough to swim, or lucky enough to float. Who's to blame? Nobody, since the all-wise Creator went out of fashion! Some happen to be fortunate—others don't! Then of course there are many men clever enough to earn money wholly outside literature, and yet have the time and energy for creation. Samuel Rogers—who buried poor Dick Sheridan—was a rich banker. F. Hopkinson Smith was a civil engineer. William McFee is a seaman. Do they write any the worse for their outside labours? Not a bit of it. They are simply bright and fortu-

nate. And I, who lack their cleverness or stamina or adaptability, heartily congratulate them—nor deem myself a persecuted victim of society because I have not their qualities. Of course, my position *is* an unfortunate one, and I sincerely sympathise with all others similarly engulfed; but where does the *blame* come in? Who in particular is to *blame* when a man stubs his toe on the curbing or falls down stairs on his nose? Hell! We may be unfortunate, but why get maudlin or whiney? It isn't Nordic to get hysterical about Fate. The blond-bearded warrior faces pain and the Twilight of the Gods with a calm visage and a knowledge that Thor and Odin will themselves perish some day.

But you are right about the artist's position under bolshevism. There *is* something to protest about! Communism flatly opposes the natural spirit of expression and creation, and endeavours to supplant beauty with propaganda and mechanical efficiency. Betwixt the man of culture and the bolshevik revolutionary there can be only war to the death—as I am trying (probably in vain) to impress on the young commissar of the Tucson soviet! . . .

As for the problem of *cottage cheese*—this is a complex matter which one cannot hope to adjudicate intelligently if one takes too artificially simple a view of the subject. It is natural, of course, for the superficial observer to class this commodity with other products bearing a cognate designation, on the classic principle embodied in the axiom that 'pigs is pigs', including even the guinea variety. But in all truth no sophisticated gastronomer could for a moment countenance so gross a confusion. Cheese proper—the normal Cheddar variety produced by a long process of mellowing and bacterial action—is one thing; but so-call'd "cottage-cheese", the soft, slushy parvenu result of a little sour-milk curdling, is a very different proposition! Correctly speaking, it is only an embryo of real cheese—a rude, unform'd inchoate thing—the *rudis indigestaque moles* of the Ovidian cosmogony, as it were. It is a parody, a caricature, a blasphemy—a parvenu thing like mankind as compared to the Elder Ones of Cthulhu and Tsathoggua. Now my treatment of the cheese and cottage-cheese question must depend entirely on the implied scope of the matter. Accepting the cottage-cheese nomenclature at its face value, I might be inclined to agree with you in believing that its merciful extirpation would prove a boon to the Nordick race; but when one considers the broader implications in your comment, and reflects upon cheese as a whole—as an historic part of the main stream of western culture—one must dissent from your ill-advised condemnation and maintain the dig-

nity of a classical institution against the assaults of iconoclastick modernism. I am a caseist in diet, a cattist in zoölogy, and an Anglo-Cathartic in religion. Shantih! Shantih! Shantih! Cheese, young man,—*real* cheese—is one of the foundation-stones of Indo-European tradition. It is mention'd in the earliest writings of the Grecians, and was a staple of the Mediterranean world. The virile Goth and Viking devour'd it till their hair and beards assum'd its colour, and it is paramount in the balladry of that 13th century which moustacheletted little Chestertons exalt as the high-water-mark of art, reason, culture, and toleration. It laid the foundations of that Dutch greatness which evolved a Talman, and of the Swiss liberty embodied in the maxims of a Calvin. The painted prose of a Machen is redolent of Caerphilly cheese, and in conjunction with garlic and spaghetti the Italian Renaissance derives directly from the cheese of Parma. The greatness of the New World was first manifest in caseous refinement, and no Rhode-Islander fails to sniff with pride at the Narragansett cheeses which, together with Narragansett Pacers, made famous the quasi-Virginian plantations which drowsed on the west shoar of the Bay before the revolution. One of the redeeming features of the Province of New-York was the noted cheese industry of the Catskill and Shawangunk regions, which brought the name of "the cheese of Hurley" into the popular nursery rhymes of Dutch and English alike, and gave rise to the still surviving trade name of "York State Cheese". Modern science, in studying the moon's surface, confirms (according to the view of those sceptics who go beyond the rationalism of the 19th century) the dignity of green cheese as the primal nebular material of the electron; and antiquarians find curious and significant linkages in such spontaneously evolved cheese names as *Phoenix* and *Kraft*. The Phoenix—rising triumphant from the ashes—and Kraft, significant among Devonshire surnames as the source of the Love-Kraft line; the golden crest of whose arms is very obviously a fine cylindrical cheese, despite its conventional heraldick recognition as a "tower". No, young man—if you wish to defame real cheese, pray do so to somebody else than your Grandpa! To speak against so traditional an institution is the plainest bolshevism. The only way of destroying it that I favour, is the way in which I manage to destroy from 1½ to 2 lbs. of York State Medium per week! . . .

Yr. obt.,  
Grandpa

431. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Temple of Azathoth,  
That which gibbers mindlessly in Darkness at the  
Centre of Ultimate Chaos.  
Hour of the Thin Piping of the Daemon Flutes, in the  
year of N'gah.  
Oct. 17, 1930

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

I am glad that *The White Ship* does not seem too badly waterlogged & unseaworthy after all these years. To me it has an undeniable touch of the artificial & the namby-pamby—for the style is one requiring more restraint & adroitness than I had eleven years ago. I did a whole young novel—110 closely written pages—in that style during the winter of 1926-7, & fancy that that may have been my swan-song as a Dunsanoid fantasiste. I like to spin that kind of cob-web—letting my imagination build cosmic Odysseys without restraint—but as soon as they are done they begin to look a bit puerile to me. They need the glamorous perspective of the creative process to conceal their flimsiness & enhance their vitality. I have never had the fortitude to type that final piece of Plunkettism. Wandrei read it in manuscript & didn't think much of it. Enclosed is *The Hound*, as requested, although I consider this one of the poorest jumbles I have ever produced. It was written in 1922, before I had begun to prune down the verbal extravagances of my earlier prose. There is too much sonorous rhetoric & stock imagery, & not enough substance, in this piece of junk. Meanwhile I shall be grateful for your opinion of *The Whisperer in Darkness*. This represents my most recent manner, although it is not an especially shining example of it. The more I consider weird fiction, the more am I convinced that a solidly realistic framework is needed in order to build up a preparation for the unreal element. The one supreme defect of cheap weird fiction is an absurd taking-for-granted of fantastic prodigies, & a sketchy delineation of such things before any background of convincingness is laid down. When a story fails to emphasise, by contrast with reality, the utter strangeness & abnormality of the wonders it depicts, it likewise fails to make those wonders seem like anything more than aimless puerility.

Only normal things can be convincingly related in a casual way. Whatever an abnormal thing may be, its foremost quality must always be that of abnormality itself; so that in delineating it one must put prime stress on its departure from the natural order, & see that the characters of the narrative react to it with adequate emotions. My own rule is that no weird story can truly produce terror unless it is devised with all the care & verisimilitude of an actual *hoax*. The author must forget all about "short story technique", & build up a stark, simple account, full of homely corroborative details, just as if he were actually trying to "put across" a deception in real life—a deception clever enough to make adults believe it. My own attitude in writing is always that of the hoax-weaver. One part of my mind tries to concoct something realistic & coherent enough to fool the rest of my mind & make me swallow the marvel as the late Camille Flammarion used to swallow the ghost & revenant yarns unloaded on him by fakers & neurotics. For the time being I try to forget formal literature, & simply devise a lie as carefully as a crooked witness prepares a line of testimony with cross-examining lawyers in his mind. I take the place of the lawyers now & then—finding false spots in the original testimony, & thereupon rearranging details & motivations with a greater care for probability. Not that I succeed especially well, but that I think I have the basic method calculated to give maximum results if expertly used. This ideal became a conscious one with me about the "Cthulhu" period, & is perhaps best exemplified in *The Colour Out of Space*. Its general principle would not have to be suspended even in dream-like narrations of the *Randolph Carter* & *Erich Zann* type—a type to which I may return now & then in future—though it does of course vanish in phantasy of the Dunsanian or *White Ship* order. I think I mentioned in a P. S. that Wright has just accepted *The Whisperer* for \$350.00, to use as a 2-part serial in the June & July issues. This quick landing certainly pleases me mightily, & encourages me to cut down revision long enough to grind out a whole series of tales as I used to do in 1919 & 1920. Of such a batch, only about ¼ would be likely to land—yet the price of original work is so much higher than that of revision, that I might even at worst make as much as revision now brings. At any rate, an attempt will do no harm. I agree that very short pieces seem to lack effect—indeed, I seem less & less able to find anything which will go into a compact space. Every tale I tackle nowadays seems to spin itself out beyond all ordinary short story limits, nor

can I find any way to make excisions without ruining the whole thing. I think a novel must be much easier to write than a good short story.

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As for Wright's policy—he has stated that his index to popular whim is, almost exclusively, the flood of semi-illiterate *Eyrie* mail which pours in upon him. Where he may err is in estimating the basic kinship of some new tale to some supposedly analogous tale which the rabble have praised. In the current issue your *Uncharted Isle* is the only tale of any real merit. . . . . The dinosaur's egg story was simply a minus quantity—but it made me curse, because I thought of that same plot just eight years ago (before any real dinosaurs' eggs were discovered) & urged kid Belknap to develop it in connexion with his beloved American Museum, within walking distance of which he's lived all his young life. I went so far as to make inquiries of a sub-curator as to whether dinosaurs probably laid real eggs, or whether they were semi-viviparous like some other reptilia. On being told that they were probably truly oviparous, I renewed my urging that Belknap write the tale, but just about that time he read Wells' *AEpyornis Island*, & thought that any prehistoric-egg story would constitute a plagiarism. I told him that such an idea was nonsense—and just then the news came of the finding of the first actual dinosaur eggs by an expedition from Belknap's own pet museum! Afterward I thought of writing the tale myself, though I always shelved the idea in favour of others. And now comes the miserable hash—so poor that nothing but its *idea* could possibly have won it first place & cover-design. If only Belknap or I had gone ahead & written a *real* story on the theme! Heaven knows—I may yet, for the idea is none the less mine because of this independent use—or abuse—of it. But if I do use the primordial egg idea, I may introduce variants. Perhaps it won't bring forth a dinosaur at all, but instead, a hellish half-man of the pre-human Tsathoggan period! . . . . .

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As for literary values in general—while my personal taste & interests coincide precisely with your own, I am not disposed to make any generalisations therefrom. The basic essence of art is too subtle & elusive to be defined hastily, & I have a strong objective conviction that realism can be very great art. Not that the mere photographic reproduction of unselected detail is real art. On the other hand, such a thing is *pure*

*science*—psychology or anthropology. But I think that there is a profound aesthetic value in realism so developed as to give the reader a sense of the underlying rhythms of things—a realism which hints at longer streams of essence & vaster marches of pageantry than the span & substance of the outward events, & in which detail serves either to indicate basic trends or to enhance the convincing life-likeness of the foreground. Such a realism must be accurate in its depiction of life & motivations, & must be detailed enough to give a sense of actual substance to the outward events shewn, else it will not have enough contact with any deep sense of truth to form the unifying or liberating influence desired. No avenue can lead us away from the immediate to the remote or the shadowy or the universal unless it really does begin at the immediate—and not at any false, cheap, or conventional conception of the immediate. Now I am not saying that all realists succeed in leading away from the immediate toward anything else. There are futile exponents of every schol of art. Nor do I claim to enjoy *personally* such master-realists as concern themselves wholly with the human scene & personality. Candidly, such masters (Dreiser, deMaupassant, Anderson, &c.) bore me acutely after brief doses—but at this point I pause to question my own authority to form snap subjective judgments. Upon impersonal analysis, I come to conclude that this realism is actually sound & sometimes great art; & that my lack of fondness for it is due to a blind spot in my own makeup—like that which makes me a poor judge of music, or that which made Hawthorne almost devoid of architectural appreciation. I'll never be a Dreiser fan like Vrest Orton, but just the same I think Dreiser is the greatest novelist America has yet produced. The *one* form of literary appeal which I consider *absolutely unsound, charlatanic, & valueless*—frivolous, insincere, irrelevant, & meaningless—is that mode of handling human events & values & motivations known as *romanticism*. Dumas, Scott, Stevenson—my gawd! Here is sheer puerility—the concoction of false glammers & enthusiasms & events out of an addled & distorted background which has no relation to anything in the genuine thoughts, feelings, & experiences of evolved & adult mankind. Its very essence is that one unforgivable disparity which forms the supreme crux of all cheapness & commonness—the investing of things & events with wholly disproportioned & inappropriate emotions. Heroic tales are not unsound so long as they adhere to the actual essentials of life & the human spirit; but when some sentimental poseur adopts their tone for artificial & trivial unrealities, the result is too nauseating &



wearisome for words. As against romanticism I am solidly a realist—even though realising the dangerously narrow margin separating romanticism from certain acceptable forms of phantasy. My conception of phantasy, as a genuine art-form, is *an extension rather than a negation of reality*. Ordinary tales about a castle ghost or old-fashioned werewolf are merely so much junk. The true function of phantasy is to give the imagination a ground for limitless expansion, & to satisfy aesthetically the sincere & burning curiosity & sense of awe which a sensitive minority of mankind feel toward the alluring & provocative abysses of unplumbed space & unguessed entity which press in upon the known world from unknown infinities & in unknown relationships of time, space, matter, force, dimensionality, & consciousness. This curiosity & sense of awe, I believe, are quite basic amongst the sensitive minority in question; & I see no reason to think that they will decline in the future—for as you point out, the frontier of the unknown can never do more than scratch the surface of eternally unknowable infinity. But the truly sensitive will never be more than a minority, because most persons—even those of the keenest possible intellect & aesthetic ability—simply have not the psychological equipment or adjustment to feel that way. I have taken some pains to sound various persons as to their capacity to feel profoundly regarding the cosmos & the disturbing & fascinating quality of the extra-terrestrial & perpetually unknown; & my results reveal a surprisingly small quota. In literature we can easily see the cosmic quality in Poe, Maturin, Dunsany, de la Mare, & Blackwood, but I profoundly suspect the cosmicism of Bierce, James, & even Machen. It is not every macabre writer who feels poignantly & almost intolerably the pressure of cryptic & unbounded outer space. Racially, moreover, it is almost exclusively Nordic. Latins simply cannot understand it—not even Baudelaire, who after all is purely human in his point of view . . . an inverted saint. Among the individuals of my acquaintance, it is rarer than hen's teeth. You have it yourself to a supreme degree, & so have Wandrei & Bernard Dwyer; but I'm hanged if I can carry the list any farther. Loveman's sense of the unreal is a strictly human, classical, & traditional one—albeit exquisitely developed—& Long's is precisely the same at an earlier stage of development. Munn & Talman & Derleth simply don't know what it's all about. One fellow—named Cole—whom I used to correspond with had it as keenly as anybody on the globe, but unfortunately he took to "hearing voices" & finally "got religion"—being now a preacher of some crazy "Pentecostal" sect in Colo-

rado. He was such a fantasiste that he actually lost his hold on reality. As for me, I think I have the actual cosmic feeling very strongly. In fact I *know* that my most poignant emotional experiences are those which concern the lure of unplumbed space, the terror of the encroaching outer void, & the struggle of the ego to transcend the known & established order of time, (time, indeed, above all else, & nearly always in a backward direction) space, matter, force, geometry, & natural law in general. My most vivid experiences are efforts to recapture fleeting & tantalising mnemonic fragments expressed in unknown or half-known architectural or landscape vistas, especially in connexion with a sunset. Some instantaneous fragment of a picture will well up suddenly through some chain of subconscious association—the immediate excitant being usually half-irrelevant on the surface—& fill me with a sense of wistful memory & bafflement; with the impression that the scene in question represents something I have seen & visited before under circumstances of superhuman liberation & adventurous expectancy, yet which I have almost completely forgotten, & which is so bewilderingly uncorrelated & unoriented as to be forever inaccessible in the future. The source of these images, as tested by repeated analysis & associative tracing, is always a composite of places I have visited, pictures I have seen, & things I have read—extending back in my experience to my very first memories at the age of 13/4, & having about 3/4 of its extent in that period of life antedating my 18th year, when I left the birthplace to which I was so utterly attached. The more recent an experience is—be it objective, pictorial, or verbal—the more sharply vivid it has to be in order to gain a place in this subconscious reservoir of vision-material. . . . . .

Yr oblig'd obt Servt  
Ec'h-Pi-El, Priest of Azathoth

432. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Oct. 24, 1930

Mortonius:—

. . . . But cold or no cold, I'm *trying* to devise a *Quebeck* travelogue of some sort, which you shall behold upon its completion. It took more study than I thought to assemble the necessary historick background—so

that right now I'm a rival of good old Mac in the matter of early French settlements.

And did I tell you that *W. T.* took my Vermont hell-beater for 350 bucks?

Yr. obt. hble. Svt.,  
Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus

433. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Oct. 24 30

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . As for my spectrally affiliated New England correspondents—I have not again heard from the grotesque Maine person, but hear frequently from the old lady descended from Salem witches. She sent several moderately gruesome legends lately, but in general I find it more natural to invent cosmic horrors of my own than to utilise actual folklore incidents. I use actual local colour in treating of geography & customs; but when it comes to actual incidents & types of unreal phenomena, I have so far preferred to invent rather than adopt. I don't see any reason why you couldn't write a weird tale. The magazine *Weird Tales* (840 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill.) is relatively easy to break into—any writer being welcome if his ideas have a modicum of originality. Indeed, a good part of the stuff it uses does not seem to have even that modicum! The chief thing is to break away from the saccharine & the conventional. From a commercial standpoint the worst drawback about writing for *W. T.* is that if they reject a Ms., it is not likely to be placeable anywhere else—since the magazine is alone in its field. *Ghost Stories* is hardly to be considered, since its especially low-grade appeal has not yet been altered despite its change from Macfadden to Hersey ownership. If a story's weirdness, however, be due to scientific imagination (voyages to other planets by mechanical means, creation of metal men, &c.) instead of downright supernaturalism, it has at least a half-chance with the "scientifiction" magazines—*Amazing*, *Astounding*, & *Wonder Stories*. Clark Ashton Smith is now "going over big" with *Wonder Stories*, & has been asked to write a whole series of tales (interplanetary



Cthulhu Mythos sculptures by Clark Ashton Smith

voyaging in an atomic-energy space-ship) for it. If anyone has a knack at this kind of thing, there is really an excellent & increasing market open to him. I fear I'm not much in this line myself, but nevertheless believe I'll try a few specimens & see how they are regarded by editors. I have just finished a 69-page novellete which W. T. has accepted for \$350.00—to use as a 2-part serial in the June & July issues. . . .

I remain  
Yr most obt hble Servt  
H.P.Lovecraft

434. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

October 28, 1930

Jonckheer Arminius:—

. . . By the way—if you're looking for travelogue material, I'm by no means limited to my own town. Belknap can tell you what an inveterate scribbler of descriptive travel-treatises I am! I could fix you up a whole series of articles—*On the Trail of the Past*—dealing with Quebec, Portland, Me., Portsmouth, N. H., Newburyport, Salem, Marblehead, Boston, Concord, Lexington, Quincy, Plymouth, Cape Cod, New Bedford, Newport, Kingston, N. Y., (with Hurley and New Paltz—old-time Dutch and Huguenot stuff) anything in the NY metropolitan area from Tarrytown and Hempstead on the N. and E. to Elizabethtown, N. J., on the southwest—Philadelphia and Germantown, Baltimore, Annapolis, Washington, Alexandria, Fredericksburg, Va., Richmond, Petersburg, and (above all) *Charleston, S. C.*, of which I prepared an exhaustive study only last July for the guidance of our friend J. Ferdinand Morton, Armiger. Just name your region, and grandpa can turn on the words. But of course the commercial and special Texaco angles would in each case have to be the product of special research, and I could not furnish pictures except through the loan of postcards in my collection. . . . .

Yr. oblig'd obt. Servt.,  
Theobaldus O'Casey

435. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Oct. 31, 1930  
The Hellish Sabbat-Eve

Forward-Facing Fancier of Futile Futurity:—

As to studyin' mineralogy and beginnin' a collection at the rock-mine on my hillside seigniory—Sir, you makes me feel guilty that I ain't matriculated this fall so's to get a cairn started in the middle of the parlour floor! Hell knows I'd be just as ready to furnish such a little accommodation as you'd be if I ast ya to take a cam'ry and git me fotygrafts of all the Dutch colonial houses in Rockland County, N. Y. which represent the second phase of evolution from the original plain steep roof to the familiar curv'd gambrel and porch roof type. That's oke—the only trouble is in gettin' the exact dope about what's wanted, so's not to fill up with all the outstandin' material excep' the right stuff! . . . . . Interest! O quest rare, unstable, and unbidden; responding never to a summons, and tarrying never for a plea! What art thou! Whence and wherefore comest thou? Whither and why goest thou? Who hath defin'd and anatomis'd thee? Who explain'd or allocated or predicted thee? Shake thy head, Father Sigmund, at that which thy lore will not cover. Pass glibly, O Doc Jawnee, over an aether too perverse for thy condition'd reflexes. Do they know aught of its mysteries, who this hellish night burn cosmick beacons on the lonely hills? Cthulhu fhtagn! Cthulhu fhtagn! Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Goat with a Thousand Young!

No, Sir, I am not insensible of the importance of mineralogy in science; being well aware that the history of the planet and the details of many of its most vivid catastrophes lye hid in the chemical constitution and physical environment of its various sorts of rock. The science of *geology*, that primary branch of learning of which mineralogy is a division, is indeed something in which I might with ease become interested under the proper set of chance conditions; insomuch as it is directly concern'd with that main stream of cosmick pageantry which begins in blank aether and free electrons and ends in the perfection of Nordick man and Georgian architecture. Where mineralogy fails to get a grip on me is in the fact that it is a *secondary* science; an affair mainly of *classi-*

*fication*, with relatively slight *direct* linkage to the dramattick stream of pageantry of elemental conflict and mutation which appeals to the cosmic curiosity or interest-sense of the incurable layman. I am not alone in this—for scores of persons have many times askt me how *anyone* can possibly be interested in so dry a thing as mineralogy. The fact is, I am perhaps *less* anti-mineralogical than the rest of the herd; insomuch as I realise that the trouble is with myself rather than with mineralogy. To the student equipt with a first-rate mind, mineralogy is not dry; because the secondariness of the relationship of its subject-matter to the major stream of cosmic and terrestrial unfolding is lost amidst the easy recognition of that relationship itself. That is, the steps of removal from direct linkage are not emotionally significant to one whose brilliant intellect accepts complexities and tenuities for granted and without effort. But with dreamy, dull-witted plodders like me all is different. We dullards trip on difficulties not even visible to born statisticians and classifiers like you scientists. By the time we've traced the steps of kinship which youse guys lamp Einsteinically from the start as a matter of course, we're all in mentally and imaginatively, with no more pep left to give us a sense of the dramattick pageant whereof the given fraction is a symmetrically adapted part. We're so goddam dizzy counting and analysing trees, that the wood becomes an invisible and unrealisable blur; losing all the kick it would pack if we took an eye-shot at it without stopping to examine tree-rings and classify types of foliation. No, bozo, it takes a bigger brain than George D. Layman's to find an epick in a gob of calcite (whatever that is) or a gate to the outer cosmos in some especial form of silicon dioxide. The fault's in us dubs, and not in the  $\text{CaCO}_3$  or  $\text{SiO}_2$ —but the effect is just the same. It takes something *simpler*—more vivid, direct, and *immediately* dramatic (i. e., allied to the elements of impressive action, conflict human symbolism, or general curiosity)—to knock a row of us mental lightweights into the aisle. Where all you wise bimboes get puzzled, is in your unreadiness to perceive that we poor simps do *not* enjoy *mental exercise for its own sake* as you convex-domed titans do. We don't get even a shadow of a punch from the mental sensation of mastering an intricate complexity *per se*, or coming upon an intricate hidden relationship or distinction in some province remote from daily life or from the foundations of things. All we have wit enough to say or feel in the face of such a thing as that is a lanquid, "Oh yeah?" . . . . . I can get interested in what Harlow

Shapley has to say about the size and structure of the universe, or what John Keats has to say about the intimations of hidden, tremulous strangeness and beauty therein; but I'm damned if I have the brains to register any emotional reaction a-tall over the difference betwixt one kind of grey rock and another kind of grey rock. . . I gotta have the zip and go of *visible pageantry*—the *historick* element—definite linkage either to cosmick ultimates on the far end, or to Anglo-Saxon mankind on the near end. . . . Take a concrete example. Crocodileite doesn't raise my temperature 0.000001° Centigrade, but *Quebeck* knock'd me so cold that I've been living in another world, imaginatively speaking, ever since. . . .

Just one thing can make me temporarily forget Charleston—and that is La Vielle Quebec! Oh, boy! No—all spoofin' aside, I don't believe I can ever write a travelogue that anybody'll read; since the place is a veritable rocket-attachment to my imagination, and sends me off on long historical voyagings every time my mind touches it. . . .

And now *I have seen it*, and found just the same beetling cliffs and towering walls and silver spires and crooked streets that WOLFE glimps'd from afar . . . and I have enter'd and trod these streets . . . walk'd into the magic of the sunset, and found substance in the gorgeousness of a dream and the pageantry of a fable . . . Quebec! Can anything else (except Charleston and Providence's antient hill) ever fill my mind? I started a travelogue last week, but after twenty-four pages find myself still lingering on the historical background—no farther along than 1689, and with nothing yet about the town as I found it! Yet what would the town be without its back-ground? Hell! I give it up! . . .

. . . . . The good point about the French in Quebec is that they have dwelt immemorially on the same soil amidst the same conditions and traditions. That is what makes a *civilisation!* I'm not at all sure but that they will, in an ironick, deterministic mood of Fate, win by chance much of that New World supremacy which they lost in battle. They cohere and persist—you can't de-gallicise them. Despite all the English who have enter'd Quebec and settled in the southern part, the province is today more French than it was a century ago—almost as solidly French as it was in 1760. And what's more—the French constantly overflow into New England and Ontario; preserving their institutions wherever they go, whilst we are gradually losing ours amidst the pro-

miscuous floods of cheap vermin from the Old World. Just as the conquer'd Greeks kept their language and manners longer than the all-conquering Romans, so will the French keep theirs long after we are sunk into mongrelisan and mechanisation. They will never be slaves to the melting-pot, the dynamo, and the time-table, and for that I respect them, damn 'em! Would that we might learn coherence and conservatism from them—so that we might preserve our triumph over them. No—the French are not bad; and after seeing Quebec I can never again think of Central Falls and Woonsocket and Fall River as wholly foreign. At least, these people have always been part of our history—enemies, perhaps, yet close neighbours and sharers of the 300-year-old New World adventure. . . .

Yrs. for easy shipping methods—

Θεοβάλδος

Theobaldus

436. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Oct. 31, 1930

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

Yes—it often amuses me to note how the sedate & established magazines used to take horror-tales & phantasies without hesitation. Those were free & unstandardised days; & the prevailing view of the cosmos was one of awe & wonder, amidst which a bit of weird fiction was not at all incongruous. But all is changed now. The progress of science has pushed the idea of a clear-cut universe of cause & effect to the fore, & has cut down the area of mystery by unravelling many of the tangles of the human mind. Older interpretations & values are seen to be superficial & empirical, & a radical shift in natural emotional stresses has occurred. Side by side with this has come a maturing of artistic taste which calls for a more definite linkage of art with some stable background answering to reality—& between these forces phantasy has suffered vastly. However, it is not an unmitigated evil that this ordeal has occurred, for it has undoubtedly helped to clear away a lot of rubbish which had no excuse for being. When we reflect on the impossible hokum which was tolerated in the 19th century, we cannot regret that some sort of purify-

ing process has been set in motion. Such phantasy as has survived is infinitely superior to all but the best phantasy of the old days—a fact which impressed me strongly four years ago when I prepared my sketch of weird literature. Nowadays the depiction of unreality must express some actual type of human illusion—must have some relevance to feelings & images actually pervading human experience—& with this compulsion it acquires a force & significance it never had before except by accident. The one drawback is that conventional critics, having once come to distrust phantasy because of its past extravagances, are unwilling to give serious consideration to the authentic residue which truly expresses & symbolises natural mental processes. Whether this attitude will persist indefinitely remains to be seen. It seems to be strongest in the United States, & very conceivably it may become modified in the course of time. Men like Blackwood, Dunsany, Machen, and de la Mare are not wholly without a certain sort of grudging recognition, & the area of tolerance may well spread during the next generation or two. But just now it is certainly a very hard thing for a new fantastic writer to gain a foothold—either in the popular money-making domain, or in the domain of actual aesthetic recognition.

Yr obt Servt  
Ec'h-Pi-El

457. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Moon's-Day  
Nov. 3, 1930

Young Man:—

. . . . None of our firm has had very good success in placing clients' manuscripts—though I did accidentally land *Yig*, and three tales of Old Dolph's—but I am convinced that failures on the part of different members have been for almost opposite reasons. My failures have been the result of length, non-popular English style, and the absence of catchy plot devices. . . . In general, we both have drawbacks as popular fiction revisers, though yours are easily removable whereas mine are not. Mine are basic and temperamental, but yours are merely the result of a too

low estimate of the popular market's demand for a rough, superficial approximation to truth and consistency in a plot-outline. . .

Nobody ever *tried* to devise something "merely passable" and succeeded in getting away with it. True, much that appears *is* merely passable; but in such cases the author did not consciously aim at that level. He aimed at what he considered higher, and worked in a naiver and more serious spirit—the effects of his attitude being subtle reflected in the finished product. And it is this subtle reflection of some sort of fumbling sincerity and crude truthfulness that spells the difference between popular success and failure. It's just as honest old Mac used to tell us—'Ye wun't never make a success of writin' ef ye stand off and look down on your readers, and dun't enter into the spirit and do yer best.' Even the trashiest fiction has to have some sort of coherence and seriousness behind it. The motivation may be all haywire, but there must at least be the air of consistent truth which comes from the author's own acceptance of that motivation—good or bad—as authentick. . . .

As for Grandpa's correspondence list—well, Sir, I concede it stands badly in need of abridgment . . . . yet where, after all, is one to begin? A few figures of older years have indeed disappeared as frequent bombarders, but the increase seems to exceed the elimination a trifle. In the last five years the permanent additions have been Derleth, Wandrei, Talman, Dwyer, Harris, Weiss, Howard, and (if permanent) Whitehead; of whom Derleth is frequent but not voluminous, Wandrei sparse of late, Talman medium, Dwyer ample but infrequent, Howard heavy and moderate, Weiss encyclopaedic but very infrequent, and Harris voluminous and frequent. Orton, Munn, and Coates are not heavy enough to be counted in. As a palliative measure I can think of nothing at the moment save cutting down Harris a bit. As for the value, or lack of value, in correspondence, I am sensible that opinions may justly differ. For a person in active life, meeting many men of wit and sense face to face, and having frequent opportunities for the testing of his ideas and perspectives in oral discourse and argument, I would say that too bulky a correspondence is futile. On the other hand, an isolated person requires correspondence as a means of seeing his ideas as others see them, and thus guarding against the dogmatisms and extravagances of solitary and uncorrected speculation. No man can learn to reason and appraise from a mere perusal of the writing of others. If he live not in the world, where he can observe the publick at first-hand and be directed toward

solid reality by the force of conversation and spoken debate, then he must sharpen his discrimination and regulate his perceptive balance by an equivalent exchange of ideas in epistolary form. It is true that we, as individuals, do not happen to be in personal correspondence with men of as great intelligence as those whose books we are privileg'd to read; but this is merely a local misfortune in no way affecting the general principle. Even so, brisk, acute argument with a man of sound if not brilliant head is likely to add more to one's mental life than the mere passive perusal of a book by a vastly greater man. That is because the book cannot answer back and test one's reaction to it. Books make one credulous and extravagant and soft-headed if not temper'd by sound, brisk, argument. They produce the type known as "highbrow"—well defin'd as 'a man educated beyond his intelligence'. It is such "highbrowism" which produces mysticism and neo-popery. Most men of letters read 75% more books than make any real contribution to their intellectual or imaginative lives. For the most part, book-reading is mere repetition of the same general conventional impressions. These impressions do nothing to promote one's orientation to the universe, or to enhance one's imaginative escape from the limitations of time, space, and natural law. One needs to learn to develop his own resources of personality—and only the interplay of argument can do that. But of course, a certain percentage of reading is imperative; and I wish I could increase mine. I especially wish to do historical and scientific reading, which enlarges one's sense both of reality and of cosmic panorama and pagentry. At present, excited by Quebec, I am going over the history of New-France—Parkman, etc. How I wish nice old Mac were around to discuss it with!

Well—be a good young bookworm and use your judgment about revision.

Yrs. for Trimettes, gilletes, and the felidae  
—Grandpa

438. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Reg'lar Dump  
6 November, 1930

Egregious Essence of Explanatory Effulgence:—

..... Oh, yes—and as for quarry-scouring—I'll place your epistle on file for consultation whenever I feel equal to an accumulating session. I can always pretend I can't find it if I want to do some stalling when the collecting season opens. It's so easy for an envelope to fall behind a desk or something . . . . . And you can do the same if I ask you to study up Dutch colonial architecture and snap me a choice gallery of certain specifick types . . . . .

. . . No one thinks or feels or appreciates or lives a mental-emotional-imaginative life at all, except in terms of the artificial reference-points supply'd him by the enveloping body of race-tradition and heritage into which he is born. We form an emotionally realisable picture of the external world, and an emotionally endurable set of illusions as to values and direction in existence, solely and exclusively through the arbitrary concepts and folkways bequeathed to us through our traditional culture-stream. Without this stream around us we are absolutely adrift in a meaningless and irrelevant chaos which has not the least capacity to give us any satisfaction apart from the trifling animal ones. Pleasure and pain, time and space, relevance and non-relevance, good and evil, interest and non-interest, direction and purpose, beauty and ugliness—all these words, comprising virtually everything within the scope of normal human life, are absolutely blank and without counterparts in the sphere of actual entity save in connexion with the artificial set of reference points provided by cultural heritage. Without our nationality—that is, our culture-grouping—we are merely wretched nuclei of agony and bewilderment in the midst of alien and directionless emptiness. Apart from his race-stream, no human being exists, mentally, as such. He is only one of the hominidae—the raw material of a human being. Therefore a native culture-heritage is the most priceless and indispensable thing any person has—and he who weakens the grasp of a people upon their inheritance is most nefariously a traitor to the human species. Of course, our heritage comes in layers of different intensity, each being

more vital and potent as it comes closer to our immediate individuality. We have an Aryan heritage, a Western-European heritage, a Teuton-Celtic heritage, an Anglo-Saxon or English heritage, an Anglo-American heritage, and so on—but we can't detach one layer from another without serious loss—loss of a sense of significance and orientation in the world. America without England is absolutely meaningless to a civilised man of any generation yet grown to maturity. The breaking of the saving tie is leaving these colonies free to build up a repulsive new culture of money, speed, quantity, novelty, and industrial slavery, but that future culture is not ours, and has no meaning for us. Its points of reference and illusions are not any points of reference and illusions which were transmitted to us, and do not form any system of direction and standards which can be emotionally realisable by us. It is as foreign to us as the cultures of the Sumerians, Zimbabweans, and Mayans. Those who will be authentick parts of it are the boys being born right now in the larger and more decadent American cities—they, and those who will be born after them. Possibly the youngest generation already born and mentally active—boys of ten to fifteen—will tend to belong to it, as indeed a widespread shift in their tastes and instincts and loyalties would seem to indicate. But to say that all this has anything to do with us is a joke! These boys are the Bedes and Almins of a new, encroaching, and apparently inferior culture. We are the Boëthii and Symmachi and Cassiodori of an older and perhaps dying culture. It is to our interest to keep our own culture alive as long as we can—and if possible to reserve and defend certain areas against the onslaughts of the enemy. Any means will justify such an end; and since observing the effect of the Catholick Church upon Quebeck, I am half become a Papist in sympathies, tho' not in intellectual belief.

Now as to how all this correlates with my intellectual view of a meaningless cosmos—I truly cannot see where you find inconsistency except through the use of very conventional and non-analytical standards of judgment. It is *because* the cosmos is meaningless that we must secure our individual illusions of values, direction, and interest by upholding the artificial streams which gave us such worlds of salutary illusion. That is—since nothing means anything in itself, we must preserve the proximate and arbitrary background which makes things around us seem as if they did mean something. In other words, we are either Englishmen or nothing whatever. Apart from our inherited network of English ideas,

memories, emotions, beliefs, points of view, etc., we are simply bundles of nerve-centres without materials for coherent functioning. Unless there exists an English world for us to live in, our total equipment of interests, perspectiveness, standards, aspirations, memories, tastes, and so on—everything, in short, that we really live for—at once becomes utterly valueless and meaningless and uncorrelated; a nightmare jumble of unsatisfiable outreachings, without objective linkages or justification, and forming only a source of illimitable misery. Of supreme importance, then, is the secure preservation of an English world around us. Conceivably, of course, an English world might well exist without legal connexion with the government of Great Britain. In Hellenic times, for example, there was no one Greek nation; but merely a world of Greek culture extending in separate city-states from Massilia in Gaul to the coast of Asia Minor. This arrangement worked because there were no environing influences calculated to break down the culture of any part—yet the disunion was a vast disadvantage; and was instrumental in laying the Greek world open to an external conquest highly injurious to its psychology and morale. Thus in the English world—America has suffered, so far, in only a limited degree; because the forces of ancestral culture have continued to function despite the severance of the political link. But we now have deteriorative agencies—mechanisation, foreigners, etc.—more hostile to continuity than anything which the disunited Hellenic world had to face; so that our ability to preserve a culture of satisfying significance depends greatly on the exact degree of closeness of our linkage to ancestral sources. Nowadays we need more than the mere fact of *being* English in heritage and speech in order to *keep* so. We need the added and positive factors of being *consciously* and *symbolically* so, in order to offer the tangible *resistance* (a vigorous back pull, and not mere inertia) necessary to check decadence. When we fight the ideal of quantity and wealth, we must have the positive English ideal of quality and refinement to pit against it. We must have a rallying point of our emotional life in order to prevent the disorganising influences around us from recrystallising our milieu into definitely hostile and repulsive shapes. It is useless to fight meaningless recrystallisation unless we have a strong hold on the meaningful order behind us, and a solid coördination with the other surviving parts—especially the recognised centre and nucleus—of that order. What little of our past we merely passively harbour, we can lose with tragic ease. We must get a



firm and virile grip on it—must recognise and cherish it, and seek solidarity with those parts of the world where it is most strongly entrenched. Possibly you may admit this, yet say that *political* union is not necessary in order to achieve it. To this one may not reply dogmatically—though one may say that political separation is at least a very evil sort of symbolism, and that in practice it has worked hellish tragedy with the life and standards of the ill-fated, power-and-money-bloated, mongrelised United States . . . that is, the life and standards of such social or territorial parts as *have* really departed from their inheritance. Of course, vast sections are still English—Vermont, South Carolina, Virginia, the old hill in Providence, and so on. Indeed, I must confess that your mention of Nova Scotia as a *neighbour*—that is, as anything except a continuous and indistinguishable part of the fabric to which we now belong—is almost incomprehensible to me; involving as it does a distinction which I find totally meaningless. I am a part of any region where English people live in an English manner . . . be it R. I., Charleston, Devonshire, Australia, Nova Scotia, or any where else. My own position in insisting on unpolluted Englishry is purely selfish and cynical. I want a good time—hence I work for the only environment which can give me a good time. As for the intensity of my emotions about the matter in a cosmos where nothing really counts—I will merely remind you that emotion is not a matter connected with reason. I have the emotions I do, simply because accident has given me a certain sort of glandular system and filled my subconscious mind with a certain set of images and impressions. I hate the rebels of 1775 because they commenced a wreckage which is making their territory unfit for their descendants to live in. God Save the King!

Yrs. for Sovereign and Parliament,  
Theobaldus Anglissimus.

P. S. In connexion with the culture-and-nationality argument—of course, you are not so naive as to suppose that by such symbols as *King* and *England* I mean any more or less than *the continuous stream of English blood and thought and folkways as a whole*—a stream including Ontario as well as Yorkshire, Charleston as well as Melbourne, Marblehead and East side Providence as well as Cape Town and Calcutta and Jamaica. Just as we must *think* in objective terms, so must we *feel* in symbols.

439. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Ninth Vacuum of Negative Matter, in the Black  
Nebula of Yl'gluh, beyond the Third Cluster  
of Space-Time Continua

Nov. 7, 1930

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

..... Your description of your library is very interesting. I also have a fair array of English poetry, a sprinkling of the older standard novels & essays, quite a shelf of 18th century memoirs, a good deal of grammatical, rhetorical, & reference material, a large section devoted to history—ancient, English, & New England—& American antiquities, a pretty ample scientific department—astronomy, chemistry, physics, anthropology—, & a full pair of bookcases sacred to Greece & Rome, & the literature & antiquities thereof. I suppose I have about 1500 volumes crowded into the room & alcove I occupy, with perhaps 200 more in storage. I eliminated a lot when I broke up 598 Angell St., but have made accumulations since then despite my repeated vows not to do so. The really big libraries owned by our crowd—beside which mine sinks into insignificance—are those of James F. Morton (general belles-lettres, specialising in Elizabethan literature), Loveman, (poetry, rare bibliophilic items), Orton, (modern first editions—for which I wouldn't give a plugged nickel), Cook, (weird material), Munn, (popular weird material), & young Derleth (everything under the sun—weird & modern fiction predominating). My collection makes no pretensions to bibliophilic merit, it being simply what I like, plus what I quasi-sentimentally value from having inherited it. ....

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I was greatly interested by your remarks on fictional method, & believe that both realistic detail & careful devices of language are important elements in creating the necessary illusion. No good weird tale can be wholly devoid of either; though different types of author will naturally tend to incline toward one or the other, while different types of story seem to demand different gradations of emphasis in this regard. No narrative prose should ever be written in violation of certain laws of

harmony & appropriateness; though on the other hand, the best prose never attracts attention to itself through artificialities of structure. *Conversation*, when used, should be absolutely realistic—violating all other considerations in the interest of complete verisimilitude. The same applies to quoted letters & other extracts. These should harmonise with their supposed authors, not with the main stream of the text. I think I have two kinds of moods in writing weird tales—one when I feel the need of scientific realism, & try to achieve a convincing air of objective sobriety against which the marvel itself stands out by contrast, (*Colour Out of Space*, *Cthulhu*, *Whisperer*, &c.) & the other when I feel myself half involved in the nebulous uncertainty of the pictured dream, & try to convey a hint of the febrile doubt & apprehension inherent in an imperfectly glimpsed vista, (*Randolph Carter*, *Erich Zann*, &c.). Actually, I think one of these is just as sound as the other—choice being dictated wholly by subject-matter. Of late the objective side has been uppermost, but that is because I have recently been writing from actual visual impressions gained in the New England countryside. When I get to a period of more fecund composition, & begin developing some of the odd items & subjective mood-jottings in my commonplace-book, I fancy the *Erich Zann* method will be called upon now & then. What I do *not* think I shall use much in future is the Dunsanian pseudo-poetic vein—not because I don't admire it, but because I don't think it is natural to me. The fact that I used it only sparingly before reading Dunsany, but immediately began to overwork it upon so doing, gives me a strong suspicion of its artificiality so far as I am concerned. That kind of thing takes a better poet than I. In my hands, the result tends to resemble *The Land of Lur* more than it resembles the products of Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett! But no matter how prosaic the language of a weird tale may seem, it must always be carefully managed with a view to *atmospheric effect*. Effective weird-fictional language, through rhythm & associative word-values, must always have a certain undercurrent of menacing *tensity*—shadows, gathering clouds, & all that. Nothing kills a horror-tale so positively as a brisk, cheerful, casual, or otherwise colourless & incongruous style. Very, very few things in *Weird Tales* ever achieve the desired degree of atmospheric menace—though *A Rendezvous in Averoigne* will form a shining example of it. As for the *unconscious* element in composition—an element which Dwyer goes so far as to set above all others in importance—I agree with you that it is really

very considerable. In fact, I think it may fairly be said that no first-rate story can ever be written without the author's actually experiencing the moods & visions concerned in a sort of oneiroscopic way. Unless there is actual emotion & pseudo-memory behind a tale, something will inevitably be lacking, no matter how deft, expert, & mature the craftsmanship may be. Emotion makes itself felt in the unconscious choice of words, management of rhythms, & disposal of stresses in the flow of narration; whilst an image or idea of natural or spontaneous occurrence is a thousandfold more vivid than any which can be arbitrarily invented or consciously adopted from external sources. Like you, I think Poe's explanation of his methods was a wholly superficial rationalisation not even beginning to touch his secret motivations & psychological processes.

*The Canal* certainly has atmosphere. The final dynamiting—like my dynamiting of the house in Tempest Mountain in *The Lurking Fear*—is probably less subtly handled than it ought to be, yet is in a certain sense necessary as a means of explaining why the whole world hasn't "gone vampire". Whenever a fantastic tale introduces a horror which, if unchecked, would shortly produce strikingly visible results throughout the earth, it is necessary to explain why these results have not occurred—necessary, in short, to check the full action of the thing—unless the tale is laid in the *future*. There is really no way of escaping this dilemma. We must either explain the present survival of the existing order, or choose a remotely future period at which the existing order is assumed to be destroyed. The only adumbration of a middle course open to us is to have the original horror so subtle as to produce only imperceptible effects for a very long period, or to have a partial checking in which the action of the horror is vastly minimised or delayed. In *Dagon* I shewed a horror that *may appear*, but that has not yet made any effort to do so. In *Cthulhu* I had a coming horror checked by the same convulsion of Nature which produced it. (Earthquake—sinking of R'lyeh). In *The Colour Out of Space* I had a *partial* checking. Just enough of the Outside influence remains in the well to provide a *slow, creeping blight*. And in *Dunwich* I had full artificial destruction, as in *The Canal*. When one does have full artificial destruction, the important thing is not to make the process too bold, crude, or incongruous with the atmosphere or action of the narrative as a whole. I agree that very few good vampire tales exist. *Dracula* wouldn't be bad if it were all like the first or castle section, but unfortunately it doesn't maintain this level. It is really very

hard to work with a superstition as well-known & conventionalised as those of the vampire & werewolf. Some day I may idly try my hand, but so far I have found original synthetic horrors much more tractable.

In theory, your views on literature are doubtless not so far different from mine as would appear on the surface. As I said, I have no personal taste for fiction dealing with actual existence—except, perhaps, that in which the panoramic march of history is suggested or symbolised—yet can appreciate the soundness of realism & the unsoundness of romanticism. Daily experience has no enchantment for me except so far as it has the occasional power to evoke associative chains of vision suggesting trans-mundane expansions, the recapture of dream-impressions, & a defeat of the inexorable laws of time & space. Yet I do differ from you radically in respect to *familiar things & scenes*; for I always demand close correlation with the landscape & historic stream to which I belong, & would feel completely lost in infinity without a system of reference-points based on known & accustomed objects. I take complete relativity so much for granted, that I cannot conceive of anything as existing *in itself* in any recognisable form. What gives things an aspect & quasi-significance to us is the fact that we view things consistently from a certain artificial & fortuitous angle. Without the preservation of that angle, coherent consciousness & entity itself become inconceivable. Thus my wish for freedom is not so much a wish to put all terrestrial things behind me & plunge forever into abysses beyond light, matter, & energy. That, indeed, would mean annihilation as a personality rather than liberation. My wish is perhaps best defined as a wish for *infinite visioning & voyaging power*, yet without loss of the familiar background which gives all things significance. I want to know what stretches *Outside*, & to be able to *visit* all the gulfs & dimensions beyond Space & Time. I want, too, to juggle the calendar at will; bringing things from the immemorial past down into the present, & making long journeys into the forgotten years. But I want the familiar Old Providence of my childhood as a perpetual base for these necromancies & excursions—and in a good part of these necromancies & excursions I want certain transmuted features of Old Providence to form parts of the alien voids I visit or conjure up. I am as geographic-minded as a cat—*places* are everything to me. Long observation has shewn me that no other objective experience can give me even a quarter of the kick I can extract from the sight of a fresh landscape or urban vista whose antiquity & historic link-

ages are such as to correspond with certain fixed childhood dream-patterns of mine. Of course my twilight cosmos of half-familiar, fleetingly remembered marvels is just as unattainable as your Ultimate Abysses—this being the real secret of its fascination. Nothing really known can continue to be acutely fascinating—the charm of many familiar things being mainly resident in their power to symbolise or suggest unknown extensions & overtones. This, then, is our main difference. You want to venture forth into the infinite as a permanent colonist, losing yourself in its exotic marvels as Lafcadio Hearn lost his European entity amidst the exoticisms of Japan. I, on the other hand, am like the explorers & adventurers of my ancestral county of Devon—eager to sail the uttermost seas of mystery & avid to behold the nethermost arcana of the void, yet always wishing to keep a calm, familiar, accustomed, old-fashioned English fireside to come back to. My zest for the iridescent gulfs beyond the sunset is reduced by one-half if I cannot glimpse them above an horizon of familiar antient spires & steep roofs—or more strictly, an horizon of *strange* spires & steep roofs, *vaguely suggesting* some lost horizon which was *once* familiar to me. In some, this mixed antiquarianism & exoticism might produce a hopeless emotional conflict; but in me the two elements have so far seemed complementary rather than antagonistic. Anyway, it gives one something to be interested in—and the hope of partly pinning down some of these fleeting dream-glimpses on paper gives one at least a partial reason for remaining alive & conscious. Your sense of totally alien worlds must be vastly more fascinating than my own fragmentary & incomplete detachments, & you certainly make effective use of them in tales like *An Offering to the Moon*. The place-images are likewise highly alluring, & I hope to see many fictional reflections of them. The rarity of cosmic-mindedness in Western Civilisation is probably due in part to the prevailing educational tradition, & in part to the limited imaginative powers of the majority. A favourable environment would probably do no more than increase the size of the cosmic minority—for even among the naive & ignorant the mystic inclination is not widespread. It must not be thought that every peasant who believes in ghosts & second-sight & such things is really a possessor of cosmic yearnings. Most of these credulous clods hold their weird views in a very non-weird fashion—merely as unquestioned bits of every-day information handed down by simple elders. Their naive belief is wholly unaccompanied by any of the sensations which cause a non-believing

person of imaginative cast to revolt against natural law & reach out toward ethereal gulfs of mystery & adventurous uncertainty.

As for your idea of shifted senses in an interstellar voyager, & the painful strangeness of the earth on his return—really, it is a tremendous thing! It vividly shews up the whole matter of relativity & subjectivity in our notions of the external world, & gives an opportunity for unlimited phantasy in description, atmosphere, & plot-weaving. The specimen details you cite seem to me admirable in every way—and if I were you I would have the victim *not recognise the earth at all* until the very last. Let him think he had landed, through a miscalculation, on the wrong planet; & let the few approximations to familiarity be only of the vaguest, most grotesque, & most disquieting sort. What the victim most cherished in his original state is now merely a torturesome mass of strangeness—whose one, lingering trace of familiarity is only an intolerable mockery & tantalisation. He longs wistfully & desperately for some loved & remembered scene—when he *is actually there*. The moment of revelation could be made into a climax of the most cataclysmic sort. *By all means* develop this idea in the near future. Any editor who doesn't snap it up is below even the debased level of a Wright, a Goinsbeck, or an Hersey!

Again thanking you in Tsathoggua's name for the recent shipment, & hoping to see more items from your pen ere long, I append the Elder Sign & the Seal of N'gah, given in the Dark Cycle of Y'hu.



Ec'h-Pi-El

440. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

29th AEon—Cycle of the  
Spawning of the Shoggoths  
Valley of Pnath  
Nov. 11, 1930

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

Your idea for a time-voyaging machine is ideal—for in spite of Wells, no really satisfactory thing of the sort has ever been written. The

weakness of most tales with this theme is that they do not provide for the recording, in history, of those inexplicable events in the past which were caused by the backward time-voyagings of persons of the present & future. It must be remembered that if a man of 1930 travels back to B. C. 400, the strange phenomenon of his appearance actually occurred in B. C. 400, & must have excited notice wherever it took place. Of course, the way to get around this is to have the voyager conceal himself when he reaches the past, conscious of what an abnormality he must seem. Or rather, he ought simply to conceal his *identity*—hiding the evidences of his "futurity" & mingling with the ancients as best he can on their own plane. It would be excellent to have him know to some extent of his past appearance before making the voyage. Let him, for example, encounter some private document of the past in which a record of the advent of a mysterious stranger—unmistakably himself—is made. This might be the provocation for his voyage—that is, the conscious provocation. One baffling thing that could be introduced is to have a modern man discover, among documents exhumed from some prehistoric buried city, a mouldering papyrus of parchment *written in English, & in his own handwriting*, which tells a strange tale & awakes—amidst a general haze of amazement, horror, & half-incredulity—a faint, far-off sense of familiarity which becomes more & more beckoning & challenging as the strings of semi-memory continue to vibrate. Re-reading awakes still more memories, till finally a definite course of action seems inevitable—and so on & so on. This idea has lain dormant in my commonplace-book for ages; & if you can find a use for it, you're certainly welcome to it. I might never develop it in years. Of course, it creates an entirely new set of conditions when one extends the time-traversing period—either backward or forward—beyond the duration of the earth & solar system. You might have the explorer reach a phase of entity *where matter cannot exist* thus bringing about the destruction of his machine & of himself, & making it necessary for him to send his communication through "The Medium Bayrolles." Or perhaps, after the destruction, the ether waves resulting therefrom might roll still farther out into some other realm of entity, where they—or part of them—might curiously *reintegrate*. But you can devise this kind of thing much better than I.

Yr obt Servt  
Ec'h-Pi-El

## 441. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

From the Burrow of IT that stirs in the Dark deep  
under the Nighted Palace of Antchar, & against  
which the Nameless Guardians of Antchar seal  
the yawning Vault that was there before Antchar  
& the Darkness thereof

Nov. 18, 1930

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

I'm glad my suggestions about a time-voyager seemed good, & think your own suggestion about the *mechanism* is quite masterly! I shall be glad to see this idea worked out. It would really, in view of the different conditions reachable by voyages of different length in opposite directions, be material for a novel rather than a short story. You might have the hero disappear in the end by losing control of the time mechanism, & thus being precipitated into abysses of ultimate entity of which it is better not to speak. Or if you envisage a *curved time* corresponding to Einsteinian *curved space*, you might have the voyager make a complete circuit of the chronological dimension—reaching the *ultimate future* by going *beyond the ultimate past*, or vice versa. . . . . The vanished Pacific world symbolised by Ponape & Easter Island has always been of the greatest fascination to me, though I think the *Antarctic Continent* is really paramount in my geographico-fantastic imagination. I know this has been done to death ever since Arthur Gordon Pym, yet none the less I think I'll take a whack at it some day. I can imagine an aeroplane party landing on a peak far inland, & finding some glacier-crevasse leading down, down, down to the roofs of a silent & cryptical city of stone whose dimensions are *not quite right*—or I can imagine a natural (or artificial) phenomenon causing a large-scale melting of the ice . . . . with revelations better hinted at than told! As for Item, the City of Pillars—yes, I had heard of those modern glimpses occasionally vouchsafed to over-zealous travellers. The mad Arab Abdul Alhazred is said to have dwelt therein for a time in the 8th century A. D., prior to the writing of the abhorred & unmentionable *Necronomicon*. Oh, yes—Abdul mentioned your ghoul, & told of other adventures of his. But some timid reader has torn out the pages where the Episode of the Vault

under the Mosque comes to a climax—the deletion being curiously uniform in the copies at Harvard & at Miskatonic University. When I wrote to the University of Paris for information about the missing text, a polite sub-librarian, M. Leon de Verchères, wrote me that he would make me a photostatic copy as soon as he could comply with the formalities attendant upon access to the dreaded volume. Unfortunately it was not long afterward that I learned of M. de Verchères' sudden insanity & incarceration, & of his attempt to burn the hideous book which he had just secured & consulted. Thereafter my requests met with scant notice—& I have not yet looked up any of the other few surviving copies of the *Necronomicon*.

Your remarks on style & its importance are highly interesting, & inspire my complete agreement. What a pity that nine-tenths of the contents of all weird magazines is utterly devoid of that quality in any well-recognised sense! Yes—the tone of a story, as established at the outset, is certainly all-important. It carries both the writer & the reader onward, & sets the proper atmospheric keynote by presenting the outlines of a certain mood. My principal fault with beginnings is to make them too Poesque & sententious. Since Poe affected me most of all horror-writers, I can never feel that a tale starts out right unless it has something of his manner. I could never plunge into a thing abruptly, as the popular writers do. To my mind it is necessary to establish a setting & avenue of approach before the main show can adequately begin. And of course different kinds of tales need different styles all through. . . . .

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Meanwhile It-Which-Came-Before-Man still broods sardonically & disquietingly on Its shelf. Each morning one finds those same dubious suggestions of subtle motion—& for the last fortnight it has seemed that they are insidiously *increasing*. Then, too, there is that impression of late, of *having heard a peculiar voice* just as I start out of an especially profound sleep. It seems to be coupled with such dreams as take me out beyond the gateway & pillar of flame guarded by Nasht & Kaman-Thah, & is in a tone & language totally unknown to me. Such sounds, or suspicions of sounds, certainly do not antedate the advent of It. As I strain my ears upon becoming fully awake, my principal sensation is a gnawing & poignant fear *lest I recognize & understand* what has been uttered

—or what I dream has been uttered. I feel that such recognition & comprehension would unlock hideous doors of cosmic memory far behind any life connected with this planet; doors whose opening would unloose horrors beyond the power of mortal brain to bear. Into my debate as to whether It be Tsathoggua or the Ultimate Chaos Azathoth, has crept a monstrous third possibility. Can it be that frightful & inscrutable YOG-SOTHOTH, to pronounce whose name aloud is instant damnation? God! let me think no more of that! . . . . . And may Pegaña shield me from ever learning *what* is said in those rumbling, chanting tones I hear—or dream I hear—as I climb up out of the wells of night.

Yours under the Elder Sign—  
Ec'h-Pi-El



442. TO AUGUST DERLETH

NOV. 21, 1930

Dear A. W.:—

. . . . . Time, space, and natural law hold for me suggestions of intolerable bondage, and I can form no picture of emotional satisfaction which does not involve their defeat—especially the defeat of time, so that one may merge oneself with the whole historic stream and be wholly emancipated from the transient and the ephemeral. Yet I can assure you that this point of view is joined to one of the plainest, naivest, and most unobtrusively old-fashioned of personalities—a retiring old hermit and ascetic who does not even know what your contemporary round of activities and “parties” is like, and who during the coming winter will probably not address two consecutive sentences to any living person—tradesmen apart—save a pair of elderly aunts! Some people—a very few, perhaps—are *naturally* cosmic in outlook, just as others are naturally ‘of and for the earth’. I am myself less exclusively cosmic than Klarkash-Ton and Wandrei; in that I recognize the impossibility of any correlation of the individual and the universal without the immediate visible world as a background—or starting-place for a system of outward-extending points of reference. I cannot think of any individual as

existing except as part of a pattern—and the pattern’s most visible and tangible areas are of course the individual’s immediate environment; the soil and culture-stream from which he springs, and the milieu of ideas, impressions, traditions, landscapes, and architecture through which he must necessarily peer in order to reach the “outside”. This explains the difference betwixt my *Dunwich* and *Colour out of Space* and Smith’s *Satampra Zeiros* or Wandrei’s *Red Brain*. I begin with the individual and the soil and think outward—appreciating the sensation of spatial and temporal liberation only when I can scale it against the known terrestrial scene. They, on the other hand, are able to think of wholly non-human abysses of ultimate space—without reference-points—as realities neither irrelevant nor less significant than immediate human life. With me, the very quality of being cosmically sensitive breeds an exaggerated attachment to the familiar and the immediate—Old Providence, the woods and hills, the ancient ways and thoughts of New England—whilst with them it seems to have the opposite effect of alienating them from immediate anchorages. They despise the immediate as trivial; I know that it is trivial, but cherish rather than despise it—because everything, including infinity itself, is trivial. In reality I am the profoundest cynic of them all, for I recognize no absolute values whatever. . . .

In matters of music, I would exasperate you—since I am absolutely without the first rudiments of taste. It is simply a blind spot with me, and I candidly recognize the fact. My aesthetic emotions seem to be wholly unreachable except through visual channels. Whenever I *seem* to appreciate a strain of music, it is purely through *association*—never intrinsically. To me, *Tipperary* or *Rule, Britannia* has infinitely more emotional appeal than any creation of Liszt, Beethoven, or Wagner. But at least I do not fall into the Philistine’s usual pitfall of expressing contempt for an art which I cannot understand. I recognize and regret my limitation in enjoyment-capacity, and profoundly congratulate those more broadly favoured by Nature. . . .

Really, the question of what pleases me—what makes it worth while for each individual to endure the burden of consciousness for an average lifetime—is something involving the vastest psychological profundities. It all gets back to my perpetual query, “What is anything?” Accident has caused a certain momentary energy-pattern to coagulate for an instant in a negligible corner of limitless space. It calls itself “mankind”, and has a certain number of basic needs arising from the

chance conditions of its formation. Some of these needs are definite and satisfiable. Others are ambiguous, hazily defined, unrecognised, or actually conflicting. Amidst this confusion and conflict, what is the least futile and silly thing to do with oneself after the basic needs are attended to? Don't ask me—I gave it up long ago . . . just as all realists have had to give it up ever since consciousness sharpened itself to the point of recognizing the dilemma. Each person lives in his own world of values, and can obviously (except for a few generalities based on essential similarities in human nature) speak only for himself when he calls this thing "silly and irrelevant" and that thing "vital and significant", as the case may be. We are all meaningless atoms adrift in the void. . . . Yr. most obt. Servt. HP

443. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Feline Headquarters—  
Novr. 22, 1730

Young Man:—

So, Sir, you are determin'd to live up to your Popish unreason and call *Derleth* "*Derluth*"! What a generation! To think these boys are descended from the rational gentry of Great-Britain!! Well, since deliberate error seems so well worth cultivating, I am resolv'd hence-forward to call you *Fred Bellevue Long, Sr.*—an appellation which you will no doubt deem a vast compliment, and a tribute to the study'd obscurantism of the coming generation—from whom a mechanical barbarism has taken the power of independent thought and personal exactitude. You boys have come to depend so wholly upon the standardised, automatick processes of your commercial and collectivistick civilisation, that you no longer take care to use your own heads or discriminate betwixt solid truth and plausible error. Chain-store reasoners . . . . . typewriter slaves . . . . . tabloid thinkers . . . . . cinema and radio copyists . . . . . convention-puppets . . . . . hit-or-miss poseurs . . . . . bah! to think an old man shou'd live to see such an age!! Monocles, fuzzy lips, Popish fairy-tales—well, just wait till your age of faddism passes, and the realists of 1950 or 1960 tear your flimsy concoctions and sloppy intentional mistakes to pieces! You'll be as much of a laughing-

stock to the young men of those days as the Victorians were to my generation in its youth! Thus the cycle goes—ebb and flow—reason and reaction—truth and myth—onward from the meaningless past to a meaningless future through a meaningless present.

I perus'd the Jeans article, and your comment thereon, with very great interest; and agree with you that only train'd mathematicians are able to conduct original research into the question of "what is anything". Nay, more—these mathematicians are, in themselves, *just as powerless as the rankest layman* to make any definitive pronouncement; insomuch as they have no means of testing the operations of their own mental processes in the steps whereby they reach their tentative conclusions. For this latter testing, the aid of the train'd psychologist, anthropologist, and biologist is absolutely essential; so that in truth the significant probing of the unknown must necessarily consist of "team-work", with both mathematicians and psychologists working in concert upon the concrete data which physicists, chemists, biologists, astronomers, and the like unearth. The only thing the layman can do amidst this complex situation is to check one expert's statements and conclusions against those of another—correlating all the current data with a mind kept free of preconceived myths, traditions, and other biasses, and subjecting his own tentative conclusions to a round of searching criticisms from experts in the various intellectual fields involved. In these criticisms many points of view will be disclosed, and the comments of one expert critick upon the differing views of another critick in the same field will often prove extremely illuminating. In the end, whilst it cannot be promis'd that any *certainly* is attainable, it wou'd be the sheerist pedantry and affectation to claim that no *probabilities* are indicated. They may not be as strong probabilities as the experts themselves could obtain if freed of emotion, but they are at least tangible provisional foundations for a temporary working hypothesis. Something of the kind is accessible to every layman who carefully reads all sides of a general argument among experts. It would be absurd to declare that, despite his technical ignorance, he is not *somewhat* further advanc'd along the route of fallacy-elimination than one who never gave any attention to the matter.

Thus with the conclusions of Jeans—which we must correlate with Millikan, Compton, Eddington, Shapley, Freud, Watson, Russell, Frazer, Einstein, Eddington, Santayana, Keith, and dozens of others before they can have even the least definitive evidential value. Some of the

issues at stake—such as the nature of the cosmic rays—must be held as wholly unsettled. Other assertions can, after a fashion, be appraised in the light of parallel authorities. In passing, we must remark that virtually all *reviews* of experts' books, as printed in popular conventional newspapers and magazines, contain a bias toward the traditional myths and delusions of the race. We must see beyond this whenever we are unable to get at an authority first-handedly.

..... Early 20th century opinion concerning man's relation to the cosmos represented a certain degree of outward-pushed observation. Today observation has been pushed much farther outward—in some cases overwhelmingly farther outward—hence it is inevitable that we ask how greatly the added territory has affected our tentative picture of conditions; whether it has weakened, strengthen'd, confirm'd, modify'd, or altogether superseded the conception of 1900. Obviously we must redraw our basic guess at what is and what isn't—refusing to be influenced by our view of 1900 just as resolutely as we refuse to be influenced by our views of 1880 or 1850 or 1800 or 1650 or 1300 or 500 or B. C. 450. But we must be no more eager and predisposed to find a *difference*, than we are eager and predisposed to find a *similarity*. We must not seek to cater to any *wish* or *loyalty* or other emotional consideration apart from the instinct of *pure curiosity*. Our only watchword must be a resolve to seek nothing but the impartial probabilities in the matter of *what is* versus *what isn't*.

Well—what do we find? First of all, a radical increase in that element of unknowability *which we always admitted*. We are bidden to accept, as the one paradoxical *certainty* of experience, the fact that we can never have any other ultimate certainty. All conclusions for an infinite time to come, barring wholly unexpected data, must be regarded as no more than *competitive probabilities*. So far as *actual knowledge* is concerned, the theistic myths of tradition are as *absolutely and finally dethroned from all pretension to authority* as are any of the earlier conclusions of science. Ancient tradition and earlier science must alike resign all *former* claims to truth which they may ever have put forward. They, together with every other possible attempt to explain the cosmos, now stand on a basis of *complete and fundamental equality* so far as their original claims are concerned. The old game is over, and the cards are shuffled again. Nothing whatever can *now* be done toward reaching probabilities in the matter of cosmic organisation, *except by assembling*

*all the tentative data of 1930, and forming a fresh chain of partial indications based exclusively on that data and on no conceptions derived from earlier arrays of data;* meanwhile testing, by the psychological knowledge of 1930, the workings and inclinations of our minds in accepting, correlating, and making deductions from data, *and most particularly weeding out all tendencies to give more than equal consideration to conceptions which would never have occurred to us had we not formerly harboured ideas of the universe now conclusively known to be false.* Let this last point be supremely plain, for it is through a *deliberate and dishonest ignoring of it* that every contemporary claim of traditional theism is advanced. Nothing but shoddy emotionalism and irresponsible irrationality can account for the pathetick and contemptible asininity with which the Chestertons and Eliots, and even the Fosdicks and Eddingtons and Osborns, try to brush it aside or cover it up in their attempts to capitalise the new uncertainty of everything in the interest of historical mythology. What this means—and it means it just as plainly, for all the jaunty flippancy of touch-and-go epigrammatists who dare not put their fallacies to the test of honest reason and original cerebration—is simply this: that although each of the conflicting orthodoxies of the past, founded on known fallacies among primitive and ignorant races, certainly has an *equal theoretical chance* with any other orthodoxy or with any theory of science of being true, *it most positively has no greater chance* than has ANY RANDOM SYSTEM OF FICTION, DEvised CAPRICIOUSLY BY IGNORANCE, DISEASE, WHIM, ACCIDENT, EMOTION, GREED, OR ANY OTHER AGENCY INCLUDING CONSCIOUS MENDACITY, HALLUCINATION, POLITICAL OR SOCIAL INTEREST, AND ULTERIOR CONSIDERATIONS IN GENERAL. If we could shave off the moustachelets of our Chestertons and rub their noses in this plain truth, we would have fewer spectacles of neo-obscurantism. It is this one crucial circumstance which renders utterly valueless all half-baked attempts to utilise the admitted uncertainty of knowledge in bolstering up obsolete lies whose natural origin and total emptiness are obvious to all psychologists, biologists, and anthropologists. Let us grant that *in theory* the doctrine of Buddha, or of Mohammed, or of Lao-Tse, or of Christ, or of Zoroaster, or of some Congo witch-doctor, or of T. S. Eliot, or of Mary Baker Eddy, or of Dionysus, or of Plato, or of Ralph Waldo Emerson, has *just as much or as little positive evidence for it as has any*



other attempted explanation of the cosmos. So far, so good. But this concession cannot possibly be made without extending equal theoretical authority to Chamber's *Yellow Sign*, Dunsany's *Pegāna*, your *Tindalos*, Klarkash-Ton's *Tsathoggua*, my *Ctbulhu*, or any other fantastic concoction anybody may choose to invent. Who can disprove any such concoction, or say that it is not "esoterically true" even if its creator did think he invented it in jest or fiction? What shall be our guide in deciding which, out of an infinity of possible speculations, is the most likely to be a correct explanation of surrounding entity? How shall we establish a test of comparative validity or authority for the various conflicting claims which present themselves? If the theism of Christus is "true" because our ancestors believed it, why is not the devil-worship of the Yezidis equally "true" because they and their ancestors have believed it? What is anything? Can any one explanation be deemed more acceptable than any other? If so, on what principle? At this point the moustache-tipped fat neo-papists begin to crack brilliant and irrelevant jokes and spout emotional generalities designed to get the mind of the seeker off the facts and confuse him into the acceptance of ready-made traditional hokum. But men of sense pause a bit and try to see what *really can be done* toward a tentative elimination leading in the direction of general probabilities. The result, inevitably, is that conclusion stated a few paragraphs back—that probabilities can now be reached only by assembling all the data of 1930, and forming a fresh chain of partial indications based exclusively on that data and on no conceptions derived from earlier arrays of data; meanwhile testing, by the psychological knowledge of 1930, the workings and inclinations of our minds in accepting, correlating, and making deductions from data, and most particularly weeding out all tendencies to give more than equal consideration to conceptions which would never have occurred to us had we not formerly harboured ideas of the universe now conclusively known to be false.

*Specifically* (for no sane human being disputes the general proposition just stated) our job is to test (a) the intrinsic probability, as judged by our contemporary observations of what we see of the universe, of any system which enters a claim; and more particularly (b) to investigate the sources of such a system, and the probable reason why anybody believes or ever has believed in it; the latter point to be worked at by the most thorough psychological analyses we can devise.

Get this straight—for there is no other road to probability.

*First*, what is the likelihood of a theory as judged by the general action of nature manifest in regular and predictable phenomena? (Day and night, heat and cold, seasons, laws of mechanics, etc., etc.)

*Second*, if it squares less readily with observed reality than does some other theory, then why was it proposed in the first place?

*Third*, if in answer to (2) it be said that certain persons at a certain time found this theory more in accord with nature than any other, then what relationship has the conception of nature at that time to our conception of it today?

*Fourth*, on what mental principles are all these conceptions of nature, and of the relation of this theory to any observed set of phenomena or parallel theory based on such phenomena, formed? How does contemporary psychology interpret the processes causing the formation of these conceptions?

Going back to the general proposition—what does the natural evidence of 1930 suggest, anyhow? Well, *uncertainty* in the first place. A definite limitation of our knowledge of what lies behind the visible aspects of the cosmos as seen by human beings from this planet. But how far can we extend this uncertainty? Certainly, it has no place in our immediate environment. Grandpa Theobald will never dodge a hateful northern winter because time and space are relative in infinity, nor will the planet Pluto ever revolve around the sun as swiftly as Mercury from the point of view of this part of space. No person in Providence, without circumnavigating the globe, will ever get to Charleston by starting for Quebec; nor will any projectile in the solar system ever hit Saturn by being aimed at the opposite part of its orbit. We live in a cosmos in which a certain amount of regularity is an essential part; and in which time and space, far from being illusions, have definite and recognisable functions so far as the relationship of any small unit to its immediate environment is concerned. Whatever be the relationship of our galactic universe to any larger unit—whether or not the totality of entity and extension—the relationship of our star-group to the galaxy, of our solar system to its star group, of our earth to the solar system, and of organic life to the earth, may and must still be regarded as *roughly* what it seems; or rather, as something with so limited a relativity-latitude that the underlying "reality" rhythms cannot be out of all *quantitative* correspondence with the phenomena we observe. We see a certain interplay of patterned forces not discernibly dissimilar *in kind* from the forma-

tion of the smallest crystal to the shaping and kinetic balance of the whole immediate galaxy. The evidence on hand points to a sort of general rhythmic seething of force-streams along channels automatically pre-determined in ultimate ends, though conceivably subject to slight variations in route (quantum theory) and with certain developments definitely unpredictable *although not, in the opinion of conservative physicists, forming actual violations of the basic principle of causation*. What most physicists take the quantum theory, at present, to mean, is *not that any cosmic uncertainty exists* as to which of several courses a given reaction will take; but that in certain instances *no conceivable channel of information can ever tell human beings which course will be taken*, or by what exact course a certain observed result came about. There is room for much discussion on this point, and I can cite some very pertinent articles on the subject if necessary. Organic life, of which consciousness is an incidental process, and which rises and falls through varying degrees of complexity, (mankind being at present its most intricate example within our scope of vision) is a phenomenon of apparent rarity, though of so well-defined a type that it would be rash to deem it confined to this solar system alone in all the history of the cosmos. We know, roughly, the relationship it bears to our solar system, and realise that it must be a very transient phase in the history of such planets as contain it. We can look back geologically, on this earth, to a relatively recent time when it did not exist; (a time which is *not* an illusion *in the history of this system*) and forward to a comparatively early moment when it shall have ceased to be. In other words, we know it to be a matter of supreme indifference and impermanence so far as the immediate universe is concerned. In several trillion years it will be a matter of absolute indifference whether or not this phenomenon has ever existed on the planets in this part of space. If the laws governing this phenomenon are basically different from those governing other immediate and observed phenomena, we have yet to be shewn evidence based on anything but assumptions and conceptions without sources in ascertainable reality as recognised today. Proof—and even probability—is likewise required to justify the assumption that organic life, either as a whole or in that department known as consciousness, has any special or significant relationship to the pattern and motions of the cosmos as a whole; *even allowing for a radical and causation-disturbing interpretation of the quantum theory* (even proof of a cosmic "purpose" and "conscious-

ness" would indicate nothing as to man's place therein. All life might well be a trifling pimple or disease). While it is perfectly true, in theory, that we require a mathematician's knowledge in order to test a mathematician's statement of a special resemblance between cosmic law and the cerebral processes of terrestrial organisms; it is equally true that common sense, after hearing the mathematician explain the basis of his claim, and after comparing this claim with the views of other and equally noted mathematicians, has a certain unofficial right to formulate concepts of probability or the reverse. And when we learn that the sole ground for the mind-and-cosmos-comparison is merely the possibility (certainly not the probability) that occasional chance tempers the dominant determinism of infinity, we are certainly justified in demanding confirmatory data before so palpably strained and artificial (and so obviously myth-and-tradition-suggested) an analogy is accepted. Is anyone so naive as to believe that the mind-cosmos comparison would have been made solely from the present evidence of 1930, if unsuggested by ancient mythology? Let us analyse the comparison in the exclusive light of contemporary evidence and see how great a part of it consists of mere words and artificially forced parallels. Let us not forget that Einstein and others do not attempt such merely poetic analogies. Einstein has much to say of "religion"—which to him means a human emotion of ecstasy excited by the individual's correlation of himself with the cosmos—but he does not use the language of Jeans. And it would be superfluous to point out—except to purblind neo-obscurantists amongst whom all distinctions are dead—that none of these modern cosmic views has anything in common with any interpretation of the cosmos, and man's relation to it, which has traditionally gone under the name of religion. These cosmic philosophers are using ancient names to describe a cloudy pantheism utterly unlike anything those ancient names ever stood for in their heyday. It is folly and hypocrisy to use the hack terms "God" and "religion" to describe things having no relationship to the original concepts back of those terms. Whilst certain of the valuecentric and teleological implications of these fellows may be said to form a pale echo of the obsolete theism, especially in some of its more mystical Hindoo phases, it is ridiculous to consider them as a prolongation of the highly dogmatic and childish specific set of delusions constituting the nominal Christianity of the Western World. According to any person following the Christian religion in its basic essence, be he a Papist or

Protestant, both Jeans and Einstein are definite atheists. Thus we see the element of puerile fashion and irrational mob-psychology in any popular trend inclusive enough to favour at once, and allegedly on the same grounds, the crazy archaism of a Chesterton and the indecisive word-juggling of a Jeans or an Einstein.

Having now seen that the actual visual and mathematical evidence of 1930 *does not suggest anything very strikingly different in its general probabilities* (probabilities, that is, regarding the absence of conscious purpose and governance, and the absence of any significant special relationship betwixt man and the infinite. All this not at all affected by our changed conceptions of space-time-matter-energy relationships.) *from the automatic and impersonal cosmos envisaged at an earlier period*, which was as a negligible, purposeless, accidental, and ephemeral atom fortuitously occurring amidst the kaleidoscopic pattern-seething, let us try to see why such a frantic series of attempts is being made to exhume the old myths so definitely exploded since 1850. What is there in current experience which makes certain people choose wholly gratuitous and irrelevant myths and improbabilities as cosmic explanations; proclaiming them more probable than the really probable, and nominating them for consideration under the plea that any old cock and bull story is technically possible in a demonstrably uncertain universe? Well—in general, we may say that the causes are manifold. Chief of all is the fact that the generation of men now in the saddle is old enough to have been mentally crippled by early pro-mythological bias in conventional homes. Their emotions are permanently distorted—trained to think the unreal real, and eager to grasp at any excuse for belief. They resent the cold probabilities of the cosmos because they have been taught to expect fairy-tale values and adjustments—hence as soon as any uncertainty appears in positive knowledge, they catch avidly at the loophole as an excuse to revive their comfortingly familiar superstitions. Second—many persons attribute the present bewildering changes in the social and cultural order to the decline of theistic belief, hence snatch at any chance to bolster up a placid and stabilising mythology—whether or not they inwardly believe it. Third—some persons think habitually in terms of vague, grandiose, and superficial emotions, hence find it difficult to envisage the impersonal cosmos as it is. Any system seems actually improbable to them which does not satisfy their false sense of importance, their artificial set of purpose-values, and their pseudo-wonder springing from an arbitrary and unreal standard of norms and causations. This class is

sincere, and often intelligent except where habitual bias is concerned. Fourth—there is an element of witty and insincere posers who become bored with plain fact and instinctively resent the non-sensational; reacting against every-day probability at the least excuse, and revelling in any mythological extravagance. . . . To these causes of myth-revival may be added the mental inertia and fashion-following instinct of the thoughtless majority. All small minds belong wholly to their age and think only in terms of "periods" determined by noisy transient spokesmen. Original and independent minds are timeless, and pay no attention to ages or fashions, but simply face the universe with all the evidence in hand on an 'is-or-isn't' basis. Today the superficial herd, who merely absorb second-hand opinions and never think for themselves, are naturally coloured by the voluble emanations of biased thinkers reflecting the listed causes. They get this way simply because they are femininely receptive rather than creative—sensitive to mass-feelings rather than vigorously independent and masculine. They readopt theism as they readopt ping-pong and backgammon—because "everybody", as represented by the most emotionally animated and flashy talkers, is doing it. But of course this herd does not really count; for in twenty more years, after the theistic reaction has passed, it will follow the mental bell-wethers into rationalism once more. The present partial reaction of the timid and sentimental and bewildered is in truth a very natural phenomenon, and might even have occurred without the excuse of an extended scientific perspective. It was clear, once the impersonal nature of the cosmos became manifest, that a certain group of the tender-minded would inevitably start a frightened, traditional retreat from reality as soon as their rather hazy comprehensions began to grasp the fuller implications of the actual facts. These things usually move in cycles—after 18th century reason, the frantic artificial piety of the 1830's and early-Victorianism; after this, the rationality of the later 19th century; after late-Victorian reason, the pathetic farce of Eliot-Chesterton-Millikan-Eddington obscurantism; after present obscurantism, the future rationality of 1960 or 1970; after this rationality, the fatigued and meaningless relapse into superstition of the year 2000 . . . . and so on . . . . and so on . . . . We do not, then, need to wonder at the existing conditions; but only to ascertain upon what pretext, or scheme of self-deception, the present obscurantists put forward the obsolete myths as probabilities to be appraised on equal terms with the actual contrary probabilities of Nature.

To begin with—why did each of these self-cocksure but often con-

flicting theistic theories or explanations of the cosmos arise in the first place, far back in mankind's days of ignorance? Here history, anthropology, and psychology step in and supply an answer so complete, natural, instinctively satisfying to the reason, and supported by evidence on every hand, that only warped emotion or imperfect perspective can possibly prick flaws and look for other and more "mystical" sources. We know today that the sources of religion are fear, wonder at the unknown, erotic perversion, and the inability to conceive of cosmic governance and causation except in terms of human governance and causation. It was an utterly and inevitable phenomenon among any race of dawning intelligence confronted by the varied phenomena of Nature; and could not help occurring, whether or not any "spiritual" or "supernatural" world existed to justify it. If there were any real "gods", the primitive men who invented gods of their own could not have known anything about them. Thus *the existence of religion as an objective fact has not the slightest bearing upon the validity of the beliefs included in religion*. As a matter of fact, psychology and anthropology are constantly supplying explanations for more and more of the curious details of religious belief. The origin of such delusional types as "spirit", "soul", "immortality", "good", "evil", and so on is now so obvious, and so universally recognised by psychologists as natural, that discussion of them as supernatural indications has become frivolous, irrelevant, and meaningless. Your friend Randall hit squarely on this point in the essay you sent me. And again I must remind you that despite the transient crop of praying physicists and Mariolatrous mathematicians, there are *no psychologists or anthropologists* of any standing (poor Osborn!) who have any belief in the supernatural.

But here is the important question. All these facts being known, upon what grounds do the obscurantists base their act when they rake up these exploded concoctions of primitive ages and offer them as competitive probabilities under the theoretical rule that anything is possible in an uncertain cosmos? What justification do they advance for championing a set of arbitrary extravagances now known to be the chance products of ancient misconceptions, and diametrically contradictory to all the probabilities of normal experience and scientific observation? How, in the light of 1930, can they (even allowing for the emotional crippling of a conventionally theistic infancy) seriously claim for these wholly undermined museum curiosities any greater probability than can be claimed by

Carcosa, Yian, Tindalos, Chaungar, and the Aklo and Voorish mysteries? What is the whole principle of unreal judgment upon which the mental and emotional attitude of the modern theist hinges?

Well—people differ. Some, as I have said, give tremendous weight to the cunningly doctored reports of "occult" phenomena popularised by men like Lodge, Doyle, and Flammarion. Others refuse to *think* about such things at all; but merely read and quote copiously, and take refuge in diverting but irrelevant witticisms and vague sentimental and aesthetic claims which mean nothing and are really understood by no one, least of all their authors. But the most considerable faction rely on metaphysics, and gloss over the facts of psychology in an effort to prove that mankind has informative powers independent of the normal sensory and cerebral apparatus. With this attitude (which it is unlikely they could form today, or hold at all except through the crippling influence of obsolete tradition) they pretend to be informed, by their emotions or imagination, of the "truth" of this or that ancient extravagance—blandly ignoring the fact that different types of emotion and hallucination dictate different kinds of "truth", each in conflict with the others, *and that in every department where testing is at all possible, the emotions have been found absolutely without value as informants concerning reality*. The least openly ridiculous form of this attitude is the generalised and non-dogmatic one represented by honest thinkers like Millikan and the Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick. These men do not attempt, as do the utterly negligible and buffoon-like neo-papists, to claim that their 'inward emotional news-agencies' confirm any specific set of ancient myths. Rather do they content themselves by thinking that their strong infancy-implemented bias toward certain general conventions—social considerateness, belief in a purposeful cosmic consciousness vaguely linked with mankind, etc., etc.—must have some shadow of reality and justification because it is so strong and persistent and universal. They do not realise that other and opposite emotions are equally strong and often much stronger, and that the persistence and universality are simply natural results of the continuous hereditary tradition which, established partly by social expediency and partly by accident, has persisted everywhere through habit and inertia. Repudiating these realisations, they continue to attach an informative significance to meaningless nerve-reactions caused by the discharge of hormones into the blood from ductless glands. Were any child to be reared in isolation, and surrounded from

infancy with the religious precepts of Tsathoggua, YOG-SOTHOTH, or the Doles, his inner emotions would all through life inform him positively of the truth of Tsathogguanism, Yog-Sothothery, or Dolatry, as the case might be. Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Goat With a Thousand Young! God! I wonder if there *isn't* some truth in some of this? What is this my emotions are telling me about Great Cthulhu? Ya-R'lyeh! Ya-R'lyeh—Cthulhu fhgthagn . . . . n'ggah . . . ggl . . . . Iä! Iä! And so it goes. What more is there to say? We know nothing, of course, about anything, and all possible speculations are technically equal in the theoretical arena of uncertain cosmos's competitive probabilities. But what does ordinary reason, as measured by the daily phenomena about us and by the larger relationships reported by physicists, mathematicians, astronomers, and psychologists, seem to suggest in the matter of choosing a provisional working hypothesis? We see that one group of old-school metaphysicians and sentimentalists, bred up in traditional artificial emotions, prefers to find an "inner" justification for choosing certain hereditary myth-forms and conventions from among the numberless theoretical possibilities which caprice and imagination might devise, and investing these arbitrary choices with the dignity of sacred dogma. But do we honestly believe that they would choose such arbitrary and contradictory improbabilities upon the evidence of 1930 alone, if not stuffed full of ancestral myths and prejudices and predispositions? And can we honestly pretend to follow these vestigial superstitions which the evidence of 1930, while of course not technically contradicting, certainly leaves wholly without foundation, probability, or *raison d'etre*? All honour to men like George Santayana, Bertrand Russell, Sir Arthur Keith, Joseph Wood Krutch, Hugh Elliott, and others with courage and acumen enough to face the facts without flinching or without raising a smoke-screen of sentimentality, mysticism, and aesthetic hokum! And that is all. . . . .

—Yr. obt.,  
Grandpa

444. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Nov. 23, 1930

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

Yes—I was glad of the \$350.00 sale, although it has really ceased to be of any interest to me whether anybody reads my junk or not—that is, outside of the discriminating minority to whom I can send the ms. if a thing doesn't make type. I want the fun of writing it, & the cash if I can get it—but what other people read & like is no business of mine. I have long ago graduated from the naive system of false, artificial values which made 19th century people care about effect of their products on others. . . . .

Sino-Japanese poetry belongs in a tradition all its own, reflecting the essentially contemplative & tranquil character of the high-grade Mongolian mind. I saw an excellent article on it not long ago, though I can't recall exactly where. It may possibly have been in one of those issues of *The Poetry Review*—it would pay you to glance through the file & see if any such thing has appeared during the past year. A typical kind of Chinese poetry is that of simple description—especially of landscape & atmospheric effects—in which the aspect of the scene presented generally suggests some mood on the writer's past. *Brevity* is the keynote of all such efforts; it being apparently thought that all impressions as fleeting as those of poetic feeling ought to have an embodiment correspondingly elusive & glancing, lest the effect be one of incongruous heaviness. The typical Japanese *hokku* is limited to 17 syllables, usually divided into 3 lines of 5, 7, & 5 syllables each. The following specimen—taken from an essay on the subject of Lafcadio Hearn—is quite typical:

*Tswigané ni*  
*Tomarité nemuru*  
*Kochō kana!*

(Perched upon the temple-bell, the butterfly sleeps.) This is a complete poem. It presents a definite image which, to a cultivated mind charged with the traditions of Japanese life & art, evokes a long train of imaginative associations in a sort of visual pageantry. Such brevity seems affected among Anglo-Saxons, but in Japan it is perfectly adequate & ap-

propriate. We can catch the beauty ourselves with a little reflection & objective analysis. Occasionally the Japanese grow more abstract & sententious, as in the following:

*Owarété mo,  
Isoqanu furi no  
Chochō kana!*

(Ah, the butterfly! Even when chased, it never seems to be in a hurry.)

*Chō wo ō  
Kokoro-mochitashi  
Itsumadēmo!*

(Would that I might always have the spirit to chase butterflies!) The prevalence of the butterfly in Sino-Japanese verse is an indication of the delicate atmosphere of colour & scenic loveliness which pervades the whole tradition. Many persons—especially Witter Bynner—have tried to reproduce the spirit of far eastern verse in English; & although the task is difficult, I do not think they have been entirely unsuccessful. But if they emulate Oriental brevity, they must emulate the Oriental mood & subject matter as well. It is certainly true that a single quatrain is too short to give an English poet any proper leeway *in the accustomed occidental manner*. . . . .

The Nobel Prize award to Lewis is not as bad as it might be—although I'd have picked Dreiser, while others would have chosen O'Neill, Cabell, Cather, or even Wilder. Lewis is more a man of ideas than aesthete; but his novels are sound in craftsmanship even if possessed of an ulterior intellectual purpose. He has punctured the pitiful shams & inanities of conventional American life as few others have; & certainly deserves a prize for social service, whether or not he merits one for sheer artistic craftsmanship. Thanks to him, no adult will ever again take seriously the vacuous pretences & hypocrisies of the Victorian-bred & commercial-minded middle class—a class whose stultifying stupidity & mendacity once dominated American life & threatened to engulf its literature & destroy its taste. . . . .

Yr obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

445. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Quinsnickett Woods—6 mi.  
north of Providence  
Nov. 24, 1930

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

You have no need of worrying about the quality of your verse. In looking about for an improved perspective, the thing to do is not to try, positively, *to be unconventional*; but to try, negatively, *not to be conventional*—a distinction which, though perhaps subtle & confusing at first sight, has great significance when closely examined. The idea is not to avoid anything consciously, but merely to see that one accepts as important only what is genuine & spontaneous—nothing which gains its prominence solely through previous literary use or popular belief, & which has no actual basis in experience. Some sort of scientific understanding of the vastness & impersonality of the cosmos, & of the insignificance & negligibility of the human atom therein, is a necessary preliminary to the straight thinking & sincere feeling demanded of a contemporary poet. This enables one to envisage, roughly, a scale of emotional values graded according to poignancy & sincerity—a scale which gives the very primitive & directly instinct-based emotions a high place, closely rivalled by the emotions of wonder & beauty, & by the feelings of wistfulness & pathos bred from the disparity betwixt illusion-born wishes & the inflexible actualities of the universe. The real poet writing out of the knowledge of today is frequently impassioned, & occasionally ecstatic; but always over *real* things & impressions, & never over imaginary values, situations, & ideals. He never assumes more than really is—never gets worked up about nothing. If he expresses sorrow, it is over a direct infraction of his personal adjustments, & never over some vague world-evil which people pretend to lament but really don't give a hang about. If he rejoices at the presence of beauty, it is always some *real* beauty, as a sunset, person, landscape, or object of art, & never the pretended theoretical beauty of "goodness" & other myths. In a word—he knows what things really are, & how little anything means, & tries not to slop over. More often we find him in a mood of wistful pathos or bitterness—the natural result of contemplating a cosmic order which co-

incides only occasionally with the illusions & volitional inclinations of the species. The prevailing tendency is toward *subjectiveness*—toward the very minute analysis of the emotions themselves rather than of the external objects with which these emotions are concerned; but whether this tendency is a permanent one, or merely a transient phase of the disillusioning process of this age, it is yet too early to say. My own junk is neither traditional nor modern, but of a special type never very popular, & as close to the new as to the old psychology—namely, the recording of the illusory phenomena of the mind, as such, & without any attempt at correlation with reality. Probably it is, if anything, more fundamentally ancient than modern; though it often becomes modern in its recognition of the unreality of aspirations & fulfilments.

With best wishes—

Yr most oblig'd obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

446. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Nov. 29, 1930  
Monolith of the Shoggoths—  
Vale of Pnath

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

. . . . I am still obsessed by the notion that one of the most extremely powerful of all tales would be an utterly realistic thing dealing with the sensations of a man deposited without a great amount of warning on another world. The one fatal weakness of nearly all interplanetary tales is that they almost completely ignore this factor of the situation. To my mind, the stupendous wave of emotion—incredulity, lostness, wonder, stark terror—incident to this supreme dislocation from man's immemorially fixed background would be so colossal a thing as almost to dwarf any events which might happen to a celestial traveller. I yet mean to write a tale whose one supreme climax shall be the hero's discovery, after many torturing & ambiguous doubts, that he *is* on another world.

Yr obt  
Ec'h-Pi-El

447. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Castle Theobald  
Dec. 10, 1730

Jonckheer Arminius:—

. . . . . I'm anxious to see this tale when you get it done, and it seems to me that Wright would be a fool not to take it. Yes—he told me about the W. T. retrenchment. Too bad—and I hope it isn't merely the prelude to failure. All serials will be cut out in view of the 60-day waits, and my *Whisperer* will appear in one issue as a complete novelette—about as long a thing as they've ever carried at once, I fancy, since it came to 69 pages typed. I don't know when the new policy begins—not at once, probably, since Belknap's 3-part serial has just started. Have you seen this latter? I could disembowel that brainless ass Seuf for the hash he made of the illustration. Good God, can't the idiot read? Look at the nice, pretty jumbo he has drawn on its pedestal, and then note Belknap's description of the loathsome and unutterable hybrid-thing that is dreaded Chaugar Faugn!!

. . . . . I shall certainly be damn'd grateful sooner or later for a sight of that Holland Society book—and you must let me shoulder the transportation both ways. Whether I eventually shell out 15 fish for a personal copy, will form a complex psychological study. Of late, I've found that of all wild extravagances, *antiquarian travel* gives biggest dividends in the way of permanent imaginative enrichment; hence have become a miser in everything except 'bus fare and YMCA room rent and guide books. Last spring, just as I hopped off for my Charleston jaunt, Loveman offered me a copy of the long-sought "Melmoth" for 10 bucks—but I resolutely passed it up, and really think the sacrifice was worth it in view of my 11 days in Charleston and 8 days in Richmond. But who can say? . . . .

Glad that all your household enjoyed the Hudson River travelogue. I have my doubts about the commercial availability of such material, since my style—as well as my basic principles of selection in assembling material—would seem to me to be one to which the modern world of trade is antipodally alien and even actively hostile. I have seen some of the publications of coach companies—which are stacked for distribution in

waiting rooms—and have so far found their travel material altogether different in tone, atmosphere, and content from mine. Possibly I might artfully turn out something to suit their needs if I studied those needs more exactly—indeed, I think that on my next trip I will make a more systematic collection of this sort of “literature”. Marketing, though, is easier said than done. Various persons have thought my stuff might fit the *Christian Science Monitor*, which has rather a bias toward travel; but upon examination it appears that *Monitor* stuff always concerns more exotic and unusual places than I visit. As a beginner in the art of travel, I am woefully bound to beaten tracks. . . . .

Well—I must knock off writing, for my left eye is raising hell. Lately the nerves or muscles give a kind of twitching or tugging when I focus it too intently—hope I shan’t have to have an old-time oculistical siege and take to constantly-worn specs again! But you never can tell about aged eyes.

Sir, I have ye Honour to Sub/cribe my/elf  
Yr. most obt., most hble. Servt.,  
Theobaldus

448. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Dec. 20, 1930

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

Chesterton has just lectured here, but I did not attend his performance. He is a likeable character, but not to be taken seriously in an intellectual way. There is something almost pathetic in his attempt to defend obsolete values & conceptions of the universe—for much as one may love tradition, it is silly to deny actually discovered facts. G K C is clever & entertaining—but the real brains of the modern world lie in characters like George Santayana, Bertrand Russell, H G Wells, or men of science like Einstein, Eddington, Jeans, Keith, Millikan, G. Elliott Smith, & so on. Chesterton would be less out of place if he would stick to aesthetics & literature & keep clear of philosophy—whose modern developments he cannot grasp, & which he therefore treats in a spirit rendered frivolous, irrelevant, & meaningless by the knowledge of today.

You would probably like Wilder’s *Bridge*—which is clever though overrated. I admire Sinclair Lewis intensely, for he has the artist’s capacity to apply appropriate emotions to the objects he treats. To regard the contemporary American scene & its childish ideas without satire would be impossible for any keen & honest intellect. I agree with Lewis thoroughly, though am somewhat bored by his spirit of propaganda & by the journalistic commonplaceness of his life. . . . .



As for Einstein—there can be no doubt but that his fame is solidly founded. Whatever future mathematicians & physicists may discover regarding the widest working out of his principles, it seems certain that the general facts of relativity & curved space are unshakable realities, without considering which it will be impossible to form any sort of true conception of the cosmos. There is no point in the archaic attitude of questioning how the ordered cosmos ‘was evolved out of nothingness’, for we realise now that there never was or can be such a thing as nothingness. The cosmos always existed & always will exist, its order being a basic & inseparable function of the mathematical entity called Space-Time. There is no sense in talking about the “creation” of something which never needed to be “created”. Such things as “wonder”, “glory”, &c. are merely subjective reactions of the nervous system of a particular kind of organisation, & the newer psychology of Freud, Adler, Watson, Pavlov, &c. has caused these reactions to be very well understood. It is merely a vestige of primitive ignorance to supply the idea of conscious personality & purpose to the eternal & impersonal congeries of regular forces & motion-patterns which forms the totality of entity. No—I’m the last person on earth to be a good astronomer, for I can’t compass the absolutely necessary mathematics. Mathematics are the O.G. of modern astronomy. I hoped to be an astronomer when a boy, but saw the foolishness of the idea—in view of my mind & temperament—by the time I was well into the ‘teens. But of course I still take an active interest in all such astronomical developments as laymen can understand, & am very eager to see the completion of the 200-inch reflector. Nothing even approaching that size in my day. Planets beyond Pluto may conceivably be discovered. I am using Pluto in my new story. Yes—I shall probably use a rocket voyage sooner or later!

With best holiday wishes—

Yr most oblig’d obt Servt  
HPLovecraft



449. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

9876  th Pulse-Beat of the  
Cosmic Fungus enveloping Yaddith, in the  
AEtherless Gulf of Re-entrant Angeles beyond  
the 8th Trans-Imaginational Ring of Finite  
Continua. 

Dec. 25, 1930

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

. . . . IT still broods sardonically upon ITS pedestal, & each morning my impression of *having heard something in the night* grows stronger. The syllables remaining most strongly in my memory are “. . . . gha . . . g’wah . . .”, & it occurs to me that this may be part of a terrible cosmic name—that which the mildew’d palimpsests of Commorion, confirmed by the unmentionable Pnakotic manuscripts, more or less liberally render as *Tsathoggua*, or *Sath-og-gwah*. There are curious speculations in the posthumous papers of the late Randolph Carter, regarding the etymological relationship betwixt the *Sath* of *Sath-og-gwah*, & the *Soth* of that hideous & indescribable *Yog-Soth-oth* which Alhazred mentions with such manifest reluctance in the *Necromicon*. Truly, the problems of the scholarly cosmic initiate are multiple, varied, & complex! . . . . .

Yrs in Tsathoggua’s name  
—Ec’h-Pi-El

450. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Saturn’s Day  
Decr. 25, 1930

Dear A. W.:—

I certainly do not disagree with you concerning the essential solitude of the individual, for it seems to me the plainest of all truths that no

highly organised and freely developed mind can possibly envisage an external world having much in common with the external world envisaged by any other mind. The basic inclinations, yearnings, and ego-satisfactions of each separate individual depend wholly upon a myriad associations, hereditary predispositions, environmental accidents, and so on, which cannot possibly be duplicated in any other individual; hence it is merely foolish for anybody to expect himself to be “understood” more than vaguely, approximately, and objectively by anybody else. For example, I am perfectly confident that I could never adequately convey to any other human being the precise reasons why I continue to refrain from suicide—the reasons, that is, why I still find existence enough of a compensation to atone for its dominantly burthening quality. These reasons are strongly linked with architecture, scenery, and lighting and atmospheric effects, and take the form of vague impressions of adventurous expectancy coupled with elusive memory—impressions that certain vistas, particularly those associated with sunsets, are avenues of approach to spheres or conditions of wholly undefined delights and freedoms which I have known in the past and have a slender possibility of knowing again in the future. Just what those delights and freedoms are, or even what they approximately resemble, I could not concretely imagine to save my life; save that they seem to concern some ethereal quality of indefinite expansion and mobility, and of a heightened perception which shall make all forms and combinations of beauty simultaneously visible to me, and realisable by me. I might add, though, that they invariably imply a total defeat of the laws of time, space, matter, and energy—or rather, an individual independence of these laws on my part, whereby I can sail through the varied universes of space-time as an invisible vapour might . . . . . upsetting none of them, yet superior to their limitations and local forms of material organisation. The commonest form of my imaginative aspiration—that is, the commonest definable form—is a motion backward in time, or a discovery that time is merely an illusion and that the past is simply a lost mode of vision which I have a chance of recovering. Now this all sounds damn foolish to anybody else—and very justly so. There is no reason why it should sound anything except damn foolish to anyone who has not happened to receive precisely the same series of inclinations, impressions, and background-images which the purely fortuitous circumstances of my own especial life have chanced to give to me. . . . .

. . . . You require certain landmarks like your beloved hills and riverbends—and it is only a step from this requirement to the need of a certain alignment with the natural traditions and folkways of the social and geographical group to which one belongs. One does not have to take these traditions and folkways seriously, in an intellectual way, and one may even laugh at their points of naiveté and delusion—as indeed I laugh at the piety, narrowness, and conventionality of the New England background which I love so well and find so necessary to contentment. But however we may regard such a pattern intellectually, the fact remains that most of us need it more or less as a point of departure for imaginative flights and a system of guideposts for the establishment of the illusions of direction and significance. And experience seems to shew that the only way one can effectively use such a pattern, is to refrain from repudiating it so far as the lesser symbolic conformities are concerned. Of course exceptions exist, and you may very well be one of them; but for the average person there is a need for personal anchorage to some system of landmarks larger than the ego yet smaller than the cosmos-at-large—a system of anchorage which can supply standards of comparison in the fields of size, nature, distance, direction, and so on, as demanded for the fulfillment of the normal sense of interest and dramatic action. Probably everybody has to have such a system—the differences being in the way various people envisage and express it. Religious people seek a mystical identification with a system of hereditary myths; whereas I, who am non-religious, seek a corresponding mystical identification with the only immediate tangible external reality which my perceptions acknowledge—i.e., the continuous stream of a folkways around me. I achieve this mystical identification simply by a symbolic acceptance of the minor externals whose synthesis constitutes the surrounding stream. I follow this acceptance purely for my own personal pleasure—because I would feel lost in a limitless and impersonal cosmos if I had no way of thinking of myself but as a dissociated and independent point. . . .

. . . It would be foolish to carry the theory of individuality so far as to imply that certain sights and impressions have not a special group-significance as well as a special individual significance. We know as a matter of common sense that if we confront four individuals—two Americans and two Chinamen—with any given object or impression apart from the barest of universals, we shall *not* have four equally dif-

ferent reactions. A grouping of reactions, as determined by community of heritage, will most certainly take place; so that although there will indeed be four separate responses, these responses will not be equidistant from one another, but will tend to group themselves into American and Chinese reactions. For example—if we place these four men before a Gothic cathedral, emotional linkages will exist for both the Americans which the Chinamen cannot possibly share. It is true that each of the Americans will have qualities of vision which the other cannot share; but it is also true that they will collectively have response-tendencies wholly absent in the Chinamen. . . . It would therefore be silly of me to deem myself simply an individual equidistant from all other individuals. Clearly, I am hitched on to the cosmos not as an isolated unit, but as a Teuton-Celt—with large emotional areas which can be shared with Teutons and Celts but not with others. This being admitted, it is certainly natural that I should seek a sense of placement and stabilisation through conscious symbolic alignment with my own Northern people. Summing up on this point—the fact is that our individual isolation, while enormous, is certainly not absolute; its shadowy degree of external linkage being such that we can neither call ourselves wholly free, nor feel that we are in any way fully understood. . . .

Well—more later. Merry Christmas! Yr. obt. Grandsire—H.P.

451. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Decr. 31, 1930

Dear A. W.:—

. . . It is barely possible that my violin-lesson experience, in which the nervous strain of enforced practicing became such a nightmare, developed a definite hostility toward the whole idea of music in my childish mind—an hostility which sank into the subconscious when the lessons were given up, but which nevertheless lurked as a latent influence to colour all my future feelings and build up a wall of resistance (interpreted as indifference when no longer associated with compulsion) and callousness against the aesthetic appeal of music. . . . It may be said, for one thing, that I had the purely mechanical elements of perfect *accuracy* and *rhythm* in connexion with the cheap tunes which I used to hum and

whistle in my day. It is impossible for me to whistle out of tune, or to miss notes by sharpening or flattening them. Whatever I do hum, I hum with the mathematical precision of a well-tuned piano. Rhythm, also. When, at the age of 11, I was a member of the Blackstone Military Band, (whose youthful members were all virtuosi on what was called the "zobo"—a brass horn with a membrane at one end, which would transform humming to a delightfully brassy impressiveness!) my almost unique ability to keep time was rewarded by my promotion to the post of drummer. That was a difficult thing, inasmuch as I was also a star zobo soloist; but the obstacle was surmounted by the discovery of a small papier-mache zobo at the toy store, which I could grip with my teeth without using my hands. Thus my hands were free for drumming—whilst one foot worked a mechanical triangle-beater and the other worked the cymbals—or rather, a wire (adapted from a second triangle-beater) which crashed down on a single horizontal cymbal and made exactly the right cacophony . . . . much as does the ordinary trap-drummer's single cymbal attached to the bass-drum. I was surely a versatile and simultaneous musician in my day—and on my plane. Had jazz-bands been known at that remote aera, I would certainly have qualified as an ideal general-utility-man—capable of working rattles, cow-bells, and everything that two hands, two feet, and one mouth could handle. Ah, me—the days that are no more! Seriously, though, I do not think that music could ever be a prime outlet for my imagination, no matter how urbanely my taste might respond to development if freed from the early violin-barrier. The fact is, that my imagination is almost wholly visual, so that nothing very far removed from the potentially pictorial could make a very big dent in me. I am what the psychologists call "eye-minded"—I had rather write or read than talk or hear, and simply cannot understand my aunt's fondness for lectures. . . .

Yr. Obt. Servt. HP

452. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Jan. 1931

Shrine of Nng, in The Temple of Infra-Red Vapour on The Doomed Nebula Zlykariob, in the Hour of the Torturing of The Worm Bgnghaa-Ythu-Yaddith

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

Specialised fiction magazines are certainly multiplying & entering narrow fields to an extent almost unbelievable. I wouldn't be in the least surprised to see *Undertaking Stories* or *True Plumber's Tales*—to say nothing of *Garbage-Collecting Adventures & Real Newsboy Mysteries*—on the stands any day. How many of these things survive, I'm sure I have no idea; for I make no attempt whatever to keep track of them. If the geographic idea gains ground, we shall see such things as *North-western California Stories*, *True Southern Massachusetts Crimes*, *Newfoundland Fishing Tales*, & so on. *Far East Adventure Stories* is a new one on me! I've never had a close-up glimpse of a "tabloid", either—except in stacks on news stands or in the greasy paws of the New York subway rabble. But I guess they represent just about the nadir of printed material—if not quite the lowest & most exhaustively contemptible form of human activity. Wouldn't say that writing for these & for the Macfadden rags is an *art*, but I would call it an *exact science*—a very genuine instance of the practical business application of complex & subtle psychological principles in reaching a public the reverse of complex or subtle.

Yours for the formula that is *not* in Olan's Latin Text  
—Ec'h-Pi-El  
Guardian of the Black Flame of Nng & Yeb.

453. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

January 1931

To Selenkos Nikator Ptolemaios Philadelphos sends greetings:—

Thanks prodigiously for the illustrated extracts, both of which go instantly into my files. And, let me remark, those files are now restored to the semi-coherent state of 1927 by virtue of an exhausting cleaning and sorting campaign from which I have only just emerged. You would not call this state coherent at all—for it merely consists of the rough dumping of certain basic classes (such as astronomy, archaeology, Providence, etc., etc.) into some 20 or so boxes or envelopes—but it's all the classification I'll bother with. It's a relief to have the circumambient cluttering a bit abated. My room doesn't show any external change; but many a corner heap is done away with, and I managed to throw away about a ton of accumulated odds and ends.

Yr. obt.

Ptolemaeus

454. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

3d Day before the Kalends of Iannarius  
January, 1931

Daedalian Diamond of Dynamick Diversity:—

.. So that wa'nt graphite after all! Coal, eh? Fancy coal in a coal mine—who cou'd have expected it? The old boys that started diggin' wa'nt so wrong in theory after all—and who the hell cares for a sordid trifle like utility? If the coal doesn't burn, that's all the more aeconomi-cal. You don't have to replenish your bins each year, and can use the jack to spend the October-April period in Jamaica or Barbadoes! . . .

How t'ell was you to know Arminius was Jonckheer van Talman? Why, Sir, thro' simple historick background-elements of association. You behold the name *Arminius*, and as a theologically inclin'd minister's son at once think of that celebrated Dutch theologian of the Reformation—James Arminius, whose unlatinis'd name was Hermann

or something of that sort. Rather famous gink—spawn'd 1560, croak'd 1609. Well—of all us gangsters, who'd be most likely to pick a Latinis'd *Dutch* name to match the sundry Latinisations unofficially represented by Mortonius, Theobaldus, Belnapius, Samuelus, and so on? Why, naturally, our *only Dutch member*—Wilfredus van Talman, scion of Talemas, Blanvelts, Bogard:, and all the other contemplative burghers, patroons, and jonckheers of the lower Hudson Valley . . . .


Speaking of His Majesty's American Provinces—I am now on *p.* 65 of my history-travelogue of QUEBECK, yet have progress'd no further than the defeat of the rebels under Arnold and Montgomery on Dec. 31, 1775, and their subsequent expulsion from Canada! The theme so ingulphs my imagination—filling it with historick panoramas and sending it off on side-excursions contributory to the general background—that rapid progress or concise compass is impossible. As it is, no one save myself will ever have the patience to read the thing through—a circumstance which does not vastly worry or even interest me. God Save the King! Rule, Britannia! Certainly, it was like a rebirth—or a delay'd first birth—to set foot on soil still loyal to our natural social-political-cultural stream, and I wish to Heaven I might die with the old Union Jack of my fathers floating over me. How I would envy you that Toronto sojourn if it weren't *at this time of year!* I may yet end up in Bermuda, British Honduras, Trinidad, Calcutta, or some place where a decent climate and Britannick supremacy are combin'd!

. . . . . You need reading or conversation with your meals. Why? What barrier shuts you off from the flood of pleasing and engrossing imaginative associations which the inner life brings up when specific external impressions are withheld? What ultimate extreme of extroversion makes necessary a choice betwixt imported ideas and a mere chaos or blank? Under the same circumstances—i.e., a solitary meal—the average person has a thousand things to busy him pleasantly. He can be revolving and rearranging previous mental or imaginative images—or, as is more common in a relaxation-period, he can be giving his imagination free rein to weave fantastic associations around the casual objects impinging on his consciousness—the articles of food, the table utensils, any distinctive decorations or personal types that may be present, and so on. The food and silver themselves are enough for an active imagination. Endless chains of fantasy can form themselves

around even a spoon. Spoon . . . silver . . . pewter . . . . Paul Revere . . . silver-mines . . . Mexico . . . buried silver plate . . . pirates . . . shilling . . . argentum . . . 'a'pyupos . . . Pheidon of AEGina . . . drachma . . . denarius . . . the Lydians . . . Bithynia . . . ΤΙΚΑΛΥΔΙΟΕ ΚΑΙΣΑΡΣΕΒΑΣΤΟ . . . . . ΤΙΤΡΑΝΗΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ . . . . . silver goblets . . . silver censers and cressets . . . . . silver columns . . . silver domes and spires . . . the silver spires and belfries of QUEBECK . . . flash of sun on bayonets . . . WOLFE . . . God Save the King . . . but this is only the tame, narrow start of a real train of associations. And the same with food—coffee . . . . Arabia . . . Haroun al Raschid . . . the Golden Road to Samarcand . . . Vathek . . . . Palace of Eblis . . . Sinbad . . . the Roc . . . the ghouls . . . Java . . . Malay Priests . . . Angkor . . . silence and mystery . . . the carving that only the moon dares look upon . . . . Brazil . . . . steaming jungle . . . the hieroglyph'd stone that none dares decipher . . . Brasil . . . Hy-Brasil . . . Isles of the Blest . . . Druids . . . . Stonehenge . . . or take sugar . . . waving cane . . . Louisiana . . . Lafitte . . . . Bienville . . . La Salle . . . Tonty of the Iron Hand . . . good old Mac . . . . days that were . . . gates that seemed to open to farther mysteries of the west . . . Cuba . . . . Morro Castle . . . . John Carter's broadside of 1762, printed at Shakespear's-Head: Morro-Castle taken by Storm . . . the *Province Gazette* and *Country-Journal*, Containing the Freshest Advices, Both Foreign and Domestick . . . . Antilles . . . . Martinecco . . . Obadiah Brown . . . . rum, negroes, and molasses . . . Lord Timothy Dexter . . . warming-pans . . . Vermont . . . Barbadoes . . . Antillia . . . Atlantis . . . Poseidonis . . . Lemuria . . . R'lyeh . . . . the temples of orichalch and the columns of chrysoberyl . . . chrysoprase . . . crocodilite . . . Cumberlandite . . . James Ferdinand Plantagenet . . . Paterson . . . . William Paterson of N. Jersey . . . who killed Billy Patterson . . . . down went McGinty . . . . *After the Ball* . . . . Grover Cleveland . . . the *Yellow Book* . . . a long way from sugar, but that's what association will do. If you don't believe it, read Ed Poe's introduction to *Murders in the Rue Morgue*. Or take beef stew—herds of cattle . . . buffalo . . . Sioux . . . Iroquois . . . "What do you hunt?" "We hunt men!" "Ugh! you have found them!" . . . . Count Frontenac . . . Phipps . . . . sacred buffaloes . . .

steaming, shallow rivers in the sun . . . . South Africa . . . . Unknown Zimbabwe . . . . Crowns of Upper and Lower AEGyptus . . . . Trivacria . . . Oxen of Helios . . . Apis . . . . the immemorial Nile . . . . the Cow-Chase . . . Maj. John André . . . Cow-Boys . . . Skinners . . . Neutral ground . . . . Sir Henry Clinton . . . the stout Earl of Northumberland . . . Tappan . . . Talman . . . the old man killed on his chest of gold . . . "the lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea" . . . . common pasturage . . . Weybosset Neck . . . wharves keep the homecoming cows from getting ashore on the Towne Streets . . . Great Bridge 1711 . . . . Market House 773 . . . Baptist Steeple 1775 . . . . "Confound their Politicks" . . . . Nichols' Dairy . . . Borden's Challenge Milk . . . Dryco . . . Jake's . . . hamburg and onions . . . Or take roast lamb . . . Charles Lamb . . . Kleiner . . . wool . . . . negroes . . . . βυλόθριξ . . . . βυλοκάρητος . . . . "dark curling locks o'er fleec'd his bending head, o'er which a promontary shoulder spread" . . . . Melanochraic Aryan . . . Thyrsis . . . sheep on Sicilian slopes . . . "Where were ye, Nymphs, O where, while Daphnis pin'd? In fair Penëns or in Pindus' glens? For great Anapus' stream was not your haunt, nor AETna's cliff, nor Aeis' sacred rill" . . . . *Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi* . . . . "Is wool thy care? let not thy cattle go where bushes are, where burrs and thistles grow" . . . . J. Dryden, Esqr. . . . Astraea Redux . . . . God Save the King . . . John Clarke and the Charter of 1663 . . . sheep on the hills behind Newport . . . the Gothick tower . . . Jason . . . Golden Fleece . . . . Medea . . . . L. Annaens Seneca . . . . *Prosperum ac felix scelus virtus vocatur* . . . "Frustrate their knavish Tricks" . . . Mary had a little lamb . . . . Sterling, in His Majty's Province of the Massachusetts Bay . . . . "a shepherd boy, he seeks no better name" . . . "on airy downs the shepherd idling lies, and sees tomorrow in the marbled skies" . . . . "the gather'd flocks are in the wattled pen innumeros prest" . . . . O Jemmy Thomson, Jemmy Thomson O! . . . . "no line which, dying, he cou'd wish to blot" . . . . "for we were nurs'd upon the self-same hill, fed the same flock by fountain, shade, and rill" . . . . "the jolly shepherd that was of yore is now nor jolly nor shepherd more" . . . . Kimball's All-Wool Suits, \$9.00. Estab. 1857. Give the Boys Fits . . . . . fleece . . . clouds . . . . "sheep with moist wool, slain by

the arrows of the sun . . . . . Aries, the Ram . . . . . M. Ulpins  
Traianus . . . . . batter'd gates . . . . . Amen-Ra . . . . . Neph

..... 

..... "the master ram at last approach'd the gate, charg'd with his  
wool, and with Ulysses' fate" . . . . . Cyclops . . . . . cyclopean ma-  
sonry . . . . . Athens . . . . . Pelasgi . . . . . Paschal Lamb . . . . .  
Ram's Horn . . . . . Agnus Dei . . . . . "abroad in the meadows to  
see the young lambs run sporting about by the side of their dams with  
fleeces so clean and so white" . . . . . Epitaphium Viri Venerabilis  
Dom. N. Mather, carmine lapidario conscriptum . . . . . juter Nov-  
Anglos theologiae tyrocinia fecit . . . . . "the Lion Bold the Lamb doth  
hold" . . . . . "the little Lamb doth skip and play, always merry, always  
gay" . . . . . "I love to see the lambs at play, they hop so spry and seem  
so gay; they nip the grass and then are seen to chase their playmates  
round the green" . . . . . the Wolf and the Lamb . . . . . "then let him  
bear away with him the imperishable coverlet, the fleece glittering with  
tufts of gold" . . . . . Hark! with fresh rage and undiminish'd fire the  
sweet enthusiast smites the British lyre . . . . . some to the thicket of  
the forest flock, and some for shelter seek the hollow rock" . . . . .  
"my name is Norval; on the Grampian Hills my father feeds his flocks;  
a frugal swain" . . . . . "Harpalus and eke Carin were herdmen both  
yfer" . . . . . "and he shall set the sheep on the right hand" . . . . .  
"for they'd left their tails behind them" . . . . . "in that Countrie are  
white Hens without Feathers, but they beare white Wools as Sheepe doe  
heare" . . . . . "1000 sheep jumping a stone wall" . . . . . "nor iron  
bars a sheep-pen" . . . . . Sheepshead Bay . . . . . Emmons Ave.  
. . . . . stink of fish . . . . . Gerritsen Tide-mill 1688 . . . . . Avenue  
V . . . . . Neck Road . . . . . Stillwell House . . . . . Milestone  
. . . . . 8¾ miles to Brockland Ferry . . . . . flat marshlands, creeks,  
waving sedge, flutter of marsh birds . . . . . curved cottage roofs . . . .  
east winds sighing of Old Holland . . . . . mutton-chop whiskers . . . .  
Victorian aera . . . . . progress and optimism . . . . . "grow old and on  
the bum, the worst is yet to come" . . . . . "High on the top the manly  
corse they lay, and well-fed sheep and sable oxen slay" . . . . .  
. . . . . O Gawd! who wants to tote a newspaper to Westermack-  
Sailahead's when all this comes out of a sixty-five cent order of roast  
lamb? Well, anyhow, you prob'ly get what I mean. The big idea is that

a constant, restless chase after new things prevents one from getting a  
kick out of the correlation, rearrangement, juggling, and marshalling of  
the stuff already inside the li'l ol' bean. . . After all, the purpose of  
acquiring impressions is to build up a background of reference-points  
which shall make one think one understands the cosmos in part, and  
which does indeed orient one sufficiently to local phenomena to allow  
for a very pleasurable ego-projection. But only certain types of impres-  
sions contribute to this background—hence the wise guy tries to see  
what is merely sterile and superficial (that is, what merely amuses for  
the moment without deepening one's inner imaginative resources) in  
order to cut out such deadwood. Also, he guards against the accumula-  
tion of any sort of material beyond the amount he can *emotionally di-  
gest*—i.e., make part of a subjective pageantry which shall create for  
him the desiderate sense of adventurous expectancy and ego-expansion.  
A smattering of many things—or even a thorough knowledge of many  
things if unaccompanied by the leisure to ruminate on these things and  
utilise them emotionally—is far less gratifying than a deeply assimilated  
knowledge of two or three things. For example—it is clear from all  
evidence that the encyclopaedic Greek scholars, like Parson and Jowett,  
do not even approach the degree of true Hellenism experienc'd by such  
a single-track dreamer as John Keats. . . . Certainly, one needs a wide  
general knowledge for correlative purposes; but this having been gain'd  
in outline, it is best to specialise in a few things, so that one may not  
miss the supremely satisfying experience of following up avenues to  
such a length as to reach opened doors and participate in the life of  
previously unattained worlds of recaptured reality or imaginative expan-  
sion. This is the secret of the poet as distinguished from the prosaicist—  
the symbol-dreamer and image-singer as distinguish'd from the chroni-  
cler and classifier.

..... Now the trickiest catch in the negro problem is  
the fact that it is *really twofold*. The black *is* vastly inferior. There can  
be no question of this among contemporary and unsentimental biolo-  
gists—eminent Europeans for whom the prejudice-problem does not ex-  
ist. *But*, it is *also* a fact that there *would be* a very grave and very legiti-  
mate problem *even if the negro were the white man's equal*. For the  
simple fact is, that *two widely dissimilar races, whether equal or not,  
cannot peaceably coexist in the same territory until they are either uni-  
formly mongrelised or cast in folkways of permanent and traditional*

*personal aloofness.* No normal being feels at ease amidst a population having vast elements radically different from himself in physical aspect and emotional responses. A normal Yankee feels like a fish out of water in a crowd of cultivated Japanese, even though they may be his mental and aesthetic superiors; and the normal Jap feels the same way in a crowd of Yankees. This, of course, implies permanent association. We can all *visit* exotic scenes and like it—and when we are young and unsophisticated we usually think we might continue to like it as a regular thing. But as years pass, the need of old things and usual influences—home faces and home voices—grows stronger and stronger; and we come to see that mongrelism won't work. We require the environing influence of a set of ways and physical types like our own, and will sacrifice anything to get them. Nothing means anything, in the end, except with reference to that continuous immediate fabric of appearances and experiences of which one was originally a part; and if we find ourselves ingulphed by alien and clashing influences, we instinctively fight against them in pursuit of the dominant freeman's average quota of legitimate contentment. Naturally, if a race wants to submit to the fantastic martyrdom of mongrelisation for an agonising period of centuries, there will emerge a new composite race and culture whose members will have attained a new homogeneity—and therefore a new and satisfying equilibrium. But who cares to sacrifice himself for the sake of this hypothetical future race—a race as genuinely foreign and meaningless to him as the Peruvians would have been to the Greeks, or as the Thibetans are to ourselves? All that any living man normally wants—and all that any man worth calling such will stand for—is as stable and pure a perpetuation as possible of the set of forms and appearances to which his value-perceptions are, from the circumstances of moulding, instinctively attuned. That is all there is to life—the preservation of a framework which will render the experience of the individual apparently relevant and significant, and therefore reasonably satisfying. Here we have the normal phenomenon of race-prejudice in a nutshell—the legitimate fight of every virile personality to live in a world where life shall seem to mean something. . . . . Just how the black and his tan penumbra can ultimately be adjusted to the American fabric, yet remains to be seen. It is possible that the economic dictatorship of the future can work out a diplomatic plan of separate allocation whereby the blacks may follow a self-contained life of their own, avoiding the keenest hard-

ships of inferiority through a reduced number of points of contact with the whites. This, indeed, is grudgingly and pragmatically seen by the author of your negrophile extract. No one wishes them any intrinsic harm, and all would rejoice if a way were found to ameliorate such difficulties as they have without imperilling the structure of the dominant fabric. It is a fact, however, that sentimentalists exaggerate the woes of the average negro. Millions of them would be perfectly content with a servile status if good physical treatment and amusement could be assured them, and they may yet form a well-managed agricultural peasantry. The real problem is the quadron and octoroon—and still lighter shades. Theirs is a sorry tragedy, but they will have to find a special place. What we can do is to discourage the increase of their numbers by placing the heaviest possible penalties on miscegenation, and arousing as much public sentiment as possible against lax customs and attitudes—especially in the inland South—at present favouring the melancholy and disgusting phenomenon. All told, I think the modern American is pretty well on his guard, at last, against racial and cultural mongrelism. There will be much deterioration, but the Nordic has a fighting chance of coming out on top in the end. I wish we were equally on our guard against the subtler decadence due to economic and mechanical overturns—the shifting and cheapening of standards, and the reduction of life to a crude and colourless quantitative basis, which has come from the impact of science, invention, and organisation upon a group too widely severed from its normal European heritage! Neo-America will probably be Nordic, but it will not be our country in any real sense; since its thread of emotional continuity with us is daily becoming thinner and more merely nominal. The alienage, of course, will not be as great as if the new institutions sprang from foreign blood-impulses and foreign heritages; but it will be sufficiently great to outrage most of our standards and sensibilities, and preclude any feeling of ease or kinship betwixt us and the commercial-mechanical-collectivistic neo-Americans. We shall have to cling to our few coastal strongholds as long as possible—and it will be up to our grandsons to decide whether to go back to England and resume the normal original allegiance, or to go over to the enemy and form part of a turbulent future folk-fabric incomprehensible to us. I wish devoutly that New England could slip out of the mess by getting amicably transferred to the Dominion of Canada. The trademad neo-Americans have no liking for us, and love to regard us as deca-

dent and obsolete. Only a month ago a big-business leader urged Connecticut to cut loose from New England and join its social, fiscal, and commercial fortunes to the New-York area. The best thing we could do would be to cede New-York a bit of southwestern Connecticut and put the whole Federal farce of 1789 behind us. Culturally, geographically, and economically we belong with the Dominion of Canada as an extension of the English-speaking maritime provinces. We need Canada as a buttress for our threatened and invaded institutions, and Canada needs us for a thousand economic reasons. As it is, Canada has only one first-class year-round Atlantic port—Halifax—and is forced to use New London and Portland as termini for her transcontinental trunk lines. Canada's tragedy is a semi-uninhabitable climate; and if New England were to join her, our towns would soon be the seat of the choicest English-Canadian life and culture. Boston, Providence, Worcester, Springfield, Hartford, and New Haven would leave Toronto, Winnipeg, and Halifax far behind; and it might be possible to get rid of most of our foreigners by subsidising their emigration to the more highly industrialised area of neo-America. Of course we would be open to French-Canadian invasion—as we are already—but it couldn't be much worse than it is. Tactful governmental measures could check any wholesale descent of Quebec habitants—recognising the St. Lawrence valley as historically and as logically theirs, just as Newfoundland, New-Brunswick, Nova-Scotia, New-England, Ontario, and the Canadian West are historically and logically ours. God! What wouldn't I give to see the old flag go up again over the white belfry of Providence's 1761 Colony-House, whence it was treasonably lower'd on the 4th of May, 1776! God Save the King! An health to His Majesty's Colony of Rhode-Island and Providence-Plantations! . . .

The Hergesheimer article is at once amusing and thought-provoking—being as it is the complex product of a mind at once touched with naive, superficial snobbery, and powerful in its attempt to grope for some solution of the problem of values. . . . .

But the boy does shew a true and penetrant thoughtfulness when he adumbrates the perpetual problem of immediate practical values—the problem of how to get the most enjoyment and least suffering out of the wearisome incident of conscious existence—the problem of what in hell to do with oneself apart from the necessities of food, warmth, and lodging. This is really a tremendously deep and significant matter which has

not yet received sufficient attention of a truly scholarly sort; a matter quite apart from the objectively scientific and epistemological problem of "what is anything." This separate problem might be summed up in such a query as "What now?" "What of it?" or "Where do we go from here?"—a query asking for information on the relative sense and silliness, emotional profit and empty meaninglessness, of any one possible course of action and manners as compared with any other possible course. What is pleasure? What is interest? What is the least damn foolish thing to do with oneself? To what degree can any one person's pleasure be any other person's—and conversely, to what degree can any one person get pleasure apart from patterns including other persons' ideas of pleasure? Where does the usefulness of convention, with its mercifully devised reference-points and arbitrary illusions of value, begin to be overbalanced by its restrictive and meaningless side? How far can pomp and ceremony be carried in the promotion of one's feeling of significance and adventurous expectancy, without setting up an ironic reaction based on the essential meaninglessness of all human expression and activity? To what extent can the gestures of superiority be stimulating, when separated from the intellectual and aesthetic actualities on which the concept of superiority is based? Where does elegance leave off being a gateway to contentment and imaginative excitation, and become a matter of affectation, mockery, and even downright ennui and tyranny? What is the boundary betwixt the well-ordered self-expression and proudly non-encroaching reticence which form the natural life of a gentleman, and the devotion to form for form's sake which marks the artificial and meaningless "society person"? What is the least silly and least empty thing to do at any given moment or under any given set of circumstances when economic necessity is not present? To what extent can actual pleasure be derived from a ceremonial assumption of pleasure? To what extent is any pleasure possible without the existence of a ceremonial or at least conventional tradition of what constitutes pleasure? What is the real relationship of any given social form to the subtle fabric of race-continuity without which we would die or go mad from homesickness? How genuine and satisfying is the ego-exaltation based on artificial and backgroundless social standing; as distinguish'd from the hereditary social standing involving the poetry of historic symbolism and pageantry, or the aesthetic social standing based on an appreciation of beauty in objects, scenes, forms, relationships, and institutions? Con-



versely, how far does actual aesthetic status, or ancestral position, satisfy the ego when unsupported by arbitrary dicta? Likewise, how far can social position (real or arbitrary) satisfy one without concomitant economic solidity and physical luxury? And how far can wealth and luxury satisfy without good birth, aesthetic cultivation, or arbitrary social recognition? And how far can any one answer to any of these questions be taken as a general truth? Into what groups—or with what individual differences—can people be classified regarding their ego-reactions in these matters? What is solid and what is flimsy for any one person—or is any classification of experience and standards into solid and flimsy categories valid? And does the same person feel the same set of emotional criteria for any considerable period, or under any considerable variety of conditions? To what extent are the standards and pleasure-sources of the present generation more, or less, solidly rational and permanently markable than the standards and pleasure-sources of our—and Hergesheimer's—generation? To what extent has the main stream of Anglo-American culture and socially approved folkways failed to create an atmosphere mentally and emotionally satisfying to the majority of normally brilliant and sensitive individuals? To what extent is any possible deficiency related to recently enlarged and rectified perspectives, and recently changed conditions of travel and daily life? To what extent were cultural forms ever satisfying? To what depth does dissatisfaction go? What sort of graph might be plotted to depict our (a) satisfaction and (b) average conformity in cultural matters from 1660 to 1931? What is the real validity, from the standpoint of permanent emotional satisfaction, of a retreat from the problem of personal pattern-placement and a quest for ego-expansion through intellectual and aesthetic assimilations and expressions not dependent on group-relationships? To what extent do people differ in their capacity for such non-social satisfactions? What is the real validity from the same emotional standpoint, of social relationships involving individual criteria at variance with the dominant instinctive standards of the group, or the standards based on heredity or intrinsic quality? To what extent does insincere and unsatisfying self-delusion animate such ostensible substitute-placements? To what extent do people differ in their capacity for non-aristocratic or otherwise aesthetically and intellectually inferior social satisfactions? What is the real validity, from the same standpoint, of a retreat from pattern-placement problems to simplicity and crudeness, and the

erection of a scornful defence mechanism? To what extent can animal satisfactions replace emotional and imaginative satisfactions? Effect of age on replacement-capacity? To what extent can acquisitiveness replace emotional and imaginative satisfactions? As compared with the validity of these escapes and retreats in relation to pattern-placement problems, what is their respective emotional validity in relation to the subtler problems of cosmic futility, unsatisfied mental curiosity, and the ungratifiable yearning for perfect beauty and the fulfilment of adventurous expectancy? How far is the old myth of religious and ethical values able to provide satisfying illusions for intelligent and educated adults? Effect of age on illusion-capacity? Effect of temperament—mental, emotional, aesthetic, and imaginative—on illusion-capacity? What is the permanent gratification-value of mental impression-crowding—hobbies, artificial interests, constant and varied travel, perfunctory reading? Effect of temperament on gratification-capacity? What is the permanent gratification-value of emotional grouping and arranging—as when one links an emotion toward a scene, person, idea, event, or pursuit to another scene, person, idea, event or pursuit, in order to heighten the gusto of one's emotional enjoyment of either or both? Effect of temperament on gratification-capacity? God, what a mess! I guess cyanide's the most sensible thing after all! But the point is that Joe really gets the big idea that there *is* a problem, which is more than most poor simps do. It gives one a pain in the neck to see how even the most studious and well-regarded psychologists glide over this fundamental and perpetual problem of making the boredom of consciousness bearable. Their various modes of over-simplification seem so god damn naive that one wonders how they ever came to make any significant researches at all. One wise old bird reduces all pleasure to the erotic—but doesn't do a curst thing to explain the continued boredom and dissatisfaction of the rounder or potentate who has all the diversified flapper experience he can collect. Another shrewd bimbo reduces the whole business to the sense of superiority, and thinks that a high place (real or subjective) "in the group" is the thing we're all scrambling after. But gawd—what a lot he dodges when he fails to define *what group* (out of an infinite number of conceivable group-images in the subject's mind) he's talking about! A third smart Alec thinks work—expression—fulfilment through creation—is the thing. Oh, yeah? Just *define* the quality and extent of work or expression meant? Not so good? And how about the abject misery of those

who have succeeded best in creation and self-expression? It's a great life—and I don't blame *Javahed* Joe for collecting all the fun he can in his own way, even if that way does seem a bit artificial and superficial to a weary old cynick. At least he senses the complexity of human frustration, bewilderment, and directionlessness, and doesn't try to achieve an optimistic and all-simplifying smirk by affirming a hash of goddam copy-book crap that ain't so! Good ol' Joe—let's all drink ourselves happy like Richd Bale, Gent. of Balisand!

As for the final enclosure—"emergent evolution"—I don't think it means very much—any more than the widely advertised suspension of causation due to the quantum theory means much. As sober physicists are shewing, the quantum dope doesn't mean that any conceivable group of specific causes can produce more than one inevitable effect; but merely that we have no possible means of detecting the intra-atomic differences in two or more sets of causes, each set producing one inevitable effect, which are really different but which appear the same to all conceivable analytical methods. The same causes always produce the same one effect—but we can't tell certain types of almost-but-not-quite-identical causes apart, hence can't tell which of several possible sets of antecedents produced it; although (and popular expositors tend to forget this) only one set could really have done so. Well—it's the same way about this "emergent evolution" business, which I'll bet was suggested by the quantum theory. We know damn well that atoms are such complex systems that the union of dissimilar ones produces molecular arrangements whose properties are utterly unrelated to the properties of the molecular arrangements which each kind of constituent atom forms with its own kind. O. K.—but what of it? True, we can't predict the new sort of arrangement from considering the properties of each constituent; but that arrangement is just as inevitable, and just as closely linked to the latent properties of each constituent, as if we *could* so predict it! Only an ostrich could consider causation suspended because we can't *see* it working! And from wide chemical observation, we know about what types of differences between compounds and constituents are customary—know, without finding anything especially new or revolutionary in the knowledge. Who but a naive and sentimental ass bothers about man's crude, meaningless *wishes* in the matter of free-will and significant purpose? Of course, the new and unpredictable constantly appears—but it was all fixed beforehand, whether we knew it or not.

Undoubtedly, living protoplasm is such a "new" product in relation to its inorganic antecedents—but what of it? We always realis'd as much with the possible exception of a group of very literal materialists, wholly dominated by Spencer, toward the close of the XIX century!

Yr. obt. Servt.,  
Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus

455. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Jany. 16, 1931

Dear A. W.:—

..... Today I get along with a maximum expense of \$15.00 per week, not counting the reckless antiquarian trips to which I irresponsibly blow myself about once a year. And this is not any squalid getting-along, either—indeed, I'd feel damn lucky if I could always be sure of the hebdomadal fifteen which makes the present standard possible. It is a matter of caution and deliberation in the selection and preservation of things, and in the judicious quest for lodgings at once cheap and in a reasonably select neighbourhood. In the course of years, by a system of trial and error, one learns what nourishing and palatable food is cheapest, and what system of clothes-choosing is likely to make replacements as far apart as possible. One learns, too, how to make public libraries serve instead of indiscriminate book-buying. \$15.00 per week will float any man of sense in a very tolerable way—lodging him in a cultivated neighbourhood if he knows how to look for rooms (this one rule, though, breaks down in really megalopolitan centres like New York—but it will work in Providence, Richmond, or Charleston, and would probably work in most of the moderate-sized cities of the northwest) keeping him dressed in soberly conservative neatness if he knows how to choose quiet designs and durable fabrics among cheap suits, and feeding him amply and palatably if he is not an epicurean crank, and if he does not attempt to depend upon restaurants. One must have a kitchen-alcove and obtain provisions at grocery and delicatessen prices rather than pay cafes and cafeterias the additional price they demand for more service. Of course, this applies only to the single man. My one venture

into matrimony ended in the divorce-court for reasons 98% financial. But if one expects to be a man of letters one has to sacrifice something—and for anybody of reasonably ascetic temperament the interests and freedoms of imaginative and creative life more than overbalance the advantages of domesticity. \$8.00 to \$10.00 a week will get a very good-sized room in the best of neighbourhoods in the smaller cities, and \$3.00 per week sees me fully fed. My dinners cost about 25¢ each, (a typical one— $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. veal loaf at delicatessen, 11¢;  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. potato salad, 8¢; cake for dessert, 2¢; coffee—using condensed milk—averaging 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ ¢) and my breakfast-lunches perhaps 10¢—a couple of doughnuts, cheese, and coffee. This is all I would eat even if wealthy, and it is just as palatable as the average programme. I also use Campbell's soups, 10¢ per can, and other inexpensive accessories. Then of course, now and then one blows oneself to a good restaurant gorge. As for clothing—buy plain designs, be careful of them, don't wear them out around the house when you can just as well be wearing any old spare rags, and you'll be astonished at the length of time they'll last. The important thing is to choose suits and overcoats so plain that no changes of style will make them conspicuous. I have an old topcoat (now relegated to rainy-day use) which I bought early in 1909—probably before you were born. My regular winter overcoat was bought in 1915, and my present topcoat in 1917—in April, just after National Guard doctors had denied me the honour of olive-drab habiliments. Of my suits—I always have four, a good heavy, a good light, and a second-best of each weight—three were purchased in 1925, and the other (scarcely used as yet) in 1928. None cost above \$25.00 (although the overcoats did, since they date from the fringe of my "better days.") If I hadn't been robbed of all my clothing in a Brooklyn burglary in 1925, I'd have some still more venerable costume reliques. Laundry is an item which perplexes the beginner in economy, but one soon learns to have everything but shirts and collars done at a cheap "rough dry" laundering rate—and more, one gradually picks up a facility in home laundering. The only way I ever take my long trips with a single small valise is by doing a good part of my own washing in YMCA lavatories and drying the results on chair-backs and opened dresser drawers. Shoelather wears fast, but the wise man can make splendid \$6.60 replacements at a Regal Store. I don't get shoes more than once in two years. And there are chain-stores like Truly Warner's where \$3.50 will get you as good a felt hat as you

could wish for—one, too, that will last a couple of years. For straws, the sagacious pauper waits till the end of a season before buying his next year's specimen. One solitary dollar got me my 1931 straw (easily a \$3.00 one) last August. . . .

Regards and best wishes—  
HPL

456. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Jan. 18, 1931

Magister Sapientiae:—

. . . The material of solid literature is life, and whatever is in life must be in solid literature. This is an absolute necessity, because we can never achieve authenticity in depiction unless we recognise genuine rather than feigned motivations. When science tells us that this or that cause produces this or that effect, or when mere observation reveals that this or that element occupies this or that proportion in the thoughts and acts of a given character, there is absolutely nothing for an author to do but set the facts down. Otherwise he gives a false and confusing fake—a phantom shadow without relation to life, art, or anything else—which is far more harmful and reprehensible than any amount of unpleasant truth could be. Victorian "literature" foisted on the reader a whole faked world of impossible thoughts, values, motivations, and proportions which did nobody any good and accomplished no result save that of making life a thousandfold harder to understand than it ever was before—not that the job was ever especially easy, at that! Every person brought up in the Victorian tradition has remained more or less of an intellectual and emotional cripple unless he instinctively resisted the poison in youth or cast it off by dint of vast travail in later life. If you want a damn good definition of a *total loss*, it is the Victorian's pretence at portraying life through art! Actually, the sound brains of the Victorian period all went into *pure science*. It is *there* that we see the "lost age" redeemed—and redeemed damn well, too, for there's no denying the tremendous power of thought that went into the nineteenth century's great literal onslaught against the unknown. When we want to take off our hats to somebody in side-whiskers and barrel pants we don't have

far to go—Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, Faraday, Lecky, Lubbock, Kelvin, Clark Maxwell, Tylor, Frazer, Haeckel, Freud, Mill, Buckle, Herbert Spencer, Mendelejeff, Mendel, Inatrefages, Geoffroy St. Hilaire, Geikie, Kirchhoff—hell! the woods are full of 'em—we'd be damn glad of as fine a bunch today! But the fact is, that all this profound truth-delving was through the medium of *literal intellection* and *not* through *artistic interpretation*. That is the whole key to the nineteenth century. It was profound and literal and esoteric in its approach to truth—keeping its facts in the classroom and the laboratory, but sedulously excluding them from the studio and the drawing-room. Life was regarded as something to be analysed by scientists and historians, but hidden from everybody else. Art and literature were left to fakers and sentimentalists and doctrinaires until the sanifying revolt of Swinburne and Samuel Butler (of "Erewhon") and Wilde—itsself grotesque in many ways—let in a little brains and fresh air and cleared the way for a fresh start. Ah, me! I think the reason I have such a love for science is that I was born toward the tail end of an aesthetick tradition which no adult could take seriously . . . . and which I certainly never took seriously, since I gave it a nose-thumbing from the start and went back to the daylight of the eighteenth century! Anyhow—all that is past. Now we know again, as we did in the sane days before Victoria, that *no subject exists which cannot be seriously treated in literature*. There are no exceptions—indeed, there could be no exceptions according to any soundly impersonal and universal view of the organic history of this planet. . . . . Even now I have no use for a fellow who simply sets out to violate people's inherited sensibilities for no adequate reason—such swine as you'll see listed in book-catalogues under the euphemism of "curiosa"—but in my intellectual maturity I refuse to commit the blunder of confusing these leprous scavengers with honest men whose affronts to convention are merely incidents in a sincere and praiseworthy struggle to interpret or symbolise life as it is. Of course it is possible to make mistakes in classification, for border-line and ambiguous cases always exist; but when we are considering figures of the stature of Voltaire and Rabelais, Lawrence and Fielding, we would be simply foolish not to recognise the vigorously honest intent to see and depict life as a balanced whole, which everywhere animates their productions. When they commit a blunder in technique or proportioning, it is our place to excuse it—whether it concern a difficult or a common theme

—and not to adopt a leering or sanctimoniously horrified attitude if the theme happens to be difficult. A case like that calls for more, rather than less, of our sympathy. It no more hurts us to stumble on a brothel or backhouse slopping-over in Remarque, than it does to stumble on a didactic or sentimental slopping-over in Browning or Longfellow. Both sorts of slopping-over may be pleasant—I like neither myself—but we oughtn't to get any more stirred up over the one than over the other. . . . . I'll endorse a censorship of the blunders of Boccaccio only *after* the Watch and Word Society have disposed of the blunders of Eddie Guest and of the designers of houses and public buildings of the 1860-1890 period. *There* is some ugliness that *ought* to be abolished by law in the interest of the good life! Down with French roofs and imitation Norman Gothic . . . . keep the children from the degrading contamination of scroll-saw porch trimmings and octagonal cupolas and Richardsonian quasi-Romanesque . . . . fie on the immortality of cast-iron lawn deer! As for governmental censorship as distinguish'd from aesthetick reticence—one might be in favour of any system calculated to diminish actual crimes of violence and perversity, but the best psychologists agree that censorship has little to do with these things. The creatures who perpetrate aggressive crimes of abnormality are generally defective from the start, and but little motivated by what they read. Conversely, normal persons are rarely moved to overt anti-social acts by any amount of reading. Censorship as now administered is a joke and a minor publick nuisance—touching as it does standard books which the impressionable rabble never read, and wouldn't understand if they did. It is not, however, anything to get wildly excited about—any more than the frankness it opposes is. The liberals who waste time and wind-power howling against the fools in Boston and elsewhere who interfere with the sole of necessary classics are themselves fools in a lesser degree; since anyone knows that a man of wit and resources can buy a book secretly or in another city even if he can't do it openly or at home. No censorship law ever kept any high-grade scholar from reading and owning all the books he needs—Bostonians read Dreiser and Lawrence, and Tennesseans understand the principles of biology—and it does not matter whether the rabble read these things or not. As a matter of fact, the current type of ignorant censorship by Victorian left-overs and Irish Catholic grafters is really a practical benefit despite its absurdity of principle and infantility of psychology—for what it does is to keep a lot of

wholly unimportant and banal sewer-effluvia off the cheap news-stands whilst having very little effect on the purchases and perusals of men of taste. One may be highly grateful to be rid of the ugly and worthless pornography which might otherwise clutter up the low-grade stationery shops—and through a law which in practice does not make it impossible for scholars to own Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* and the *Decameron* and the *Old Testament* and *Candide*. The only real hardship ever worked, is in connection with the drama—as, for instance, when the primer-puzzled, rosary-fingering nitwits of Providence and Boston officialdom banned Eugene O'Neill's *Strange Interlude* a few months ago. And even that wasn't so bad—for the play was put on in Quincy, Mass., whither repaired all the studious Providentians (myself not among them) and Bostonians who cared to sit through its five or so hours of almost unrelieved tedium. Ho, hum! But life is a bore! And I don't know but that the frank expressers are about as damned a bore as the vacant-skull'd suppressors! That's why I light out for the fifth dimension and the galaxies beyond the rim of Einsteinian space-time—to escape the concentrated ennui to which all phases of objective life, flexor-minded or extensor-minded, Apollonian or Dionysiac, ultimately boil down. To hell with mammal primates—I'm sure the articulatae will do a damn sight better when they inherit the aging planet and give us the air as we gave it to the dinosaurs! The first intelligent civilisation on this planet will probably be one of the formicarine, the coleoptera, the aphidae, the muscidae, or the culicidae.

Yr. most oblig'd, obt. hble. Servt.,  
H. Paget-Lowe.

457. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

18 Januarii, 1931

Pythagorean Pattern of Perspicuous Profundity:—

Well, Sir, I have the honour to state, that I last Wednesday completed the following work, design'd solely for my own perusal and for the crystallisation of my recollections, in 136 pages of this crabbed cacography:

A  
DESCRIPTION  
of the  
Town of  
QUEBECK, in NEW-FRANCE,  
Lately annex to His Britannick Majesty's  
DOMINIONS.

Tradition is virtually the only standard, or value, or criterion of interest and direction-purpose illusion, that we have in the world of feeling, action, and art. There it is supreme. But in the world of *thought* and *reality* it is a perfectly meaningless thing; and has no effect except to place obstacles in the way of the discovery of truth. When we wish to obtain any *actual knowledge* of the cosmos and its properties, we must at once put out of our heads all the accumulated notions concerning such things which miscellaneous experience and slipshod inheritance have blindly saddled upon us. "Good", "evil", "duty", "direction", "purpose", "dignity"—applesauce! We must cease to be parts of any system of preconceived bias—Christian, moral, humane, or anything like that—and become simple free inquiring agents, each alone and fearless, facing the varied phenomena of the external world with such processes of cognition and such stores of correlative background-data as repeated former tests may have shewn to be authentick. If *then* we find any of the old traditions verify'd, well and good. But we must not accept anything on any authority save the actual present evidence of the cosmos as judged by the tested information of contemporary science. Real probabilities about the structure and properties of the cosmos, and its relation to living organisms on this planet, can be reach'd only by correlating the findings of all who have competently investigated *both the subject itself, and our mental equipment for approaching and interpreting it*—astronomers, physicists, mathematicians, biologists, psychologists, anthropologists, and so on. The only sensible method is that of assembling all the objective scientific data of 1931, and forming a fresh chain of partial indications bas'd EXCLUSIVELY on that data and on *no conceptions derived from earlier and less ample arrays of data*; meanwhile testing, *by the psychological knowledge of 1931*, the workings and inclinations of our minds in accepting, connecting, and making

deductions from data, AND MOST PARTICULARLY WEEDING OUT ALL TENDENCIES TO GIVE MORE THAN EQUAL CONSIDERATION TO CONCEPTIONS WHICH WOULD NEVER HAVE OCCURRED TO US HAD WE NOT FORMERLY HARBOURED PROVISIONAL AND CAPRICIOUS IDEAS OF THE UNIVERSE NOW CONCLUSIVELY KNOWN TO BE FALSE. It goes without saying that this realistic principle fully allows for the examination of those irrational feelings and wishes about the universe, upon which idealists so amusingly base their various dogmatick speculations. Psychology handles these glandular phenomena with the utmost exactitude, and traces them with extreme clearness to natural reactions of the uninformed mind when placed in contact with the mysteries, pains, tantalizations, and frustrations of the existing universe. Such illusions of value, purpose, "soul", obligations, "brotherhood" and the like are to be expected in a primitive milieu. Well—it is only this *fundamentalism* (to restore a valuable word from the perverting barbarity of modern jargon) of outlook that I insist upon in an opponent. If he honestly has this, I am prepar'd to view with respect whatever conclusions he may derive from his survey of Nature, no matter how much those conclusions may differ from my own. All that I refuse to respect, is the arbitrary folly of the mystick and the traditional dogmatist, who refuse altogether to employ the outlook and methods of sane reality. I do not think it argues bigotry in me to dismiss these pitiful vestiges of barbarism with only such attention as enables me to recognize their character and realise their remoteness from serious thought. Thus I say frankly that a man like Chesterton is not worth listening to as a thinker, however amusing he may be as a jester; and that people like Bishop Manning are simply quaint intellectual curiosities. But on the other hand, I am prepar'd to listen with the utmost attention and respect to serious quasi-theists like Eddington and Millikan; since, although I deem their teleological views wholly unjustify'd by the phenomena which they cite as a basis, and obviously suggested by the orthodox emotional crippling of their Victorian childhood, I recognise that they do not advance such speculations for any other reason than that they honestly think them suggested by the existing universe. And the same thing goes for the Plantagenistical Meliorism of the Paterson School.

As for the matter of scatter'd interests—of course, each person knows the course which gives him the most pleasure, and I do not doubt but that your many side-lines all knit up somewhere as parts of a world

which is coherent and symmetrical in your consciousness—just as with me Quebeck, Arthur Machen, astronomy, Joseph Wood Krutch, sunsets, the Endless Caverns, the Spectator, dinosaurs' eggs, single-truck street-cars with red and green glass in their roofs, stone walls, Georgian doorways, the new Philadelphia parkway and Museum, black cats, certain numbers like 3331, 156, 102, and 416, sonorous Roman names like Cu. Ateins Capito, P. Senecius Herennio, C. Scribonius Libo, etc., etc., the Royal Arms of old ENGLAND, great oaken forests with vast boles and low twisted boughs, the Antarctic continent, the Magellanic clouds, sunken temples, Charleston, Providence, whaling ships, streets and roads that climb uphill and end against the sky, longs's, narrow winding streets with old bookshops near a waterfront amidst which one cannot be sure where one is, dark rivers with many bridges winding betwixt great walls of brick or stone, spires and domes catching the late-afternoon sunlight, hushed hillside meadows at noon, sheep and goats, Egyptian hieroglyphicks, flutes and pipes, cliffs on the sea, certain undefined aromattick odours, certain unidentified strains of musick or kindred sound, ruin'd castles cover'd with ivy, the moon, Orion, observatories, nightmares, daemons, grey jagged mountain-peaks, unknown valleys, Wickford, Marblehead, Fredericksburg, Newburyport, Kingston, railway stations, gambrel roofs, equestrian statues, small farmhouses set against steep rocky hillsides, Vermont, drums, cymbals, and trumpets, the Roman Eagles, SPQR, the Iroquois, Atlantis, Easter Island, Tryout Smithy, Bagdad and Cordova, the West Indies, Japanese gardens, the golden road to Samarcand, the rocky desert of deserts beyond Bodrabain, unicorns, fires on lovely hills, the Milky Way, leagues of level marshland at twilight, Genl. Sir Guy Carleton, Ld Dorchester, Henry St. John, Visct Bolingbroke, the Magnalia, Sir W. Phips, Kt Deerfield, the Unitarian churchyard in Charleston, P. Cornelius Scipio, Caerleon-on-Usk, Iceland, songs and street-scenes of 1895-1900, Confederate uniforms, the Pleiades, meteorites, vast vaulted crypts, thunderstorms, the Boston and Maine Railroad, Angkor, Zimbabwe, the House of Usher, unexpected journeys, the sound of hidden brooks in deeply wooded valleys, the middle Hudson River region, the Missahickon, encyclopaedias, telescopes, chemical laboratory apparatus, the year 1903, old rag-men with spavined horses and rattling carts calling "raygs, bartells . . . . . maw-nee fer raygs" in a musical chant, the Dighton Rock, the Seven Golden Cities of Cibola, the Spanish War, Wedgewood pot-

tery, dryads and fauns, high walls of unknown masonry, streets with steps in them, wharves, ship-chandlers' shops, bells heard from a distance and not identified, streets flooded with sunlight from the opposite end, and so on, and so on, all represent facets, ramifications, and association-attributes of one basically coherent ideology and mental-emotional cosmos which my own temperament has evolved in conjunction with the impressions impinging on it; and whose cardinal keynote seems to be the expansion of the ego through the imaginative breakingdown of the laws of time, space, and matter, and the flight of the etherealised personality through a limitless variety of dimensions and cycles. Now the only thing which may justly be said against diffusiveness in general, is that it prevents one from grasping any one thing with sufficient thoroughness to be really master of it. Very few active, bustling, men-of-the-world, it is observ'd, have any philosophick opinions worth considering; insomuch as their perpetual round of affairs has left them too little time to digest any one point of thought with the concentrated leisure necessary for real assimilation and conscious formulation. . . . . A man is an organic molecular phenomenon accidentally spawned by the processes of Nature and no more distinctive or privileged than a skunk-cabbage, a tree, a rock, or a glacier. There isn't any *ought* about him—he simply *is* . . . just as any chance collocation of electrons, atoms, and molecules *is*. What will happen to any particular specimen of the breed is simply a matter of chance. Each one will reach out with all its strength for all the gratification-sensations it can get—and the cosmos isn't at all interested in the relative amounts each one secures. Specimens which are strong and have lucky chance on their side will get a good deal. Those which are weak or don't 'get the breaks' won't get very much. What of it? The total amount of energy in the cosmos is unchanged. . . . . The pressure of the rabble is both individual and collective—that is, isolated members try to climb out of their class, whilst the class as a whole tries to overthrow the system which fixes its position. Both of these factors are eminently normal, and the normal reaction on the part of the superior class is graduated opposition—mild and partial toward the individuals, who eventually succeed in their climb (and without bad results to the culture) after a refining and probationary period, but very determined toward the massed herd—and wisely so, since the welfare of the culture depends on the supremacy of a highly developed class. Eventually, however, there may occur accidents

(such as the invention of machinery) which materially shift the balance of power and give the rabble a strength they never had before. It is then natural for the rabble to increase its pressure on the upper class; so that, for the sake of saving the whole culture from destruction, it becomes necessary to grant them certain concessions. This is especially true if conditions so alter as to increase the disadvantages of the rabble, and make their state intolerable enough to drive them to desperation. At this point we behold the growth of a condition roughly describable as "socialistic"—but we must remember that it is a matter of natural forces, and not any outgrowth of non-existent abstractions. The rabble have no "right" to any privileges or even to food and existence—nor have the upper classes themselves. Each simply has what strength and luck gave. And when the rabble gets stronger it can seize more, whilst the upper classes yield because they would be physically overthrown if they did not. All this sounds very shocking and brutal to the nineteenth century idealist—but he must remember that the twentieth century realist makes the statement not because he especially dislikes poetic illusion, but merely *because the facts are what they are*, without any indications of the lace-edged frills envisaged by Victorians. Conversely, it sounds rather ghastly, hollow, mocking, and absurd to the twentieth century realist, to hear the nineteenth century idealist tricking out the stark conflicts of Nature in a pale-pink mythology of false conditions and motivations more suited to the nursery story hour than to serious adult discussion. To the realist there is something obscenely frivolous in idealism. Note, however, that the two systems are not so far apart. Ethical idealism demands socialism on poetical cosmic grounds involving some mythical linkage of individuals to one another and to the universe—while hard-fact realism is gradually yielding to socialism because that is the only mechanical adjustment of forces which will save our culture-fostering stratified society in the face of a growing revolutionary pressure from increasingly desperate under-men whom mechanisation is gradually forcing into unemployment and starvation. We shall have to pension these under-men by paying them good wages for short-hour work which is not needed at all (because it could easily be done with sparsely manned machinery at full time)—that is, we shall have to organise our governing financial groups in such a way that they will have to disgorge some of their surplus money, and carry on with less profit than they could secure under an unsupervised system. But this will not

be done because anybody loves the rabble, or because anybody thinks the rabble has any mystical "right" to things it is powerless to seize. It will be done because the rabble is no longer powerless, but strong and desperate enough to overturn society and set up a communistic barbarism unless soothed with the sop of concessions. As it is, the concessions of the upper classes will really make no great social difference. Money will remain supreme, and the increasingly rapid upward filtering of all the good brains will eventually leave the rabble a stolid, moronic group likely to cause no trouble if well clothed, housed, fed, and amused. Everybody is for himself, and the resultant of all the opposite-pulling forces is the social norm—which changes only as the balance of forces changes. . . . .

And about *international relations*, too. Nothing but mischief can be caused by the sentimentalists who try to pretend that different cultures can understand and like one another, or that leaders in different nations will ever cooperate through a common love of mystical (and mythical) cosmic obligations. This is mischievous for two reasons—because it encourages false hopes, and because it tends to make all international arbitration ridiculous in the eyes of men of sense. Woody Wilson's monumental asininity was not so much a matter of *what* he advocated, as a matter of *why* he advocated it and why he expected to be taken seriously. Actually, as Spengler shews, cultures are profoundly rooted, prodigiously unique, and externally hostile things—whose differences are *far greater* than is commonly suspected. We cannot judge cultures, and their deep instinctive attitudes toward one another, by the unctuous amenities of the few internationally-minded aristocrats, intellectuals, and aesthetes who form a cosmopolitan and friendly group because of the common pull of surface manners or special interests. Of course these exotic specimens get on well enough together—but the real peoples as a whole are another matter! Therefore don't let the cause of international equilibrium be made ridiculous by being mixed up with flatulent sentimentalities and pseudo-cosmic bombast. Obligations . . . human brotherhood . . . understanding . . . . . broadmindedness . . . . . BANANA OIL! The tragic trouble with all this goddam crap isn't that it doesn't sound pleasant and poetic, but that it postulates forces and conditions and trends in the universe which do not exist. Now what *are* the realities? Well—the one big reality is simply that every cultural group—that is, every group sufficiently homogeneous to have

an unified psychology and differentiated set of folkways—is going to grab all it can for itself, exactly as in the past. That's Nature. But it doesn't necessarily mean a literal duplication of all the events and methods of the past—indeed, changed mechanical conditions affecting transportation, commerce, and warfare, make such literal duplication impossible. The primary object of every group, as before, will be to get all it can; but under future conditions the means of getting such a maximum may be different. It is excellent sense to suggest changes in international method when such changes will operate for the benefit of the nation concerned; but rank idiocy to ask a nation to relinquish advantages for the sake of a theoretical and all-inclusive world-civilisation—most of the component nations of which the given nation either hates like hell or regards with indifference. International students may well point out profits to be derived from tariff liberalisations, reciprocal trading agreements, and so on, and may likewise perform real service through efforts to avert needless recourses to arms. The cataclysmically annihilative aspects of future warfare are recognised by all, and it is wholly becoming for men of sense to stress the peril which any nation will share with the rest of civilisation if the next general war is too extensive or too long. *Pacifism as an ethical principle*—the don't-shoot-mamma's-boy sentimentality—is ridiculous, and is recognised as such by the majority. But arguments proving the unprofitability of ultra-modern combat, in view of the almost certain devastations—out of all proportion with those for former wars—equally shared by all participants, are very much in order; and may conceivably have the effect of deterring many nations from precipitating conflicts which would otherwise have occurred. There can never be a guarantee against a war launched by a nation powerful enough to expect a quick victory over all probable opponents; but there almost certainly can be a vast lessening of major conflicts, and an increased disposition of statesmen to try all other means before resorting to a warfare which may bring more loss than gain. The important thing to stress is the *changing nature* of warfare—whereby among well-equipped nations it ceases to be genuine battle, in any historically understood sense, and becomes merely a sanguinary nightmare of wholesale mechanical extirpation affecting both military and civilian populations. Once an heroic distinction, it is now an expansion pestilence and calamity like the cyclone or the earthquake. Only among the minor nations can we ever again hope to see wars of the kind that made



our arms glorious on the fields of Poitiers, Crécy, and Agincourt—that made William Pepperrell a Baronet at Louisburg, and transferr'd James Wolfe to the Pantheon of Immortals on the Plain of Abraham. But in presenting such an argument to a nation, good sense demands that it be couch'd *in terms of advantage to that nation itself*. Only a fool expects France to limit her army for the sake of an abstract "humanity" including Germany, Italy, bolshevik Russia, and Abyssinia! Encourage among nations the sensible and realstick relationship which must conduce to mutual profit, but don't increase their dislikes by forcibly commanding them to love one another. We may tolerate a Frenchman very well in the abstract—but we begin to hate him as soon as anybody imposes upon us the "obligation" to kiss his perfumed whiskers. Hindoos are splendid in geography books, but not so good when they begin to set up temples in Angell Street—as one "Swami Akilikumda" (or whatever the name is) is doing right now with the aid of a rich, soft-headed widow's money.

Well—that's me, 'bo. If you think I am anti-social, or reluctant to do all that a private citizen needs to do toward maintaining the Anglo-Saxon civilisation, you get me wrong. I've never yet shewn a tendency to break the laws, flout the ancestral folkways, or encourage social, cultural, or political decadence. But I'm a realist, and refuse to let attitudes take the place of actualities, or pretend to be what I'm not. My ideal is maximum pleasure, and I get it by maintaining my own individuality in a way that encroaches on none. My intellectual criterion is simply *truth*, and my one and only guide in taking sides on questions is *whether a thing is or isn't so*. I repudiate idealism not because I despise idealists—indeed, I think they tend to be personally likeable rather than the reverse—but because I see no sense in assuming sets of conditions in the cosmos which have no existence. I have no axes to grind. I don't dislike the hypothetical conditions postulated by idealists, and would be glad to subscribe to a good many of them if they were so. My only objection is that they are not so, and that attempts to read them into the structure of the universe are injurious to the welfare of the only real value in the entire world of ideas—namely, the simple and basic quality of *unadorned truth*—the honest *is-or-isn't criterion*. I don't believe in "right" and "wrong"; but I recognise that some courses are advisable in perpetuating a pleasure-giving milieu whilst some are not. I don't believe in "rights" or "justice"; but I think it is more pleasant to observe the amenities of old tradition, and the symmetries of well-proportion'd

emotion, than to torture paupers, insult labourers, snatch candy away from children, or poison urban water-supplies. There is a pleasurable aesthetick value in classical moderation, and the avoidance of those freskish excesses which bespeak the silliness of inadequate or disordered motivation. One of the most pitiful and amusing things about idealism is that it stages its farce of sentimentalities almost for nothing—since after all, the actual line of conduct it enjoins is by no means remote from the ordinary conduct of the civilised pagan and materialist—the man of taste whose only motive force is the Hellenic principle of enlighten'd selfishness. There are certain things that well-bred people naturally do—simply as a matter of aesthetics and social determinism—and it merely makes these things sound hollow and absurd when theorists attempt to bolster up the already-adequate system by tacking on a wholly irrelevant and irrational framework of pseudo-authority, pseudo-correlations, and pseudo-explanations. And so it goes. In the last analysis, I attack the ethical believer not because of what he does or recommends, but because he has—in most cases—committed the logical error of building up a superstructure of cosmic theory without having taken the necessary preliminary step of testing the theory's essential foundation—the existence or non-existence of such a thing as an objectively genuine *obligatory* force in Nature. Whenever he starts out by *honestly tackling* this vital and pivotal ontological point, I prepare myself to attend his discourse with respect and receptiveness.

Oh, by the way—here's something from old California—home of Cosmic Brotherhood, Vedantick Mystick Circles, Surplus Mahatmas, and all such ennobling influences! Our friend Clark Ashton Smith, whose work you appreciate so poignantly, has just got a revision job. . . . He is frankly stumped this time—and I don't blame him in view of the opening line he quotes—"My soul has the arms of an Octopus". That's all he quotes—but I'm helping him out with a provisional version, spun out of my sympathetick understanding of the Eastern Spirit of Universal Oom. The way Grandpa would dope it out is this—

#### Unity

My soul has the arms of an octopus  
To cuddle the whole world in;  
O'er the cosmick sea, with emotion plus  
I float on a fluttery fin.

For Buddha has hidden my bosom burst  
 The collar that cramps us so—  
 And I sprinkle all space with the love that erst  
 Was lavish'd on Limo, O.

*Om Mane Kidme On—Gôta Nôbab Nhânās!*

..... No anthropologist of standing insists on the uniformly advanced evolution of the Nordic as compared with that of other Caucasian and Mongolian races. As a matter of fact, it is freely conceded that the Mediterranean race turns out a higher percentage of the aesthetically sensitive, and that the Semitic groups excel in sharp, precise intellection. It may be, too, that the Mongolian excels in aesthetick capacity and normality of philosophical adjustment. What, then, is the secret of pro-Nordicism amongst those who hold these views? Simply this—that ours is a Nordic culture, and that the roots of that culture are so inextricably tangled in the natural standards, perspectives, traditions, memories, instincts, peculiarities, and physical aspects of the Nordic stream that no other influences are fitted to mingle in *our* fabric. We don't despise the French in France or Quebeck, but we don't want them grabbing *our* territory and creating foreign islands like Woonsocket and Fall River. The fact of this uniqueness of every separate culture-stream—this dependence of instinctive likes and dislikes, natural methods, unconscious appraisals, etc., etc., on the physical and historic attributes of a single race—is too obvious to be ignored except by empty theorists. I dwelt on that point in my preceding epistle. Now how about us? Well, our stock had a hardy and adventurous history and under highly unfavourable sub-arctic conditions, and in conflict with relentless natural enemies. Survival depended on the exaggeration of those glandular reactions tending toward dominance, freedom, boldness, assertiveness, and the retention of a boyhood relentlessness in our attitude toward the external world. Those of us who managed to survive at all, had these qualities in more than the common degree; and of course they became for us the supreme subconscious criterion of human character. It is too late in the day to change this set of feelings, even if there were any reason for change. They are as fixed as our white complexions, tall stature, and other racial attributes. We must simply recognize the fact that, to be congenial for us, a civilisation must be founded on the ideals of unbro-

ken freedom, haughty dominance, executive competence, (*"excudent alii spirantia mollis aera"*, etc.) personal dignity, emotional discipline and economy, and the various other things which historick experience has taught and forced us to cherish above all else. We don't despise art and intellect—indeed, we feel the need for them very acutely and go after them with Nordic determination; but the fact remains, deep down within us, that we don't consider these things such *utterly essential parts of any tolerable conception of human character* as we consider our racial unbrokenness. We can like a fool or a boor even when we laugh at him. There is nothing *loathsome* or *monstrous* to us in weak thinking or poor taste. But for the cringing, broken, unctuous, subtle type we have a *genuine horror—a sense of outraged Nature*—which excites our deepest nerve-fibres of mental and physical repugnance. Upon this proportioning of instinctive attitudes all our folkways—laws, customs, art, literature, language, sports, working religion, manners, dreams—are exclusively based; so that the inapplicability of these folkways to any group or individual far removed from the Nordic standard is quite self-evident. What we mean by Nordic "superiority" is simply *conformity to those character-expectations which are natural and ineradicable among us*. We are not so naive as to confuse this relative "superiority" (we ought to call it *conformity* or *suitability* instead) with the absolute biological superiority which we recognise in the higher races as a whole as distinguished from the negro, australoid, neanderthal, rhodesian, and other primitive human and humanoid types both living and extinct. We know perfectly well that the Italians excel us in the capacity to savour life and beauty—that their centres of taste are better developed than ours—but they annoy us and fail to fit into our group because their gland-functionings and nerve-reactions do not correspond to what our own heritage has made us expect. We do not call them *inferior*, but simply admit that they are *different* beyond the limits of easy mutual understanding and cultural compatibility. If we wisely kept vast masses of such foreigners out, we could regard them with a more impersonal appreciation. It would be wholly possible, too, to assimilate *a few* to our own fabric. But when we get so damn many of them that a wholesale test of strength betwixt their ideals and ours starts up on our own soil—well, forget your idealism for a second, use your horse-sense, and guess what will happen! It isn't that our unbrokenness and stamina are any more valid a form of "superiority" than the Italians beauty-sense or the

Jew's mental sharpness; but simply that these masculine qualities happen—purely by historic chance—to constitute *our* particular main standard in so deep-seated a way that we cannot help feeling a profound, crawling, physical-emotional aversion toward individuals and groups whose different scales of value-emphases may cause these qualities to be, as we view them, underdeveloped. The plain, honest fact is, that no individuals and groups can live harmoniously together as long as some members are moved by a scale of feelings, standards, and environmental responses radically different from the natural scale of other members. Living side by side with people whose natural impulses and criteria differ widely from ours, gets in time to be an unendurable nightmare. We may continue to respect them in the abstract, but what are we to do when they continue to fail to fulfil our natural conception of personality, meanwhile placing all their own preferential stresses on matters and ideals largely irrelevant and sometimes ever repugnant to us? And don't forget that we affect alien groups just as they affect us. Chinamen think our manners are bad, our voices raucous, our odour nauseous, and our white skins and our long noses leprously repulsive. Spaniards think us vulgar, brutal, and gauche. Jews titter and gesture at our mental simplicity, and honestly think we are savage, sadistick, and childishly hypocritical. Well—we think Chinamen are slimy jabberers, Spaniards oily, sentimental, treacherous, backward, and Jews cringing. What's the answer? *Simply keep the bulk of all these approximately equal and highly developed races as far apart as possible.* Let them study one another as deeply as possible, in the interest of that *intellectual understanding* which makes for appreciation and tolerance. *But don't let them mix too freely, lest the clash of deep and intellectually unreachable emotions upset all the appreciation and tolerance which mental understanding has produced.* And above all, don't get led off on a false trail through observing the easy camaraderie of a few cosmopolitan intellectuals and aristocrats in whom similar manners or special interests have temporarily overridden the deep wells of natural feeling ineradicable from the bulk of each of the divergent race or culture groups represented. . . . .

Yeh—it's damn hard to stop arguing. But you get what I mean—I wanna get down to hard pan and not play around on the surface where nobody knows what either he or the other guy is talking about because both are using *conventional terms* without investigating the relation of

these terms to underlying *realities*. For instance—your talk about my 'isolating myself from my fellows' implies a *wholly conventional point of view as to what constitutes one's relationship with his fellows*. I am a complete hermit only by accident—because I don't happen to run across any guys in every-day contacts who have anything to talk about. If I lived where such guys are—as indeed I did live briefly in your general metropolitan zone—I'd be seeing them fairly frequently, in fact, I was constantly in touch with the gang in those days. And as for general social theory—well, by this time I ought to have made it god damn clear how I stand on the question of my place in the Anglo-Saxon fabrick! God Save the King! Rule, Britannia! You mistake my mere unhyprocritical selfishness and individualism—a selfishness and individualism involving no hostility toward others, and even including an egotistical solitude for the aggrandisement of the race-and-culture group (what you would, under a different interpretation, call a "civic" sentiment)—for the active and positive misanthropy of a Wandrei or Clark Ashton Smith. What you call my "isolation" is merely my insistence on the absence from cosmic reality of certain mythical conceptions of sentimental obligatory linkage which originated solely in primitive tradition. I simply refuse to swallow meaningless emotional poses without adult anthropological connotations. I am no more isolated than anybody else—except by the mere chance of not happening to run across congenial minds in this particular locality. But I simply refuse to pretend an interest in vague assumptions of mystical points of human kinship unrelated to the realities of congenial personality—mystical linkages which have no existence except in the meaningless and sentimental ideology of primitive ignorance and Victorian hypocrisy. I recognise myself as one of a vast number of approximately similar organick entities on this planet, and realise that my mental contentment depends largely on my imaginative adjustment to the pattern form'd by the history and folkways of my group. Does that sound like eccentric isolation? Rule, Britannia! God Save the King! My only difference from yourself in this respect is that I view the circumstance without traditional trappings, and do not allow the conditions of my imaginative pattern-linkage to impose upon me a needless harness of non-existent, quasi-ritualistic mental inhibitions—the things you recognise as "obligations". I own all *genuine* obligations—that is, I follow such a regimen as will most conduce to (or at least, not detract from) the survival of the pattern promoting my pleasure.

But I refuse to emulate the child who plays around with a tiny broom "helping mother sweep"—that is, I refuse to countenance the force of imagining myself an active, conscious, and necessary factor in the drift of our automatic and deterministic culture-unit. I cut out the fairy-tale stuff and face the real facts of the individual's essential automatism and volitional insignificance—being content to "play my part in the civilisation" just as every one else really does—by living out my own personality in my own way. If my way happened to lie in the direction of public administration, as many people's way does, I'd go in for that sort of thing. Each to his own. But I won't pretend to be what I ain't! Nor is this in the least anti-human, anti-civic, or anti-social. It is merely "anti" a certain hackneyed sentimental illusion about what humanity, civicism, and sociality are. As for my belief that human and inanimate objects, as background-factors, do not essentially differ in essence—what of it? In all truth, many of the inanimate objects which fascinate me (old steeples, Georgian doorways, mysterious ruins, etc.) do so because of symbolical connexion with the stream and drama of human history. It isn't I who go in for sterile rocks and mountains! No—Grandpa's only principle in human affairs is *the casting-off of the fictitious and insincere*. Refusal to *overvalue* people, in the mass, is no indication whatever that one *hates or despises* people. I'm sure I don't.

Yr. obt. Servt.,  
Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus

458. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Tenbarnes Manor  
January 21, 1931

Jonckheer Arminius:—

And speaking of changes, how about a little typing from Grandpa? Left eye a bit on the bum, and wrist shaky from overuse, hence this damn machine wears, temporarily, the aspect of a lesser evil. A somewhat unexpected mess of work early this month has queered my whole programme, causing a pile of more than 20 unanswered letters to pile up. Today, in a way, forms my first real conscious glimpse of 1931.

..... Too bad W. T. has curtailed, but it's not a bad market even now. Actually, the change will affect very few of us—for we have scarcely ever had things in except at long intervals. ....

Yr. obt. servt.,  
HPL

459. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Jan. 23, 1931

Dear A. W.:—

..... I have had thousands of impressions of unreal phenomena—false memories, &c—and have given them the most careful study—almost invariably tracking down the real sources of the impressions, which often bear only a slight resemblance to the impressions themselves. I have likewise accomplished similar tracings of the bizarre impressions of others. There is no reason to suppose that any given human impression has any exact correspondence with any external reality. All that creates a favourable presumption, is a high degree of correlation with the impressions of others and the general body of repeatedly demonstrated fact. Aberrant impressions can be accepted only on probation. As for "god"—there is of course no theoretical barrier to the existence of a "cosmic intelligence", yet *absolutely nothing indicates such a thing*. On the contrary the notion never arises except through traditional suggestions based on the mythical perspectives of primitive man. . . . Well—so it goes.

Best wishes—  
HPL

460. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
Jany. 30, 1931.

Dear Mr. Howard:—

..... Is it a fact that the corpse of a person repeatedly bitten by snakes swells and bursts? A revision client of mine in Kansas City had a plot-germ based on that idea, and I worked up a story from it—*The Curse of Yig*, which you may recall in *W. T.* It made good fiction, but I have always wondered just how much truth there was in the original notion. ....

It would be interesting to see whether bull fighting could trace any subterranean folk-connexion with ancient Crete. Owing to the fact that the very existence of the Cretan civilisation was forgotten in classical times, the link must be very slender; yet it would be too much to claim that the particular cult of the bull did not linger on somehow along the North African littoral, cropping out later in a preference for bull-fighting over other Roman arena sports. That the Apis bull of Egypt had some Cretan connexion seems highly probable—and from this link a prolongation might well exist. Come to think of it, there's another possible link, too—for bull-fighting seems to have had a vogue in Thessaly, in northern Greece, quite independently of the Roman arena. This, of course, is a long way from Crete, but that means nothing, since outposts of Minoan culture existed all over Greece and the coast of Asia Minor. Indeed—upon reflection, I'd venture to guess that this Thessalian link stands more of a chance of being the real one than any in North Africa. Certainly, the cult of the bull was tremendously grounded in the very ancient world, so that the later ancient world had much to remember. As for the modern attitude toward athletics—I agree wholly with you. To de-specialise and de-commercialise sport and restore it to the majority after a long period of showy exploitation is a task worthy of any sociologist. ....

It really astonishes me—as I think it would astonish any untravelled Easterner—to hear how extensively Texas is foreignised. We still think of the historic pioneer Texas here—or if we stop to realise its growth,

we carelessly couple it with the Old South, of which it seems to us an extension. The rural-foreign sections are probably much like our Slav-peopled Connecticut Valley, and such other New England areas as the French-Canadians have taken. Some Italians also seek the land. In western Rhode Island there is also a rural *Finnish* element. Well—you're lucky to have some areas and towns dominantly American. In Rhode Island there is only one city really American, and that is Newport; but as I have said, the residential part of Providence, on the steep hill, is a purely American oasis in the midst of cosmopolitanism—so that this letter is being written in an immediate milieu as Yankee and colonial as it was in 1831 or 1731. As you say, the secret of foreign progress is willingness to accept a low living standard; and that is assuredly a hard enemy to beat. What the country will look like in 2031 is more than I would care to picture! New Orleans must have undergone a painful transition—and I don't wonder at the disgust of the old inhabitants. The French people would probably find Quebec a congenial haven, with much that they miss still flourishing—if they could stand the climate in winter, which is more than I could do.

..... I realise that the Romans were an extremely prosaic race; given to all the practical and utilitarian precepts I detest, and without any of the genius of the Greek or glamour of the Northern barbarian. And yet—I can't manage to think behind 450 A. D. except as a Roman! Can you beat it? Your Indian War dreams are surely realistic enough! I never had anything like that, though I constantly dream of being in the 18 century . . . both in England and in these Colonies. In such dreams I look more like myself—and this dream-self has come to represent me so perfectly that in waking hours I sometimes feel odd for lack of my three-cornered hat, powdered periwig, satin small-clothes, silver sword, and buckled shoes. Probably this 18th century personality is even stronger than the Roman one—indeed, it has coloured my writings and point of view from the very first. As a small child I used to find a strange fascination in the steep colonial hill districts of Providence, and in the older books of the family library—the 18th century ones with the long "s". I began using the long "s" myself in writing—when I was about 7—and aped the prose of Addison and Johnson, and the verse of Pope, Thomson and Goldsmith. In a way, the key to my whole personality can be found in my ineradicable spiritual membership in the 18th century. Possibly even my weird tastes spring from subconscious effects

to defeat the objective natural laws which have placed me physically in an age not psychologically my own. When I come to think of it, some of my earliest sensations of weirdness were derived from my contemplation of the old Georgian hill streets and the archaic New England countryside, and my imaginative certainty that I was somehow closer to these things than to the fin-de-siecle world into which I was corporeally born.

... I have a whole book full of idea-jottings which I could never write up if I lived to be a thousand—indeed, I sometimes lend it to other writers and invite them to borrow from it. That's where, for instance, Long got the idea of his *Black Orchid*. Just now I'm lending it to Whitehead. If you ever want to see it, let me know. ....

..... I wish I could write more *variedly*—heaven knows I need the money—but when I get off of weird stuff I am always abominably uninspired. That is rather bad luck for me, since of all possible markets, the weird one is about the narrowest. Do you go in much for "science-fiction"—the "voyage to Mars" stuff? There is really quite a market for that—at least three magazines. Clark Ashton Smith is invading that field with some degree of success. ....

Best wishes—Yrs. most cordially and sincerely—  
H P Lovecraft

461. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Freyr's-Daeg  
February 6, 1931

Jonckheer:—

Before I get to confessions of ignorance, let me strut around with what I *do* know. Imprimis—I can tell you right offhand that there isn't any "Greek Year" or "Egyptian Year" 28 corresponding to the reign of Ptolemaeus Philadelphus. The Greeks reckoned by Olympiads, and about 123 of them had elapsed before Philadelphus came to the throne. And in the Egyptian dynastic reckoning 30 had long since been passed. Indeed, I don't think the Egyptians kept up the dynastic reckoning after the final Persian conquest—though that would be the subject for another bit of special research. The only conceivable explanation of the

"28" is that it means in the 28th year of Philadelphus' reign. If it isn't that, you can count me out. He reigned 37 or 38 years, beginning with B. C. 285; so that the 28th year of the reign would be B. C. 257 or so. That, of course, is some 2188 years ago. ....

Well—now for the ignorance. I haven't the slightest idea what happened to the cadaver of P. Philadelphus after the court physician announced in B. C. 247 (or 246, acc. to some) that it was all over with the poor devil. It probably was mummified, since the Macedonian Greeks took up with many Egyptian customs (this bird Ptolly married his own full sister for one thing) and had pretty well abandoned the traditional Aryan-Greek custom of burning on the pyre—Alexander himself had a sumptuous entombment, and there's no reason to think differently of his successors. Research might disclose more on this subject—but if I'm to get this to you quickly, I must confine myself to what's stored in the old bean. As it is, I must admit that I don't know where or how Ptolly was planted, or whether he's ever been excavated. If so, his body would not be as well mummified as those of the ancient Egyptians, since by Ptolemaic times the art had declined throughout Egypt, and the Greeks were but indifferent imitators of it. Probably he was buried somewhere in the Necropolis outside the city wall—where now, I believe, an expedition is looking for the tomb of Alexander the Great himself. The difficulty of this search leads me to suspect that none of the Macedonian-Greek royal bodies have been unearthed—though I may be all wrong on this. But just use the agile Talmanic imagination a bit, and you can have Ptolly all finely pickled in guaranteed Texaco products—bitumen and all that. Incidentally, I suppose you know that it was this guy who built the celebrated Pharos of Alexandria—or had the architect do it for him—one of the 7 wonders of the world. There's a topic of special research for one of your staff—did they use Texaco in the Pharos to guide the sea-borne commerce of the ancient world?

Yr. obt.,  
Grandpa Theobald

462. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Feb. 8, 1931

In the Infra-Dimensional Abyss outside  
Time & Space, whence springs upward  
the Singing Flame of the Unknown City

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

..... You are right in saying that the common stock of fantastic writing needs enlargement, & it is certainly fortunate that you can play so substantial a part in that direction. I only wish your tales, as well as your poems, could be collected in a series of books—preferably illustrated by yourself. That daemoniac-spawn plot of yours is tremendously powerful—a genuine improvement, I think, on the idea of which Machen is so fond—*Great God Pan, Black Seal* &c. I once had the idea of having a daemon begotten through some hellish evocation, & having the birth attended by the death, from shock, of both mother & physician—followed by the swift growth of the nameless thing which escapes unseen from the fateful birth-chamber. The thing was to be a terror of the night in the rural region concerned—a looker into windows & devourer of lone travellers. But I gave up the notion when I saw how Machen had used it before me. Your tomb idea, though, is new—implying that the begetting entity was one of Those whom Harley Warren glimpsed far down beneath the archaic necropolis before he perished of fright—in the darkness. The way you subsequently dispose of the ghoul-spawn—including its final exit—is truly powerful & terrifying.

.....

Yrs for the nether hells of Nyarlathotep—

Ec'h-Pi-El

Guardian of the Black Fire of Nng &amp; Yeb.

463. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Thor's-Day

Feb. 12, 1931

Jonckheer:—

..... Too bad about Brer Farnsworth, who is a damn good fellow for all his occasional vagaries of editorial taste. I hope the hospital session will bring results. His nerve trouble is a very rare one—a sort of pseudo-palsy, or something like that, called Parkinson's Disease. So *Oriental* is going down to the quarterly class, eh? That's real news to me! Not that I'm personally interested, since nothing of mine would ever be likely to fit it. ....

Yr. obt. grandshire,

Ludwig van Theobaldus

464. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Tiw's-Daeg

17th of Santhicus

Anno 2242 of the Syrian Realm

February, 1931

Jonckheer:—

EXTRA—SPECIAL—RECANTATION—HUMBLE PIE!!

Humiliation . . . . Senile Decline . . . .

Gawd, an old man's memory! . . . . .

You win . . . 'grandpa is getting past the age of usefulness! Here I was telling you that no era existed which could give a "Year 28" around the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, when all the time . . . . but what's the use? Old age is old age!

Gawd, but it does give me a jolt to get caught napping like that, after having known a thing perfectly well. And I'd still be wallowing in the same sea of forgetfulness this minute if your just-received note and MS. hadn't happened to contain one key-word that has set the

old memory back on the job at last. . . . . Apellaeus. . . . .  
 Ἀπελλαιος. . . . . Hell's Bells! It's all as plain as the nose on your  
 face . . . or even that on my face, which is something else again.  
 And to think that a whole major calendar had completely dropped out  
 of my brain, just as though it had never existed, though I knew all  
 about it when I first read up on the Hellenistic period back in '04 and  
 '05. This way out! My only defence is that the calendar in question is  
 neither old-Greek nor locally Egyptian, and that when I had to reel off  
 that hasty note to you my non-agile head was sort of stalled betwixt  
 those two landmarks. I never stopped to cogitate around for a tertium  
 quid, but began to strut pompously on a basis of fragmentary informa-  
 tion. Eheu . . . pride antedates a banana-peel descent! . . .

Well, after this grovelling, I'll get down to brass tacks. The era in  
 question, which (as I ought to have recalled in the first place) was in-  
 deed used by the Macedonians in Egypt as well as in many Levantine  
 countries of the same period, is the *Era of the Seleucidae*, or Syro-Mace-  
 donian Era, reckoned from the foundation of the Graeco-Syrian king-  
 dom as represented by the capture of Babylon by Seleucus from Antigo-  
 nus in B. C. 312. There you are, all set—and in 1905 or so I knew all  
 this just as well as I know my own name. Of course this was the official  
 era in Syria itself from the very first, and I now realise that the other  
 Hellenistic regions—beginning with Egypt, which was closely allied  
 with Syria—soon adopted the system; although peninsular Hellas itself  
 (also, probably, Sicily and Magna Graecia in Italy) did not, but stuck to  
 the ancient custom of measuring years by the terms of magistrates and  
 using the old months Hecatombaeon, Metageitnion, etc. (The Olympi-  
 ads, invented about this time, were used more in historical chronology  
 than in daily or legal computations). My old head, thinking only of  
 Greece and Egypt, left Syria out altogether—yet the mere mention of  
 the Syrian month Apellaeus sets it all straight. The invention of the  
 Syro-Macedonian Era by Seleucus Nicator probably represents his carry-  
 ing on of Alexander's policy of merging East and West. The Seleucian  
 year was partly a lunar year, but its management and divisions did not  
 correspond to those of the old Greek lunar year. Instead, they followed  
 the prevailing arrangements in Syria, which were a corrupted form of  
 the Jewish calendar—somewhat altered by slow decay from the form  
 you'll find in Bible dictionaries. This has what might be called a luni-  
 solar year—a lunar year with certain rough attempts to square it with

the solar year. Instead of beginning around the summer solstice, as in  
 Old Greece, the year followed the Judaeo-Syrian custom of beginning  
 around the autumnal equinox; and all the months had brand new names  
 —unlike any of the older Greek month-names, and equally different  
 from the Semitic names of the Judaeo-Syrian months (luni-solar) which  
 were adopted. Thus your month Apellaeus (roughly, December) was  
 simply a renaming of the Judaeo-Syrian Canun I (old Hebrew Kislev).  
 —and calculated on a rather different basis from the nearest correspond-  
 ing old Hellenic month—Poseideon. These new month-names were so  
 characteristically unique (Possibly they are derived from older month-  
 names used in Macedonia proper but none occurring in any classical ref-  
 erence I have ever seen. There's a good subject of research—the old  
 calendar of Semi-Hellenic Macedonia in the years before Alexander.)  
 that they naturally had a sort of subconscious hold on my memory—  
 hence the flood of recollection brought up by the word Apellaeus. After  
 the invention of this new calendar, the Seleucid monarchs forced it on  
 the native Syrians in preference to their own system—which had differ-  
 ent names and dates, though of course an identical astronomical divi-  
 sional basis. The Jews called it the "Era of Contracts" or "Era of  
 Kings", and it finds mention in the books of Maccabees in the Apocry-  
 pha. Nearly all Jews used it until the 15th century A. D., and in some  
 parts of Arabia it is still in use locally. It is also the official system of  
 reckoning in the Eastern or Nestorian Christian Church. As I now real-  
 ise, it was the accepted chronology of Ptolemaic Egypt—and why I  
 didn't remember that fact is something for psychologists to figure  
 out! . . . .

Yrs.  
 Grandpa

465. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Feby. 17, 1931

Dear A. W.:—

. . . . . But I may remark that I, too, was a detective in youth—being a  
 member of the Providence Detective Agency at an age as late as 13!  
 Our force had very rigid regulations and carried in its pockets a stan-



dard working equipment consisting of police whistle, magnifying-glass, electric flashlight, handcuffs, (sometimes plain twine, but "handcuffs" for all that!) tin badge, (I have mine still!!) tape measure, (for foot-prints) revolver, (mine was the real thing, but Inspector Munro (aet 12) had a water squirt-pistol while Inspector Upham (aet 10) worried along with a cap-pistol) and copies of all newspaper accounts of desperate criminals at large—plus a paper called "The Detective", which printed pictures and descriptions of outstanding "wanted" malefactors. Did our pockets bulge and sag with this equipment? I'll say they did!! We also had elaborately prepared "credentials"—certificates attesting our good standing in the agency. Mere scandals we scorned. Nothing short of bank robbers and murderers were good enough for us. We shadowed many desperate-looking customers, and diligently compared their physiognomies with the "mugs" in "The Detective", yet never made a full-fledged arrest. Ah, me—the good old days!

—Best wishes—  
HP

466. TO FRANK BELKNAP LONG

Freyer's-Daeg  
Feb. 27, 1931

Young Bellamy:—

Well, Sir, you certainly have given a good account of yourself as a controversialist—even if you do hang egotistically on to your manuscript as if it were a precious AEGyptian papyrus! Bless me, but I write arguments longer than that two or three times a week of various correspondents, & never give a damn about what becomes of 'em! However—since this fits into your coming book, I'll forgive you—except for that superadded touch about not lending the letter. Sink me, Sir, but do you fancy spies of your rivals are following you about watching for pearls of polisht wisdom to drop from your almost moustachelletted lip? It must be exquisite to live in a vision like that—some people need a quart of rye to get that way! Ah, me—the phantasticall illusions of adolescence. But I vow I was never *quite* as bad as all that!

In replying, I am going to *attempt* to avoid the usual long-windedness of argument by depending largely upon pencil notes which I appended to your text as I usually do with Harris & Weiss letters. The return of this annotated text will eliminate a great deal of repetition & elaboration—though in addition I shall probably make enough comments to require at least a long envelope. However—if you deem these comments unduly long, reflect on how much longer they wou'd have been had I not dispos'd of much material otherwise!

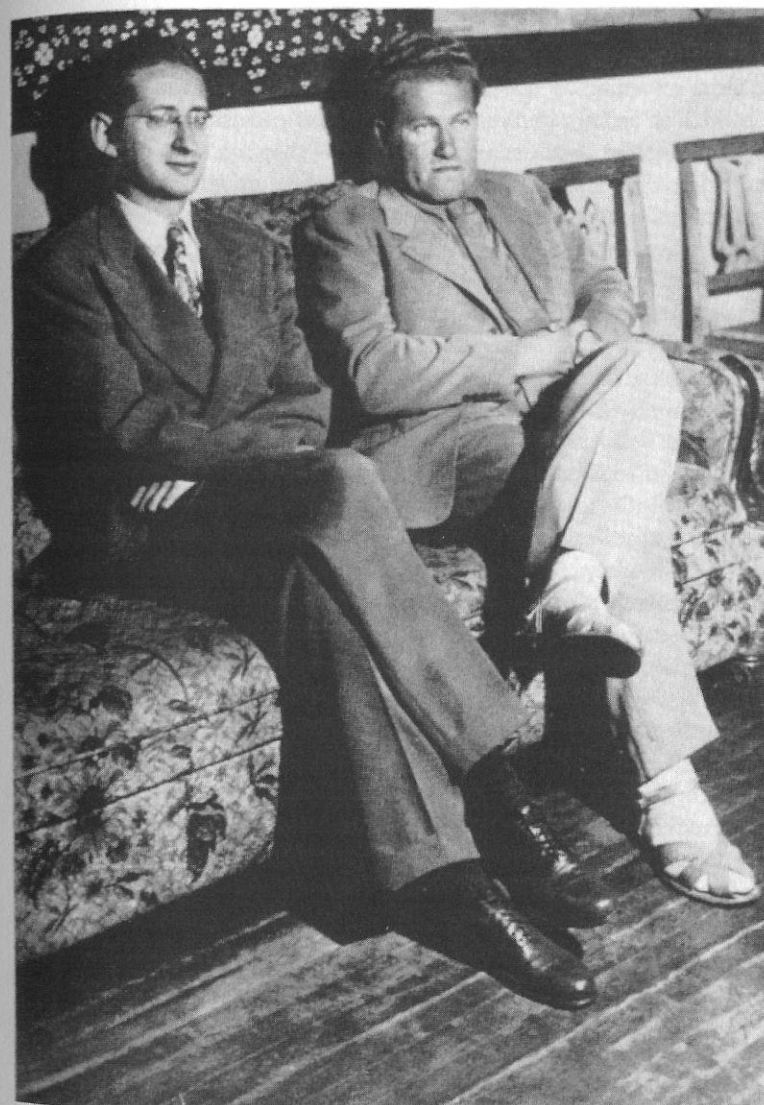
It is just as ridiculous to get excited & hysterical over a coming cultural change as to get excited & hysterical over one's physical aging. Both are, let us grant, contraventions of our egotistical will—but both are equally inevitable; & there is no more sense in getting childishly "rebellious" about fading romance in poetry, than there is in pouting & screaming over one's wrinkling face, thinning hair, & stiffening joints. There is a legitimate *pathos* about both processes; but *blame & rebellion* are *essentially cheap, because inappropriate*, emotions. We laugh at an old woman who dyes her hair & shoots paraffin under a sagging cheek—& so must we laugh at an old aesthete who tries to pump a spurious life into the dead heroics of a Byron or the putrescent pseudo-glamour of a picaresque romance. We laugh because of the obvious inadequacy of the gesture—the shabby pretence that something *is* so when it *isn't* so. Don Quixote—oh, yes—we *are* interested—da, da, da, isn't it interesting! Romance, the open road, inns, donkeys, windmills, ha, ha, ha . . . . we're *interested*, I tell you, we're oh, so interested! Yes, yes, I defy you to say we're *not* interested . . . . . this is *glamour*—glamour, I tell you! Can't you see the moon shining? No, no—I am *not* yawning. I swear to you that I am *not* yawning. This is *literature*—this is *life*—no, I don't know anything that's ever happened to me which the book links up with, nor have I felt many of the emotions depicted; but the professor says it's literature & that I ought to like it because it used to please & move people when they lived & thought & felt differently—hence I swear I *do* like it. I *do* like it—I swear to you that I *do* like it . . . . ho, hum . . . zzz . . . zzz . . . zzz . . . & so to bed. This represents the traditionalist's ideal as applied to the majority of keen-minded young men reared with eyes open in this post-war generation. It all seems strange to the few surviving traditionalists to whom such vestigia actually do represent authentic emotional values—but these human reliques must learn to readjust their perspectives & face the conditions

as they are. And before they begin whining & pulling their long hair, let them ask themselves how such a "rebellion" would look if staged against some equally inevitable phenomenon like the washing away of England's east coast or the changing of their sons' voices at puberty. Fashions in feeling come & go as causative conditions come & go; & such conditions are parts of a vast natural cycle far beyond the power of human will to change. Beat not against Darozhând. Make no mistake—*pathos* is indeed validly present; but this is a well-defined emotion by no means interchangeable with *resentment*. It is wholly appropriate to feel a deep *sadness* at the coming of unknown things & the departure of those around which all our symbolic associations are entwined. *All life is fundamentally & inextricably sad*, with the perpetual snatching away of all the chance combinations of image & vista & mood that we become attached to, & the perpetual encroachment of the shadow of decay upon illusions of expansion & liberation which buoyed us up & spurred us on in youth. That is why I consider *all jauntiness*, & many forms of carelessly generalised *humour*, as *essentially cheap & mocking*, & occasionally ghastly & corpse-like. Jauntiness & non-ironic humour in this world of basic & inescapable sadness are like the hysterical dances that a madman might execute on the grave of all his hopes. But if, at one extreme, intellectual poses of spurious happiness be cheap & disgusting; so at the other extreme are all gestures & fist-clenchings of *rebellion* equally silly & inappropriate—if not quite so overtly repulsive. All these things are ridiculous & contemptible because they are *not legitimately applicable*. Now don't mistake me as you seem to when you claim that I urge the sacrifice of pleasure in the interest of truth—or of some austere harmony dependent upon truth. I am not asking any such sacrifice, or claiming that either jauntiness or rebellion would be ridiculous if it had any depth or sincerity. But jauntiness never has depth or sincerity—the stink of pretence & spuriousness always clings about it—while cosmic rebellion is based on such glaring misconceptions of plain facts that it only grows in childishness as it grows in intensity. It is never tragedy, but only petulance. The sole sensible way to face the cosmos & its essential sadness (an adumbration of true tragedy which no destruction of values can touch) is with manly resignation—eyes open to the real facts of perpetual frustration, & mind & sense alert to catch what little pleasure there is to be caught during one's brief instant of existence. Once we know, as a matter of course, how nature inescapably sets our free-

dom-adventure-expansion desires, & our symbol-&-experience-affections, definitely beyond all zones of possible fulfilment, we are in a sense fortified in advance, & able to endure the ordeal of consciousness with considerable equanimity. It generally happens, as I have said before, that one is able to snatch enough enjoyment to make life as endurable as oblivion; so that we are only occasionally tempted to chuck the whole thing off—whilst to perhaps a quarter of us, according to chance, a real excess of pleasure piles up, in such a way as to make existence actually preferable to non-existence. Life, if well filled with distracting images & activities favourable to the ego's sense of expansion, freedom, & adventurous expectancy, can be very far from gloomy—& the best way to achieve this condition is to get rid of the unnatural conceptions which make conscious evils out of impersonal & inevitable limitations . . . get rid of these, & of those false & unattainable standards which breed misery & mockery through their beckoning emptiness. A man of sense can usually achieve a high percentage of reasonably cheerful moments, but this can be done only by adhering to factors of sober reality. The false jollity dependent on illusion is merely a momentary flash soon offset by corresponding moments of abysmal emotional depression. . . . .

. . . . . Some former art attitudes—like sentimental romance, loud heroics, ethical didacticism, &c.—are so patently hollow as to be visibly absurd & non-usable from the start. Others, like those dependent on moods & feelings (pity, tragedy, personal affection, group loyalty &c.) which are still empirical conduct-factors though intellectually undermined, have an excellent chance of survival. Fantastic literature cannot be treated as a single unit, because it is a composite resting on widely divergent bases. I really agree that *Yog-Sothoth* is a basically immature conception, & unfitted for really serious literature. The fact is, I have never approached serious literature as yet. But I consider the use of actual folk-myths as even more childish than the use of new artificial myths, since in employing the former one is forced to retain many blatant puerilities & contradictions of experience which could be subtilised or smoothed over if the supernaturalism were modelled to order for the given case. The only permanently artistic use of *Yog-Sothothery*, I think, is in symbolic or associative phantasy of the frankly poetic type; in which fixed dream-patterns of the natural organism are given an embodiment & crystallisation. The reasonable permanence of this phase of poetic phantasy as a *possible* art form (whether or not favoured by cur-

rent fashion) seems to me a highly strong probability. It will, however, demand ineffable adroitness—the vision of a Blackwood joined to the touch of a De la Mare—& is probably beyond my utmost powers of achievement. I hope to see material of this sort in time, though I hardly expect to produce anything even remotely approaching it myself. I am too saturated in the empty gestures & pseudo-moods of an archaic & vanished world to have any successful traffick with symbols of an expanded dream-reality. But there is another phase of cosmic phantasy (which may or may not include frank Yog-Sothothery) whose foundations appear to me as better grounded than these of ordinary oneiroscopy; personal limitation regarding the *sense of outsideness*. I refer to the aesthetic crystallisation of that burning & inextinguishable feeling of mixed wonder & oppression which the sensitive imagination experiences upon scaling itself & its restrictions against the vast & provocative abyss of the unknown. This has always been the chief emotion in my psychology; & whilst it obviously figures less in the psychology of the majority, it is clearly a well-defined & permanent factor from which very few sensitive persons are wholly free. Here we have a natural biological phenomenon so untouched & untouchable by intellectual disillusion that it is difficult to envisage its total death as a factor in the most serious art. Reason as we may, we cannot destroy a normal perception of the highly limited & fragmentary nature of our visible world of perception & experience as scaled against the outside abyss of unthinkable galaxies & unplumbed dimensions—an abyss wherein our solar system is the merest dot (by the same *local* principle that makes a sand-grain a dot as compared with the whole planet earth) *no matter what relativistic system we may use in conceiving the cosmos as a whole*—& this perception cannot fail to act potently upon the natural physical instinct of *pure curiosity*; an instinct just as basic & primitive, & as impossible of destruction by any philosophy whatsoever, as the parallel instincts of hunger, sex, ego-expansion, & fear. You grossly underestimate this physical instinct, which appears to be as undeveloped in you as superficial exhibitionism is in me; yet its potent reality is attested by the life-work of a Pliny, a Copernicus, a Newton, an Einstein, an Eddington, a Shapley, a Huxley, an Amundsen, a Scott, a Shackleton, a Byrd . . . . but hell! what's the use? Who can tell a blind man what sight is? At any rate, the lure of the unknown abyss remains as potent as ever under any conceivable intellectual, aesthetic, or social order; & will crop out as a forbidden



Robert Bloch and August Derleth

thing even in societies where the external ideal of altruistic collectivism reigns. In types where this urge cannot be gratified by actual research in pure science, or by the actual physical exploration of unknown parts of the earth, it is inevitable that a symbolic aesthetic outlet will be demanded. You can't dodge it—the condition must exist, under all phases of cosmic interpretation, as long as a sense-chained race of inquirers on a microscopic earth-dot are faced by the black, unfathomable gulph of the Outside, with its forever-unexplorable orbs & its virtually certain sprinkling of utterly unknown life-forms. A great part of religion is merely a childish & diluted pseudo-gratification of this perpetual gnawing toward the ultimate illimitable void. Superadded to this simple curiosity is the galling sense of *intolerable restraint* which all sensitive people (except self-blinded earth-gazers like little Augie Derleth) feel as they survey their natural limitations in time & space as scaled against the freedoms & expansions & comprehensions & adventurous expectancies which the mind can formulate as abstract conceptions. Only a perfect clod can fail to discern these irritant feelings in the greater part of mankind—feelings so potent & imperious that, if denied symbolic outlets in aesthetics or religious fakery, they produce actual hallucinations of the supernatural, & drive half-responsible minds to the concoction of the most absurd hoaxes & the perpetuation of the most absurd specific myth-types. Don't let little Augie sidetrack you. The general revolt of the sensitive mind against the tyranny of corporeal enclosure, restricted sense-equipment, & the laws of force, space, & causation, is a far keener & bitterer & better-founded one than any of the silly revolts of long-haired poseurs against isolated & specific instances of cosmic inevitability. But of course it does not take the forms of personal petulance, because there is no convenient scape-goat to saddle the impersonal ill upon. Rather does it crop out as a pervasive sadness & unplaceable impatience, manifested in a love of strange dreams & an amusing eagerness to be galled by the quack cosmic pretensions of the various religious circuses. Well—in our day the quack circuses are wearing pretty thin despite the premature senilities of fat Chesterbellocs & affected Waste Land Shantih-dwellers, & the nostalgic & unmotivated "overbeliefs" of elderly & childhood-crippled physicists. The time has come when the normal revolt against time, space, & matter must assume a form not overtly incompatible with what is known of reality—when it must be gratified by images forming *supplements* rather than *contradic-*

tions of the visible & measurable universe. And what, if not a form of *non-supernatural cosmic art*, is to pacify this sense of revolt—as well as gratify the cognate sense of curiosity? “Dunt esk”, as they say in your decadent cosmopolis! No, young Belloc, you can’t rule out a phase of human feeling & expression which springs from instincts wholly basic & physical. Cosmic phantasy of *some sort* is as assured of possible permanence (its status subject to caprices of fashion) as is the literature of struggle & eroticism. But of course, as I have said before, its later & less irresponsible forms will doubtless differ vastly from most of the weird literature we have had so far. Like the lighter forms of dream-phantasy & Yog-Sothothery, it will require a delicate & precise technique; so that a crude old-timer like myself would never be likely to excel in it. Nevertheless, if I live much longer, I may try my hand at something of the sort—for it is really closer to my serious psychology than anything else on or off the earth. In *The Colour Out of Space* I began to get near it—though *Dunwich* & the *Whisperer* represent a relapse. In using up the ideas in my commonplace-book, I shall doubtless perpetrate a great deal more childish hokum, (gratifying to me only through personal association with the past) yet the time may come when I shall at least try something approximately serious. There is, of course, no need of becoming serious so long as thinly-veiled childishness retains power to gratify me; but I am assuming that my real senility has not so far advanced as to check, just yet, that gradual mental maturing perceptible in me since 1919 or 1920 (the period of Galpinian activation) & apparently somewhat accelerated (perhaps through Providence re-orientation) since 1927. I am still a primitive & retarded type as measured by good intellectual standards; but not quite so pathetic a case of belated infantility as I was in 1920 or 21 or 22, when I spewed forth such insufferable maundering as *The Tree*, *Hypnos*, *The Moon-Bog*, *The Hound*, &c., &c., though a fat middle-aged clod who ought to have known better a decade before; or even in 1925, when (during the Clinton Street period) I allowed myself to sign such mawkish drivel as *The Horror at Red Hook* & (worse yet) *He*. The only decent things I wrote in those days were sheer luck-shots—*Arthur Jermyn*, *Erich Zann*, & a few others. And yet I had a better time, in some ways, than I have now; for my very infantility (repulsive as it was in a middle-aged man) allowed me to retain as a subjective reality something of that sense of adventurous expectancy which is now only a wistful aesthetic memory. I shall never

find another Dunsanian city of wonder as utterly unreal & linked with incredible cloud-mysteries as the exotic & unexplored labyrinth of sea-born towers that was the dim, half-fabulous Manhattan of 1922. Least of all could I find such a Dunsanian place in any Manhattan of any later date. I grant, then, the virtues of infantility *so long as they are valid*—even though such phaenomena must of necessity appear absurd to the mental adult. What is hollow & insincere is the parade of infantility in art, & its feigning by the adult artist after its real essence has passed away. Dead childhood rattling its own bones in a mocking and hellish danse macabre. I may add, that I doubt if cosmic scepticism would have any tendency to destroy such a pleasing infantility as I have described. In 1920-27 I was as much of a sceptic as I am now, the only difference being that I had not reflected minutely & profoundly, & had received so few direct visual impressions of varied scenes that my perspective had something of belatedly childish unjadedness about it. Infantility, with all its roseal clouds of unrecognised emptiness, is an attribute of youth which no philosophy can touch. Its keynote is golden inexperience—the fact that one has not had time or opportunities to see many things or think closely & deeply about many things. But such an idyllic unstable equilibrium is foredoomed to early destruction—hence the wise man is he who prepares for an adult life of reality, rather than he who tries to defeat growth by dyeing his long hair & prattling unconvincing insincerities with the language but not the heart of true youth. Of course, the nostalgia of maturity for old, glamorous days & ways & images & conceptions & expectations is a terrifically acute & poignant reality—perhaps the only emotional reality of the first magnitude—but its really artistic treatment recognises it purely *as an emotion*, & does not attempt any AEson-like revival of the lost moods & perspectives. . . . .

Now as for your remarks on what you call “science”—I can only make a Morton-like gesture of lifting my hands in despair & cursing the tendency of the mind to absorb purely conventional images & associations & confuse them with realities. “Science”—ready-made conventional association brings up the latest book & magazine symbols in artificial & regular order . . . Edison, Millikan, John Dewey, General Electric Company, utility, hydroelectric power, big business, &c., &c., &c. Gawd in heaven, but can’t the younger generation get clear of *words* & *conventions*? Just as I told you a year or two ago, we need a thorough housecleaning to slough off the accumulated traditional overtones &

conventional implications of *mere words*—overtones & implications which not only purge the words of their true value, but actually transform them to active & positive misleading agents. "Science" . . . . Westinghouse . . . . Frigidaire . . . . machinery . . . . salesmanship . . . . O Montreal!!

Listen, young man. Forget all about your books & machine-made current associations. Kick the present dying parody on civilisation out the back door of consciousness. Shelve the popular second-hand dishings-up of Marxian economic determinism—a genuine force within certain limits, but without the widest ramifications ascribed to it by the fashionable *New Republic & Nation* clique. For once in your life, live up to your non-contemporary ideal & do some thinking without the 1930-31 publishers' sausage-grist at your elbow! Get back to the Ionian coast, shovel away some 2500 years, & tell Grandpa who it is you find in a villa at Miletus studying the properties of loadstone & amber, predicting eclipses, explaining the moon's phases, & applying to physics & astronomy the principles of research he learned in Egypt. Thales—quite a boy in his day. Ever hear of him before? He wanted to *know* things. Odd taste, wasn't it? And to think, he never tried to manufacture rayon or form a joint-stock company or pipe oil from Mesopotamia or extract gold from sea-water! Funny old guy—wanted to know things, yet never thought of a collectivist state . . . leaving this last for the unctuous windbag Plato, upon whom the moustacheletted little Chestertons of a later aera were to dote. Bless me, but *do* you suppose he actually had the normal human instinct of *curiosity* & simply wanted knowledge to satisfy that elemental urge? Perish such an un-modern & un-Marxian thought . . . . yet one has dim suspicions. . . . . And then this bozo Pythagoras. What did he want to bother with that old "what is anything" question for? And Heraclitus & Anaxagoras & Anaximander & Democritus & Leucippus & Empedocles? Well—if you take the word of your precious old satyr-faced pragmatist Socrates, these ginks merely wanted to know things for the sake of knowing! According to this beloved super-Babbitt of yours, who brought down philosophy from the clouds to serve among men—serve useful ends in a civically acceptable fashion—the old naturalists & sophists were a sorry lot. Your dear Plato agreed. They were not social-minded or collectivistic. Tut, tut—they were actually selfish individualists who gratified the personal human instinct of cosmic curiosity for its own sake. Ugh! take them away! Mous-

tacheletted young Platonists want nothing to do with such outlawed & unregimented pleasure-seekers. They simply *couldn't* have been real "scientists", since they didn't serve big business or have altruistic or bolshevistic motivations. Practically & Marxianly speaking, there simply weren't any such people. How could there be? "Science" is (they print it in books) the servant of the machine age. Since ancient Ionia had no machine age, how could there be "Science"?

Well, as I've often said, it's about time we got rid of this conventional word-slavery. Let's shelve the word "science", since flaming youth can't think of it apart from the Mass. Institute of Technology. Let us agree that *that kind of thing* is unworthy of the notice of a gentleman. *I hold this view even more strongly than you.* Get it out of the way & let's see what I *do* respect as the highest form of human activity. Well—here you have it. The thing I respect is the selfish, independent, individualistic instinct-gratification of Thales & Pythagoras, Leucippus & Democritus, Heraclitus & Empedocles. I want my curiosity authentically gratified, just as Clodius wants a wench & Lucullus a dinner. The process of delving into the black abyss is to me the keenest form of fascination, & it is my conviction that this process demands the exercise of those parts of the human organism which represent the latest & most complex degree of evolution. I burn, I admire, I respect . . . . & what I crave, admire, & respect is the pure & abstract abyss-plunging which enthralled Anaxagoras, Anaximenes, & Anaximander. Dry, utilitarian mechanism? John L. Sullivan's ass! Don't make an old man hee-haw! I want the straight dope on the clear-cut *is or isn't* proposition as far as it can be pushed, & a weeding out of all silly, unmotivated, & gratuitous guesswork & lie-faking in the unknown gulph beyond the present radius of the *is-or-isn't* searchlight. Why do I want this fakery mopped up? Good gawd—is inquiry needed? Isn't it obvious that the fakery not only represents a crudely repugnant reversal of method from that which has gained us all the real information we do possess; but forms an actual obstruction (as proved by invariable past experience) to the extension of real knowledge into the ever-decreasing dark gulph over which it asserts an arbitrary & unjustified sway? When a man's prime concernment is a gratification of the sheer curiosity-instinct, he has not much patience to spare for a meaningless mummery which claims attention & allegiance without ever having advanced a single sane reason why it should receive any more attention or allegiance than the mumblings of a

crazy parrot! If this be unduly "dogmatic" atheism, make the most of it. All I want is to know things. The black gulph of the infinite is before me. Sober men like Democritus & Aristotle & Epicurus & Lucretius & Hipparchus & Eratosthenes & Copernicus & Kepler & Newton & Einstein & Jeans & Eddington & Shapley & Hubble & Mendeleef & Darwin & Haeckel & Huxley & Quatrefages & Tylor & Freud & Watson & Keither &c. tell me things about it in such a way that their essential statements fit together in a mutually supporting way & make certain new facts consistently & repeatedly clear to my registering apparatus by the same channels through which this apparatus apprises me of the difference betwixt hot & cold, black & white, Felis & Canis, James Ferdinand Morton & Rheinhart Kleiner. At the same time a child tells me the moon is made of green cheese, (which his mother told him) a parson or elderly off-duty physicist tells me there is a vertebrate poetic consciousness behind the electronic uncertainties of ultimate space, (which his carrion-eating primal forbears doped out from watching the seasons & interpreting their dreams, & handed down to him under a system of ponderous taboos & infantile emotional crippling) & a nut at the Cranston State Hospital tells me he is a denizen of Saturn's ring sent earthward to conquer the human race, (which his inner intuitions suggested to him in the fashion of religious experience). Well—this is the sort of light I get on the cosmos from different sources . . . . & does it take an especially dogmatic atheist to get an inward kick of truth-registry out of source #1—the sober scholars—which somehow he can't get out of #s 2, 3, & 4 . . . the kid, the cleric, & the cuckoo? Is it dogmatic to see a reason for accepting #1, & not to see any reason for accepting the closely similar assertions number'd 2, 3, & 4? True, the child *may* be right. The whole cosmos *may* be governed by a bodiless mammal intelligence whose attributes are patently terrestrial & exactly the same as those which a primitive race must naturally invent in the course of demonstrably mythical theogony. Yes—& the bimbo at the nut-factory *may* be Yabon-Gluh, the Saturnian messenger, even though he's down on the books as Stanley U. Czernak, an Olneyville factory Pole with a taste for Edgar Rice Burroughs & a bullet in his frontal lobe. All these things *may be*—let non-dogmatists take 'em all on tentative trust if they feel like it, & weigh each one as an equal factor against the verifiable data given by source #1. O. K.—if one goes in for that sort of thing. But I for one won't let moth-eaten savage speculations, or childhood crib-side

"now I lay me's" or conventional printed hedgings of "our best people" impose on my natural faculties & emotions of discrimination. I won't cringe & fawn & lick spittle before popular idols who promulgate wild yarns with only too obvious antecedents—yarns which outrage every sound inner instinct of horse-sense in a mind which rejected the crippling of orthodox childhood. It isn't as if I were alone. When a guy has real brains like Bertrand Russell & George Santayana & Hugh Elliott & H. L. Mencken & Joseph Wood Krutch & Irving Babbitt (in this respect) & Harry Elmer Barnes (I don't give a damn for his preferences in purely emotional fields) & Sir Arthur Keith & H. G. Wells (in part) & John Dewey (who the hell cares for his social views?) & Albert Einstein (just analyse his "cosmic religion" & see if it differs a whit from my own aesthetic of impersonal but non-conscious order!!) behind him, he can god damn well thumb his nose at fakers & nuts & mystics & cobweb-curators, & tell them just where to go . . . . & this without any undue exercise of presumption or egotism. But remember that such an one's chief interest is not in envisaging an universe of any particular sort, be it godful or godless. All he yearns to envisage is *the universe as it is*, whatever its form or nature may be. Just bring up anything like a scrap of *real evidence* that there is any reason to imagine a "personal consciousness" or "purpose" in the cosmos, & watch the apparent dogmatism drop off. What we want is to know the simple *is or isn't* of the matter. Any other aspect of the matter strikes our emotions as essentially trivial & irrelevant. It may interest some people, but why bother us? Of our genuine basic emotions, *curiosity* is the strongest. That's simple, empirical nature . . . . & don't make me laugh by trying to link it up with the one trivial facet of "science" which the machine age has enlisted as an ally! Same old tyranny of *words* & conventional associations. Let's can familiar terminology & adopt my suggestion of calling this abstract basic knowledge *cognition*, & the elemental instinct which motivates me, *cognition-craving*. Can youth handle terms & conceptions which haven't appeared in print with the hall-marks of conventional approval? These things, believe an old man, have their clarifying merits! So get this straight—I have no use for the machine age or any of its conceptions, methods, & ideals. I have use only for *abstract cognition without social or utilitarian connotations*; the thing which Thales & Anaxagoras & Heraclitus went after, & which was clearly definable by the word *philosophy* until those pragmatistical puffballs Socrates & Plato

threw a monkey-wrench into the works & crippled human thought for the next two millennia. Now it is a matter of perfect indifference to me whether or not baser interests cluster round the search for truth & lick the molasses-drops that ooze out of the fact-barrel. This apelike parasitism of the herd means nothing either for or against the abstract *is-or-isn't* quest which Thales began, Democritus continued, & Einstein prolongs. If machine-culture chooses to worship "science", that's its own business. It doesn't imply that the abstract process of *cognition-craving* turns about & reciprocally worships machine-culture! Is Buddha less of an austere aesthetic figure because he is now whined at by degraded Tibetan lamas, or Mahomet because Morocco negroes pray to him? To hell with collectivism & machine-culture, conventionalism & veiled neo-Marxism! Truth is truth; cognition is cognition. You don't have to be a Babbitt or a bolshevik in order to demand a purer truth than the hokum fat Dago popes dish out, or the side-line tripe cooked up by bullhead-brained physicists on their mental vacations! God! if only some of these convention-hounds would let a ray of genuine originality through their cut-&-dried copyings once in a dog's age!

*Cognition*, as such, is completely without social or aesthetic implications except so far as it places certain obvious contradictions of natural laws, & certain pointless exaltations of empty trivialities, in a light so unfavourable as to encourage obsolescence. It is nobody's tool or hand-maiden—it is itself alone. Practically speaking, the mind likely to worship pure cognition most sincerely is that most of all opposed to industrialism & standardisation. Cognition is that branch of human desire & cerebration most antipodally removed from anything envisaged or wished by Thomas A. Edison, Henry Ford, & the late Charles P. Steinmetz. It is the enemy of urban civilisation as it is the enemy of all handicaps which cripple the free individualistic excursions of the disinterested intellect into unknown cosmic space. It is the sworn ally of beauty *because it is itself one of the supreme forms of beauty*—the catharsis of a primal, titanic urge which links man to the uttermost gulfs of dramatic immensity. It is one with the greatest music & the loftiest poetry—being perhaps a glimpse of the liberating & expanding reality which both are blindly seeking. It is a quest for the prototype of that rhythm whereof Homer & Phidias are faint, far echoes. It is the one value which is not relative & ephemera, but absolute & supreme; nor is its status affected by those relativistic & quantumistic discoveries which re-

move its farther fruits still farther from the rim of the known. It is man's only anchorage against utter lostness in limitless space . . . the one bulwark left when all the mirages & cobwebs break down. . . . .

. . . . . If I had nothing more important about me than the shambling hulk in which the few vital cells of my cerebral personality are set, I'd possibly hire out as a scarecrow or shop-window model & devote myself to the exploitation of cast-off overalls or Hart, Schaffner, & Marx Kampus Kut Clothes. As it is—feeble though my activities are—I feel that the distinctive features of my personality are *not* my long nose, ugly head, loose-jointed chassis, & Hapsburg jaw, or any coloured rags, brass rings, or hirsute patches that I could hang or raise on the surface of that meaningless hash of objective angles. What *is* Old Theobald is a *mode of motion* inside a very small part of that clumsy tributary fabric—and if I can't hang the rags & rings on that part, I don't care to hang 'em at all. . . . .

That's the trouble with you, young man. You're one of those conventional "either . . . or" boys. If a man doesn't fit into one standardised intellectual book-attitude, you try to fit him into another. If he isn't a cheap little surface-exhibitionist, you think he *must* be a machine-worshipper. If he doesn't endorse the futile hysteria of the traditionalist, you think he must be a social collectivist. These are the easy book-taught attitudes—but the free original mind discerns the thousands of independent attitudes which exist all apart from such rubber stamp positions. Another trouble is that you raise up theoretical dilemmas of straw & moonshine, & outline fearsome imaginary plights as the *only possible* alternatives to the worn-out courses you would like to see followed. You waste gallons of tears & whole cubic yards of breath over shifts of perspective that need occasion no serious mourning at all. Not but what many distinctly unwelcome trends are indeed visible; but that you over-emphasise the universality of these trends, & extend your lamentation to cover concurrent changes less open to regret. Of course I agree with you that the ideals of persons like Barnes, as related to society, are barbarous in the extreme & incapable of fulfilling the demands of civilised individuals. But I think it almost childish to imagine that such ideals can ever animate any respectable part of the English race. You are more touched with the democratic fallacy than I am, for you fancy that everyone will bow to the dominant policy of an equalitarian social order. To



me this is frankly absurd. There will be a period of confusion & change; but unless the fabric blows up into an outright chaos of proletarian communism, (as I think the plutocrats will be too shrewd to allow if doles & sops will tide things over) there will be a fresh semi-socialistic equilibrium in which the better classes will have a tremendous amount of leisure. To suppose that, amidst this condition, the basic individualistic instincts of mammal primates can be paralysed by a thin wash of idealistic collectivist hooey is to come perilously near falling for that hooey oneself. Insects are insects—but mammals are mammals. Just watch the funded proprietor amidst his new leisure, & in spite of the utilitarian slogans through which he will have been wading. Did you ever see a parvenu who didn't try to be a gentleman? Do you suppose that people collect antiques & read history for nothing? The chances are that our future plutocrats will try to cultivate all the aristocratic arts, & succeed at a fair number of them. The new culture will of course lack certain emotional overtones of the old culture which depended on obsolete views & feelings—but as I said at the outset, there's no need of mourning about that too deeply. Of course we shan't like to see the new architecture & poetry & painting which will appear; nor shall we perhaps like the possibly lessened share which these things will occupy in the physically speeded & active lives of our grandsons. But after all, what the hell of it? Every age to its own gods. The Middle Ages had to snivel along after real civilisation faded, & the Renaissance gave the Moyen Age a parting kick in the behind. Better let nature take its course instead of trying to bolster up a set of moods which died with the beliefs that created them. In many cases the older values *never were* taken seriously by mental adults, & in other cases the change begins actual sanifying improvement rather than retrogression.

We don't know yet what the machine will ultimately do. The worst thing about it is the suddenness with which its massed effects have overtaken certain phases of our culture. If the traditional regions can stave it off long enough, they may find a way to use its benefits without sacrificing too many of their independent folkways. You moderns are all carried away by semi-Marxian notions of complete economic determinism—carried so far that you can't envisage the normal reaction of repressed basic instinct against any set of really intolerable conditions. It is taking murder & blood to whip the individualism out of the poor dregs of a Soviet Russia from which most of the real brains & spirit have long been

exiled. This being so, what chance has peaceful mechanisation to destroy our individualism—in the absence of any prospect of exiling, slaughtering or other really rough stuff? Personally, I don't think it matters a god damn how standardised & socialised the rabble get to be—or the moneyed bourgeois either—so long as a gentleman can live unmolested amidst his own thoughts & books & companions, & rear his sons in the manner of gentlemen, according to the sound residue of decorative principles (modesty, honour, intellectual & aesthetic sincerity, courteous non-encroachment, uncommercial appreciation of life, &c.) which survive from age to age as basic aesthetic attributes scarcely touchable by shifts of intellectual perspective & social environment. To imagine that any changes short of a bolshevik explosion could make such a life impossible of leading, is to entertain a highly grotesque & exaggerated idea of what normal social & economic evolution is really like. Still—no one wishes to deny that the process of transition is very unpleasant & discouraging; & that the dominant utilitarian preachments of the present make detached seclusion the only logical place for an independent thinker. The point is, that such seclusion is always open to us, with no really substantial thread of its ultimate denial. What, in view of this, is the row all about?

Of the Randall arguments I will merely say—(a) that the attribution of many scientific concepts to mere rationalisation is probably true so far as their *origin* goes; but that after a wide & exhaustive *verification* by a large number of varied & disinterested observers, we must accept them on a somewhat more solid basis. And (b) that the argument for the identity of science & machine collectivism is to a large extent invalidated by a consideration of the long history of pure cognition-craving, beginning with Thales of Miletus & continuing down the line to Einstein, de Broglie, & the astronomers at the Mt. Wilson observatory. Most of the modern concepts of what the machine-age will demand, seem to me highly artificial & strained. At worst, a machine society could not ask anything so ultimately degrading to the quintessential quality of humanity than an *intellectual* allegiance—or pretence at allegiance—to thoroughly exploded values which have become emotionally meaningless & even repugnant through their open & continual contravention of patently observable truths. Such a degradation, imposing upon all really intelligent & honest men a perpetual hypocrisy & ingrained mental dishonesty, is that incredible & anti-social anachronism

called the Popish church. Suitable enough for the degraded Middle Ages, & (with modifications & evasions) for the supine rabble of all ages, it is an insult to think of its connexion with a modern gentleman. To this disgusting defaecation of Dark Age superstition, almost any social order short of communism would be preferable. The American capitalist order based on Nordic Protestantism is infinitely more respectable, even if less tawdrily decorative. Protestant emotions encourage manhood of the old Germanic type, whilst Popery fosters everything effeminate & repugnant. But actual communism is worse than even Popery—hence Mussolini (known to be a complete atheist & cynic) is wise in using Popery for the time being as a bulwark for his power. It may be added, that Popery is not necessarily a drag on culture in nations whose psychology does not involve sincerity, honour, & integrity to the extent that our English psychology does. These decorative values bulk very low, intellectually, with the Latins; so that such races have a very natural bias toward the ancient faith. But Nordics are of a different cerebral & glandular build, & cannot afford to evade & pretend beyond certain limits. With us a damn lie is a damn lie—& we have an inability to hedge around such things . . . an inability forming the hall-mark of a haughty & world-conquering race; an *unbroken* race like the Romans (like 'em or not!). We have to be honest—& Evangelical Protestantism is the only *honest* religion ever professed by the Occidental world since the altars of our Saxon fathers were swept away by the snivelling priests of Dark-Age papists. Only the real Protestants—best exemplified by the Puritans of the Massachusetts-Bay—ever attempted to carry out *in fact* what every so-called "Christian", by virtue of the silly dogmata he swallows, nominally believes himself commanded to carry out. All of the dogs flinch & shirk except the English Puritan—& he tries to *do* as he *believes*. Read the articles of faith of the old Congregational church in Cotton Mather's *Magnalia*, & correlate it with the history of the tight-lipped fanatics of the Bay. They formed the reductio ad absurdum of all religion—but by God, they were *honest* before themselves & before the cosmos! True Englishmen, by God, Sir—the breed before whom your little papists cringe! Quebec—Wolfe—the Heights of Abraham—God Save the King!! If you're not prepared to do what your Bible says, then get out from behind the skirts of the Holy Virgin & confess your honest paganism like a man! The true English mind has no use for duplicity & evasion. We were good Papists in the Middle Ages when we had noth-

ing else to believe; but as soon as we began to awaken to a sense of consistency, we recognised the foetid putrescence of the Romish whore. We, who had a Wycliffe, did not need a Luther. And it is folly to say that Henry VIII did more than accelerate a change which had been inevitable for two centuries. Even amidst our theistick delusions we could recognise the vile hypocrisy of Popish pretence & corruption, & the unreconcilable breaches of sane English *is-or-isn'tness* involved in the filthy grovelling of a Catholick horde. It is possible, of course, that the Romish church could have reformed from within, as indeed it has since done to some extent; but even so it was not the church for blunt, honest Englishmen. What happened was for the best—just as it is now best that we shed our last theistic pretences in the light of what we have come to know & feel. "Great Catholick tradition" indeed—pardon my exit for purposes of regurgitation! However, I fully recognise the Romish church's purely aesthetic appeal, & have no quarrel with it so long as it does not pretend to be a serious survival. Admittedly, the Puritans dispensed with many pleasing adornments which cou'd have been retain'd without loss of force or honesty—so that after all I fancy the good old Church of England, in a broad, low form opposite to the silly Anglo-Catholick high-churchery, is the best of all. Old St. John's in Providence—the place with the hidden hillside churchyard—is about the sort of fane I'd attend if I swallowed any supernaturalism. That used to be antient King's Church—founded in 1723, present edifice 1809. God Save the King!

As for your artificial conception of "splendid & traditional ways of life"—I feel quite confident that you are very largely constructing a mythological idealisation of something which never truly existed; a conventional picture based on the perusal of books which followed certain hackneyed lines in the matter of incidents, sentiments, & situations, & which never had a close relationship to the actual societies they professed to depict. There are many reasons to believe that standard literature is superficial & misleading in the extreme. It does not check very well with the actual early life-clues which we encounter through realistic history & documentary research. Literature seldom portrayed real emotions & motivations till the opening of the 20th century; so that older specimens, except in a decorative way, leave one curiously cold & unimpressed with a sense of reality. There are, however, notable exceptions—most of which depart as far as possible from the conventional "great

tradition". In some ways the life of certain earlier periods had marked advantages over life today, but there were compensating disadvantages which would make many hesitate about a choice. Some of the most literarily attractive ages had a coarseness, stridency, & squalor which we would find insupportable. The Elizabethan age, admittedly supreme as to art, would probably alternately debase & disgust a gentleman to death. Modern neurotics, lolling in stuffed easy chairs, merely make a myth of these old periods & use them as the nuclei of escapist day-dreams whose substance resembles but little the stern actualities of yesterday. That is undoubtedly the case with me—only I'm fully aware of it. Except in certain selected circles, I would undoubtedly find my own 18th century insufferably coarse, orthodox, arrogant, narrow, & artificial. What I look back upon nostalgically is a dream-world which I invented at the age of four from picture books & the Georgian hill streets of Old Providence. No, young man, your "splendid traditionalism" is just as meaningless to me as my abstract cosmic *is-or-isn'tness* is to you! I have my own use for elements drawn from elder traditions, but do not make the error of swallowing whole streams of outmoded folkways whole—folkways which in some cases seem to us pitifully tawdry & extravagant & unmotivated as we view them out of their natural chronological & psychological settings. There is something artificial & hollow & unconvincing about self-conscious *intellectual* traditionalism—this being, of course, the only valid objection against it. The best sort of traditionalism is that easy-going eclectic sort which indulges in no frenzied pulmotor stunts, but courses naturally down from generation to generation; bequeathing such elements as really are sound, losing such as have lost value, & adding any which new conditions may make necessary. What we want from life, beyond animal gratification, is a mixture of symbolic ego-expansion, beauty-rhythm, recapture of lost moods or experience, curiosity-gratification, & adventurous expectancy regarding wonders which the future may have in store. The ego-expansion demand usually includes subtle transcendings of the limitations of time, space, & natural law; things which only phantasy can supply. This phantasy may be either religious fakery or conscious art, & I certainly prefer the latter. Candidly, I think a Yog-Sothoth in whom one does not pretend to believe, is less puerile than a traditional Yahovah or Jesus or Buddha in whom one does pretend to believe. Adulthood will probably eliminate both in favour of a subtler kind of imaginative attitude toward the

Black Unknown. I may or may not live to see such a thing, but you & little Augie Derleth will.

In short, young man, I have no quarrel with the principle of traditionalism as such, but I have a decided quarrel with everything that is *insincere, inappropriate, & disproportionate*; for these qualities mean ugliness & weakness in the most offensive degree. I object to the feigning of artificial moods on the part of literary moderns who cannot even begin to enter into the life & feelings of the past which they claim to represent. Poor little apes—they are fascinated by a glitter of sound & colour which represents nothing real to them, but which they love to juggle childishly & superficially as a baby juggles its rattle or Gertrude Stein juggles empty words. I'm not saying that your case is as extreme as all this—but no professional traditionalist can help being tarred to some extent with this brush. If there were any reality or depth of feeling involved, the case would be different; but almost invariably the neotraditionalists are sequestered persons remote from any real contacts or experiences with life, & actually ignorant of the normal person's reactions toward the impinging events constituting a genuine life-stream—the varied interchanges of idea, will, action, emotion, &c., & the relentless struggle underlying the whole—all this forming a pattern vastly varied in different ages according to geographical intellectual, topographical, political, & economic setting, hence possessing only a few elements of real permanence in conjunction with other elements dependent on transitory phenomena. For any person today to fancy he can truly enter into the life & feelings of another period is really nothing but a confession of ignorance of the depth & nature of life in its full sense. This is the case with myself. I feel I am living in the 18th century, though my objective judgment knows better, & realises the vast difference from the real thing. The one redeeming thing about my ignorance of life & remoteness from reality is that *I am fully conscious of it*, hence (in the last few years) make allowances for it, & do not pretend to an impossible ability to enter into the actual feelings of this or any other age. The emotions of the past were derived from experiences, beliefs, customs, living conditions, historic backgrounds, horizons, &c. &c. so different from our own, that it is simply silly to fancy we can duplicate them, or enter warmly & subjectively into all phases of their aesthetic expression. There are, of course, vast areas of experience & feeling in common, based on physical impulse & other identical stimuli; so that we cannot

call all phases of elder art obsolete. But once we get outside these areas we encounter sterile ground—upon which we stand as unmoved & largely uncomprehending strangers. This of course is most obvious in connexion with the art & literature directly connected with the more secondary & derivative emotions—emotions fairly remote from physical impulse, & largely conditioned by intellectual opinions & artificial modes of life. For example—you couldn't possibly duplicate your great-grandfather's feelings toward such things as war, Paris, the U. S. Senate, Sabbath-observance, &c. &c. &c. Probably you could not even understand them—I doubt whether I could. Yet you fancy you can absorb the literature of his time, dictated by such emotions, with the same emotional receptiveness that he himself possessed! God, God, the superficiality of youth! Who can read the *Iliad* through today with any real interest or emotional response? The *Odyssey*, on the other hand, is of more permanent stuff & wears very well. But even the *Odyssey* does not begin to mean to us what it meant to be a Greek, or Roman, or even a mediaeval person. You know perfectly well that to us Dante is only a congeries of powerful pictorial glimpses weighted down with prosy dullness & emotional ballast as meaningless to us as a fly-paper sales-talk in Chinese. There really is no "great tradition" except as to certain elements of mannerism & approach, & even this much is a pure accident depending on the chance persistence of certain basic social, economic, & intellectual conditions. This persistence has now come to a close. We are all, as little Alfie expresses it, "Epigoni" now; & to fail to recognise the fact is merely to play the ostrich. When we come to analyse what you—from your remote & sheltered perspective—call "splendid & traditional ways of life", we see only a procession of grotesque phantoms coupled with irrelevant acts & gestures which have no power to do anything except make us feel foolish. And very largely we find such things to be a myth & exaggeration—an artificial convention in the past, & today only an escape-symbol for those unable to adjust themselves to the rapidly changing contemporary scene. Actually, if one forgets about self-conscious literary poses, one can individually manage to achieve a surprising degree of community with certain phases of the real (not the theatrically exploited) past. What the romanticist dreams about the past is usually hollow & unsound; & many of the things he admires have no conceivable place in contemporary life & feeling other than an ugly, awkward, & intrusive one. The dreamer is not philosopher enough to

realise that the apparent beauty of certain things in the past lay not in their intrinsic nature, but in their relative collocation as reckoned with reference to their environing scene & to the psychology of one born in that scene, without the jarring impressions of subsequent periods. One may state almost dogmatically that the life of one of your little Renaissance Dagoes today would appear tawdry, cheap, vulgar, & essentially *plebeian*. There is nothing of beauty, as beauty exists for us, in his clownish extravagances. On the other hand, he is a rather tiresome, pathetic, & ignominious figure. What he got out of life by his heavy puerilities was probably far less than a sensitive & observant modern gentleman can get through travel, reading, conversation, & the contacts of good society. I state this intrinsically—I believe that a cultivated Englishman of 1910 (we concede the restless discomfort of the *immediate* present) could get far more actual pleasure—quantitatively—out of life than any hysterical Mediterranean of the 15th or 16th century. The general proportioning of pleasure-sources would be different, but the net total would be higher. As to "intuitive convictions" regarding values—surely by this time you ought to realise that *there are no unanimous intuitive convictions* except so far as accidentally created by physical instinct & similarity of experience. The deep "intuitive" impulses & value-feelings of yourself & myself, for example, are so widely divergent in a vast number of fields that the words "good" & "bad", "superior" & "inferior", "noble & admirable" & "ignominious & despicable" have almost opposite meanings in our respective vocabularies. Loveman has still a third world of "intuitions", Morton a fourth, Kirk a fifth, Leeds a sixth, & so on. And good old Mac had still another. If there be occasional points of coincidence, we may easily see the effect of physical instinct, & of certain strong formative influences artificially exerted in identical fashion in all cases. It amuses me to see how seriously you take the artificial value-concept which differentiates betwixt Jack the Ripper, Keats, Beethoven, Plato, & the mythical Christus, *cosmically* speaking. You exaggerate the intensity & universality of this feeling because you apparently possess it yourself, & in an exaggerated degree—or rather, because you confuse it with the genuine & legitimate feeling which gives objects a relative appraisal according to social value & the aesthetics of tradition-conformity. Of course we would rather have Keats or Plato around the house as a guest than Jack the Ripper; but I do not think there are many people under forty now who imagine that, as

scaled against infinity, Jack & Jesus, a rat & an elephant, Confucious & a monkey, a ton of coal & an electron, Felis & a colonial doorway, a banana & George Santayana, Jupiter & a meteor, Antares & the great nebula in Andromeda, are all impersonal & negligible subdivisions of a sand-grain whose existence or non-existence is absolutely immaterial to the sum total of cosmic energy except in the most infinitesimal technical way. Nobody outside the earth knows whether any organic life has ever existed on it, & nobody outside the galaxy knows whether there is any solar system or not. We take all this for granted nowadays, so that there is a faint aura of moth-balls & the museum about people who get excited & rhetorical about such matters. The point is wholly negligible, because nobody on the earth has anything to do with cosmic totality. It is sufficient to recognise that Jack the Ripper is indeed tangibly & relatively different from Keats & Plato from the standpoint of terrestrial society & tradition-conformity—this recognition being an adequate basis for genuinely intense preferential feelings, which are none the less valid because of their lack of *cosmic implications*. . . . .

Your portrait of Grandpa Theobald is highly interesting—more so than the old man himself—& is especially notable for that unconscious self-revelation common to all biographers of distinction. For, young Belknap, you have revealed your one fundamental philosophic weakness—conventional artificiality of classification—to perfection in formulating a charge of *inconsistency* from data I would be the last to deny. You & James Ferdinand simply can't learn to distinguish betwixt intellectual opinion & irrelevant instinctive emotion. He's as bad as you are. For instance, he has the idea that I place an exaggerated *intellectual* valuation on the 18th century merely because my chance emotions have given me a strong but irrational *subjective* sense of belonging to it. I've told that bird dozens of times that I have no especial *intellectual* brief for Georgian days, & that I freely own the vast literary superiority of the Elizabethan age, & the vast scientific & philosophic superiority of Victoria's reign. But do you know, that fat rascal simply *can't keep the straight facts in his head from one month to another*. The idea of a man's being able to see beyond his own emotional biases is so alien to his orthodox Harvard training that he keeps forgetting my real attitude as often as I tell him. In one letter I'll carefully explain the whole thing over again—& then in a couple of months that curly-headed Falstaff will be accusing me again of harbouring the same biased perspective

which I've just shewn him I *don't possess or champion!* He can't understand my ability to class as merely one period among others an age to which random early impressions have so closely bound my emotions & sense of identity. Well, young man, that's the way with you & my Roman loyalties. I've never in my life tried to defend the personal adherence to the art-life of power & integrity. I've freely admitted his weakness & imitativeness in literature, & have lamented those callosities & standardising tendencies which give him so startling a similarity to the modern neo-American. Time & time again I've testified my clear belief in the intellectual & aesthetic superiority of the Greek. And yet, recalling my merely personal emotions, you come forth & claim that I champion the Roman as a civilising leader! The fact is, that my overpowering sense of Roman identity & patriotism in all periods anterior to the Saxon conquest of England is a phenomenon even more irrelevant & fortuitous than my parallel sense of membership in the 18th century. It is more puzzling because I have not yet traced the cause in full, whereas I have traced the cause of my Georgianism to childish picture books & old Providence hill streets. But at any rate, it is merely a juvenile psychological accident occurring prior to my eighth year—for at seven I sported the adopted name of L. VALERIUS. MESSALA. & tortured imaginary Christians in amphitheatres. Probably what appeals to me in the Roman is the *aesthetic of power*—for my test of human character is masculine strength, freedom, & above all things *unbrokenness*. That life is itself an art few can deny, & in that art I think we must admit that *pattern & haughty unbrokenness* are the supreme elements. The Roman, though weak as a conscious artist, was himself an art-factor in the height to which he raised the crucial qualities of manhood.—

“Excudent alii spirantia mollins aera—  
Credo equidem—vivos ducent de marmare vultus,  
Orabunt causas melius, coelique meatus  
Describent radio et scugentia sidera dicent:  
Tu regere imperio populos ROMANE, memento;  
Hae TIBI ermetartes; pacisque imponere marem,  
Porcere subjectis, et debellare superbos.”

Biologically, as a member of the species *homo sapiens* physically & emotionally equipped for the acid test of survival & dominance & importance in determining the flow of the historic stream, the Roman & the

Teuton stand out so *majestically*—by all the aesthetic laws which concede the quality of *majesty* to mountains, men, & monuments—that it is impossible not to thrill at their names & symbols, & feel that the chief joy in being a man at all is belonging to the species which has produced Romans & Teutons. . . .

Well, anyway, the point is that my own personal mess of subjective emotions has nothing whatever to do with my intellectual opinions. I have freely declared myself at all times (like everybody else in his respective way) a mere product of my background, & do not consider the values of that background as at all applicable to outsiders. The only way for the individual to achieve any contentment or harmonic relationship to a pattern is to adhere to the background naturally his; & that is what I am doing. Others I urge to adhere to *their own* respective backgrounds & traditions, however remote from mine these may be. When I venture now & then to suggest values of a more general kind, I approach the problem in an entirely different way—speaking not as Old Theobald of His Majesty's Rhode-Island Colony, but as the cosmic & impersonal Ec'h-Pi-El, denizen of the invisible world 'Ui-ulh in the second zone of curved space outside angled space. It is wholly possible, of course, that emotional biases get carried over—& if so, I duly apologise for the errors. But before shooting, be sure that there *is* a real conflict involved. There is no point in pouncing on an instinctive personal bias of mine—of which I have hundreds, all of local & fortuitous origin—*unless you see me trying to put it over as a general truth or precept.* . . .

. . . . . If there is any approach to an absolute value in the cosmos—or at least on this planet—then this is it. Sincerity—is-or-isn't-ness—technical perfection—harmony—coherence—consistency—symmetry—all these things are obviously aspects of one single property of space, energy, & general mathematical harmonics whose universality gives it the deepest possible significance. I have thought this all my life, & that is why to me one Newton or Einstein, one M. Atilius Regulus, M. Porcius Cato, or P. Cornelius Scipio, seems to me in certain ways worth a full dozen of your prattling little Keatses & Baudelaires. If this be mere morality, make the most of it. I can't see that the point has any save an aesthetick bearing. I think that in the single quality of *sincerity* or *truth-adherence* there is involved a basal form of artistic symmetry so universal as to be potentially superior to any other. Of course, all violations of this principle are not even approximately equal. The harmless

personal "white lie" is just that. But when lying gets to involve *larger units*, so that it actually obscures our correct perspective of the balanced forces around us, it has reached such proportions as to be intolerable. That is why I hate & despise religion. . . .

. . . . . You can't seriously maintain that a child's curbstone scrawl is as significant a work of art as a painting of Rembrandt's; & the silly gestures of posers & rebels bear just about the same relation to the coordinated art of living as such a scrawl bears to such a painting. To interpret the precious & inalienable imaginative freedom & adventurousness of the artist as the right to wear pajamas to the theatre or to turn handsprings on Boston Common is to introduce an element of falseness & belittlement so gross as to constitute a real insult, in the deepest sense, to the aesthetic faculty. Every so-called aesthete who makes an ass of himself in the name of art, is in truth insulting the ethereal realities of art so flagrantly that he ought to be placarded as a traitor to beauty. No man worships the secret harmonies of nature with decently appropriate reverence, till he has pushed his ugly carcass out of the limelight & settled down to project his true mental ego into the sunset aether of liberation & adventure. So it is. I despise freaks because they are mockeries, irrelevancies & degradations—because they offer a cheap physical clownishness as the symbol of a poignant & delicate emotional harmony. But don't fancy I *condemn* such beings. I merely *despise* & *ridicule* them. They are not *offenders*; merely *inferiors.* . . .

. . . . . Traditionalism, in any orthodox form, is today an actually *anti-cultural* influence. It is putting a monkey-wrench in the works—keeping a rising young man out of a key position through the retention of a dummy director—balling up traffic by using the street-cars for hearses to carry putrescent corpses. We're damn sorry there has to be a break—but all the same when an old bridge gets rotten, we clear it away & build a new one rather than let people plunge to destruction amidst an ultimate collapse. So the thing to do is to buck up & think like a man. Keep *whatever is sound* of the dying tradition, & perhaps it can some day be incorporated in a new one. And don't get excited & impatient about the slowness of the latter to formulate. Our dying culture was a slow, gradual growth in its day. What is to be, will be. No man can change Darozhand. And the wise mind is impersonal & unchronological enough not to belong too intensely to any one age. It is

not in any one set of traditions, but in the vast, sad pageantry of shifting scenes & ages & thoughts & feelings, that the real interest & drama of the ironic life-spectacle lie. . . . .

(c) What I conceive to be your third mistake, is the glib way in which you seek to join the age-long abstract cognition-quest of Thales, Heraclitus, Democritus, Empedocles, Lucretius, Copernicus, Darwin, Haeckel, & Einstein to the politicks & aecomomicks of the machine age by confusing it with the technology of Watt, Stephenson, Marconi, Edison, DeForest, Steinmetz, Tesla, & so on, under the misleading rubber-stamp name of "science". I know it isn't originally your fault, since you copy it from other conventional moderns; but one might hope that original analysis would save you from repeating an ambiguous usage.

Now this is a complex question, & cannot be approached in any mood of jaunty superficiality. Of course, there is a surface appearance of connexion betwixt the cognition-quest & technology; because on the one hand technology has to depend on what cognition brings to light about nature, whilst on the other hand the technologist's quest for his own cheap rewards often leads him to uncover actual secrets of nature & thus contribute to cognition as a sideline, even though he is not a truth-seeker labouring with a disinterested cognitional object. But anyone with a clear head can keep the two streams of motivation separate, naming certain delvers who are pure cognitionists, & others who are pure technologists or engineers—besides a large twilight zone of men whose researches are spurred on by a blend of both motivations. . . . .

And how about the Old Man? Well—I was born in the year 1890 in a small town, & in a section of that town which during my childhood lay not more than four blocks (N. & E.) from the actually primal & open New England countryside, with rolling meadows, stone walls, cart-paths, brooks, deep woods, mystic ravines, lofty river-bluffs, planted fields, white antient farmhouses, barns, & byres, gnarled hillside orchards, great lone elms, & all the authentick marks of a rural milieu unchanged since the 17th & 18th centuries. My ancestry was immediately rural on the maternal side—with the spacious valleys & antient ways of western Rhode Island behind it, & with the country echoed & reëchoed in the tales of my grandfather & mother—& on the paternal side, behind two generations of New York State urbanism, there was the immemorial tradition of the Old English countryside. The things around the house that fascinated me most were the old piles of *Farmer's*

*Almanacks* going back to the beginning of the 19th century & holding all the lore of antient rural New England. I read them all through from 1815 to the present, & came early to think of every turn & season of the year in terms of the crops, the zodiac, the moon, the ploughing & reaping, the face of the landscape, & all the other primeval guideposts which have been familiar to mankind since the first accidental discovery of agriculture in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley (see enclosed Keith cutting) so many millennia ago. Parallel to all this, too, I read translations of such classick things as Hesiod's *Work & Days*, & Virgil's *Eclogues & Georgics*, & absorbed with sensations of the most intense realisation such English rural pieces as Thomson's *Seasons* & Bloomfield's *Farmer's Boy*. Remember my delight at picking up a really old copy of that latter at Stone's in 1922? My house, tho' an urban one on a paved street, had spacious grounds & stood next to an open field with a stone wall (now urbanised into a modern little court, as you saw when we drove past) where great elms grew & my grandfather had corn & potatoes planted, & a cow pastured under the gardener's care. Here, when I was five, they built me a playhouse—to which I added others in later years. I never knew what it was to play on a city street; for from the age of three my mother always took me walking in the fields & ravines, & along the high wooded riverbank, (the latter still unchanged, thanks to the Met. Park System.). I knew the old New England country as well as if I had been a farmer's boy; for I paused long at all the antient white farmsteads (some still remaining, tho' ingulph'd by new urban streets) at every season of the year, & learned intimately every sight & sound & smell of the archaick, hereditary life—the mystical wonder of spring & the upland ploughing & the budded orchard boughs & the fragrance of new earth; (God, I can whiff it now!)—the apple-blossoms of May tapping at old attic windows—the dreamy buzz of summer, with the droning hives, the mottled kine splashing in valley brooks, & the supernal luxuriance of green ingulphing all the world & half stealing away one's senses in a languor of enchanted sweetness; the haying—the creaking wain & teeming loft, the swish of the scythe & the barking of distant dogs, the flashing pitchforks & sweating farmers; the weird golden light of autumn over leagues of order'd sheaves stack'd in the meadows—glint of fire in small-paned windows—barnyards stacked with orange pumpkins & varicoloured fruits & melons—harvest-home—Ceres—Pomona—Vertumnus—*sunt lachrymae rerum*—tinted leaves—crystal well-water—

crowing roosters—the great round Harvest Moon over the rows of sheaves; & silent, terrible winter with its deadening white blanket & hushed farmyard, or its bare brown earth & curious smells of matted leaves—& the fires inside the antient cottages, throwing a red glow on low ceilings & lighting up carved Georgian mantels & panelling, & wide-planked, polisht floors with rag carpet rugs—& the sleek, friendly cats gliding from the kitchen to the living-room & back again, & the homely speech of the rural cotter & his buxom family . . . . . Gad! And to think there are boys of this new generation who know nothing of all this except from books & brief summer glimpses—& who think they have some idea of what the Old America was like! No wonder they fail to find any responsive thrills in Thomson or Bloomfield, & marvel at the numberless editions of *The Seasons* struck off by every village printer in New England—Providence, Warren, Newport, Plymouth, Ipswich, Concord, Newburyport, Keene, Brattleboro, Bellows Falls, Deerfield, Greenfield, & so on! But this is the kind of thing which held me spellbound all through my youth—& which, alas, I saw perish bit by bit as the greedy tentacles of the town overran it bit by bit. Now—except for the mercifully spared park area which I still haunt as of old on drowsy summer afternoons, & which fortunately includes one of my beloved ravines—the old countryside is almost gone; though one farm still remains *as a farm* with a few acres of antient field & orchard & garden around the antient (1735) house, & forms the goal of many a walk of mine. Old days—old days—old days—& *I have not lost them yet*, for the same old nostalgic urge still drives me out to where such primal things still live, & makes me spend many a warm, mystical day in the old Quinsnicket country (8 m. N. of Prov.) with its hoary fields & orchards, its stone walls & winding lanes, its 1670, 1678, 1720, & 1735 farmhouses, its venerable water-mill beside the moss-banked reedy Blackstone, its great stone mansion of 1811 with the cyma-pediment & fanlighted doorway, its quaint old Butterfly Factory (so named from the iridescent stone of the walls) of 1815, with belfry & vane, & the deep, Druidic silences of the dark Quinsnicket woods where hidden pools, rocky cliffs, mysterious valleys, cryptic caves, & uncommunicative circles of standing stones all linger unchanged in arboreal twilight since the days when haughty Narragansetts were its only lords, & smoked the calumet of friendship with the lone Wampanoags whom they welcome to their huts of stone. God, Child! But whatever this unhappy country may

some day come to, there is no one who can say that Old Theobald has not known to its inmost depth, & loved to its utmost detail, that first, settled, & homogeneous English America which to the young is half a myth & half a dream. *Tradition* indeed—why, thou book-brooding little rascalkins, your old Grandpa doesn't need to spin theories & juggle words, *for he has known & lived in the real thing, & been an integral physical part of the objectively actual elder world* to an extent which makes it perfectly irrelevant whether he believes in tenuous old cosmic theories or not!! . . . . . Hell! If you ever had such a breath of reality, you'd forget all about the cute little sentences, literary, "inevitable" words, kittenish mock-irony, & artificial sophistication, & just *write, write, write* like the devil—**SINCERELY & SIMPLY**—because of a creative demon within you & a *sincere*, bursting emotion which would suffocate you if you couldn't get it on paper. That, by God, is *art*—not the reflection of some smart-alec epigram or the echoing of some worn-thin traditional rubber-stamp. Damn me, I wish I had the art to write out the stuff I want to get down on paper—but I haven't the genius & experience & energy, & am too old now ever to get them. . . . . Derleth is right in his devotion to the soil—if only he wouldn't let it foreshorten his perspective. I wish I could keep clear of mere theorising myself—probably I could if I had the money to travel every now & then to antient places & keep my imagination constantly fed with real, objective images of fresh vistas of antiquity & picturesqueness to serve as excitant symbols of expansion & adventurous expectancy. All this kind of thing, with me, joins curiously up with the conception of the cosmic to form a sincere & serious mood of pictorial experience, liberation, & adventurous expectancy, which would be of probable aesthetick value if I only had the genius to get it down on paper as it clamours to get down. But since I haven't that genius, I can only fume in muteness, & try to write feeble tales & stale Yuggothian fungi.

But God, what a lecture! Do I need to adduce further evidence of my complete *emotional* membership in the elder world? Even the urban side was not left out—for, to the west, did I not have the mystic sunset flaming beyond the antient Baptist steeple, the narrow colonial hill streets with their fanlights & double rows of steps, & the great outspread sea of roofs & domes & spires leading off to the purple western hills as glimpsed from old Prospect Terrace? Zeus! the charm & mys-



tery of the violet early evening, when the lights of the ancient city below began to twinkle forth one by one! And the old colonial villages— & the small Georgian seaports with their peaked roofs, white steeples, & salt-scented wharves full of old memories of ships & unseen shoars. Why, Sir, modernity *cannot exist* for one who has really gazed upon the elder world! And the rest of me is archaick to match. I read books with the long *s* before I read many with the short *s*, & thrilled at the old hill streets as at nothing else. And here I dwell now upon the antient hill, with a quiet village-like landscape of old houses & gardens outside my window, & the same old colonial hill streets with fanlighted doorways, double flights of steps, & hidden 1723 churchyards, to walk down & up on the few occasions that I venture forth. I have no radio & want none. I read as little new matter as possible, & have no taste for "smartness". I cannot bear a typewriter, nor compose anything of any importance on one. I have no respect for wealth, fashion, or quantity, but value beauty, sincerity, & imaginative sensitiveness. I cannot live away from the ancient green fields & village steeples & deep woods, & hate the raucous noises & rhythms of modernity. Most of the ancient emotions (tho' *intellectually* repudiated or at least revalued) outside the grossly supernatural are still of vast authenticity with me, & I continue to admire the strong, honourable, & generous types held up to me as ideals in my elder-world youth. And so on, & so on. But the very sincerity & seriousness of that elder world make me unwilling to juggle childishly & irresponsibly with the basic *is-or-isn't* principle, hence I can have no use for a religious mummery unjustify'd by any fact in nature. All in all, despite my survival into an age of transition, I think I stand aligned pretty solidly with the basic objective realities of the solid old world that was. The natural urban scene to me is one of cobbled streets, little single-track street cars, horses & carriages, jingling sleigh-bells, & no traces of motors, cinemas, radios, aeroplanes & the like. I don't have to adopt any conscious "great traditions" in order to line up with the past. It's enough to display the synthesis of my memories & affections— & I'm admitted to the quiet churchyard no matter what I may intellectually believe! Certainly, I don't welcome the coming of a new & alien world, & shall never have anything to do with such; but I can't blind my eyes to inevitable trends, & feel no inclination to stamp & shriek at just one more example of the inevitable sadness of life & the foredoomed decay of "all things beautiful & brief" as our friend Samuelus

puts it. I live in such worlds of enduring memory & dream & cosmic expansion & escape as my feeble creative powers are able to devise for me—always staving off the suicide-line by illusions of some future ability to get down on paper that quintessence of adventurous expectancy which the sight of a sunset beyond strange towers, or a little farmhouse against a rocky hill, or a rocky monolith in Leng as drawn by Nicholas Roerich, invariably excites within me. I don't believe, intellectually, that I can ever do it—but it is consoling to imagine that I might, through some accident.

And now as to what my absolute ideal really is—what it really is that I am so enthusiastic about, & that I seem instinctively disposed to set up as a criterion of excellence in homo sapiens.

Well—I would say, if called upon for a definition, that the thing I look for is *harmony, sincerity, integrity, & inviolateness of personality*. I look for the maximum results of an evolution which tends to emancipate man from animal caprice, environmental tyranny, random disharmonies, ugly or stupid irrelevancies of motivation, crude conflicts of internal will, disproportionate emotional outbursts & frustrations, & in general, all those inherently unbeautiful & unintelligent excesses, distortions, delusions, pretences, insincerities, abnormalities, maladjustments & futilities which spring from weakness, disease, underdevelopment, false training, or lack of proper discipline. I see no reason for falsely idealising any of these defects & weaknesses into pseudo-advantages or marks of superiority, as decadent aesthetes idealise them. Weakness & imperfection are just that—however much one may try to gild or rationalise them. Henri Gaudier . . . O my Gaud! What I respect is the honesty of the attitude which recognises defects & weaknesses as such, & tries to escape from them as much as possible instead of wallowing in them & pretending to be proud of them. The complacency of weakness is even more repellent than the complacency of strength. I blame no one for not being perfect, but I think each one—whatever his degree of departure from that coördination of will, brain, & muscle which we may theoretically envisage as perfection—ought to try to make as much progress toward perfection as he can, instead of reversing his values on the all-out-of-step-but-Jim principle & setting up his own weakness as a new god according to whose tenets perfection is itself imperfect.

As for a more concrete illustration of my "perfection" or "manly strength" ideal—I will merely transcribe the guide-notes made on your

letter-margin & say that I regard the quality as simply a sound & workable coördination of emotion with experience—a high degree of success in applying reason to the control of both internal & external phenomena for one's own advantages. The possession of this quality does not imply any lack of sensitiveness—indeed, we sometimes find such balance, instinctive eurythmy, & quiet competence at its highest development among the most tasteful & artistically gifted persons. The quality stems, undoubtedly, from sheer intelligence—that is, an intelligence strong enough to register its appraisals in actual conduct & to overrule the irrational & meaningless caprices of the glandular reactions resulting from environmental accident. It involves a consciousness of the futility of emotion—a consciousness of the inevitability of a large frustration-percentage, which in turn breeds a sane acceptance of that frustration-percentage as an unpleasant necessity, & avoids the ugly extravagances of irrelevant feeling which occur in the childishly bewildered & sullen or resentful non-rationalist. It is non-mercurial because the sources of mercuriality have been undermined by realistic perception. The basis of the quality is beauty—proportion—non-extravagance—non-grotesquerie—harmony with the cosmic pattern—absence of inherently ridiculous ego-exaggerations—internal adjustment—maximum power of volition to effect such objects as are recognised as rationally feasible. . . . . It is futile to deny the artistry of a world-scheme like Alexander the Great's—a poem whose lines were written with conquered provinces instead of alphabetical letters. Most of the great conquerors have been both artists & power-wielders. My ideal is more traditional than you seem willing to admit. Examine it closely, & you will find many resemblances to the ideals of classical paganism. The only ideals which it utterly repudiates & contravenes are those of Christianity & aesthetic decadence. The crux of the whole matter is simply well-proportionedness, & the maximum use of the special faculties provided by human evolution. By "strength" I mean simply the power to escape from the sway of animal caprice & slavery to the most trifling vicissitudes of environment & illusion. Freedom—integrity of personality—elimination of the extravagant, the unmotivated, the incongruous, & the irrelevant. Adulthood—ability to face reality even when limiting one's contact with it. This is not the "strong, silent man" of popular folklore. This man is strong only in the sense of being above whim & infantility, & silent only in the sense of eliminating the unmotivated & the meaningless. He may be

weak in body, mind, taste, or all three—but he gains the dignity of aesthetic strength by facing whatever weaknesses he has, & making the most of his residue of non-weakness. He does not crow like a baby & pretend that weakness is strength, that the moon is made of green cheese, & that Jesus loves him. He slips a rational *is or isn't* basis under whatever pattern of physical, mental, emotional, or imaginative life he may map out for himself, & takes his medicine without whimpering or getting excited. He has the faculty of realising that all the major pains of life are caused not by an incorrigible design of mankind, but by the inherent conditions of existence as determined by the accidents which moulded the cosmos, the galaxy, the solar system, the earth, & the species with its congeries of eternally conflicting gland-impulses.

Well, Sir, if my previous letters have wrongly given the impression that I worship the Dempsey or Neanderthal type, the preceding ought to be enough to set things straight. All I need add, is that I make no pretence at all of coming anywhere near the type I admire. That ought to have been evident from the first—indeed, no one can even begin to be civilised until he ceases to associate himself with his abstract conceptions of excellence. You are perfectly right in saying that it is the weak who tend to worship the strong. That is my case exactly. In youth I was a mere semi-invalid, & even now I have no initial push despite a greatly improved endurance. And in matters of mind you are well aware how frankly I confess my utter & hopeless mediocrity—a mediocrity which made me sadly lay aside the hope of an astronomical career (with its mathematical implications) before I was 17. Indeed, the more I reflect on my own mind & personality the less I think of it. I must be even substantially below the business average, to leave me in a frightful state of bombastic & quasi-adolescent simplicity as late as only a few years ago. God! the stuff I wrote in amateur journals as late as even the Clinton Street period! My recent housecleaning has brought up so much of this early tripe that I feel like going out in the woods & hiding myself. Political platitudes, & the assumption that I knew what I was writing about when I pulled them—"poems" (quick, the anaesthetick!)—jaunty philosophick credos (O gawd, o galpinus!)—infantile aesthetick rebellions against earlier attitudes even more infantile—help! help! And the immortally humiliating thing is that I was not really a child at all when I thus strutted before as wide a publick as would listen. A fat, middle-aged man with the mind & emotions of a child. No, Sir, when

your Grandpa maps out ideals of strong, dignified minds conscious of their own limitations & above the caprices of environment & internal frustration he is NOT thinking of L. Theobald, Jun. The ideal is purely abstract, as suggested by an impersonal survey of what appear to be the rhythms & relevancies of our infinitesimal glimpse of cosmic illusion . . . . . though no doubt I place an exaggeratedly high emotional valuation on those qualities which I least possess. Or rather, those qualities which, having formed an admiration for them on abstract grounds, I find myself to possess least. What we idealise is not simply what we lack. It is what we lack of that which we wish we had. We may lack a disease without wishing we had it. Well, anyway—the only relation of myself to the type I consider superior is that I shall naturally try to bend toward it rather than away from it. Pete knows I am little enough like it, but when it's possible to choose a line of development—encouraging some things & discouraging others—the line I choose is thus mapped out for me. The only merit I claim is that of being relatively free from infantile ego-exaggerations—so that I can freely acknowledge my ridiculous imperfections & remain more or less plastic & open to improvement so far as circumstance & physico-cerebral organisation may permit. I may not get very far, but at least I know I'm not there . . . . & that the road's damn long. It's a sign of at least a little progress to be able to know & acknowledge this. That's more than I could do twenty or even ten years ago. Right now I'm about where I ought to have been in 1911. By the time I lose my last tooth & fall into the coma of nonagenarianism I shall have become, with good luck, reasonably adult & non-ridiculous. . . . .

Now as for my remarks regarding a hold on reality as measured by the placement of one's enthusiasms—you miss the point in supposing that I held up Novanglian colonialism as a particular test of genuine substance. I merely alluded to it as a single concrete case, valid for those who chance to be inclined that way. What I said a real artist must have is simply an emotional pull of great depth & sincerity toward something—anything—that is truly related to experience & primary emotion as distinguished from what is artificial & determined by tenuously abstract ideas of what a superior emotional object ought to be. I acknowledge the poignancy of your emotions toward certain isolated objects symbolising phases of beauty past or present, & do not place any lower estimate on such objects & emotions than you do; but I feel also that this

phase of your emotional life (& of anyone's emotional life) is not broad enough to lay the foundations of a creative art-life on. The emotions concerned in this field are to a very dangerous extent derivative and artificial, since they concern the *taste & opinion* of the past & present even more than they concern the actual life & primary emotions of the past & present. They tend to be secondary & uncoördinated, & to relate to artificial, subjective, & often meaningless & erroneous conceptions rather than to anything in the realm of reality & authentic human experience. They have a tendency to be mere tinsel & unreality—mere second-hand & misleading symbols of any phase of life which ever had any actual existence. They are capable of becoming a sterile blind alley, leading to no real enlargement of life & experience, when worshipped to the exclusion of more direct life-contacts. One would not have them undervalued, yet one would wish to make sure that they do not usurp too great a proportion of one's emotional life. I am acutely conscious that much of my more concrete & tangible objective antiquarianism falls within this classification, but always try to keep the feeling within bounds. I discipline the feeling by avoiding emphases on the remoter sort of antiquities—the sort, that is, which are least backed up by contact with my own continuous life & tradition stream, & concerning whose backgrounds I have the least amount of intelligent & coördinated information. There is more value in the contemplation of an object related to one's own experience, or some stream of experience which one has made one's own through genuine study & comprehension, than in any amount of gazing at unrelated, uncoördinated, & imperfectly understood objects. That is why I believe a Georgian doorway has more real significance for an ordinary American than an Inca masque or Italian primitive has. In order to make the Inca or Renaissance object of equal significance—of equal relationship, that is, to the actual experience & tradition stream of the beholder—one would have to take exhaustive & specialised courses in Peruvian anthropology & cinquecento art & life. It is childish to imagine that the layman can have any *real* knowledge whatsoever of the life & feelings of the various cultures represented by museum objects, so that the illusion of reaching the heart of the past through such symbols is sheer moonshine. The little aesthete who raves over Etruscan vases & Minoan goldsmith work is really—apart from the element of abstract art appreciation—doing nothing more than playing around in the sand with pretty pebbles for which he invents vapid little stories. He is not

half so close to a knowledge of the real thought & feeling of ancient Etruria or Crete as is the historian & archaeologist whom he tends to despise as a dull, prosy old soul. He is just playing with his own lighter emotions & fancies—the touch of life & experience is absent from such phenomena. Of course you have enough historical & archaeological knowledge to give substance & coördination to many of your archaic enthusiasms. You know what you are looking at in a gratifying number of instances. But your tenure of certain theories of life & art makes you dangerously liable to overlap into the zones of frivolous mock-understanding & merely derivative experience now & then without your fully realising the transition. Not that it will do you any harm to do so—but that you will not succeed in building any solid body of authentic creative expression on such second-hand shadows of comprehension & experience. It is important for you to be able to distinguish between your two types of experience in order to use the real type in seeking aesthetic expression. Think this over, & see if you can catch my meaning when I discriminate between your taste for Arabian water pipes (how much have you ever had to do with Arabia—how much do you even begin to know about the real Arabian's complex, subconscious body of innate & inherited feeling?) & your love of the sea. I am bold enough to maintain that your narghile enthusiasm is an essentially superficial phenomenon, unjustified by any adequate or corresponding knowledge of the core of Saracenic life & feeling, whereas your sea-love is a basic emotion pertaining to realities of vision which have been actually in contact with your personal life-stream & inherited body of inclinations. Corresponding phenomena are true of everyone—take me, for instance. I have a very distinct fondness for Egyptian objects, & for even remoter objects of more doubtful & mysterious provenance; yet I know very well that these things have relatively little to do with any real adjustments my life has had, or any basic, primitive feelings I have ever entertained. I freely admit that these stimuli belong to the lighter, second-hand side of my experience stream, & have the judgment not to make them the primary bases of any attempt at expression. On the other hand, my attitude toward the cycle of the seasons—the soil, the crops, the rural landscape, the sky, the routine of the farm—is far deeper & more real, because it has an actual relationship to what I have personally seen & felt & inherited. I know about this business from the inside—my feelings toward it have been of the profound, direct, personal type rather than the light,

artificial, decorative type. I don't have to do any pretending or whipping up of enthusiasm in these fields. I am a part of this milieu—it is mine by natural placement & personal contact—soaked into my subconscious mind & rooted there by a thousand tentacles which could not possibly exist in the case of some exotic & arbitrarily fancied art object. It is not external fancy, but the tough, unalterable fabric of life itself. And I know damn well that I can never produce real art from any other background—any background, that is, which I have not previously linked to this real one in the most solid way by means of intimate knowledge & profound, detailed, associations. The only way to form real & serious contacts with the exotic is to push the continuous frontier of one's detailed & coördinated knowledge & enthusiasm outward from the realm of direct personal experience. We can't assimilate a distant realm merely by legally annexing it & leaving it at a distance. Look at the Philippine Islands! In approaching the outer realms of life we must choose the sounder policy of continuous expansion & engulfment whereby the nation overtook & really assimilated Louisiana & the West. The place for enthusiasms to *begin* is at home. New England (or for you, New York) first. Then the outer nations or territories which have the most to do with the original region. Old England—Quebec—Pennsylvania—the South—Holland—& so on. Classical antiquity, which has furnished the main stream of thought & folkways. And so on. Not until one has an enormous coördinated body of real knowledge concerning the life, feelings, & visible forms of one's own & directly contributing cultures, can one hope to approach exotic cultures with any real prospect of absorbing their feeling to an aesthetically effective extent. It is just playing around when a small boy calls himself a Bagdad Arabian, as I did at the age of five. What I am, whether I like it or not, is a New England Englishman. That first. Then a Western European. Then an heir of Greece & Rome. Thus far, I am on solid ground—ground which can have a real rather than pretended meaning to me. And of this ground I am not childish enough to assume that I can ever know any other part as well as New England, which is my immediate part. I can know French Quebec & Dutch New York fairly well. All winter, as I told you, I have been studying Quebec; & all this spring I have been studying the Dutch Hudson Valley with the aid of a monumental tome lent me by Talman. I can know the South fairly well, too, because it is of a race-stock & history approximately like that extending behind me & moulding my subcon-

scious emotions. Likewise Old England, from which I am only three generations off on the paternal side, & with whose emotional stream I am still wholly merged. Greece & Rome, too, are realities to me because they stand directly behind English thought & feeling & are made familiar to me by lifelong reading & connected interest & association. All these things are close enough to me personally to be real influences in my deepest & sincerest emotional life. Now who is so naive as to fancy that remoter, more exotic objects could be equally REAL to me—that is, that they could figure with equal potency in my deep, instinctive feelings? Of course I can admire & be tremendously interested in remote objects, but would I not be a fool to claim that I can understand them as well as I understand my own things? I love the Bagdad of the Caliphs—but do I fancy I can actually (not flashily or pretentedly) enter into the feelings of Haroun al Raschid as well as I can enter into the feelings in decreasing order, of H. P. Lovecraft, Whipple U. Phillips, Thomas Lovecraft (1745-1826) of Minster-Hall, near Newton-Abbot in Devonshire, Fitzhugh Lee of Virginia, Gabriel Manigault of Charleston, Myndert Harmense, Cnaeus Viburnius Temo of Reate, in Sabinum, B. C. 150, or Agamenides of Syracuse in B. C. 400? Don't make Grandpa laugh! Of course, this limited territory could be gradually extended if I were to build outward from the frontiers of my present detailed knowledge through either study or personal experience. A month in St. Augustine with books of Spanish colonial & peninsular history before me would undoubtedly bring Iberian life into contact with my personal stream, & add it to my field of actuality as I have lately added French Quebec. But would I not be an idiot to pretend that I can enter into such life equally well now, before I have made my extension of research & personal contact? Also, of course—would I not be an idiot to suppose that these new & superficially assimilated conquests can ever be as real to me as my own domain, with which I have grown up? It is my hope that the narrow bounds of my present experience can some day be extended by travel & further study, but I hope I have the soundness not to pretend a comprehension of the outer realms until I actually achieve it. It would be silly in me to claim that an Aztec idol means as much to me as a New Bedford whaling ship or a Providence steeple; a Devonshire Abbey or a Virginia manor-house; a silver Quebec belfry or an Esopus grist mill; a Roman portrait-bust or an Athenian lamp. I don't fall for the tripe of watered aesthetick stock. I want solid foundations or

nothing. Remember, I like to play with the exotic images also—but I know enough not to take my play seriously or try to link it with my personal stream. I enjoy it, but would not try to found a creative art-life on it. . . . .

You tend to live in a play-world which never had any real existence in time or space. Your "great tradition" postulates a past without foundation in human experience—a past of books & legends, but not of men & things. The ancient world, the middle ages, & the Renaissance are not, so far as I can discover, what they are represented to be in mainstream literature . . . . & therefore what you doubtless think & feel them to be. You accept a few sensational surface-manifestations as typical of the inner life of an age, whereas those manifestations probably affected only faintly the actual daily thought & feelings of the people concerned. You shew this tendency in paying excessive attention to the popularly conspicuous names of history & literature—just as popular romantic novelists shew it when they go out of their way to drag historically celebrated figures into every possible sort of picture of elder life & ways. For example, the average superficial novelist can't handle the 1st century A. D. without dragging in Nero & the early Christians. What nonsense! Millions lived their whole lives all through that period without ever hearing of any of these things except perhaps for the name of "Caesar" or "Nero" as some remote & theoretical influence away off somewhere. What about the daily life of the provincia of Hispania Tarraconensis or Achaia—of the growing cities of Gallia Belgica—of the vestiges of Egyptian life in the Upper Nile Valley—of the perils of the Parthian frontier—Bah! The common concept of the ancient world is so misleading that I truly think a man with a merely cultural or politely "literary" knowledge of the period is farther from the truth than a year-old child who never heard the name of Greece or Rome! It's all right for parlour conversation—but God! the idea of taking it seriously enough to write novels on it like Sienkiewicz or William Stearns Davis, or to fancy that such skimming entitles one to class one's linkage with it in the same category as one's linkage with one's own native region! Now of course, young man, you aren't as bad as all this! But I'm merely warning you of the position toward which your theories of life & art threaten to lead. Another thing—don't fancy I'm claiming superior knowledge because I see through the sham of literary antiquity. I'm no specialist, hell knows—my memory is so bad that I forgot all about the

Seleucid Era as used in Ptolemaic Egypt when Talman asked me a question in connexion with some advertising material, & did not get jolted back to earth till he asked a further question which included the name of the Syro-Macedonian month Apellaeus—which of course re-established the mnemonic chain & forced me to send a sheepish filling-up of the blank I had formerly omitted. I'm no historian—but my one merit in the matter is that I know my own ignorance & am thus able to avoid the absurd position of the writer who builds a whole work on a spurious or non-existent basis. I'm not ass enough to weave attempted art on the assumption that I can enter into a Greek's or a Chaldaean's feelings as well as I can enter into a Rhode Islander's feelings. When I get down to hard pan, it's through Rhode Island—though I am just as ready as the next man to use Greece & Rome in such ways as I can use them without overstepping the bounds of reality & emotional validity. . . . .

. . . . . It is true that the core of aesthetic feeling is a sense of expansion in time & space & of mastery over natural law; but it is also true that this sense can never be adequately visualised except through the copious use of actual objective media as a reference-background. The moment we try to achieve this sense of liberation through the use of wholly artificial materials, we are let flatly down amidst a jumble of mawkishness & puerility. To adumbrate the elusive unrealities we seek, we must have realities as motivations & reference-points. Life—personal life & experience—forms the only adequate basis for art, no matter into what realms of phantasy that art is destined to be projected. Providence comes before Yog-Sothoth—New York & Maine & the sea come before the Renaissance or Peru or St. Peter. So that's what Grandpa's driving at. If you must be a traditionalist, at least be a traditionalist working with real things. Tangible things are tangible things—ideas & impressions & emotional inheritances are mirages which can be wholly undermined by unexpected openings of knowledge-vistas. The only sound traditionalism is that which depends on those physical objects whose nature cannot be altered by an enlarged or metamorphosed intellectual-emotional basis. . . . .

Of course both you & I suffer from the handicap of having lived very circumscribed & eventless lives so far—lives without any wide variety of experiences or emotional contacts. That is our misfortune, for which cosmic accident is responsible; but we can best overcome it by recognising it frankly & taking measures to counteract its effects in our art-ef-

forts. Our greatest caution must be to beware of assuming that we know more about life & human reactions & sensations than we actually do. We cannot hope to create realistic literature, but must specialise in the literature of imaginative escape, properly tempered with as much of realism as we *can* achieve. We must be the laureates—if of anything—of other circumscribed persons like ourselves . . . . that element in society to whom very little happens, but whose imaginations are sensitive enough to reach wistfully outward wishing that something might happen. If we try to handle life with a greater assumption of experience & sophistication we shall merely make fools or pathetic spectacles of ourselves. We could, of course, try to see more of life—& you are perhaps young enough to succeed although I am not. But even so, we are too well started in our narrow ruts to get very far with wider material. It's a safe bet that in both cases the literature of imaginative escape is the kind of thing to go ahead with. The best legacy that classical antiquity can give us is old Solon's motto—Gnothi seauton. To know himself is the first requisite of the artist. Then, having done this, the next step is to follow the modern motto & *be* himself.

. . . . . What honest materialists like me cast away is not the credo of our fathers. That was gone long ago, whether we like the loss or not. The thing cast away is simply the pretence of adhering to an old & devitalised credo. I believe I am firmly sound in holding the *forms* of antiquity to be more truly capable of preservation than the *beliefs*. The beliefs *cannot* survive today—hence the greatest traditionalist is he who clings to the residue which *can* conceivably (though not certainly) survive. Yesterday's beliefs are nothing—they do not & cannot exist. But the forms are at least forms—tangible rhythms, which do not need to pretend to be anything other than they are. There is nothing else of the past to keep. . . . .

In another way I am undeniably more traditional than you—& that pertains to every-day, unintellectual instincts & sympathies & predilections. As you are well aware, I retain, apart from all conscious philosophy, an enormous amount of hangover material from my immediate blood-ancestry & personal milieu—habit-patterns, spontaneous likes & dislikes, standards & associations, geographical points of view, & all that—things which are perfectly meaningless in my conception of the universe, but which are undoubtedly a greater part of the sum total of my personality (the general conglomerate of irrational patterns & scraps

which forms anyone's personality) than their intellectual insignificance would indicate. These things are physical phenomena—gland functionings & nerve-patterns—and therefore greater realities than mere ideas or beliefs. Well, I get these in unbroken tradition from the past. They are what lies behind me, inherited with unbroken continuity. Emotionally, I have had no cleavage with the early-American scene, no matter what I may believe intellectually . . . . . & it hardly takes a moment's reflection to see that this kind of traditionalism is a thousand times more genuine than any sort which one may gain by reading romantic books of the past & forming a sentimental attachment for "good old faiths" that sound nice & exotic & glamorous until one tries to think too deeply & minutely about them. One drop of blind emotion inherited in direct succession from one's real blood & geographical background is a far more potent factor in the real personality than reams of half-digested romantic allegiances picked up from books. The test, in a way, of any man's professed traditionalism is its degree of identity with the actual body of tradition which lies personally behind him. The *genuine* traditionalism of an American is the early-American Protestant tradition. That is what we all come by honestly, in the blood-&cradlesong line of legitimate descent. When a modern American has the general emotional cast of the old American-Protestant type, we may say that his personality is a really conservative one which has held to ancestral function-patterns no matter what his free mind has decided about the is-or-isn't question. But when such an one announces his loyalty to the Italian Pope or the Gallic decadents, or goes over to the Japanese like Lafcadio Hearn, we are justified in believing that he is not inherently conservative or traditional at all; but that he is simply a restless unrealist seeking escape somewhere in some jumble of foreign images which may blur for him the sharp outlines of unwelcome truth. There is nothing reprehensible about all this, but it must not be called traditionalism. It is not traditionalism because its acquisition involves a mode of thought & feeling alien to that of traditional inheritance. The possessor regards his harbourage of the alien tradition as a sort of gleeful adventure—the possession of a new toy—while the real holder of an inherited tradition takes this natural attribute as a matter of course, as he takes the colour of his eyes or shape of his nose. . . . . I like to be a Roman, or an Abdul Alhazred . . . but I would not try to base a serious work on such foundations. What I really am, is a growth of the soil. My instincts were

formed by the functioning of a certain line of germ-plasm through a certain set of geographical & social environing conditions. They are genuine, not literary or aesthetic or conscious or voluntary in any way. Most of them seem supremely ridiculous to me. But they are *me* . . . & so I continue to react spontaneously & unconsciously in the manner of my forefathers, liking the same superficial forms & types & attitudes they liked, except when such things conflict with the fundamental laws of truth or beauty. The emancipation of my consciousness has left my emotions all the freer to follow the ancient patterns without supervision. Without question, my deepest, instinctive, personality belongs to early America in unbroken continuity. And that, young man, is tradition! . . . . . Part of the old Protestant tradition (the only tradition an American can genuinely hold by inheritance) involved a ruthless sweeping aside of shams & a rigid quest for truth at any cost—no matter whether it overthrew everything in church & state that went before it. Our forefathers kicked out the rotten carcass of Popery first, & then, in the New World, began kicking out the simple-minded dogmatic bigotry which was left. The Massachusetts Puritans—honest fools—were the first stage. The anti-Puritan revolt which founded Rhode Island, & which lies directly behind me, represents another stage. Roger Williams called himself simply a "seeker", & would be bound by no creed. He left the Baptists six months after he established the First Baptist Church whose later steeple is our glory. The Unitarians are another stage. The living & respect-deserving Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick is another. Harry Elmer Barnes, Charles Francis Potter, & the ethical humanists form another. *They are all far more perfect traditionalists than your snivelling little neo-papists & Chesterbellocs*, because they are functioning absolutely in line with their original ancestral impetus. They are doing what the Rev. John White & William Bradford & John Winthrop & William Blackstone & Roger Williams did before them. They are cutting out the pose & acting simply & naturally on lines of blood impulse. American Anglo-Saxons perpetuating the habit-patterns inherited from the past. If they pretended to switch over to popery or Continental Europeanism or anything else outside their direct line of inheritance they would be departing from the traditional pattern of thought. Blood & experience have put sincerity & truth-seeking in the forefront of the racial emotions—and not unless the American continues to feel this emotional pull is he truly a traditionalist. The next stage of racial

thought-development after the Humanists is that of complete materialistic scepticism—the inevitable product of cosmos-confrontation by the honest, straightforward, & uncompromising mind. It is a Protestant, Puritan zeal—an Anglo-Saxon & early-American scorn for falsehood & evasion—which makes the modern American nihilist face openly the evident lack of purpose, values, goal, or central consciousness in the space-time continuum. We are still Protestants though no longer Christians. It is the same old leaven at work—the feudal loyalty-instinct having been transferred from a non-existent deity to the one fundamental cosmic element of truth. . . . . You ought to be a growth of the old New York soil—with deep roots in its slowly fused historic antecedents, & an intimate knowledge of its past & its constituent streams—just as others may be growths of the New England or Southern or Quebec soil. Look at young Talman—that kid has the right idea in never losing touch with his Rockland County provenance. He is a New Netherland Dutchman first, & other things later on. One speck of one's own inheritance is worth a bushel basket full of borrowed traditions from some distant & not really half-understood milieu. Whatever is genuine in you is the old American Protestant stuff that has come down from Longs & Belknaps & Mansfields & Dotys. Stand on your own feet, boy—don't borrow some damn Dago's stilts! The only "great tradition" which comes in direct line to *you* is the American Protestant tradition. Anything else you may try to put on will always be a far poorer fit than your own natural garments. Take an old man's advice & don't try *not* to be what you *are*. If you stop being a growth of the American soil you'll merely succeed in not being a growth of anything. You'll be like the Aesopic dog who reached for a new bone-reflection in the water & lost the real bone he had in his mouth before. . . . .

Moon's Day.

. . . . . The *beliefs* of a civilisation—mere surface froth—have very little to do with its deep basic *spirit*—or rather, are mere outgrowths or temporary manifestations of that spirit as determined by temporary accident & as frequently revised by changing conditions. The actual spirit itself—whose automatic operation gives rise to the little beliefs which rise & fall with the flow of time—is a matter of innate physiology & environmental accident; & depends far more upon daily habits & cus-

toms, as dictated by economic, geographic, climatic, & other factors, than upon any other sort of influence. Our conceptions of time & space were established by the kind of transportation at our disposal, & the topographical facility or difficulty in communicating with this or that region. Our feelings toward the seasons were determined by their physical effect on us as rural dwellers, & upon their economic relationship to our agricultural or pastoral life. Our feelings toward the cosmos & the deity-myth were born of primal ignorance & fear & perverted eroticism, & perpetuated by lack of contradictory information plus the childhood-crippling effect of intellectual traditionalism. Our feelings toward beauty were crystallised by the especial ways in which agricultural life caused the rhythms of the universe to be most plainly manifest to us. Our manner of thinking has much to do with our manner of recording & transmitting thought. In short, the "spirit" of the world in which we live is virtually completely a product of the accustomed habits of life in that world. If a man grows up used to the habits of a certain world, he belongs to it. His subconscious ideas of distance or separation, national separatism or cosmopolitanism, soil-relationship or nomadism, historic continuity or innovation, beauty or ugliness, good or evil, artistic technique, literary style, etc. etc. etc., are entirely dictated & controlled by his customary methods of transportation, manner of dwelling & working, resemblance of his environment to his ancestral environment, mechanical methods of painting, building, or writing at his disposal, & so on. There is nothing else in life which could have any tendency to fix people in certain ways of thought & feeling. It is puerile & silly to fancy that a man living from childhood in an aeroplane age could possibly have even approximately the same basic notions of distance & national isolation as a man living from childhood in an age of horses & galleys, ox-teams & canoes, impassable mountain ranges & unplumbed black forests. Silly, too, to fancy that a child of the brick & stone streets & artificial home & motor & street-car temperatures can have even approximately the same reactions toward the changing cycle of Nature as a child of the farmstead or rural manor-houses, with the green, brown, or white woods & groves & pastures pressing upon him, & the life & rhythm of his whole environment shifting in turn with the revolving year. Equally puerile to fancy that the deep rhythms & spirit of art can remain unchanged when the tools of the artist are completely altered—making certain strokes easy which once were difficult, certain strokes artificial



which once were naturally suggested, & vice versa, & so on. The typewriter is ruining prose style among the younger generation because it is limiting thought & expression to suit measured lines of convenience, & making the process of harking back & changing early parts of a text to fit later parts more difficult than ever. It is spoiling rhythm, too, by substituting unnatural & irrelevant mechanical-convenience stresses for the normal, unhampered ebb & flow of cadence determined within the artist's mind & formerly recorded by a method so uniform as to substitute no new & spurious element. Typewriting can't hurt old men whose style was fixed in youth before the widespread use of the cursed thing, nor can it hurt anybody who merely uses it for professional copying after a work of art is completed in the normal way. The only trouble comes when one tries to use it in actually creative writing. Then it sets in its insidiously modifying influence & substitutes false for natural rhythms. Now it is perfectly possible that the norm of a mechanised future may be so impersonal & objective that mechanical stresses will be, for that future, a truer & more artistic form of expression than the humanly felt stresses of oral speech & its hand-written transcript. Very well & good. But the man who practices the methods of that future belongs to it—& not to the traditional past. As for city apartments—who ever said Grandpa was *blaming* you for living in one? I merely said that the accidents of fortune which have so reared you have unalterably changed your relationship to the soil & landscape from that relationship which was your grandparents'. It may be all in the normal direction, if mechanised urban life is the norm of the future. But how can you fancy yourself a traditionalist if you do not long constantly for the sweep of green fields & delicate spring odours & the sight of cottage roofs embowered among blossoming orchards? As we were environed before the age of seven, so are our tastes for the rest of our lives. The lack of access to the green fields & cycle of rural nature would simply drive me mad . . . . an apartment out of reach of Nature would be simply the antechamber to a still more cramped padded cell. Thus I belong to the early-American setting in a way that urbanites cannot belong. . . . .

. . . . . My hatred of this cursed machine for personal use is not a symbolic or theoretical one, but a plain distaste for the noise & the process. And when I say I "can't compose original work on it" I am speaking the literal truth, & not using the word "can't" in the affected posing sense of those aesthetes who sometimes drawl that they "can't"

read this or that book. I can't compose original work on the typewriter because my method of making sentences & paragraphs is one of trial & error, & my old head isn't good enough to carry the successive steps long enough to get a tolerable version before recording. It would be impossible to conduct the process of sentence-building on a machine, for dozens of words have to be written in or crossed out before the result is of tolerable finish. No possible advantage, & many overwhelming disadvantages, would attend the use of the typewriter. Besides, there is the matter of larger corrections. Every now & then some turn of an unfolding narrative will bring up new twists affecting all the preceding portions, so that dozens of past places have to be written over, interlined, transposed, & so forth, in order to make the whole thing homogeneous. This could not conceivably be done on a machine. With such a device, whole pages would have to be written over where normal penmanship can make the changes on existing pages; while changes of a certain fineness could not possibly be inserted with the uniform typography of a machine. Of course, modern authors do resort to handwriting for corrections of a certain degree of fineness—but with me there are so many of these that an original writing on the machine would be of no advantage at all. And besides, I would have to be taking the sheet out of the machine every other second or two. The added speed would be of no use, because the writing of permanent prose demands a slow pace anyway for the sake of rhythm. And the process of handwriting is no effort at all unless one aims for great legibility & ornamentation. The reason moderns think handwriting is hard, is that they have never practiced it enough to get used to it. The sole advantage of typing is its eyesight-saving value. That is why I have been driven to it this spring. It is, of course, perfectly adequate for careless & hasty letter-writing, where no delicate plot-nuances have to be managed, & where the most slipshod sentence-structure can get by without criticism. Nobody expects anything of a letter, or judges any man's style by one. Even when I write one by hand I pay no attention to rhetorick, but just sail along at a mile-a-minute pace. That is why I write so long & so many letters—because I take no pains at all with the language. But it wouldn't do for stories. If you were to analyse the language of this letter you would find it shot all to hell with solecisms & bad rhythms. When I advise the swift & straightforward writing of permanent works of art, I do not mean any such extreme as this. I simply mean a relatively fluent pace—with, of

course, all ordinary rhetorical cautions & with a *subsequent* looking-over designed to correct extravagances or careless slips. However—I still insist that the typewriter would be intrinsically bad for any artist who had not previously formed a style without it. When I concede its admissibility for writing, I speak only for older men who have perfected a natural method past the point of shaking. Beyond all doubt, the machine introduces a new barrier between the mind & its recorded expression—as if, god knows, there weren't enough to start with!—& substitutes a monotonous mechanical rhythm which degrades & destroys the natural rhythms of human feeling & utterance. The ideal mode of recording is one which least changes the conditions of oral speech—and I leave to you the decision as to whether the pen or the typewriter is superior in this respect. . . . .

Well, Protestantism is simply the tragick attempt of honest Teutons to restore the unity between human belief & human reality. We know now how tragick & ugly it was—but we respect the tragedy, & venerate the ugliness as we venerate the ugliness of some twisted, aged saint whose malformations were gain'd gloriously in battles fought for us & for truth. For centuries of darkness man's intellect had been paralysed & hypnotised by the shock of antiquity's fall & the lusts of sheer barbaric living; aggravated by the mass-insanity promulgated by mystics who fed upon human ignorance. The only civilised people in the middle ages were our Saracen foes. Then came light, as the sheer pressure of resurrected Greek reason, largely exhumed by the Saracens, broke through the murk of stupidity, barbarism, & faith. All modern attempts to deny this—to revalue the Middle Ages & belittle the Renaissance—are such feeble products of faddism as to need no notice beyond the simple act of record. As regarded religion, man had two choices. His revived reason saw the absurdity of upholding a serious faith impossible of reconciliation with any habitual, agreeable, or even possible way of life; & reacted to the situation in various ways according to the cultural heritage of the various nations involved. The Latins, most direct heirs of paganism, deliberately cast the practical programme of their faith into antique pagan form except for certain verbal quibbles & certain inconsistent flarebacks of irrational ethicism. They discarded the Christian idea of religion as an ethical force, & even let their ethicks slide down below that aesthetic point insisted on by the virile antique Romans. Priests who had been simply gluttons, wenchers, wine-sops, thieves, & beggars before,

now became murderers, paederasts, sadists, & corrupters on a truly Heliogabalan scale. Among these people the Christian element in religion became so submerged that it ceased to be expected. Hypocrisy itself virtually disappeared, since the departure was so great as to make the religion a wholly new one, retaining the name of Christianity merely as one uses a word which is new to the present & which has had some alien, forgotten, & utterly antipodal meaning in the past. Thus, for Mediterraneans, Poperly was perhaps neither inconsistent nor hypocritical. They had forgotten what Christianity ever was & what it had ever demanded. They were neo-pagans, & inferior to the ancients only because they had not the intellectual balance of classical antiquity. If anybody cares for this integrated people & religion with the archaic borrowed name, all very well. I cannot justly criticize their method of solving the inconsistency-dilemma—though it does exasperate me to see their paganism cluttered up with so many vestigial verbal hypocrisies & intellectual absurdities. I suspend judgment because I am not a Latin & have no power to fathom the real workings of the Latin mind.

But our Northern people, confronted by the same choices in getting rid of the conduct-belief dilemma, took an opposite route. They had the realistick temper of men accustom'd to responsible action, & could not see any significance in the altering of faiths or misusing of names. They were, in truth, more really like the classical ancients in their singleness of outlook. They were not so close to the outward classick heritage, but had more of the real classick psychology in them. It would have been ideal if they could have shaken off the deity-delusion at once & proceeded to use their recovered reason & single-mindedness in the working out of a new rational way of life—an openly pagan, materialistick, & nature-following way—but unfortunately the hypnosis of theism was too strong for them, & the hold of the word "Christianity" too firm to permit them to shift to something less absurd. They were saddled by a herd-fetish—& being honest & single-minded, could not proceed to forget what their fetish had originally meant. Filled with a new sense of obligation to fulfil the precepts of Christianity which their books & legends enjoin'd upon them, they scorn'd any lying distortion of the meaning of those precepts. Instead of running away from consistency & honesty as those coprohagous little sewer-rats of papists did, they faced courageously—like white men & Romans, by god!—the blank wall of absurd & impossible myth which their limited vision led

them to regard as reality. They were men—men in the antique sense—& I thank god there is no heritage but theirs in my past! Unbroken before the cosmos! No evasion for them—they were after the core of is-or-isn't business. They turned on the rotten carcass of religion that stank around them, & try'd to find out what kind of an animal it had been before it began to putrefy. Men, by god! Out of the shards of the alien, incongruous gibberish they rescued the original exotic growth that lay at the base of the gibberish. Rescued not only the form, but the inner spirit to an inconceivable degree. For the first time since vermin-riddled Jews peddled their new cult around the gutters of Tiberian Rome the actual Christian religion existed in fact & not in pretence. Gone was the Dionysiac & Pythagorean & Neoplatonick hokum—gone the ignorant Gothick incrustations. Gone the pretence & the mockery & the evasion. The alien, unworkable importation from Syria stood on its own feet at last—no longer serving merely as a mask for the perpetuation of our normal ancestral paganism. Well, you know the rest, Son. Protestantism went back to what it thought were realities & tried like blue hell to live up honestly to the cosmick obligations which it honestly believed to be pressing upon men. Of course it was silly & ugly & grotesque, & of course it bred added hypocrisies amongst its bewildered lesser devotees. But for the first time since antique Rome, the world saw a religion of real men trying to fulfil honestly what they thought the personified cosmos had asked them to fulfil. We have to laugh at them today, because their system was so impossible of enforcement & survival, & because it did so relatively little to encourage the actual amenities of the farce called living. But while we laugh, we have to respect—which is more than we can do in the case of dirty little papists. These people, by god, were honest & sincere—the only religionists in the modern world who were willing to think like men & act to their poor, pathetick best on a straightforward & sham-free is-or-isn't principle. When they thought their Yahveh told them to do something, they didn't sneak out the back door & pretend that the old Boy meant something else. They knew what they read in the silly Oriental hash which they & the papists equally revered, & they had the guts to stand by what they understood. They revived, more than any snivelling little mass-whiner, the antique boldness & honesty in approaching the universe; & would never have stooped to slobber empty words about "conceptions of the good life" which nobody but two or three freaks could live. Instead, they tried to

obey the commands of the myth-cult which they acknowledged as their master, & moved heaven & earth to make the whole race do what they felt the whole race had been commanded to do. There is no Christianity in the post-Roman world except Protestantism, & of all Protestantism, the original Puritanism of the Massachusetts-Bay is probably the most honest form. It is the ugliest of modern religions because it is the most real. Religion itself is an absurdity & an anomaly, & paganism is acceptable only because it represents that purely orgiastic phase of religion farthest from reality. It is in the Semitick faiths, where religion is supposed to have something to do with human beings, that the silliness & impossibility & irrelevance of the whole thing is most flagrantly shewn up. But it is thus shewn up merely because it has achieved added contacts with reality. Protestantism is the *reductio ad absurdum* of all religion—but it is such only because it is more honest than Popery, & because it covers a larger ground. Popery is a child's tickling of itself—Protestantism is a man's honest facing of the unknown. Today we see as disgusting spectacles the stranded hulks of many backward caravels in the Protestant Armada—puerile orthodoxies which were once honest facings of the is-or-isn't question, but which are today infantile & irrelevant. We justly laugh at these—& yet there is something more inherently respectable in their atrophied decrepitude than there is in the brazenly mendacious & wily carcass of popery. Real Protestantism—the basic attitude of facing the universe honestly & trying to do what is most sensible in the light of what is real—is no more like its 17th century self today than your coat is like Edward Doty's doublet which he stripped off to fight the first duel in the new world. The same impulse, working with the augmenting body of data at its disposal, has supplanted Cotton Mather with Jonathan Edwards, Edwards with William Ellery Channing & Theodore Parker, Channing & Parker with Fosdick & John Haynes Holmes, Fosdick & Holmes with Charles Francis Potter & Harry Elmer Barnes, & Potter & Barnes with Joseph Wood Krutch, Mencken, & other moderns who keep to the principle of truth & reality in the face of the shifting phenomena of the external world. All this has nothing to do with art, beauty, or anything else except the question of honest observation & honest thought. If fervour & belief eclipsed beauty for a while, that is an inevitable result of the accident which foisted Christianity on a western world whose Teutonic inheritors were one day to take it seriously. But that phase is soon over. Religion as a vital issue

is dead except on paper, & whatever beauty-baiting the future may witness will be the work of greed & trade, & not of honest cosmos-facing.

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This epistle is a two-day job, broken by one of my very rare excursions into the outside world. The amiable if not excessively profound Thomas S. Evans—he of the dramattick & playwrighting predilections—called me up & urged me to accompany him to a concert of the newly organised Providence Concert Band in historick Infantry Hall (now remodell'd on the interior, tho' still possessit of that nauseous Victorian belfry), & having no striking objection, I acquiesced. Not a bad series of sound-wave patterns—I rather like a good brass band, anyway, since I have not the musical taste to appreciate the Galpinian subtleties of highbrow orchestral symphonies. My upper limit in appreciation is defined with amusing clearness. The conventional grand opera goes over okay with Grandpa, & Dick Wagner (whose *Ride of the Valkyries* I was privileg'd to hear) is just about my idea of emotion as derivable from sound—but jack the cultural bar up a bit & try to put over Debussy or Stravinsky or the subtler capers of some of the older big boys, & the Old Man's snores run the bass-viols a close second. Evans, who loves a good facade, professed to turn up an already uptilted Welsh nose still farther at the aesthetic quality of the programme; but I'm sure I had just as good a time as I ever used to have in youth listening to the concerts of Reeves' American Band at Roger Williams Park with my grandfather. Old days . . . old days . . . . . Can't I see Bowen R. Church with his cornet & goatee standing up & grinding out the choicest classicks of 1899? Poor devil—he might have been one of the greatest cornetists in the country, but drank himself to death. Fine old stock—from East Greenwich—descended from the old Plymouth & Little-Compton Indian fighter Benjamin Church, who made such a shewing in King Philip's War. . . . .

Well—more anon, & be a good young anti-mechanist.  
Grandpa

467. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Sun's Day  
(March 1931)

Hail, O Mokrates, Prince of Light:—

. . . . To suppose a man with the aesthetick and philosophick vision of Hemingway could say anything in the French pastry jargon of Thornton Wilder, or that a sensitive perceiver like Marcel Proust (the one real novelist of the last decade or two) could get anything at all over in the stereotyped phrases and attitudes of the "great tradition", is to miss the whole point of the purpose and mode of functioning of language. What any guy has to say, is what's in him—and every fresh combination of a guy and wot he's got on his chest calls for a distinctly individual use of language. If anybody feels perfectly at home in some other bimbo's shiny coat and pants, that's a proof of one of two things—either that he is, by accident, a dead ringer for the other guy; or that he hasn't a damn thing of his own to say. Standardised manners and perspectives are natural in literature only during ages so un-analytical and unreflective that they can't depict human character; or during other ages when the art of drawing individuals is more or less voluntarily passed up in favour of a sketchy art confined to rough universals. The latter set of conditions is what we tend to recognise as "classicism" . . . . . the former is mediaevalism and its Victorian flareback. Romanticism, that is. Of these two positions, romanticism and classicism, the first is a disease and a defect whilst the latter is a discipline verging dangerously toward being a pose. In fact classicism can't help being a pose in this age of psychological understanding and poignant perception of human differences. Honest depiction of life must be based on realism, no matter how much that realism may be suffused with imaginative overtones derived from subjective attitudes toward reality and dream. . . . .

One thing I shake with the moderns on is the utter banality and bad artistry of *plot* in the conventional or fiction-correspondence-school sense. It doesn't take half an eye to show how blatantly false to life such cheap event-juggling is—indeed, I can't think of a thing more obviously and essentially meaningless and hollow than this idol of the Dickenses and LeFanus, the Walter B. Pitkins and Thomas H. Uzzells . . . . . to

say nothing of that Newspaper Institute whose yellow dodger you lately sent me. A story ought to be a fragment of life and just that—life of the external form or of the imagination, but in any case authentic and normally proportioned life, without any artificial values and stock conceptions of events and motivations thrust in to spoil the coherence of the fabrick. I often feel hellishly cheap when some vestige of my nineteenth century environment impels me to wind up a yarn of mine with a cheap little twist of event. Not that climax itself is inherently inartistic in its proper place—but it is inartistic when it coincides too patly with certain streams of events or volitional elements. . . . Life is vague and tangled and groping—an endless dissatisfaction which begins nowhere and ends nowhere, has no values and means only a dull pain of frustration as all imagined goals recede farther and farther out of reach into the alluring, tantalising sunset. The writer who catches this authentick outline and serves up episodes from it in poignant fashion cannot dally with arranged-to-order coincidences and synthetick happy endings. He need not be cramped to greyness, for the imaginative phenomena of escape are always legitimate material for artists built that way—but when he tries to remodel the workings of the cosmos to suit an infantile idea of how events ought to dovetail together, he has no further right to call himself an artist.

And so it goes. A vital writer doesn't have to be a roughneck—except when his theme dictates it—but he has to repudiate the silly notion that there is no place for roughneckery. He may, as prompted by natural temperament, be the most delicate of ethereal fantaisistes, or the most analytical and precise of intellectual psychologists—in both of these latter cases departing as far as imaginable from the uncouth in manner—but he must at all times be one thing if he is to be anything at all—and that is himself. He must think of his subject and creative urge first—and of his language and rhetorical machinery only later on. What he must fling off like a poisoned garment is the whole psychology of convention, verbal tradition, elegance, refinement, primness, purism, artificiality, and kindred bullshit. Let the refinement come when it wants to, where natural art suggests it and makes it appropriate—but let it keep out of the way otherwise, lest it serve not as an asset and adornment, but as a grotesque sham and target for the jeers and healthy reactionary coarseness of sound masculine thinkers and artists. . . .

Grandpa Lo.

468. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

March 23, 1931

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . As for poetry in general—as I said before, it is no more likely to become extinct than painting or music or any other rhythmical, symbolic, & expressive manifestation of the race's nervous reactions, glandular functionings, & psychological association-patterns. It is nothing to get sentimental about—no "higher" a form of expression than prose or mathematics or any other basic response of the brain to impinging stimuli—but it is just as characteristic & permanent as any other form. It has a different relative importance in different times & places, but can hardly be totally absent from any social order. Modern America is of course an unfavourable environment as such things go—but naturally, no comprehensive student will judge the civilisation as a whole by the temporarily dominant element of loud-mouthed commercialists & utilitarians. There is no law against practicing the arts, even though the persons who fill the daily headlines care little about them. As for civilisation in general—the transiency & insignificance of mankind are understood more & more thoroughly in each new generation, so that the older sense of human importance will soon become less & less absurdly manifest in literature & the arts. Younger people today do not harbour either intellectually or emotionally the delusions of the earlier modern world; but are returning very perceptibly to the more rationally proportioned conceptions of the best ages of classical antiquity. The exaggerated & ridiculous seriousness of the 19th century, with its absurd notions about the deep significance & ponderous importance of things, is a sensation which the present generation can understand only through antiquarian study—though of course the lower orders retain most of the exploded attitudes so far as outward form is concerned, while the cheaper & more immature forms of conventional art & literature continue to function vacuously & insincerely on the same basis. As for democracy—it has never been a really possible form of government on a large scale, never can be, & never could have been. It is simply a pose or attitude or catchword so far as any actual national policy is concerned—a myth fostered

by politicians for their own immediate advantage. The only conditions under which anything approaching it can function, are those of a very small, very homogeneous, very new, & mainly agricultural community such as the New England of the 17th or 18th centuries, the New Zealand of the 19th century, or Switzerland at various stages of its history. The moment a people becomes heterogeneous, or the moment it adopts forms of involved commerce or mechanised industry, the condition of democracy becomes as automatically impossible as unrestricted traffic on a busy city intersection or Homeric military tactics on a modern battlefield of tanks & poison gas. If the forms & pose are kept up, that is merely so much sham & hokum which deceives nobody save the simple—just as the Emperor Augustus rejected the title of “king”, kept alive the fiction of the Roman “republic”, & had himself solemnly “elected” every year to all the various offices—consul, praetor, quaestor, &c—whose powers his actual position included. But there is no reason to mourn the absence of democracy—because it is a sheer illusion which never existed on a national scale. There is no reason to attach any merit to it—indeed, its worship is generally a purely unintelligent acquiescence in a type of theory long ago proved irrelevant & unsound. If anything is truly lamentable, it is the extent to which 19th century people naively swallowed the democratic hoax—thereby strengthening the popular adherence to a meaningless fetish incapable of contemporary application. Today all government involves the most abstruse & complicated technology, so that the average citizen is absolutely without power to form any intelligent estimate of the value of any proposed measure. Only the most highly trained technicians can have any real idea of what any governmental policy or operation is about—hence the so-called “will of the people” is merely a superfluity without the least trace of value in meeting & dealing with specific problems. Any sort of successful government must be administered by specialists working in coördination & able to plan over long time-intervals without fear of interference or overturn. This is as true in communistic as in fascist government—for of course modern Russia is ruled by a very small group of men who, despite a low origin & lack of general culture, are nevertheless highly trained in their particular respective lines according to the dominant ideology. The cause of modern conditions is, of course, the invention of machinery capable of establishing new rhythms of economic & social life & organisation—a purely impersonal & inevitable phenomenon

which could not have produced any different results. That is why there is no use in getting indignant about things, no matter how much one may naturally regret the cultural losses & dying traditions incidental to a profound readjustment. It couldn't have been any different. All that one needs to bother about in government is actual results in terms of daily life. High-sounding theories & principles are *words*—just that & no more. What a government may reasonably be expected to guarantee to the individual are relative physical security, a chance to obtain the surroundings & impressions which harmonise with one's background, abilities, or appreciative capacities, a freedom to express intellectual opinion & aesthetic personality without restriction, a general atmosphere favourable to the creation of art & the search for truth for their own sakes, & a continuity of folkways sufficient to promote a sense of congenial placement & to create the illusions of interest, direction, & value in the otherwise meaningless phenomena of conscious existence. It is not to be expected that these things can be achieved with any degree of perfection *by any possible* sort of government—but the important thing is to realise that *these alone are the things that count*—these, & not such mythical, futile, & irrelevant *word-conceptions* as “equality”, “prosperity”, “justice”, “opportunity”, “property”, “democracy”, “independence”, “self-sufficiency”, “self-government”, “responsibility”, & kindred blah-blah. It doesn't matter an infernal rap *how* a nation achieves a reasonably civilised & orderly condition, so long as it *does* achieve such. King, oligarchy, fascist dictator—it's all the same in the end. One method is as good as another *provided it works*. Even communism would be all right *if it would work* for civilised ends—but so far there does not seem to be evidence that it can effectively do so. . . .

With best wishes—

Yr most obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

469. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

March 24, 1931

Jonckheer:—

..... I have been wrestling with a new antarctic story—which has turned out to be a novelette of 30,000 or 35,000 words, and which I consequently dread to type—and with a spell of bum sight in my left eye which is even now driving me to the machine in spite of my detestation of that barbarous contraption. I may have to take to wearing glasses again full time—which I found myself able to cease doing about the time you first knew me—though I dread to think of it on account of the way the damn things irritate my ears and nose-bridge. My aunts suggest that I try shell rims, which are undeniably less irritant than the more traditional types—but I'll be curst if I want to look like a typical George F. Babbitt or a middle-aged caricature of Harold Lloyd. However, a spell of rest may avert or at least postpone this dilemma.

..... Never before in my life have I heard the name Pilgrim, in the sense of a new-world colonist, applied to any group save the Separatists who settled Plymouth in 1620. These Pilgrims may conceivably be called Puritans, and sometimes are by easy-vocabularied moderns; but you can't put across the converse and call any other Puritans Pilgrims. Get the distinction? The Pilgrims proper were generally a rather humble lot, and held religious notions—or rather, notions of religious government—very remote from those of the Massachusetts bunch. They were, more than anything else, the cultural descendants of the old Lollards—the Wyckliffe outfit. They flouted the whole system of church ritual and church authority upheld by the established faith; and believed that any two devout Christians could form a church as valid as anything set up by St. Pete, the civil state, or any other constituted power. About the last thing those birds ever would have done is to kick out a guy because of some little difference in creed or doctrinal practice. They probably wouldn't have gone the whole way with Roger Williams and welcomed "Papists, Infidells, Turkes, and Iewes"; but they'd have been satisfied to boot the Papists, Infidells, Turkes, and Iewes out and let Roger alone. In other words, they were very mild and unassuming folk.

At home they'd tried to set up a church according to their ideas at Scrooby, in Nottingham; but being harassed, they decided to sample the liberties of your own beloved fatherland; hence crossed over to Leyden, where they stayed 12 years. The only reason they left there was that they saw their children would grow up as Dutchmen. Not that they didn't like Dutchmen, but that they naturally wished their own posterity to be the same as they were, and speak the beloved old English tongue. As a result, they looked over a map of the new world to see if there wasn't some vacant corner where they could live by themselves as Englishmen without any mutual toe-treading . . . and finally lit on the region around the Delaware, for det vass bevoor your olt enemies der Svedes bane coom dere. They had also thought for a time of going to New Amsterdam, but decided that would be just as overwhelmingly foreign as Leyden. Being dead broke, the poor devils virtually apprenticed themselves to the London Company of merchant-adventurers, and were packed off in 1620 in a couple of rotten ships with captains who despised them—and one of which, the *Speedwell*, had to put back from the open sea before it foundered. Thus buffeted, they reached New England half by mistake, and wearily settled down at Plymouth, after a trial landing at Provincetown, as duly recorded in the schoolbooks. They certainly weren't in any shape to pester anybody else—and indeed, but for the fortifying presence of an outsider—the gentleman-adventurer Myles Standish—they probably couldn't have held their own against the cold and the wilderness. Such were the Pilgrims. It may be remarked that their action against Thomas Morton of Merrymount (NOT a forbear of James Ferdinand) was not due really to puritanic bigotry but to genuine fear of the results of his giving rum and muskets to the Indians. Now at this point pause to form a picture of the well-defined and characteristic Pilgrim type—the humble, oppressed total Separatist from the established church; weary and tolerant, poor and unassuming—content to let the rest of the world alone and to tolerate any law-abiding Protestant.

ACT II—enter a new element on the stage of New England. Gentlemen, meet the Puritans proper! A powerful and arrogant faction of the Church of England, strong in numbers, cash, and political influence, and having a high proportion of important landed gentry and rich merchants among them. NOT the spiritual heirs of the Lollards, but a direct evolution of Luther's reformation; and thoroughly in sympathy

with the established church's organisation and policy, though not with its ceremonies. Here are some guys who know what they want and aren't going to take any back talk from anybody. No humble, oppressed, broken people here—but grim, fervent, competent citizens in the main line of old-world tradition, and just as ready to persecute outsiders as the Romans were to persecute the Catholics, the Catholics the Anglicans, and the orthodox Anglicans, them! And what do these birds do? Bind themselves out to anybody else? Not by a damn sight! They organise their own merchant-adventuring outfit, the Company of the Massachusetts-Bay, and prepare to make a thorough and well-equipped colonising venture on a large scale—just like your Dutch West India people. Being disgusted with the forms and emotional life (NOT with the authority and organisation) of their home church, they resolve to carry themselves, their ample worldly goods, and their rigid ecclesiastical organisation competently and prosperously across the sea to build another England in which they can lord it unhampered, wax prosperous, and persecute everybody else. These people rather despised the Separatists, and had nothing to do with them in England. In New England they were prepared to live at peace with the Separatists as their southern neighbours, but were quite prepared to put on the screws if these same neighbours didn't do as they liked. Their territory, of course, was the area between the Pilgrims on the south and the Mason-Gorges grant—New Hampshire and Maine—on the north. The first big settlement was made at Naumkeag, a good harbour where Roger Conant, a Pilgrim who had turned against Separatism and desired a more formal church, had founded a small settlement in 1626. This was in 1628—when the Pilgrims were still a small struggling bunch of less than 300, though they had managed to purchase their independence of the London Co. The new Naumkeag settlement, made by John Endecott, Gentl., of Dorchester, England (whose descendants mis-spell their name Endicott), was re-named SALEM, and the bigoted, arrogant, and fanatical Colony of Massachusetts-Bay was born. You know the rest—or ought to, after reading of last year's BOSTON Tercentenary. The preponderant large-scale settlement came in 1630, when John Winthrop, Gentl., of Groton in Suffolk, was made Governor of the company to succeed Endecott; coming over with Thomas Dudley, Gentl. (of the family of the Earls of Leicester) as his Deputy. Winthrop came to Salem on the *Arbella*, which also bore my lineal ancestor Rev. George Phillips, son of Christo-

pher Phillips, Gentl., of Rainham St. Martin's in Norfolk. The whole colonial enterprise comprised 11 vessels carrying over 700 persons with horses, cattle, and all necessaries. Some contrast to the Pilgrims' poor little Mayflower—Mrs. Hemans couldn't say of the Puritans what she said of the Pilgrims—that they came "not as the conqueror comes!" In 1630, too, the ship *Lyon*, bore the Rev. Roger Williams—destined, as paradox would have it, to found a colony more radically un-Puritan than that of the Pilgrims of whom he wasn't one! Also in 1630, as you know, Winthrop moved the main body of colonists successively to Charlestown and the Shawmut peninsula—the latter becoming the larger and celebrated Irish town of Boston. William Blackstone, who had been settled there before, stood the Puritans (of whose doctrines he had quickly repented after seeing a working-out in Salem) just five years, and then packed up for Rhode Island (an area, however, on Plymouth land at the time).

Now get this Williams business straight. Roger didn't move to Boston with the Winthrop bunch, but stayed with the original Naumkeag folks at Salem as Minister of their church. Then the fur began to fly—and in a year Roger and the Bay government (not his own parishioners) grew so cool that he lit out for Plymouth, probably by request. This is why the idea of his fleeing from the "Pilgrim Fathers" grates on one's historic sense so. He was O. K. with the Pilgrim Fathers. They liked him, and had him assist in pastoral duties, and hated to see him go—even though the ruling elder Brewster was a bit anxious about the latitude of his doctrines. The reason he did go—in 1633—was that his old parishioners were wildly anxious to get him back, and had fixed things with the Bay authorities so that he could return. He liked Salem, too—it is easy to see why he, an university bred scholar and gentleman, would find the meek peasantry of Plymouth just a bit tedious after a couple of years. His chief friend whilst there was one of the few gentlefolk among the Pilgrims—Edward Winslow, Esq., of Worcestershire, who became Governor of Plymouth in 1633, and who is a lineal ancestor of my elder aunt's late husband Dr. Clark. You can see how fundamentally erroneous it is to suppose the Pilgrims would ever have had trouble with Williams. Their government was not a theocracy at all, but a perfect and absolute democracy, with everyone a freeholder, and having an equal vote in affairs. It was a perpetuation of the famous compact signed in the Mayflower's cabin—the church had nothing to do with the politi-



cal organisation. On the other hand, the totally different Puritans of the Massachusetts-Bay Colony had a frank and rigid theocracy, with suffrage limited to church members, and all church matters regulated by the civil law. Church and state were never—not even in the Papal States of yesterday or in Vatican City today—so closely connected as in early Massachusetts; a condition utterly and antipodally alien to Pilgrim-Plymouth polity and feeling. And here's another thing that ought to get under your Dutch skin—the Massachusetts Puritans were overwhelmingly Calvinists, whilst the Plymouth Pilgrims were equally emphatic in their devotion to the modified doctrines of ARMINIUS, with which they had of course become impressed during their stay in Leyden. Well—I don't have to tell you about how Williams' second stay at Salem turned out. Of course, his doctrines about the lack of a state's right to interfere with any man's belief, and about the lack of the king's right to grant American lands without lawful purchase from the Indian proprietors, were utterly anathema to the arrogant Bay Puritans—hence his trial, banishment, and all that. You will now ask why, if he was so oke with the Pilgrims, he didn't go back among them—to which I reply, you don't know those goddam Massachusetts high-hats! The fact is, that although there wasn't the slightest political connexion betwixt Plymouth and Massachusetts except the common sovereignty of England, (the union as Province of the Massachusetts-Bay did not come till 1691, under William and Mary—your good old House of Orange) the arrogant Puritans with their ability to wield tacit coercive forces like economic advantage, military support in Indian trouble, etc., constantly exercised a policy of browbeating toward their Pilgrim neighbours; getting away with it all the better because of their superior birth, education, subtlety, and so on. Whenever Plymouth thought of doing anything Massachusetts didn't like, the Salem-Boston bunch had a few Capone-like words to say, and poor Plymouth pulled the Caspar Milquetoast act. All extra-legal, of course—but so is Scarface Al, and so are the Washington-dictated policies of Cuba, Santo Domingo, Nicaragua, etc. Hence Roger harboured no illusions about his being allowed to remain peacefully on Plymouth soil. The Pilgrims would have been glad to have him—but the men higher up said nix! What he did do was to beat it secretly to Mount Hope (Plymouth soil, of course, but safe for a while) and make a land dicker with Big Chief Massasoit for something outside both Massachusetts and Plymouth. He had met and become friends with Indians of

several tribes during his Plymouth stay, hence knew he was sure of a welcome. The good old Wampanoag sold him a choice corner lot with a Seekonk water frontage on the east shore, just where Omega Pond and the Ten-Mile empty, and there he went in the spring of 1636—but alack! It turned out the Plymouth soil reached legally all the way to the Blackstone-Seekonk-Narragansett Bay line, so that the new home was on forbidden territory after all. Governor Winslow wrote this to Roger with pretty rueful and apologetic feelings—and I'll wager he felt like a plugged sixpence when he asked R. W. to help him stand in with the Big Works at the Bay by moving on quietly and peaceably! But Roger was a broad-gauge guy, and held no hard feelings. As soon as he had time to reap an early planting he moved on in a canoe with his few companions, received a friendly What Cheer from a bunch of Bravas—I mean Injuns—on the Gano St. Waterfront, rounded George M. Cohan's native Fox Point into the Providence River, and proceeded up that sweet-breezed (in 1636) estuary till he saw a spring and fresh-water rill at the foot of the great bluff on the east shore. There landing where now the Cohens and Ginsburgs haggle, he posed for the rotogravures and announced to the world that the Texaco Town of Providence had at last, after all these years, come into being. Nor did he fail to buy the soil lawfully, according to his own doctrines, from the natural Narragansett proprietors—not the present hotel management, but the sachems Canonicus and Miantonomi.

Well—I could go on indefinitely piling up instances of the diff betwixt Plim and Mass, Pills and Pures, but what's the use? It remains to be said merely that Massachusetts always remained a definitely hostile neighbour, though glad enough to secure Roger's good offices with the Injuns in times of trouble. The attempts to lay claim to Warwick, to jazz up our boundaries, to egg on the Puritans of Connecticut in their absurd Narragansett land claims, to provoke the Indians regardless of our peaceful wishes, etc., etc. are all too well known. The Bay tyrants made the poor Plymouth folk expel Quakers and others, and tried to make us do likewise—but Williams soon told them where they got off! What would work on the mild-mannered Pilgrims wouldn't work on the independent and adventurous people who formed Rhode Island and Providence-Plantations—for truth to tell, most of us were of the same haughty temper, being members of the Massachusetts Puritan migration who had become fed up and were getting out in disgust . . . some going

back to the regular Church of England (especially in Newport and the Narragansett Country), some becoming Baptists, and some taking up with the new Quaker movement. I think I have pointed out that the original or western Rhode Island stock is absolutely without Pilgrim antecedents, being either a disgusted overflow from Massachusetts, or a later influx direct from Old England. Rhode Island had no really perceptible amount of Mayflower blood until 1747, when His Majesty George the Second favoured us in readjusting our eastern boundary to include the Little-Compton-Tiverton-Bristol-Warren-Barrington-Dumberland strips—(we didn't take in East Providence and the eastern half of Pawtucket till 1862) former Plymouth soil incorporated into Massachusetts in 1691. This, of course, gave us a considerable new population of Pilgrim blood; so that to this day you will find Mayflower names and descendants in the eastern part of the state—though never in the older regions like Newport, Narragansett, Warwick, Providence, etc., except through later moves. I don't know of any drop of Pilgrim blood in me, and doubt if any of the remaining genealogical stub ends could bring it in, since they are all obviously of western-R. I. provenance. Phillips, Place, Whipple, Mathewson, Dyer, Field, Hazard, Brownell, Ellis, Rathbone, etc., etc. are all Massachusetts-Puritan; Casey is Ould Oireland via Britannia; and Dodge (which as you'll recall we found twice in the Rathbone material unearthed in Room 328 three years ago) has Newfoundland as its only cisatlantic stopping-off place . . . whilst my paternal line is more directly British, with New York State as its intermediate habitat. But for all that, I'll hand it to the Pilgrims for being good neighbours. They're the only ones we ever had who didn't hate us and go out of their way to make trouble for us. And if the damn Puritans hadn't browbeaten them, they would have been in still more cordial sympathy with all our enterprises. I'm for them every time—and that's why I don't like to see them blamed for the raw deals which those stuffed shirts at Salem and Boston pulled! However—I'll admit that certain individuals among the Bay Puritans were very decent in their unofficial relations. Governor Winthrop, for example, really had much personal regard for Roger Williams; and is probably the one who advised him to leave the Bay before the General Court ordered his arrest and confinement. Winthrop's son—the Connecticut governor—met Williams in London when they were back on colonial business; and formed a very close and firm friendship despite the continued bad relations between the two colonies.

I shall try to see the cinema you mention—though I saw the original play "Outward Bound" in Nieuw-Amsterdam in June, 1924, in the company of two individuals no less distinguished than the late Houdini and the late (so far as ownership of *Weird Tales* is concerned) get-rich-quick Henneberger, who were then collaborating on the details of a column run (or signed) by the celebrated conjuror. I recall that performance especially well because Houdini, conversing before the rise of the curtain, aired what is said to have been a favourite parlour trick of his—apparently pulling off his own left thumb and snapping it back after it had seemed to be away from its stump for as great a distance as an inch—or perhaps two. The wholly impromptu setting, and the fact that the whole thing was in the very next seat not four feet from my eyes, made the effect highly impressive. I wasn't prying enough to beg an explanation, but logic seems to suggest that the cardinal principle was the snapping of some dark strip of material down and back to create an apparent gap between the base and tip of the thumb. But it was damn clever—an absolutely perfect illusion, so far as my aged eyes were concerned. . . .

. . . . . To make a story effective in the highest degree, the inner rhythms of the prose structure must be carefully fitted to the incidents as they march along; while each word must be chosen with infinite care—a care which considers not only the dictionary meaning, but the subtle aura of associations which it has picked up through folk-usage and previous literary employment. In other words, prose must be created with just the same exactness, delicacy of ear, imaginative fertility, etc. as verse. One must study profoundly the art of *how* to present each new development in a narrative. Often everything depends on the dramatic manner in which some turn of plot is unfolded—so that one must study hours to discover just the right way to lead up to a revelation, bridge over a transition of scene or mood or perspective or time or action, build a foundation for some future event so that it will have an air of half-expectedness when it comes, express the delicate suggestions, associations, and implications which surround some specific act or object or incident, etc., etc., etc. . . . .

God Save the King—and the States-General too.

Yr. obt. Servt.  
Grandpa Theobald

470. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

March 26, 1931

Vale of Pnath: Hour of the Opening of  
the Under Burrows

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

Not yet, despite the outward evidence of silence, hath the aeon-aged blasphemer E'ch-Pi-El fallen utterly a victim to Yog-Sothoth & the Goat With a Thousand Young! Reasons for lapsed correspondence are twofold—imprimis, a crowded programme made worse by the perpetration of a new antarctic novelette some 30,000 to 35,000 words long & intitul'd *At the Mountains of Madness*; & secondly, a fresh spell of bum sight in the left eye which is even now turning me from cacography to the hated clicking of this damned machine-age spawn. I shall probably have to adopt—or rather, readopt—the full-time wearing of glasses, which I managed to shake off in 1925. I hate the thought, though; for the cursed things irritate my ears & nose-bridge beyond endurance.

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My ideal weird author would be a kind of synthesis of the atmospheric tensity of Poe, the cosmic range & luxuriant invention of Dunsany, the bottom-touching implications of Machen, & the breathlessly convincing unrealism of Algernon Blackwood.

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*The City of the Singing Flame* is certainly a memorable thing, & I was glad to learn that Wandrei shares my opinion. No—I can't pick any flaws in the embalming tale; for despite my authorship of the banned *In the Vault* I have not a shred of inside knowledge of the profession! One has to bluff beyond one's scholastic means now & then—as I have done with geology & zoölogy in my new tale. I'd hate to have any genuine scientist go over the fine points of that narrative! I must read more, though, in the geological field. There is material for ineffable phantasy in the rocks & inner abysses of Mother Earth.

Yr Obt Servt,  
Ec'h-Pi-El

471. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

Antient River-Bank where Old Theobald wander'd as a  
brooding youth of 3 in good old 1893, and which is still  
unchang'd amidst a world of mechanis'd decay and putres-  
cent democracy.

Spring!!!!, 1931.

Basileus of Brilliancy and Beatitude:—

Well, Sir, as you may see, the Old Man hath bust hibernation at last. The boughs are feathery green, the air is balmy, and the reddening afternoon sun gleaming mystically thro' a tracery of delicate branches. Time is suspended, and mystick yesterdays hang wistfully and alluringly over the wooded slopes and the glassy pool where vivid green rushes shoot up beside the sun's crimson reflection. I am at that ravine-mouth where you and Cook and Munn and Wandrei and I strolled in 1927—when Wandrei darted off to the secluded heights to meditate alone amongst the fauns and dryads. Across the pool, on the heights above, the facade of a Georgian country-seat peeps thro' the trees, with the gable and roof of another far beyond it. At this placid hour there is nothing to remind me that I am not in the past—or in Old England. Ah, me—I trust I may be gather'd to dust before universal decay strips me of such refuges to flee to. As I writ in 1901—

Take heed, Diana, of my humble Plea;  
Convey me where my Happiness may last;  
Draw me against the Tide of Time's rough Sea,  
And let my Spirit rest amid the Past!

Yr. obt. Servt.,  
Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus

472. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Saturn's Day  
April 4, 1931

Jonckheer:—

Confound the exaggeratory tendencies of that little Belknap rascal!  
All Putnam acceptance dope originated right within that bushy young

head, for his old Grandpa told him exactly what you were told and nothing more! . . . Actually, I haven't heard an additional word from Put's, and have no real expectation of any favourable action on their part. All they probably want to do is look the ground over and see just what the available manuscript supply is and what it isn't.

. . . As you can see from my tales, I'm not much for recognised folklore; but have a tendency to weave my own myths as I go along. . . .

. . . . A whole specialised study could be made of the gambrel roof in the American colonies—its obscure origin, its variant flowerings in the New England and Dutch areas, its creeping (in its Dutch pitch and proportions) down the coast through New-Jersey to Pennsylvania in the English regions but its apparent absence from Pennsylvania-German houses, its rare steep manifestations in Swedish Delaware, its sporadic reappearance in more of the New England form in tidewater Virginia—Williamsburg, Yorktown—and the lone, absolutely unique example in Chalmers St., Charleston. Really, all spoofing aside, this would be a splendid field for a specialist. I won't pretend to know where the gambrel started, but think the earliest specimens in New England and Nieuw Nederland are about contemporaneous—circa 1700. From present evidence, I feel sure that the first profuse landslide of them was in New England around 1720-30. Certainly, we were building little else then, whereas the Dutch do not seem to have adopted them so fully or universally till the decade of the 1760's. Perhaps the southern Hudson Valley book will have more to tell about the matter—at any rate, it must be regarded as still open to investigation. As for nomenclature—I never heard any one word except gambrel applied to this type of roof. If it sounds too Yankee, just call the things "roofs of double pitch" and let it go at that. . . .

As for specs—my prime requirements are (a) nose and ear comfort, and (b) conservative inconspicuousness. I'm still hoping that the eye-resting of my coming trip will obviate the need of full-time re-adoption—for even the semi-rest already effected has ameliorated the trouble considerably. If I do have to return to the goddam things, I'll probably wind up by keeping my old rimless outfit with the ear curves made of spiral wire. That was some help. . . .

Best wishes & so on—yr. Obt. Grandsire,  
Baltus Hormense von Theobaldus

473. TO MAURICE W. MOE

April 5, 1931

Hail, O Sage:—

Young Talman—the gang's arch-genealogist—hounded me into getting out all my fam'ly charts on both sides three years ago, and when I waded through 'em for the first time in years I couldn't find a goddam thing to account for such a nut as Grandpaw Tibbald. The whole keynote of my personality, aside from my antiquarianism, is individual revolt against meaningless convention; yet the whole ramify'd branchage behind me is about as solidly conventional a mess as you could well imagine. Any sort of aesthete is as rare as a hen's tooth, and intellect doesn't sparkle a bit—but that's to be expected, since I ain't no arc light myself. The overwhelming majority—virtually totality—of my ancestry on both sides is of the staid and stolid country-gentry class, with an abnormally high percentage of *clergymen* droning their amiably well-meaning matins and liturgies across the well-clipt hedges of a subdued and commonplace rural mead. I can scare up a full-fledged clerick—the Rev. Francis Fulford, Vicar of Dunsford—in four generations—that is, he is my great-great-grandfather—and by two generations behind him they come thick and fast. Then on my mother's side, also, they rant and rave—only here they tend to be Puritans and other freaks instead of sober Anglicans. That screechy old Quaker gal hang'd on Boston Common in 1660—Mary Dyer—is among my doubtfully revered progene-trices. Mediocrity seems quite the rule; for the three or four really great lines I touch—Musgrave of Edenhall, Cumberland, Chichester; Carew of Hacombe; Legge, Lord Dartmouth; etc., etc. are so far back that no trait from them could conceivably have any perceptible share in moulding me. When one's chart gets so far back as that, one can't be sure of having any more of this blood than any common churl may have; since of course the peasantry were constantly fertilised left-handedly by just the same people who handed right-handed blood along the chart lines. When you get back to two or three key ancestors, any one of these can connect you up with half the worthies of Plantagenet times and before—thus there probably isn't any Englishman living who *isn't* descended

from Charlemagne or at least from half a dozen of William the Conqueror's companions. All of which took the kick out of my rediscovery on the chart of bimboes like Thomas, Earl of Warwick, the lines of Beauchamp, Claving, de Clifford, Moreton, St. Albyn, Fitzurse, Chalons, etc., etc. One of these guys might mean a lot in 1850, but in 1550 or 1450 they are just decoration. I can raise both a knight (Sir Lancelot Allgood of Nunwick) and a Baronet (Sir John Morris of Clasemont, Glamorganshire, Wales) in the fifth generation back—that is, these guys are my great-great-great-grandfathers—but when you come to analyse 'em you find they are very ordinary specimens of their kind—the Knight being merely a small-time Tory (High Sheriff of Northumberland) knighted by George III, upon his accession, for Tory loyalty during the preceding Whig regime. And Sir John is merely a first baronet—a novus homo whose old man wasn't any more than a simple gentleman of Tredegar. In direct male line, I can't get back to the Conquest at all; the family of Lovecraft (early spelling) first appearing in Devonshire, in the valley of the Teign, circa 1450. I can't push my own lineal stem back of 1560 plus or minus, when John Lovecraft (present spelling) of Minster Hall near Newton-Abbot bore the present arms of the family: a chevron, engrailed, or, between three foxes' heads, erased, or, on a field Vert. Following his progeny down the line, I don't find a single mark of distinction above the mediocre country-gentry average. Clergymen to burn (though there was no Queen Mary to get it done), just plain squires who probably talked with a dialect almost as broad as their tenants', Captains, Colonels, occasional marriages into old lines but mostly marriages into small-time lines whose charted antecedents don't reach the Domesday Book—that's the bulk of the germ-plasm that made up Grandpa's paternal half. One curious strain is that of Washington—a branch with no discoverable relation to that which emigrated to Virginia and produc'd the arch-rebel. But not a damn thing to indicate a revolt against commonplace unintelligence or a taste for the weird and the cosmic. No philosophers—no artists—no writers—not a cursed soul I could possibly talk to without getting a pain in the neck.

In 1745 we find born a restless egg who probably felt the blind stultification of all this oppressive respectability; for according to common report this Thomas Lovecraft struck out to live while he lived, aided by wine, horses, and the fair. I hope he had a good time, for his legacy to posterity was a general property scattering which shot everything to hell

before he croaked—so that he had to sell even his family seat in 1823 . . . . historick date, on which the Lovecrafts ceased to be gentlemen according to the original and technical definition. Possibly the shock killed the old reprobate, for he himself bumped off three years after that. Out of the wreckage climbed sundry of his numerous lawful progeny—I can't answer for the doubtless numerous rest—including his sixth child and their son Joseph; already married and with six children of his own. This bird Joe, gentlemen, was the great-grandfather of your Grandpaw Tibbald. Casting around for a possible comeback area, he lit in an evil hour on these revolted colonies, whither he transported himself, wife (daughter of the Vicar of Dunsford), and offspring in the year 1827. Or more exactly, he meant to settle in still loyal Upper-Canada—the present Ontario—but found nothing doing, so filtered across the line to the Province of New York, in whose northern reaches he settled down on an experimental farm and promptly died, leaving his heirs to worry along as best they might. As it happened, all of them—John, William, Joseph, George, and Aaron—and a sister Mary—managed to keep above water; improved in some cases by advantageous marriages. Of these lines, however, all but two are definitely extinct, and even one of these two probably is. Joseph had a grandson who went west in the 1880's and dropped from sight. And George, marrying the daughter of a transplanted Allgood of Nunwick, had a son Winfield—who married into the old Yankee stock of Rhode Island and left one good-for-nothing descendant to close the family history in these colonies . . . . H. P. Lovecraft of Angell Street Grange and Tenbarnes Manor, author of those numerous works so conspicuously unmention'd in the annals of fame. George also had daughters, whose childless next generation complete the dead-ending. Hence—unless that lost western grandson of Joe Junior managed to keep alive amidst the wild and woolly—you behold in Old Theobald the Last of a Dynasty . . . . that is, so far as the States are concern'd. If I can ever get over to Devon I may try to see what sort of cousin I can unearth there aside from those planted beneath and around the parish churches of the Newton-Abbot region. I came across the name about twenty years ago in an advertisement of estates tied up in chancery in London—heirs wanted, and all that—but recalling the futile claims put in by other lines for similarly advertised fortunes great and small, (my maternal grandfather tried for a Rathbone fortune back in 1878, in a mild way, but nothing doing) I

let chancery take care of its own. In America, the Lovecraft line made some effort to keep from becoming nasally Yankeeised—and here for the first time we see an influence which may have directly affected me. Hence, almost without a doubt, stems my lifelong Toryism. This resistance may have been stronger in the equally-British Allgoods than in the Lovecrafts; for while the Lovecrafts were not university men, my Grandmother Allgood's father and maternal grandfather were both Oxonians. At any rate, my father was constantly warned not to fall into Americanisms of speech and provincial vulgarities of dress and mannerisms—so much so that he was generally regarded as an Englishman despite his birth in Rochester, N. Y. I can just recall his extremely precise and cultivated British voice, and his immaculate black morning-coat and vest, ascot tie, and striped grey trousers. I have myself worn some of his old ascots and wing collars, left all too immaculate by his early illness and death . . . . for in my youth I, too, resented being called anything but an Englishman. Now right here appears some of the force of sheer traditional influence operating in a blind way, as opposed to any of the obvious tags of conscious instruction. My father was stricken when I was less than three years old, and ever after that I was brought up in the utter and engulfing midst of a typical old Rhode Island family whose direct line came to those colonies in 1630 on the *Arbella* and who have not any link beyond the sea of a later date than 1658—of which more hereafter. According to all accepted rules, I ought to be as Yankeeified as any person living—for I was out of touch with any line other than Yankee, and a purely English line domiciled in New York state since 1827 is hardly bizarre or different enough to give a small child any great feeling of half-alienage. That is, by ordinary reckoning. And yet it did . . . . and how! I suppose I heard people mentioning that my father was “an Englishman”—and of course my mother now and then brought up ideals of unbroken traditions as the base for a proper self-respect and a gentleman's attitude of delicacy and mutual non-encroachment . . . . ideals naturally drawn from both sides of the stock I represented, and including mention of Minster Hall and the Lovecraft past as well as of Greene, Foster, the South County, and the Phillips past. Be that as it may, some inner force set me at once singing “God Save the King” and taking the opposite side of everything I read in American-biased child books on the Revolution. My aunts remember that as early as the age of three I wanted a British officer's red uniform,

and paraded around the house in a nondescript “coat” of brilliant crimson, originally part of a less masculine costume, and in picturesque juxtaposition with the kilts which with me represented the twelfth Royal Highland Regiment. Rule, Britannia! Nor can I say that any major change has ever taken place in my emotions. As I was then, so am I today. All my deep emotional loyalties are with the race and the empire rather than with the American branch—and if anything, this Old Englandism is about to become intensified as America grows more and more mechanised, standardised, and vulgarised—farther and farther removed from the original Anglo-Saxon stream which I represent. I could very well use Rupert Brooke's famous lines . . . . “If I should die, think only this of me; that there's some corner of a foreign field that is for ever ENGLAND.” . . . .

. . . What were my maternal strains—and how were they envired during their approximate three centuries in New England? . . . . The Phillips line here begins with the Rev. George Phillips, son of Christopher Phillips, Gent., of Rainham St. Martin's in Norfolk, who came on the *Arbella* in 1630 and settled in Watertown, Mass. From his eldest son Samuel comes the founder of the Exeter and Andover academies; but I come from his youngest son Michael who emigrated to Newport in 1668. Michael's son (from two of whom I am descended) crossed the bay and settled in the Narragansett Country. . . . The younger children of Narragansett planters generally moved north to smaller farms in the exquisitely idyllic Scituate-Foster country—and there we find my Phillipses after 1750. I have told you of my two pilgrimages to this region—1926 and 1929—and of my researches amongst the gravestones there. . . . My great-grandfather Jeremiah Phillips owned a mill which supplied the neighbouring countryside with grain. My grandfather, moving southward to a small village which he renamed Greene, engaged in lumbering and milling industries and ended by acquiring all the land in and around the village. He built the local hall, founded the local Masonic lodge, saw to the various educational enterprises of the region, and in general reestablished the magnate-like status of the pre-revolutionary south county; but in 1870 was overtaken by sudden collapse financially—a thing he could have averted by disavowing responsibility for a signed note, but which as a gentleman he refused to evade. This moved the family to Providence, where a happy financial recovery took place; so that I was born into a very com-

fortable home in the best part of the city—you saw the house on its terrace in 1923, though both it and the locality are not what they were in 1890. Other maternal lines had a very similar history—several having been larger and more important planters in the south county than the Phillipses. The Hazards and Rathbones, I may say without exaggeration, were great houses even in the full Virginian sense—a resemblance obvious even in the old colonial days, when relations between Narragansett and the South were very close. It is no mere caprice which turns my aging fancy toward Charleston. Many a Rhode Islander before the Revolution went there before me as health declined—so that some Whipple blood still survives there, though not in the male line. It was the congeniality betwixt Narragansett and the South which first exploited Newport as a watering place—the earliest visitors being southern families. Newport, of course, was “the town” frequented by Narragansett planters; Providence being relatively small and crude before the revolution, whilst Newport was a centre of cultivation and the arts. My principal non-Narragansett maternal strains are from the Providence area—Whipple-Field, Clemence, and Mathewson. The Whipples are a Norfolk line who first came to Ipswich, in the Massachusetts-Bay, where one of their branches settled whilst Capt. John Whipple came to Providence and founded the Rhode Island line. The antient Whipple homestead in Ipswich still stands and is used as a museum—a seventeenth century building with an overhang like that of Salem’s Seven Gables. In the revolution this family were all damn’d rebels, including the famous privateer Abraham, Capt. Benajah, and my lineal ancestor Capt. Benedict. My ancestor Benjamin Whipple married a daughter of the celebrated Huguenot Gabriel Bernon, who in 1723 founded King’s Church (now St. John’s) in Providence, but—haw! I caught you there—she is not my ancestress, since he had a second wife Esther Millard from whom I am descended. No curst French in Grandpa!

But I do have a single strain of Irish—Casey—coming in as follows. In 1641 Thomas Casey, Gent., of the Caseys of Tyrone who (by virtue of O’Neill descent) used the bloody hand of the O’Neills as their coat-of-arms, was a Protestant resident of Dublin, and marry’d to a gentlewoman of Gloucestershire. In that year came a frightful massacre by the papists, wherein all of Casey’s household were butcher’d in cold blood except for his six year old son, also named Thomas, who was taken by his nurse to the seat of his mother’s family in England. Hence, growing

up as an Englishman, he emigrated to Newport in 1658; marrying an Elliott and founding a line which includes Gen. Silas Casey (killed in the Mexican War—author of *Casey’s Military Tactics*), Gen. Edward Casey, the engineer who started the Washington Monument, Edward Pearce Casey (still living), architect of the Congressional Library, and so on. This celebrated military-engineering line descends from his middle son Adam. I am descended from Samuel, the youngest son. Also descended from Samuel, though not a lineal ancestor of mine, is a delightful artist-scoundrel forming the only aesthete I can scare up on my family tree. He was Sam’s own son—Sam junior, whose older brother John is my ancestor. A still older brother, Thomas, migrated to the province of New York, remain’d loyal to our rightful king during the treason of the 1770’s, and after the war migrated to Colborne, in Upper-Canada, where his posterity still hold positions of honour and respect.

Samuel Casey, Jun.—my great-great-great-granduncle—deserves a paragraph all to himself. He was a silversmith of such art and skill that pieces of his work are in both the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Metropolitan Museum of New York; and originally held a good estate in the Narragansett Country. In 1764 the burning of his house with valuable contents threw him into poverty . . . . but his notions of honour were more elastick than those of my grandfather Whipple Phillips in an hour of adversity. In short—mov’d by the easy morals which enabled many colonists to tolerate piracy, smuggling, coining, and rebellion against their lawful king—Uncle Samuel turn’d his silversmithing skill to counterfeiting, and produced some masterly Spanish milled dollars and Portugese moidores before the long arm of the law reached out for him. Being sentenced to be hang’d on Nov. 4, 1770, he was rescu’d by a band of neighbours with black’d faces (cf. Boston Tea Party) who storm’d the gaol and supply’d him with a horse for leaving the colony. Last seen riding west with coattails flapping in the wind, he leaves the history of Rhode Island and the pages of my pedigree. His brother John’s daughter Sarah (whose mother was a Dyer of the Quaker martyr’s line) marry’d John Rathbone and had two daughters, Sarah and Rhoby. These marry’d, respectively, Stephen Place and Jeremiah Phillips—and in the next generation Sarah’s daughter Rhoby Place (nam’d for her aunt) marry’d Rhoby’s son Whipple Phillips . . . . these espoused cousins becoming my mother’s parents and thus giving me two lines of Casey-Rathbone blood.

... I might also remark that longevity is very rare. Most of us tend to shuffle off around seventy, though the Place strain is long-lived (my elder aunt looks like the Places, and I therefore have high hopes of her long survival despite her poor health), and one of the elements behind the Place strain involves the sole real centenarian in my stock—Mary Brownell, wife of Thomas Hazard, who lived from 1623 to 1723. Physically I favour the strain running through my Phillips line back to the Whipples, indeed, almost everyone remarks a resemblance to me in the painting of Commodore Abraham Whipple at the Rhode Island Historical Society.

But is Grandpa yet accounted for after all these words? Whence the weird and cosmic inclinations? Whence the predilection for dabbling in these floods of words and sentences? Whence the disgust for blind beliefs and meaningless conventions? ...

... Why did little rock-hill farmhouses arouse horror in me? Why did I pore over *Grimm* and the *Arabian Nights* and the Greek myths with an ardour given to nothing else? Why did I think that Providence's antient Georgian hill was a haunted place, connected with some memory just eluding me? Why did the sunset, seen beyond the mystical spires and domes of the lower town from Prospect Terrace, always fill me with a curious sensation of opening gates and about-to-be-revealed wonders? Don't ask me—for I haven't a shadow of an answer! ... And whence my restless curiosity about the basic question of "what is anything"? And my innate and instinctive disgust at the orthodox Christian influences around me at home and at Sunday-School—a disgust which left me free to be a Graeco-Roman pagan without the slightest emotional tugging from the direction of the obsolescent Christian faith? No—I don't think any *basic* quality of mine has any *visible* source either in heredity or experience. Grandpaw jest grow'd! How, for example, does a pure Nordick come to possess a fully-develop'd ROMAN patriotism—when nobody around me ever gave Rome any particular notice? ...

Any strains of the sombre or the melancholy in me must be attributed to a variety of circumstances. Poor health and a sort of low vitality may form a starter; and the early death of my father and slightly melancholick cast of my mother cannot be overlook'd. There is, too, the element of economic decline to be reckon'd with. ... By the time I was born—my father had regained a modest prosperity tho' he left only ten thou-

sand dollars, and my grandfather was fully on his feet again, and President-Treasurer of a company promoting land and irrigation in Idaho. My array of toys, books, and other youthful pleasures was virtually unlimited; and I doubt if I ever thought of such a thing as varying prosperity or instability of fortune. The poor were simply curious animals about whom one spoke insincerely and to whom one gave money, food, and clothing . . . . like the "heathen" about whom the church people were always talking. Money as a definite conception was wholly absent from my horizon. Rather was I a simple, unplaced entity like the care-free figures moving through the Hellenick myths. But actual decline did set in when I was about ten years old; so that I saw a steady dropping of servants, horses, and other adjuncts of domestick management. Even before my grandfather's death a sense of peril and falling-off was strong within me, so that I felt a kinship to Poe's gloomy heroes with their broken fortunes. And of course the frightful crash itself—in 1904, when the death of my grandfather broke up all his recuperative plans and forced the sale of the old home—gave me a tremendous and positive melancholy. All the air rotted with decay, and the moon itself was putrescent. I had been vastly attached to my grandfather and to my birthplace, and when both—to say nothing of my beloved black cat Nigger-Man—were swept away in the course of a few months, I was about ready to cash in myself. . . . But I didn't—for I was only fourteen after all, and had my first pair of long trousers and the prospect of high school to think about . . . . besides which, 598 wasn't exactly a slum or gaol, even after 454. And there was the mystery of the limitless cosmos to penetrate . . . . the tantalising void with the unknown circling orbs, and the power of imagination to piece out what science couldn't tell. Thus I jogg'd along and managed to have a fairly good time in spots despite rotten health, headaches, and a sort of sense of decline in everything. But without doubt, my aesthetick sense worked more in the line of escape than lyric exultation; with the macabre then and ever its long suit. And economic decline continued steadily—without a break to this day, and with several sharp jogs downward, as when an uncle lost a lot of dough for my mother and me in 1911, and (of course) when my poor health and jazzed-up nerves made it clear that I was not going to be any wow at sestertius-scraping myself. Lately I have become so harden'd to poverty that ironick amusement is mixed with the melancholy. Indeed, I can live on less than anybody I know of, and have developed



economies I couldn't have thought of twenty, fifteen, ten, or even five years ago. But I'm about at rock-bottom as I am, and I guess any fresh tobogganing would send me back to the Barrington river—without the bicycle, but with no need of any means for a return trip. I certainly shan't keep on the existence-farce if I have to give up living in an aesthetic neighbourhood, or have to lose the books and familiar objects of furniture and decoration which constitute my concrete as distinguished from my abstract universe.

As for a physique—I didn't inherit a very good set of nerves, since near relatives on both sides of my ancestry were prone to headaches, nerve-exhaustion, and breakdowns. My grandfather had frightful blind headaches, and my mother could run him a close second; whilst my father was stricken with paralysis in the early forties. My own headaches and nervous irritability and exhaustion-tendency begin as early as my existence itself—I, too, was an early bottle baby with unexplained miseries and meagre nutriment-assimilative capacities; though I got along excellently after a time except for nervousness and headaches . . . . and bad digestion . . . . and heart and kidney trouble due to nervous malregulation of automatic organic functions . . . . and poor eyesight . . . . and dizziness . . . . and abnormally ready fatigue . . . . yeah, outside of this I was quite okay. School had to be irregular, and I undoubtedly had too little physical exercise because I hated exercise for its own sake, and was bored to death with all games. I loved the summer countryside, however, and was constantly in the open in warm weather . . . . my old home then being close to the edge of the primal woods and fields and ravines, most of which are not built over. Of course my abnormal sensitiveness to the cold has always existed—though always compensated for by a power to enjoy any amount of mid-July heat. My leading pleasures were books, pictures, walks in ancient places, museums, writing, music (until my violin experience soured me on the latter), and such playing with other children as involved the making-up and acting-out of plots. I was not, like many neurotic and bookish children, essentially solitary by nature. I liked to play war and Indian and policeman and railway man and all that, though I could not abide a mere game which involved no imagination or dramatic unfolding. I liked a flexible and extemporaneous plot-element, and baseball, football, and all that simply left me cold. Nor was this because of my poor physique. Sedentary games, if they were games only,

made me yawn just as widely. And still do. I have not the least trace of sporting blood in me. The lure of gambling is as alien to me as the love of gawd. My dizziness made me tremendously afraid of heights, but I deliberately conquered that by repeated experiments of wall-walking at increasing altitudes. Finally I took a post-graduate course in railway trestles. Having weak ankles, I never skated; but I loved the woods and their traditional associations. The lore of hunting allured me, and the feel of a rifle was balm to my soul; but after killing a squirrel I formed a dislike for killing things which could not fight back, hence turned to targets until such a time as chance might give me a war. But I had bad luck in wars, for I was only eight when the Spanish came, and was discouraged with more eloquence than urbanity when I had almost persuaded a world war examiner that I was Hercules Secundus. My greatest exercise was bicycle-riding, which I pursued from 1900 to 1913. I cultivated high speeds, and managed to cover a large and picturesque area of countryside—perhaps forming in this way that close acquaintance with rural New England which made me a local antiquarian in the end. It is in this period that my typical love of white village steeples in distant vales, and farmhouse roofs beyond gnarled hillside orchards, became so prominent a feature. Most of my cycle trips were made in quest of new and surprising landscape vistas—for I always sought the element of surprise—unfolding—the unexpected—the edge of the unreal, where anything is possible—. My eyes troubled intermittently, and I wore glasses most of the time. Around 1906 I was a good rifle shot, but by 1910 my skill had declined. Nervous breakdowns were frequent, and that of 1908 caused me to adopt a sort of hermitage and withdrawal from the world which only the influence of amateur journalism dispersed. College was found impracticable—and meanwhile my interests had veered away from literature to science and back to literature again. Cosmic mystery was always my goal in one way or another—but I saw that the pen would get me a bigger slice of it than would the more exacting telescope, mathematical formula, or laboratory. I was a devotee of the drama, though this interest has waned in later years. Never was I any good mechanically—making things, and all that. And I have no drawing skill. All the effective use I ever put the old lunchhooks to was writing and map-drawing. . . .

. . . I might remark that my tendency to endless correspondence is a relatively late growth. In youth I scarcely did any letter-writing—thank-

ing anybody for a present was so much of an ordeal that I would rather have written a two hundred fifty-line pastoral or a twenty-page treatise on the rings of Saturn. Not until I was twenty years old did I write any letters worthy of the name—and my beginning then was due to the fact that my well-beloved little cousin Phillips Gamwell (died 1916) had reached the age of twelve and blossomed out as a piquant letter-writer eager to discuss the various literary and scientific topics broached during our occasional personal conversations. Four or five years of Johnsonese periods loosed upon this youthful and encouraging audience form'd the preparation for the verbal deluges which you first sampled in the 1914-15 season.

Latter chapters need no recapitulation. My health improved vastly and rapidly, though without any ascertainable cause, about 1920-21; and still further (in connection with my reducing) in 1925. In that latter year I left off the full-time use of glasses, though I shall probably have to go back shortly. In these latter years I don't know but that age is beginning to counteract the improvement—winters seem to get at me about as badly as imagination can picture—but compared with the early years Grandpa is a pretty tough old bird.

And so—after some nine pages—the explanation may rest for a while. A fine explanation, except for two things—first, that it doesn't explain anything; and second, that the personality it tries to explain amounts to too little to need explanation. But outside of that it's quite all right. Orta get me theme credit in the class, if credit is due for quantitative allotments of verbiage. No—on the whole, I'm afraid that all this prose doesn't tell half so much about the old man as certain of his quasi-sonneteering *Fungi from Yuggoth*. But that doesn't matter a damn when the subject is of complete and carefree insignificance. Nine pages of ancestry and environment—to define Old Theobald. *Montes Laborant—nascitur ridiculus mus!*

Rye Toddle inkaday!

Grandpa Lo.

474. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
April 29, 1931

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

.... As for the status of poetry—I'm sure there's nothing to worry about! Whatever art or activity gives one satisfaction is a perfectly adequate one, no matter what its abstract status may be—though so far as that goes, there is certainly no art or activity which can be sensibly held as surpassing poetry. Poetry can express more phases & details & shadings of any given thing than any other aesthetic medium when handled by a master, hence surely deserves a place among the very foremost of human phenomena.

About space—I don't see that it need be any less interesting when regarded simply as a set of working rules. If anything, such a conception adds the drama of mystery & uncertainty to the cosmos as it seethes on behind its veil of subjective aspects. It is a mistake to become too attached to any particular set of ideas or intellectual conventions. The true philosopher knows how delusive everything is, hence doubts all things from the very start. Then when new revelations come, he has nothing to lose.

As for democracy—it has had brief periods of real effectiveness as a creator of the tangible conditions of civilisation; but these periods have been briefer, & their actual degree of democracy much less, than is commonly supposed. The "democracy" of Greece was upheld by the submergence of a vast slave population outside the radius of the verbal principle; & in modern nations the same thing is true under other names—the equivalent of the slaves being an industrial class with only theoretical privileges. Democracy can be a real force only in a very small & very young countries—early New England forming a classic example; in which, however, the democracy went when the youth & simplicity went. The empty name & catchwords of democracy, of course, long survive the real article—veiling in most cases an indirect & invisible yet highly powerful government by financial & industrial interests. Certainly, the

changes in America (& for that matter, elsewhere) resulting from mechanisation are not by any stretch of the optimistic fancy to be welcomed. All that can be said for them is that they are absolutely inevitable. Everything in modern existence is a direct & absolute corollary of the discoveries of applied steam power & of large-scale applications of electrical energy; & there is no possible way to unmake a discovery once it has been stumbled on. It was so when the principle of agriculture was first stumbled on some 20,000 years ago or slightly less. Before that time all mankind were simple nomads, hunting & tending flocks. That accident created civilisation—a whole new way of life—& many doubtless regretted the change at the time. Actually, no one way of life as naturally evolved is very much better or worse than any other. What we hate is simply *change*, as such. And very naturally & reasonably, since most of the zest of life comes from illusions depending on stable backgrounds & continuity in traditions & folkways. In a century or two everybody will be used to the newer methods & ideologies, & will regard them as the old were once regarded. The special misfortune of those now living is that they form a transition generation, with too great a disparity between memories & actualities to feel at one with any attainable milieu. A "U. S. of Europe" would be merely a customs union. With nations so racially & culturally divergent, an actual federal super-nation like the American republic of 1790 would hardly be imaginable. . . .

I remain,  
Yr. Most Obt Servt,  
HPLovecraft

475. TO WILLIAM LUMLEY

Rio Vista Hotel  
120 Bay Street  
St. Augustine, Fla.  
May 12, 1931

Dear Mr. Lumley:—

. . . . The idea of a land of darkness is excellent, and one footnote telling of ancient MSS. *which even the Egyptian priests could not read*

excited my imagination tremendously. That kind of thing resembles my own (purely mythical) "Pnakotic Manuscripts"; which are supposed to be the work of "Elder Ones" preceding the human race on this planet, and handed down through an early human civilisation which once existed around the north pole. . . . .

. . . With every good wish, I remain Yrs. most cordially and sincerely,

H. P. Lovecraft

476. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Rio Vista Hotel  
St. Augustine, Florida  
May 16, 1931

Dear A.W.:—

. . . . . You may well envy me this trip, for I can't recall any that I have enjoyed equally so far. This place braces me up like a tonic, although I can't say that any day yet has been as hot as I'd really like. I still shiver now and then around morning and evening, but noon leaves nothing to be desired. The ancient Spanish atmosphere is infinitely alluring, and I am picking up various fresh touches of colour every day. I have seen all there is to see of the ancient houses and streets, and have visited the most fantastic old cemeteries imaginable. And the subtropical scenery is a never-ending delight. I am now beginning to note exotic fauna as well as flora. In one long glassy lagoon (across which the Moorish domes and belfries of the great winter hotels and churches can be seen in silhouette like some half-dreamed city of the djinni out of the Arabian Nights) there are flying or leaping fish; and above the water swoop diving birds—kingfishers, perhaps—always on the alert for prey. Then again—on the shore near the ancient fort one often spies long-legged, long-necked wading birds—herons or flamingoes, perhaps—such as I never before saw outside a zoo. . . A few days ago I went over to Anastasia Island to see the vast alligator and ostrich farm which lies in a dense cypress swamp there—and it was certainly worth the price of admission! Tall trees casting a sinister twilight over shallow lagoons—funeral garlands of trailing Spanish moss—and the whole ground sur-

face alive with scaly, wriggling saurians, some of which are computed to be 300, 500, and even 700 years old! Many of them may actually have seen Ponce de Leon or Pedro de Menendez!

.... Well, best wishes—  
HP

477. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Dunedin, Florida  
June 5, 1931

Dear A. W.:—

Whippoorwills? I'll say we have 'em down here! Exotic ones, too, with a liquid rolling note apparently more complex than that of their northern kinsfolk. I first heard them in the mystical dawn outside my window, and half imagined that they were voices calling across the ultimate void from Beyond. And we have snakes as well. A splendidly mottled one paid us a call on the front stoop yesterday, and Whitehead made his visit a longer one by catching him and pickling him in alcohol for my benefit. I shall certainly prize this addition to my modest museum! ... Your "People" (*Evening in Spring*) is magnificent—and all three of us here are unanimously shouting its praises. You've got the stuff in you, Son!

Best wishes—  
HP

478. TO HENRY GEORGE WEISS

Dunedin (Florida)  
June 5, 1931

Dear HG:

.... I am, most certainly, having the veritable time of my life; for Whitehead is one of the most fascinating personalities I have ever encountered. He is generosity & good-fellowship personified, & has a searching erudition that makes his conversation an endless pleasure.

Though rector of the local Church of the Good Shepherd, he has nothing of the musty cleric about him; but dresses in sport clothes, swears like a he-man on occasion, & is an utter stranger to bigotry or priggishness of any sort.

The scenery here is hauntingly appealing, & I am at this moment on the sun-baked gulf shore under a palm-tree. The *climate* beats even St. Augustine, & I feel active & braced up beyond all comparison with my usual state in the north. At the same time, I think I'd rather live in St. Augustine than here; since the *newness* of everything in this region would get on my nerves eventually. I need a touch of historic tradition & antiquarian architecture in order to achieve imaginative satisfaction.

I expect to move along next week—going back to St. Augustine for a week, though trying to work in a cheap excursion to the South of Florida—Miami & possibly (dare I dream it?) Key West. A couple of belated revision cheques arouse a hope in this direction which I lacked before. ....

Now as to the argument—I really don't see that we've made much progress in trying to find a non-religious basis for *the sense of obligation*. You have done some noble & subtle reasoning—all valid & clarifying in many directions—but the gist of the basic question still remains untouched. Why "should" anybody do anything which nature doesn't *force* him to do, & which would not advance his own individual satisfaction?

Your first argument is that non-cruelty is natural within certain limits, & that with growing civilisation those limits tend to expand. This is, to a moderate extent, quite true—as I have myself previously pointed out—*aesthetics* being the basis of the change. But to fancy that this essentially passive softening & refinement of taste could account for the fanatical & assertive emotions of radicals & equalitarians is beyond the utmost boundary of probability. No ordinary emotion of this sort could conceivably take on such grotesque extremes. To account for hysterical devotion & martyrdom, some potent conception of *imperative obligation*—such as the material world does not provide for—is absolutely necessary. Incidentally, your mention of an "economic interpretation" of enemy-eating implies a definite & demonstrable error. It is a matter of common anthropological knowledge that such practices are mystico-religious or magical in background & motivation; often involving the conception of absorbing the victim's strength & prowess with his substance.

To sum up my position—the *whole concept* of a rigid *right* or *justice*

or *obligational element* (as distinguished from the mild & passive mercy-feeling resulting from aesthetics) has *no conceivable basis* outside mystical religion. I have tried in vain to find anything in your arguments which would challenge that position. Your Marxian quotations from Cole are all tremendously apt, & I agree with them. But this sort of interpretation of materialism does not account for the obligation concept. Your Marx quotations regarding intangible values—sugar-weighing—& your comparison with ants & bees regarding an obligational “labour bond”—are likewise what I would call interesting but irrelevant. True—but what has it to do with the validity of any obligational element apart from necessity? Ants & bees react as they do *because they have to*—because they are made that way. So do human beings & all other natural objects. Whatever way they *do* react, is the natural & inevitable way, & that’s all there is to it. Ideas of *preference* in the matter—i.e., *any choice of courses within the limit of material possibility*—are manifestly artificial & without natural basis. Only aesthetic feelings (to a mild degree) or religious feelings (often to a fanatical degree) could account for the origin & persistence of such preferential notions. This, of course, applies to *all* obligational & preferential feelings—not merely those connected with social adjustment.

As for *mind*—we may most briefly define its essence as a mode of motion in the material cells of the body—primarily the brain. In its essence it is most distinctly *not a social product* but a pure biological product—the typical natural response of nerve tissue (both general & cerebrally localised) to external environment. Far from being social in basis, it may be said to represent the lone wolf—the individual—learning how to protect itself against its surroundings. Various arbitrary forms of mental expression, however, (such as speech) are indeed social products. You err in thinking that man has been gregarious from the start—though of course this whole matter has nothing to do with the question of an obligation-sense. Gregariousness preceded speech, of course, but it was in *turn* (so far as comparative evidence indicates) preceded by a solitary phase of life—such as is still found in connexion with the gorilla.

All your Marx-Engels observations form good & subtle reasoning so far as they go, but they wholly dodge the primary question *of the nature of the quality of obligation*. You give no sound reason *why* any individual “should” (and what is the *real* meaning of “should”, or “ought”,

anyhow?) follow any other course than that prompted or made imperative by nature & demonstrated by cool reason to be most satisfying to his particular individual instincts.

When you turn to consider various possible outcomes of the present awkward social & political situation, I can agree with you to a surprising extent. Any of the courses you enumerate is distinctly possible—but so, I must insist, is likewise a gradual palliation & capitalistic letdown without social & aesthetic overturns. You are too cocksure when you insist that the present leaders will not make any tangible concessions till after the mob becomes dangerously conscious of its power. Note that I am by no means so cocksure in the opposite direction. I don’t say that any such compromise is *bound to succeed*. Only a damn fool pretends to be a prophet where vast unknown, unstable, & complex forces are concerned. I merely say that the compromise *may* succeed; & that I hope very much, personally, that it will. But I am free to admit that any sort of catastrophe—from tyrannous communism to complete savagery—may come instead. It is a sheer gamble whether or not the existing leaders will see the need of a letdown before the mob grows universally conscious of its destructive physical power.

As for my own attitude on the subject—of course environment has given me certain natural *inclinations* in the matter of opinion, just as it plays a vast part in the formation of all human opinion; but so abstract & impersonal are my general mental processes that I don’t think this element can be held as paramount. If you ever saw me arguing with the blind upholders of an aristocratic tradition for its own sake, you would realise how far from stereotyped & derivative my own ideas & sentiments are. Such reactionaries regard me as a hopelessly non-human semi-bolshevik myself! My frank position is, that I think no conceivable system of communism could bring civilised people any possible recompense for the damage its establishment would inevitably involve. Otherwise, I’m impersonally neutral. I don’t give a damn whether my grandfather’s ex-coachman knows more or less Latin, or appreciates literature more or less, than I do. It’s all one to me. I wouldn’t give a nickel either to teach him or to keep him from learning. But I’m god damned if I’ll stand for being held back myself, merely waiting for him to catch up! As for communism—I don’t give a damn whether it exists or not so long as it lets gentlemen alone, & does not alter the relationship betwixt the individual & the best opportunities for free intellectual & aesthetic

expression. I oppose it because I believe the odds are against its adoption in a civilised way. Russia is certainly the last model for an Anglo-Saxon to follow. . . . .

Yrs. most sincerely,  
HPL

479. TO JAMES FERDINAND MORTON

St. Augustine, in His majty's Province  
of East-Florida

June 16, 1731

Candescent Corona of Congestedly Catalogued Chronology:—

. . . . . As a whole, *climate* is South Florida's chief asset. It braces the old man up like a tonick. But the landscape is flat and rotten—swamp or sandy pine barrens—except in spots. Miami's vegetation of the subtropicks doesn't get that far south, whilst that of the full tropicks does not naturally attain its fullest development. But *Key West* is the real thing. Vast palms, banyans, and all the fixings. That's the place for me! Yet it was only founded in 1822, and for all its distinctiveness has not the utter antique fascination of St. Aug. . . .

Expectantly,  
Θεοβάλδος  
Theobaldus

480. TO J. VERNON SHEA

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
June 19, 1931.

My dear Mr. Shea:—

. . . . . Poe has probably influenced me more than any other one person. If I have ever been able to approximate his kind

of thrill, it is only because he himself paved the way by creating a whole atmosphere & method which lesser men can follow with relative ease. I make no claim to membership in the first rank of weird writers—a rank represented by Poe among the dead, & by Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, Walter de la Mare, Lord Dunsany, & Montague Rhodes James among the living. It is enough for me if I can make a good showing amongst the smaller fry represented in the cheap magazines.

Others—including editor Wright—agree with you in liking *The Outsider*, but I can't say that I share this opinion. To my mind this tale—written a decade ago—is too glibly *mechanical* in its elimination effect, & almost comic in the bombastic pomposity of its language. As I re-read it, I can hardly understand how I could have let myself be tangled up in such baroque & windy rhetoric as recently as ten years ago. It represents my literal though unconscious imitation of Poe at its very height. In those days I couldn't help aping the mannerisms as well as reflecting the spirit. However—I'll concede that the tale has the single merit of an original point of view. It is my constant complaint that allegedly weird writers fall into a commonplaceness through reflecting wholly conventional & ordinary perspectives, sympathies, & value-systems; & in this instance (as in others) I sought to escape from this pitfall as widely as I could. . . . .

. . . . . In my opinion, my best tale is *The Colour Out of Space* (1927). Second comes *The Music of Erich Zann* (1921), & after that my own preferences are very vague. I don't care much for the ultra-fantastic tales I wrote under extreme Dunsanian influence—*White Ship* &c.—although one more (*The Strange High House in the Mist*) is still due to appear in *W. T.* Yes—I had a very short tale called *The Terrible Old Man*, but I don't think much of it. The best thing I ever did in that brief, quasi-folklore line was *The Cats of Ulthar* (1920). I've written an endless number of stories, but have saved only 40 so far for permanent preservation. After I get home, if you like, I'll send you a list of all my stuff; & later lend you copies (either mss. or printed sheets) of any you haven't seen but might care to wade through. Glad you liked *The Dunwich Horror*. I used considerable realism in developing the locale of that thing—the prototype being the decaying agricultural region N. E. of Springfield, Mass.—especially the township of Wilbraham, where I visited for a fortnight—in 1928. My *Whisperers*

*in Darkness* will reflect a Vermont visit made in the same year. I am very fond of giving weird tales a minutely realistic setting as a sort of foil for the unréal extravagancies of the central theme. . . . .

Yrs. most cordially & sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

481. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Brooklyn, N.Y.  
July 19, 1931

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

St. Augustine was perhaps the all-around high spot of the trip; though for a long sojourn I think I would prefer Charleston, with its continuous Anglo-Saxon tradition & 18th century survivals. Still—only in St. Augustine can one see actual 16th century houses & quasi-mediaeval fortifications. My stay in Florida has surely brought the Spanish colonial tradition much closer to my imagination. I have now touched all four of the great colonial civilisations of North America—English, French, Dutch, & Spanish. Dunedin & the Florida west coast agreed with me climatically, but rather bored me through lack of antiquities. Key West was a high spot—actually the West Indies in all but name. I was bitterly disappointed at not being able to get over to Cuba, but a lean purse is an unanswerable argument. I shall make every effort to get to Havana next year. Miami did not produce much of an impression, though some excursions out of it had their points of interest. I saw a Seminole village on the edge of the Everglades, & sailed out over a neighbouring coral reef in a glass-bottomed boat which allowed one to see the picturesque tropical marine fauna & flora of the ocean floor. On the return trip I stopped off at St. Augustine for another week, but finally reentered the old American South. It was like a homecoming to see old Georgian doorways & steeples again—& I explored Savannah for the first time. Then Charleston—though waning cash forced me to cut my stay short. I could only glance briefly at Richmond—then straight back to N. Y., where my hosts eliminated food & lodging expenses. The South gave me, this spring, what I have never before expe-

rienced in nearly 41 years of existence—namely, 2 solid months of continuous comfort. I shall have to move down there some day—for obviously, it is the only climate in the U. S. physically suited to me. I do not, however, find any *weirdness* in the scene. Others do, but I can't. All my sense of landscape-terror centres in the more remote & rocky regions of New England. . . .

Yr Most Obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

482. TO J. VERNON SHEA

Brooklyn, N. Y.  
July 19, 1931

Dear Mr. Shea:—

I'd like to see some of your tales some time—they sound exceedingly interesting, even though they may have the usual limitations of the beginner. You have no need to be ashamed of crude early work, for everyone has to go through a period of experiment & pioneering. We all tend to overwork the dictionary & thesaurus at a certain stage, but this soon passes. Your general reading, as you outline it, sounds gratifyingly vital & well chosen. The more you read of good literature, the better equipped you will be for any sort of writing—even though your especial field may be restricted to the fantastic as mine is. Conversely, the less you read of popular magazine trash the better will be your chances of achieving genuine artistic expression. It is the machine-made, insincere trash that brings in the money—but that is another story which has nothing to do with literature. I am assuming that your wish to write is a profound & spontaneous one, such as only the production of real literature can satisfy—a wish that takes the form of imaginative glimpses & conceptions so poignant that you cannot feel easy till they are in some measure captured on paper. Practice & reading are the best aids to the fulfilment of this urge. *Simplicity* in style ought always to be cultivated—for it leads to the best results in the end, even though it may prolong one's period of apparent crudeness. It is better to be simple, sincere, & a little crude, than to achieve a glib facade of unctuous fluency through the

use of cheap & popular artificialities of rhetoric. The best style is the one with the least complexity & the fewest mannerisms. Delicate shadings & subtleties can be depicted with care & accuracy, yet without any of the flamboyant extravagancies common to immaturely pompous writing. The specimen of your prose impresses me very favourably indeed, although it is of a somewhat more florid sort than I usually aim at nowadays. It really shows a splendid sense of colour & imagery, & to my mind is very distinctly the utterance of one who has something to say artistically. Certainly, it is better than I could have written at your age. With time you may feel inclined to write rather more objectively & restrainedly—with less of what might be taken for mannerism & sentimentality—but for the present I believe you have vast reason to congratulate yourself. I must read *The Earth Taint* as a whole some day—in print, I hope! Glad to see you are departing from hackneyed convention enough to make your earth-folk the villains. One step farther from convention, & you won't find it necessary to divide your characters into heroes & villains at all. In real life, everyone is a compound of hero & villain—though some individuals naturally incline toward certain proportions of character which roughly correspond to the stereotyped categories. . . . .

Stories in *W. T.* in which I have had a hand include—among others—the following:

<i>The Last Test</i>	}	Adolphe de Castro
<i>The Executioner</i>		
<i>The Curse of Yig</i> —		Zealia B. Reed
<i>Two Black Bottles</i> —		W. B. Talman
<i>The Loved Dead</i>	}	C. M. Eddy, Jr.
<i>Deaf, Dumb, &amp; Blind</i>		

It is amusing that you should at one time have thought me a clergyman, since I have not entertained any belief in the supernatural since the age of 8. . . . .

I met Quinn twice during my stay in N. Y., & find him exceedingly intelligent & likeable. He is 44 years old, but looks rather less than that. Increasingly stocky, dark, & with a closely clipped moustache. He is first of all a shrewd business man, & freely affirms that he manufactures hokum to order for market demands—in contrast to the artist,

who seeks sincere expression as the result of an obscure inward necessity. . . . .

For H. L. Mencken I entertain the greatest admiration, even though he sometimes becomes needlessly vociferous & extravagant in his tirades. His general philosophy of the universe is a sound one, & he has been of inestimable service to American letters in helping to explode the mawkish & insincere *genteel tradition* which formerly stultified all our aesthetic expression. His principal weakness (recognised by himself) is an inability to enter sympathetically into the spirit of poetry.

Joyce is hardly worth reading unless one be a specialist in the history of literary form. Proust is not at all like him, but inherits many qualities from the main tradition of the French novel. Gertrude Stein is an erratic extremist whose work is a total loss so far as real art is concerned. Extravagance of that sort is merely a curiosity—though sometimes a fairly significant curiosity—in the museum of aesthetic development. . . . .

Your travels may add up to more than mine in mileage & variety, even though not drawn out into a straight north & south line as mine have been. It is my antiquarian taste which keeps me close to the historic Atlantic coast. The colonies so far entered by me are the following:

Rhode Island	(1890)	Maryland	(1925)
Massachusetts	(1890)	Dist. of Columbia	(1925)
Connecticut	(1903)	Virginia	(1925)
New Hampshire	(1921)	Vermont	(1927)
New York	(1922)	North Carolina	(1930)
New Jersey	(1922)	South Carolina	(1930)
Pennsylvania	(1922)	Quebec	(1930)
Ohio	(1922)	Georgia	(1931)
Maine	(1923)	Florida	(1931)
Delaware	(1925)		

Yrs most sincerely  
HPLovecraft



483. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.,  
July 25, 1931.

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

... As for civilisation—there is no reason for mourning the passing of the present western world; for all cultures peter out in the end, & I don't think this has been a very notable one except in the single field of scientific achievement. The civilisations of Egypt, Persia, Greece, & Rome undoubtedly excelled ours—in fact, virtually everything of value in ours was borrowed or inherited from Greece & Rome, so that it is really a prolongation of the Graeco-Roman stream rather than a new & separate affair. Probably the next civilisation will be a sort of continuation of this as this is of the Graeco-Roman. One cannot yet tell whether a stable machine-culture will grow out of contemporary life without an intervening break, or whether the present fabric will explode & give place to a wholly new growth beginning with a pastoral & agricultural barbarism amidst which the machine will be forgotten except as a subject of magical tales. It doesn't greatly matter in the end. As for the idea of "liberty"—a good deal is pure sentimentality & hokum . . . a matter of mere pompous language without any underlying reality. Perfect freedom never has existed & never can exist. When individualism goes too far, it cancels itself & produces chaos. Then comes disintegration, & a choice betwixt the two forms of control represented by fascism & communism. Between these, the logical choice is fascism; for this retains the stratification & cultural traditions of the past, whereas communism diligently wipes all these things out. Democracy in a complex industrial civilisation is a joke—since it means nothing but the concentration of all resources in the hands of a few capable plutocrats, & the subterraneous rule of this group under the outward forms of democracy. Concerning unemployment—the present wave is the worst yet because it combines a new & permanent element with the recurrent depression-element which always comes at intervals in unregulated commercial nations. This new & permanent element is what we have come to call *technological*

*unemployment*, & is the result of a very simple but profoundly important effect of mechanised industry—namely; that under all conditions, & to a constantly increasing degree as invention advances, *it now requires only a few persons, comparatively speaking, to produce all the materials which the total consumption of the world can possibly demand.* This is because of the infinite multiplying-power of the machine. Once make a pattern, & the apparatus to construct a given article from it, & there is no limit to the *number of such articles* which a mere handful of machine-tenders can produce. If more than the world's normal supply are made, there will be no one to buy them. Obviously, the old system of unregulated individual industry breaks down here. The manufacturer, under the traditional system, seeks to produce as much as possible with as little expenditure as possible; & therefore installs labour-saving machinery, discharging all but the few men needed to run it, & keeping these busy for as much time as he can in the face of labour-union pressure. This formerly gained him a good profit, but now he finds that after his cheap, easy & inexhaustible producing mechanism has turned out a certain amount of goods, there is no market whatever for any more. People can use only a certain amount of any one thing, hence beyond that limit articles of the sort are useless. The so-called "saturation-point" has been reached, despite all artificial devices like style changes & "high-pressure salesmanship". Moreover—the manufacturer *has restricted his own market* by trying to produce more & more cheaply—like the dog with a bone in his mouth who lost the bone through reaching for its reflection in the water. In discharging men & installing machines, he so swelled the pauper class that the remaining solvent element, capable of forming a market, was materially decreased. If men can't be employed, they can't get money; & if they can't get money, they can't buy goods. Thus the manufacturer is caught in his own trap. By trying to produce goods more cheaply, he stripped so many people of their money that there are no longer enough solvent people to buy his goods! The eternal vicious circle—& a fine piece of grim cosmic irony. Then he closes down altogether & lives on his accumulated surplus while the masses live on charity or starve to death. Virtually no goods are produced. Prices fall, & eventually the few people who are not on charity manage to use up the existing stock of goods. This ends the *temporary* depression & gives the manufacturer a market once more. He reopens his factory & begins to produce again. *Formerly*, this brought

safe prosperity, since the fresh start of industry required enough employed men to redistribute money, rescue the poor from charity, & expand markets once more. *But this recovery is less & less complete as the machine age advances, because the fresh start of industry & the virtually unlimited production of goods requires fewer & fewer employes.* The residue of the *permanently unemployed & unemployable* increases rapidly, & we have at last to face the situation that *all the possible business of the world can be performed by only a fraction of the world's population*—the rest remaining absolutely superfluous & without any natural function whereby they can lay claim to food, clothing, & shelter. It is no longer a fact that there is always work for willing hands. The hands may be willing, but all the work that needs doing has been done. No matter what the size of a population, there is work for only a fraction of it so long as those in control of the power & industrial machinery are allowed to map out their own employing conditions & operate on the principle of minimum outlay. Those who have money will get more & more of it. The very brightest of those without money will get the few available jobs & receive whatever wages the owners will wish to pay. And the rest will starve or accept an increasingly impatient charity. The result of this unsupervised & unmodified drift is, of course, inevitable social revolution. No vast horde of people will endure long starvation if they have the physical force to seize food; & when the masses of the starving are large & desperate enough they will have the force & will use it. Then communism & chaos. *But*—the manufacturers know all this as well as anybody else, & will undoubtedly look for compromise-courses. Their goal is *greatest ultimate profit*, & when they see that immediate economy only restricts their market & imperils the whole system whereby they enjoy privilege, they will realise that good business demands less economy at the start. Better a costlier “overhead” & a sounder market & future. Thus you will see the moneyed groups making grudging concessions to the mob. Knowing that people can't buy things unless they have money, they will employ *more people for shorter hours* in the expectation that most of the money they pay will come back in the form of expanded markets. This will work a while, but not far enough. The extent of voluntary concession, as conditioned by visible profits, will not be enough to give permanent employment to enough people to remove the revolutionary menace due to starvation. If the existing social order is to last, more money must be distributed in some way or other, regardless

of normal principles of profit. Socialistic measures like those already in force in England—old age pensions & unemployment insurance—the so-called “dole”—will be as necessary as fire-engines at a fire. As time passes, vested capital will have to “shell out” more & more in order to survive. It will be a painful thing for the plutocrats to yield up the latent surpluses which have hitherto given them absolute political power, but they will of course do this rather than sacrifice the social order which at least allows them enough profit to live in personal luxury & preserve the continuous traditions of the civilisation. Besides, if they are shrewd they can continue to rule as absolutely as at present—since they represent the sharpest brains, & will not be interfered with by a well-fed majority. All political administration in a machine age is so complex as to be beyond the comprehension of the common layman, & in time even the masses will come to realise this & be glad not to meddle in the business. Fed, clothed, housed, & amused, they will be content to leave bothersome problems to those better able to understand & deal with them. If social evolution gets this far without an explosion—as of course many doubt—the result will not be anything which one need lament. Of course, all familiar things & relationships—travel, housing, architecture, working conditions, social & family organisation, politics, &c—will have changed so greatly that the present generation would find them bewildering & meaningless; but to those of the future they are likely to be as familiar & acceptable as earlier conditions have been to earlier generations. The amount of leisure possessed by all classes will necessarily—in view of the little work to be done by human agency—be prodigious; & it is barely possible that this enforced leisure, plus the collapse of the profit principle & the substitution of a production-for-use-only policy, will help to recreate the now-dying moods, perspectives, codes, & art-forms of non-commercial aristocracy among the governing classes. The gradual rise of the best brains to these classes will make them potentially very choice—& will leave the permanent masses correspondingly stupid & docile. The rebirth of the old paternalistic social order—ruling aristocracy & obedient proletariat—through a fruition of the very socialistic principle which moneyed reactionaries now decry, would be one of the richest ironies in the whole cosmic joke & muddle called life! But it does not do to be optimistic. Almost any trivial circumstance might throw a monkey-wrench in the whole works. A little delay in plutocratic disgorging will mean a communist revolution. A

good-sized world war with modern inventions would mean tremendous mutual annihilations, ending in a series of revolutions completely destructive of civilisation. And in any case, general world-weariness will sooner or later cause the complex burden of civilisation to become too much for the race—so that most of it will be gradually dropped (as the refinements of Roman civilisation were gradually dropped toward the end) through the simple realisation that the game isn't worth the candle. But all this is perfectly natural, & need occasion no regret. At any rate, what I look for in America during the next 25, 50, or 100 years is a gradual giving-in of the moneyed groups on matters of surplus capital, employing conditions, immediate profits, & government supervision; together with a compensating recognition of the actual governing supremacy of these groups. A communist revolution is possible, but I fancy the financial leaders will be too wise to let things get that far. A shelling-out of surplus profits will be the palliative for unemployment—doles, pensions, better wages, shorter hours, & larger totals of employes—and with care the present general order of things can be kept going. All told, it is undoubtedly worth keeping at virtually any cost; at least, for the next few centuries.

As for relativity—since only the profoundest professional mathematicians have any real conception of it, I can hardly hope to be very clear on the subject. I will, though, send along one of the Haldeman-Julius booklets on the subject when I can find it—a thing giving several reasonably comprehensible hints. The crux of course is that all entity is so bound up in the elements of *time & motion* that even *size* depends on position & velocity. A yardstick at a certain speed in one part of the universe may be of a size wholly different from its size at another speed in another part of the universe. Nor is space a mere empty abstraction. Straight lines do not exist, nor does *theoretical* infinity. What seems infinite extension is simply part of an inevitable returning curve, so that the effect of proceeding directly away from any given point in space is to return at length to that same point from the opposite direction. What lies *ultimately* beyond the deepest gulf of infinity is *the very spot on which we stand*. As for the religious myth—or more especially, the “immortality” delusion—it simply does not belong to adult contemporary thought. The “losses” entailed by the hard fact are merely sentimental moods & perspectives, for which modern psychology fully accounts. Of course existence “means” nothing. It simply *is*. Organic entity is merely

a temporary fact, but the absence of cosmic implications does not, to a mature & disillusioned mind, militate against the enjoyment of such pleasurable processes as the workings of senses, imagination, & intellect provide for.

With best wishes—

Sincerely yrs,  
HPLovecraft

484. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Tenbarnes—  
July 30, 1931

Jonckheer:—

.....  
Yrs. for the abolition of inefficiency and red tape in  
P. O.'s and trade papers alike—

Hormanus Filipse van Tiebout

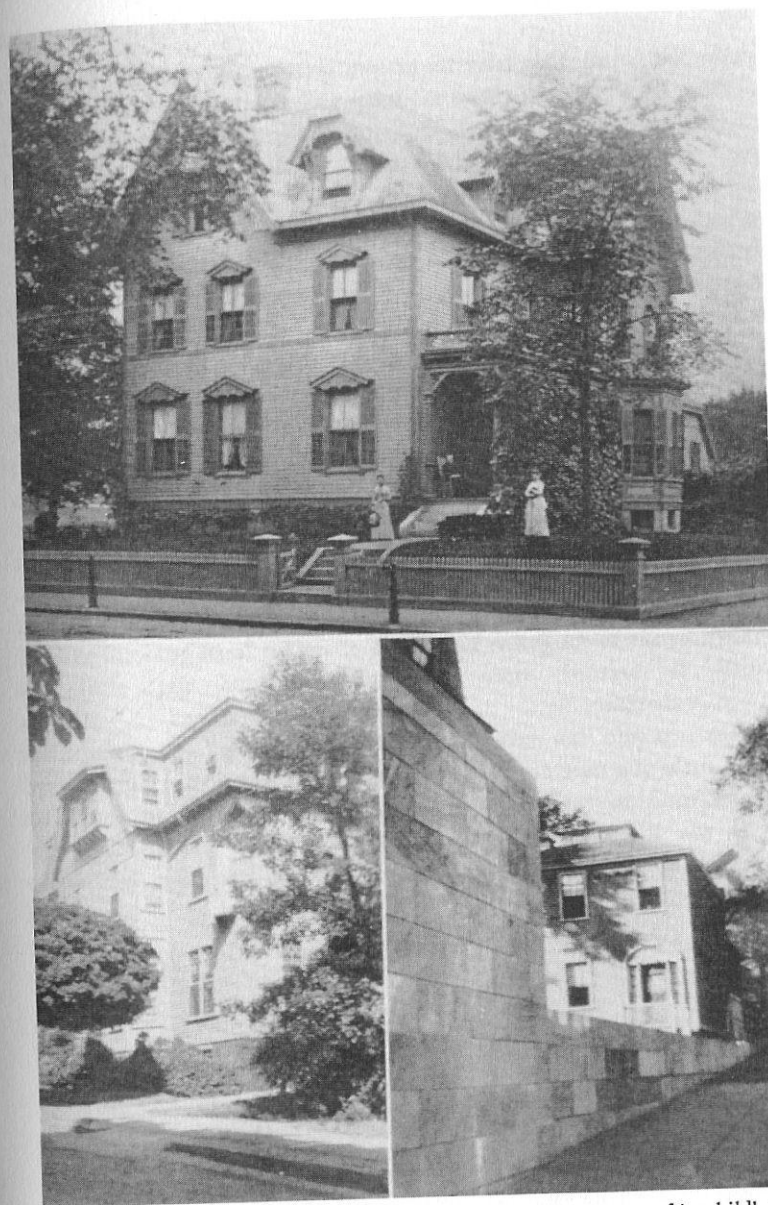
485. TO MAURICE W. MOE

Home at last—  
August 3d, 1931

Hail, O Sage!

..... That lower class among whom contemporary education is not diffused—and who will therefore continue to hand down a naively theistic tradition—are now overwhelmingly Catholic. To think clearly about the cosmos in the light of contemporary information is to abandon any possibility of believing in the fantastic and capricious orthodoxies of yesterday—be they Buddhistic, Judaic, Christian, Hindoo, Mohametan, or any other brand. More liberal wish-delusions, however, will undoubtedly last for several generations more—or until the race has lost that emotional dependence on mythic values, and eulogies, and immortalistics which the earlier centuries of primitive *ignorance* and fanci-

ful speculation have bred into it. Some of us—as individuals—have lost this primitive dependence already; but we can more or less understand its survival in others—especially since we are ourselves full of primitive and vestigial feelings in other directions . . . . feelings which (like worship of pageantry, exaltation of the family, love of hunting and fishing, etc.) are no less poignant because of our understanding of their purely mundane and fortuitous origin, and purely relative and transient significance as environmentally adjustive factors. Thus I know what you *mean* when you speak of the illusion of immortality as something emotionally “satisfying”; though to one of the contemporary milieu the element of emotional satisfyingness or its reverse *has nothing whatever to do with the question of a theory’s truth or falsity* . . . . experience and observation having taught us the complete unreliability of the emotions (which bring different and sometimes opposite conclusions to different persons) as a guide or interpreter of the external world. Moreover—the conventional emotional biases toward immortality and cosmic purpose are themselves very largely accidental results of traditions rather than basic attitudes, as we may see by comparing the moods of different types and individuals—older and younger, unsophisticated and sophisticated. No level-headed modern either wants to be “immortal” himself (gawd, what boredom!) or to have his favourite characters immortal. Each appears for a second in the pattern and then disappears . . . . and what of it? What more could anybody not filled up with infantile myth expect or even dream of? It is overwhelmingly true that no sane adult, confronted with the information of today, could possibly think up anything as grotesque, gratuitous, irrelevant, chimerical, and unmotivated as “immortality” unless bludgeoned into the ancient phantasy by the stultifying crime of childhood orthodox training. Religionists openly give away the fakery of their position when they insist on crippling children’s emotions with specialised suggestion anterior to the development of a genuine critical faculty. We all know that *any* emotional bias—irrespective of truth or falsity—can be implanted by suggestion in the emotions of the young, hence the inherited traditions of an orthodox community are absolutely without evidential value regarding the real *is-or-isn’tness* of things. Only the exceptional individual reared in the nineteenth century or before has any chance of holding any genuine opinion of value regarding the universe—except by a slow and painful process of courageous disillusionment. If religion were true, its followers would



*Top:* The House at 454 Angell Street, Providence, Lovecraft's childhood home. *From left to right:* Annie Phillips Gamwell, Mrs. Winfield Lovecraft, Sr., Winfield Lovecraft, Sr., and Sarah Phillips Lovecraft. *Lower left:* The house at 10 Barnes Street, where Lovecraft spent many of his later years. *Lower right:* The house at 66 College Street, Lovecraft's last home. (Moved in 1959 to 67 Prospect Place.)

not try to bludgeon their young into an artificial conformity; but would merely insist on their unbending quest for *truth*, irrespective of artificial backgrounds or practical consequences. With such an honest and inflexible *openness to evidence*, they could not fail to receive any *real truth* which might be manifesting itself around them. The fact that religionists do *not* follow this honourable course, but cheat at their game by invoking juvenile quasi-hypnosis, is enough to destroy their pretensions in my eyes even if their absurdity were not manifest in every other direction. Of course, their policy is the habitual ostrich-act of all primitive thinkers. When they see that honest openness to evidence does not incline their children toward the preferred system of myths, they do not behave like civilised beings and question the validity of the myths, but turn about and try to cripple the mental receiving apparatus of their children until the poor mites duplicate the accidental bias of their misinformed elders and forcibly acquire the same set of meaningless moods and obsolete prejudices. Thus each of the deeply-seated myth-systems carries on—the little Hindoo becoming a Brahma-worshipper like papa, the little Moslem continuing the ancestral whine to Allah, the little Yankee intoning nasal psalms to the god of demigods of the Christians, the little Jap burning more and more incense at Shinto shrines . . . . and so on . . . . and so on . . . . ad infinitum . . . . ad absurdum . . . . and pretty soon the solar system will play out, and nobody in the cosmos will know that there has ever been any earth or human race or Brahmins or Moslems or Christians or Shintoists or such . . . . dust to dust . . . . and the ironic laughter of any entity which may happen to be watching the cosmos from outside . . . . ho, hum! . . . .

Yr. obt.,  
Grandpa Lo.

486. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

10 Barnes St.  
Providence, R. I.  
August 6, 1931

Dear Mr. Howard:—

..... As usual, I do as much as possible of my reading and writing in the open air—in fact, I am now seated in the woods some 5 miles north of the city. The Metropolitan Park Commission has preserved a great deal of Rhode Island woodland and farm land in its ancient condition, so that my present surroundings are essentially those of the rural 18th century. Weather has been warm—85° to 93° lately—but at no time too warm for my taste. I don't know what it is to be too hot, though the least touch of cold puts me completely out of business. By the way—my trip seems to have cured that strain on my left eye which troubled me last winter. It began to diminish as soon as I stopped reading the daily paper, and disappeared altogether during my Dunedin stay. So far, no reappearance—though I'm reading the papers again.

Glad you liked *The Whisperer in Darkness*—which reminds me that I extracted a splendid kick from your recent tale of the immemorial African tomb and *That Which Dwelt Within*. As to my new stuff—uniform bad luck. Wright turned down the antarctic tale, and Putnams rejected the bunch of original MSS. they asked for in the first place.

... When we consider the vast *number* of our distant ancestors—the almost *infinite* extent to which our heredity is divided and subdivided as it recedes in time—we can see how slight an effect on us is exerted by any one ancestor or even by any especial group of ancestors—in the ages behind recorded history. Nothing of a personal or individual nature is likely to be inherited through many generations—for what happened to any *one* progenitor simply fades into relative nothingness amidst the vast bulk of experiences inherited through the geometrically multiplying array of other lines. A grandparent is only a fourth of us—a great-grandparent an eighth, a great-great-grandparent a sixteenth, a great-great-great-grandparent a thirty-second, and so on. It makes me laugh to hear of a person boasting of a remote forbear, as if he inherited anything more from that forbear than do the thousands or perhaps millions

of others who also descend from the same source even though they do not bear the same name. Heredity counts only when one has behind one a *very large proportion* of the same kind of blood—blood which represents a certain definite type of experience or natural selection. Thus it means nothing whatever to be “descended from Charlemagne”. Probably every living Anglo-Saxon is! Nor does it mean anything in particular to have had one or two celebrated ancestors in the Elizabethan or Jacobean—or even the Georgian period. But it *does* make a difference whether the *bulk* of one's ancestors have been men accustomed to power, freedom, and a high intellectual and aesthetic standard of living, or men accustomed to subservience, manual labour, and a low level of mental and artistic life. . . . Our likes or dislikes for types and periods in ancient history are undoubtedly matters of accidental sentiment wholly unconnected with our blood stream. Early tales and reading—chance impressions from pictures, plays, or conversation—all these things generally lie behind such inclinations concerning ancient races or personalities. Of course, the fact that we generally bear most about our ancestors causes us to incline in most cases toward their cause in history. This, however, is a matter of traditional culture and not of blood heritage. . . . .

... Actually, we must both have a slice of Mediterranean; for my maternal grandfather's line is black of hair and eye, though three of my grandparents were blue or grey-eyed, and I was blue-eyed and yellow haired myself till about 5 years old. Or rather, I was blue and violet eyed till 2½, and yellow-haired till 5. My hair darkened steadily till I was 20 or more—and then began to acquire a sprinkling of grey at 26. But my complexion has always remained chalk-white, since I have not been constantly in the open air. I burn easily, but tan only with great difficulty—and even the deepest and hardest-won coat of tan is soon lost. The best coat of tan I ever had was during this recent trip, when Key West and Miami added to the acquisitions of St. Augustine and Dunedin. I might have put up a bluff at being a Cuban if I had had the lingo—but it took only about a fortnight in the north to peel the whole business off! . . . .

I imagine that your instinctive self-placement among antiquity's hardy barbarians is due to your early familiarity with an environment in which many of the conditions and values of primitive times were reproduced. It is likely that your preference for the Danes over the Saxons springs from the fact that Scandinavians have figured more largely in glamou-

rously recorded exploits. I have never had much choice among the various Nordic elements extending behind me, and have never stopped to figure out whether Saxon, Norman, or Dane preponderates in my Teutonic lineage. The Lovecraft line is Saxon; but a great number of contributory lines have Norman origins, whilst my father's mother's line—the Allgoods of Northumberland—come from a region where Danish blood preponderates. Incidentally—this region (near Hexham) is also very rich in Roman antiquities, being close to Hadrian's Wall. I have a great admiration for the Scandinavians, since the bulk of them kept to their ancient ways much later than any other Teutonic race. They are a link between our present and our past, whether we be one of themselves or of a Teuton tribe whose absorption and conversion came at an earlier date. Thor, Odin, Freyer, Asgard, and Valhalla are behind us all—even though our Saxon side broke away sooner than our Danish side. I can still get more of a kick out of the names and deeds of the old Northern gods than out of any other religion. As a Roman, I am a philosophic sceptic just as in actual modern life. The religion of Greece and Rome, though a thing of exquisite beauty, grips only my aesthetic emotions; as indeed was the case with most Romans of mature cultivation in the late republican age. The frosty blond deities of the north, on the other hand, seem to my mind to be curiously woven into the elements of terrestrial and celestial Nature; so that the sound of thunder evokes images of a great blue-eyed being in Berserk fury, whilst a cold winter twilight calls up all sorts of images of shadowy shapes marching imperiously in some Northerly middle region just beyond the Earth. . . .

Yrs. most cordially—  
H. P. Lovecraft

487. TO J. VERNON SHEA

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
August 7, 1931

My dear Mr. Shea:—

Let's see how this letter is for chirography—I'm trying to decide on a new fountain pen, which for me is the most exacting of all tasks. It

seems almost impossible to suit my hand except after about a dozen trials. A brief test in the shop is no good at all—I have to get a pen home & write a couple of pages before I can form a really good idea of the way it fits my degree of pressure & muscular patterns. This is the 7th or 8th pen I have had since I began looking for one last May—& I have half an idea I shall keep it. I shall have to have two pens, so that one will be ready to fall back upon whenever I begin the long series of trials & exchanges culminating in the purchase of a new one. This is a Waterman—the good old fashioned make to which I always return after experiments with more modern makes. But it sure is the bunk to call any pen a *lifetime* affair. A spell of 3 or 4 years at my rate of usage will wear down any point ever made—iridium'd or not. I never employ a typewriter except when absolutely forced to do so—hence the amount of text my pen has to handle is virutally infinite. Nothing rasps my nerves more than a spell at the machine—it gives me a headache in half an hour, & after another half-hour sends a shooting pain through my shoulder-blades. Possibly the posture has something to do with it—I don't know; but I do know that honest, old fashioned script is the only medium of expression in which I feel absolutely at home.

..... Yes—Wright *explained* his rejection of the *Mountains of Madness* in almost the same language as that with which he *explained* other recent rejections to Long & Derleth. It was *too long, not easily divisible into parts, not convincing*—& so on. Just what he has said of other things of mine (except for length)—some of which he has ultimately accepted after many hesitations. Those once-rejected & later-accepted things include *Cthulhu*, *The Tomb*, & many others. It is very possible that I am growing stale—that is for readers of the *Whisperer* & *Mountains of Madness* to judge—but if so it merely signifies the end of my fictional attempts. There is no field other than the weird in which I have any aptitude or inclination for fictional composition. Life has never interested me so much as the escape from life. However—there is a region on the border betwixt weirdness & *scientifiction* in which I might conceivably experiment. Indeed—the *Mountains of Madness* belongs largely to this type.

Yes—all the tales you mention were in the batch shot back by Putnam's. The grounds for rejection were twofold—first, that some of the tales are not subtle enough . . . too obvious & well-explained—(admitted! That ass Wright got me into the habit of obvious writing with his never-ending complaints against the indefiniteness of my early stuff.) &

secondly, that all the tales are too uniformly macabre in mood to stand collected publication. This second reason is sheer bull—for as a matter of fact unity of mood is a positive asset in a fictional collection. But I suppose the herd must have their comic relief! The book editor—Winfield Shiras—added some slices of bologna about later discussions concerning a volume in which the heavier tales might be sandwiched in betwixt lighter ones . . . . but I'm not expecting to hear much from him. It satisfies me amply to let the incident remain a closed one. I don't think the John Day Co. would care greatly for anything of mine—they have not communicated with me concerning anything for their Hammett anthology.

Neither do I think that Harpers would be any market for my stuff. The standard magazines take weird material only from the most famous & established writers—to say nothing of demanding a technical skill far in advance of mine. After all, the unreal is such a confoundedly *minor* phase of general human experience! Its place in the life of the majority is so slight, & the number of those to whom it is important is so small! Editors, having such an ingrained distrust of the whole genre, naturally confine their few acceptances to specimens in which the workmanship is of the highest possible level—& in which the weirdness is as mild & innocuous as possible. . . . .

Best Wishes—  
HPL

488. TO J. VERNON SHEA

10 Barnes St.,  
Providence, R. I.,  
August 14, 1931

Dear Mr. Shea:—

. . . . . As for Derleth—I don't wonder you find his *W. T.* stuff mediocre! He holds all records for leading a literary double life—for his serious work is no more like this commercial junk than Marcel Proust is like Nictzin Dyalhis! He despises his pot-boilers utterly & eloquently—but continues to write them because they bring in highly welcome cheques. His real work is of a minor-keyed, delicate

quality—brooding memories & impressions woven together as they impinge on a single life-stream, & brief tragic vignettes of hidden lives & strange, lonely people. Some day he will probably go farther in literature than anyone else in the whole *W. T.* crowd. His first novel, still unfinished, will be called *Evening in Spring*. Derleth is only 22, & graduated from the U. of Wis. a year ago. He is an associate editor of a very intelligent intercollegiate magazine called *The Midwestern*. He is a small-towner, living at his birthplace, Sauk City, Wis., & having his literary roots deep in the soil. Vast promise there—mark an old man's words!

Yr most obt hble Servt  
HPLovecraft

489. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Ten-Mile Rover Woods  
Aug. 18, 1931

Dear A. W.:—

. . . . . The corrupt and tautological nature of an "already" which merely duplicates another word or phrase indicating time will be obvious on reflection. For example—in answering a certain sentence such as "You'll have to see Jones about that matter today," we can easily see what sentences do—and what sentences don't—permit of the word's use. If we say, "No—I've already seen him." we use the adverb legitimately, as indicating the completion of the seeing at some time past. But if we say "No—I saw him yesterday." we cannot legitimately tack on any more adverbs of time. It was yesterday that the seeing took place, and that's that. Only in colloquial mid-western speech (or recently, in New York City as well) could one hear so impossible a tautological rigmarole as "No—I saw him yesterday already." In New York the classes who employ this superfluous "already" tend to slur it over and make it a sort of unaccented trailing-off suffix of the word it precedes—and with them it is almost invariably intruded at the very end of the sentence—thus: "Naw—I seen um yess'uddy-u'ready."

Which reminds me—I cut out one such already from your "People" ms.—and also changed "Oklahoma Territory" to "Indian Territory" in



one of the sketches. On second thought you will realise that during the Civil War period the name "Oklahoma" was unknown. It was first used in 1889 when the new white man's territory was carved out of the western part of the old Indian Territory, and did not spread to the whole original I. T. area till 1907, when the two divisions were recombined and admitted to the Union as the State of Oklahoma.

... Best Wishes—  
HP

490. TO J. VERNON SHEA

August 21, 1931

My dear JVS:—

..... The reason Derleth doesn't contribute serious work to *W. T.* is that his serious work isn't at all in the weird vein. He places some of it in such select *intelligentsia* sheets as *This Quarter*—published by American expatriates in Paris. When I say that Derleth will soon lead all the rest of the *gang* I speak seriously & advisedly. He has a profundity, seriousness, simplicity, & human insight that none of the rest of us can even begin to duplicate. In comparison with his promise-laden sketches my own tales are the superficial tinsel of a played-out never-was. My stuff represents the last thin output of a small-timer who has nothing fresh in reserve—but Derleth is a mine of ideas & crystallised experiences just beginning to yield abundantly. His only peril is that his incessant pot-boiling may subtly & unperceivedly pollute his genuine aesthetic work—just as Wright's goddam insistence on obvious plots has insidiously given some of my work a naive & rather cheap twist without my knowing it. But so far he has kept the work of his right & left hands astonishingly separate & dissimilar. ....

As regards isolation & worldly inexperience—I am almost in the class with you & Long myself, & was quite so till well along in my twenties. I was virtually an invalid—a nervous wreck with a thousand subsidiary weaknesses—in childhood, & never really got on my feet physically till

I was thirty. Nor was my emergence from hermitage ever very complete. I did, surely enough, break away from belated juvenility enough to travel around independently so far as waning finances allowed; & to meet different people in person where previously I had conversed only through correspondence—but this long-deferred semi-introduction to the world did not *take* as thoroughly as it might have done had I been chronologically younger. The era of expansion & late-dawn was a relatively brief one, & was followed by a sort of slow drift back to the hermit patterns of my early days. Vistas faded & contracted, & the glitter of adventurous expectancy receded farther & farther—till at length I saw the wider horizons fall off one by one. Before I know it, I was virtually back in my shell. Came to hate New York, whither I had moved, like poison; & was back in Old Providence in 2 years & 3 months from the time I started out. Old age tells—you can't be flexible & expansive when the chill of the thirties gets into your bones. That's why I hope Sonny Belknap will break away from mamma's apron-strings before it's too late for him to enjoy a sense of freedom. To think the little rascal will be *thirty* next April . . . . . & he seems like a kid of about 17 emotionally! However—I can't say that my own return to a final senile hermitage has been altogether complete. Enough remains of the faded expansion period to make me keep up my occasional antiquarian journeys, & to visit congenially with such members of *the gang*, new & old, as may reside along my routes. That much is surely net gain from the total stagnation of my early twenties! I fancy you'll achieve a reasonable independence soon enough to avoid a static & devitalised old age—heaven knows you have time enough! Incidentally—your self-portrait looks very interesting, & is far better than anything I could ever draw. I haven't a fundamental grain of pictorial talent, though I wish like hades I had. A drawing of myself by myself would have to be something like the accompanying enormity—which succeeds marvellously in looking like



H. P. Lovecraft—  
On his 41st Birthday  
— Aug. 20, 1931  
(reproduced, if at all,  
by the author)



"... there was no longer a face!"

nobody I ever saw in or out of the mirror. I might get a job drawing portraits for *Wonder Stories*. Your *Lurking Fear* scene is very vivid—better than I could do, as witness the following. I dodge the job of drawing any of the *Things*, but concentrate on what was revealed inside the hut—how the narrator learned what had occurred. On the whole, I doubt if Mr. Senf, with all his faults, has a serious rival in me. Not every would-be lit'ry guy can hope to become his own illustrator as William Blake was, & as Klarkash-Ton may some day become. But you still have youth—so who shall set a boundary to your iconographical evolution?

Yrs most cordially & sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

491. TO MAURICE W. MOE

The Antient River-Bank—  
Unchang'd since the Golden Nineties  
August 30, (can it be?) 1931

Migrant Sir:—

..... A man of sense believes what normal evidence indicates—and if new evidence appears, he changes his belief to match. My own beliefs depend merely on what is presented to my senses and reason, and every one of them is liable to change (as many of them have indeed changed in the past) upon the introduction of fresh evidence. If anybody ever discovers any real probability of the existence of such a cosmic will as primitive myth depicted, then I shall certainly be a theist. I am the reverse merely because the probability has not yet appeared. I simply recognize, honestly, the dominant probabilities about the is-or-isn't-ness of things. The trouble with you is that your theism is of the most primitive archaeological form. You could easily cling to the deity-illusion while allowing your powers of observation and rational sense of proportion a more normal latitude. Many forms of modern religion have none of the rank grotesqueness and absurdity of yesterday's dead orthodoxies—and many of those orthodoxies (especially Anglicanism) have acquired a civilised mellowness which redeems them from the blind plebeian insanity of camp-meeting gospel. Why, you ought to hear me argue with the Rev. Henry St. Clair Whitehead, orthodox, high-church Anglo-Catholic . . . . and some boy, I'll say! The really serious religious thought of the day is that of informed mystics like Harry Emerson Fosdick or the theist-scientists Eddington and Jeans. They seem to me to reason erroneously—or rather, to venture unjustifiably beyond reason—but they do not try to contradict the facts of nature, or to lose their sense of proportion in primitive emotional extravagances surviving from bygone epochs and sets of conditions. They are at least worthy of serious adult consideration. . . .

..... Did I tell you that Little Belknap and his Grandpa are both to be represented in the coming weird anthology—*Creeps by Night*—edited by Dashiell Hammett and published by the John Day Co.? Sonney's

story will be *A Visitor from Egypt*, and mine will be *The Music of Eric Zann*—a favourite of my own, by the way. We got only twenty-five bucks apiece, but the prestige may be helpful in dealings with editors. . . .

As for Exhibit F—oy, I shood get famous a'ready when effery school-boy like a Klessick kvotes me! Me and Dick Gilder—ve iss guys vot makes it opinions yah kent kest aside lightly! Guys vot iss for our lit'ry vork acclaimed a'ready! Ven ah men like Gilder or ah men like Luff-kreft says ah pome iss ah sunnett, I esk you, aindt it ah sunnett? But det fella Voidsvoit—oy, vot ah oilcan! He shood write aboutd lying ahvake end call it ah sunnett! Oy! Soch a men! He so dumb iss, he t'inks it ah sunnett iss ah kind uff straw het! Now det Meestah Moe, he ken make it ah sunnett vot shood make ah men get trenqvil inside uff him. Who, I esk you, cood so nize make voids ahboudt ah gret luff like dis o'ready?

Seenze foist your reddient booty's luffly star  
Pegun to tveenkle by mine heffens dear . . . .

Ah, Moses, dot iss boetry! Ken't you see it how urritchinal iss effery immitch? Ah leedle star it shood mek de void more bright den de sun—det is pretty. I esk you, ain'dt it? Den det nezst lest line—

Uff ethereal soul-shine in your luffer's eyce! Nize, yes? Det soul-shine—vot ah immitch! End de vay dot void e-the'-real gets voided into det metre! Now, why coodn't det feller vit de sleep sunnett urritchinal like det get a'ready? By de mesters vee gotta judge 'em—and I ask you, iss you got enny choice? Petruck, Dente, Sheksper, Meelton, Pup, Svinebun, Russetti, Lunkfella . . . no, Voidsvoit iss gotta get outa det bunch. He vass in der moodt, but he didn't mek it ah sunnett! . . .

Yrs. for higher temperatures—  
Grandpa Lo.

492. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Aug. 31, 1931

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . . As for social, economic, & political outlooks in England & elsewhere—one may only regret that one happens to be living in a period

of major transition. Such periods are inevitable at certain intervals—when great changes in actual living conditions come too suddenly to be dealt with by preëxisting systems of organisation & tradition—and the only thing to do about them is to wait a century or so till things can have a chance to recrystallise. With good luck, one may hope to see old forms evolve gradually into new—in accordance with the actualities of today, yet without unnecessary breaks & harshnesses. But this evolution can never be altogether painless; for the generation in power is not used to the new conditions, & always clings blindly to the no longer applicable forms of the age amidst which it was reared. There will never be equilibrium or contentment in any country until the whole basis of economics is changed in such a way as to minimise the accumulation of profits on a large scale, & to give the government power to oversee such things as employment conditions & the coördination of industries. This has been made necessary by the advent of machine production, & the consequent growth of a complex, inescapable system of industrial interdependence which paralyses all previous laws & methods & leaves a vast proportion of the population without means of survival except through special measures outside the familiar cycle of old economic laws. Much may be learned from Soviet Russia, though no one would like to see the complete system of that country—with its discouragement of pure aesthetics & its arbitrary restriction of the individual—adopted in the western world. The choice is between chaos & reorganisation, & the wise man chooses the latter. Whether the new system will be as satisfying to mankind as the old, no one can say. That is merely an academic question anyway, since it will form the only possible system, whether one likes it or not. Meanwhile it is of course a melancholy sight for people used to the old order to watch its inevitable decay. . . .

With best wishes—

Yrs most sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

493. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Open fields near the River,  
 Unchanged since my childhood  
 Sept. 2, 1931

Dear A. W.:—

... What you say of the fascination of autumn is very true—and I have always felt it despite the menace of physical discomfort it brings. I love an abnormally hot October, when I can wander around through the prismatic landscape and imbibe the spell of the ancient harvest season without shivering. There is melancholy in it, but the accompanying beauty and sense of adventurous expectancy are so great as to make that quality forgivable. It is a season of almost weird retrospective, when one seizes on the unchanged objects and processes of nature—or of anciently ordered life—and half-imagines that the past which they typify is still present. The woods, the fields, the hillside orchards laden with fruit, the fields of sheaved corn, the old stone walls overgrown with flaming vine, the farmyards heaped with brilliant pumpkins and other garnerings of the year, the acrid odour of smoke, the distant notes of horn and hound across the stubbled fields and dying meadows—all these things have a potent magic for one who has known the old days and the simple folkways of an immemorial culture not yet urbanised.

..... At this second I am sitting on an old New England stone wall under an ancient elm, with a squirrel chattering nearby and a lovely profusion of poison ivy (to which I am oddly immune despite a cuticular hypersensitiveness in other directions) climbing among the mossy rocks. As far as my eye can reach (since a merciful line of tall elms cuts off the smart villas of Blackstone Boulevard) the archaic, unspoiled fields spread around—pasture land ahead and on my right, and a corn-field on my left across the road. It has been this way for 250 years—and may the gods keep it so (by virtue of ownership by large, conservative institutions) as many more! .....

I have never been able to live without the ancient woods and fields. My birthplace, though an urban house on a solidly built-up street, was just on the edge of the settled district—with a rural vacant lot next door, and the whole stretch of unchanged farming countryside (now all

built up in streets) only a block away. Thus I have always been in close touch with the earliest phases of New England agrestic life—able to walk in a few minutes to fields and farmsteads 200 years old and still harbouring the typical dwellings and agricultural arrangements of the past. I say *always*, because a few such farms have managed to survive even to this day—one or two now entirely surrounded by city streets, though retaining everything unchanged—gardens, barns, byres, orchards, and livestock. The park system, moreover, has preserved a number of scenically lovely bluffs and mystically shadowy wooded ravines near the river—so that no phase of traditional nature need remain unvisited by me. And sometimes, of course, I make for the still wilder country north of the town. ....

All rural and architectural beauty have acquired for me a symbolic value, with bearings on my own personal past and on the vividly envisaged past of my family and race-stock. Certain collocations of scenic or architectural details have the most powerful imaginable effect on my emotions—evoking curious combinations of poignant images derived from reading, pictures, and experience. Old farmhouses and orchards move me about as profoundly as any one kind of thing I know—though general rural landscapes are also supremely potent. They give me a vague, elusive sense of half-remembering something of great and favourable significance—just as city spires and domes against a sunset, or the twinkling lights of a violet city twilight seen from neighbouring heights, always inspires a vaguely stimulating sense of adventurous expectancy. I hate to see the old things go. Just now my greatest loss has been the stable of my birthplace; for years in decay, though the house on its high terrain has been rehabilitated as a doctors' building. The old barn went down a month ago to make way for a modern dwelling, and it seemed as though half of my linkage with youth went with it—for it was my exclusive playhouse after financial decline wiped out our horses and carriages. My younger aunt felt desolated, too, for she had seen it built—it being newer than the house. Last month she recovered from the shattered walls the baking-powder tin with "historical data"—tin-type, newspaper sheet, and "to whom it may concern" letter—which she had put it in 1881, for the benefit of future archeologists. How melancholy—and how illustrative of the emptiness of human designs—that she should have to reclaim herself that which was intended for a remote posterity! Eheu, fugaces . . sic transit gloria mundi!

(Just at this second a mournfully appropriate sound has floated across

the fields in pensive timeliness. A sweet bell's notes—from the lichgate of neighbouring Swan Point Cemetery—where the last three generations of my family lie, and where I shall some day repose—tolling at the passing of a funeral cortege!)

... The literary effect of old scenes on me is to make me wish to write old-fashioned pastorals in the 18th century mode that reflects my boyhood reading and predilections. . . . .

.. Best wishes—  
HP

494. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Another part of the same  
River-Bank Countryside  
Sept. 5, 1931

Dear A. W.:—

... Took a long, circuitous walk yesterday—including parts of Providence in which I had never set foot in all the 41 years of my existence. Saw two great wood-fringed ponds (on the city's southern rim, with dismal streets now pressing close) for the first time, and discovered two woodland dells (one a public park, and one the abandoned bend of a suburban highway whose modern tar-macadam course has cut off a corner) of the utmost glamour. Also climbed Nentaconhaunt Hill (at the city's western edge) for the first time in five years—enjoying the magnificent dual view of town on the east and primal countryside on the west. . .

Best wishes—Yr. most obt. hble. Servt.—  
HP



Donald Wandrei

495. TO AUGUST DERLETH

The Old River Bank  
Sept. 9, 1931

Dear A. W.:—

... As for Mencken—I thought I had said many a time that I think him a very sound critical influence; though of course admittedly insensitive in the domain of poetry, and perhaps not as valuable today as when the state of American "literature" absolutely demanded a drastic corrective. O Gawd—those days of Harold McGrath, Anthony Hope, Winston Churchill, Charles Major, Meredith Nicholson, Stanley J. Weyman, Charles Felton Pidgin, and all the rest! Dear, dead old 1900!! Mencken, for lending heavy aid in cleaning up this mess of sticky insincerity, deserves unbounded credit. And if his manners are crude and at times slightly infantile, who shall blame him for such a foible? The sound sense and alert vigour of his mind, and the essential correctness of his philosophic position, remain above question. And who knows? He may be needed again as badly as he was in 1900-1910. After every age of good sense there comes a reaction in the direction of sentimentality and insincerity; and we have reason to believe that such lies ahead of us. . . . .

... I think I am probably the only living person to whom the ancient 18th century idiom is actually a prose and poetic mother-tongue . . . the naturally accepted norm, and the basic language of reality to which I instinctively revert despite all objectively learned tricks. To others, like Austin Dobson, Georgianism is an elegant pose. To me, it is the natural, subconscious thing—other styles being the artificial acquisitions. . . . . No amount of contemporary teaching could break my addiction to the 18th century—my sense of natural placement therein. At home all the main bookcases in library, parlours, dining-room, and elsewhere were full of standard Victorian junk, most of the brown-leather old-timers (except rare items like the *Magnalia* or the ancestral bibles and testaments) having been banished to a windowless third-story trunk-room which had sets of shelves. But what did I do? What, pray, but go with candles and kerosene lamp to that obscure and

nighted aërial crypt—leaving the sunny downstairs 19th century flat, and boring my way back through the decades into the late 17th, 18th and early 19th century by means of innumerable crumbling and long-s'd tomes of every size and nature—*Spectator*, *Tatler*, *Guardian*, *Idler*, *Rambler*, Dryden, Pope, Thomson, Young, Tichell, Cooke's *Hesiod*, Ovid by Various Hands, Francis's Horace and Phaedrus, &c, &c, &c . . . golden treasures, and thank God I have 'em yet as the *main* items of my own modest collection. Easy enough getting them when family dividing came—for nobody else wanted 'em! Tempora cunctantus, sed ego in illis non amito! And not alone literature, but dictionaries (including Johnson's—in an 1800 abridgment), encyclopedias, and rhetorical textbooks. Cyclopaedia of Arts and Sciences, compiled by a Society of Gentlemen (1763), Blair's Rhetorick, Abner Alden's 1797 Reader—old days, old days! It is out of this last-named relique that I carefully learnt the basic rules of versification at the age of 6—before anybody tried to teach me any modern way. Thus the old Georgian manner is *really* my first, instinctive natural medium of expression. Parker's *Aid to Composition* (ultra-modern for me—actually as recent as 1844!) was another hereditary thing that I learned backwards and forwards, from cover to cover, before I was 12 years old. It was a great life—and all joined up with my foot and bicycle rambles in quest of ancient houses and archaic streets and centuried villages. The 19th and 20th centuries receded as a dream—and the old colonial age became the reality. I habitually us'd the long s in writing—and my prose was just as Georgian as my verse. I used forms like *publick*, *accompt*, *intitule*, *shoar*, *con'd*, *ingulph*, &c. &c. as a natural thing, and always elided the *e* of pasts and participles (drown'd, walk'd, &c) except when I meant them to receive the full original pronunciation with the extra syllable. (drown-ed, walk-ed, &c)

In Adam's fall

We sinned all

—2 syllables

Thus the old *New England Primer*, of which we had—and have—3 different editions. Ah, me, but it was hard work climbing down 150 to 200 years to meet the objective external world. Hard work for an old man . . . . I think I once told you that I would actually feel more at home in a silver-button'd coat, velvet small-cloaths, wig, steenkirk cravat, and all that goes with such an outfit from sword to snuff-box, than

in the plain modern garb that good sense bids me wear in this prosaick aera. . . . The informal and miscellaneous nature of my early reading made me familiar with many Georgian and Queen Anne works not commonly read today, even in collegiate literary courses—Darwin's *Botanick Garden*, Garth's *Dispensary*, Oldham's, Parnell's, Tichell's, Dyer's, Warton's, &c. poems, old periodical essays like *The World and the Bee*, and such early American things as Dwight's *Conquest of Canaan*, Barlow's *Columbiad*, and Trumbull's satires—*MacFingall*, and *The Progress of Dulness*. God, Sir, but if any mortal has ever really *liv'd* in the 18th century, that bird is myself! And of course the tales of Gothick horror came with the rest—though they didn't give me the wallop Poe did. In general, I felt a sort of kinship with the 19th century down to 1849 or 1850—but then my interest and sense of affiliation went dead. The mid-Victorial world has always been as utterly alien to me as the world of Sumerian Babylon, Achammian Porsia, or Klarkash-Tonic Commoriom. My nearest *objective* approach to the 18th century consists of an actual conversation with a person born therein. In 1896, when I was six years old, I was taken to visit in the Western Rhode Island region whence my maternal stock came; and there met an ancient gentlewoman—a Mrs. Wood, daughter to a rebel officer in the late unfortunate uprising against His Majesty's lawful authority—who was celebrating with proper pride her hundredth birthday. Mrs. Wood was born in the year 1796, and could walk and talk when Genl. Washington breath'd his last. And now, in 1896, I was conversing with her—with one who had talked to people in periwigs and three-cornered hats, and had studied from schoolbooks with the long s! Young as I was, the idea gave me a tremendous feeling of cosmic victory over Time—a sense that I was actually working my way back into that 18th century which had produced the Georgian doorways on the hill and the brown-leather books in the trunk room. This ancient matron—who, even then an old lady, had told stories of the past to my mother and aunts when they were small—was alive when my Abner Alden reader of 1797 was published! It is pleasing to relate that Mrs. Wood survived till about 1903 or 1904, thus actually living in *three* centuries. I did not, however, have a chance to speak with her except in 1896. Another link—at one remove—was supplied by my acquaintance with an old gentleman who, in his early boyhood, (he was born in 1831) had talked much with his own centenarian great-aunt, who remembered the terrors of the Ft. William

Henry massacre of 1757, when Montcalm's Indian allies got out of control and worked such lethal slaughter. Old days . . . old days . . . so near and yet so far!! . . .

. . . . Best wishes—  
Grandpa HP

496. TO SEABURY QUINN

Sept. 11, 1931

My dear Quinn:—

Mixed congratulations & commiserations on your rise in the editorial world! I can understand how it feels to be kept from developing clamorous plots—for that is just the state into which an excess of revisory drudgery has lately plagued me. Added to this oppression in my case, is the turmoil of steam-heat installation in the Victorian backwater which harbours me & my overcrowded belongings. Everything is reduced to the primal '*rudis indigestaque moles*', & I am fleeing to the woods & fields for quiet. Fortunately, the absence of a neighboring aunt in Maine leaves me a vacant flat to serve as a shelter when the weather makes outdoors inhospitable. Just now, though, the weather is treating me very well—blazing summer sunshine, & a thermometer which was 87° yesterday & probably more today! I think I mentioned that I am a tropical bird—knocked out by the cold, & in my element from 80° upward. . . .

Glad you liked *The Strange High House*—which was written in 1926, once rejected by Wright, & later recalled for reconsideration. It is one of the last of the things I wrote in the semi-poetic Dunsany manner—a manner to which I may or may not revert in future. The trouble with that style & mood is that if one doesn't catch exactly the right keynote, the result is very pathetic indeed. Nothing is more utterly mawkish & namby-pamby than a flat, misfire tale of that type—like my *White Ship*—which makes me sick whenever I think of it! I was immeasurably pleased with the Doolin illustration, which showed an actual comprehension of the text & mood of the story. Doolin is the best artist they've had since Rankin's heyday, & I surely hope he won't go down hill like

the others. Your recent pointed words to Wright may cause him to keep a sharper eye on the "art" department than he has heretofore. . . .

Yr most obt hble Servt  
HPL

497. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Crypt of H'hphn-Yys-Echrr on the  
extra-cosmic comet Phphun—  
Hour of Approach to the Black Sun  
Gnarr-Kthun in the 7th Dimension  
beyond the Uttermost Rim  
HPL to Smith (September 11, 1931)

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

. . . Indeed, little Derleth is getting cleverer and cleverer in his weird ideas. Some of his new tales are really remarkably good—especially such specimens as *The Thing that Walked on the Wind*, *The House in the Magnolias*, and *They Shall Rise in Great Numbers*. . . .

. . . . .

With obeisances to the Nameless Eidolon in the cave under  
the Karthian Hills beyond the desert of Yamahahn—  
Yrs in the Dark Lore

—Ech-Pi-El

498. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

Providence, R. I.  
September 12, 1931

Dear Mr. Howard:—

. . . . . As for atavism and racial memory—of course, the two are quite distinct. Undeniably, heredity occasionally reproduces a physical



and perhaps mental structure after the lapse of a few generations; (just how far this can be carried is still an open question) but the reproduction of the acquired mental images of that structure is something far different—and probably impossible. The most atavism could do is to duplicate a general temperament and set of inclinations. Concerning heredity in general—it is curious how a dark strain will persistently crop out among a blond stock, whereas a blond strain is completely lost among a dark stock. This proves that the dark type is by far the more basic and normal in the species, and that the Nordic is the product of an exceptional and tenuous specialisation—whose results are insecurely lodged in the race, and always ready to be overthrown by any influence favouring the original arrangement. Facial features, I think, are more malleable—more affected by climatic and cultural changes—than matters of pigmentation and skeletonic proportion. This is natural, since the contours of flesh and fat, nerve and muscle, are largely dependent on temperature, moisture, respiration, nourishment, and personal experience both objective and emotional. It is probably a fact that the 2nd and 3d generations of alien immigrants' descendants are less foreign and aberrant in facial aspect than their European forbears.

As for the ultimate origin of civilisation—I don't believe any sort of theory could amount to more than a guess. That the human race started on some plateau in central Asia is almost certain; hence the natural inference is that settled agricultural life probably began in some fertile river-valley south of that mid-Asiatic upland terrain. Archaeology is still too incomplete to afford an answer, hence imagination is free to speculate over the whole of Mesopotamia, Persia, India, and kindred regions. Possible source-regions extend as far north as the Black and Caspian Seas. The Mediterranean has indeed undoubtedly changed its bed, but it is not likely that civilisation began so far west. Still, without doubt vast Mediterranean areas once peopled and civilised—probably with the Cretan culture in its early stages—are now submerged. The Flood-legend may be connected with this subsidence, though modern research favours a more local explanation. Inundations in the Tigris-Euphrates region, due to the bursting of glacial dams, are now considered the sources of the Flood-tradition—which is thought to have been carried by word of mouth to widely distant realms.

..... I have had two sizeable tremors in my vicinity—only one of which I could feel. That was the shock of Feby. 28, 1925, which I use in my story *Cthulhu*. I was then living in Brooklyn on the second story

of an old brownstone house; and the tremor rattled dishes, skewed pictures, rocked chandeliers, and produced a perceptible feeling of swaying in the house. My friend George Kirk, who had a room on the floor above me, felt it even more violently according to his description. The other shock was in Providence, several years later, which shook up the downtown section quite a bit. I missed it, however, because 10 Barnes St. is on the crest of a 150-foot near-precipice of solid granite, which seems not to have taken part in the general sliding. ....

... I think my own choice would be England of the 18th century—to have been born in Devonshire in 1690, just two hundred years before I actually saw the light in Providence. Of course, there are many things about that period which I would not have relished—but one can't find *all* that one wants in any *one* age. 18th century England probably averages as high as any combination of time and place for a person of my particular psychology. I would have lived as a country squire of liberal tastes, visited London occasionally, fought on the government side in 1715 and 1745, and been a Tory in politics. If living at the time of the American war, I would have advocated liberal measures with the colonies, but stern military measures once they actually repudiated their rightful sovereign. My second choice of a living period and place would be the Roman republic about the time of the third Punic War—the age of Cato, Laelius, and Scipio Aemilianus. I would have welcomed the less decadent features of Greek culture while exulting in the acquisition of Grecian territory and would have tried to participate in the reduction of the ancient African enemy. The conquest of Spain, too, would have thrilled me—how inspiring to have been with Scipio under the walls of stubborn Numantia! S.P.Q.R.—Alala! ...

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely,  
HPL

499. TO J. VERNON SHEA

Sept. 13, 1931

Dear JVS:—

..... As for your novel—the longer you wait about it, the better it will be. It is astonishing how a few added years of life—with their accretions in point of education & experience—change

one's estimates of the things one has *apparently* understood before. Characters, motivations, values &c., all alter in the light of enlarged perspective. What is more, I doubt if you can fully reflect the present till you shed some of your contempt for the past. No person, place, or set of institutions is anything except the product of antecedent influences; nor is there any drama or interest in any thing or event except in relation to the continuous & unending time-stream. The best novels are those which possess the quality of pageantry—tracing the experiences & reactions of a group or line through several generations, as in Galsworthy's saga of the Forsytes. Early writing, to be effective, ought to deal with relatively simple events & emotions within the experience of the author. Its main value is in perfecting style—& you of course realise how vast an amount of care & practise is needed to transform the average beginner's ponderous, verbally uncertain prose into the accurate, assured, flexible, & emotionally vivid medium of the mature & accomplished author. As the writer lives longer, observes & reads more widely, & undergoes a wider & wider range of experiences, the area of material which he is competent to treat increases rapidly. But of course each individual will always have his special aptitudes, so that some one direction will be better suited to his progress than any other. It is his business during the formative & experimental years to find out what this direction is—then, afterward, to follow it assiduously; though with a broad recognition of general life which may serve to prevent specialisation from degenerating into narrowness or disproportion. Some writers need to specialise more closely than others, while a fortunate few stand at the opposite extreme & find themselves able to do justice to an unusual variety of moods & phases of life. I, unhappily, belong in the former class—& only time can tell you which class is yours. At the present stage, your best policy will be to try everything you feel like trying—meanwhile working constantly to make your style fluent, musical, graphic, & precise. When you find your rightful province, be content with it; & don't regret your inability to write like somebody else whose province is different. Especially, don't regret your inability to write a *Bridge of San Luis Rey*. That book is clever & striking, but undeniably artificial & in places even mawkish. It was absurdly overrated upon its appearance, & now seems to be receding into something more like its proper niche. Derleth swears by it—but I don't admire his general critical opinions quite so much as I admire his own serious work. I hope you can manage to get to college

this fall—though of course no harm will be done if you have to wait another half-year or year. I feel sure, from the experience of most of my friends, that you will find it a great broadener of perspective—& believe I would have been much less narrow in abilities & limited in interests had health permitted me to go in 1908. You ought to be thankful for your health—fancy anyone who has never had a headache! Your walking probably helps to keep you in trim—I am sure that mine does much to prevent me from lapsing back into the semi-invalidism of my 1908-1920 period. In boyhood I was a constant bicycle rider—which both exercised me & helped me to see more of the countryside than most people saw in those pre-motor-touring days. I couldn't do much long-distance walking till about the year 1924, but by that time built up an ability to cover surprising distances without fatigue. Last Monday I took a walk—purely for pleasure—to the neighbouring town of Attleboro, Mass., a matter of about 12 or 13 miles; riding home on the bus for chronological reasons rather than because of weariness. Walking is really the only way in which to see the countryside at its best; for automobiles are much too swift—& too narrowly confined to recognised highways. And as for exploring a *city*—I'll go so far as to say that *nothing* but pedestrianism is of any value whatever. . . . .

In the matter of vocations, it's pretty hard to give really intelligent & effective advice. During your four years of college you'll probably acquire many new vistas which will aid you in deciding maturely. Journalism isn't much of an asset for the careful, artistic writer; though it does enhance one's chances for quick popular success by inculcating a direct, incisive style & giving a wide array of glimpses into highly diverse aspects of human nature. It is essentially a field for the naturally worldly & gregarious person, & would be unthinkable for myself—& probably for you as well. All told, I'd be inclined to favour education as a career for one of your obvious tastes—& you might find a college instructorship devoid of many of the drawbacks attending high-school teaching. That is what young Wandrei has—at his alma mater, the U. of Minn. When a student specialises in educational subjects, his university generally aids him in securing a position. No—I never worked in a bookshop, although a surprisingly large percentage of my friends do. It is a good business for a literarily inclined person; for the day's routine often brings pleasant bookish conversations, & sometimes new acquaintances of permanence & value. I'd like to land a job of that sort—though it

would have to be a minor one, since I don't know books from the bibliophile's standpoint—first editions, commercial values, rare items, & all that. The fact is, I'm distinctly bored by such formal, artificial, & essentially non-literary bibliophily. But when a man does have this specialised knowledge—as my friends Kirk, Leeds, Loveman, & Orton do—there is no limit to the extent they can progress in the field of bookselling. Kirk has his own business, & Loveman gets \$60.00 per week as an expert cataloguer for the well-known N. Y. firm of Dauber & Pine. . . .

Best wishes—  
Yr obt hble Servt HPL

500. TO J. VERNON SHEA

#10—  
Sept. 28, 1931

Dear Jr.:—

Why the wincing? You don't call us clumsey *W. T.* hacks *real authors* do you? I'm sure it would never occur to me to classify Long, Quinn, Howard, Smith, myself, & so on, with the sort of writer substantial enough to make communications from novices absurd. Hell, no! I'd write any of these mediocrities any day if I happened to have anything to say to him. The difference between the veriest novice & this grade of scribbler is infinitely less than that between such scribblers & the Blackwood-Dunsany-Machen-James type. As I've been trying to make clear, the popular magazine world is essentially an *underworld* or caricature-imitation-world so far as serious writing is concerned. Absolutely nothing about it is worthy of mature consideration or permanent preservation. That is why I am so absolutely unwilling to make any concessions to its standards, & so much disposed to repudiate it entirely in an effort to achieve real aesthetic expression even on the humblest plane.

Nor is my opinion of your material at all low. Naturally one can't expect a relative beginner to be mature & assured all at once, but I have tried to make it clear that I consider your output much better than my own at a corresponding stage of inexperience. *Brother & Sister*, for example, is really excellent, & shews a surprising advance over the other

specimens you have submitted. It took Derleth a much longer while to hammer out a good style from his original juvenile jauntiness. . . .

Yr most hble & obt Servtr  
HPL

501. TO J. VERNON SHEA

Technology Chambers,  
Boston, Mass.,  
Octr. 4, 1931

Dear Jr.:—

..... As for your contrast between the writing conditions of my time & your own—I fear you make the common mistake of harbouring a badly proportioned picture of former times. You can never understand the stream of civilisation until you pay more attention to the past—for the real past & its relationship to the present are not what the casual modern imagines. You make the mistake of juxtaposing eras—like the theatrical costumers who invariably dress the civilians of the Civil War period in the costumes of 1830-40.

When I was young—1900-1910, let us say—there was just as much amateur striving for authorship as there is now. The same old correspondence schools & journalistic courses were flourishing, & the same old writers magazines were purveying their mixed wisdom & hokum. There was not such a vast array of cheap magazines, but everybody was trying to make the bunch (vast enough, hell knows!) that did exist. And the number of persons wishing to write well—not professionally, but as a gentleman's accomplishment—was even greater than at present. That is, there was more emphasis on excellence for its own sake, & less on *practical* results. Style, in general, was far better than it is now—that is, in prose. Verse was still encumbered by Victorian artificiality & 1890-period jauntiness. There was *less* excuse for writing badly then than there is now, since flashy & imperfect models were less distractingly common. It was the age of Dreiser's best work, & the strongest novels of Mrs. Wharton. Kipling's influence, however, still lingered; & all too many fell for O. Henry. Stevenson was overrated—but the cur-

rent praise of Lafcadio Hearn was well merited. The popular trash of the day—George Barr McCutcheon, &c.—was not taken very seriously. Only the elders clung to memories of the Dickens age. The general tempo was that of a reaction against the 1890's. It was considered bad form to mention the fact that Oscar Wilde ever existed—& college dramatic societies used to perform *The Importance of Being Earnest* without giving the author's name. The great fault of the age, in literature, was *not* poor style, but naive emotion & limited intellectualism. Good writing was more common than now—but it was largely wasted on artificial & conventional conceptions of life. It was, dominantly, the age of polite & correct insipidity—the last, inane petering out of the *genteel tradition*, with the illusion of moral values clinging in people's emotions even when their scientific intellects had discarded it. No—the writer of 1900-10 most distinctly did *not* have to blaze a trail for himself.

Paradoxically, the reason I was slow in escaping from my pompous (though correct) Johnsonese style was because I did NOT belong to my age. As I told you once, I disavowed everything around me, & went back to the models of the 18th century. I veritably swam in an ocean of ancient models & textbooks from the age of six onward—but they were the models & textbooks of 1750-1800—NOT of 1896-1914. A writer of 1896-1914, really belonging to that age, had a better chance of successful maturing than one today. The *brilliant* models & methods of the present, in prose, are generally the *wrong* ones—and the percentage of bad writing in proportion to good is much higher than of yore. The one *real* advance (aside from psychological & intellectual advance) is in *poetry*. As for the style of *B & S*—it may not be the ideal one, but it has the quality of directness & simplicity which the ideal one ought to have. . . .

Yr obt grandsire—  
HPL

502. TO J. VERNON SHEA

Friday  
(October 9, 1931)

Dear Jehvish-Ëi:—

..... Modern art does not emulate photography, but tries to incorporate some essence of the subjective—some hint of the inward & unreal perspective through which the artist individually & uniquely views his subject. No two persons see exactly the same thing when they look at the same object—for each one unconsciously selects a certain number of details (out of the ungraspably infinite total) for emphasis & conscious registration. Modern art tries to shew what an artist sees when he looks at a thing. It is not, except nominally, a portrait of the object. Essentially it is a diagram of the artist's mood. It began with the French impressionists in the mid-19th century, gained a climax in Gauguin & Cezanne, & has been carried to absurd extremes by many inferior theorists today. But I would hardly call *suicide* an absurd extreme. It has, in my opinion, a very legitimate power; so that I am not at all surprised by its selection as a prize-winner. It excelled the pretty canvases because it represented a sincere & strongly individual creative impulse instead of a mere bland imitativeness. Watkins had something he had to get off his chest—and that is what real art is. He didn't merely say, *now I'm going to paint a picture*, look around for a conventional subject, & then do his best to imitate a camera. The colour—which of course I haven't seen—must play a part almost as important as the lines. However—I am free to say that modern art is not my favourite form. I recognise its power & appreciate many manifestations of it, but as an antiquarian am far more attracted by the classical themes of yesterday. In paintings my favourite subject is the landscape—or the wide architectural vista—and I find most of my favourites extending from the 17th to the middle 19th century. Salvator Rosa, Hobbema, Claude Lorrain, Constable—a very mediocre taste, according to any art authority, but at least not a tenth as bad as my utter taste-vacuum in the domain of music. Now & then I like a touch of the fantastic in pictorial art, hence am fond of the engravings of John Martin, (fl. circa

1820) Dore, & Sime. And in a slightly more popular field I can thoroughly endorse the admiration which our 240-lb. friend B'na-Dwi-Y'hab bears for the drawings of Howard Pyle. However—I make no pretensions to the role of art critic. . . . .

Yes—*Solomon Kane* surely is a husky bozo! I think—recalling his early letters—that he has fought in the ring, though I don't know how professionally. I judge he has also participated in shooting & stabbing affrays in connexion with cattle & boundary warfare—still a live reality in western Texas. He is a living compendium of the sanguinary annals of the southwest—which he re-tells with all the fresh gusto of a primitive epic poet. In truth, his milieu quite exactly reproduces that early & untrammelled Aryan world which evolved such bardic productions as the *Iliad*, *Beowulf*, & the *Norse Sagas*. . . . .

Fra Bernardus' description of me is so excessively favourable that I shall have to lie low in order not to belie it! Not often can I carry off the bluff of a *colossal* intellect or *encyclopaedic* information. As for speaking *Bostonese*—if B'ua-Dwi-Y'hab were himself a Bostonian (or Novanglian of any sort) he would not fall into that error. My speech is simply the ordinary literate medium of Southern & Central (not Northern) New England *outside* Boston—the daily speech of Providence, Hartford, New Haven, Springfield, Worcester, Salem, & so on. If you ever heard real Bostonese (which my younger aunt has picked up through a 20-year residence in Cambridge amid Harvard circles in middle life) you would know the difference in a second. While we ordinary Yankees don't use the flat midwestern *haff*, *caff*, *gräss*, &c., we certainly do not *linger* & *gloat* over the broad *a* as the Bostonians & Cantabrigians do. We don't sound any final *r* in words like *car*, *far*, &c., (phonetically, our common pronunciation is indistinguishable from *caa*, *faa*, &c), but this is not a Bostonism or Briticism at all; but merely the ordinary usage along the Atlantic seaboard (with the single exception of the Philadelphia zone) from Maine to Florida. It is curious that inhabitants of New York City do not notice any difference in our accent from theirs, although we find theirs irritatingly different from ours. They do not sound final *r*'s, & are by no means as flat in their *a*'s as the midwesterners; but have certain unmistakable tendencies in sound & inflection which grate on many. They tend, for example, (though the younger generations are breaking themselves of the habit) to interchange *oi* & *er* sounds; so that they pronounce the name *Ernest Boyd* as if were *Oimest*

*Bird!* They would say, for example, *The Oil of Joisey bought erl stocks* if they were describing a purchase of Mr. Rockefeller's securities by Lord Dunsany's father-in-law. They also say *momunt* when they mean *moment*, & so on. Likewise—in compound words they tend to accent the *first* word where we tend to accent the second. They eat *lamb' chops* & *ice'-cream*, while we prefer *lamb chops'* & *ice-cream'*. In *northern* New England & *upper* New York state the rolled *r* is heard: (hence Dwyer's notice of my lack of it) though by no means so violently as in the west. In Philadelphia it reappears mildly, together with a peculiar kind of inflection of possibly Germanic influence. This is also (except for backwoods Northern New England) the present northerly limit of the primitive—*aow* sound (*daown*, *raound*, *abaout*) formerly prevalent throughout the United States except in academic circles. Beginning in southern Maryland we find the deep-vowelled speech made familiar in literature & the drama as the dialect of the South, & due to the effect of negro pronunciation upon a population largely rural & thus out of touch with urban corrective influences. This dialect seems thickest in Georgia, & is probably even thicker in the inland states—Mississippi, &c.—which I have never visited. In urban Charleston, S. C., however, it is & always has been entirely absent, for purely local reasons. Charleston was from the start a city of great independence & cultivation, & preserved European contacts to an unusual degree. It was separated from all other colonial centres by a wide zone of almost impassable terrain, & the population of its agricultural hinterland were forced by lowland fever-&malaria conditions to live within its compact area for a large part of the year. Thus it was the scene of a more extensive urban social life than was found anywhere else in the South—all the neighbouring planters having townhouses there, & participating in cultural activities impossible to a purely rural people. They customarily sent their sons to Oxford & Cambridge, & in general had more to do with Europe than with the rest of the colonies. Under these conditions, their speech was too fixed by frequent social use to suffer any modification from the nigger talk around them—hence has remained to this day distinct from the speech heard in places as close as Columbia & Savannah. It is, oddly enough, almost identical with that of the greater part of New England—so that I was once mistaken for a native Charlestonian. Probably this plain type of speech is not dissimilar to the speech of the majority of small towns in central & southern England—the basic form of the language, from

which the north-country burr, the Oxford & London drawl, & the various colonial variants have diverged. There have, though, been many changes in this base—even since the late 18th century—so that it is remarkable that places as far apart as Charleston & New England should have kept so closely parallel. Of the dialects of the west I know relatively little—though the exaggeratedly rolled *rrr* . . . (as in *carrrrr*, *farrrrm*, *arrrdiirr*, *Mistirrr Carrrtirr* (Mr. Carter), &c) is the principal earmark as judged by the standard of the Atlantic coast. Westerners flatten the short *a* (*haff*, *laff*, *päss*, *gläss*), & seem also to handle their vocal cords slightly differently in ways almost too subtle for exact definition. This stridency seems at a maximum among people from Ohio & Michigan—at least, I have not noticed it so much among Illinoisians & Wisconsinians. Californians & Northwesterners roll their *rrr*'s, but do not share the other qualities of midwesterners. In the Southwest—Texas, Arizona, & New Mexico,—the Southern influence has softened the Western burr & produced a wholly distinct dialect—or rather, a congeries of dialects subsisting side by side. The rolled *rrr* . . . & the wholly suppressed final *r* seem to exist in close juxtaposition, while Hispanic words are frequent—notwithstanding the fact that the Spaniards have not left any influence on the pronunciation or vocal quality of the local English. Robert E. Howard has made many interesting observations on the dialects of the southwest—one of which he probably speaks himself. As for the rolled *rrr* . . . —while it probably once existed among all English-speakers, it seems to have had a tendency to drop out of all English dialects except those strongly affected by Gaelic speech—as in Scotland, Ireland, & the north English counties near Scotland. The other Celtic branch—Cymric—does not seem to have had this effect; since there is no tendency toward *rrr* . . . rolling in the neighbourhood of Wales & Cornwall. In America, the *rrr* . . . is found (so far as regions of original colonial settlement are concerned) only where the founding stock was predominantly Scotch-Irish (as in New Hampshire—thence Vermont & northern N. Y. State—& Pennsylvania) rather than purely English. The cause of its prevalence in the West is still a matter of debate, though it is possible that a predominance of Scotch-Irish may be traced in the first pioneering wave which fixed the dialectic forms. Also, the large-scale German infusion subsequent to 1848 may possibly have had something to do with it. A still greater puzzle is afforded by the *oi-er* interchanging peculiar to New York City. It is hard to trace it to

Dutch speech, since it does not occur anywhere in the equally Dutch rural Hudson Valley. Even its date of origin is subject to dispute, though it certainly reaches well back into the first half of the last century. . . .

Best wishes—  
E'ch-Pi-El.

503. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Oct. 9, '31

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . As for New England as a seat of *weirdness*—a little historic reflection will show why it is more naturally redolent of the bizarre & the sinister than any other part of America. It was here that the most gloomy-minded of all the colonists settled; & here that the dark moods & cryptic hills pressed closest. An abnormal Puritan psychology led to all kinds of repression, furtiveness, & grotesque hidden crime, while the long winters & backwoods isolation fostered monstrous secrets which never came to light. To me there is nothing more fraught with mystery & terror than a remote Massachusetts farmhouse against a lonely hill. Where else could an outbreak like the Salem witchcraft have occurred? Rhode Island does not share these tendencies—its history & settlement being different from those of other parts of New England—but just across the line in the old Bay State the macabre broods at its strongest.

As for the extent of the present transition in the world—it will possibly rank as one of the greatest to date, (at least in geographical extent) though in the end it may not involve so vast a total of change as the upheaval attending the dissolution of the Roman World—A. D. 400-800. The points of change are different, but when totals are added up I think the earlier upheaval is likely to come out ahead. We do not realise today how vast that change was, because we have—since 1450 or 1500—regained a great many of the classical elements which were then lost. But the difference between A. D. 400 & A. D. 900 was absolutely stupefying—almost everything was lost—language, literature, standards of living, habits of thought, &c. Today we are far more like a Roman of

the days before the downfall, than like a denizen of the ensuing mediaeval world. The extent of the coming upheaval cannot yet be predicted—nor can we determine with certainty just what direction it will take. But it is very unlikely that any of the major languages will perish, or that there will be any sudden loss of the dominant appurtenances—mechanical or scholastic—of civilisation. Even in Russia a tremendous amount has been salvaged. However, I don't think any "golden age" is due—indeed, I think that future cultures may be more monotonous & emotionally unsatisfying than earlier ones. I doubt greatly if any culture will equal that of Athens around B. C. 450. . . .

With best wishes—

Yr most obt Servt  
HPLovecraft

504. TO J. VERNON SHEA

Tuesday  
(October 13, 1931)

Dear Jr.:—

..... As for *Brother & Sister*—there is a good deal of sense in Derleth's suggestions, for it certainly does subtilise the tale vastly to have the child already born—to eliminate all overt happenings & have the narrative purely one of mental implications. I agree, however, with your own counter-suggestion that the *death* of the child would be unmotivated & therefore inartistic. I might add that its *sickness* would also be rather artificial unless both brother & sister be notably sickly—for science long ago exploded the myth that there is necessarily anything unhealthy about the offspring of close kin. In ancient Egypt the marriage of brothers & sisters was very common, & no harm ever came of it. All that a consanguineous union really does, is to intensify in the offspring whatever latent hereditary weakness or strength the parties may possess. If you rewrite the story, I'd advise following Derleth's suggestions except as to the extreme sickness & death of the child. Let him survive as a strange, potentially tragic figure. Indeed—it occurs to me that a finely tragic novel might be written about the life of a boy who grows up with such a possible shadow over him.

Written from the boy's point of view, it would be an equally powerful tale, albeit of a rather different type. Derleth's advice about erotic experience seems to me rather more debatable. While the traditional system of sex ethics is probably rather clumsy, it still has certain advantages over that which seems to be replacing it; & is certainly the most sensible one to follow unless one's temperament makes it wholly impracticable. At present, the following of an alternative course involves so much commonness & ignominious furtiveness that it can hardly be recommended for a person of delicate sensibilities except in extreme cases. It remains to be seen what sort of middle course the future will work out. No conceivable system can be really perfect, for there are opposite emotions which make for ceaseless conflict under any sort of arrangement; but it is possible that some improvement may be made in the existing state of things—a state in which the actual situation tends to depart farther & farther from the nominal one. In these transitional days the luckiest persons are those of sluggish eroticism who can cast aside the whole muddled business & watch the squirming of the primitive majority from the sidelines with ironic detachment. Sex experience is certainly not necessary to good authorship or other aesthetic endeavour, although of course in dealing seriously with real life one ought to have all the experience & perspective one can possibly command. I'd reverse the general tenor of Derleth's advice by merely suggesting that the bulk of one's work dealing with the details of erotic relationships be postponed till after one is domestically established in the accepted way. Not that experience be hurried, but that certain types of heavier writing be deferred. I never thought pre-marital experience worth the attendant ignominiousness, & doubt very much if I was the loser thereby. Indeed, I can't see any difference in the work I did before marriage & that I did during a matrimonial period of some years—none of my stylistic transitions corresponding in the least to any change in biological status. Weird work, without a doubt, is to an enormous degree independent of objective circumstances. . . . .

You are right in believing that no one can really grasp the inmost life of an era without having lived through it, though I might add that sound historic study often greatly improves our comprehension of bygone ages. We do not know the exact feelings of a Greek or Roman in every department of life, yet we know a great deal more about them now than we did 150 years ago. Our ignorance of all things is relative. I

have often tried to test the authenticity of my conception of certain former periods, but doubt if I could fully enter into the moods of any of them. Every now & then I get an unexpected side-light which forces me to revise a previously settled view. Only this week I have received impressions from the book-revision job which slightly alter my picture of 18th century life in the Connecticut Valley—where the people were evidently cruder & more fanatically pious, even down to the Revolutionary period, than I had suspected before. The motivating springs of any age are complex & largely concealed; & to recapture them from history & documentary remains is a well-nigh impossible job. This reminds me that a new book is just out—*All Ye People*—which is said to go far toward capturing the daily life & spirit of the 1810 period. All this is important because we can never understand the present or speculate intelligently about the future until we have formed some conception of the general time-stream of which the past is so important a part. . . . .

Best wishes—  
HPL

505. TO WILFRED BLANCH TALMAN

Jonckheer Arminius:—

. . . . I'll enjoy seeing this *Argosy* specimen—*Voodoo Express*—if you come across a conveniently transmissible copy, though I have no idea that the A. could ever become a market for *me*. You are of course correct in believing that the "action" story commands the largest low-grade audience, and that it is therefore the most financially profitable type for the non-literary fiction manufacturer to cultivate; correct, too, in recognising that it is extremely difficult to manufacture, as attested by the vast horde of business-minded quantity-producers who strive in vain to make the market with this kind of ware. I do not, however, agree with you in thinking that "action" tales have any genuine *art* in them—except in the very few cases where the subject-matter may inherently call

for a swift succession of events. One must not suppose that *difficulty of manufacture* is equivalent to actual *aesthetic expression*. It is very *difficult* to make a watch or calculate the stresses in bridge-building, but the result is not *art*. It is, instead, *applied science*. Just so with cheap fiction. It is devilish *hard* to study the cheap hard emotions (*mind* is too charitable a word) and devise a sort of artificial image-concoction which shall titillate it in precisely a given fashion—but no one could say that such a spurious, cold-blooded concoction has any resemblance to the sincere expression which is *art*. It is applied science—and damn clever applied science—but it has nothing to do with aesthetics. The reason an "action" story can only rarely be real art is that life is seldom made up of massed action. Within the brief time-compass of a short story, life never affords even an approximation of the physical incidents demanded by the cheap fiction market. When, therefore, a mentally adult reader sees a "hero" in danger too many times, he at once loses the feeling of reality as connected with the story. The words become just words and nothing more—since the thing has grown too unconvincing to build up imaginative pictures. Then again, "action" is really only the smallest part of our total impression from the external word. What "happens" is quite microscopic as compared with what simply "is." Any tale which attempts to re-create a section of experience in maturely effective proportions must devote fully as much attention to the static as to the kinetic factors involved. This is even truer of weird fiction than of any other form; since phantasy is not, directly, a picture of objective events at all, but merely the delineation of a certain type of human mood. What a weird story tells is something that never happens; the real portraiture being wholly of the feeling which often gives rise to the illusion of such happenings. The overt incidents are only subsidiary outcroppings of the dominant mood-portraiture. *Atmosphere* is the one essential in this field, because atmosphere is the only medium whereby anything as elusive and intangible as a *mood* can be even approximately re-created. To have the *reader* in mind is absolutely fatal to sincere artistic expression. Art demands that one write what is within one, and nothing more or less. That is why popular fiction is almost totally devoid of art, and why, conversely, only a small part of the material produced artistically happens to fall within the circle of commercial acceptability.



Now I have no quarrel with non-artistic fiction manufacture. It is a profession just as difficult and dignified as steamfitting—and I would gladly follow either if it were practicable and profitable. The only thing is, that I *can't* do it. The process of tinkering cold-bloodedly and inartistically with words and phrases and cadences for purposes other than that of self-expression develops within me certain repugnances which prevent me from duplicating the required patterns in quasi-original fiction. I can *revise*, but I can't concoct new things in the domain of the cheap and spurious. And I don't say that with any pride, because it merely implies a lack of sharp and versatile intellect. Young Derleth, for example, can reel off atrocious and profitable hokum (cf. any issue of *W. T.*) with his left hand, while with his right he creates delicate things like *People* and *Evening in Spring*, which one could scarcely imagine were written by the same person. But I'm no Derleth—and am too old now to develop into one. One can't succeed in a field for which one has only contempt and loathing, so beginning about five years ago I stopped trying to suit shoddy markets and decided to work sincerely. I have no ambition to work in any but the genuine field—that of Machen, Blackwood, or Poe—even though I realise keenly that I shall never be more than a microscopic figure (if even that) in that honourable and fiercely contested area. I had rather fail like an inferior Blackwood than succeed like a glorified Quinn or Kline—although, as I said before, I'd be perfectly willing to grind out the Quinn-Kline brand of pap if I *could* do it without impairing my ability to write sincerely. But I *can't*—so that's that. It must be from fields mainly revisory that whatever dependable remuneration I am to get must come—from those, or from fields totally dissociated from writing.

Just now all my writing is in abeyance, for a succession of small revisory snatches has culminated in the large book job which I went to Hartford to see Orton about. I think I mentioned that this was the superficial revision and proofreading (aided by your chart of symbols) of a long history of Dartmouth College—and I may add that it has kept me tied down for a fortnight with a concentration which may or may not have been responsible for the sick-headache-and-bum-digestion spell out of which I am only just now pulling. I finished the damn thing last Tuesday, and got it off by parcel post Friday. It is possible that I may have to visit Brattleboro briefly before the thing goes to press, though I

rather hope not in view of the time of year. If this job suits, I may get quite a stream of work from Orton's Stephen Daye Press. . . .

Olla huula huula hei!  
Grandpa Theobald

506. TO J. VERNON SHEA

Friday before the  
Witches' Sabbath  
(October 30, 1931)

Dear Jehvish Ei:—

..... I can see that you easily beat me in number of table-aversions! How can anybody dislike *cheese*? And yet Little Belknap hates it as badly as you do! I don't suppose you would like spaghetti if you don't like cheese, for the two rather go together. I share your liking for sweets, & take an inordinate amount of sugar in my coffee. I, too, am an enthusiastic potato-ite'—& guess I like the fried form best of all. Shake! Of other vegetables I like peas & onions, can tolerate cabbage & turnips, am neutral toward cauliflower, have no deep enmity toward carrots, prefer to dodge parsnips & asparagus, shun stringbeans & brussels sprouts, & abominate spinach. I like rhubarb—& am also really fond of baked beans prepared in the ancient New England way. ....

Take your time about the book loans. I'm in no hurry. *Bethmoora* certainly is great—as are virtually all the *Dreamer's Tales*. As for Machen's *White People*—I still maintain that this is *incomparably the finest* of all his weird tales; being, like Blackwood's *Willows*, almost a model of what a weird tale ought to be. The *lack of anything concrete* is the *great asset* of the story. A weird tale is not an account of *things & happenings*, but a skilful *transcript of a certain sort of human mood*. Tangible aspects & events can never be more than incidental properties. The real thing is the *dark current of half-formulated feelings* that sweeps relentlessly along. The *childish rambling* in this tale is potently effective as a foil to the hellish background. Nothing is more ghoulishly

hideous than the delineation of monstrous elder evil in the guileless language of childhood. Nothing in the child's discourse is really irrelevant. It taps fount after fount of dim, dark folklore as it babbles along, marshalling a terrible array of evidence to lead up to the last ineffably subtle denouement. Make no mistake—& Derleth & Dwyer & the whole gang will back me up when I say so—this is the greatest weird thing Machen ever wrote. It is just about *perfect* for its *genre*. Later on I'll lend you his *Hill of Dreams*, which really falls outside the strictly weird fold. The *White Powder* is cheap & mechanical as compared with *The White People*. . . . .

As for dialects—here are a couple of cuttings which may interest you, & which you might send back eventually. I was greatly interested in your remarks on Pittsburgh local usage, & did not realise it was so distinctive. It probably partakes of both Pennsylvanian & Middle Western characteristics—I recall that the use of *leave* for *let* is common in Cleveland & Milwaukee, & probably in other Western towns. *Crick* is a rusticism heard in the backwoods everywhere from Newfoundland to Key West & Maine to California, but I never heard of *food* rhyming with *hood*. The rising inflection at the end of sentences is encountered in Ireland, but rarely elsewhere to my knowledge. It may be part of Western Pa.'s Scotch-Irish heritage. The so-called *Dutch* of Pennsylvania, by the way, are not really from Holland, but are *Germans*. In the 18th century the common Anglo-Saxon name for Germans (*Deutsch*) was *high-Dutch* as opposed to the *Low Dutch* of the Netherlands. Thus a man in 1731 would say that the people of Penna. are High-Dutch whilst those of New-York are Low-Dutch. Thus arose the common term *Pennsylvania Dutch*, which misleads many today. . . . .

Yr obt grandsire  
Ech-Pi-El

507. TO ROBERT E. HOWARD

Banks of the Seekonk—  
October 30, 1931

Dear Mr. Howard:—

... As for my feeling of instinctive placement in ancient Rome—anything as subtle as that is hard to define. It began very early, when I read about Rome in connexion with its mythology, and also heard of it from another and unfavourable angle in Sunday School. In the first case, after reading of Arabia and Greece with a sense of only objective interest, I felt a sudden surge of *personal connexion* when I stumbled on Roman names and Roman pictures and events of Roman history. I began to have pride and exultation in all Roman victories, enmity toward all foes of Rome, and deep melancholy at the downfall of the Roman world. Also—the mere sound of a sonorous Roman name (*any* name, such as Cnaeus Ventidius Bassus, Aulus Domitius Carbulus, Lucius Pomponius Mela, and so on . . . gave me a peculiar thrill of almost indescribable quality. Typical place names like Tiber, Sabinum, Ostia, Tibur, Veii, Reate, Baiæ, etc., also awakened odd feelings of affectionate pseudo-memory. And I could not avoid pseudo-patriotic feelings at *symbols* linked with Roman glory. The she-wolf, the eagles, the initials S. C. or S. P. Q. R., the battle-cry of Alala! or Venus Victrix!—and later (when I began to study Latin) certain phrases characteristic of patriotic Roman writers—*non esse consuetudinem Romanorum*—*mare nostrorum*—*majorum*—etc., etc. Moreover, Roman architecture fascinated and tantalised me ineffably—beckoning me, as it were, to vast imaginary vistas filled with lordly domes, towering Corinthian columns, and titanic arches surmounted by spirited equestrian groups. I also found the Roman physiognomy peculiarly homelike and attractive, alien though it is to my own. It never seemed foreign—and I felt a paradoxical resentment at its dilution and disappearance in the imperial age, even though that dilution brought it nearer to my own racial type than it was before! When Rome was presented to me from the second and unfavourable angle—the Sunday-School horror of Nero and the persecution of Christians—I could never sympathise in the least with the teachers. I felt that one good Roman pagan was worth any six dozen of the cringing slum riff-

raff who took up with a fanatical foreign belief, and was frankly sorry that the Syrian superstition was not stamped out. I didn't admire the Emperor Nero personally—but that was because he was not of the good old Roman type. When it came to the repressive measures of Marcus Aurelius and Diocletianus, I was in complete sympathy with the government and had not a shred of use for the Christian herd. To try to get me to identify myself with that herd seemed in my mind ridiculous. My own sense of placement lay unerringly and unchangingly with the Romans and the general Roman civilisation. My chief loyalty, though, concerns a day before there were any Christians—for it is the old Republic that captivates me. My favourite period is that of the later Punic Wars and the conquest of Spain and the East—say backward from 100 B. C. But any period fascinates me potently enough, and there is of course a profound charm in the Imperial age when the Roman civilisation began to extend to the land and races connected with my real blood ancestry. Roman Britain has a magical spell all its own—I can imagine myself a centurion in the Second Legion at Isca Silurum, or a retired provincial quaestor with a villa on the outskirts of Eboracum. But oddly, my instinctive imaginary picture of myself is never that of a British or Gothic Roman. It is always that of a hawk-nosed member of the old Latian and Sabine stock from the Tiber and the slopes of the Apennines. . . .

With every good wish—yrs. most sincerely,

H. P. Lovecraft

508. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Novr. 6, 1931

Dear A. W.:—

... About "Arkham" and "Kingsport"—bless my soul! but I thought I'd told you all about them years ago! They are typical but imaginary places—like the river "Miskatonic", whose name is simply a jumble of Algonquin roots. Vaguely, "Arkham" corresponds to Salem (though Salem has no college), while "Kingsport" corresponds to Marblehead. Similarly, there is no "Dunwich"—the place being a vague echo of the decadent Massachusetts countryside around Springfield—say

Wilbraham, Monson, and Hampden. It would be impossible to make any real place the scene of such bizarre happenings as those which beset my hypothetical towns. At the same time, I take pains to make these places wholly and realistically characteristic of genuine New England seaports—always being authentic concerning architecture, atmosphere, dialect, manners and customs, &c. As for that rocky promontory—the coast north of Boston *is* composed of high rocky cliffs, which in several places rise to considerable altitudes as bold headlands. Of course, though, there is nothing as dizzy as the fabled seat of the Strange High House. If I had any promontory specifically in mind when writing that tale, it was the headland near Gloucester called "Mother Ann"—though that has no such relation to the city as my mysterious cliff has to "Kingsport". Marblehead has rocky cliffs—though of no great height—along the neck to the south of the ancient town. . . .

Best wishes—Yr. obt. Servt.,  
HP

509. TO J. VERNON SHEA

Wooded Banks of the Seekonk  
—Nov. 10, 1931

Dear Jehvish-Êi:—

..... About *oo*—the sound in *root* is much more variable everywhere than in *food*. It is this latter case which marks Pittsburgh as so highly unusual. I don't believe there's any variant from the dominant pronunciation of this word in any other part of the globe. ....

As for diet—I thought I was bad enough, (& so do my hosts sometimes when I have to strain tact to its limits about fish, liver, &c!) but I fear you're even a more horrible example! I'm not enamoured of deep layers of butter, but I like a little on bread if I have to eat bread at all . . . . . which is seldom from choice. But as for jam or jelly—I am your utter opposite, for I like it so well that I pile on amounts thicker than the bread which sustains them! I'm not fond of milk or any milky drinks. If I take fluid at a fountain it's some thin fruit beverage with

orange, grape, cherry, lemon, or lime as a base. But I more often take ice cream, of which my favourite flavours are vanilla & coffee (the latter hard to get outside New England) & my least relished common flavour is strawberry. I don't care for tea at all, but don't dislike it with lemon. I like coffee exceedingly, but relish its imitation Postum just as much. I am nauseated by even the distant stink of any alcoholic liquor. As for vegetables—I don't mind cauliflower, & don't think you would either if you tried it. It is rather neutral & politely unobtrusive. But I doubt if you'd like Brussels sprouts. I never heard of *kale* except as a slang term for what is academically known as jack, berries, dough, mazuma, & long green—although I dimly realised, that the frozen metaphor had some sort of obscure vegetable basis. Black-eyed peas are a new one on me—but in New England we are very fond of baked yellow-eye beans. . . .

Yr obt grandsire  
Ečh-Pi-El

510. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Novr. 20, 1931

Dear A. W.:—

. . . . . Manifestly, this (*A Rose for Emily*) is a dark and horrible thing which *could happen*, whereas the crux of a *weird* tale is something which *could not possibly happen*. If any unexpected advance of physics, chemistry, or biology were to indicate the *possibility* of any phenomena related by the weird tale, that particular set of phenomena would cease to be *weird* in the ultimate sense because it would become surrounded by a different set of emotions. It would no longer represent imaginative liberation, because it would no longer indicate a suspension or violation of the natural laws against whose universal dominance our fancies rebel. It would not even represent the shudder formerly felt when people believed in non-material phenomena; since that shudder was based upon mystery and unplumbed possibilities, whereas today we know that anything which can exist at all exists in strict mathematical relationship to all other cosmic energy-manifestations. However, one may add that in the event of such a discovery a certain aura of vague

quasi-weirdness would continue to linger around the affected field through the force of tradition until it became very thoroughly understood and explored. The foregoing will shew you why I insist on the definition "which it is very probable that no natural explanation can possibly fit." Everything *which really exists* most certainly has a natural explanation. But it is my contention that real *weirdness* or imaginative liberation depends on the depiction of something *which does not exist*, or which probably does not exist. If ghosts, Tsathogguan monsters, or any sort of a "spiritual" world *existed*, weird fiction would sink to commonplaceness. . . . .

. . . . Yr. most obt. Grandsire HP

511. TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Deept of Gba-Ktan, beyond Devil's Reef  
off the coast of Innsmouth  
Hour of the Nameless Swarming  
(November 20, 1931)

Dear Klarkash-Ton:—

I certainly hope you can get to see Newburyport sooner or later, for its antiquity and desolation make it one of the most spectrally fascinating spots I have ever seen. It has started me off on a new story idea—not very novel in relation to other things of mine, but born of the imaginative overtones of such a place. My scene will not be called Newburyport and Arkham. However, this tale may never see the light, since that port and Arkham. However, this tale may never see the light, since that Putnam rebuff has caused me to pause for a general stock-taking, and to review the question of whether my stuff really is any good except in a superficial way. All my tales, except for perhaps one or two, dissatisfy me profoundly on close analysis; and I have about decided to call a halt unless I can manage to do better than I am doing. I am using the new idea as a basis for what might be called laboratory experimentation—writing it out in different manners, one after the other, in an effort to determine the mood and tempo best suited to the theme. What I shall—or shan't—write hereafter depends to some extent on how I come out

with these experiments. My latest move is to destroy all three versions written to date, preparatory to embarking on a fourth. The trouble with most of my stuff is that it falls between two stools—the vile magazine type subconsciously engrafted on my method by *W. T.* association, and the real story. My tales are not bad enough for cheap editors, nor good enough for standard acceptance and recognition. As Putnam's pointed out, they tend to become too explanatory—to lack subtlety in the manner of Blackwood's *Incredible Adventures* or Machen's *White People*. In choosing which direction to take for further efforts, I have little difficulty. Repugnance—and lack of natural cleverness and adaptability—definitely debars me from the popular “eckshun” field, so all I can do is to try honestly to write really better stories or give up the whole mess as a bad job—though possibly pulling off consciously mediocre yarns now and then for sheer amusement.

As for compromise work—possibly it can be done, but not by me. An “eckshun” story can have merit only when the subject-matter is such as to demand, naturally and inherently, a rapid succession of overt events; and only certain types of imagination can spontaneously and persistently breed such themes. I am essentially a static, contemplative, and objective person; almost a hermit in daily life, and always preferring to observe rather than to participate. My natural—and only genuine—form of imagination is that of *passive witnessing*—the idea being that of a sort of floating, disembodied eye which sees all manner of marvellous phenomena without being greatly affected by them. I am constitutionally unable to see anything interesting in mere *motions* and *events*. What absorb me are *conditions, atmospheres, appearances*, and intangible things of that kind. My perspective is too inherently cosmic and analytical to make me feel the importance of what the tridimensional world regards as changes in the relative setting of dust-grains as negligible as terrestrial men. The only things I can conceive as worthy protagonists of cosmic drama are *basic natural forces and laws*, and what spells *interest* for me is simply the convincing illusion of the thwarting, suspension, or disturbance of such forces and laws. To me a climax is simply an effective demonstration of a temporary defeat of the cosmic order. I use human puppets as symbols, but my interest is not with them. It is the situation of defeat itself—and the sensation of liberation therein implicit—which provides me with the thrill and catharsis of aesthetic endeavour.

With this emotional background, it would be a matter of sheer hypoc-

risy and artificiality for me to attempt “eckshun” stories. If I am to write sincerely and with the possibility of art, it must always be, for the most part, of observers who float or glide through a field of cosmic abnormality little touched except mutually and emotionally. This is my one natural type of expression, because it is the only thing I really have to say. It is the only type of image which my rather isolated and uneventful career has fitted me to formulate, or has urged me to utter and record. . . .

Yrs. in the lore of the Forbidden Litany—,  
Ech-Pi-El

512. TO MISS ELIZABETH TOLDRIDGE

Dec. 3, 1931

Dear Miss Toldridge:—

. . . As for current changes in civilisation—surely no individual need worry in the least about any of them, unless active in some field directly affected. The majority of persons today will probably see very few striking & sudden changes in daily life, because (barring an upheaval like the Russian one) such things are invariably very gradual. *Ideas & mental perspectives* change swiftly—but after all, most people are doing about the same general kind of things (albeit somewhat differently proportioned in the case of the younger element) that they were doing thirty or forty years ago. Even the necessary social-economic readjustments in western governments will not mean a revolutionised set of folkways. Indeed—their chief object will be to preserve existing folkways & institutions as far as possible under the mechanised conditions of the present & future. I hate to see picturesque old objects & customs vanish—but I don't let the matter keep me awake nights. As a matter of fact, a fair majority of the existing colonial architecture & a very large part of the existing cultural tradition will long survive me. . . .

Thanks very much for the second set of cuttings—some of which are of especial interest just now, since I heard Prof. de Sitter lecture here Nov. 9 on *The Size of the Universe*. One of the most spectacular of recent astronomical developments is the growing conviction that the vis-

ible cosmos is in a state of constant expansion—as if it were scattering its contents into empty space. Probably all cosmic units have a similar history—forming through the accidental aggregation of wandering atomic clusters, subsequently going through a series of typical readjustments based on the electrical properties of matter, & ending in a final disintegration & dispersal. De Sitter is not the first proponent of this view of the cosmos—which perhaps originates with Dr. V. M. Slipher's spectroscopic work at the Lowell Observatory in Arizona, (which proved that all spiral nebulae—external galaxies—are retreating rapidly into outer space) but he is the first to make it the subject of a mathematical fact in the manner of Einstein. It will also be interesting to see how well de Sitter's theory of the origin of the solar system (through actually colliding stars instead of merely closely passing stars) will stand comparison with the views which have been dominant since 1905 or 1906. De Sitter is a pleasant-looking little old man with bald head, fringe of snowy hair, & snowy full beard. He speaks excellent English, but has not a very great vocal carrying-power, so that those in the rear of his audiences are distinctly out of luck. He is extremely clever in bringing the outlines of an abstruse subject within the layman's grasp, & shews great acumen in choosing illustrative lantern-slides. . . .

With best wishes—

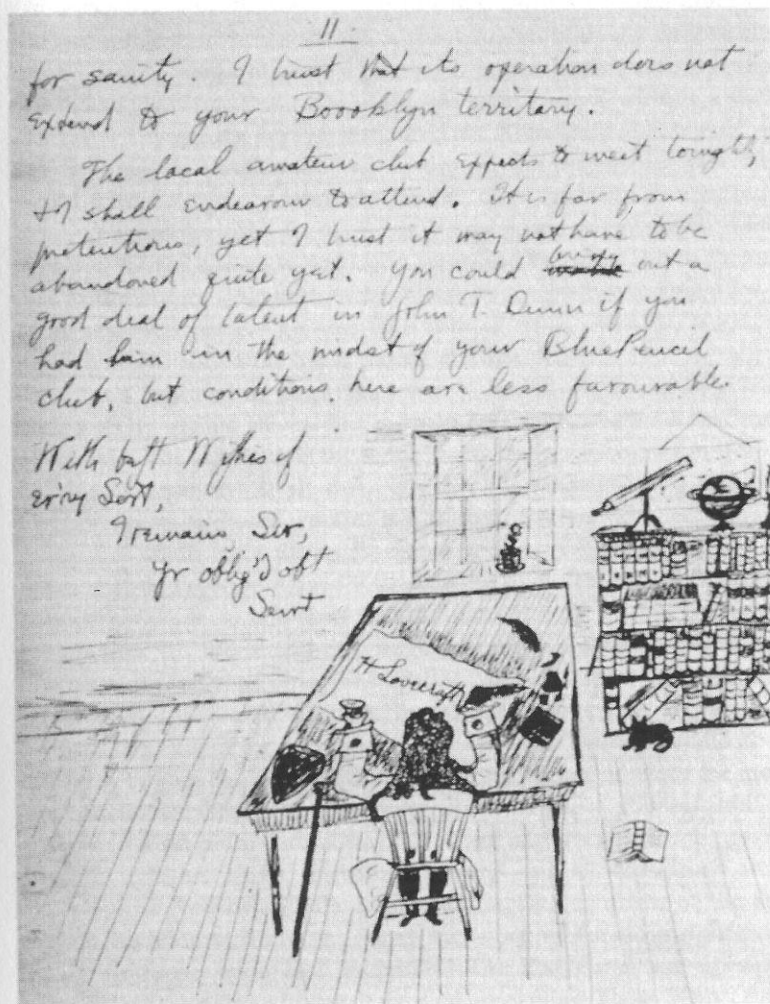
Yrs most sincerely,  
HPLovecraft

513. TO J. VERNON SHEA

Decr. 9, 1931

Dear Jehvish-Ei:—

Glad the atmosphere of *The White People* is beginning to manifest itself to you. As for the essentials of the plot—you haven't quite got 'em yet, though you probably would have if I had sufficiently stressed the relationship between this tale & *The Great God Pan*. This, then, is the dope: I. The image found in the woods was that of two entities locked in a monstrous & obscene embrace—from which, had they been living



A page from Lovecraft's correspondence

things would have been born a Thing of non-human horror . . . . like Helen Vaughan in *The Great God Pan*, or the boy in *The Black Seal*. II. On account of a sympathetic action like that described in the prologue, the now-adolescent child—though without contact with any creative element—became pregnant with a Horror, to whose birth (knowing what she did of dark tradition) she could not look forward without a stark frenzy far beyond the fear of mere disgrace. Thus she killed herself. If she had not, a nameless hybrid abnormality of daemonic paternity would have been loosed upon the world. There seems to be very little question about the correctness of this interpretation, since several small allusions toward the end—especially regarding the girl's age & the nature of the image—join with earlier allusions to sketch the implications. Most analytical readers get this idea without much difficulty, & others see it unmistakably after being tipped off. This kind of plot was what the 1890's regarded as about the acme of horror—& it certainly does pack a pretty sombre shiver. But as I said before, that isn't the real crux of the tale. The big thing is the tense, insidious atmosphere—landscape, half-hinted legendry, & all that. Whether it's mathematically the second-best weird tale ever written, is a matter of no transcendent significance. I'd hardly take young Derleth's verdict as final in matters of weirdness, & I'd have valued Klarkash-Ton's verdict more before his popular-magazine success than I would now. But all I'll say is that, in my opinion, it's the second-best weird tale which I myself have read. I don't see any of your objections against Machen's style, which is certainly one of the most fluent & harmonious imaginable. If you had brought the same objections against Algernon Blackwood, I could have agreed with you; for his ragged journalese sometimes develops the most unreadable cacophonics & prosaicisms. But Machen is glibness itself—though in a far from formal way. If I have any semi-objection against his style it is that it's too unctuously literary—too self-consciously artistic & precise. Possibly a little of the meaningless jauntiness of the Stevenson tradition still clings around him—but as for downright poor style, one simply must look elsewhere! *The Red Hand* was especially shivery to me because of what it implied concerning Those Who Dwell Beneath. Possibly the atmosphere impressed me more than anything directly stated. When you get all through with your present Macheniana, I'll send you *The Hill of Dreams*—the one book in which Machen

makes contact with the main stream of major literature. It is not supernaturalism, though one long day-dreaming episode partakes very much of the atmosphere of the marvellous.

Sorry to hear that your *Suicide in Costume* theme was not well received, & can't bring myself to agree with the instructor who so ruthlessly condemned it. He certainly must be a martinet—though perhaps he forms a useful corrective for young minds disposed to overlook reality in favour of fairy-tale extravagance. There is no question but that realism must form the groundwork for any first-rate piece of writing, no matter how far from reality the author may push any one line of development. Unless the writer knows how to describe & vivify the every-day scene around him, he will never know how to describe & vivify anything. But although he must begin at home, there is of course no obligation for him to stay there. Your *Ten-Cent Matinee* is really very good, even if you don't care for it yourself. Details of that kind make a scene real, & such reality is necessary even when the given story is to end in unreality. What I object to in your instructor's attitude is his illogical prejudice against the unusual. He ought to realise that the exceptional as well as the commonplace has a legitimate status in the general pattern of things. All one can justly censure on a pupil is an excessive devotion to the unusual—a devotion so great as to bias his perspective & cause him to overlook or misinterpret the usual. Your *Shoe Repairer* theme is excellent—though for once I can see what your instructor means by monotony of sentences. Read the thing aloud, & see if there isn't a preponderance of short, similar sentences rather trying to the rhythmic ear. Good prose must be simple, but it must have a certain musical flow & variety if it is to represent the highest art. Dunsany exhibits one phase of perfect prose about as well as any writer I know, & Wilde was another titan in that line. Prose style was better 30 or 40 years ago than it is now—a lower technical level being one of the prices we are paying for the higher intelligence & deep insight of our contemporary literature.

And speaking of food—what causes me to shiver at the drinking of milk is not its origin but its remembered taste. I simply don't like it. That is, I don't like it clear; although I relish a bowl of crackers & milk with cheese if the proportion of crackers is sufficiently high. My mother used to camouflage it with *both* chocolate & vanilla, & it wasn't bad in that form; but I fancy I get enough to eat without taking so much

bother. I can't understand your considering the maple flavour as *sickeningly sweet*—in fact, that term itself is subjectively meaningless to me. *My sweet tooth* has no limit—I like my cake to be all frosting, & take five (domino-shaped) lumps of sugar in an average-sized cup of coffee. Hershey's sweet chocolate is one of my favourite nibbles. Nothing pleases me more than maple sugar or syrup.

As for my fiction—whether or not there's anything potentially in it, I know that it needs a damn thorough overhauling. It is excessively extravagant & melodramatic, & lacks depth & subtlety. After more than thirty years of intermittent effort, the last fourteen years of which are continuous, I have produced nothing within even gunshot distance of Algernon Blackwood. My style is bad, too—full of obvious rhetorical devices & hackneyed word & rhythm patterns. It comes a long way from the stark, objective simplicity which is my goal—yet I find myself tongue-tied when I attempt to use a vocabulary & syntactical pattern other than my own. All my recent experimenting came to naught. I tore up all the tentative versions & wrote the god damn thing the way I would have written it in the first place—producing 68 pages which I shall probably never bother to type. Whether I'll try any more experiments remains to be seen. I'm too cursedly busy just now to do so even if I wished. Yes—I find the novel technique better suited to me than that of the short story. Of late, I fail to get much pleasure from short stories—either reading or writing them. No—I don't think lack of acquaintance (direct or indirect) with publishers has anything to do with the non-book-publication of my attempts. Whitehead has all sorts of friends close to prominent publishers, but it has never helped him get a collection published. Robert H. Davis is no influence in the field of real literature, although he can make or unmake a popular magazine writer who has the goods. He once rejected my *Rats in the Walls* on the ground that it was *too horrible*. At bottom, the real reason why my stuff has no standing is that it isn't good enough to have. . . .

Yr obt grandsire  
Ech-Pi-El



514. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Decr. 10, 1931

Dear A. W.:—

..... There are far fewer difficulties in accounting for reported "occult" phenomena than in accepting the absurdities involved in belief in human personality apart from the living cellular organism.

Thus the question resolves itself into two phases:

I: The utter and abysmal improbability of a non-corporeal human existence.

II: The causes of the perplexing illusions which lead certain persons to believe in the extravagant and untenable doctrine of noncorporeal existence.

The first phase is not hard to outline—in fact, Haeckel did it so well a generation or two ago that further elaboration is mere repetition. Briefly—there is no such conceivable thing as a stable or permanent human personality. The existence of every living mammal is something new and (apart from ultimate determinism) fortuitous, depending wholly on the accident of what parental elements happened to combine. Every fresh organism is something wholly new—the result of a fresh cell-combination—and to fancy that its essence has any coherence or reality apart from the growth of these creative cells is so *wild and unmotivated* a vagary as to have no standing whatever in the light of reason. As the cells develop and follow natural ancestral patterns, the natural irritability of the protoplasm flowers into the phenomena of consciousness and personality; but there is never any *one* stage of this development which we may take as a permanent growth and call "the person". On the other hand, the developing organism creates a whole series of personalities—the child, the youth, the adult, the senescent, and the senile—only vaguely resembling one another, and each equally basic for the time being. As the cells change, so does the personality change—and accident can bring as many changes as nature. Let something cripple certain cerebral cells, or let something cause a disproportionate functioning of the endocrine glands, and the whole personality of the moment vanishes and gives place to another. Personality, then, is an obvious at-

tribute of cellular organism—bearing no existence before the parent elements united to form the organism, and being subject to change as the organism ages or suffers other modifications. To fancy that this attribute (a mode of motion in matter of a certain complex natural form) has any existence apart from its causative material, or that it can survive the death and disposal of that material, (when as a matter of fact it often fails to survive, in full, even a decade within the lifetime of that material!) is a delusion so childish that few biologists of the present even begin to consider it seriously. To cling to primitive myths of this sort is like believing the earth to be flat, or accepting the Ptolemaic theory of the solar system. Three-quarters of all the religious piffle and ghostly legendry extant would vanish in a flash if the majority of people had the patience and common sense to look at this matter as it really is. The mistake of the herd is to harbour a totally false idea about the nature of life. Life is not a *thing* but a *process*; and a process ceases when its component parts are dispersed. Life is like a flame—which cannot survive the candle which produces it. It is a lack of comprehension of the *utter improbability* of non-corporeal human existence which lays certain minds open to suggestions of "occult" phenomena.

So much for Phase I. Phase II is much more complex, and of course begins at the opposite end. It takes a miscellaneous body of alleged phenomena of all degrees of crudity or puzzling subtlety, cited as evidence *against* the normal conclusion reached in Phase I, and endeavours to see how such phenomena can be reported when all the bulk of evidence is overwhelmingly against non-corporeal existence. Modern observation does not find the alleged phenomena of occultism as impressive as past generations did, because recent anthropological and psychological researches have emphasized the feeble hold which our consciousnesses have on reality. Everything we seem to perceive and know depends on a curious filtration and colouration imposed by our mental and emotional backgrounds, so that we can be sure of nothing unless it will bear testing and objective demonstration. What we think we remember of yesterday may at times bear only an approximate relationship to what really happened; and many an acute and self-analytical man can spot in himself dozens of wholly erroneous pseudo-memories and mnemonic transpositions by means of objective checking up—things which he would have sworn were true if he had not been honest and intelligent enough to analyze them and track them down to their illusory birth. We also

come to recognise the tremendous force of myth-building, and the well-nigh incredible persistence of unreal myth-patterns—as well as the accretive nature of repetition as applied to stories, anecdotes, and reports. We find that all those reported phenomena which do not savour plainly of hallucination, error, mendacity, or transposed memory, are those to which we can never get closer than third or fourth hand. Taking Phase II as a whole, we may say inclusively that the one great cause of “occult” belief is the defenceless state of mind bequeathed by our justly credulous (because necessarily uninformed) ancestral past. It was absolutely inevitable that our forebears should believe in supernatural and spiritual phenomena, because they had no other way of accounting for the phenomena of nature and the delusive paradoxes created by dreams, shadows, memories, and the like. Animism and dualism were essential stages which we had to pass through; and their crystallization in dogmatic and compulsory religions served to drive them so far into the subconscious of the race that they have long survived their rational term.

Our minds are crippled—biased and predisposed toward the acceptance of supernaturalism as a matter of course—by the religious instruction we receive at the most impressionable period of early childhood. Psychologists know that almost any sort of emotional and imaginative bias, be it ever so absurd, can be drilled into one if he be taken at a suitably early age. That is why our subjective feelings—crippled as they are—form no evidence whatever one way or the other in the stern quest for reality. If we were not so injured in childhood, we would today laugh the notion of the spiritual out of court at the very outset. It is, then, no wonder that the minds of the non-analytical form fertile soil for delusions. Now—how can we classify the various types of occult delusion with respect to origin and implantation? There seem to be two types of false evidences here involved: 1) Phenomena which have a basis in reality, but which suffer misinterpretation. 2) Reports of phenomena which have never occurred at all.

First let us look into class one. It would be impossible to analyse and classify, in the compass of a single letter, all the delusions so confidently, sincerely, and ingeniously brought forward by men like Flammarion and Chevreuil; but one may take a few salient types as illustrations of the sources of apparent “evidence for spirituality”.

a) Direct error. Vapour interpreted as ghost. Wind in hollow walls mistaken for spectral music. (Actual case in Halsey Mansion—built

1801—just around the corner from 10 Barnes St. In the 1850's this fine old brick house was actually feared by the ignorant.) Given the phenomenon, it weaves its own legend and creates its own mythical antecedents in the course of a few repetitions.

b) Transposition of memory. A. says that he saw a certain indication of a given happening *before* it occurred or before he learned of its occurrence. Investigation always shows that the alleged indication was in fact *subsequent*, even though the narrator sincerely believes that it was antecedent.

c) Mnemonic selection. B. insists that he had an advance dream or vague premonition of something which actually occurs. The fact is, that the situation was one which (although it may not *seem* so) called for speculation in advance, with the eventual alternative among others. After the outcome is known, B. remembers thinking or dreaming of the correct alternative, and forgets that he thought or dreamed about others just as strongly. This type of myth is of course fostered by the measurable number of pure accidental coincidences in which the subject really happens to guess a correct alternative in advance. But for every such case of accidentally correct guessing, there are naturally a hundred cases of incorrect guessing. People remember the one striking accident and forget the humdrum hundred bad guesses.

d) Auto-hypnosis due to volition. Most people, irritated by men's real insignificance and helplessness in the cosmos, ardently wish that a spiritual world existed to give them the unreal importance formerly assured them by religion. Natural limitations of time, space, and natural law are galling to them—especially in the light of the delusive and grandiloquent tradition on which they were suckled—hence some consciously take to weird fiction, whilst others prefer to kid themselves along and cling to a vestigial love of the obsolescent spiritual mythology. The subconscious strength of this wish is often so great as to become translated into downright hallucination, causing the subject to experience illusory evidences of the supernatural, or even to construct elaborate day-dreams of occultism revolving around himself. In some cases, it drives otherwise truthful persons to grotesque extremes of uncontrollable (even when not wholly unconscious) mendacity in the direction of establishing or corroborating illusions which bolster up their cherished conception of the spiritual. This is especially marked in abnormally egotistical types, whose sense of importance and centrality is

enhanced by the weaving of supernatural illusions around their personality. (A psychiatric study of the Rev. Montague Summers—who claims, among other marvels, to have “seen” a priest bodily levitated several feet into the air during the performance of some sacerdotal rite—would be a highly important contribution to science. Here we have an extraordinarily profound scholar and author subject to wish-hallucinations of the most extreme type. . . . .)

e) Sincere errors in reporting—similar to case (a) but less crude and direct. This is the case of those who read and accept elaborate presentations of alleged occult phenomena such as those in Chevreuil and Flammarion. Because the data in such books is so detailed and sincere, and so coherently and forcefully presented, the susceptible reader allows his larger conception of cosmic probability to be lulled to sleep by something which merely *looks* irrefutable. He forgets that it is much more likely for these rare alleged events (events which very suspiciously follow certain hackneyed myth-patterns in a majority of instances) to involve a hidden error or falsehood somewhere along the chain of transmission and verification, than for the basic facts of human existence and perishability to be other than what the overwhelming bulk of tested evidence and common sense indicates. This forgetfulness and predisposition would undoubtedly be less marked if people would realise how natural it is for seemingly convincing ghostly legends to take their rise. The stage was all set for such hallucinations in primitive times, so that anthropologists know they would have occurred in any case—whether or not any similar reality existed. With the general lines of the myth-pattern all marked out, it is inevitable that it should have been transmitted, with suitable accretions and adaptations to varying sets of manners and customs, down the long line of the ages. It is amusing to analyse certain ghost tales current in certain nations, and to discover in them half-submerged elements unmistakably bespeaking their earlier formulation in lands widely separated from the place of alleged occurrence. We read of an “occult” phenomenon occurring yesterday in a house in Boston—but can trace in the account features which could not have developed except in France, or Italy, or Hungary, as the case may be, or in centuries more recent than the 17th, 16th, 15th, and so on. Such analysis breaks up a vast number of the most apparently circumstantial cases, whilst *actual investigation almost invariably rips any one of them to tatters*. It is inconceivable to a believer how many discrepancies there are betwixt the

actual conditions in such a case as finally tracked down, and the plausible case-history as written up in the pages of a Flammarion. One false link alters the whole thing. The character of witnesses, psychological and otherwise—the actual thing first reported—the conditions of visibility &c—the motivations uncovered—the number of accretive repetitions—&c. &c. &c. It is the same old story whenever one of these plausible yarns is really tracked down—and sometimes, of course, one finds that the alleged anecdote is wholly fictitious. Let any occultist choose any case at random, and a thoroughly searching investigation will either shew flaws, or shew an endless chain of repetitions hinting at ultimate nullity, or prove the whole thing a fake. . . . .

. . . . As for the element of reporting and transmission—we have only to see how common rumour grows by repetition, and how the honest testimony of two eye-witnesses to the same event differs, in order to appreciate the development of myths as they circulate. A. hears the blinds slamming on a house and tells B. B. tells C. that the blinds slammed without any wind. C. tells D. that a ghostly hand slammed the blinds. D. tells E. that a transparent man in white slammed the blinds. E. tells F. that in a house where a murder took place 150 years ago, a periwigged ghost opened the blinds of a long-sealed room—and so on and so on. All in all, *if we keep our sense of proportion intact*, we can see that it is impossible and silly to accept these specious embodiments of myth-patterns as real evidence against the natural conditions which all our direct and sober observations attest; just as it is foolish to accept subjective impressions and hallucinations when we know so well the capriciousness and wish-swayed unreliability of our perceptive faculties. With things as they are, it is not to be wondered at that virtually no modern thinkers of any standing—not even those who vaguely harbour the old cosmic-purpose delusion—have any credence in the claims of mediums and ghost-seers. Against the fantastic minority represented by Flammarion (who was not a physicist or biologist) and two or three other Frenchmen, by Sir William Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, and one or two Americans, *we have as complete occult sceptics the entire body of responsible investigative intellect throughout the world*, including Einstein, Jeans, Eddington, Millikan, Compton, de Sitter, Julian Huxley, Santayana, Bertrand Russell, Freud, Jung, Adler, Watson, Pavlov, . . . but there's no need of reproducing an international Who's Who. . . . .

There now remains for consideration class 2 of reported occult phenomena—things which never occurred in *any* form, but which have been created by imagination, tradition, or mendacity, and developed by plausible repetition. We have touched upon these in connexion with group e of class 1, but it will be well to cite certain classic instances. That of the Hindoo fakir is the best case. For a century we have heard of yogis and mahatmas who throw a rope into the air so that it stands up straight and extends aloft out of sight—whereupon a boy climbs up and likewise vanishes in the distance. This became a popular traveller's tale—as having been told one by Colonel C—who heard it from Major M—as early as the 1850's; and for fully thirty years was accepted by the general western public as a marvellous and unexplained bit of actual sleight-of-hand. Nobody but occult dupes (and there was a wave of that delusion in the middle 19th century, somewhat resembling the present popular wave) believed it to be supernatural, but everyone joined in a wondering admiration of the clever turbaned performers. Then an explanation was reported. Mass hypnotism was the answer, and there began to be frequent reports of a photographer who snapped the spectacle at the crucial moment when he thought he saw the boy climbing the rope, but who found on developing his negative that the rope was on the ground and the boy simply scuttling away around the nearest corner.

This was the general public belief after about 1880, and probably still is with many. But what are the facts? The matter was actually taken up seriously early in the 20th century through a systematic tracking down of reports. Colonel C—was asked just what Major M—told him, and Major M—was asked where he got his account. Who, as a matter of fact, had ever *seen* this rope and boy trick as opposed to merely hearing about it? Who was the photographer who had revealed it as mass-hypnotism? Well—the result was that the whole thing was relegated to the domain of *pure folklore*. Nobody had ever seen the trick—and *nobody had ever performed it!* It was a typical case of a pure myth-pattern—utterly fictitious to start with, but eventually believed all over the world. The same was proved concerning other Hindoo tricks, although long-term living burials (in some cases of which the subject died) were shewn to exist occasionally as a result of a special physiological aptitude or of some hidden breathing connexion with the surface. What is significant—as shewing how myth-pattern can originate in recent times as well as in antiquity—is the fact that the tale of the photographer was

found to be as baseless as all the rest. Yet in the fin de siècle period this plausible anecdote was widely credited by the most thoughtful man alive. One of the best-informed persons in this field was the late showman Houdini—a tremendously intelligent and hard-headed soul despite his many crudities—for whom I did a great deal of revision in the last years of his life. He had delved very thoroughly into the Hindoo fakir question himself, and was convinced that all the more spectacular tricks attributed to them were sheer legend, although their residue of genuine legerdemain was surely clever enough. Such is a typical case of the myth which grows by report. Reaching back to mediaeval history, we find entire episodes—once widely believed—to be mere growths of folk legend or applications of the solar and other myth-patterns. There never was a Wilhelm Tell, nor was Richard III a hunchback. Coming down again—the old haunted well of Middleboro, Mass. was created by a Boston American reporter, and the haunted house at Henniker, N. H. received its traditional ghosts when the present tearoom exploiters bought and opened it. In these last two cases myth-patterns are in the making—at least one “historical” ballad apiece having been innocently and independently launched from sources wholly unconnected with the original fakes. And of course Arthur Machen's *Bowmen of Mons* form the one perfect modern classic instance. You ought to see the “authentic” reports of people who “saw” people who “had seen” the shining phantoms on the battle field before Machen invented them! And pretty soon people began to “remember” the peculiar arrow wounds found on the German dead . . . . “doctors” (who could somehow never be located) gave testimony about these wounds. . . . .

. . . . Much as I would like to live in a cosmos full of my favourite Cthulhus, Yog-Sothoths, Tsathogguas, and the like, I find myself forced into agreement with men like Russell, Santayana, Einstein, Eddington, Haeckel, and so on. Prose is less attractive than poetry, but when it comes to a choice between probability and extravagance, I have to let common sense be my guide. . . . .

Yr. obt. Servt.,  
HP

515. TO WILLIAM LUMLEY

Dec. 21, 1931

My dear Mr. Lumley:—

..... Yes—I have frequently noticed the bestial and repulsive aspect of crowds, especially in such decadent cosmopolitan centres as New York City. Hogarth certainly reproduced the true substance of life, and it takes but a little imagination to modify these degraded types into the out and out monsters of phantasy. Another artist who went even farther than Hogarth in depicting human bestiality is the Spaniard, Goya. Swift surely had a sound basis for his account of the Yahoos—which indeed I found fascinating from childhood onward. There is a place in art and literature for the delineation of reality in its sternest phases, but that does not detract from the value of phantasy—the literature of escape. Some writers take naturally to the one phase, while others incline toward the other. It is always the unreal and the marvellous—the vague and expectancy-fraught world of dream, wherein anything is possible—which have primarily fascinated me. ....

Yrs. most cordially and sincerely,  
H. P. Lovecraft

516. TO AUGUST DERLETH

Decr. 23, 1931

Dear A. W.:—

.... As for the controversy, your point that "negative evidence in the absence of positive evidence is nil" is not a very good one except in theory. It is true that in a matter where no probabilities exist on either side, negative evidence can scarcely figure. Here, however, the case is different. The alleged thing whose existence is under discussion is an *improbability* of the most overwhelming sort; all our knowledge of the universe and its workings pointing against its possibility. Nothing, then, could justify the serious consideration of such a thing as a possibility ex-

cept the very strongest sort of positive evidence. If this positive evidence is lacking, the absence becomes *in effect* a strong—almost irrefutably strong—piece of "negative evidence"; because it leaves the field clear for those *other* general evidences regarding the structure of the cosmos, whereby the existence of the alleged thing is shown as an improbability just short of absolute impossibility. There is no use trying to evade the force of this truth. To embody the principle concretely—suppose I asserted, without a *raison d'être*, and in the face of all opposing evidence, that there is a city of brick houses inhabited by lizard-headed entities on a planet revolving around the star Epsilon Ursae Majoris. Who the hell can disprove that? The only thing which makes it virtually certain that such a race and city do *not* exist, is the fact that my statement is not founded on any basis of evidence; so that there is nothing to invalidate the general probabilities which declare against the existence of the hypothetical things. In other words, the principle of negative evidence is that whereby we recognise, in practical thinking, *that there is no reason to believe in the existence of anything whose claim to reality can be shewn to depend on nothing but error, caprice, or irrelevantly motivated guesswork.* .....

Yr. obt. Servt.,  
HP