

Meanwhile, let us consider the following from H. P. Lovecraft, who has contributed a good deal to these sprightly pages. Mr. Lovecraft writes:

"My dear Baird: I was indeed glad to receive yours of the 14th, and to learn that your readers are taking kindly to my tenebrous effusions, as represented by 'Dagon'. I hope they'll like its successors as well—for I can certainly give them all you think they'll take! That 'The Hound' merits your favour is pleasing news to me. I wrote it a year ago in New York, when I had been exploring an old Dutch cemetery in Flatbush, where the ancient grave-stones are in the Dutch language, with such beginnings as 'Hier Lydt' or 'Hier leght begraaven'. My companion was Rheinart Kleiner, (whose verse you may have seen in some of the popular magazines) and when we picked some scaling red slate from one of the slabs as souvenirs, I wondered what *thing* might come to us some midnight to punish us for the wanton desecration.

"And here is another horror for your approval or rejection. This thing—whose long title you can shorten to 'The Late Arthur Jermyn' if the original presents typographical problems—was written about two years ago. Its origin is rather curious—and far removed from the atmosphere it suggests. Somebody had been harassing me into reading some work of the iconoclastic moderns—those young chaps who pry behind exteriors and unveil nasty hidden motives and secret stigmata—and I had nearly fallen asleep over the tame backstairs gossip of Anderson's 'Winesburg, Ohio'. The sainted Sherwood, as you know, laid bare the dark arcana which many whited village lives concealed; and it occurred to me that I, in my weird medium, could probably devise some secret behind a man's ancestry which would make the worst of Anderson's disclosures sound like the annual report of a Sabbath School. Hence Arthur Jermyn. Most of those who have seen the MS. profess themselves properly horrified—all, in fact, except one chap who has traveled in Rhodesia, and declares himself bound by ties of the purest and most undaunted affection to all the denizens, negro and simian alike, of the Dark Continent.

"Popular authors do not and apparently cannot appreciate the fact that true art is obtainable only by rejecting normality and conventionality in toto, and approaching a theme purged utterly of any usual or preconceived point of view. Wild and 'different' as they may

consider their quasi-weird products, it remains a fact that the bizarrerie is on the surface alone; and that basically they reiterate the same old conventional values and motives and perspectives. Good and evil, teleological illusion, sugary sentiment, anthropocentric psychology—the usual superficial stock in trade, and all shot through with the eternal and inescapable commonplace. Take a werewolf story, for instance—who ever wrote one from the point of view of the wolf, and sympathizing strongly with the devil to whom he has sold himself? Who ever wrote a story from the point of view that man is a blemish on the cosmos, which ought to be eradicated? As an example—a young man I know lately told me that he means to write a story about a scientist who wishes to dominate the earth, and who to accomplish his ends trains and overdevelops germs, (a la Anthony Rud's 'Ooze') and leads on armies of them in the manner of the Egyptian plagues. I told him that although this theme has promise, it is made utterly commonplace by assigning the scientist a normal motive. There is nothing outre about wanting to conquer the earth; Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon, and Wilhelm II wanted to do that. Instead, I told my friend, he should conceive a man with a morbid, frantic, shuddering hatred of the life-principle itself, who wishes to extirpate from the planet every trace of biological organism, animal and vegetable alike, including himself. That would be tolerably original. But after all, originality lies within the author. One can't write a weird story of real power without perfect psychological detachment from the human scene, and a magic prism of imagination which suffuses theme and style alike with that grotesquerie and disquieting distortion characteristic of morbid vision. Only a cynic can create a horror—for behind every masterpiece of the sort must reside a driving, dæmonic force that despises the human race and illusions, and longs to pull them to pieces and mock them. This is true in even greater degree of pictorial artists—I wish you could get a staff of Clark Ashton Smiths to illustrate WEIRD TALES! The normal artist has conventional conceptions of line and detail, light and shade; but the macabre genius has the magic prism, and sees the world in that leeringly twisted, mockingly decorative light which gives rise to the achievements of an Aubrey Beardsley, Sidney Sime, John Martin, Gustave Dore, or—immortal of immortals—Francisco Goya y Lucientes. I

wish you could get some illustrations and cover designs from Clark Ashton Smith himself—even though he isn't doing so much in that line lately as he used to do. He lacks technical assurance, but has the lurid vision to an abnormal degree.

"I find Eddy rather a delight—I wish I had known him before. Next Sunday we are going on a trip which may bring you echoes in the form of horror-tales from both participants. In the north-western part of Rhode Island there is a remote village called Chepachet, reached by a single car line with only a few cars a day. Last week Eddy was there for the first time, and at the post office overheard a conversation between two ancient rustic farmers which inspired our coming expedition. They were discussing hunting prospects, and spoke of the migration of all the rabbits and squirrels across the line into Connecticut; when one told the other that there were plenty left in the *Dark Swamp*. Then ensued a description to which Eddy listened with the utmost avidity, and which brought out the fact that in this, the smallest and most densely populated state of the Union, there exists a tract of 160 acres which has never been fully penetrated by any living man. It lies two miles from Chepachet—in a direction we do not now know, but which we will ascertain Sunday—and is reputed to be the home of very strange animals—strange at least to this part of the world, and including the dreaded 'bobcat', whose half-human cries in the night are often heard by neighboring farmers. The reason it has never been fully penetrated is that there are many treacherous potholes, and that the archaic trees grow so thickly together that passage is well-nigh impossible. The undergrowth is very thick, and even at midday the darkness is very deep because of the intertwined branches overhead. The description so impressed Eddy that he began writing a story about it—provisionally entitled 'Black Noon'—on the trolley ride home. And now we are both to see it . . . we are both to go into that swamp . . . and *perhaps* to come out of it. Probably the thing'll turn out to be a clump of ill-nourished bushes, a few rain-puddles, and a couple of sparrows—but until our disillusion we are at liberty to think of the place as the immemorial lair of nightmare and unknown evil ruled by that subterranean horror that sometimes cranes its neck out of the deepest potholes . . . It."