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## “BOTHERSOME FORMS, OF COURSE, WERE MECHANICALLY EXTERMINATED”

*Colonialism, Science, Racial Dysgenia, and Extermination in the Work of H.P. Lovecraft, Intertextually and Beyond*

**ABSTRACT:** The science-fiction writer H.P. Lovecraft is famed for his apocalyptic oeuvre. His work is deeply marked by racist science and colonial history, linking them as structural constants that produce the outbreaks of horror in his stories. The horror is repeatedly represented as a dysgenic devolution with exterminatory implications. Yet similar treatments of racialized fear are commonly expressed in many non-fiction texts and biopolitical agendas, particularly in colonial contexts, and this conjunction also occurs in real events, including the historical apocalypse of the Holocaust. This paper will discuss Lovecraft’s apocalyptic fiction as a structural elaboration of the consequences of colonialism, racism, and scientific rationalism that reveals, despite its fantastic irrationality, a fundamental truth about extermination and modernity.

**KEYWORDS:** Colonialism, Scientific Racism, Extermination, Eugenics, H.P. Lovecraft.

### INTRODUCTION

The reader may be relieved to be informed immediately that the coolly genocidal sentiments quoted in this paper’s title are not the product of a military diary or scientific report from Central Europe, circa 1942, but are taken from an American science-fiction story, published in 1936. The fictitious exterminations so referenced are thus wholly speculative. They were the price of the positive eugenic results achieved by the most advanced civilization ever to exist on Earth, a triumph of scientific rationalism: The alien race of colonizers whose highly-civilized intellectual and aesthetic pursuits required the development of a menial slave-force to free them from work must, perforce, exterminate some bothersome forms on the way, and such work would likely be done best mechanically, that is, scientifically. If such imaginary genocides, in the tale, are merely part of the backstory, pages of a history that has never been written, the reader may yet feel a certain disquiet at encountering mechanical mass murder taken for granted as the price of science and civilization, be it 1936 or 1942. The coincidence, then, of such a highly specific conceit appearing in both American pulp-fiction entertainment and the scientific plans for Nazi colonization of eastern territories, described by Goetz Aly and Susanne Heim as “the state directed mass extermination of human beings as a functional necessity for a long-term program

of social modernization,” requires explanation. If, as Aly and Heim (2002 [1991], 2, 5-6) say, “behind all this lay certain conceptual models,” such models should be accessible through an analysis of fiction that dramatizes social reality.

This short story or novella, “At the Mountains of Madness,” was written by H.P. Lovecraft, the most popular of the authors who were published in the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* in the 1920s and 1930s, judged by his current cultural footprint and semi-canonization, although he remained quite obscure at the time. Posthumously his work has since been extensively and internationally reprinted and re-interpreted in several feature films, table-games, and graphic novels. He lived from 1890 to 1937, publishing pulp fiction mostly in the last quarter of his life. An amateur astronomer and a literary enthusiast, he produced and distributed, via hectography, his own works from the age of about ten, forerunners of what today are called ‘zines. He wrote an astronomy column for the local newspaper and went on to produce a magazine in a network of self-publishers, serving as president of their organization. As an individual, he was an antiquarian and a scientist, a Romantic and a rationalist, highly erudite but a failed student. As an author, his work has ramified not only into other products but into a network of other stories and writers treating of what has come to be called his mythos. One recent work, *Providence*, from the graphic-novelist Alan Moore, dramatizes this very process of cultural efflorescence as if the author’s ideas came literally to be reified, horrors come to life because the occult forces driving them were real (Moore, Burrows, 2017). As the excerpt in this paper’s title shows, the concept has some merit.

Probably Lovecraft’s most popular work, “At the Mountains of Madness” tells the tale of a scientific expedition to the Antarctic continent that discovers, behind a massive mountain range, the extinct remains of an ancient civilization of extra-terrestrials, a race living on earth hundreds of millions of years before human life. Advanced to that point in science fiction where technology becomes indistinguishable from magic, to paraphrase Arthur C. Clarke, the alien colonizers genetically engineered a subservient life-form, a slave-creature they created that did all the menial work and heavy lifting upon which their higher civilization rested. In the process, “bothersome forms, of course, were mechanically exterminated,” including “a shambling primitive mammal, used sometimes for food and sometimes as an amusing buffoon... whose vaguely simian and human foreshadowings were unmistakable.” By interpreting the art and monuments they discover, the explorers follow the history of this civilization: how it became decadent, devolving and retreating to underground Antarctic caverns, and how it was eventually overthrown by the revolt of the race of slaves it had created. It is these black protoplasmic organisms that destroy and consume all but the last survivors of the hubristic human scientific expedition (Lovecraft 1936). The survivors who narrate the story express the desire to end further exploration lest the resurrection of these and other eternal horrors provoke

the apocalyptic destruction of humanity.

If the amusing and simian buffoon is likely a snide reference to what at the time would have been called the Negro—other such references being far from uncommon in Lovecraft—more subtle features of racist characterization can be found in the slave-race “shoggoths,” described as black, foul-smelling, and capable only of imitation. Since it is in fact these racialized protoplasms that threaten the exploring scientists and the edifice of modernity itself, race is far from a surface element in this story, or for that matter in most of the author’s work. To his weird fiction applies perfectly Franz Fanon’s observation that “Racism is never a super-added element discovered by chance in the investigation of the cultural data... the cultural whole [is] deeply modified by the existence of racism” (Fanon in Young 1995, 91). In the case of the science-fiction author, the scientific construction of race as a natural law, its origins, and its consequences are often the building blocks of his imagined terrors.

The text of the tale is written very much in the language of academic scientific inquiry. Details abound of the equipment, experiments, and movements of the scientists, including co-ordinates of longitude and latitude, and this empirical framework upholds the extravagant discursions, from the stars down to Atlantean depths, which describe the evolution of the civilization of the “Elder Ones” and their slave “shoggoths.” This way of structuring the text was a conscious aesthetic decision by the author to allow for the suspension of disbelief, and recurs throughout his work. At the same time, this story employs many tropes perhaps best known from the nordic racialist occultism of the Thule Society (Kershaw 1999, 113, 138-139), tropes evoked with utopian and elegiac sentiments by Lovecraft in an earlier poem, *Nemesis*, referring to the ancient era when “Man, yet untainted and happy, dwelt in bliss on his far arctic isle” (Lovecraft 1918). Yet these elements are not arrayed in manner of the triumphalist teleologies of a victorious higher civilization. Instead, things fall apart, are in fact violently torn apart and destroyed. Science, specifically a science of colonial power, leads not to progress but to horror and disintegration, and this contrarian telos is doubly marked in the text, effecting the end of the ancient alien civilization and the modern human scientific expedition. The program of social modernization collapses under its own weight.

One of Lovecraft’s most repeated and structurally indispensable plot device features biologized racial degeneration that leads to personal, local, or possibly global doom, a degeneration depicted in the terms of the grotesquerie of pan-European scientific physiognomies and taxonomies of racial inferiority. His settings are settler-colonial and colonial, often working as plot devices in themselves such that trade, exploration, and settlement incite dysgenia, degeneration, or potential apocalypse; the *Heart of Darkness* scenario plays a repeated role in Lovecraft’s oeuvre. As historical and intertextual contextualization will show, these concerns and scenarios were endemic in the

period in which he lived, yet treated uniquely in his fiction.

His characters are frequently scientists and researchers and the language even of alchemical demonology is couched in a scientific framework. However, Lovecraft's protagonists, unlike Poe's Dupin or Chandler's Marlowe, do not use research and ratiocination to organize the facts and restore order, but rather they uncover occult science devoted to monstrous disorder. Comparison with the Third Reich is not idle when genocide may be casually regarded as the prerogative of advanced races, albeit not necessarily to the benefit of humanity, and the fear that is repeatedly dramatized in Lovecraft's science fiction is the same fear of zero-sum apocalyptic racial obliteration that Hitler's antisemitic speeches consistently project and threaten, and which provided the rhetorically "logical" legitimization for the Holocaust (Kershaw 1999, 563-564, and 2000, 150-153). This is why the author of fantastic fiction can prophesy a real racist apocalypse. This settler-colonial nexus of colonialism, science, extermination, and racialized dysgenic fantasy, whose individual elements construct the entitled quotation, is the central destabilizing force in Lovecraft's fiction.

#### DYSGENIA AND SCIENTIFIC RACISM

An early story was "The Lurking Fear," which appeared in 1923 in *Home Brew*, part of an amateur network of writers and low-print-run journals. The fear was, precisely, a racial degeneration through hybridity in a colonial setting. That setting is emphasized by a familial genealogy and a remote mansion dating back to "a New Amsterdam merchant" of 1670, where "Dutch civilisation once feebly and transiently penetrated." Rejecting "the English civilisation," however, the Martense family stagnates in the desolate American wilderness, "interbreeding" first with the "menial class" and then with the "mongrel population," who in turn are depicted through colonial tropes. Racially inferior, these "squatters" or, tellingly, "natives" are "simple animals... gently descending the evolutionary scale" who live a stereotype as "poor mongrels who sometimes leave their valleys to trade handwoven baskets for such primitive necessities as they cannot shoot, raise, or make." Shunned by all and with "an unclean animal aspect," over the course of a century and a half the colonial family degenerate into simian, burrowing anthropophagi identifiable by their ocular heterochromia, "a queer hereditary dissimilarity of eyes." Lovecraft depicts one as "a filthy whitish gorilla thing with sharp yellow fangs and matted fur. It was the ultimate product of mammalian degeneration; the frightful outcome of isolated spawning, multiplication, and cannibal nutrition..." The white beast, a scientifically metaphorical product of settler colonialism, feeds on the poor mongrels to a suggestive point: "great numbers of them had actually been killed and removed, just as the wild animals had been exterminated" (Lovecraft 1971 [1927], 13-15, 22).

Another early tale, first appearing in the amateur journal *Wolverine* in 1921, “Facts Concerning the late Arthur Jermyn and His Family,” also published in 1924 as “The White Ape” in *Weird Tales*, reaches similarly sinister conclusions. Its setting and plot is marked by colonial and relationships and racist fantasy: the lineage of the House of Jermyn is corrupted by an ancestor’s mating with a white ape-princess while exploring the Congo, bequeathing sorrow and extinction to their progeny. The white apes were themselves hybrids, created when “the great apes had overrun the dying city” of the lost white tribe (Lovecraft 1999 [1924a], 14-23), which is to say that this element of colonial unease is doubly represented in the plot; readers’ attention is directed to the results of colonial penetration.

Now, sex with apes could be called an interdisciplinary subgenre of colonial-imperialist Euro-American popular culture. The very appearance of the gorilla as an actual animal—its “discovery” by Europeans—is a result of colonial activity in Africa, and the scientist-explorer Paul Du Chaillu, the first European to see one, used the suggestion of interspecies sex to spice up his naturalist public lectures. The idea appeared as science in “The Orang-Outan Carrying Off a Negro Girl,” the inner-cover illustration of a 1795 English edition of Linnaeus’ *Systema Naturae*, an early text establishing racial hierarchy as natural law (Hund 2015, 50). As high art, the image was twice produced for the Paris Salon in first scandalous and then award-winning sculptures, “Gorilla Carrying Off a Negress” (1859) and “Gorilla Carrying Off a Woman” (1887), by Eugene Fremiet (Zgórnjak, Kapera, Singer 2006, 219-237, and Gott, Weir 2013, 39-41). The suggestive conceit is probably most famous from cinema’s 1933 *King Kong*, which was a favorite of Hitler’s, who knew the film as *King Kong and the White Woman* (*King Kong und Die Weisse Frau*). In the film, one recalls, the concept was doubly present, not only in the white woman that was the object of the giant ape’s desires, but in the native non-white women offered to him on Skull Island (Wallace, Cooper 1933).<sup>1</sup>

In “Arthur Jermyn,” Lovecraft literalizes the results of this racist fantasy by describing the family’s dysgenic degeneration, not without a certain parodic flair: One descendant meets his end when he goes ape and attacks a circus gorilla, with whom he was “singularly fascinated,” by “bit[ing] fiendishly at its hairy throat” before the brute beats him to death. The story’s great-great-grandson immolates himself upon discovering this racial history, and the Royal Anthropological Society itself hushes everything up, not least the facial resemblance between the mummified white ape-ess and the last of the Jermyns. Yet the racist taxonomy that drives the tale is undermined, as the double-hybridity suggests; the Jermyn funeral pyre is more dark omen than triumphal purification or guilty expiation: it is suggested at the beginning of the tale that this hybrid ape ancestry is ubiquitous, that “if we knew what we are,” we would

<sup>1</sup> Hitler’s appreciation in Kershaw 1999, 485.

all burn ourselves to death (Lovecraft 1999 [1924a]).

The evidence for racial difference is scientific. Arthur Jermyn, the titular descendant, creates a “thrill of repulsion” in those who meet him on account of “his facial angle” and “the length of his arms” (*ibid.*). Facial angle was one of the measurable signs of racial inferiority, originally developed by Pieter Camper in the late eighteenth century and continuing through the work of Paul Broca, Josiah Nott, and Samuel Morton, the latter author of the extremely influential craniological treatises *Crania Aegyptiaca* and *Crania Americana*, wherein white mental superiority was scientifically demonstrated by skull measurements and visually documented by skull drawings. As Morton’s titles demonstrate, this science itself is a colonial product. In fact, his experiments with the colonially-obtained skulls of Egypt “proved” that that racial dysgenia, a decline through hybridity, had doomed the originally white civilization of ancient Egypt.<sup>2</sup> The skull provides evidence of scientific racial knowledge in many Lovecraft stories, including “The Lurking Fear” and signally in “The Rats in the Walls,” and it is noteworthy how the author highlights the institutional quality of such knowledge, here with a Royal Society (in other stories with Brown University and characters’ frequent trips to real libraries), even as the institution conceals or obfuscates the truth. Science plays a dual role as an empirical foundation, but its pursuit and the knowledge thus obtained lead to the direst self-extermatory ends.

Such tension drives “The Rats in the Walls,” published in *Weird Tales* in 1924. This dysgenic nightmare represents a hypertrophied process of devolution in which the narrator himself degenerates into a cannibal, the process depicted through utterances in successively older languages that terminate in grunting, a clear fictional illustration of the concurrent academic hierarchies of race, language, and civilization. Though set in England, Lovecraft infuses American colonial history into the tale through the narrator’s family history, detailed enough to include a Civil War scene of burning and destruction, which drives the last-of-his-line protagonist to put in order and occupy the ancient family seat of “Exham Priory.” He brings with him a reminder of his past in a black cat named “Nigger-Man,” who follows a sound like rats down to the entry to a gigantic crypt which is then explored. A scientific team assembles for this purpose, including a well-known archaeologist, an anthropologist, a psychic, and a military man. Like so many Samuel Mortons, craniology allows this story’s fictional team of scientist investigators to identify and qualify a quantity of subhuman, ape-ling skeletal remains on the evolutionary scale, as “pithecanthropoid,” “lower than the Piltdown man,” or “slightly more human than a gorilla;” one batch of devolved “skeleton things must have descended as quadrupeds through the last twenty or more generations.” Finding himself in an ancestral charnel house where his forebears had raised their own cannibal

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<sup>2</sup> See Fredrickson 1977, 77, and Kendi 2016, 179-180.

nutrition for consumption in ancient rites, the narrator degenerates backward linguistico-dysgenically, attacks and feeds on his associate, and ends up confined in a mental institution (Lovecraft 1999 [1924b], 104-108).<sup>3</sup>

Lovecraft’s most involved treatment of racialized dysgenic devolution is the long story “The Shadow over Innsmouth.” The theme is ichthyological, as the members of an isolated New England community are actually physically devolving into fish-things by following the tradition of the “Kanaky” Indians and mating with the “water-beasts.” The processes of settler colonization are marked through historical and geneological research, and the narrator’s interest is kindled through artifacts emerging from Innsmouth but originating from the hybrid biological rituals. Science warns of the dangers of half-castery when the local librarian displays “disgust at a community slipping far down the cultural scale” (Anglo-Saxondom on a descent into a slimy aquarium, perhaps), and the devolution is scientized as “changes in osseous factors as basic as the shape of the skull.” The narrator must in the end cut short his investigation and flee the town, but the narrative winds down with him physically devolving into a queer foreign fish because of a hereditary pathogeny. One great-grandparent was the hybrid result of a Kanaky-mating: the narrator degenerates because he is an ichthyo-octaroon. Unusually, however, the narrator rejects suicide and begins to accept his situation. From the early sensation that “some frightful influence... was seeking gradually to drag me out of the sane world of wholesome life into unnameable abysses of blackness and alienage,” he is moved to “feel queerly drawn toward the unknown sea-depths” and that “stupendous and unheard-of splendours await me below” in the civilization of the “Deep Ones.” This sort of happy end is atypical of Lovecraft’s tales, and it is not so happy as all that, for these Deep Ones, “someday, if they remembered, they would rise again for the tribute Great Cthulu craved,” which is human sacrifice (Lovecraft 1999 [1936], 277, 282, 295-299). In Lovecraft’s mythos, hybrid spawn bode ever ill; what the librarian laments, and what the Germans call *Verkanakerung* (see below) has the potential to unleash an apocalypse.

These stories feature dramatized versions of the racialized paranoia of the times, but beneath the ravaging ape-men and degenerated cannibals—themselves, usually threatening white women, a common cover motif for *Weird Tales* and other pulps—there is also a common structural continuity of narrative flow: colonial activity (i.e. taking artifacts and taking possession of land and property but also spawning, interbreeding, and “mongrelizing”), then scientific

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<sup>3</sup> Joshi speculates that Lovecraft may have been influenced in his linguistic representation of atavistic devolution by the Irwin Cobb story “The Unbroken Chain,” passed to him by F. Belknap Long in 1923: “This tale deals with a Frenchman who has a small percentage of negroid [*sic*] blood from a slave brought to America in 1918. When he is run down by a train he cries out in an African Language—“Niama tumba!”—the words that his black ancestor shouted when he was attacked by a rhinoceros in Africa”, *ibid.*, 381-382, 384 n33.

investigation and attainment of knowledge, leading to horror and destruction. The scientific rationalism is not merely a formal trope that recurs and drives the narrators and the narrative forward, it also functions within the texts to balance the extremity of the fantastic conceits and to ground the suspension of disbelief. The realia of texts and institutions, some truly real, like Margaret Murray’s 1921 *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (an anthropological investigation proposing that European witchery arose from an underground-dwelling pre-Aryan race) and some truly false, like “the Necronomicon of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred” (which has subsequently been produced, postmodernistically, as if it were real), this metatextual intertextuality functions as does the camera-eye of Dos Passos, a modernist technique associated with realism (despite the fact that such modernist technique sometimes contrasts with Lovecraft’s prose, which seems to look back nostalgically). Lovecraft’s science-fiction uses science and realia to fulfill a referential function that establishes textual credibility, before the prose launches itself into speculative heights or abysses. The rational thus functionally empowers the irruption of the irrational and horrible, perhaps, it is suggested, even unto extermination.

## RACE AND EXTERMINATION

Historically, exterminationist beliefs in the USA expressed themselves scientifically through the biopolitical exclusion of black Americans. The abolitionist minister Theodore Parker (1860) wrote a friend that African-Americans would simply die out in the face of the superior whites, a withering away of the race that Parker justified historically, in a shift of the Native American experience onto another colonially subjugated population (Fredrickson, 119-120, 157). A planter’s wife on her plantation, or rather her husband’s, confided to her diary that in the wake of emancipation, the “black” former slaves will end up being exterminated like vermin (in Litwack 1979, 11). US President Andrew Johnson explained to Frederick Douglass that allowing black Americans to vote would inevitably lead to a zero-sum race war in which one “race” could only be exterminated (Johnson 1992 [1866], 46). Most apocalyptically, there was the Memphis municipal judge in the white riot of 1866, exhorting the rampaging mob amidst the flames to “kill every damned one of the nigger race and burn up the cradle”.<sup>4</sup>

One is high-culturally familiar with Joseph Conrad critically linking sanitary mass murder to colonial activity—“Exterminate all the brutes!” as Kurz would have it, in that character’s epitaph to his “Report on the Suppression of Savage Customs.” Lovecraft’s 1927 “The Horror at Red Hook” replays the *Heart of Darkness* narrative in Brooklyn where not Marlow but Malone descends into the

<sup>4</sup> See Rable 2007, 33-42; Waller 1984, 233-246.

darkness. Lovecraft invokes Conrad while scientizing and fantasizing the theme; the Red Hook neighborhood's "Syrian, Spanish, Italian, and negro [*sic*] element," a "babel of sound and filth," is viewed by the protagonist "with an anthropologist's shudder..." (even before his investigations uncover the "Yezidi" satanic cult, "Asian dregs" with "squat figures and characteristic squinting physiognomies"). Malone "united imagination with scientific knowledge, that modern people under lawless conditions tend uncannily to repeat the darkest instinctive patterns of primitive half-ape savagery." Scientific knowledge links the dark instinctive savagery to modernity and proposes modern solutions: Kurz proposed his final solution at the end of a report on how to civilize the natives. When the climax is precipitated by three children, "blue-eyed Norwegians," having been kidnapped and killed by "the unbelievable throng of mixed foreigners," the sacrifice of the Nordics provokes a police "clean-up," that is, a raid on an ethnic ghetto featuring mass arrests.<sup>5</sup> The notion of half-ape Italians and Spaniards may be refuted as racist fantasy by modern readers, but they will recognize the sad reality of police raids on ethnic ghettos as the modern savagery to which such notions lead.

Malone's police investigation leads to a white man, Robert Sudyam, who has descended among the teeming lower races and is orchestrating human sacrifice according to the rites of "dark religions antedating the Aryan world." Indeed, Malone discovers the classic antisemitic blood-libel: children are sacrificed to Lilith. Although the "unclassified slant-eyed" cult is a *mélange* of the non-Aryan, this essential opposition marks the tale—the Hebrew word *Adonai* appears in the story's central incantation—and one may read the "Arab with a hatefully negroid mouth," the "blear-eyed pockmarked youths," and the gamut of racist physiognomies as working for Jewish-demonic world domination in the classic paranoid antisemitic style of the police forgery *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. As in much of Lovecraft, the end of the investigation, in which a row of buildings collapse, killing many policemen, and the Kurz-figure Sudyam kills himself, is no end at all. Disorder continues, and the cult survives, "pushed on by blind laws of biology."<sup>6</sup>

The highly racist affect of this story seems to have been provoked by Lovecraft's own brief sojourn in New York. It was written after a period in which Lovecraft went south to the city for two years, construed by his most prominent academicizing exponent, S.T. Joshi, as well as other interpreters and authors, in the way Hitler represented his Vienna moment,<sup>7</sup> an association superficially marked by Joshi's infelicitous choice of words in declaring that these stories were the "*consequences of a world view* [*italics in original*]," the latter being a

<sup>5</sup> Raymond Chandler's Los Angeles pulp detective Marlowe shows the popularity of this Conradian narrative telos; Lovecraft 1927.

<sup>6</sup> See Lovecraft 1927; Friedländer 1997, 76, 94-97.

<sup>7</sup> See Kershaw 1999, 61; Joshi and others in Woodward 2008.

pet phrase of Hitler’s to describe his antisemitic convictions. Lovecraft reacted negatively to what Joshi calls the “heterogenous megalopolis,” to a point that the author described it thus in a private letter to fellow-scribe Frank Belknap Long:

The organic things—Italo-Semitico-Mongoloid—inhabiting that awful cesspool could not by any stretch of the imagination be call’d human. They were monstrous and nebulous adumbrations of the pithecanthropoid and amoebal; vaguely molded from some stinking viscious slime of earth’s corruption, and slithering and oozing in an on the filthy streets or in an out of windows and doorways in a fashion suggestive of nothing but infesting worms or deep-sea unnamabilities [*sic* throughout].<sup>8</sup>

A scene similarly metaphorizing this bio-politics of atavism can be found in Joseph Conrad’s novel *The Secret Agent*, in which the Assistant Commissioner descends into the neighborhood of the “criminal classes,” a “descent into a slimy aquarium” and “immoral atmosphere” which “assimilated him” into “but one more of the queer foreign fish” and gave him a sense “of evil freedom.” The secret policeman finds himself “all alone in the jungle,” searching not for Kurtz but for foreign radical socialists in 1907 London (Conrad 1963 [1907], 150-153).

Other Lovecraft scenes and stories follow the contours of a *Heart of Darkness* narrative. In “The Call of Cthulhu” the conceit is staged in the Louisiana bayou, where the police, accompanied by “the muffled beat of tom-toms,” enter “black arcades of horror... substantially unknown and untraversed by white men.” The “black morass,” once penetrated, reveals a voodoo ritual where the “indescribable horde of human abnormality” do their chanting bonfire dance with “animalistic fury and orgiastic license” inside a circle of scaffolding hung with the bodies of their human sacrifices. The provenance of this death cult is explicitly colonial: the titular monster is an ancient god of the indigenous population of the South Pacific. The academic investigator follows clues of artifacts taken from them, only to discover that the intrusion has awakened and freed the god to doomful purpose, with apocalyptic implications for humanity. It is not merely the beating drums and voodoo that racialize the ritual: the cults are literally marked by the author as racially hybrid. In Louisiana, the “hybrid spawn were braying, bellowing, and writhing around a monstrous ring-shaped bonfire” while in the South Pacific our sturdy European traders find the “swarthy cult-fiends” are a “queer and evil-looking crew of Kanakas [*sic*] and half-castes.” Of these latter, “there was some peculiarly abominable quality about them which made their destruction seem almost a duty,” and indeed “they were forced to kill them all” (Lovecraft 1999 [1928], 139-169, 152, 161). This latter phrase and the action of the plot are precisely the suppression of savage customs requiring that one exterminate all the brutes. Yet at the same time, it is the killing of the natives and “half-castes” and the subsequent exploratory incursion of the sailors on the undiscovered island that releases the bloodthirsty god and brings his racially

<sup>8</sup> Lovecraft to F. Belknap Long, 21 March 1924, and Joshi quoted in Hefner 2014: 657-658.

decadent death-cult to New Orleans.

The bodies hanging in the bayou are also an eerie reflection of that “strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees” (Allen 1939): the victims of lynching in the US South. This practice of enforcing the natural law of white supremacy publically enacted the torture and often the immolation of black Americans. Pieces of victims’ bodies were frequently taken as souvenirs; W.E.B. Dubois saw the knuckles of Georgia’s Sam Hose on display in a butcher shop window after Hose was spuriously accused of rape, captured, and then before a crowd of hundreds, tortured, castrated, and burned alive (Dray 202, 4-13). The South represented this ritualized violence, which Donald Matthews has explicitly compared to human sacrifice (Matthews 2002: 20-47), as a defense against dysgenia, against the degradation of the integrity and power of the white race. South Carolina Senator Ben Tillman addressed Congress in 1900: “We of the South have never recognized the right of the negro to govern white men, and we never will. We have never believed him to be equal to the white man, and we will not submit to his gratifying his lust on our wives and daughters without lynching him” (Tillman 1900). Lovecraft accepted this representation, although his point of reference for its truth was fictional, Thomas Dixon’s novel *The Clansman* and its stage adaptation.<sup>9</sup> Given Lovecraft’s knowledge of lynching, and the racialization of the sacrificial rite, his gruesome fiction reflects, as through a glass darkly, a gruesome reality of settler-colonial power. While Tillman and Dixon wax triumphant through their celebration of ritualized murder, the author of weird tales inverts it, giving it a narrative form that represents the moral degradation of civilization through colonial activity.

This colonially-derived racialization and general narrative structure appears in works of non-fiction as well. Jack London applied the ethnographic techniques of anthropology to “a new class of urban savages,” in his 1902 *The People of the Abyss*. Salvation Army founder “General” William Booth used it in his 1890 *In Darkest England, and the Way Out*, which both in title and in text aped Henry Morton Stanley’s best-selling *In Darkest Africa*. Stanley describes colonial explorations in the Belgian Congo with an exterminationist bent, sometimes wiping out whole villages for sport, funded and published by American newspaperman James Gordon Bennett, who called Africans a “species of human vermin,” bothersome forms, one might say, whose destruction was almost a duty. Booth invokes this narrative in a non-exterminationist description of the misery of England’s working classes. Continuities are evident with Jacob Riis’s photographic exposé *How the Other Half Lives*, wherein the subjects are depicted using naturalist and ethnographic imagery—the ethnically-defined neighborhoods of New York’s Lower East Side, ghettos, were referred to as “colonies” at the time—and such self-consciously realist social observation, as

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<sup>9</sup> See Lovecraft 1976, 77; Freidman 1970, 60, 168.

Brooks Hefner has put it, “drew on nativist and racist thought that was widespread in the nation to stigmatize the urban poor as dangerous.”<sup>10</sup> Riis’s photographs, like Booth’s *exposée*, were documentary illustrations that projected racialized inferiority onto their subjects in the name of progressive scientific reform, that is, a project of social modernization.

One sees in these discursive continuities how civilizing London or New York may require different conclusions from Kurz’s and different methods from Stanley’s, with regard to civilizing a fictional and the real Congo, while remaining responses to the same hypothetical problem. In Lovecraft’s fiction, however, the investigations that explore this problem scientifically, be it in England, Louisiana, Brooklyn, the Catskills, Antarctica, or the South Pacific, lead implacably toward dysgenic degeneration, self-immolation, and apocalyptic threats to human life. As an author, Lovecraft emphasized that his work aimed toward and derived from an exceptional sensitivity to uncanny emotional perceptions (Lovecraft 1967, 141-142). One may suggest, given the war that began the year after his death, that he perceived and dramatized a certain reality about the intersection of colonialism, race, science, and western civilization: an uncanny truth of modernity.

## NON-FICTION

Real horrors provoked by racist power would in the end render picayune the terrors of Lovecraft’s apocalyptic fiction. The science of race, the fear of dysgenia, and exterminatory conceits communicate intertextually across various fields of activity. Direct comparisons between the European anti-Semitic gutter press, as well as more influential voices, reveal much of how Lovecraft expressed a highly particular version of Great Power racial obsessions. For that matter, from 1915-1923 Lovecraft wrote for and edited the 13 issues of his self-published journal *The Conservative*, wherein he opposed immigration, espoused militarism, and lamented German and English racial fratricide. With a print run in the low hundreds, it circulated in a web of amateur cultural journals. Sentiments like this would have sold well in interwar Vienna: “Tracing the career of the Teuton through medieval and modern history, we can find no possible excuse for denying his actual biological supremacy... his innate racial qualities have raised him to preeminence. There is no branch of modern civilisation that is not his making” (Lovecraft 2013, 17-18, 45).

Fact or fiction? Are texts like *Mein Kampf* and the *Protocols*, in fact, non-fiction? Consider the self-published Teutonic supremacist Jörg Lanz “von

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<sup>10</sup> See Hochschild 1999, 49-50, 98-99; Hefner 2014, 661; McLaughlin 2000, 21-23. An early non-white/urban-poor conflation is Engels’ *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844*, published in English in 1887.

Liebenfels" (the title being the "Aryan von," self-conferred membership in the world's racial aristocracy), idiosyncratic contributor to the interwar Viennese antisemitic scene. In his world-view, Jews were created by Adam and Eve engaging in bestiality with primates, and indeed "most of the world is in the likeness of the apes," dangerous "Sodom-Ape-lings" who "through their arts of love (*Liebeskünste*)... breed themselves to a higher level and us to a lower level." He also called for the "extirpation of the animal man and the development of the higher new-man," offering a succinct history of colonial imperialism in the New World, a dubious racial science, and a prophetic summary of Nazi colonial plans for the Wild East (Lanz in Vieler 1996, 148-150). Lanz's magazine *Ostara* was likely present in Hitler's reading matter but without specific influence, functioning perhaps as would a text like *King Kong*. Lanz published in a cheap, mass-distribution format like *Weird Tales* and other American pulp fiction, and in *Ostara*, there were similar "Predatory dark 'beast-men' who preyed on the 'blond' women with animal lust and bestial instincts that were corrupting and destroying mankind and its culture."<sup>11</sup> This imaginary "non-fictional" world is precisely that of Lovecraft's white ape-ess, devolutionary boneyard, and hybrid immigrant cult.

The strength of affect and scientism in Lovecraft's above-quoted epistolary denunciation of monstrous, pithecanthropoid, Italo-Semitic-Mongoloids prefigure the infamously antisemitic Nazi fellow-traveller Céline, with his "Bulgaro-Bastaves, Afro-Polacks," and "Sub-Hebraics." In Lovecraft's story "He," for example, by means of "half-breed" rites learned from the Indians, the narrator is shown a vision of the future where "swarming loathsomely on aerial galleries I saw the yellow, squint-eyed people of that city, robed horribly in orange and red, dancing insanely to the pounding of fevered kettle drums, and the clatter of obscene crotala..." This is the threat to white world-supremacy realized, the future after the passing of the white race: "the Chinese in Brest," in Céline's (1996 [1960], 2, 64) words (Lovecraft 1999 [1926], 124-125).

Céline might be summarizing this insistent point in Lovecraft's oeuvre when he declaims, "It's enough to make you scream... to shudder, if you have the least inkling of instinct left in your veins [...] They erupt from the depths of the ages, to terrify us, to draw us into miscegenation, [...] and, finally, into the Apocalypse!" (Céline in Mason 2010) Similar exaggerated affect is displayed by Thomas Carlyle, when he metaphorizes the loss of direct colonial political and economic control in Jamaica as a marriage between "Quashee" and English liberals that would produce offspring of "dark extensive moon-calves, unnameable abortions, wide-coiled monstrosities, such as the world has not seen hitherto!" This characterization of apocalyptic miscegenation deftly serves to describe Lovecraft's demonic threats in general, even stylistically, as in Malone's

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<sup>11</sup> Lanz's text quoted by and described by Kershaw 1999, 50-51.

vision in the “mongrel” depths of Brooklyn, where “headless moon-calves bleated to the Magna Mater” in the crypt where children were sacrificed. Carlyle, not coincidentally, expounds in this text, “Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question,” on the problems of colonial activity, science, race, and dysgenia. His science is economic: the counterforce to hybrid degeneration is the continuing production of “fruits spicy and commercial” (Carlyle 1901, 298).

Colonial slavery like that of Jamaica developed the material basis for modernity much as the corollary racist science previously touched on anchored the racial hierarchy to black inferiority. Even Céline’s loose-cannon racism—Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish religions each and all trying to mongrelize the white race, for example—followed academic orthodoxy in putting black on the bottom. Lovecraft, for his part, considered the “Blacks” to be “fundamentally the biological inferior of all White and even Mongolian races” (Lovecraft 2013, 18). This specific hierarchy is in fact the referential support of Céline’s anti-Semitic ranting; black inferiority is the basis of everything that is wrong with Jews. Céline lamented that Jews “negrified” Aryan culture to a “tom-tom beat,” thanks to their “nigger blood.” Note the tom-tom beat, clearly a popular mimetic code, operating synecdochally, like *Kanake*, in new contexts. “The nigger Jew is in the process of toppling over the Aryan in communism and robot art... The Jew is a nigger... The Jew is only the product of a cross between niggers and Asiatic barbarians” (Céline in Andrew 1996, 85). A visual analog to this nonsense is the “Black Jew” on the poster of the Nazi degenerate music exposition, where the specific features of black caricature in the depiction of hair, lips, and eyes represent Jews through the figure’s emblazoned six-pointed star.<sup>12</sup> Not only the hybrid obsession but also the logical dependency of this relation reveal the origins of modern biopolitical antisemitism in New World colonial settlement and labor regimes. The East, as Hitler put it, would be the Mississippi of the Third Reich (Kershaw 2000, 434; see also Kakel 2011). In the event, however, the Nazi East resembled rather more Lovecraft’s depictions of Exham Priory and degenerate death-cults than any modernist future of the Fuehrer’s imagination.

Lovecraft’s references to the Kanak of the South Pacific, whose imaginary rites would be transplanted to the New England coast, is another example of the broader representations of colonial racial supremacy, as Lovecraft employs one indigenous culture as a representation of the collective indigenous other. This process is explicit in the very use of the term “Indian,” or the Nazi idea of “Jewdom.” Of particular interest here is the fact that the Kanak specifically have served exactly this synecdochal purpose as a metaphoric “racial inferior” in the German language itself, as the English-derived words *Kannaker* or

<sup>12</sup> The University of Virginia library attributes this term *Entartete* (degenerate) to Cesare Lombroso, that is, a physical process of degeneration caused by atavism discovered and confirmed through the scientific examination of skulls; see poster at: <https://explore.lib.virginia.edu/exhibits/show/censored/walkthrough/entartete>.

*Kannakermann* moved from referring to the specific peoples of the South Pacific to a general ethnic insult, *Kanake*, by 1900. At this point it was defined as synonymous with the anti-Slav and anti-Czech insult *Hanake*, both signifying a despicable, low (*niederträchtigen*) person. After World War II, *Kanake* was used to insult southern and eastern immigrants to Germany, especially Turks (some of whom have responded by re-appropriating the term for identity formation in a process mirroring the adoption of “nigga” by some African-American youth today). In 1920, the *Deutsches Kolonial-Lexicon* grew to reflect this obsession, listing *verkanakern* and *Verkanakerung* as meaning “the sinking of Whites down to the level of the natives.”<sup>13</sup> The racial, economic, and social aspects of colonial labor regimes converge linguistically in the German language as they do narratively in Lovecraft’s fiction. In a story like the “The Shadow over Innsmouth” one finds a dramatization of racial decline resulting from a literal *Verkanakerung* that demonstrates the depth of intertextual continuity in racialized discourse regimes across linguistic, cultural, and genre barriers.

## RACE AND EUGENIC LEGISLATION

Though a work of fiction, the racist attitudes of “The Horror at Red Hook” are similar to those of the contemporary American political and scientific elite toward immigration, embodied in the exclusionary US Immigration Act of 1924, which severely limited entry to racially suspect ethnic groups. The story marks the biological threat in one way by the sheer profusion of specific racial and ethnic classifications in the text, more than in any other Lovecraft story, a veritable incantation of racially-inferior immigrant categories, “dregs wisely turned back by Ellis Island” (Lovecraft 1927). The lurking fear expressed itself in broader society, politically and scientifically, through dire prognostications of dygenic racial degeneration through the laws of biology.

A key figure in the politicization of racist science in the United States was Madison Grant, author of 1916’s *The Passing of the Great Race: Or, The Racial Basis of European History*. This influential text was praised by Hitler as his bible, perhaps over-exuberantly, but it passed contemporary scientific muster. Academic journals such as the *American Historical Review* and the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* gave positive reviews to *The Passing of the White Race*, intellectually validating sentiments like “the cross between any of the three European races and a Jew is a Jew” (Grant 1936, 18). In 1920 Grant’s follower Lothrop Stoddard published *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*, becoming a popular enough figure to be

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<sup>13</sup> Originally in English the term signified a certain exterminatory violence: “esp. one in Queensland as labourer on the sugar plantations” according to the OED; Gozturk 2010, 278-802.

referenced in *The Great Gatsby*. Grant played the doyen role on the executive committee of the Eugenics Records Office at the Cold Spring Harbor National Laboratory, which was later run by Grant’s most influential associate, Harry Hamilton Laughlin, funded mostly by Wickliffe Draper and the Pioneer Fund. Political validation came from no less a political comer than Herbert Hoover, who sponsored a eugenics conference at the New York National History Museum in 1921 that was inspired by Grant’s tome, the introduction to which was written by Henry Fairfield Osborn, the head of the museum and a leading anthropologist. Madison Grant and his closest followers were, in short, deeply integrated into political and academic circles in the United States.

Grant, working with Laughlin, also influenced national legislation like the 1924 Immigration Act and state legislation like the Virginia Racial Integrity Act of 1924. In fact, Laughlin wrote a model law upon which the latter statute and fourteen other state laws were based. Nor was Hitler’s enthusiasm for American scientific racism the only connection to the Nazis. As early as 1921, Laughlin was helping publicize the foundational texts of Nazi race theory in private letters and scholarly publications like the *London Eugenics News*. Laughlin corresponded with the German “racial hygiene” promoters Alfred Ploetz and Fritz Lenz, first chair of “race-hygiene” at the University of Munich, and Laughlin and the German doctor, colonial skull-collector, involuntary-subject medical experimenter, and forced-sterilization enthusiast Eugen Fischer arranged to get each other’s articles translated and published. Fischer’s 1913 paper on the “problem of miscegenation” was the ideological basis for the Nuremberg Laws of 1935—the term itself is of American Civil War origin. When the Nazi forced sterilization law, the Law for the Prevention of Defective Progeny, was decreed in 1933, Laughlin printed it with praise in his *Eugenical News*; as Paul Lombardo has said, “positive publicity for the Nazi eugenics program filled the pages of his journal.” In April 1934 he published papers by Frick (“German Population and Race Politics”), Fischer (“Eugenics in Germany”), and others (“German Sterilization Progress”). He also distributed, using the Pioneer Fund, the Nazi pro-euthanasia and antisemitic documentary *Erbkrank (The Hereditarily Diseased)* shown in US public high schools, among other venues (Lombardo 2002, 761-762).<sup>14</sup>

Laughlin also created the Committee to Study and to Report on the Best Practical Means of Cutting Off the Defective Germ Plasm in the American Population, with the goal “to purify the breeding stock of the race at all costs.” The committee was a model of academic co-operation, chaired by the president of Stanford and influential scientists from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, the University of Chicago, and more. A French member was the surgeon Alexis Carrell, Nobel Prize recipient at the Rockefeller Institute, who declared in a 1935

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<sup>14</sup> On the origins of “miscegenation,” see Frederickson, 171-175.

best-seller that criminals, the insane, and “those who have misled the public in important matters... should be humanely and economically disposed of in small euthanasic institutions supplied with proper gases.” Capable of overfilling New York lecture halls to the point of 5,000 listeners, Carrell believed that a “High Council of Doctors” should be empowered to safeguard the rule of “the dominant white races” (Proctor 1988, 180). He echoed views expressed earlier in the United States by American Dr. William Duncan McKim, author of *Heredity and Human Progress* (1900): “The surest, the simplest, the kindest, and most humane means for preventing reproduction among those whom we deem unworthy is a gentle, painless death” (Allison 2011, 47). Laughlin sent an enthusiastic surrogate, Dr. Clarence Cambell, to read his contribution to the 1935 Berlin International Congress for the Scientific Investigation of Population Problems. The Honorary President and keynote speaker of this conference was the future war criminal, Frick, the President was Fischer, and other presenters were the luminaries of Nazi racial science. Cambell declared that “Germany has set a pattern which all other nations must follow” and closed his speech with a toast “to that great leader, Adolf Hitler,” as *Time* magazine reported in a sympathetic tone. Cambell’s own contribution to the conference included the conclusion that “the difference between the Jew and the Aryan is as unsurmountable [*sic*] as that between black and white” (Lombardo 2002, 773).

In the latter statement, one observes the logical derivation previously discussed. It may also help explain how Laughlin’s views earned him the post of the US House of Representatives’ expert adviser on the Committee of Immigration and Naturalization. Institutional ties between eliminationist and exterminationist racism run much more deeply and broadly than these indicative references; Pioneer-funded author Earnest Sevier Cox’s *White America: The American Racial Problem as Seen in a Worldwide Perspective* (edited and promoted by Grant) was read on the Senate floor by Mississippi’s Theodore Bilbo as part of a filibuster to stop an anti-lynching bill, and Bilbo had received funds from Pioneer for the development of a 1939 bill for the forced deportation of all black Americans to Africa—a “Madagascar plan,” in so many words, like that to deport Jews which had been bandied about by the French, Poles, and Germans before and during World War II. More to the point, Laughlin’s publications, agitation, and political power played a role in the US Supreme Court’s 1927 decision declaring that forced sterilization was constitutional; their decision upheld the several involuntary sterilization laws for various states that he had formulated. These statutes in turn informed the text of the 1933 forced-sterilization Nazi Law for the Prevention of Hereditarily Diseased Offspring: in 1927 and 1933, National Socialism and American democracy were in complete legal accord with the eugenic principle that “to prevent our society from being swamped with incompetence,” as wrote Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., “society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their

kind.” Likewise, in July 1941, beginning the escalation of *Einsatzgruppen* murders, Heinrich Himmler could order the elimination of the local population on grounds of their being “racially and humanly inferior.”<sup>15</sup>

These very different political contexts, one democratic, for whites, and the other authoritarian, both institutionalized scientific schemes of social modernization based on the fear of “racial” degeneration, but one must observe that the Nazis went quite a bit farther in attempting to realize their exterminationist vision. Only, as it were, some 60,000 people were forcibly sterilized in the United States under state law—a figure, however, that excludes all the African-American women who were sterilized without their knowledge or consent during other medical procedures (Dorr 2006, 359-362).<sup>16</sup> The United States did not institutionally endorse exterminationist mass-murder, but rather eliminationist involuntary surgery, in defense of racist homogeneity and white supremacy. More than statutory convergence, one focuses on the deeper narrative that defines the international teleology of racialized power. Scientific inquiry, based on colonial fruits, or rather skulls, demands its knowledge be applied. Academics, demagogues, bureaucrats, and doctors cite one another’s discoveries to combat the lurking fear of racial dysgenia. The skull of the SS insignia can in this sense be seen as triumphal scientism on the march.

The Eugenics Records Office never expanded its authority like the SS, Harry Laughlin never went on to commit crimes against humanity, and Oliver Wendell Holmes was not Heinrich Himmler. Yet, even if historian Garland Allen is correct in asserting that “Germany had a far more active and virulent pro-Nordic and pro-Aryan tradition than most mainstream American eugenicists,” and that American eugenics policy should be understood as part of the “origin of eugenics movements in a wide range of countries,” (Allen 2004, 451- 452) surely such claims make it even more noteworthy that the United States was the source of both the legal statutes providing the model texts for Nazi Germany<sup>17</sup> and the warmest praise coming from politically-connected academics, as the Third Reich took the first steps toward the most apocalyptic racist extermination event in human history.

## A LITERARY REFLECTION

In the May-July issues of 1941, the latter being the month in which Himmler began decisively escalating racist mass-murder in territory occupied by Germany,

<sup>15</sup> See McDonald 2013, 381-382, 384; Yudell 2014, 94; Aly, Heim 2002 [1991], 141-142, 160-165; Longerich, 2012 [2008], 531.

<sup>16</sup> Involuntary sterilization continued in the United States well into the 1950s (Reilly 1987, 153-170). Native Americans were also involuntarily sterilized by the state (Lawrence 2000, 400-419).

<sup>17</sup> For further details see Whitman 2017.

H.P. Lovecraft's last new work was published posthumously in *Weird Tales*, "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward." In it he describes a necromantic league of alchemists, of American colonial origin but some gone back to Europe, whose scientific wizardry has progressed from self-empowerment to calling forth extra-dimensional demons who threaten the mental sanity and physical life of ordinary men. The lead antagonist, Joseph Curwen, who had threatened the community before only to be destroyed, comes back from defeat to take over his descendent and continue his experiments and human sacrifices. He corresponds with allies in Hungary, Romania, and Prague, sharing plans, techniques, and information, seeking power and knowledge, and scrupling at nothing. The hubris of Curwen defeats them, through the use of the cult's own knowledge, but the bestial forms of evil they have called out of unknown depths continue to lurk beneath the surface, ever hungry to feed (Lovecraft 1941 [1927]).

The coincidence in dates, events, and themes can only be meaningful in the acausal terms of Jungian synchronicity, since the tale was written around 1927, but the fictional and real death-cults in the story and in history have interesting parallels. The inspired alchemist, in the form of Paracelsus, was a subject of Nazi cinema, appropriating an image which, to quote film scholar Mark Rentschler quoting George Mosse, "had circulated within a larger apocalyptic tradition concerned with 'the abolition of time and the overcoming of death.'" Rentschler describes the film's climactic confrontation with Death: "Paracelsus confronts the double that obsesses and occupies him, both his enabler and his undoer..." (Rentschler 1996, 177, 189) Lovecraft's text begins by quoting Cotton Mather paraphrasing the seventeenth-century French alchemist Borellus (Pierre Borel) on the possibility of ritualized chemical necromancy through the "essential Saltes," which the Curwen character uses to arrest aging and gain a certain physical immortality. He will be undone by the same means that enable him, when the proper incantation from his own experiments reduces him to dust (Lovecraft 1941 [1927]).

In keeping with the other Lovecraft stories under discussion, the setting is profoundly colonial. Curwen, born in Salem in the late seventeenth century, has his first series of necromantic experiments interrupted when the Rhode Island community decides to put an end to them, and him, just before the American Revolution. He has built a business of trade, specifically the slave-trade, and depends upon chemicals and minerals available through colonial shipping, the "strange substances he brought from London and the Indies." The colonial period is the early history of this modern death cult, emphasized in the text by the archaic language of the antagonists that continues to mark their early-twentieth-century rituals and experiments. That history is thus both past and present, as the substance of the knowledge they have gained impinges on their collective high-modern machinations and comes to obsess the young Charles Ward (Lovecraft 1941 [1927]).

The shade of Cotton Mather speaks in the text both literally and figuratively, and Mather was no stranger to exterminationist warfare or juridically cataloged irruptions of the irrational. The native population to be destroyed in King Phillip's and King William's Wars were to his mind "horrid sorcerers, and hellish conjurers, and such as have conversed with demons." Conversely, during the Essex County witch trials, Mather supported the use of "spectral evidence," aural and visual hallucinations described by the witnesses who saw them: the creation of evidence in juridical and academic modes, based wholly on visions of the unreal, that is, conversing with demons (Slotkin 1973, 119, 132-141). Such doubling and double standards goes to the root of later fears of racial degeneration in that these early Indian wars of the late seventeenth century were the sites of massacres (particularly in the exterminatory Pequot Massacre) where Anglo-Dutch ferocity alienated their Indian allies, the hellish conjurers; as historian Jill Lepore writes, "colonists' fears of 'degenerating' into Indians had only been exacerbated by their own 'savage' conduct" (1998, 175).

Racism in the "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward is marked most importantly by the question of hybrid spawn; Curwen has as assistants, first in the eighteenth century, "a sullen pair of aged Narragansett Indians... the wife of a very repulsive cast of countenance, probably due to a mixture of negro blood," then in the twentieth he relies on an "evil Portuguese mulatto." The same relationship between rituals of death and racial hybridity that has been seen in other works appears here, although much more subtly, more as the dissonance that qualifies the chord than the central melodic theme. The evil, repulsive mulattos working for the antagonist have their mirror images in a married couple who help Charles Ward, and these are stereotypes of the moonlight-and-magnolias school, "old Asa and his stout wife Hannah" (Lovecraft 1941 [1927]). Loyal and servile they may be, but it is also through them that the portrait of Curwen is found, and the portrait marks the beginning of the physical and mental degeneration of Ward, a similar causal relationship to the activity of the cat "Nigger-Man" in "The Rats in the Walls." The dysgenic conceit is attenuated as a racialized phenomenon, yet the essential relationship is maintained. Curwen's servants are the only hybrid characters, and he is the only agent of devolution, which is provoked in his lineal descendent.

Extermination, in this text, is merely familial and local, in the sense that it is visited upon Charles Ward, who does not survive the resurrection of his past, but it also appears in that colonial past itself. Curwen imported slaves in order to feed them to the creatures he alchemically called forth. Surely one of the most bloodily direct representations of slavery and colonial power, Lovecraft offers a story of an individual's economic and familial growth that is based on human sacrifice. Mass-murder is the basis for the necromancers' edifice of knowledge as a historical and a historicized necessary condition for their twentieth-century blood-stained altar. Furthermore, their powers are obtained through the torture

and interrogation of those they bring into the living world and make their prisoners, and the whip, symbol of slavery, is the particular implement of that torture of the resurrected human captives. The prison-crypt imagined by Lovecraft is not the site of religious confession or expiated guilt but the site of extraction. Although the wizards are defeated, and the extractive economy of the past that empowers them comes to an end, Curwen has called up the demonic feeders again; at the end of the story it is implied that they remain imprisoned underground, so that racialized murder in the name of power is always a standing possibility, a legacy of colonial design.

Despite the occult trappings, the way the narrative expresses its thanatopic telos is marked by science, or scientism. Curwen's arrested aging is given a medical sheen by a doctor's physical examination which determines that "the process of metabolism had become retarded to a degree beyond precedent" (Lovecraft 1941 [1927]). The text then summarizes a debate on the psychological condition of the patient, rather academically. The process of raising the dead and the demonic turns out to be a highly precise alchemical procedure whose variations and incantations have been discovered through the shared investigations of the necromancers. The precise sites of graves and precisely who rests in them, which salts should be used together and with which linguistic rites, all these details of their experiments are given the reader, often through letters, textual correspondence. The use of the alchemical materials require orderly storage, labeling, and cataloging. This evidence forms an essential part of the narrative, one not merely expository: the data gleaned by Dr. Willett through investigating Curwen's laboratories, libraries, and sacrificial chamber, down to the specificity of a catalog number, empowers him to banish the leader of the scientific death wizards.

The irrational research of the antagonists is mirrored by the protagonists' own research in the rational world, at the (real) John Hay Library and in the use of a press-cutting service, for two examples, and in the titular character's archival investigation of his ancestor Curwen. The story is narrated with repeated references to the provenance of information in one source or another—both primary and secondary—as well as geographical precision and architectural *realia*, that give a juridical or academic text-linguistic quality to this work of science fiction. There are other doubles in the text, like the Curwen portrait that Charles Ward increasingly comes to resemble, Curwen's taking the place of Ward, and Willett's behavior in the crypt-cum-laboratory-cum-prison, where he enacts a ritual just as Curwen would, subconsciously impelled by the contents of the texts he has found. Their textual authority alone causes him to act, ignoring consequences that may well not benefit humanity. How different, then, are the alchemical wizards of Lovecraft's imagination from the eugenic academics gathered in conference, exchanging texts, citing one another, and supervising racist legislation with transparently exterminatory implications?

"The Case of Charles Dexter Ward" depicts the re-emergence of a colonial necromancy in the modern world whose most sinister imaginatory practices can be seen reflected in reality in World War II and the Holocaust, characterized by historian Ian Kershaw as "the Abyss," "Hell on Earth," and the "Bottomless Pit of Inhumanity" (2015, 295, 346, 356). The doubling and interchange characterize an irruption of the irrational, the horrific, that is empowered by rational historical, academic, and alchemical research, and that depends on the physical and intellectual rewards of colonial racism. In both history and Lovecraft's fiction, the gateway to this abyss was uncovered by colonial occupation, opened by science, and plunged through in order to combat degeneration, physical and metaphysical, based on fears of racialized dysgenia.

## CONCLUSION

In these weird tales, juridical decrees, academic treatises, private speech, and political manifestos, modernist scientific materialism provides the vocabulary for understanding the world; seen as both a philosophy and a body of empirical knowledge, this concentrated intellectual capital legitimates racist distinctions and eliminationist, even exterminationist, violence. These distinctions are really only one distinction, that between the master race, which however defined is always a variation on colonially-derived whiteness, and everyone else. In science and Lovecraft's science-fiction, when that distinction blurs, the imagined result is the collapse of modern civilization. Miscegenation is construed as apocalypse, resulting from original sin, as in "Arthur Jermyn," or monstrous crime, as in "Red Hook." The same conclusions were reached by political powers and scientific experts on race. Lovecraft himself stated beliefs that were broadly congruent with them, yet his fiction also expressed the truth of where it would so shortly lead, a truth that seemed to elude such as Harry Laughlin.

The protagonists of the author's supernatural fiction face the same abstract conflict described by many historians in dealing with the reality of Nazi atrocities, a conflict between civilized modernity and horrible cruelty: the Holocaust was a plan for social modernization and thus was conceived as a triumph of scientific rationality. However, in Lovecraft's fiction, the conflict is not a moral contradiction. The progressive telos of modernity is reversed. Thanatos reigns. His own statements on writing weird fiction help explain this alchemy. "The function of creative fiction is merely to express and interpret events and sensations as they are, regardless of how they tend or what they prove—good or evil, attractive or repulsive, stimulating or depressing, with the author always acting as a vivid and detached chronicler rather than as a teacher, sympathizer, or vendor of opinion... fundamentally either adverse or indifferent to the tastes and traditional outward sentiments of mankind, and to the health, sanity, and normal expansive welfare of the species." He sought to produce fear

through “a malign and particular suspension or defeat of [the] fixed laws of Nature.” One has seen how the age and the author determined natural law through race and scientific rationalism, but Lovecraft wished to suspend their juridical reign over his imagination, even as his stories structurally represented the realities of his age in colonialism, race, and science. Consciously stripping away the certainties of a triumphant rationalist modernity, the events and sensations produced by those structural realities were consistently imagined as “a hideous cloud over mankind’s very destiny” (Lovecraft 1967, 144, 157, 175). The literary mirror produced a truthful distortion. In the fictions of nightmare science and the science of horrific fiction, the apocalypse arrives when racial distinction is breached and white supremacy is eroded; in the real world, humankind unleashed an apocalypse of mass death when racist distinctions were upheld and white supremacy was enforced. H.P. Lovecraft’s stories dramatize the real fruits of the branches of white-supremacist thought: the apocalyptic insanity of the most advanced civilization and the moral failure of rational scientific materialism.

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