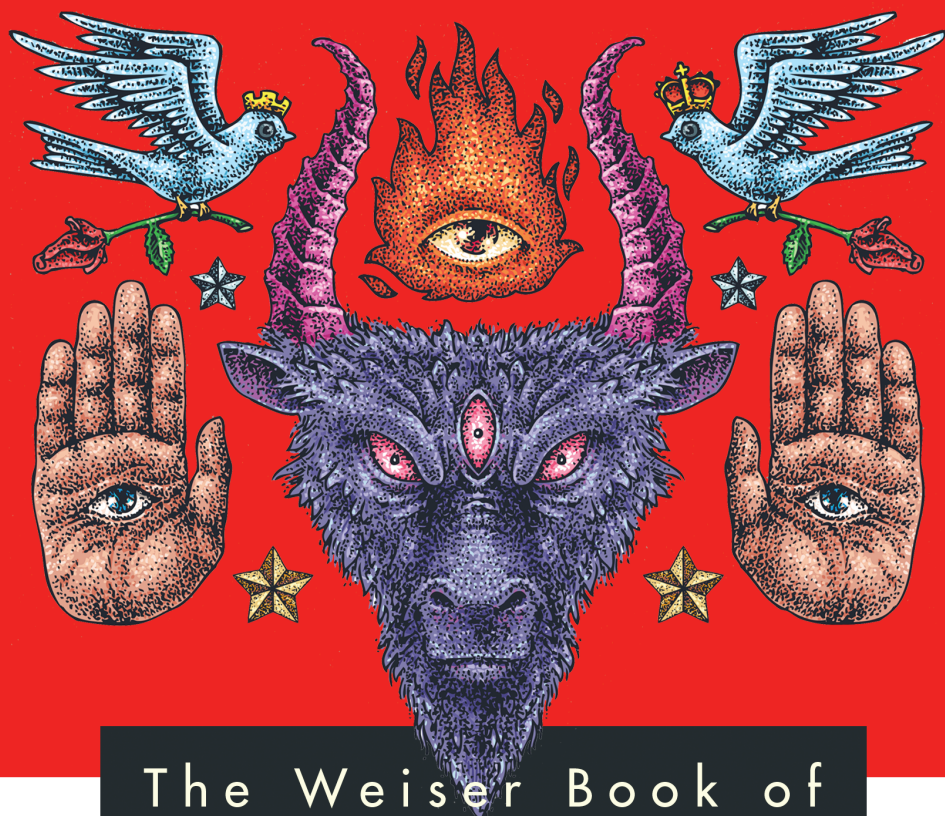


HIDDEN MAGIC, OCCULT TRUTHS, and the  
Stories that Started It All...



The Weiser Book of

# HORROR AND THE OCCULT

Edited and introduced by LON MILO DUQUETTE



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# HORROR TAKES ITS TIME

Lon Milo DuQuette



*The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown. These facts few psychologists will dispute, and their admitted truth must establish for all time the genuineness and dignity of the weirdly horrible tale as a literary form.*

H.P. LOVECRAFT, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*

*“Oh, my sweet summer child,” Old Nan said quietly, “what do you know of fear? Fear is for the winter, my little lord, when the snows fall a hundred feet deep and the ice wind comes howling out of the north. Fear is for the long night, when the sun hides its face for years at a time, and little children are born and live and die all in darkness while the dire wolves grow gaunt and hungry, and the white walkers move through the woods.”*

GEORGE R.R. MARTIN, *A Game of Thrones*

Horror is the literature of the damned; a demon-child art-form—conceived in the fertile depths of subconscious hell; gestated in the lonely womb of fear and despair; brought to troubled birth by the midwife of tortured obsessions; and reared to grotesque maturity in the prison asylum of a terrified imagination. Horror, to be truly horror, must be more than a frightening story. It must be a cloistered odyssey, a claustrophobic dance with madness. Above all, horror must be a traumatic and soul-mutating spiritual experience—sublime, elegant, and terrible.

Sounds disturbing, doesn't it? I hope so. Horror *should* be disturbing. But, at first glance, classic horror seldom presents itself as the product of a disturbed mind. On the contrary, some of the best

works of the genre are introduced by a narrator who seems as sane and rational as you or I—an ordinary mind which, at the moment, is merely grappling with extraordinary psychological issues with which we all can more or less identify. But beware dear reader! Your gentle empathy with the story’s protagonist is a subtle poison that within a breathtakingly few paragraphs disrobes your soul and lulls you into a poppied sleep. Naked and vulnerable (and now uncertain of your own sanity), horror draws you irresistibly into the mind of the main character of a nightmare.

For me (or anyone who stubbornly refuses to grow up completely) literature doesn’t get better than *that*.

I turned nine years old in July of 1957, and was enduring my second melancholy summer of exile in the uncivilized wilderness of Nebraska.<sup>1</sup> I realize the word “exile” probably sounds melodramatic, but I was a very melodramatic child in 1957. Nebraska was for me an alien planet, cruel and hostile.

I hadn’t been *born* in Nebraska. I had been kidnapped by my own parents and taken there against my will.<sup>2</sup> I was a Southern California boy, and I thoroughly enjoyed my first seven years in that hip and sunny fairyland where movies were made; where rock-*n*-roll was evolving and the dreams and industries of the “Space Age” made us

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1 I sincerely apologize to Nebraskans, past and present, who might be offended by my words, and ask the reader to please be mindful that my comments here about Nebraska and Nebraskans are merely giving voice to the private, personal, subjective, and immature observations of the high-strung and unhappy nine-year-old Lon Milo DuQuette. They do not necessarily reflect my current objective opinions of the Great State of Nebraska or her remarkable and resilient citizens. I sincerely apologize to Nebraskans, past and present, who might be offended by my words.

2 Of course I wasn’t actually “kidnapped.” Again, my flair for the overly dramatic is getting the best of me. (That happens, especially when writing about overly dramatic subjects like horror stories.) My family moved from Southern California to Nebraska so that my father could start a new business. I was nonetheless traumatized by the move and resisted every phase of the process.

all feel like citizens of a bright and gleaming future. The family's move to Nebraska in 1955 was in my eyes a doleful exodus back to the dark ages—a “trail of tears” from a twentieth-century beach paradise to a nineteenth-century prairie hell. Powerless to change my circumstances, I pouted and steeped in a bitter broth of self-absorbed discontentment.

I hated Nebraska. I hated Nebraskans. I hated the way they talked. I hated the way they laughed about butchering animals. I hated the way they preached about their wrathful God—a God who hated Negroes and Chinese (even though there wasn't a Negro or Chinese person within a hundred miles of our provincial town); a God who would condemn little boys to the flames of eternal torment just for the sin of *not believing* in a God who hated Negroes and Chinese. Most of all, I hated the way Nebraskans, young and old, actually took smug pride in their own lack of sophistication. They wore their ingenuousness like a badge of honor, and rudely ridiculed and bullied anyone else who *did not* also proudly clothe themselves with the same coarse robe of premeditated ignorance.

I admit this must sound terribly unkind. “Hate” is a strong and unhealthy passion, especially for a nine-year-old boy. But hate springs from *fear* (real or imagined), and in my young mind there was much to fear in Nebraska. Even as a youngster I sensed a palpable darkness; a prairie madness; a nameless evil brooding just underneath the surface of the bib overalls and cotton house dresses; a slumbering beast just waiting to be awakened by the kiss of alcohol or jealousy or greed or lust; an evil that is ever mindful that the nearest policeman is many miles (and perhaps hours) away; a black and primitive wickedness that takes poisonous root in the solitary psyche of those who toil alone in the earth from dawn to dusk, season after season, year after year; an evil that smothers in the heart all breath of human compassion or empathy for the pain and terror they inflict daily on the helpless beasts they breed for slaughter or the children they breed for labor and war; a twisted and perverse evil that feeds on guilt and self-loathing; an evil that incubates in the deafening silence of sweltering summer

nights or the perpetual darkness of winter and hideously hatches like a basilisk egg into monstrous acts of rape and incest, and murder, and suicide.

The houses themselves are possessed of dark subconscious secrets—indeed, they are built upon them. Unlike the sunny and uninsulated bungalows of Southern California, Nebraska houses hide their own dungeons. Large as the footprint of the house itself, these cinder block chambers (the natives call them “basements”) offer a modicum of insulation from the frozen sod of winter, and an area of damp coolness from the blistering heat of summer. Basements also provide residents a dark hole in the ground in which to cower from the whirling death clouds called tornadoes—tangible wind devils that regularly strike down from pus-green clouds and sweep across the earth, bringing grotesque death and destruction to anything and everyone in their path.

Yes. There was much for a young man to fear in Nebraska. I was lonely, depressed, and morose. One sweltering humid summer morning I became so desperately bored I did something unthinkable for a nine-year-old boy in Nebraska.

*I found something to read.*

That morning I lingered in my sweat-soaked bed until I knew I was alone in the house. I got up and turned on our old Raytheon television set in the living room but could only get a scattered signal of a “farm report.” Like electricity and indoor toilets, television was new to rural Nebraska, and the few broadcast stations in operation were very far away. Reluctantly, I switched off the crackling television and turned my attention to the living room bookcase. I looked for something—anything—that might alleviate my ennui or titillate my idle brain.

The family library had a few things that might distract me. My father was a pretty interesting guy (a native Californian and very *un-Nebraskan*). He valued education and wanted his sons to cherish books, so he had recently purchased a new set of *World Book Encyclopedia* to display next to a few old sets of matched volumes of literature.

I figured the encyclopedia would be too much like homework, so I turned my attention to an old twenty-volume set of the *World's Greatest Literature*.<sup>3</sup>

At first glance *The Last of the Mohicans* looked like it might be fun, but I soon discovered it much too grown-up and difficult. I finally settled on volume 8 of the series, *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, by Edgar Allan Poe. I opened it up and saw to my delight that it was a collection of short stories with titles that were absolutely irresistible to a miserable nine-year-old boy: “The Premature Burial,” “The Masque of the Red Death,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” and so on. Premature burials and red death sounded very promising indeed, but back in California I had actually seen a terrifying cartoon called “The Tell-Tale Heart” at the old Lakewood Theater.<sup>4</sup> I recalled that my mother became very upset with my older brother Marc for taking “little Lonnie” to see such an adult and disturbing film. I poured myself a glass of buttermilk, plopped down in the big chair by the open window, and opened the book.

Once I started to read, however, I knew I was way out of my depth. There were lots of big words, incomprehensible foreign language phrases and epigrams, and geographic references. Every other sentence seemed to make reference to some ancient legend or myth or classic poem. I was forced to actually *use* the dictionary and encyclopedia just to plod my way through the first story, “The Pit and the Pendulum.” But I eventually *did* get through it, and after I closed the book I realized I had become someone else—someone I liked who could use the dictionary and encyclopedia. I learned about the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition (How delightfully evil was *that!*); I was exposed for the first time to the melodically elegant use of the English language;<sup>5</sup>

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3 Spencer Press, 1936. He must have had the books since before he married Mom.

4 *The Tell-Tale Heart*, directed by Ted Parmelee, narrated by James Mason, screenplay by Bill Scott and Fred Grable. (1953; Columbia Pictures).

5 I had to read Poe so deliberately that I felt as though I was reading aloud. In my soul, Poe's voice carried the gentlest lilt of a fine Southern gentleman and the tortured desperation of my favorite actor, Vincent Price.

most importantly, I discovered I was capable of being touched by art—capable of being possessed by *passion*. My ennui lifted and was replaced by a pre-adolescent worship of the macabre and the genius and wit of its creators. This passion has yet to subside. I spent the rest of that summer with Poe . . . and the dictionary, and the *World Book Encyclopedia*.

Ironically, the same nineteenth-century-*esque* liabilities I despised about 1950s Nebraska life proved to be priceless assets of atmosphere that allowed me to conjure the perfect reading environment to savor the ecstasy of classic horror.

*Horror takes its time*, and to properly appreciate it you must also take your time. It has a pace, a slow, incessant rhythm—like your own heartbeat, or your own breath. After all, the great innovators of the art were writers of the Gilded Age who wrote for a nineteenth- and early twentieth-century audience.<sup>6</sup> Nebraska in 1957 had both her feet planted firmly in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. That summer morning in 1957 could have just as easily been 1857, accompanied by the same soundtrack of bucolic silence; the same light searing through the same sun-stained yellow window shades; no hint of modern objective reality, no diversions of bustling civilization; no diversions of airplanes roaring overhead, no freeways in the distance, no sirens, no television, no radio, no air-conditioner; only the white noise of a million cicadas and the hiss of my own blood running through my brain, the incessant swing of the pendulum of an ancient clock, the barking of a distant dog, the cawing of a crow, the almost imperceptible whisper of the delicate film of curtains as they billowed gently toward me like the gossamer negligée of a lovesick ghost.

This was the background music of my honeymoon with horror—playing as the honey-sweet words of Edgar Allan Poe, lugubriously woven elegant phrases from the age of gilded manners into a symphony of tortured rapture. Only had I been obliged to read the yellowing pages by the light of a whale oil lamp could my anachronistic reading experience have been more exquisitely atmospheric.

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6 The offerings in this anthology date from 1851 to 1922.



I was so lucky.

Today most of us find it almost impossible to recapture the sepia-toned world that best conducts horror from the page to the soul. Twenty-first-century readers, spoiled by spectacular special effects of the cinema, demand instant gratification from the written word—explosive shocks and gore-splattered attacks upon the senses. We no longer allow ourselves time to refine the rapture of terror. We wolf down the junk food snacks of violence and carnage when, with just a little patience, we could leisurely savor a rich and soul-satisfying banquet of elegant horror. We are missing so much.

That summer with Poe and my newly awakened love for the written word would eventually have profound effects upon my life, the most obvious being my eventual career as a writer. Writing is not only what I do for a living, it is my art, my joy, my voice, my meditation, my prayer, my confession, my declaration of independence, my act of worship, my song of self-awareness. My profession, however, has taken many years to evolve and develop. My 1957 boyhood love affair with horror had more immediate and dramatic consequences. Simply put—*I woke up*.

Poe's narrative voice clearly revealed to me that I possessed my own narrative voice. That hot summer morning, my consciousness instantly expanded. I no longer just passively *saw* or *heard* or *smelled* or *felt* the things around me. I woke up and became consciously *aware* that I was seeing and hearing and smelling and feeling the things around me. I became at once the observer and the observed of my own movie, and like the voice-over narration in a film-noir detective story I began to tell myself the bedtime story of my own existence, and the narration continues to this moment.

Thank you, Edgar Allan Poe. Thank you, horror literature.

The genre of classic horror has also changed the world. It can be argued that horror is the mother of science fiction—and that science fiction has molded the future and touched the consciousness of countless millions of fans who now have given themselves permission to dream like gods. In its way, horror is the grandmother of theoretical mathematics, quantum physics, and the mutation of intelligence in this

corner of the galaxy. But it all had to start somewhere, and the editors of this anthology have labored lovingly to pay homage to the founding fathers of art form. Some of them, like Edgar Allan Poe, or H.P. Lovecraft, or Bram Stoker, or Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, require little or no introduction. But others are perhaps less familiar to you. We have provided the briefest of biographical sketches for all our authors at the beginning of each selections, but I would like to take this opportunity to write a few extra words about three of the stars of our production who also deserve, in my opinion, to be recognized as *founding fathers* of horror:

**Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton**, who I believe should be credited with establishing early in the nineteenth century the archetypal form and devices of the horror genre;

**Robert W. Chambers**, who late in the nineteenth century broke the space-time membrane of gothic horror and smashed open the doors of our subconscious—the same doors from which H.P. Lovecraft’s primordial “Old Ones” would ooze out, forcing us to cower before our shadow souls;

and **Aleister Crowley**, a real-life, unapologetic black magician who early in the twentieth century rolled up his sleeves and did battle with those shadows to turn demons of darkness into angels of light.

## Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–1873)

Have you ever heard these phrases?

*“It was a dark and stormy night . . .”* or,

*“The pen is mightier than the sword . . .”* or,

*“Pursuit of the almighty dollar”*?

These familiar clichés first poured forth from the pen of Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, the prolific English playwright, poet, and novelist. As might be expected of a gentleman of his breeding, the

noble Lord Lytton pursued these literary diversions as an amateur while he busied himself with the serious duties of serving his Queen (Victoria) as *Secretary of State for the Colonies* and a wide assortment of other stiff-collared diplomatic and political responsibilities. He published his first book of poems in 1820, and in 1828, when his semi-titillating essay on the whimsical subject of nineteenth-century *dandyism* was released, it was clear to the reading public that here was a fellow who could be wryly entertaining as well as erudite.

While his occult tales and horror stories have become favorites of lovers of the mysterious and macabre, Lytton's most publicly beloved and familiar works remain his post-biblical epic, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), which has over the years captured the imagination of filmmakers; and his dramatic historical fiction, *Rienzi* (1835), which Richard Wagner turned into an enduring opera. His popularity with the general public notwithstanding, Lord Lytton deserves serious recognition as one of the primary godfathers of horror. This enduring admiration attests to his skill with words, but even more impressive are his impeccable credentials among serious occultists.

Although empirical evidence is absent, Lytton is said to have been an initiate of one or more of the mysterious continental magical secret societies that obliquely claimed they were of ancient Rosicrucian origins. He was almost certainly the friend and confidant of the great French magician, Alphonse Louis Constant (Eliphas Levi, 1810-1875), the father of modern ceremonial magic.

As a young member of the Rosicrucian Order AMORC, I was instructed by my elder adepts (in no uncertain terms) that I was to read and study the *works* of Lord Lytton, especially his occult story *Zanoni*.<sup>7</sup> Written in 1842 (a full generation before the founding of Madam Blavatsky's Theosophical Society or the Hermetic Order of the Golden

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7 Read my notes on *Zanoni* by purchasing an electronic copy of *Zanoni, Books One, Two, and Three*, published as digital books as part of the Magical Antiquarian Curiosity Shoppe (A Weiser Books collection!).

Dawn), the opening words of *Zanoni* can be interpreted as a Rosicrucian confession from Lord Lytton himself:

It so chanced that some years ago, in my younger days, whether of authorship of life, I felt the desire to make myself acquainted with the true origins and tenets of the singular sect known by the name of Rosicrucians.

The plot of *Zanoni* is a darkly appealing love story that inaugurates all the genteel devices of classic horror-love that we will (a few years later) recognize in the works of Edgar Allan Poe, Robert W. Chambers, and others. But the text of *Zanoni* also reveals (to the trained eye) the language of a fellow occultist. In fact, it is clear that *Zanoni* could not possibly have been written by anyone other than a *bona fide* initiate of the mysteries. The story even makes indirect references to a magic *book*—a book that is undoubtedly the very *real* tome known to scholars today as *The Book of Abra-Melin*.<sup>8</sup> This landmark occult grimoire (c. 1378) would remain untranslated and unknown to the English-speaking world (or indeed anyone but the most knowledgeable and serious student of the occult) until 1888 when Golden Dawn adept S.L. MacGreggor Mathers translated fragments of the text, which he found in the *Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal* in Paris.

*The Book of Abra-Melin* is considered by many to be the Rosetta Stone of Western Magick, elevating the misunderstood superstitions of the mediaeval sorcerers to a spiritual science as sacred and viable as the self-transformational traditions of Eastern mysticism. As it would seem, His Lordship, Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton—dandy, diplomat, and novelist—was rubbing elbows on a regular basis with very same mystics and magicians who not only knew of the book’s existence but were intimately familiar with its contents and significance.

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8 Abraham Von Worms, *The Book of Abramelin*, ed. Georg Dehn, trans. Steven Guth, foreword by Lon Milo DuQuette (Lake Worth, FL: Nicholas Hays, Inc., 2006).

It is clear to me that where secret occult mysteries and practices are concerned it was not a case of Lord Lytton gleaning his occult knowledge from nineteenth-century English Rosicrucian pretenders, but one of nineteenth-century “Rosicrucians” getting their occult knowledge from *him*!

While we heap praise on Lytton for being a founding father of *horror*, we must also credit him for helping introduce the world to the genre of *science fiction*. His 1871 novel *The Coming Race* would prove to be a breathtaking and disturbing look into the future. Unfortunately, early in the twentieth century the imaginative ideas put forth in *The Coming Race* would be seized and distorted into a monstrous vision by the madmen of Germany’s Third Reich, and employed like some malevolent conjuration to invoke a great demon upon the earth in the form of the genocidal terrors of the Second World War. No horror fiction story can possibly compare to such unimaginable evil—such incalculable pain and death suffered by millions upon millions of our fellow human beings.

Of course, I am not suggesting that we blame Lord Edward Bulwer-Lytton for the genocidal horror of the Holocaust. However, we would all do well to be mindful of Lytton’s own words, “The pen is mightier than the sword,” and be aware of the awesome power the written word has to effect changes in human consciousness—for good or for ill.

## Robert W. Chambers (1865–1933)

If H.P. Lovecraft is the *Christ of horror*, then most assuredly Robert W. Chambers was his *John the Baptist*.

Recently it was my privilege to introduce and curate the series of short stories first published in 1895 under the collective title *The King in Yellow* by Robert W. Chambers.<sup>9</sup> To avoid paraphrasing myself,

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9 Robert W. Chambers, *Yellow Sign, An Excerpt from the King in Yellow: The King In Yellow series, Magical Antiquarian Curiosity Shoppe, A Weiser Books Collection*, Introduction by Lon Milo DuQuette (San Francisco, CA: Weiser Books, 2012).

I append a portion of my introduction below. While I refer specifically to *The King in Yellow*, my observations of Chambers' style, technique, and imagination apply also to this book's Chambers selection, "The Messenger."

Perhaps you have heard of *The King in Yellow*? No? Neither had I until a few years ago, when a filmmaker contacted me and informed me he was making a film of *The King in Yellow* and asked if I would be interested in appearing in a cameo role in the production. Before I gave him my answer (the project was later abandoned), I did a bit of digging and discovered a most remarkable treasure—a terrifying work of American horror that predates by a quarter century the first short story by H.P. Lovecraft. Indeed, *The King in Yellow* by Robert W. Chambers is arguably the archetypal inspiration for what would become an entire genre of horror fiction for which the immortal Lovecraft is ultimately credited.

Robert W. Chambers (1865-1933) is not exactly a household name, but that has not always been the case. Late in his career his romantic novels and historical fictions were wildly popular, his books best-sellers, his magazine installments eagerly awaited. For a time he was considered the most successful American literary figure of the day. Yet his later and lighter offerings, while bringing him fame and modest fortune, are forgettable bonbons when compared to the strong meat and innovative brilliance of his horror fiction. The most notable of all his work is *The King in Yellow*, a collection of short stories whose plots are loosely connected to an infamous imaginary book and play of the same title banned universally because of its ominous tendency to drive mad those who read it or came in contact with it. Indeed, the terror begins immediately, with the reader unsure whether or not madness and suicide will be the price he or she will pay for turning the page.

I was a bit disoriented when I began reading *The King in Yellow's* opening story—a dizzying effect that I'm sure Chambers intended to induce in the minds of his "gay-nineties" readers. The tale, called "The Repairer of Reputations," takes place in the science fiction "future" of a 1920s New York City, a metropolis of street names, parks, and landmarks familiar to us still today, which Chambers meticulously paints from his rich palette of images (he was, after all, a classically trained and skilled artist and designer). However,

there is something disturbingly tweaked with the entire milieu of the story. It all takes place in a utopian and prosperous post-Civil War America—a blend of aristocratic republic and military dictatorship that could have easily evolved from the strange bed-fellows of the Gilded Age’s contending movements: nationalistic *laissez-faire* capitalism and the liberal yet pragmatic ideals of social progressivism. From the opening lines, we are instantly plunged into an alternate reality where the comfortable and familiar past has been slightly altered and we are forced to confront the infinite “what ifs” of history—and in doing so calling into question the objective reality of the present.

Nestled within this surreal environment, we are introduced to a well-spoken narrator who at first seems to be a faithful servant of the truth, but who will soon give us reason to doubt both his sanity and our own. But I won’t spoil that for you.

Like Lovecraft would do decades later, Chambers allows the reader’s own imagination to do the heavy lifting of terror. Cassilda’s Song, which serves as the epigram for the entire work, is supposedly clipped from Act I, Scene 2 of the play, *The King in Yellow*, and without burdening the reader’s imagination with concrete certitudes, conjures images of strange locales and vistas not of this earth, indeed, not of this universe, and only hints of characters of unspeakable power and horror.

*Along the shore the cloud waves break,  
The twin suns sink beneath the lake,  
The shadows lengthen  
In Carcosa.*

*Strange is the night where black stars rise,  
And strange moons circle through the skies  
But stranger still is  
Lost Carcosa.*

*Songs that the Hyades shall sing,  
Where flap the tatters of the King,  
Must die unheard in  
Dim Carcosa.*

*Song of my soul, my voice is dead,  
Die thou, unsung, as tears unshed  
Shall dry and die in  
Lost Carcosa.*

Like all great works of horror, the story becomes disturbing, dark, and terrifying in direct proportion to the degree to which our own hearts and minds are disturbed, dark, and frightened.

## Aleister Crowley (1875–1947)

Unlike Lord Lytton and Robert Chambers, Aleister Crowley is *not* remembered primarily for his works of fiction. Admittedly, he was a prolific poet, and in this capacity, even in his early twenties, he received a measure of critical praise and encouragement. His two novels, *Moonchild* (1917), and *Diary of a Drug Fiend* (1922), also received a modicum of critical recognition and over the years have indirectly inspired a handful of film efforts. His short stories,<sup>10</sup> plays, and essays (most privately published and now treasures coveted by collectors) were obviously written for an elite audience of highly educated esotericists and close associates capable of appreciating his elaborate in-jokes, pornographic allusions, and obscure references. As much as he lamented his rejection by the public, it appears he went to great lengths to openly court his own vilification.

For the reader who is completely unfamiliar with the person of Aleister Crowley I highly recommend his own *Confessions*<sup>11</sup> and the recent biography *Perdurabo—The Life of Aleister Crowley*.<sup>12</sup> I has been my pleasure and challenge to write a handful of books concerning the

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10 Including *The Testament of Magdalen Blair*, which appears in this anthology.

11 Aleister Crowley, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley* (1929), ed. John Symonds and Kenneth Grant (1969; repr., London and New York: Arkana, 1989).

12 Richard Kaczynski, *Perdurabo: The Life of Aleister Crowley* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2010).



life and work of this remarkable man. The following brief excerpt is from my book, *Understanding Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot*.<sup>13</sup>

Paradoxes seem to define the life and career of Edward Alexander (Aleister) Crowley.<sup>14</sup> Yes, in many ways he was a scoundrel. There is no doubt that he wallowed shamelessly in his carefully cultivated persona as England's literary and spiritual bad-boy. At the same time he took life and himself very seriously. Among other distinctions, he was a world-class mountaineer,<sup>15</sup> chess master, painter, poet, sportsman, novelist, critic, and theatrical producer. He introduced America to astrology,<sup>16</sup> Isadora Duncan to the I Ching, Aldous Huxley to mescaline, and the poet Victor Neuberg to hiking and high magick. As an agent provocateur, writing for an English-language German propaganda newspaper in New York, he penned the outrageous and inflammatory editorials that provoked a reluctant United States Congress to enter the First World War on England's side.<sup>17</sup>

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13 Lon Milo DuQuette, *Understanding Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot* (Boston, MA: Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC. 2003), 7-8.

14 1875-1947.

15 By 1920 Crowley still held the world record for a number of mountaineering feats, including the greatest pace uphill (4,000 feet in 83 minutes) at over 16,000 feet on Mexico's Iztaccihuatl in 1900; the first ascent of the Nevado de Toluca by a solitary climber 1901; and his 1902 assault on K2, where he spent 65 days on the Baltoro glacier.

16 Ghostwriting for Evangeline Adams, Crowley wrote the bulk of the material first published under her name, including her classic texts *Astrology: Your Place in the Sun* (1927) and *Astrology: Your Place Among the Stars* (1930). These works made "astrology" a household word in America and Europe and catapulted Adams to celebrated status as "Astrologer to Wall Street and Washington." Recently Crowley's co-authorship has been graciously acknowledged by the Adams estate and has resulted in the release of *Astrological Principles of Astrology* by Aleister Crowley and Evangeline Adams (York Beach, ME: Red Wheel/Weiser, 2001).

17 It is often forgotten that the United States was very close to entering the First World War on *Germany's* side. Much to the horror of the German Foreign Ministry, Crowley's editorials made it appear that it was Germany's intention (in fact its foreign policy) to engage in unrestricted submarine warfare against civilian shipping. Even though this was at the time an outrageous falsehood, Crowley's editorials were

During the Second World War, at the request of friend and Naval Intelligence officer Ian Fleming,<sup>18</sup> Crowley provided Winston Churchill with valuable insights into the superstitions and magical mindset of the leaders of the Third Reich. He also suggested to the Prime Minister, if reports can be believed, that he exploit the enemy's magical paranoia by being photographed as much as possible giving the two-fingered "V for Victory" gesture. This sign is the manual version of the magical sign of Apophis-Typhon, a powerful symbol of destruction and annihilation, that, according to magical tradition, is capable of defeating the solar energies represented by the swastika.

Astonishingly, Crowley's adventures and achievements, more than any dozen men of ambition and genius could realistically hope to garner in a lifetime, seem almost to be distractions when weighed against his monumental exploits of self-discovery. His visionary writings and his efforts to synthesize and integrate esoteric spiritual systems of East and West<sup>19</sup> make him one of the most fascinating cultural and religious figures of the twentieth century.

Even though Crowley did not, like Edward Bulwer-Lytton, invent the genre that would define the format and atmosphere of classic horror; even though he wasn't responsible for transforming horror into the morbid-sweet love-song of a tormented soul like Edgar Allan Poe; even though he didn't smash the dimensional boundaries of space-time to plumb new depths of psychological hell like Robert Chambers and H.P. Lovecraft; he did something none of them did. He actually lived the terrifying and ecstatic events of the real life horror-love story-adventure of his own amazing life.

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used to create an anti-German hysteria that would eventually sweep the United States into the conflict on England's side. In a very real way, Aleister Crowley saved his beloved England using only his pen as a magical wand.

18 Ian (Lancaster) Fleming (1908-1964)—pseudonym Atticus—British journalist, secret service agent, writer, whose most famous creation was superhero James Bond, Agent 007. Crowley and Fleming were indeed friends. Copies of their correspondence still exist, some of which discuss matters of occult propaganda and the interrogation of Rudolf Hess.

19 He called his system "Scientific Illuminism." Its motto: "The Method of Science—The Aim of Religion."

Crowley is not important to us for the horror stories he wrote, but for the magnificent horror story he was.

He didn't just write about demons, and devils, and angels, vampires—he invoked them, evoked them, conjured them, battled them, conquered them; he didn't just write about the wonders and terrors of other dimensions, he willfully penetrated them, navigated them, transcended them—then he wrote about them in exacting detail.

Nearly seventy years after his death, the man who the tabloids called the “most dangerous man on earth,” the man they called the “wickedest man in the world,” the man who in all seriousness called himself the “Beast 666,” is now receiving the academic and philosophical attention and recognition that eluded him in life.

Crowley's influence today on the literary art form of horror is incalculable. There isn't a modern writer of horror, science fiction or fantasy who has not in some fundamental way been directly or indirectly influenced by Crowley.

Crowley's dead. But his “horror” reaches from beyond the grave. Robert Chambers wrote of an accursed book and play called *The King in Yellow*. Supposedly, everyone who read *The King in Yellow* went hideously insane. I think of that and smile when I encounter people today who still fearfully hold the person of Aleister Crowley in superstitious awe.

“Is it dangerous to study Aleister Crowley?” I am still asked. Aleister Crowley was by no means perfect. He was not good with people, and often alienated those who loved him dearest. His bold explorations of human sexuality and drugs (always meticulously recorded and analyzed) are fascinating to study, but were never intended to be casually emulated. I have never encountered anyone who knew him that did not disapprove of some aspect of his character or behavior.

But he is dead. For us, only his works remain as a measure of the man, and they are currently more accessible to the general public than at any time during his life. His influence on the modern world of art, literature, religion, and philosophy is now widely acknowledged even by his most vehement critics.

But is it dangerous for some people to study Aleister Crowley? I guess I have to say “Yes.” For those whose belief in a God of goodness

hinges upon the reality of Devil who is equally evil—for the superstitious, the ignorant, the lazy, the immature, the unbalanced, the mentally ill, the paranoid, the faint-hearted; for anyone who for any reason cannot or will not take responsibility for their own actions, their own lives, their own souls; for these people Aleister Crowley is still a very dangerous man.<sup>20</sup>

And now, dear reader, I will leave you to enjoy the works of these three masters of horror and the choir of other luminaries of the genre. I sincerely hope you enjoy your time with them and will treasure this beautifully produced book. Perhaps when you have finished reading it you'll want to put it in your family library—near the dictionary and encyclopedia. Who knows—perhaps someday some bored young man or woman will discover it on a hot summer morning.

For the time being . . . I bid you goodnight.

LON MILO DUQUETTE

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20 From Lon Milo DuQuette, *The Magick of Aleister Crowley* (Boston, MA: Weiser Books, 2003), 8.