

American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror)

From imusti

Download Read Online

American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) From imusti

Part of a new six-volume series of the best in classic horror, selected by award-winning director Guillermo del Toro

American Supernatural Tales is the ultimate collection of weird and frightening American short fiction. As Stephen King will attest, the popularity of the occult in American literature has only grown since the days of Edgar Allan Poe. The book celebrates the richness of this tradition with chilling contributions from some of the nation's brightest literary lights, including Poe himself, H. P. Lovecraft, Shirley Jackson, Ray Bradbury, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and—of course—Stephen King. This volumes also includes "The Yellow Sign," the most horrific story from *The King in Yellow*, the classic horror collection by Robert W. Chambers featured on HBO's hit TV series *True Detective*. By turns phantasmagoric, spectral, and demonic, this is a frighteningly good collection of stories.

Filmmaker and longtime horror literature fan Guillermo del Toro serves as the curator for the Penguin Horror series, a new collection of classic tales and poems by masters of the genre. Included here are some of del Toro’s favorites, from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Ray Russell’s short story “Sardonicus,” considered by Stephen King to be “perhaps the finest example of the modern Gothic ever written,” to Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* and stories by Ray Bradbury, Joyce Carol Oates, Ted Klein, and Robert E. Howard. Featuring original cover art by Penguin Art Director Paul Buckley, these stunningly creepy deluxe hardcovers will be perfect additions to the shelves of horror, sci-fi, fantasy, and paranormal aficionados everywhere.

Download American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) ...pdf

Read Online American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) ...pdf

American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror)

From imusti

American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) From imusti

Part of a new six-volume series of the best in classic horror, selected by award-winning director Guillermo del Toro

American Supernatural Tales is the ultimate collection of weird and frightening American short fiction. As Stephen King will attest, the popularity of the occult in American literature has only grown since the days of Edgar Allan Poe. The book celebrates the richness of this tradition with chilling contributions from some of the nation's brightest literary lights, including Poe himself, H. P. Lovecraft, Shirley Jackson, Ray Bradbury, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and—of course—Stephen King. This volumes also includes "The Yellow Sign," the most horrific story from *The King in Yellow*, the classic horror collection by Robert W. Chambers featured on HBO's hit TV series *True Detective*. By turns phantasmagoric, spectral, and demonic, this is a frighteningly good collection of stories.

Filmmaker and longtime horror literature fan Guillermo del Toro serves as the curator for the Penguin Horror series, a new collection of classic tales and poems by masters of the genre. Included here are some of del Toro’s favorites, from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Ray Russell’s short story “Sardonicus,” considered by Stephen King to be “perhaps the finest example of the modern Gothic ever written,” to Shirley Jackson’s *The Haunting of Hill House* and stories by Ray Bradbury, Joyce Carol Oates, Ted Klein, and Robert E. Howard. Featuring original cover art by Penguin Art Director Paul Buckley, these stunningly creepy deluxe hardcovers will be perfect additions to the shelves of horror, sci-fi, fantasy, and paranormal aficionados everywhere.

American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) From imusti Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #311349 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2013-10-01
- Released on: 2013-10-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.50" h x 1.41" w x 5.81" l, 1.40 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 512 pages

Download American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) ...pdf

Read Online American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) ...pdf

Download and Read Free Online American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) From imusti

Editorial Review

Review
Praise for Penguin Horror Classics:

“The new Penguin Horror editions, selected by Guillermo del Toro, feature some of the best art-direction (by Paul Buckley) I've seen in a cover in quite some time.” – Cory Doctorow, Boing Boing

"Each cover does a pretty spectacular job of evoking the mood of the title in bold, screenprint-style iconography." – Dan Solomon, Fast Company

About the Author

GUILLERMO DEL TORO is a Mexican director, producer, screenwriter, novelist, and designer. He both cofounded the Guadalajara International Film Festival and formed his own production company—the Tequila Gang. However, he is most recognized for his Academy Award-winning film, *Pan’s Labyrinth*, and the Hellboy film franchise. He has received Nebula and Hugo awards, was nominated for a Bram Stoker Award, and is an avid collector and student of arcane memorabilia and weird fiction.

S. T. JOSHI is a freelance writer and editor. He has edited Penguin Classics editions of H. P. Lovecraft’s *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*, and *The Thing on the Doorstep and Other Weird Stories*, as well as Algernon Blackwood’s *Ancient Sorceries and Other Strange Stories*. Among his critical and biographical studies are *The Weird Tale*, *Lord Dunsany: Master of the Anglo-Irish Imagination*, and *H. P. Lovecraft: A Life, and The Modern Weird Tale*. He has also edited works by Ambrose Bierce, Arthur Machen, and H. L. Mencken, and is compiling a three-volume *Encyclopedia of Supernatural Literature*.

Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

AMERICAN SUPERNATURAL TALES

It takes an unusual caliber of writer to deliver readers into the terrifying beyond—to conjure tales that are not only unsettling, but unnatural, with elements and characters that are all the more disturbing for their impossibility. From Edgar Allan Poe to Stephen King, American authors have excelled at journeying into the supernatural. You’ll find them here, including H. P. Lovecraft, Shirley Jackson, Ray Bradbury, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and others. An unprecedented anthology of phantasmagoric, spectral, and demonic writing, *American Supernatural Tales* celebrates our enduring need to be spooked and horrified.

Penguin Horror is a collection of novels, stories, and poems by masters of the genre, curated by filmmaker and lifelong horror literature reader Guillermo del Toro. Included in the series are some of his favorites: *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, *The Raven: Tales and Poems* by Edgar Allan Poe, *The Thing on the Doorstep and Other Weird Stories* by H. P. Lovecraft, *The Haunting of Hill House* by Shirley Jackson, *Haunted Castles: The Complete Gothic Stories* by Ray Russell, and *American Supernatural Tales*, edited by S. T. Joshi and featuring stories from Ray Bradbury, Joyce Carol Oates, Robert E. Howard, and Stephen King, alongside many others. Penguin Horror reminds us what del Toro writes in his series introduction: “To learn what we fear is to learn who we are.”

PENGUIN BOOKS

AMERICAN SUPERNATURAL TALES

S. T. JOSHI is a freelance writer and editor. He has edited Penguin Classics editions of H. P. Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories* and *The Thing on the Doorstep and Other Weird Stories*, as well as Algernon Blackwood's *Ancient Sorceries and Other Strange Stories*, Arthur Machen's *The White People and Other Weird Stories*, and *American Supernatural Tales.* He has also written critical studies on Lord Dunsany and H. P. Lovecraft; edited works by Ambrose Bierce, Clark Ashton Smith, and H. L. Mencken; and has completed a two-volume history of supernatural fiction entitled *Unutterable Horror.*

GUILLERMO DEL TORO is a Mexican director, producer, screenwriter, novelist, and designer. He cofounded the Guadalajara International Film Festival, and formed his own production company—the Tequila Gang. However, he is most recognized for his Academy Award-winning film, *Pan's Labyrinth*, and the Hellboy film franchise. He has received Nebula and Hugo awards, was nominated for a Bram Stoker Award, and is an avid collector and student of arcane memorabilia and weird fiction.

AMERICAN
SUPERNATURAL
TALES

Edited with an Introduction
by S. T. Joshi

PENGUIN HORROR

Series Editor Guillermo del Toro

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

he author and publisher are grateful for the following parties for permission to reprint the following copyrighted works:

H. P. Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu." Copyright © 1928 by Popular Fiction Publishing Company. Reprinted by permission of Lovecraft Properties LLC.

Clark Ashton Smith, "The Vaults of Yoh-Vombis." Copyright © 1932 by Popular Fiction Publishing Company. Reprinted by permission of Arkham House Publishers, Inc. and its agents, JABberwocky Literary Agency Inc., 24-16 Queens Plaza South, Suite 505, Long Island City, NY 11101.

Robert E. Howard, "Old Garfield's Heart." Copyright © 1933 by Popular Fiction Publishing Company. Reprinted from *The Black Stranger and Other American Tales* by Robert E. Howard, edited and with an introduction by Steven Tompkins, by permission of the University of Nebraska Press. Copyright © 2005 by Robert E. Howard Properties, LLC.

Robert Bloch, "Black Bargain." Copyright © 1942 by Popular Fiction Publishing Company. Reprinted by permission of the Estate of Robert Bloch by arrangement with Richard Henshaw Group LLC.

August Derleth, "The Lonesome Place." Copyright © 1948. Reprinted by permission of Arkham House Publishers, Inc. and its agents, JABberwocky Literary Agency Inc., 24-16 Queens Plaza South, Suite 505,

Long Island City, NY 11101.

Fritz Leiber, “The Girl with the Hungry Eyes.” Copyright © 1949 by Avon Books, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Richard Curtis Associates.

Ray Bradbury, “The Fog Horn.” Copyright © 1951 by The Curtis Publishing Company, renewed 1979 by Ray Bradbury. Reprinted by permission of Don Congdon Associates, Inc.

Shirley Jackson, “A Visit” (also titled “The Lovely House”). Copyright 1952 by Shirley Jackson, from *Come Along with Me* by Shirley Jackson. Reprinted by permission of Viking Penguin, a member of Penguin Group (USA) LLC and Linda Allen Literary Agency.

Richard Matheson, “Long Distance Call.” Copyright © 1953 by Galaxy Publishing Corporation, renewed 1981 by Richard Matheson. Reprinted by permission of Don Congdon Associates, Inc.

Charles Beaumont, “The Vanishing American.” Copyright © 1955 by Fantasy House, renewed 1983 by Christopher Beaumont. Reprinted by permission of Don Congdon Associates, Inc.

T. E. D. Klein, “The Events of Poroth Farm.” Copyright © 1972 by T. E. D. Klein. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Stephen King, “Night Surf,” from *Night Shift* by Stephen King. Copyright © 1974 by Cavalier. *Night Shift* copyright © 1976, 1977, 1978 by Stephen King. Used by permission of Doubleday, a division of Random House, Inc. Any third party use of this material, outside of this publication, is prohibited. Interested parties must apply directly to Random House, Inc. for permission. Reprinted by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Limited.

Dennis Etchison, “The Late Shift.” Copyright © 1980 by Dennis Etchison. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Thomas Ligotti, “Vastarien.” Copyright © 1987 by Thomas Ligotti. Reprinted by permission of The McIntyre Agency. All rights reserved.

Karl Edward Wagner, “Endless Night.” Copyright © 1987 by Karl Edward Wagner. Reprinted by permission of the Karl Edward Wagner Literary Group.

Norman Partridge, “The Hollow Man.” Copyright © 1991 by Norman Partridge. Reprinted by permission of the author.

David J. Schow, “Last Call for the Sons of Shock.” Copyright © 1994 by David J. Schow. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Joyce Carol Oates, “Demon.” Copyright © 1996 by The Ontario Review, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the author.

Caitlín R. Kiernan, “In the Water Works (Birmingham, Alabama 1888).” Copyright © 2000 by Caitlín R. Kiernan. Reprinted by permission of the author.

HAUNTED CASTLES, DARK MIRRORS

ON THE PENGUIN HORROR SERIES

There is no god but this mirror that thou seest, for this is the Mirror of Wisdom. And it reflecteth all things that are in heaven and on earth, save only the face of him who looketh into it. This it reflecteth not, so that he who looketh into it may be wise.

—Oscar Wilde, “The Fisherman and His Soul”

To learn what we fear is to learn who we are. Horror defines our boundaries and illuminates our souls. In that, it is no different, or less controversial, than humor, and no less intimate than sex. Our rejection or acceptance of a particular type of horror fiction can be as rarefied or kinky as any other phobia or fetish.

Horror is made of such base material—so easily rejected or dismissed—that it may be hard to accept my postulate that within the genre lies one of the last refuges of spirituality in this, our materialistic world.

But it is a fact that, through the ages, most storytellers have had to resort to the fantastic in order to elevate their discourse to the level of parable. Stevenson, Wilde, Victor Hugo, Henry James, Marcel Schwob, Kipling, Borges, and many others. Borges, in fact, defended the fantastic quite openly and acknowledged fable and parable as elemental forms of narrative that would always outlive the much younger forms, which are preoccupied with realism.

At a primal level, we crave parables, because they allow us to grasp the impossibly large concepts and to understand our universe without and within. These tales can “make flesh” what would otherwise be metaphor or allegory. More important, the horror tale becomes imprinted in us at an emotional level: Shiver by shiver, we gain insight.

But, at its root, the frisson is a crucial element of this form of storytelling—because all spiritual experience requires faith, and faith requires abandonment: the humility to fully surrender to a tide of truths and wills infinitely larger than ourselves.

It is in this abandonment that we are allowed to witness phenomena that go beyond our nature and that reveal the spiritual side of our existence.

We dislocate, for a moment, the rules of our universe, the laws that bind the rational and diminish the cosmos to our scale. And when the world becomes a vast, unruly place, a place where anything can happen, then—and only then—we allow for miracles and angels, no matter how dark they may be.

Penguin has a particularly important place in my own relationship with the fantastic. When I was a child—roughly seven years old—I started purchasing and collecting fantastic literature. My first purchases were paperbacks, and the two main purveyors of my collection were, almost inevitably, Editorial Bruguera in Spanish and Penguin Books in English. As a kid, I was so grateful to have these short story collections and novels in an affordable—albeit fragile—format. Reading these tales at such an early age most definitely shaped me into whatever manner of creature I am today.

The discovery of the horror tale at such an early age was fortuitous for me. This sort of tale serves, in many ways, the very same purpose as fairy tales did in our childhood: It operates as a theater of the mind in which internal conflicts are played out. In these tales we can parade the most reprehensible aspects of our being: cannibalism, incest, parricide. It allows us to discuss our anxieties and even to contemplate the experience of death in absolute safety.

And again, like a fairy tale, horror can serve as a liberating or repressive social tool, and it is always an accurate reflection of the social climate of its time and the place where it gets birthed.

* * *

In the eighteenth century, Romanticism—and with it, the Gothic tale—surged as a reaction against the suffocating dogmas of the Enlightenment. Empiricism weighed heavily upon our souls so, as the age of reason went to sleep, it produced monsters. Reason and science were being enthroned when the Gothic Romance exploded full of emotion and thrills. “The great art of life is sensation, to feel that we exist, even in pain,” said Lord Byron, enunciating a basic Romantic idea and, perhaps, hoping that goblins, ghosts, and demons provided some necessary release to a puritanical society.

The Gothic has its sights planted firmly in the past because it is there that ghosts reside. Romanesque ruins evoke, with their incomplete grandeur, the will that built them and the echoes they left behind. The innate necrophilia subjacent in the Gothic spirit is made manifest as a tribute to the eternal notion of love.

The enormous popularity of this genre produced a deluge of inferior titles and sub-Minerva Press imitations; its elements became so well-known as to be somewhat parodied in Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (created in direct response to Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic novels) or, more obliquely, in the *Don Quixote* of the Gothic genre: *The Monk*, by Matthew G. Lewis.

Toward the end of its run, the Gothic’s resistance to modernity gave way to a new set of devices—it began to utilize the shiny artifices of science, psychology, and other avant-garde tools to lend plausibility to its phantoms.

And it is at this point that the modern horror tale, in the hand of young, skillful, and powerful writers, starts evolving from its Gothic roots and delivers bold, very experimental works that shape the language in exciting and innovative ways.

* * *

Much like Matthew G. Lewis, who was twenty years old when he wrote *The Monk*, Mary Shelley was painfully young—a teenager, in fact—when she first published *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* and into the monster and his tale she was able to pour all her contradictions and her questions—her essential pleas and her feelings of disfranchisement and inadequacy. The tale spoke about such profound, particular feelings that, irremediably, it became universal.

While reading the novel as a child, I was arrested by the epistolary form Shelley had chosen (and which *Dracula* would use to good effect many decades later), because it felt so immediate. I was overtaken by the Miltonian sense of abandonment, the absolute horror of a life without a reason. The tragedy of the tale was not dependent on evil. That’s the supreme pain of the novel—tragedy requires no villain.

Just as Poe will prefigure the ambiguities of psychiatry, Shelley utilizes the most cutting-edge science and philosophy to drive her existential discourse home. Galvanism, chemistry, and surgery provide the alibi for the monster to gain life and to arise and question all of us.

The Faust-like thirst for knowledge and the arrogance of science are embodied in the character of Victor. He becomes an uncaring god who can force dead flesh to be reanimated but cannot calculate the consequences of his creation. This leads to the infinite sorrow of his creation, who will experience the hunger, the loneliness, and the burden of existence, far removed from its creator.

And the Creature, like the wolf of St. Francis, wanders through the world, encounters mostly evil and hatred, and learns of rage and pain. He becomes hardened and lonely. And I, at age ten, in a comfortable house in a suburb, felt exactly the same way. Shelley goes deeper than many authors by refusing to impose a pattern of

good and evil only as discourse (like Stevenson's "Markheim" or Poe in "William Wilson"), but by actually weaving it into the plot.

The unnatural essence of the Creature is defined by his origins—by the god that gave him life—because Victor usurps not only the divine function of God, but also that of intercourse. Victor is barren and alone when he creates the Creature, and their final encounter brings it all full circle—they finally meet in a desolate, frozen landscape, which provides the perfect theater for the colloquy between the arid God and the abandoned Man.

In usurping the role of God, Victor is also faced with questions and reproach that far exceed his paternal capabilities and ultimately allow the Creature to see him, too, as just a man. Another abandoned man. So, as the tale ends, and as his god dies a simple man, the Creature will fade into the cold limbo with the sole desire to die himself. To be no more. Remote as Victor may have been, he was the only thing that gave sense to the Creature's life, and with him gone, only oblivion remains.

Frankenstein is the purest of parables—working both as a straight narrative and as a symbolic one. Shelley utilizes the Gothic model to tell a story not about the loss of a paradise but rather about the absence of one.

The novel is so articulate and vibrant that it often surprises those who approach it for the first time. No adaptation—and there are some masterful ones—has ever captured it whole.

Taking its rightful place among the essential characters in any narrative form, Frankenstein's Creature will go beyond literature and will join Tarzan, Sherlock Holmes, Pinocchio, and Monte Cristo in embodying a concept, even in the minds of those who have never read the actual books.

* * *

Clearly, the horror tale deals with the essential duality of mankind, a topic that has proved irresistible to philosophers, prophets, and saints. The Adamites, the Dulcinians, and other savage orders advocated salvation through Bosch-like excess and violence—and they all situated the root of all evil in the soul. It is not until Poe that the seat of evil is transferred back to its proper place: the human mind.

It is in Poe that we first find the sketches of modern horror while being able to enjoy the traditional trappings of the Gothic tale. He speaks of plagues and castles and ancient curses, but he is also morbidly attracted to the aberrant intellect, the mind of the outsider.

Poe grappled with the darker side of mankind, with the demons that reside within us: our mind, a crumbling edifice, sinking slowly in a swamp of decadence and madness. He knew that a rational, good-hearted man could, when ridden by demons, sink a knife in the eye of a beloved cat and gouge it out. He could strangle an old man or burn alive his enemies. He knew that those dark impulses can shape us, overtake us, make us snap—and yet, we would still be able to function, we would still presume to possess the power of rational thought.

Why would anyone say we are mad?

In Poe, the legend weighs heavily upon his readers. Partly because of the singular misfortune of his life, but also due to one outstanding fact: The portrait of Poe as a dissolute, intoxicated wretch comes chiefly from the biased chronicling and ruthless eulogizing of one Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Griswold had the singular duty of being an enemy of Poe and guardian of the writer's legacy. So, quite early after the writer's death, the misinterpretation of Poe starts in earnest. Griswold publishes a most ruthless epitaph and a distorted biography that will, to this day, define Poe in the popular imagination.

One of the most surprising aspects of Poe is how remarkably uninterested he is in the supernatural. He is interested in figures of uncanny origin, and—much like the medieval artists—is capable of giving the plague a body and a voice, but he is not compelled toward the ghostly or physically monstrous; he is a rationalist (it should come as no surprise that he pioneered the detective novel) repulsed by and attracted to madness and loss.

Like every good writer of horror fiction, there is a large degree of autobiography in Poe's work. The imprinting of death and love, the almost Dickensian nature of his childhood and the fact that his savage muse did not endear him to the mainstream of American literature all cooperated to create the sense of isolation in his fiction. This remarkable characteristic—which he will share with another accursed American writer, Howard Phillips Lovecraft—is of the foremost importance in understanding Poe. Most of his protagonists are outsiders. They stand alone, trapped, confined within themselves.

But it is here that two thoroughly modern demons make their appearance: perversity and arrogance. Part of the fundament of the horror tale is that it exists in a regimented social reality. The inner monologue of a Poe character becomes more effective when juxtaposed against minute social detail and quaint norm. The desires that pulse within are deemed irrational or perverse by the outside world and lay these characters on a disastrous route that suffuses each story and poem with a driving sense of doom.

His poems and stories, such as those in *The Raven: Tales and Poems*, have a passion for the abnormal and the hopeless that makes clear his ambivalence toward "normalcy." He can only paint normalcy as a saintly virtue, a quiet, enraging sounding board for the drumming of madness. And little by little, as his tales unfold, that quaintness will become unsustainable, repugnant even, and it must be extinguished. It is in this arrogance that Poe's characters reveal their true nature: They are not victims but executioners. Wolves in a land of sheep. In this, Poe hints at the psychopathy and sociopathy that will shape the criminology of centuries to come. Standing above moral judgment, he gives us a true glimpse into the criminal mind.

Poe is enraptured by the loss of all that was noble and grand and good. The tragedy in Poe's world is not the darkness in which we wallow but the fact that we once contemplated heaven. The warm, bright kingdom of the smile has fallen, and it has given way to a valley of despair and demented laughter.

Poe instilled polarized reactions and remains, to this day, a writer often misinterpreted and even reviled. To an obstinate few, the exquisite, precise nature of his prose remains invisible, asphyxiated by the effect it provokes. But his work is without a doubt the fundamental stepping-stone between the legacy of Gothic horror and the threshold of its modern incarnations.

* * *

Poe redefines the Gothic edifice as a haunted castle of the mind, but it will have to wait until the end of the nineteenth century to be fully inhabited, when Henry James creates *The Turn of the Screw.*

The ghost story is perhaps the most venerable and accepted part of horror literature. Just as monsters can be found as far back as *Beowulf, The Ramayana,* or *The Iliad,* so can ghosts be traced to the very origins of the consigned narrative.

The ghost story has had many great practitioners, but, justly, two names stand above them all: M. R. James and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. In their hands, the ghost story acquires such solidity and conviction as to become fact. Their distinct styles achieve this result through varied means, which I will discuss succinctly. In James, horror comes as much by the punctilious nature of the detail and background provided for the story as it comes from the obstinate omission of such details in a capricious manner by the story's narrator. This lends the story the patina of truth. It is no secret that, in describing his horrors, James is evoking his own

intimate phobias and, it is said, the echoes of a single ghostly encounter he had at a very early age.

Le Fanu's case is entirely another matter. Even when James drinks from the same stylistic resources—which he absorbed as a student and scholar of Le Fanu's legacy—it is the innate connection that Le Fanu feels with the supernatural that dominates his work and separates it from the rest.

The tenuous but precise way in which Le Fanu builds up the supernatural elements is akin to the pervasive effects of mildew on a solid wall. It is not by force but by accumulation that he demolishes disbelief and tears down the barrier that separates us from fear. The relentless but delicate construction of atmosphere and dread that Le Fanu creates comes partly from a calculated and precise style of writing and partly from the lifelong relationship he has with the darkest folktales of his native Ireland.

The tenets of ghost story fiction are quite varied but almost invariably require the rooting of a haunting within an edifice, a patch of land, or an ancient object. The ghost must be "tethered" to a host of some kind. A haunted castle.

Henry James was fascinated by ghost stories—which he defined as fairy tales for adults—and studied them carefully. He devoted considerable time to the creation and contemplation of such tales and, in my opinion, devised one of the most moving and tenuous of all ghost tales in "The Way It Came."

In *The Turn of the Screw*, James utilizes many a traditional Gothic story element (a haunted edifice, a manuscript, a secret from the past, and the element of innocence at the center of the tale) but creates a breathtaking exercise in ambiguity and duality—the house and the mind of the governess seem to be equally infested with darkness and ghosts.

Through the ages, it has been a tradition in Great Britain to have a great ghost story for Christmas. This tradition gave us *A Christmas Carol* by Dickens, and it extends into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries through the gorgeous productions the BBC has done through the decades at the yuletide season.

Henry James utilizes this device to start *The Turn of the Screw.* He also utilizes, obliquely, a most popular framing device: the club story.

The club story, along with the ghost story, is a cherished tradition that can be found in settings as varied as *The Dinner Club* stories by Sapper, *Tales from the White Hart* by Arthur C. Clarke, assorted stories by M. R. James, or even "The Body Snatcher" by Robert Louis Stevenson, to name but a few. In the typical club story, a varied assortment of characters gathers in a supper club, a tavern, or a smoking room and, after describing the settings—the quality of the brandy, the gentle glow of the fireplace—stories of one sort or another are shared. This device often produces in the reader a sense of comfort and allows for a colloquial narrative that gives the most outlandish tales the patina of reality. Often a manuscript is quoted. The epistolary nature of the tale within the tale also lends credence to the events narrated, even if they unfold through a most unreliable narrator. The reader may now be in the wrong hands.

James then proceeds to weave a brisk but dense tale that engages the heart and the mind of the reader. We are at once as fascinated by the chilling nature of the tale as we are by the bifurcating possibilities of the haunting. We are either seeing the chronicle of the most tragic, relentless mental abuse of two children, or we are witnessing a chilling story of spiritual infestation. James himself has left some scattered evidence as to where his loyalties lay, and while there is some indication of his belief in the reality of the haunting, this has been disputed ardently through decades of literary analysis by some of the great minds of our century.

At the heart of the tale lies a most English virtue: repression. Regardless of the factual reality of the proceedings, the constant pulse of repressed desire gives the characters a susceptibility, a proclivity to

heightened emotion, to hysterical reaction. James maintains the children as chillingly ambiguous, manipulative, and strong willed. This alone would have unsettled a governess at the time, but particularly one who can only define her subjects in the most anodyne and antiseptic terms: “charming,” “beautiful,” “beatific,” or “radiant.” The governess seems uncomfortable at the hint of any complexity in the children and at great unease with almost any demonstration of flattery or physical affection. That is why James is so brilliant in constructing his two ghosts around the very thing that would frighten his main character: carnal desire.

The origins of Quint and Miss Jessup (the former governess) are not an Anglo-Saxon myth or an ancient tale of revenge but the carnal story of two lovers consumed by physical passion. It is, in a way, a different sort of possession that also scares and bewilders our heroine/villain, quite in the same way that native lust would shock goodwilled missionaries across the South Seas.

The duality in the tale lies also within James. The English streak in him supports one side of the story—the one permeated by ghost tales and moral colonialism. His empirical, liberal American streak supports the other side. And even structurally, the pacing of the piece—which can be defined as a long novella or a short novel—throughout its compact chapters is entirely American while its coruscated prose and internal pacing are decidedly Old World.

A sophisticated mind still has, hardwired in it, the trigger of pareidolia—the human tendency to organize any random pattern into a system or a shape—and James lays before us an inkblot test of a tale. Whether we believe the haunting to be real or not speaks volumes about our nature as well as the nature of the tale’s characters. Our experience reading the novella mirrors the experience of the governess trying to assemble the tale. After all, James said that the reader should rely on “his own experience, his own imagination” to complete the haunting.

The haunted castle is now officially our mind and the ghost is desire.

* * *

Which brings us to Howard Phillips Lovecraft. There is so much to say about him and such illuminating texts have been written by brilliant scholars (above all else my kind accomplice S. T. Joshi), colleagues (L. Sprague de Camp’s Lovecraft biography), or fellow authors (*H. P. Lovecraft: Against the World, Against Life*, Michel Houellebecq) that I feel at a disadvantage trying to scribble a few thoughts.

I will then speak about my personal relationship to his work. One hot summer afternoon (I must have been eleven or twelve years old) I stumbled upon the text of the Lovecraft story “The Outsider.” I was riding in the family car, and the text was included in Spanish in an anthology for my older brother’s lit class. I started to read, and almost an hour later, I was left behind in the car, still reading, oblivious to the inclement heat, mesmerized and moved by this story.

In it, an entity emerges from the depths of the earth and ascends painfully, seeking, lost. And he encounters a horrifying entity at the end of a corridor. A loathsome creature, pale and deformed—who is it? And why does he stand there, looking directly at him? What is that frame that surrounds the door where the wretch stands? In the final paragraphs of the story, the narrator extends his hand and the horror hits the reader full force. The story provoked such strong emotions in me. “The monster was I . . .” And, as I closed that book, I felt transmogrified. I had become an acolyte of Lovecraft.

Starting that afternoon, and for the rest of my life, I have devoted more time to Lovecraft than virtually any other author in the genre. His mannered, convulse prose, so antiquated and yet so full of new ideas, is very compelling to a young writer for the same reason that Bradbury’s is—it *seems* easy to forge. It is so clear, so

full of evident quirks, that you long to imitate it, and it is then that you find out how full of secrets his prose can be.

Many a time the term “visionary” is used to describe a particular type of artist, one with such conviction about the worlds that he or she is building that he seems to be transcribing rather than creating. I wrote about this in my introduction to a Penguin Classics edition of Arthur Machen’s work. Well, Lovecraft is that type of artist. His phobias and inadequacies do dictate in him the compulsive worlds and characters he creates. He speaks of what he knows—corrupt lineages in old Eastern Seaboard towns, bizarre forms of sea life that terrorize the pious white men with their undulating, soft folds of pale flesh, the fundamental loneliness of men trapped out of time in urban monstrosities that seem to shift and change around them—all of these things stem from the dark moments in his own life.

Lovecraft’s biography rivals Poe’s in bizarre occurrences and outrageous misfortune, but his is a quiet, isolated, phobic existence, whereas Poe’s is marked by excess and adversity. The details of his misfortune are too many and too odd to enumerate here, and the best thing I can do is ask you to follow Mr. Joshi’s notations and books and the few other titles I recommended earlier.

The stories included in this Penguin Horror volume of *The Thing on the Doorstep and Other Weird Stories* are an absolute treasure trove that will show you many of the thematic and stylistic aspects of HPL’s work. He is a well-versed student of the weird tale and can metamorphose at will. He drinks from the wells of Poe, William Hope Hodgson, Algernon Blackwood, Lord Dunsany, Arthur Machen, and many others, but impresses all of his narratives with his own phobic, misanthropic seal. No one has ever created a more adverse and bizarre cosmos than Lovecraft. No one.

You’ll be delighted with the lysergic “The Music of Erich Zann,” the necrophiliac “The Tomb,” the often imitated, multi-anthologized “Pickman’s Model,” the disturbing “The Dunwich Horror,” and a few other masterpieces, including the titular story.

But the crown jewel in the collection is, in my opinion, “At the Mountains of Madness.” A great admirer of Poe, Lovecraft sets out to riff on *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, but then he stumbles into uncharted territory by hinting, through science and revelations, at the darkest possible origin of mankind. A group of scientists embarks on a fossil hunt to the frozen edges of the globe. Utilizing cutting-edge technology and tools, they attempt to catalog and decipher the evolutionary clues found in fossils and remains that are gradually revealed to them. They stumble upon the ruins of a cyclopean alien city. It is there that it is revealed that an ancient race of extraterrestrials created mankind as a cruel cosmic joke. They also created a race of slaves that can shape-shift at will, and that still lurk in the ruins of the city. The final encounter in the few final pages and lines of this story are so powerful, so primal as to render one speechless.

Reading this tale in my midteens was a revelation. I had never been exposed to any literature that so dwarfed our existence and hinted at the cold indifference of the cosmos. I became entirely enamored. Making a film of it became my quest.

For the last fifteen years or so, I have attempted repeatedly to make a film based on this story. From 2009 to 2011 I dedicated my every waking hour to sketching, sculpting, and writing about every detail in the adaptation of Lovecraft’s difficult prose. Difficult to adapt, that is, since it is a superb tonal work, chock-full of erudite and minute scientific annotations and peppered with brief but shocking episodes of devastating power. The adaptation took necessary liberties but remained faithful to every landmark of the novel.

Needless to say, the film didn’t happen, and for now I have to be content to share my home office with a life-size Lovecraft sculpture, many Cthulhu and HPL busts, a portrait by Michael Deas, hundreds of conceptual drawings, a visual effects test by Industrial Light and Magic, and the few eerie music tracks that Jónsi, from

Sigur Rós, composed for us . . .

It is my hope to, one day, share my love for HPL with the world.

* * *

With *The Haunting of Hill House*, Shirley Jackson evolves the ghost story one step further by creating an equally fluid tale—one that will again test the relationship between the fantastic and the psychological.

Jackson is the perfect case of a writer associated with a genre that a substantial portion of her readers would avoid. Her prose and poise are obliquely reminiscent of E. B. White, Thurber, or the spirit of *The New Yorker*, and yet her fierce grasp of the supernatural, her lapses into the Gothic Romance tone and trappings, and her undeniable attraction to the bizarre would have her equally at home in *Weird Tales*. So, much like James, she injects her own ambiguity into the tale. But whereas James brings a fin-de-siècle sensibility to the stories, Jackson brings forth a decidedly modern and American approach.

One of the most remarkable feats Jackson pulls off is to make the house a character. It is not the melancholic edifice that hosts the lamia. It is the lamia. Stephen King would later define this notion further by postulating that bad places attract bad things, but Jackson provides the foundation by asserting over and over again the presence of the house as a sentient, physical, spiritual entity of evil.

As an extension of the loneliness prefigured in Poe, Jackson continually speaks of that condition in most of her fiction. Hill House can only hold the truly lonely souls, reclaim them, invite them to belong. The symbiosis, the abandon that is needed for the house to possess the novel's heroine, Eleanor Vance, is a game changer—a tacit agreement that will be cashed in the final pages of Jackson's masterwork: "[S]ilence lay steadily against the wood and stone of Hill House, and whatever walked there, walked alone."

In its efficiency, Jackson's prose transmits modernity—she allows the novel to remain crisp and lean. She refuses to overcomplicate her writing with unnecessary description or mannerisms and, therefore, when she delves into detail, she has the reader's complete attention.

And this is where one of the most genial touches of the novel comes into play. Jackson sets forth the entire endeavor as a scientific experiment, and therefore we are forced to accept the background and history (biography?) of Hill House as pure fact and the parameters of modernity as our safety net.

The experiment as background will again be put to good use by Richard Matheson in the magnificently unsubtle *Hell House*, but Matheson will choose to solve the novel as a dark riddle, whereas Jackson chooses to let it evolve like a collision course.

And it is here that the kinship with Henry James's work stops. Rather than maintaining the boundaries of the story as fluid as a question mark—Is it real? Is it not?—Jackson opts for an exclamation point—a fascinating piece of nature documentary: Hill House is the lion pouncing in slow motion on the smallest, weakest gazelle in the herd: Eleanor.

We are told that this is a house with "insistent hospitality; it seemingly dislikes letting its guests get away," and one that will disintegrate Eleanor's sanity and sense of self without ever defining the nature of the evil that animates it. But evil there is, undoubtedly—and this, too, is a characteristic that separates James and Jackson.

Jackson forces us to contemplate all the haunted occurrences through each of the participant's eyes and vulnerabilities. And by never denying the malevolence of the house: The haunting is real and everyone

within it is alone, trapped in their own minds and circumstances, blind to the plight of the others.

This is perhaps one of the most veiled and pervasive horrors in Jackson's fiction: We are always alone.

If *Hill House* is a colloquy, then it is a colloquy between the different sides in Jackson's mind, the many "me's" that face the vast, hostile world alone. And in the end, Jackson's misanthropic, nihilistic view of the world seems to assert that, in the darkness, there is a refuge. That if Eleanor needs to belong and Hill House needs to possess, then, finally, in that coupling there might be hope.

* * *

The case of Ray Russell offers us a chance to talk about one of the most peculiar horror writers. Russell links postpulp literature and the Grand Guignol tradition with the modern sensibilities of America in the 1960s. Within him resides a neopaganistic streak that is passed from Algernon Blackwood and Sax Rohmer to him and other writers of unusual proclivities, such as Bernard J. Hurwood. A fascinating combination of the liberal and the heretic.

Russell was born in the early twentieth century and saw action during World War II. He held a variety of jobs and published in a variety of publications. He was part of the resurgence of fantastic literature in American letters. As executive fiction editor of *Playboy* in the magazine's infancy (1954–1960), Russell probably knew his share of excess and power, but he utilized this power to provide refuge to a host of valuable genre writers, among them the brilliant Richard Matheson and the precious Charles Beaumont, but also heralded the birth of adult fantastic fiction by publishing also Vonnegut, Bradbury, Fredric Brown, and many others.

Russell authored numerous short stories and seven novels—including his most famous one, *The Case Against Satan*, which pioneers and outlines the plights of *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Exorcist.* But, in spite of this and his continued collaborations with *Playboy* throughout the 1970s, Russell remains a forgotten writer. A sort of writer's writer, an acquired taste. This in spite of being a recipient of both a World Fantasy Award and the Bram Stoker Award for Lifetime Achievement.

In fact, in the last few decades, so little has been published about Russell that the only quote, oft repeated, is Stephen King's blurb, in which he enthrones *Sardonicus* as "perhaps the finest example of the modern gothic ever written."

But King, as always, is absolutely right. Russell has a savage streak in his prose, one that would today be considered inappropriate and even offensive and, to me, entirely reminiscent of the Grand Guignol Theatre. But in his best stories he also captures the tenuous atmosphere of the Gothic Romance. At a secondary level, Russell seems to wallow in a sadistic impulse akin to the *conte cruel* so aptly practiced by Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam.

This tortuous vocation is never clearer than in his Gothic *S* trilogy. The tales *Sanguinarius, Sagittarius,* and *Sardonicus* are all surprisingly inventive stories, with shocking twist endings that are here reprinted in their entirety.

My favorite of the three, *Sagittarius*, may not be a perfect exercise in style, but it is a luscious, devoted repast of Gothic fiction. *Sagittarius* centers around the tale of two stage actors—the divine Sellig and the revulsive Laval, a freakishly deformed performer who shocks the Grand Guignol audience every night, and who embodies evil to perfection.

If you can guess the not too subtle wordplay hidden in the performers' names, then it will feel only natural

that, in an inspired stroke, Russell links the pair with two more infamous figures of gaslight London: Jack the Ripper and Mr. Hyde. The connection is effortless and feels neither mannered nor insincere and, I guarantee this: It packs a powerful punch in its final pages.

“La vie est un corridor noir / D’impuissance et de désespoir!” cries Laval. “Life is a black corridor of impotence and despair.” Indeed.

Sanguinarius retells—from an unorthodox perspective and with great macabre gusto—the story of Countess Elisabeth Báthory and her thirst for blood. Russell provokes and subverts the tale by adopting the Countess’s point of view. He succeeds in this by infusing the story with period quirks and idioms that lend an air of authenticity to the macabre proceedings.

It is also remarkable to hear the tale told in this manner as we find empathy and reason behind the most atrocious actions. Báthory starts her journey as a virginal bride in her early teens and is swallowed by a vortex of depravity and bloodshed that is described, at times, with zealous excess. In this, *Sanguinarius* represents an aspect of Russell’s fiction that will erupt in full in *Incubus*—the capacity of the author to get caught in his own compulsions as he attempts to titillate and shock the reader.

The most famous of his tales, and the only one that is frequently reprinted and discussed, is *Sardonicus.* First published in *Playboy* at the end of the 1950s, this is a tale of enormous originality that remains, at the same time, a grand homage and a reinvention of the Gothic. To the eyes of its seemingly straight protagonist, Sir Robert Cargrave, everything in Castle Sardonicus is askew and in decay. He has been called there to assist the husband of a former liaison of his—the man in question, the preternaturally pale Mr. Sardonicus, has the lower half of his face paralyzed in a horrid rictus, and the reason for this is too preposterous and delightful to consign in these few lines!

In my opinion, Ray Russell is the literary equivalent of the Italian filmmaker Mario Bava, a supersaturated neo-Gothicist who shines above the premises of his material based on style, conviction, and artistic flair. Sadly, most of Russell’s work has remained unavailable, except for outrageously overpriced paperbacks and expensive collectors’ editions. It is therefore that I take great pride in presenting a new edition of *Haunted Castles: The Complete Gothic Stories* as part of this Penguin Horror series.

* * *

And this brings us to the final title of the series, S. T. Joshi’s edited volume of *American Supernatural Tales.*

Foremost among the modern scholars of the genre, Mr. Joshi has published many volumes dedicated to the study of the weird tale and has edited many volumes of horror fiction with unparalleled rigor and love. In every respect, he will be a more adept guide than I in taking you hand in hand through the amazing catalog of supernatural fiction he has curated.

* * *

So, there you have it. We have prepared a small collection of books that I hope will find their way into the hands of young, strange readers—tike I was—curious about this deranged form of storytelling—seeking that late-night chill, that intimate shiver that happens when the lamia crosses the threshold of our room and whispers at us from the darkened corner.

When the certainty of seeing a monstrous thing takes ahold of us and forces us to gaze at the end of a corridor—there, an apparition stands, a thing of supreme horror. And, as we advance toward it—as in HPL’s “The Outsider”—we are overwhelmed by the realization that the putrid flesh, the vacant eyes, the mad stare

we see in that lonely figure is nothing but the reflection in a mirror. A dark mirror facing us.

May your nightmares be plentiful.

GUILLERMO DEL TORO

Thousand Oaks, California, 2013

INTRODUCTION

he supernatural in literature can be said to have its roots in the earliest specimens of Western literature, if we take cognizance of such monsters as the Cyclops, the Hydra, Circe, Cerberus, and others in Greek myth. There is, however, a question as to whether, prior to a few centuries ago, such entities would have been regarded as properly supernatural; for a given creature or event to be regarded as *supernatural*, one must have a clearly defined conception of the *natural*, from which the supernatural can be regarded as an aberration or departure. In Western culture, the parameters of the natural have been increasingly delimited by science, and it is therefore not surprising that the supernatural, as a distinct literary genre, first emerged in the eighteenth century, when scientific advance had reached a stage where certain phenomena could be recognized as manifestly beyond the bounds of the natural. H. P. Lovecraft, one of the leading theoreticians of the genre as well as one of its pioneering practitioners, emphasized this point somewhat flamboyantly in his essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature” (1927):

The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space.

What this means is that the supernatural tale, while adhering to the strictest canons of mimetic realism, must have its emotional and aesthetic focus upon the chosen avenue of departure from the natural—whether it be a creature such as the vampire, the ghost, or the werewolf, or a series of events such as might occur in a haunted house. If *all* the events of a tale are set in an imaginary realm, then we have crossed over into *fantasy*, because the contrast between the natural and the supernatural does not come into play. Conversely, the supernatural tale must be clearly distinguished from the tale of psychological horror, where the horror is generated by witnessing the aberrations of a diseased mind. Lovecraft, in discussing William Faulkner’s tale of necrophilia, “A Rose for Emily” (1930), made clear this distinction, also pointing out the degree to which the supernatural tale is tied to developments in the sciences:

Manifestly, this is a dark and horrible thing which *could happen*, whereas the crux of a *weird* tale is something which *could not possibly happen.* If any unexpected advance of physics, chemistry, or biology were to indicate the *possibility* of any phenomena related by the weird tale, that particular set of phenomena would cease to be *weird* in the ultimate sense because it would become surrounded by a different set of emotions. It would no longer represent imaginative liberation, because it would no longer indicate a suspension or violation of the natural laws against whose universal dominance our fancies rebel. (Letter to August Derleth, November 20, 1931)

Given the fact that the commencement of supernatural literature in the West is canonically dated to the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), there is no intrinsic reason why Americans need feel any inferiority to Europe in regard to their contributions to the form; for it was just at this time that American literature was itself beginning to declare its own aesthetic independence from that of Great Britain. And yet, less than half a century after the United States became a distinct geopolitical entity, British critic William Hazlitt threw down the following gauntlet: "No ghost, we will venture to say, was ever seen in North America. They do not walk in broad day; and the night of ignorance and superstition which favours their appearance, was long past before the United States lifted up their head beyond the Atlantic wave" (*Edinburgh Review*, October 1829). Hazlitt may have been seeking merely to emphasize the new nation's continued cultural inferiority to the land that gave it birth, and he may also have been guilty of exaggerating the rationality that governed the founding of the American colonies, but in spite of all caveats he does appear to raise a valid point. Since so much of supernatural fiction appears to find the source of its terrors in the depths of the remote past, how can a nation that does not have much of a past express the supernatural in literature? The Gothic novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were predicated on horrors emerging from the "ignorance and superstition" of the British or European Dark Ages, but if a country did not experience the Dark Ages, how could those horrors be depicted plausibly? The authors represented in this volume, covering nearly the entirety of American history, sought to answer these questions in a multiplicity of ways, and their varying solutions shed considerable light on the development of the supernatural tale as an art form.

Although there is considerable evidence that the British Gothic novel was voraciously read in the United States, few Americans attempted their hand at it: the sole exponent of the form was Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810), who chose to follow the model of Ann Radcliffe in making use of what has been termed the "explained supernatural," where the supernatural is suggested at the outset but ultimately explained away as the product of misconstrual or trickery. As a result, Brockden Brown does not qualify as America's first *supernaturalist*, and that distinction remains with the unlikely figure of Washington Irving: unlikely because his writing as a whole—lighthearted, urbane, comic, even at times self-parodic—would seem as far removed from the flamboyant luridness of Matthew Gregory Lewis or the guilt-ridden intensity of Charles Robert Maturin as anything could possibly be. And yet, the supernatural comprised a persistent thread in Irving's work, notably in his two story collections, *The Sketch Book* (1820) and *Tales of a Traveller* (1824). That Irving was able to find inspiration in the Dutch legendry of New York and New England—a legendry already two centuries old by the time he began writing—suggests that even a "new" land (new, of course, only in terms of European settlement) could quickly gain a fund of superstition that had the potential of generating supernatural literature.

In the next generation, two towering figures—Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne—chose starkly different means to convey the supernatural. Hawthorne, plagued by an overriding sense of sin inspired by the religious fanaticism of the Puritan settlers of Massachusetts, found in the American seventeenth century—culminating in the real-life horror of the Salem witchcraft trials—a fitting analogue of the European Dark Ages, and his novels and tales, supernatural and otherwise, constantly draw upon the Puritan past as a source of evil that continues to cast its shadow over the present.

Poe, younger and more forward-looking, felt the need to found his horrors on the potentially hideous aberrations of the human mind, with the result that much of his best fiction falls into the category of psychological horror ("The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Man of the Crowd"). As he noted somewhat aggressively in the preface to *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840), in defending himself from accusations that many of his horrors were borrowed from European examples, "I maintain that terror is not of Germany, but of the soul." And yet, Poe rarely strayed from the supernatural; indeed, many of his most distinctive tales chart the progressive breakdown of the ratiocinative intellect when faced with the "suspension of natural laws." Poe also recognized that compression was a key element in producing the *frisson* of supernatural

terror: in accordance with his strictures on the “unity of effect,” he understood that an emotion so fleeting as that of fear could best be generated in short compass, and for a century or more his example compelled the great majority of literary supernaturalists to adhere to the short story as the preferred vehicle for the supernatural. Indeed, it could be said that “The Fall of the House of Usher” is a kind of rebuke to those countless British Gothicists who had dissipated the vital core of their supernatural conceptions by extending it over novel length: here, instead, was a “Gothic castle” every bit as terrifying as that of Otranto or Udolpho, but concentrated in a fraction of the space. Poe achieved this condensation by a particularly dense, frenetic prose style that could easily be mocked (and would in fact be mocked by such a fastidious writer as Henry James), but whose emotive power is difficult to gainsay.

Poe, then, is the central figure in the entire history of American—and, indeed, British and European—supernatural fiction; for his example, once established, raised the bar for all subsequent work. No longer could such entities as the vampire or the ghost—already becoming stale through overuse and, more signifiantly, through the advance of a science that was rendering them so implausible as to become aesthetically unusable—be manifested without proper emotional preparation or the provision of at least a quasilogical rationale; no longer could fear be displayed without an awareness of its psychological effect upon those who encounter it. And yet, over the next half-century or more after Poe’s death, we can find no writer who focused singlemindedly upon either supernatural or psychological horror as Poe had done; indeed, excursions into the supernatural emerged almost at random from writers recognized for their work in the literary mainstream. This may indeed suggest that the supernatural was not, properly speaking, a genre clearly dissociated from general literature, but a mode into which writers of all stripes could descend when the logic of their conceptions required it.

And so we have the examples of F. Marion Crawford, popular historical novelist, writing the occasional short story, and even one or two novels, of the supernatural; it may or may not be significant that these short stories were collected only posthumously in the volume *Wandering Ghosts* (1911). Another popular writer, Robert W. Chambers, began his career writing a scintillating collection of the supernatural, *The King in Yellow* (1895), but lamentably failed to follow up this promising start, instead descending to the writing of shopgirl romances that filled his coffers but spelled his aesthetic ruination. Edward Lucas White, also better known for his historical novels, persistently recurred to the supernatural in his short stories, notably in two substantial collections, *The Song of the Sirens* (1919) and *Lukundoo* (1927).

If any figure can be said to have followed in Poe’s footsteps, it is the sardonic journalist Ambrose Bierce. From the 1870s until his mysterious disappearance in 1914, his occasional “tales of soldiers and civilians” danced continually on either side of the borderline between supernatural and psychological horror. Bierce became the hub of a West Coast literary renaissance that featured other writers such as W. C. Morrow, Emma Frances Dawson, and even the young Jack London, all of whom dabbled in the supernatural. Short fiction comprised only a relatively minor proportion of Bierce’s total literary output—he was best known in his time as a fearless, and feared, columnist, chiefly for the Hearst papers—and, while he may have derived inspiration both from Poe’s example and from his theories on short fiction construction, the literary mode he evolved could not have been more different from Poe’s: a prose style of stark simplicity and spare elegance, a detached, cynical, occasionally misanthropic portrayal of hapless protagonists in the grip of irrational fear, and a probing utilization of the topography of the West in contrast to the never-never lands of Poe’s imagination. Indeed, Bierce successfully answered Hazlitt’s old query by showing that even a land as raw and new (again, in terms of Anglo-Saxon settlement) as the West could be the source of terror: the abandoned shacks and deserted mining towns of rural California become the *mauvaises terres* of the Biercian imagination, lending a grim distinctiveness to tales whose relatively conventional ghosts and revenants might otherwise relegate them to second-class status. And of course Bierce followed Poe in the meticulous etching of the precise effects of the supernatural upon the sensitive consciousness of his fear-raddled protagonists.

If Bierce was the head of the West Coast school of weird writing in his time, Henry James was, perhaps by default, the leader of the East Coast school. Like so many other mainstream writers, he found the supernatural—manifested almost exclusively in the form of ghosts—a perennially useful mode for the expression of conceptions that could not be encompassed within the bounds of mimetic realism. And yet, James rarely tipped his hand unequivocally in the direction of the supernatural, instead mastering the technique of the ambiguous weird tale, where doubt is maintained to the end whether the supernatural has actually come into play or whether the apparently ghostly phenomena are merely the products of psychological disturbance on the part of the characters. Preeminent among James's contributions in this regard is *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), which has inspired an entire library of criticism debating whether the revenants at the focus of the tale are or are not genuinely manifested; clearly James did not wish the question to be answered definitively. In short stories written over an entire career he probed the same questions, and his final, fragmentary novel, *The Sense of the Past*, might have been his greatest contribution to weird literature had he lived to complete it. James's compatriot Edith Wharton manifestly followed in his footsteps—perhaps, indeed, at times a bit too closely. Nevertheless, there is enough originality and artistry in her dozen or so ghost stories to earn her a place in the supernatural canon.

H. P. Lovecraft joins Poe and Bierce in the triumvirate of towering American supernaturalists. In a career that spanned little more than two decades, Lovecraft transformed the horror tale in such radical ways that its ramifications are still being felt. Although an early devotee of Poe, Lovecraft was also a diligent student of the sciences and came to the realization that the standard tropes of supernatural fiction—the ghost, the vampire, the witch, the haunted house—had become so played out and so clearly in defiance of what was then known about the universe that alternate means had to be employed to convey supernatural dread. Lovecraft found it in the boundless realms of space and time, where entities of the most bizarre sort could plausibly be hypothesized to exist, well beyond the reach of even the most advanced human knowledge. This fusion of the supernatural tale with the emerging genre of science fiction (canonically dated to the founding of the magazine *Amazing Stories* in 1926) generated that unique amalgam known as the Lovecraftian tale. In such tales as "The Call of Cthulhu," "The Colour out of Space," "The Whisperer in Darkness," *At the Mountains of Madness*, and "The Shadow Out of Time" Lovecraft exponentially expanded the scope of supernatural fiction to encompass not just the world, but the cosmos.

Lovecraft fortuitously emerged as a literary figure at the exact time when supernatural horror could finally be said to have become a concretized genre, with the founding of the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* in 1923. This was in every sense a mixed blessing. It is now difficult to determine whether the establishment of *Weird Tales* (the first magazine exclusively devoted to horror fiction) and its analogues in the realms of mystery, science fiction, the Western, romance, and other genres actually precipitated the banishment of the supernatural (except by the most eminent mainstream authors or in suitably tame and conventional modes) from leading literary magazines, or whether their prior banishment led to the founding of the pulps; whatever the case, a manifest dichotomy was established, and those writers who chose to focus on the supernatural found themselves obliged to appear in the pulps for lack of other venues. Simultaneously—perhaps as a result of the literary Modernism that dominated the 1920s, with such writers as Theodore Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway—a prejudice developed among mainstream critics for any literary product that departed from strict social realism, so that virtually all ventures into fantasy or the supernatural were indiscriminately declared subliterary. This prejudice—based upon the very real fact that the great majority of material in the pulp magazines was indeed trite, hackneyed, and subliterary—took decades to dissipate, and in large part it caused Lovecraft's work to languish in the pulps, so that his friends had to band together after his death to publish his work in book form.

Nevertheless, during his lifetime Lovecraft attracted a wide cadre of like-minded writers who were determined to raise supernatural horror to the level of an art form, even if some of them perforce wrote to the narrow demands of *Weird Tales* and other pulps. Clark Ashton Smith, who had already established a

reputation as a scintillatingly brilliant poet, produced more than a hundred tales that fused fantasy, science fiction, and horror in an indefinable amalgam, while Robert E. Howard, in his short career, definitively established the subgenre of sword and sorcery as a viable component of the supernatural or adventure tale.

Lovecraft's most valuable influence was exemplified in his patient and tireless tutoring of younger writers—August Derleth, Donald Wandrei, Frank Belknap Long, Robert Bloch, Fritz Leiber—into the finer points of literary artistry, and his laborious efforts paid dividends in the generation after his death. Other writers who had not had any direct contacts with Lovecraft, such as Ray Bradbury and Richard Matheson, nonetheless benefited from the example of his relatively small but extraordinarily rich output of weird work. Derleth and Wandrei established Arkham House as the leading publisher of supernatural work—another mixed blessing, as their publications tended in part to enhance the relegating of supernatural horror to a literary cul-de-sac. But such dynamic writers as Bloch, Bradbury, and Leiber followed Lovecraft in expanding the range of the supernatural by melding it with elements drawn from the mystery or suspense tale, the fantasy tale, and the science fiction tale.

This melding had, by the 1950s, become a necessity, because the pulp magazines were in their last throes. *Weird Tales* finally folded in 1954, and no replacement was in sight: the magazine *Unknown* (later *Unknown Worlds*) had had a short but influential run in the 1940s, but that was all. The pulps gave way to digest magazines, chiefly in the realms of fantasy and science fiction (whose readership was, and today remains, much larger than that for supernatural horror), while the paperback book generated potential markets for mystery, the Western, science fiction, and fantasy, but not for horror. Accordingly, such writers as Richard Matheson and Charles Beaumont were compelled to write supernatural tales under the guise of these other genres—perhaps a natural development in an era when the threat of atomic annihilation caused an entire society to ponder the mixed blessings and dangers of scientific and technological advance.

For writers of the 1950s, the Lovecraft influence manifested itself even in the way in which they consciously strove to battle against it. Writers such as Matheson, Bradbury, and Beaumont, while admiring Lovecraft, came to regard his work as too remote from everyday reality for credence in an age in which television, radio, and film were celebrating the nuclear family and the American way of life. They also protested against the occasional flamboyance of Lovecraft's prose, so contrary to the skeletonic syntax of a Hemingway or a Sherwood Anderson, and so easily parodied—especially, and unwittingly, by a host of self-styled disciples who sought to mimic Lovecraft's lush texture and elaborate upon his Cthulhu Mythos. Accordingly, Matheson and his compatriots fashioned tales emphatically, perhaps aggressively, set in a recognizable world of telephones, washing machines, and office jobs. This tendency had been anticipated by Fritz Leiber, who in "Smoke Ghost," "The Girl with the Hungry Eyes," and other tales of the 1940s nonetheless managed to fuse Lovecraftian cosmicism with mundane reality. That latter story was pioneering in a different way: in its baleful account of the dangers of sexual obsession, it had introduced a bold new element to a genre that had otherwise seemed almost prudishly chaste.

From a very different direction, the mainstream writer Shirley Jackson found in both supernatural and psychological horror a vital means for conveying her pungently cynical skepticism regarding human motives and actions. The fact that many of her tales appeared in *The New Yorker* and other prestigious venues helped to break down the resistance of magazine editors who had axiomatically banished the supernatural from their pages. Well-paying men's magazines such as *Playboy* began specializing in mystery, horror, and science fiction, and the occasional supernatural tale even found its way into such staid organs of literary classicism as the *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's.*

Media, especially film and television, now began to cast an increasingly significant influence upon supernatural literature. The dominant figure in the field in the 1960s was a television personality, Rod Serling, whose *The Twilight Zone* (1959–64) immediately and permanently entered into the American

collective psyche. While Serling was in fact a skilled writer, it was his aloof, sardonic commentary on his television show that rendered him an icon in his own time. At the same time, the crude B-movies of the 1950s—rightly condemned as pablum for the uncultured or as self-parodic camp—slowly improved in cinematic quality. Perhaps this fusion of literature and media laid the groundwork for what would become a three-decade "boom" in horror literature.

Such bestselling novels as Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby* (1967), William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* (1971), and Thomas Tryon's *The Other* (1971) were all adapted into successful films, especially the first two. Horror suddenly became a blockbuster genre, and Stephen King was the first to capitalize on it: such of his early books as *Carrie* (1974), *'Salem's Lot* (1975), and *The Dead Zone* (1979) all benefited from striking film adaptations, and King went on to become perhaps the most remarkable phenomenon in publishing history. It is, of course, naïve to think that the number of copies an author happens to sell has any correlation with his or her literary standing, and the majority of King's writing is indeed marred by clumsy prose; hackneyed conceptions derived from film, comics, and other media; and a rather dreary prolificity that does not bode well for the endurance of his work. King's success as a horror novelist also spelled, at long last, the downfall—at least as a publishing phenomenon—of the short story as the chosen venue for supernatural horror, even though the number of cases in which a supernatural plot can be said to be sufficiently rich and complex to be sustained over novel length is, in spite of the thousands of novels that have poured off the press in recent decades, disconcertingly small.

To be sure, not all the writers who strove to grab a residue of King's commercial success were hacks or tyros, although there certainly were, and are, a distressing number of these. Such a writer as Peter Straub (*Ghost Story,* 1979) may have indulged in a bit of self-congratulatory exaggeration when he declared that King was the Dickens of the horror tale while he himself was its Henry James, but there is no denying that his artistry as a prose stylist is substantially greater than King's. Although Anne Rice's first supernatural novel, *Interview with the Vampire,* dates to 1976, it took some time in becoming a bestseller; her following now may be even greater than King's, and some of her works (mostly her early novels) are far from contemptible on the purely literary scale. Dean R. Koontz, on the other hand, can take his place with Judith Krantz and Danielle Steel as bestsellers whose work will be deservedly forgotten in the next generation.

The current emphasis on the horror novel, whether supernatural or psychological, is largely a marketing phenomenon: in today's publishing environment, short stories are not seen as commercially viable. And yet, King himself had begun his career with some highly able short stories, collected in *Night Shift* (1978), and other writers of the 1970s continued to be devoted to the short form regardless of the slim pecuniary profits to be derived thereby. T. E. D. Klein, although the author of one novel, *The Ceremonies* (1984), that briefly reached the bestseller lists, has made an imperishable name for himself by excelling in that hybrid form, the novella, which allows for expansiveness in the conveyance of the supernatural manifestation while at the same time adhering to Poe's "unity of effect." Dennis Etchison, Karl Edward Wagner, and others may also find their short work surviving as literary contributions while the novels of their contemporaries—and, indeed, their own novels—lapse into oblivion. For these writers, the small press has become the haven for their weird work; pay is slight or perhaps nonexistent, but there is something to be said for writing that is largely divorced from market considerations.

In this regard, the most remarkable phenomenon in contemporary supernatural horror is Thomas Ligotti, whose eccentric output of short stories (he has admitted that he will not and cannot write a horror novel) has somehow managed to secure a following almost entirely through word-of-mouth. Uncompromising in his uniquely twisted vision of a universe of grotesque nightmare, Ligotti is content to offer his meticulously crafted tales to a relatively small audience capable of appreciating it; like Lovecraft, he scorns the notion of writing to a market. If Ligotti ever appears on the bestseller list, it will be an aberration more bizarre than anything depicted in his tales.

The 1990s were a period of ferment in the horror field. The “boom” that had begun in the 1970s seemed to be dying of inanition—and, perhaps, of an overdose of the mediocre, the shoddy, and the calculatingly commercial. Some writers and critics gleefully predicted the downfall of the supernatural and its replacement by either the serial-killer novel or other forms of psychological suspense, while still others, protesting against “dark fantasy”—a mode of writing that sought to convey its horrors by subtle implication rather than blood and gore—found a loud alternative in the subgenre labeled splatterpunk. This name—a variant of the avant-garde science fiction mode called cyberpunk—was coined by David J. Schow, who proved to be nearly the sole writer of this sort whose work has any hope of survival as a genuine contribution to literature. Melding references to slasher films, rock-and-roll music, and true crime, splatterpunk writers proclaimed their greater relevance to a society in which violence had become so prevalent as almost to be banal; but in the end, the sheer absence of talent exhibited by most such writers caused this movement to flare out almost as quickly as it had emerged.

Today, supernatural horror comes in as many forms as the imaginations of its diverse writers can envision. Once again—with the exception of Joyce Carol Oates, who has followed Shirley Jackson in repeatedly evoking the supernatural in the course of her mainstream work—the predominant venue is the small press, and in recent years the Internet has proven to be a welcome haven for much sound work. It is at this juncture difficult to determine which authors will survive the relentless winnowing of posterity: in my judgment, at least Caitlín R. Kiernan and Norman Partridge deserve tentative canonization, although others might wish to make a case for such writers as Brian Hodge, Douglas Clegg, Patrick McGrath (a leading figure in the “New Gothic” movement, which strives to return to the Gothic roots of the genre and bypass the excesses of both the old-time pulps and the recent bestsellers), Jack Cady, and any number of others.

As a literary mode, the supernatural has undergone as many permutations and variations in the past two hundred and fifty years as any other, and has left a rich legacy of literary substance that deserves to be chronicled and interpreted. For writers like Lovecraft, it may have chiefly represented “imaginative liberation”—liberation from the mundane, the everyday, the commonplace—but for others, like Shirley Jackson, it was a vehicle for the conveyance of conceptions about humanity and its relations to the cosmos beyond that offered by mimetic fiction. To the extent that it draws upon the past—in the form of myth, legend, and superstition that persistently suggests a world of shadow behind or beyond that of ordinary reality—it appears to represent a permanent phase of the human imagination, and as such it will remain perennially vital as a literary mode. Its emphasis upon fear, wonder, and terror may perhaps render it a cultivated taste, but the flickering light it casts upon these darker corners of the human psyche will bestow upon it a fascination, and a relevance, to those courageous enough to look upon its revelations with an unflinching gaze.

—S. T. Joshi

WASHINGTON IRVING

Washington Irving was born in New York City in 1783. Generally regarded as the first significant writer in the United States, Irving practiced law until 1803. After a two-year visit to Europe (1804–06) to improve his health, Irving began writing articles and sketches in magazines; his first book, *A History of New York* (1809), published under the pseudonym Diedrich Knickerbocker, brought him immediate fame. Shortly thereafter, Irving moved to England, where he remained for nearly twenty years. It was there that *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (1820), including such celebrated tales as “Rip Van Winkle” and “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” was published. *Tales of a Traveller* followed in 1824. Financial considerations led him to accept a position at the United States embassy in Madrid, where he wrote several works reflecting his interest in Spain, notably *The Legends of the Alhambra* (1832). Irving was minister to Spain in 1842–46. During his later years Irving worked on *Astoria* (1836), a history of the Astor family, and biographies of

Oliver Goldsmith (1849) and George Washington (1855–59; 5 vols.). Irving died at Sunnyside, New York, in 1859.

Irving is distinctive in combining humor and satire with the supernatural. “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” with its well-known image of the headless horseman, has been adapted for film or television at least seven times. Many of Irving’s best-known horror tales are included in *Tales of a Traveller*, among which are “The Adventure of My Uncle” and “The Adventure of My Aunt,” about animated portraits; “The Devil and Tom Walker,” a popular account of a bargain with the devil; and “The Bold Dragoon,” which features both a ghost and animated furniture. “The Storm-Ship,” a segment of the tale “Dolph Heyliger,” in *Bracebridge Hall* (1822), is an engaging tale of the Flying Dutchman.

“The Adventure of the German Student,” first published in *Tales of a Traveller*, is an unwontedly grim tale of a reanimated corpse and foreshadows the tightly knit work of Poe and his successors.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE GERMAN STUDENT

n a stormy night, in the tempestuous times of the French revolution, a young German was returning to his lodgings, at a late hour, across the old part of Paris. The lightning gleamed, and the loud claps of thunder rattled through the lofty, narrow streets—but I should first tell you something about this young German.

Gottfried Wolfgang was a young man of good family. He had studied for some time at Göttingen, but being of a visionary and enthusiastic character, he had wandered into those wild and speculative doctrines which have so often bewildered German students. His secluded life, his intense application, and the singular nature of his studies, had an effect on both mind and body. His health was impaired; his imagination diseased. He had been indulging in fanciful speculations on spiritual essences until, like Swedenborg, he had an ideal world of his own around him. He took up a notion, I do not know from what cause, that there was an evil influence hanging over him; an evil genius or spirit seeking to ensnare him and ensure his perdition. Such an idea working on his melancholy temperament produced the most gloomy effects. He became haggard and desponding. His friends discovered the mental malady preying upon him, and determined that the best cure was a change of scene; he was sent, therefore, to finish his studies amidst the splendours and gaieties of Paris.

Wolfgang arrived at Paris at the breaking out of the revolution. The popular delirium at first caught his enthusiastic mind, and he was captivated by the political and philosophical theories of the day: but the scenes of blood which followed shocked his sensitive nature; disgusted him with society and the world, and made him more than ever a recluse. He shut himself up in a solitary apartment in the *Pays Latin*, the quarter of students. There in a gloomy street not far from the monastic walls of the Sorbonne, he pursued his favourite speculations. Sometimes he spent hours together in the great libraries of Paris, those catacombs of departed authors, rummaging among their hoards of dusty and obsolete works in quest of food for his unhealthy appetite. He was, in a manner, a literary goul, feeding in the charnel house of decayed literature.

Wolfgang, though solitary and recluse, was of an ardent temperament, but for a time it operated merely upon his imagination. He was too shy and ignorant of the world to make any advances to the fair, but he was a passionate admirer of female beauty, and in his lonely chamber would often lose himself in reveries on forms and faces which he had seen, and his fancy would deck out images of loveliness far surpassing the reality.

While his mind was in this excited and sublimated state, a dream produced an extraordinary effect upon him. It was of a female face of transcendent beauty. So strong was the impression made, that he dreamt of it again and again. It haunted his thoughts by day, his slumbers by night; in fine, he became passionately enamoured of this shadow of a dream. This lasted so long, that it became one of those fixed ideas which haunt the minds of melancholy men, and are at times mistaken for madness.

Such was Gottfried Wolfgang, and such his situation at the time I mentioned. He was returning home late one stormy night, through some of the old and gloomy streets of the *Marais*, the ancient part of Paris. The loud claps of thunder rattled among the high houses of the narrow streets. He came to the Place de Grève, the square where public executions are performed. The lightning quivered about the pinnacles of the ancient Hôtel de Ville, and shed flickering gleams over the open space in front. As Wolfgang was crossing the square, he shrank back with horror at finding himself close by the guillotine. It was the height of the reign of terror, when this dreadful instrument of death stood ever ready, and its scaffold was continually running with the blood of the virtuous and the brave. It had that very day been actively employed in the work of carnage, and there it stood in grim array amidst a silent and sleeping city, waiting for fresh victims.

Wolfgang's heart sickened within him, and he was turning shuddering from the horrible engine, when he beheld a shadowy form cowering as it were at the foot of the steps which led up to the scaffold. A succession of vivid flashes of lightning revealed it more distinctly. It was a female figure, dressed in black. She was seated on one of the lower steps of the scaffold, leaning forward, her face hid in her lap, and her long dishevelled tresses hanging to the ground, streaming with the rain which fell in torrents. Wolfgang paused. There was something awful in this solitary monument of wo. The female had the appearance of being above the common order. He knew the times to be full of vicissitude, and that many a fair head, which had once been pillowed on down, now wandered houseless. Perhaps this was some poor mourner whom the dreadful axe had rendered desolate, and who sat here heartbroken on the strand of existence, from which all that was dear to her had been launched into eternity.

He approached, and addressed her in the accents of sympathy. She raised her head and gazed wildly at him. What was his astonishment at beholding, by the bright glare of the lightning, the very face which had haunted him in his dreams. It was pale and disconsolate, but ravishingly beautiful.

Trembling with violent and conflicting emotions, Wolfgang again accosted her. He spoke something of her being exposed at such an hour of the night, and to the fury of such a storm, and offered to conduct her to her friends. She pointed to the guillotine with a gesture of dreadful signification.

"I have no friend on earth!" said she.

"But you have a home," said Wolfgang.

"Yes—in the grave!"

The heart of the student melted at the words.

"If a stranger dare make an offer," said he, "without danger of being misunderstood, I would offer my humble dwelling as a shelter; myself as a devoted friend. I am friendless myself in Paris, and a stranger in the land; but if my life could be of service, it is at your disposal, and should be sacrificed before harm or indignity should come to you."

There was an honest earnestness in the young man's manner that had its effect. His foreign accent, too, was in his favour; it showed him not to be a hackneyed inhabitant of Paris. Indeed there is an eloquence in true enthusiasm that is not to be doubted. The homeless stranger confided herself implicitly to the protection of the student.

He supported her faltering steps across the Pont Neuf, and by the place where the statue of Henry the Fourth had been overthrown by the populace. The storm had abated, and the thunder rumbled at a distance. All Paris was quiet; that great volcano of human passion slumbered for a while, to gather fresh strength for the next day's eruption. The student conducted his charge through the ancient streets of the *Pays Latin*, and by the

dusky walls of the Sorbonne to the great, dingy hotel which he inhabited. The old portress who admitted them stared with surprise at the unusual sight of the melancholy Wolfgang with a female companion.

On entering his apartment, the student, for the first time, blushed at the scantiness and indifference of his dwelling. He had but one chamber—an old fashioned saloon—heavily carved and fantastically furnished with the remains of former magnificence, for it was one of those hotels in the quarter of the Luxembourg palace which had once belonged to nobility. It was lumbered with books and papers, and all the usual apparatus of a student, and his bed stood in a recess at one end.

When lights were brought, and Wolfgang had a better opportunity of contemplating the stranger, he was more than ever intoxicated by her beauty. Her face was pale, but of a dazzling fairness, set off by a profusion of raven hair that hung clustering about it. Her eyes were large and brilliant, with a singular expression approaching almost to wildness. As far as her black dress permitted her shape to be seen, it was of perfect symmetry. Her whole appearance was highly striking, though she was dressed in the simplest style. The only thing approaching to an ornament which she wore was a broad, black band round her neck, clasped by diamonds.

The perplexity now commenced with the student how to dispose of the helpless being thus thrown upon his protection. He thought of abandoning his chamber to her, and seeking shelter for himself elsewhere. Still he was so fascinated by her charms, there seemed to be such a spell upon his thoughts and senses, that he could not tear himself from her presence. Her manner, too, was singular and unaccountable. She spoke no more of the guillotine. Her grief had abated. The attentions of the student had first won her confidence, and then, apparently, her heart. She was evidently an enthusiast like himself, and enthusiasts soon understand each other.

In the infatuation of the moment Wolfgang avowed his passion for her. He told her the story of his mysterious dream, and how she had possessed his heart before he had even seen her. She was strangely affected by his recital, and acknowledged to have felt an impulse towards him equally unaccountable. It was the time for wild theory and wild actions. Old prejudices and superstitions were done away; every thing was under the sway of the “Goddess of Reason.” Among other rubbish of the old times, the forms and ceremonies of marriage began to be considered superluous bonds for honourable minds. Social compacts were the vogue. Wolfgang was too much of a theorist not to be tainted by the liberal doctrines of the day.

“Why should we separate?” said he: “our hearts are united; in the eye of reason and honour we are as one. What need is there of sordid forms to bind high souls together?”

The stranger listened with emotion: she had evidently received illumination at the same school.

“You have no home nor family,” continued he; “let me be every thing to you, or rather let us be every thing to one another. If form is necessary, form shall be observed—there is my hand. I pledge myself to you for ever.”

“For ever?” said the stranger, solemnly.

“For ever!” repeated Wolfgang.

The stranger clasped the hand extended to her: “Then I am yours,” murmured she, and sank upon his bosom.

The next morning the student left his bride sleeping, and sallied forth at an early hour to seek more spacious apartments, suitable to the change in his situation. When he returned, he found the stranger lying with her head hanging over the bed, and one arm thrown over it. He spoke to her, but received no reply. He advanced

to awaken her from her uneasy posture. On taking her hand, it was cold—there was no pulsation—her face was pallid and ghastly.—In a word—she was a corpse.

Horrified and frantic, he alarmed the house. A scene of confusion ensued. The police was summoned. As the officer of police entered the room, he started back on beholding the corpse.

“Great heaven!” cried he, “how did this woman come here?”

“Do you know anything about her?” said Wolfgang, eagerly.

“Do I?” exclaimed the police officer: “she was guillotined yesterday!”

He stepped forward; undid the black collar round the neck of the corpse, and the head rolled on the floor!

The student burst into a frenzy. “The fiend! the fiend has gained possession of me!” shrieked he: “I am lost for ever!”

They tried to soothe him, but in vain. He was possessed with the frightful belief that an evil spirit had reanimated the dead body to ensnare him. He went distracted, and died in a madhouse.

* * *

Here the old gentleman with the haunted head finished his narrative.

“And is this really a fact?” said the inquisitive gentleman.

“A fact not to be doubted,” replied the other. “I had it from the best authority. The student told it me himself. I saw him in a madhouse at Paris.”

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born in 1804 in Salem, Massachusetts, and spent the bulk of his life there. One of his ancestors was a judge during the Salem witch trials. Ill health, along with a naturally solitary and bookish nature, kept him at home and limited his schooling for much of his youth, which alternated between his Salem home and a family home in Raymond, Maine. He graduated in 1825 from Bowdoin College, where he met Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and the future president Franklin Pierce. Over the next dozen years, spent largely in seclusion, Hawthorne published his first several books, including *Fanshawe* (1828) and *Twice-Told Tales* (1837). After marrying Sophia Peabody in 1842, Hawthorne published *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846) and the two volumes for which he would be best remembered, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851). For a time he worked in the Custom House in Salem; later, when Franklin Pierce became president, Hawthorne became United States consul at Liverpool, spending the years 1853–57 in England. His friendship with Herman Melville fostered both writers’ careers. Among Hawthorne’s later works are *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) and *The Marble Faun* (1860). Hawthorne died in Plymouth, New Hampshire, in 1864.

The supernatural was a lifelong concern for Hawthorne, and he used it in variegated ways to underscore the moral messages he sought to convey. The celebrated tale “Young Goodman Brown” (1835) is a haunting account of secret witchcraft, while “Rappacini’s Daughter” (1844) is a story of science gone mad. Although not overtly supernatural, *The House of the Seven Gables* is a powerful rumination on an ancestral curse. Throughout his life, Hawthorne worked on several narratives about the elixir of life, including such works as *Septimius Felton* (1872) and *The Dolliver Romance* (1876). “Edward Randolph’s Portrait” (first published in the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, July 1838, and included in the revised edition of

Twice-Told Tales, 1842) embodies many of the central themes in Hawthorne's supernatural work, notably the powerful effect of the crimes and evils of the past upon the present.

EDWARD RANDOLPH'S PORTRAIT

he old legendary guest of the Province House abode in my remembrance from midsummer till January. One idle evening last winter, confident that he would be found in the snuggest corner of the bar-room, I resolved to pay him another visit, hoping to deserve well of my country by snatching from oblivion some else unheard-of fact of history. The night was chill and raw, and rendered boisterous by almost a gale of wind, which whistled along Washington Street, causing the gas-lights to flare and flicker within the lamps. As I hurried onward, my fancy was busy with a comparison between the present aspect of the street and that which it probably wore when the British governors inhabited the mansion whither I was now going. Brick edifices in those times were few, till a succession of destructive fires had swept, and swept again, the wooden dwellings and warehouses from the most populous quarters of the town. The buildings stood insulated and independent, not, as now, merging their separate existences into connected ranges, with a front of tiresome identity,—but each possessing features of its own, as if the owner's individual taste had shaped it,—and the whole presenting a picturesque irregularity, the absence of which is hardly compensated by any beauties of our modern architecture. Such a scene, dimly vanishing from the eye by the ray of here and there a tallow candle, glimmering through the small panes of scattered windows, would form a sombre contrast to the street as I beheld it, with the gas-lights blazing from corner to corner, flaming within the shops, and throwing a noonday brightness through the huge plates of glass.

But the black, lowering sky, as I turned my eyes upward, wore, doubtless, the same visage as when it frowned upon the ante-revolutionary New Englanders. The wintry blast had the same shriek that was familiar to their ears. The Old South Church, too, still pointed its antique spire into the darkness, and was lost between earth and heaven; and as I passed, its clock, which had warned so many generations how transitory was their lifetime, spoke heavily and slow the same unregarded moral to myself. "Only seven o'clock," thought I. "My old friend's legends will scarcely kill the hours 'twixt this and bedtime."

Passing through the narrow arch, I crossed the courtyard, the confined precincts of which were made visible by a lantern over the portal of the Province House. On entering the bar-room, I found, as I expected, the old tradition monger seated by a special good fire of anthracite, compelling clouds of smoke from a corpulent cigar. He recognized me with evident pleasure; for my rare properties as a patient listener invariably make me a favorite with elderly gentlemen and ladies of narrative propensities. Drawing a chair to the fire, I desired mine host to favor us with a glass apiece of whiskey punch, which was speedily prepared, steaming hot, with a slice of lemon at the bottom, a dark-red stratum of port wine upon the surface, and a sprinkling of nutmeg strewn over all. As we touched our glasses together, my legendary friend made himself known to me as Mr. Bela Tiffany; and I rejoiced at the oddity of the name, because it gave his image and character a sort of individuality in my conception. The old gentleman's draught acted as a solvent upon his memory, so that it overflowed with tales, traditions, anecdotes of famous dead people, and traits of ancient manners, some of which were childish as a nurse's lullaby, while others might have been worth the notice of the grave historian. Nothing impressed me more than a story of a black mysterious picture, which used to hang in one of the chambers of the Province House, directly above the room where we were now sitting. The following is as correct a version of the fact as the reader would be likely to obtain from any other source, although, assuredly, it has a tinge of romance approaching to the marvellous.

* * *

In one of the apartments of the Province House there was long preserved an ancient picture, the frame of which was as black as ebony, and the canvas itself so dark with age, damp, and smoke, that not a touch of the

painter’s art could be discerned. Time had thrown an impenetrable veil over it, and left to tradition and fable and conjecture to say what had once been there portrayed. During the rule of many successive governors, it had hung, by prescriptive and undisputed right, over the mantelpiece of the same chamber; and it still kept its place when Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson assumed the administration of the province, on the departure of Sir Francis Bernard.

The Lieutenant-Governor sat, one afternoon, resting his head against the carved back of his stately armchair, and gazing up thoughtfully at the void blackness of the picture. It was scarcely a time for such inactive musing, when affairs of the deepest moment required the ruler’s decision; for, within that very hour Hutchinson had received intelligence of the arrival of a British fleet, bringing three regiments from Halifax to overawe the insubordination of the people. These troops awaited his permission to occupy the fortress of Castle William, and the town itself. Yet, instead of affixing his signature to an official order, there sat the Lieutenant-Governor, so carefully scrutinizing the black waste of canvas that his demeanor attracted the notice of two young persons who attended him. One, wearing a military dress of buff, was his kinsman, Francis Lincoln, the Provincial Captain of Castle William; the other, who sat on a low stool beside his chair, was Alice Vane, his favorite niece.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alysha Johnson:

The book American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) make one feel enjoy for your spare time. You may use to make your capable a lot more increase. Book can to get your best friend when you getting tension or having big problem along with your subject. If you can make studying a book American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) to be your habit, you can get considerably more advantages, like add your personal capable, increase your knowledge about a number of or all subjects. You could know everything if you like wide open and read a e-book American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror). Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science e-book or encyclopedia or some others. So , how do you think about this reserve?

Eric Fincher:

Do you considered one of people who can't read satisfying if the sentence chained from the straightway, hold on guys this kind of aren't like that. This American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) book is readable by you who hate those perfect word style. You will find the data here are arrange for enjoyable looking at experience without leaving also decrease the knowledge that want to give to you. The writer of American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) content conveys the idea easily to understand by lots of people. The printed and e-book are not different in the written content but it just different as it. So , do you nonetheless thinking American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) is not loveable to be your top list reading book?

Mae Bushee:

Your reading sixth sense will not betray an individual, why because this American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) reserve written by well-known writer who knows well how to make book that can be understand by anyone who also read the book. Written inside good manner for you, dripping every ideas and

writing skill only for eliminate your hunger then you still skepticism American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) as good book not only by the cover but also through the content. This is one book that can break don't judge book by its deal with, so do you still needing yet another sixth sense to pick this kind of!? Oh come on your studying sixth sense already said so why you have to listening to an additional sixth sense.

Linda Soto:

Reading a publication make you to get more knowledge from this. You can take knowledge and information originating from a book. Book is prepared or printed or outlined from each source that will filled update of news. With this modern era like now, many ways to get information are available for a person. From media social including newspaper, magazines, science publication, encyclopedia, reference book, story and comic. You can add your understanding by that book. Are you hip to spend your spare time to spread out your book? Or just in search of the American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) when you desired it?

Download and Read Online American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) From imusti #XCOZMK249Y8

Read American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) From imusti for online ebook

American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) From imusti Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) From imusti books to read online.

Online American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) From imusti ebook PDF download

American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) From imusti Doc

American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) From imusti Mobipocket

American Supernatural Tales (Penguin Horror) From imusti EPub