The Insider

Roger Zelazny

Take Cthulhu for an example. His angle was a bit different from my own, in that he influenced one sensitive writer and several others, who managed to make lots of people think of him to the extent wherein their thoughts nourished him then and sustain him yet.

Periodically, when his authors⁠—or, more correctly, his authors’ works⁠—undergo a revival, it is that much in the way of gravy for him, since my kind feeds upon the emanations of thought turned in our direction.

For a long while, Cthulhu and his Circle had been a bit obnoxious concerning the entire coup. He and Nyarlathotep, Yaddith, Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth and others of that crowd had been enjoying their renewed vitality and mocking the rest of us, sitting and gibbering much more actively than ourselves in their Pools of Ultimate Foulness.

I decided to strike back. First, I determined to essay the same avenue Cthulhu had employed, but I just couldn’t find another Lovecraft. I looked in Greenwich Village, Prague, Budapest, Paris, Alexandria, Hong Kong, Hackensack. No luck. All the dark geniuses were writing sex novels or verses for greeting cards, neither of which would serve as the proper vehicle for what I had in mind.

Cthulhu heard what I was up to and gibbered at me obscenely, which only made me madder and more determined. I wanted to be able to sit in my own Pool of Filth, and maybe invite a few friends to drop in and have some good times, too. Nyarlathotep razzed me about it. Yog-Sothoth turned his baleful gazes upon me and slobbered, amused.

Then I found what I was looking for.

I heard them one day (while wandering in my astral form) on a curious contrivance which purveyed sounds, over and over again, by means of a black, grooved disc which was situated upon a circular, revolving platform, a diamond-tipped needle tracing a spiral path along its grooves and transmitting its subtle vibrations to an amplifying unit which, in turn, agitated the ether to the extent that it reproduced previous utterances.

I listened carefully to the half-intelligible noises.

This, I knew, was to be my modus.

I traced the things back to their origins.

...A shipment of the darkling discs was delivered to the merchant’s.

I followed the deliverer back to an eldritch storing-house and waited...

...After a time, a shipment was received in that dank place.

I followed the deliverer back to a grim factory and observed the process of their manufacture from a talisman known as a “master”...

...When a new “master” came in, I followed its deliverer back to a “studio.”

I witnessed many rock and roll recording sessions, deriving an obscene delight from these rituals.

...I followed the participants about for several days, until I met their abominable agent.

From him, I learned of arrangers and composers...

...I followed him until I met one of these individuals.

Wight was his name.

Azathoth! but he was good!

He carefully improvised a melody involving the repeated striking of a piano key, about words formed from the letters appearing upon an eye-chart he had purchased from a bankrupted oculist.

He gave it to the arranger who provided a bass viol and kicked trashcan accompaniment, pocketing his commission with the words, “What fools these mortals be!” and presently assumed his true form, that being Shib-Sothoth (Yog’s brother), gestured obscenely, and vanished in a cloud of sulphurous vapors, leaving behind him a nose-stopping infusion of reptilian musk.

The arranger gave it to the abominable agent.

The abominable agent gave it to the Turtles, as they were called (as in “Voice of the...”), and the Turtles made a “master.”

This, then, was how it was done.

Not wanting to deal with the Circle, as they were called, I found me a composer other than T. Wight.

I brought all my baleful powers to bear upon the individual I chose.

Slowly, the thing occurred within his brain, which incidentally would have looked rather sporty inside a copper case clutched in my talons as I traveled between the unspeakable centers of all chaoses.

It went the route. The song, that is, not the brain. I’ll get that later.

As they recorded, I felt the surge of power...

You see, I am not a nameless horror.

...My name, over and over and over again:

“Slubgubdrubringadingaderry!”

Ditto. Ditto.

Ditto.

Ditto! Ditto! Ditto!

I waited, growing in strength.

Then one stark and starless night it happened.

A live performance.

...Called a “hop”, I think.

\* \* \*

My priests appeared and began the chantings, with appropriate ritualistic movements. (I had inspired these, also.)

I couldn’t hold back.

I materialized and accepted a few offerings from the darker corners of the gymnasium and from cars parked without with their lights off.

There rose up a mighty screaming as this was noted. (Or perhaps I flatter myself. The screaming had begun prior to my materialization... Maybe nobody noticed.)

I can still hear it, though...

Now, even Cthulhu is afraid of me and my Circle. In fact, now that I am their equal, I gesture obscenely back at Cthulhu, Nyarlathotep, Yaddith, Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, and Ted Wight, invite friends over to my Pool of Ultimate Foulness, gibber as actively as any, and engage in unspeakable abominations and obscenities, growing in strength as my priests invoke me throughout the land of men.

It is the good life.

La dolce vita...

La vie bonne...

Das gute Leben...

𓉐 𓎟 𓈁 𓈁 𓋹 𓂭 𓄿 𓅱 𓅓 𓉠 𓀀 ...

Come ride with me now, amidst the mocking and friendly ghouls on the night wind, and play by day amongst the catacombs of Nephren-Ka in the sealed and unknown valley of Hadoth by the Nile, before Nasser submerges them completely. The light is not for thee, save that of the moon over the rock tombs of Neb, nor any gayety save the voicings of the Turtles in their wildness and freedom, their bitter alienage.

I’ll stop around for your brain this evening, my votary.

Notes

Here, Zelazny provides his own take on H. P. Lovecraft’s Cthulhu mythos. He returned to the mythos in “24 Views of Mt. Fuji, by Hokusai” and A Night in the Lonesome October.

The addresses on the manuscript indicate that he started it in 1966 and completed it by January 1967, when he moved to Westhills Road in Baltimore. It bears the pseudonym Phillip H. Sexart on the manuscript, a deliberate parody of H. P. Lovecraft (love->sex; craft->art; Lovecraft’s middle initial stands for Phillips.) This is Zelazny’s second known pseudonym (the other is Harrison Denmark). The title is also a parody because Lovecraft wrote a story entitled “The Outsider.”

Cthulhu, one of Lovecraft’s Old Great Ones, is squidlike, mountainous and hideous, inspiring abject terror. Nyarlathotep is “crawling chaos,” a manipulative being that can resemble a man. Yaddith is a distant planet orbiting five suns; the civilization of its inhabitants (Nug-Soth) was destroyed by Dholes, huge, worm-like creatures; Zelazny’s Yaddith is a being, not a planet. Azathoth is a blind idiot god and daemon sultan, the ultimate evil whose name no one dares speak. Yog-Sothoth, who resembles a conglomeration of glowing bubbles and who knows all and sees all, is the only being more powerful than Azathoth.

The story describes making and using an LP record as a modus to attract followers to the being in this story. Eldritch means eerie. A talisman is an amulet with occult properties. Shib-Sothoth, Yog-Sothoth’s brother, is an addition by Zelazny to the mythos. Slubgubdrubringadingaderry parodies Lovecraft’s unpronounceable character names.

The Turtles were a 1960s psychedelic folk rock band. Their biggest hit “Happy Together” had an addictive tune that could summon Slubgubdrubringadingaderry and give him power. Ted Wight is an obvious reference to Ted White: author, musician, critic, science fiction editor, and friend of Zelazny’s.

The third paragraph from the end of the story is a line of hieroglyphics. If your e-reader doesn't handle them as characters, here's an image that is very similar to the line of characters above: 