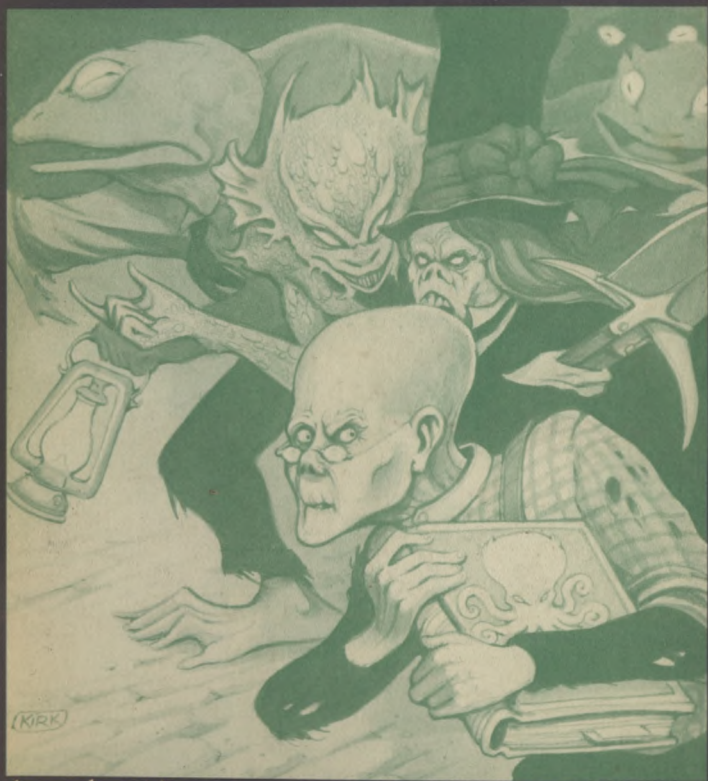


# DREAMS from R'LYEH

Lin Carter



Introduction by L. Sprague De Camp

\$5.00

of  
LIN CARTER  
and  
*DREAMS FROM  
R'LYEH*

Lin Carter (1930- ) has, in less than ten years, made his name a respected and internationally familiar one to readers and collectors of weird fantasy around the world. Today he is considered an authority on the history of imaginative literature, and his pioneering book-length studies of the genre are modern classics of fantasy scholarship. His first venture in this area was *Tolkien: A Look Behind "The Lord of the Rings,"* which has sold steadily through four large printings and elicited the admiration of W. H. Auden, among others. This was followed by an even more impressive work of scholarly research, and one of deeper interest to Arkham House patrons, *Lovecraft: A Look Behind the "Cthulhu Mythos,"* the first booklength study of Howard Phillips Lovecraft, which Fritz Leiber hailed as "the best single book or article I have ever read dealing with Howard Phillips Lovecraft, his life, his works, the Cthulhu Mythos, and the many writers who contributed to it."

As editor of the prestigious Adult Fantasy Series for the paperback firm of Ballantine Books, Mr. Carter has been directly responsible for reviving an entire literature—scores of fantasy and macabre classics by such neglected giants of yesterday as William Morris, Lord Dunsany, William Hope Hodgson, Arthur Machen, James Branch Cabell and Clark Ashton Smith—many of which had been out of print for a half-century or more and none of whom had ever appeared in popular mass-market paperbacks. For his work "Under the Sign of the Unicorn's Head," alone, Lin Carter has already earned the enthusiastic gratitude of the world's fantasy

*Continued on back flap*



# DREAMS FROM R'LYEH

by

LIN CARTER

With an Introduction by  
L. Sprague de Camp



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ARKHAM HOUSE      Sauk City, Wisconsin

1975

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TO

H. P. Lovecraft, Gent.,  
lately of His Majestie's Collony of  
Rhode-Island & the Providence-Plantations,  
but now (I trust) residing in the  
sunset city of his dreams.



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## MERLIN ON THE QUEENS EXPRESS

My friend and collaborator Lin Carter and I sometimes argue about poetry. He comes out strong for free-form verse, now almost the only kind seen in scholarly and literary periodicals. Most of it, to my way of thinking, makes Eddie Guest look good. Having had my indoctrination in these matters a couple of decades earlier than Lin, I persist in preferring the currently unfashionable fixed-form verse. He says:

“According to Pound, all those limitations of rhyme and metre just get in the way. Throw ’em out!”

“Pound!” snort I. “Just a nutty old solipsist showing off his erudition. You don’t make turgid prose into poetry by chopping it into arbitrary short lines of a few words each —”

“You just haven’t been with it, man. All those formalities are just crutches to shore up lines that should be strong enough to stand without them.”

“Well, since I’m not Walt Whitman or Emily Dickinson, I need those crutches —”

And so on. By the time we settle the argument, perhaps each of us will have brought the other around to his original point of view. Or perhaps another lurch in public taste will have made both our viewpoints obsolete.

But I am happy to see that here, Lin presents a sheaf of fixed-form poems in traditional style. All, that is, but *Merlin Enchanted*, which he describes as the only “real poem” of the lot. *Merlin Enchanted*, however, is not so *libre a vers* as those words imply. It is a perfectly respectable series of blank-verse septets in iambic pentameter, with a few irregularities and an intricate system of repetitive lines. And the other poems are just as “real” as this one.

This brings up the question: What are poems for? Lin writes me: “No one, least of all myself, is going to take these verses seriously. They were written in a sense of fun, the shivery relish of Lovecraftian ghoulishness and Klarkash-Tonian hyperbole.” He refers to the stories and poems of the late Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937), the noted writer of eldritch-horror neo-Gothic fantasies and creator of the “Cthulhu mythos”; and Lovecraft’s Californian colleague and pen pal, Clark Ashton Smith (1893-1961), author of tales laid in the magic-haunted continents of Hyperborea, Atlantis, and Zothique. (In his correspondence with Smith, Lovecraft spelled his friend’s name Klarkash-Ton, thus converting a pair of prosaically Anglo-Saxon nomina into something from the slimy depths of R’lyeh.)

Well, why shouldn’t one write poetry for fun, to amuse and entertain the reader? Once the tribal bard kept track of the pedigrees of the clans, did public-relations duty for the chief by composing lays about his heroic deeds, and sang the tribesmen into battle. But time has whittled away these functions of the poet. Nowadays, if he does not amuse and entertain, the poet might as well keep his verses to himself for all the attention that will be paid him.

Nobody is going to solve such ancient and intractable problems as war and peace, the production and distribution of wealth, and the relations between the sexes by writing poems about them —

least of all poems that sound as if composed by a computer — although some contemporary poets seem to think they ought to try. So let's have some poems that are fun to read. That means poems that say their say in intelligible English and that exploit, rather than are constrained by, the devices of fixed forms to strengthen their impact. As, for instance, the present collection.

*Dreams from R'lyeh*, which comprise two thirds of this volume, is a cycle of sonnets about the legend-haunted New England invented by Lovecraft. In Lovecraft's fictional cosmogony, a race of benign deities, the Elder Gods, once banished or restrained a hostile race of supernatural beings, the Great Old Ones or Ancient Ones. Ignorant mortals, however, now and then tamper with the restraints upon the Ancient Ones, who thereupon manifest themselves in terrifying fashion. These include Nyarlathotep, the messenger of the other Ancient Ones; the squid-headed Cthulhu, who sleeps in R'lyeh at the bottom of the sea; and Shub-Niggurath, the Goat with a Thousand Young, a Lovecraftian version of Pan.

Many of these stories were laid on Lovecraft's own part of New England, "Arkham" being a thinly-disguised version of Salem. Lin Carter's sonnets, which use the Lovecraftian cosmos as a springboard, do something rarely attempted with this form. Taken together, they tell a story: the seduction of a scholarly youth of an old Arkham family by the malignant study of the treacherous tomes of eldritch lore invented by Lovecraft, and the scholar's dissolution into a mindless wraith wafting through the outer dark.

The other poems deal with various fantastic subjects. Now, imaginative prose and poesy have suffered during the last few decades from the competition of reality. Nobody will ever again be able to write a story, as did H. G. Wells, with the title: *The First Men in the Moon*. The sinister spells of the wickedest

wizards seem tame alongside Buchenwald, Hiroshima, and Vorkuta. So, rightly to enjoy imaginative compositions takes a certain mental attitude. This is not merely the well-known “suspension of disbelief.” It is the ability to become again, if not “as a little child,” at least as a big child or an adolescent.

This is not so hard as one might think. Psychologists tell us that each of us has, bottled up inside him, the child from whom he grew — the same child that feared the dark, believed in Santa Claus, and had reveries wherein wonderful adventures took place. Those who can evoke this suppressed young person within them can derive from fantastic writings, of the type of Lovecraft and Carter, an intensity of terror, triumph, and kindred emotions seldom matched in the workaday world.

Carter the man is of medium height and slight build, in his late thirties, with blue eyes and auburn hair and beard. Born and reared in Florida, he served a hitch in the U.S. Army in Korea. (When the present crop of young scream about the inhuman hardships of military service, he shrugs and says: “Well, it didn’t hurt *me* any.”)

Later, he studied literature at Columbia University, wrote copy for an advertising agency, and became a full-time free-lance writer, specializing in science fiction and fantasy. He has sold sixty or seventy books, including children’s fairy tales and a scholarly study of J. R. R. Tolkien’s “Ring” trilogy, published as *Tolkien: A Look Behind “The Lord of the Rings.”* He has collaborated with the late Robert E. Howard and with me in rounding out Howard’s fictional saga of Conan the Cimmerian.

He lives with his wife Noël in Hollis, in the Borough of Queens, New York City. He has a three-story house full of dogs and of antiques, curios, swords, art objects, and other collectanea. A confirmed night owl, he rattles away nightly on his typewriter, casting his own version of Merlin’s nocturnal spells.

For Lin's main strength as a writer, both of prose and of verse, lies in the most important quality of a fictioneer: being a natural storyteller. A writer of fiction who cannot tell a tale so as to hold the reader's interest is like a boat that, though it have the world's shiniest brass, will not float. Lin has been casting his Merlinian spells for quite some years now and shows every sign of casting many more in times to come.

— L. Sprague de Camp

# DREAMS FROM R'LYEH



# DREAMS FROM R'LYEH:

## A SONNET CYCLE

By Wilbur Nathaniel Hoag [1921-1944]

Edited for Publication by Lin Carter

“Eternal is the Pow’r of Evil, and Infinite in its contagion! The Great Cthulhu yet hath sway o’er the minds and spirits of Men, yea, even tho’ He lieth chained and ensorcelled, bound in the fetters of The Elder Sign, His malignant and loathly Mind spreadeth the dark seeds of Madness and Corruption into the dreams and Nightmares of sleeping men . . .”

—*The Necronomicon* of Abdul Alhazred, III, 17; the Translation of Dr. John Dee, *circa* A.D. 1585.

“. . . Death is no deterrent to the mighty dead. Even in decay their vast intellects can fill our sleeping minds with nightmare visions of the Pit and ultimate insanities beyond the reach of reason.”

—*Necrolatry* (The Worship of the Dead), Ivor Gorstadt; Leipzig, 1702.

“Alhazred’s image of the Sleeping God leads one almost to the interpretation of Cthulhu as one of the dream-gods such as Hypnos; he is set forth as a god who infects the minds of those asleep with dark and terrifying dreams, nightmares, visions—spreading the germs of his own evil through the world through the medium of his own dreams.”

—*Cthulhu in ‘The Neconomicon,’* Laban Shrewsbury, Ph.D., LL.D., etc.; from an unpublished, fragmentary manuscript written *circa* 1938-39.

Dr. Milton Avery Barnes, senior curator of the Manuscripts Collection of Miskatonic University in Arkham, Mass., has asked me to edit for publication the following verses which were discovered among the papers of the gifted young poet, Wilbur Nathaniel Hoag. Nearly thirty years have elapsed since the discovery of these poems, which are now published here in their final and corrected form for the first time.

The disappearance of Mr. Hoag from his ancient family home on State Street occurred during the night of September 13, 1944, and is still an unsolved mystery. He has since been declared legally dead by the County Court, however, and as he died intestate, leaving no clearly defined heirs, the State of Massachusetts has formally bequeathed his papers and his library to the University, on whose behalf my editorial labors have been performed.

The Hoag family was established in the old seaport-town of Arkham in 1693, when Isaiah Hoag, his wife and eldest son, settled there from Plymouth, England. The family fortunes were built on the South Seas trading voyages of Isaiah's son, the famous "Yankee trader" Captain Abner Ezekiel Hoag who pioneered the rum and copra trade in the Pacific. Folklorists, anthropologists and occult scholars may, however, know Captain Hoag best for his reputed discovery of the obscure and debatable *Ponape Scripture* in the Carolines *circa* 1734, which manuscript currently is in the possession of the Kester Library in Salem, Mass., and concerning which the late archaeologist Harold Hadley Copeland published his shocking and controversial book *The Prehistoric Pacific in the Light of the 'Ponape Scripture'* (1911).

For well over two centuries, the Hoags have been prominent in Massachusetts history. Their connections with the great Marsh family have been the subject of considerable genealogical research (it was, in fact, this same Abner Ezekiel Hoag who wed Bathsheba Randall Marsh in 1713, and thus became the son-in-law of the famous Captain Obed Marsh, whose exploits as a merchant skipper are part of local Arkham legend). Still later, about 1780, the Hoag family also intermarried with the old Kingsport line founded by Amos Tuttle in 1604; the house of Hoag may, then, most fittingly be set among the ancient patriarchal families of Colonial New England and in the light of their distinguished history it is exceedingly regrettable that the old line has become extinct at last.

Our poet, Wilbur Nathaniel Hoag, was of course the last of his line, and with his death or disappearance yet one more living link with the Colonial past of our country has ended. He was only a youth of twenty-three when he vanished so mysteriously, and in all the years since that time the facts of his disappearance have never been adequately explained, nor have the circumstances surrounding his death, or presumed death, ever come to light. Official queries at the time elicited from his neighbors that for some months before he vanished into the unknown, Hoag had become a virtual recluse and was seldom if ever seen, and then only during the hours of darkness. The morbid strain evident in his verses, the continual references to death and madness, the profusion of occult themes borrowed from obscure, unwholesome mythological texts, indicate an unstable intellect bordering perhaps on severe aberrance. This is a question for the psychologist, however, and our principal concern here is purely a literary one.

In preparing these sonnets for publication, I have imposed upon them an order and sequence not indicated in the original manuscript. I have been aided by the rapid degeneracy of Hoag's

handwriting. What I assume to be the earlier verses, those relating to his childhood, are written in a clear and classic Spenserian hand; rapidly, however, this clarity decays to a hurried scribble, and, in the latter half of the sonnets, the penmanship has become an almost animal scrawl, the pages splotted and stained by the oddest pus or slime. Indeed, the latter verses are all but illegible, and, so uncouth is their ragged scrawl, that I have almost fancied them indited on the page by the deformed paw of some hybrid beast, than by the scion of a fine old Arkham family.

The mystery of Hoag's disappearance — so oddly akin to the mystery of his late Uncle, Zorad Ethan Hoag, murdered and repugnantly mutilated by an unknown hand (our poet makes shuddering reference to the crime in the sonnet I have numbered VII) — will probably never be solved at this late date. But the dark brilliance of his macabre verse, savoring of the more poisonously beautiful pages of Baudelaire, or Poe, or the late Rhode Island poet, H. P. Lovecraft, is clearly evident in every jewelled page. Morbid these poems are, but in the phrase of H. P. Lovecraft, *Radiant with beauty, the Cup of the Ptolemies was carven of onyx.*

— Lin Carter  
Miskatonic University  
Arkham, Mass. 01970





## I. REMEMBRANCES

I am New England born, and home to me  
Is ancient Kingsport on the Harbour side.  
When I was very young my Father died  
And so I came to Arkham by the sea  
Where Uncle Zorad and his servant, Jones,  
Lived in the old house. He, my guardian,  
Was a strange, silent, melancholy man  
Given to dark old books and carven stones.

It was from him at last I understood  
Why Kingsport people shunned our family.  
"Our grandsires came in 1693,"  
He said. "And even here they hate our blood.  
We came from the old country to survive.  
There, we were witches, to be burnt alive."

## II. ARKHAM

How much I loved the city's ancient ways,  
Quaint cobbled streets, fanlights above the door;  
Arkham preserved a softer, gentler lore  
In this day's turmoil, from lost nobler days.  
I loved the crooked alleys, narrow, grey,  
And gabled houses leaning all awry . . .  
But even then it had begun to die;  
The very air was noisome with decay.

The river-mist, rank with a rotten smell,  
The crowded houses, slumped, ramshackle, thin;  
Arkham was like a corpse whose outward shell  
Preserved a lifelike semblance, while within  
Worm, mould and maggot, in a wriggling slime  
Bear witness to the leprous touch of time.



### III. THE FESTIVAL

It was that month when red Aldebaran  
Burned in the solstice skies arisen late,  
With cryptic starry signs enconstellate,  
Spelling some occult lore unguessed by man.  
The shifting starlight made strange shadows flit  
Among the sliding coils of mist that flowed  
From the dark Miskatonic past the road.  
And every night the Dagon Hall was lit.

It was a sort of church. Old malformed oaks  
Grew up around it in a kind of ring.  
I overheard the servant say, "The folks  
Wonder, ye keep the lad from Worshipping;  
Tonight is Festival." I bent to hear  
My Uncle say, "He's young. Another year . . .?"

#### IV. THE OLD WOOD

Northwards from Arkham up along the coast,  
The ancient woods that climb the hills around  
Grow oddly thick for such unhealthy ground.  
And on the hill-tops, where they grow the most,  
All seem deformed and strangely overgrown  
As if their roots, deep down within the earth,  
Fed on the rank putrescence of some Birth  
Malformed and monstrous, and best left unknown.

Even the grass grows mouldy, and a smell  
Hangs in the air as though something was dead,  
While bloated fungi spread their stench as well.  
I asked my Uncle's servant once. He said,  
"Sure, I can tell ye"—would he had not talked!  
"—That is the Wood where once the Black Goat walked."

## V. THE LOCKED ATTIC

He always kept it locked, the attic room,  
And ordered me to keep away from there.  
I wondered why, and one day climbed the stair  
And broke the lock. A place of airless gloom  
With walls and rafters that leaned oddly wrong  
And crazy angles that were hard to see,  
As in some alien geometry  
With more dimensions than to ours belong.

But nothing frightened me, until I tried  
To open up the window for some air  
And found it opened from *the other side*.  
I wiped the dusty pane, and saw out there—  
What should not be! I screamed, and somehow knew  
What awful worlds that window opened to.

## VI. THE SHUNNED CHURCH

"It's been abandoned quite a spell," he said,  
"That old church on the hill in back o' Hunt's.  
When we was kids, we thought 'twas haunted. Once  
I found out why it's still untenanted . . .  
One night I heard 'em talk about the place,  
How it were closed on 'count of what were done  
In there each Roodmass, and how there was one  
Never come out, who went inside. They chased

The preacher feller out o' town, I think . . .  
One night the kids dared me to go inside.  
It were all dark and dusty, with a stink  
All through th' air, like somethin' that had died.  
—I screamed and run, soon as I understood  
Whose image there on the Black Altar stood!"

## VII. THE LAST RITUAL

The night he died the Demon Star was high.  
It hung above the house against the dark  
A cold, arcane, malign and watching spark  
Like some green, burning and Cycloptic eye.  
They locked me in my room, but I could see  
My Uncle take down that abhorrent book  
At whose mad page I was forbade to look,  
Gorstadt's grim volume of Necrolatry.

I heard them chanting (they had closed the blind),  
And smelled some burning reek ophidian . . .  
Then all was silence . . . till the screams began.  
At dawn the neighbors broke the door, to find  
Jones gibbering and mad. Uncle was dead.  
They found his body. All except the head.

## VIII. THE LIBRARY

When I was young they never let me look  
Into that room kept under lock and key,  
But when he died my Uncle left to me  
His strange collection. Almost every book  
Was old and crumbling, curiously bound  
In serpent-skin, and with a rotten smell  
As of some tainted and abandoned well,  
Or some dead thing long buried underground.

I looked in one. And, though my blood ran cold,  
I read it, page by page. The nightwind blew  
About the eaves, and when red morning rolled  
Up from the east, I finished. And I knew  
Those old, old books were not meant to be read  
By sane men. They were better burnt instead.

## IX. BLACK THIRST

The yellowed pages, rotten with decay,  
Crawling with loathsome symbols, fill my brain  
With wild, tumultuous visions. Were I sane  
I'd rise and hurl the leprous book away . . .  
Yet I read on, half thrilled, half in disgust,  
Rapt with sick fascination to explore  
The vile corruption of forbidden lore,  
That leaves me weak and soiled with nameless lust.

I rise with dawn and scrub my shaking hands  
And gulp strong brandy down, and try to pray,  
And vow to burn these books . . . another day . . .  
But I am like one trapped in sinking sands,  
Who strayed apart far from the paths of men.  
The night will come. And I will read again . . .

## X. THE ELDER AGE

This lore was old before the rise of Ur,  
Before the pomp of Babylon was born,  
Ere golden Egypt knew her golden morn,  
Or Tyre, or Nineveh, or dark Sumer.  
Ere any human peoples tread the earth  
The blue Pacific lapped the carven walls  
Of seacoast cities whose basaltic halls  
Were drowned in myth before Atlantis' birth.

Lost land, thy ancient mages read the stars  
And scanned necrotic hieroglyphs on scrolls  
Borne hence from nighted Yuggoth where she rolls  
Far on the Rim amidst fantastic wars.  
Only the *Text* bears witness to thy lore,  
Sunken R'lyeh, that shall rise no more.



## XI. LOST R'LYEH

Long-lost and legended, R'lyeh sleeps,  
Dreaming ensorcelled ages by, the while  
Slow foetid waves wash round her rotting pile  
Drowned in the uttermost of ocean deeps . . .  
Until the stars are right, when from that tomb  
The awful Dead her primal ruins hide  
Shall rise tremendous, as was prophesied.  
Until that hour she sleeping bides her doom.

Wake not, dread ruin that the tides caress,  
Thou weed-grown mass of thronged decaying spires,  
Dim, phosphor-litten with putrescent fires—  
Sleep on, thou whelmed, accurst necropolis!  
Too soon shall from thy cyclopean fane,  
Cthulhu wake to walk the earth again!

## XII. UNKNOWN KADATH

In what remote hyperborean clime,  
Under what alien-configured skies  
Namelessly constellated, it doth rise  
Is known to none. In the abyss of time  
No eye hath seen the sable mountain rear  
Her pinnacles. The place hath not been guessed  
Where Kadath lifts her onyx-castled crest  
Among the *shantak*-guarded deserts drear.

Only those dreamers roaming far afield  
Beyond the lands we know, to them alone  
Is far and fabulous Kadath revealed  
And all her mysteries to them made known,  
And *That* which lies deep in her inmost crypt—  
The secret of the Pnakotic Manuscript.

### XIII. ABDUL ALHAZRED

Only Alhazred of all mortal men  
Hath seen far Yuggoth lost beyond the Rim,  
And drowned R'lyeh where lies buried Him  
Who Was Before And Who Shall Be Again.  
The cloudy shores of fabulous Hali  
On dread Carcosa where Hastur abides,  
That caverned deep where Tsathoggua hides—  
No wizard else hath known, save only he.

Alhazred saw . . . and from that sight returned  
Out of the nightmare deeps of the Abyss.  
If thou wouldst know the Elder Lore he learned  
And passed down from that century to this,  
Read of those horrors of the primal dawn  
Recorded in *The Necronomicon*.

#### XIV. HYPERBOREA

Far to the north an ancient kingdom lies  
In frozen lands where only glaciers rule;  
Beyond the Pole, beyond Ultima Thule,  
The tomb-like towers of the city rise.  
This is a cursed land where none dare dwell  
And Silence guards the empty altars where,  
In ages gone, by spell and rite and prayer  
The wizard-priests unloosed the hordes of hell.

But all the terrors of that primal year  
Sleep glacier-guarded under walls of snow,  
And never shall arise. And this I know.  
Yet is my soul still haunted by this fear:  
The thrones and empires of the world will shake  
If ever . . . Hyperborea . . . awake!

## XV. THE BOOK OF EIBON

In glacier-whelmed and lost Commoriom,  
Aeons before Atlantis, at the Pole  
Where now but black and frozen oceans roll  
Their sluggish tides, and warm suns never come,  
He sought the secrets of the Elder Age,  
Of nightmare gods and old fantastic wars  
Brought down by Tsathoggua from the stars  
And chronicled on Eibon's darkling page.

Hyperborea spake his name with dread  
And whispered of strange shapes and stranger light  
That moved about his ebon spire one night  
When thunder spoke and all the stars burned red.  
Next morn it lay in ruins everywhere.  
They found his Book. His body was not there . . .

## XVI. TSATHOGGUA

Beneath Voormithadreth the Mount of Dread  
In lost Hyperborea long ago  
Before the coming of eternal snow,  
The wizard followed where the *shantak* led;  
Down through the gulfs of those tremendous deeps,  
Caverns of nightmare, where the wholesome sun  
Hath never shone since first the earth begun,  
To that abyss where Tsathoggua sleeps.

Eibon alone hath seen, and come back sane  
From that slime pit of madness where It lies,  
The Black Abomination from the skies,  
Who sleepeth now but who shall wake again.  
We know the truth, we who have dared to look  
Into the darkling pages of his Book . . .

## XVII. BLACK ZIMBABWE

In dreams alone I tread those jungled streets  
Where shattered columns, black with hoary age,  
Hint of the splendour of some crumbling page  
Of history now legended. The seats  
Of prehistoric majesty still stand—  
The monstrous walls, the cryptic minarets  
—But whose the hand that raised them? Time forgets,  
Mazed in the darkness of this silent land.

Only the moon remembers, ages gone,  
The glittering, barbaric Wizard-Kings  
Who found the Sign and made the Offerings  
In the forgotten ages of earth's dawn.  
The moon alone recalls that nameless crime  
That wiped them from the memory of Time.

## XVIII. THE RETURN

Something is wrong tonight. Far out to sea  
Strange phosphorescence flickers from below.  
The ocean heaves in waves uneasy, slow,  
That roil and bubble . . . an old prophecy  
Comes back to haunt my soul . . . the stars burn cold  
In patterns oddly wrong. And now the deep  
Surges, like something—stirring—in its sleep!  
Is this the Night the ancient books foretold?

Iâ! The seas unfold! That *Shape*—'tis true!  
He rises from the city old as time! . . .  
I woke . . . and knew it but a dream . . . yet knew  
The blood-congealing truth of that old rhyme:  
*"That is not dead which can eternal lie,  
And with strange aeons even death may die."*



## XIX. THE SABBAT

"This is the night," the sly-faced stranger leered  
—He had approached me on the lonely streets—  
"This is the night the Arkham coven meets!"  
Before I answered he had disappeared.  
At nightfall I went down the cellar steps  
And through that secret door which I had found.  
It led by dark ways tunnelled underground  
Into a caverned abyss in the depths.

Weak with a mingled loathing and desire,  
I joined the hooded throng that milled and whirled  
About the standing stones, red-lit with fire  
That flamed up from the bowels of the world.  
One hailed me—"Azath!"—he was robed in red—  
"That was your Uncle's coven-name," he said.

## XX. BLACK LOTUS

The Coven-Master gave to me a phial  
Of that dread opiate that is the key  
To dream-gates opening upon a sea  
Of acherontic vapours: mile on mile  
Stretched ebon coasts untrod, wherefrom aspire  
Pylons of rough-hewn stone climbing to skies  
Alien-constellated, where arise  
Grey mottled moons of cold and leprous fire.

My dream-self roamed the cosmic gulfs profound,  
Past daemon-haunted Haddith, where in deeps  
Of foul putrescence buried underground  
The loathsome shoggoth hideously sleeps.  
I saw—and screamed! And knew my doom of dooms,  
Learning at last . . . where the Black Lotus blooms.

## XXI. THE UNSPEAKABLE

I drank the golden mead and did those things  
Of which I read within the ancient book.  
The wind awoke. The elms and willows shook  
Before the thunder of fantastic wings.  
Down from the cosmic gulfs the monster fell,  
The grim, stupendous, bat-winged Byakhee,  
Come from the cloudy shores of Lake Hali,  
Black-furred and iron-beaked, with eyes of Hell.

When I bestrode its back, the beast unfurled  
Its vast and mighty wings. Across dark seas  
Of space we flew. Amid the Hyades  
We reached at last that bleak and mythic world  
To men forbidden and by gods abhorred,  
Carcosa, where the great Hastur is Lord.

## XXII. CARCOSA

It was a scene that I had known before,  
This barren, desolate, and drear expanse  
Through which I wandered in a dream-like trance.  
And there in somber splendor by the shore  
Of dark Hali the nameless city stood:  
Black domes and monolithic towers loom  
Stark and gigantic in the midnight gloom  
Like druid menhirs in a haunted wood.

These streets and walls I seem to half-recall,  
Wandering blindly through the winding ways  
Beneath a sky with strange black stars ablaze,  
From some mad dream . . . or was it dream at all?  
Aye, here it was I heard Cassilda sing,  
Where flap the yellow tatters of The King!

### XXIII. THE CANDIDATE

Down the dark street of monoliths I passed,  
The shambling, faceless figure of my Guide  
A voiceless thing that beckoned at my side,  
And to the dreaded Gate I came at last.  
Before the silent Guardian I made  
The black unhallowed Sacrifice, and spoke  
Names at whose sound forgotten echoes woke.  
The portals gaped. I entered unafraid.

Fate, or my stars, or some accursed pride  
Had brought me here. Naked, I stood alone  
And took the Vow before the Elder Throne—  
He *laughed*, and drew His tattered mantle wide—  
O do not seek to learn nor ever ask  
What horror hides behind . . . *The Pallid Mask!*

## XXIV. THE DREAM-DAEMON

In dreams the Daemon comes upon the hour  
Of full moon over Arkham. And I see  
The opal shores of seas unknown to me  
Where Babel-tall, bizarre, the cities tower—  
Black and basalt metropoli of myth  
Athrong with ziggurat and pyramid  
That scale dark skies where ebon moons are hid.  
Is it a dream of Yaddath or of Ith?

Or some outré and undimensioned sphere  
Beyond the cosmos? I seek not to learn  
Upon what occult world those ruins rear,  
Remembering those books I ought to burn.  
This much I know: the cities and the shore  
Were somewhere, somehow, known to me before . . .

## XXV. DARK YUGGOTH

There lies a world beyond the seas of night,  
Past the last planet, on the farthest Rim  
Of curving space, where by some cosmic whim  
It reels and wheels beyond the shores of light,  
Lost in the howling dark. The eye of man  
Can never glimpse its lone imperial place,  
Deep in the blackest depths of elder space,  
Nor astronomic glass may ever scan.

This is the planet that Alhazred knew,  
Beyond the measured, known, and numbered nine;  
Lost and alone where never sun doth shine,  
Nor soft winds blow, nor skies are ever blue.  
Far in the midnight deeps beyond our sight,  
There the black planet rides the tides of night.

## XXVI. THE SILVER KEY

Dreams hold no dread for me, for I alone  
Went down the Seven Hundred Steps and passed  
The Gate of Deeper Slumber, till at last  
I went beyond the limits of the Known . . .  
I have seen many-columned Y'ha-nthlei,  
And talked with serpent-bearded Byatis,  
And, flown on Night Gaunts to the last abyss,  
Have glimpsed the foetid pits where Abhoth lay.

All worlds lie open to me . . . time and space  
Reveal their darkest secrets to the one  
Who dares the nighted realm of They Who Shun  
The Light, and comes to gaze into *His* face.  
What I have seen would drive you mad; yet I  
Cannot go mad; I cannot even . . . *die*.



## XXVII. THE PEAKS BEYOND THROK

Where ominous the mould-encumbered walls  
Of riven citadels old as Mnar  
Rise in their ruin, from a distant star  
I wandered; now, nightmare alone recalls  
Those greenly-litten vales of writhing trees  
Whose scaled and snaky limbs reached for my flesh;  
And those black, hellish jungles beyond Kesh  
Where I with ghouls conversed by foetid seas.

And there was one that shambled from the feast,  
Whining with eagerness to scan my face,  
A filth-encrusted, gaunt, hound-muzzled beast  
Who sought to fold me in its vile embrace.  
It spake those words at which I paled and fled:  
"I was your Uncle, when I lived," it said.

## XXVIII. SPAWN OF THE BLACK GOAT

They ride the night-wind when the Demon Star  
Over the dim horizon burns bale-red,  
Come from the charnel-pits of the undead,  
Nadir of nightmare, where the shoggoths are.  
Now, till the light of morning-litten east  
Bids them return to the unbottomed slime,  
Freely they roam the darkling earth a time  
And from fresh grave abominably feast.

These are they spawn that nighted pits confine,  
And shouldst thou sight them in the midnight gloom,  
Then art thou lost! For not the Elder Sign  
That seals the great Cthulhu in his tomb,  
Canst save thee from the hunger-maddened wrath  
Of the Begotten of Shub-Niggurath.

## XXIX. BEYOND

I have seen Yith, and Yuggoth on the Rim,  
And black Carcosa in the Hyades;  
And in the slimy depths of certain seas,  
I have beheld the tomb where lieth Him  
Who Was And Who Shall Be; and I have flown  
Astride the *shantak* or the *byakhee*  
Where Kadath in the Cold Waste terribly  
Bears up her onyx-castled crest unknown.

I have conversed with seer and archimage  
In glacier-buried, drear Commorion,  
And traced the maggot-eaten parchment page  
Of tomes that Tsathoggua carried from  
Dim vast Cykranosh. I am no more sane,  
For too much horror burns away the brain.

### XXX. THE ACCURSED

Sometimes I dream that I was once a man  
On some small planet in the deeps of night,  
And not a mindless, mewling parasite.  
And, with my brethren off Aldebaran  
Or green Algol, I sometimes seem to trace  
Against the dark a smiling, lovely thing . . .  
I half-recall a voice that used to sing  
Old lullabies . . . is it my mother's face?

Is it a vision, dream, or memory?  
The chittering horde about me sweeps me on;  
The half-remembered vision dims—is gone.  
An ancient pain gnaws at the heart of me.  
From this strange dream, this mystic cryptogram,  
I wake to horror—*knowing what I am.*

## XXXI. THE MILLION FAVORED ONES

From black Mnar, from Yuggoth on the Rim,  
From those liquescent pits where shoggoths bloat,  
Across the cosmic gulfs of spheres remote  
—We come! We come! At the command of Him  
Who is our Lord and Father. Bleak Kadath  
And frozen Leng have known our awful tread;  
Lost Yhe in the Pacific quailed in dread  
Before our coming, and our Father's wrath . . .

And some of us were human once, and some  
Have never even heard the name of Earth,  
Abominations of a monstrous birth  
Out of the womb of nightmare . . . When we come,  
The nations kneel in fear before our step . . .  
We are the Children of Nyarlathotep.



## OTHER POEMS





## LUNAE CUSTODIENS

When once the sunset dyes the west with red  
that is the dawn of darkness, then behold . . .  
marmoreal, her pallid visage peers  
adown the steep and star-empowdered vault  
as she hath done thrice twenty thousand years  
since first her task was set by gods of old—  
this night to guard the sleeping from the dead.

Unzoned, the Moon her antique vigils keep  
over the couched and dreaming somnolent,  
against unmemoried, malefic Night,  
Mother of Mysteries, whose spectral brood  
shrink from her pallid pentagrams of light,  
free, save for this lunar impediment,  
to prey upon their souls who dare to sleep.

Serene, remote, she watches over all  
that slumber in the dim sublunar world  
on this unhallowed night, accurst, arcane,  
when from the coffin and the charnel pit  
(the occult realm where mould and maggot reign)  
the spawn of chaos wake when day has furled  
his banner and the darkness spreads her pall.

Now from unplumbed abysses of the Pit,  
nadirs of nightmare, all the legionry  
of tomb and sepulchre are free to roam  
the drear and mantic wastes, uncitied, bare,  
or druid woods where horror finds a home,  
or coasts which front the acherontic sea,  
or shadowed vales of gloom indefinite.

By haunted hills where moonlit menhirs lean,  
by stagnant moat and ivy-cumbered wall,  
dark avenues of graveyard cypress, yew,  
and wizard laurel, all the ghouls of dream  
seek the unguarded sleeper whereunto  
their psychonecrophilic hungers call  
unto the Feast Unholy, that wast seen

in rune-writ tome and iron-bound grimoire  
upon whose cryptic, sealed, forbidden page  
were writ of old the eldrich laws of dream  
in lost and ocean-drowned Poseidonis.  
Only the Moon, whose silvern-paly beam  
was legend to the primal archimage,  
could save the dreamer from the necrophore.

Virgin of Heaven, from the hordes of Dis  
who seek this night from sleeping minds to slake  
their dark vampiric thirst; from the embrace  
of nightmare legions spawned of the Abyss,  
save us, O thou who rides the ebon tides of space . . .  
pale Guardian of those who do not wake . . .  
Queen of the Skies, *regina coelis!*

## MERLIN, ENCHANTED

*Doomwards, the shadow moves over the dreaming grass*  
among the watching trees, coeval with this earth,  
malformed and monstrous in the druid dark.  
Where boughs of Broceliande bear up bright weight  
of stars  
moonsilver filters through a web of leaves  
in tattered tapestries of falling light:  
*doomwards, the shadow moves over the dreaming grass.*

Among the watching trees, coeval with this earth,  
sandalled in silence, shadow-robed, agrim  
he broods on runic skies thick-hieroglyphed  
with stars wherein his doom is legible.  
He walks . . . he walks . . . Merlin among the oaks,  
bemazed with magic, following her flight  
among the watching trees, coeval with this earth.

Malformed and monstrous in the druid dark,  
the hazels mark him and the oaks observe,  
leering and peering through the seagreen gloom.  
A thin wind whispers through the clotted leaves  
among the menhirs on midsummer hill.  
Somewhere in silence an owl calls, once; hidden  
among trees  
malformed and monstrous in the druid dark.

Where boughs of Broceliande bear up bright weight of stars,  
one star, whirling, throbbing, hangs between the horns  
of the gilt sacrificial-sickle Moon.  
His beard greysilver in the heavy light  
he walks . . . he walks . . . Merlin among the elms,  
deep in the secret dark of the fated wood  
where boughs of Broceliande bear up bright weight of stars.

Moonsilver filters through a web of leaves  
on bone-bare shoulders, thin breasts, saltgreen hair,  
over the undine dancing among dark trees  
with gloom of oceans in her mocking eyes;  
a witches' saraband through the deep green gloom,  
calling him onward with a magic older than magic, as  
moonsilver filters through a web of leaves.

In tattered tapestries of falling light  
he climbs the crest of the pentacled, chosen hill;  
under Orion's frosty eye the woman of water  
binds him with seven hundred seventy spells  
chanted and spun in the sacred, goblinded night.  
There, in the light of a star of heraldic crimson,  
sorcery wove a tower of time for his prison,  
in tattered tapestries of falling light.

*Doomwards, the shadow moves over the dreaming grass,*  
into the heart of the skypointing tower, lightwoven,  
augmented with moonlight, timeless, and potent  
with pentacles,  
standeth it tall, bordering Earth from Faërie.  
Pale moonlight pulls at it, pushing a shadow from  
Merlin's doom  
on towards the narrow sea, falling towards the doom  
of Logres:  
*doomwards, the shadow moves over the dreaming grass.*

## TO CLARK ASHTON SMITH

Upon what rare and oriental wine  
Your visions fed, I cannot claim to know,  
Nor from what volumned lore of spheres sublime  
You built your necromantic tales, whereto  
So many dreamers like myself have come  
To revel in the opulence of art  
That nourishes like some supernal sun  
The famished dreamers whom our age doth hurt.

It is apparent you alone may spell  
The hieroglyphs of parchments old as Mu  
And vivify old legends to regale  
This modern age that mocks its poets so.  
Sing on, Atlantean, and cull new song  
From ancient rimes neglected overlong.

## ONCE IN FABLED GRANDEUR

Once in fabled grandeur, I  
Ruled beneath an Orient sky.

And once I sat in gorgeous halls  
That only memory recalls.

Another life, another land,  
When I was King of Samarcand.

My kingdom now is dust and bones.  
But I rule on from newer thrones.

## THE NIGHT KINGS

When I stand in opal twilight  
    At the passing of the day,  
When the stars are dim above me  
    And the world seems far away;  
When the shadows slowly lengthen  
    As if weary from the light  
And the greys of gloaming strengthen  
    To the ebony of night;

Then I hear the silence falling  
    Like the sighing of the sea,  
And the sound of footsteps calling  
    Comes across the world to me.  
Then I know the Kings are marching  
    For I hear their ghostly tread  
When the night's dim gloom is arching  
    And the glow of day has fled.

And I see the Night Kings looming  
    As they stride across the sea  
With the pallid stars illuming  
    Every misty shape to me:  
They are clad in robes of midnight  
    And the stars are in their hair  
And their brows are lit with moonlight  
    As I see them striding there.

At their heels a stealthy legion  
Of their shadow-subjects creep,  
As they march toward that dim region  
Where the emperor is Sleep.  
When I see the Night Kings striding  
In the moonlight far away  
Then I know the sun is hiding  
And the dark is here to stay.



## ALL HALLOWS' EVE

The goblin moon, half-hidden, half-revealed,  
Leers down through ragged veils of tattered cloud  
(A grinning skull wrapt in a rotting shroud),  
And night lies thick as dust on hill and field.  
A chill, uneasy wind moans in the eaves.  
Against the yellow moon and cloudy wrack  
That veils the autumn stars, trees gauntly black  
Lift groaning limbs long stript of withered leaves.

A grim, ill-omened night! Within my room  
Long shadows writhe and waver on the wall:  
One guttering candle struggles in the gloom.  
—A gust of wind—the darkness covers all—  
That sound! Is it the icy lash of rain  
Or bony fingers . . . *tapping* . . . on the pane?

## SHARD

Within a dream I walked in woodland glens  
Where moonlight fell in slanting silver rays.  
A fount of crystal splashed in silent song  
And milkwhite unicorns bent down to drink.

## THE WIND IN THE RIGGING

I love the cry of white gulls in the morning,  
The whisper of waves is like music to me.  
I love the song of the wind in the rigging,  
The night-wind is singing its song to the sea.

I love the creak and the boom of the canvas,  
The sting of the salt as the spray is blown free.  
I love the song of the wind in the rigging,  
The night-wind is singing its song to the sea.

I love the glow of a full moon above us  
That silvers the breast of the dark Caribbee.  
I love the song of the wind in the rigging,  
The night-wind is singing its song to the sea.

I love the whisper of wind in the rigging,  
No sound on earth is more lovely to me.  
Hark, can you hear? It's the wind in the rigging.  
The night-wind is singing its song to the sea.

*As the background lore for my sword and sorcery novels about the adventures of Thongor the Mighty, warrior hero of Lost Lemuria, I have invented a mythological age which preceded that of my grim-jawed barbarian monarch. Here is an heroic lay from that mythology. Diombar, the Blind Singer of Nemedis, sang it in his old age to the men of the First Kingdoms. It tells of the close of The Thousand Year War between the first of men and the last of the Dragon Kings of old Hyperborea, and of the Last Battle in that war.*

## DIOMBAR'S SONG OF THE LAST BATTLE

1.

With dawn we rode from Nemedis  
in all her pomp and pride.  
The white road thundered beneath our tread  
and the white sea at our side.  
The wild waves broke on the naked rocks  
and returned to break once more  
Where the grim black walls of the Dragon Keep  
loomed on the grim black shore.

2.

The foam-maned lions of the sea  
drove madly against the strand.  
On a desolate stretch of wet black rock,  
the heroes took their stand.  
Above, against a storm-torn sky  
of whirling crimson smoke,  
The jagged walls of the Keep rose sheer  
from the rocks where white waves broke.

3.

And Thungarth, Son of Jaidor, urged  
his mount to the grim black gate  
That rose above him like a cliff,  
death-cold and dark as fate.  
Ah, he was young as morning,  
a hero to behold;  
His mighty thews like ruddy bronze,  
his mane like ruddy gold.

## 4.

The challenge was his alone to claim,  
 by clan-law and blood-right,  
 For the Dragon Kings had slain his sire  
 in treachery by night.  
 He set his war horn to his lips—  
 the thunder of its cry  
 Aroused the Dragon Warriors forth  
 to conquer or to die.

## 5.

And from the ebon citadel  
 the Dragon Warriors came,  
 And they were mailed in adamant,  
 and armed with evil flame. '   
 The heroes rode against them  
 and strove with sword and shield  
 To fight and fall—if fall they must  
 —to die, but never yield!

## 6.

And Khorbane fell, and proud Konnar,  
 and gallant Yggrim too;  
 Yet still we strove with the Dragon Kings  
 and the great war trumpets blew.  
 And for every hero of Phondath's breed  
 who upon that black shore fell  
 We sent a dozen Dragons down  
 the scarlet throat of hell!

## 7.

From wild red dawn to wild red dawn  
 we held our iron line  
 And fought till the blades broke in our hands  
 and the sea ran red as wine.  
 With arrow, spear, and mighty mace,  
 we broke the Dragon's pride,  
 Thigh-deep in the roaring sea we fought,  
 and crimson ran the tide.

## 8.

But we were armed with simple steel,  
 and they with sorcery;  
 And step by step they thrust us back  
 into the hungry sea.  
 And Thungarth saw that he must use  
 that Sword the Gods had made  
 Although he knew it meant his doom  
 to lift that dreadful blade.

## 9.

As one by one his brothers fell,  
 he raised the Star Sword high!  
 He sang the runes to the Lords of Light  
 —and thunder broke the sky!  
 Red lightning flashed—drums of thunder crashed—  
 a rain of fire fell  
 To sweep the last of the Dragon Kings down  
 to the smoking pits of hell!

## 10.

But the Lord of the Dragons was old and wise  
 and a mighty mage was he.  
 He loosed a bolt of flaming death—  
 his warriors laughed to see  
 The Star Sword *broke* in Thungarth's hand!  
 And now what hope for Men?  
 The scaly might of the hissing horde,  
 They were upon him then . . .

## 11.

But he beat them back with the broken blade,  
 there, caught in the roaring tide.  
 And one by one they fell before  
 young Thungarth in his pride.  
 But the Dragon Lord, with a great black spear,  
 he drove them forth once more,  
 They closed again with Thungarth there  
 while the wild waves ran with gore.

## 12.

Yet once again he beat them back  
 with a fragment of the Sword;  
 They broke and fell before him then,  
 and he faced their mighty Lord.  
 The great black spear was sharp and long,  
 his Sword but a shard of steel;  
 The Dragon Lord was fresh and strong,  
 but Thungarth would not yield.



13.

He battled there with the broken blade,  
    half-drowned in the roaring tide;  
The great black spear drank deep as it sank  
    in Thungarth's naked side.  
But ere the Son of Jaidor fell,  
    or ere his strength could wane,  
The Broken Sword of Nemedis  
    had clove the Dragon's brain.

14.

Thunder rolled in the crimson sky.  
    The War Maids rode the storm  
To bear the soul of Thungarth home  
    to the Halls of Father Gorm.  
The Age of the Dragon ended there  
    where the seas with scarlet ran:  
Though the cost was high, the prize was great.  
    And the Age of Men began.

## THE ELF-KING'S CASTLE

Within the dark enchanted wood  
The elf-king's castle stood.

All moon-pale marble, snowflake-lace:  
It was a holy place.

It rose up from the misty glade  
And flashed amid the shade.

Slim, clustered spires and narrow wall—  
A frozen waterfall.

No other mortal had come near  
The place this thousand year.

One look . . . and then I turned away  
But walk accursed from that day.

Go where I will, naught can I see  
But that immortal symmetry.

Amid the snarling traffic—*there!*  
Moon-marble, floating on the air.

Alas I ever walked that way  
For I go haunted to this day.

And never shall the world of men  
Seem fair to me again.

## TO LORD DUNSANY

Never let the worldly-wise  
Wipe the dream-dust from our eyes,  
Nor let the iron gods of truth  
Slay the wonder of our youth.  
Hold fast against the everyday  
Your tales of kingdoms far away;  
Lead us through gateways of the mind  
To faëry lands the dreamers find  
And show us how through dreams we may  
Lift anchor up and sail away—  
Our galleon some golden tale,  
Each printed page a straining sail.

## THE FORGOTTEN

Hawk-head, the ankh has fallen from your hand.  
Archer, your bright wings falter in the dust.  
Huntress, you wander in a bitter land.  
Warrior, your blade has rotted into rust.

No more sweet incense wreathes the morning air  
Or maidens chant your legends to the flames;  
Nor any mortal whispers anywhere  
With awe the potent music of your names.

No more the smokes of sacrifice ascend  
From hecatombs of gilt-horned oxen slain;  
No more petitioners their raiment rend  
To beg your favor or evade your bane.

Now are the altars ivy-overgrown,  
The temples desecrate, the sibyls still.  
Now are the idols only tongueless stone,  
No more the living vessels of your will.

The shrines lie empty to the desert night;  
The drowsy jackal by the altar nods.  
Man has forgot the glory of your might—  
Man has first mocked, and then forgot, the Gods.

Thigh-born, the leaves are withered on your brow.  
Green-beard, your tides moan lonely on the strand.  
Goat-foot, your syrinx makes bitter music now.  
Hawk-head, the ankh has fallen from your hand.

## GOLDEN AGE

Say not: the Golden Age has passed  
And all its giants dead at last:  
There are no dragons left to slay:  
And wonder perished with Cathay:  
    For I foresee a brighter day.

A wiser Merlin may be born:  
A braver Roland wind his horn:  
A taller Troy in thunder fall:  
A stronger Caesar conquer Gaul:  
    And sirens someday sweeter call.

We'll see, before this world is done,  
A second Icarus seek the sun:  
A more alluring Salomé dance:  
A nobler Joan shall die for France:  
    And add new annals to Romance.

A weaker Judas shall betray  
His Master come again someday:  
A wilier Ulysses brave  
Witch's isle and cyclops' cave:  
    A greater Moses part the wave.

A love-cross'd Lancelot shall fail  
A-questing for a rarer Grail:  
A godlier Alexander reign  
To burn Persepolis again:  
    A truer Cid shall ride for Spain.

Aye, miracles can happen yet  
Though men their myths sometimes forget.

**LINES WRITTEN TO A PAINTING**  
**BY HANNES BOK**

Here where pale minarets and pylons cling  
Ablaze with sunset to the scarlet peak,  
Night draws across the skies her gemmy wing.

Now glides the galleon, her satin sails  
Engoldening the sea, home to her rest:  
Starlit, one spire the goblin moon impales.

Bright as a peacock-plume these colors gleam.  
O rare the hand that made this vision live,  
Kindled these fires, wove this jewelled dream!

## DEATH-SONG OF CONAN THE CIMMERIAN

1.

The road was long and the road was hard  
And the sky was cold and grey:  
The dead white moon was a frozen shard  
In the dim pale dawn of day:  
But thief and harlot, king and guard—  
Warrior, wizard, knave and bard—  
Rode with me all the way.

2.

The wind was sharp as a whetted knife  
As it blew from the wet salt seas:  
The storm wind stirred to a ghostly life  
The gaunt black skeletal trees:  
But I drank the foaming wine of life—  
Wine of plunder and lust and strife—  
Down to the bitter lees.

3.

A boy, from the savage north I came  
To cities of silk and sin:  
With torch and steel, in blood and flame,  
I won what a man may win:  
Aye, gambled and won at the Devil's game—  
Splendor and glory and glittering fame—  
And mocked at Death's skull-grin.

## 4.

And there were foemen to fight and slay  
 And friends to love and trust:  
 And crowns to conquer and toss away  
 And lips to taste with lust:  
 And songs to keep black night at bay—  
 And wine to swill to the break of day—  
 What matter the end be dust?

## 5.

I've won my share of your gems and gold,  
 They crumble into clods:  
 I've gorged on the best that life can hold,  
 And Devil take the odds:  
 The grave is deep and the night is cold—  
 The world's a skull-full of stinking mould—  
 And I laugh at your little gods!

## 6.

The lean road slunk through a blasted land  
 Where the earth was parched and black;  
 But we were a merry, jesting band  
 Who asked no easier track:  
 Rogue and reaver and firebrand—  
 And Life rode laughing at my right hand—  
 And Death rode at my back.



## 7.

The road was dusty and harsh and long—  
 Crom, but a man gets dry!—  
 I'm old and weary and Death is strong  
 But flesh was born to die:  
*Hai*, Gods! But it was a merry throng—  
 Rode by my side with jest and song—  
 Under an empty sky.

## 8.

I've heard fat, cunning priestling's tell  
 How damned souls writhe and moan:  
 That paradise they can buy and sell  
 For gold and gold alone:  
 To the flames with scripture and priest as well—  
 I'll stride down the scarlet throat of Hell—  
 And dice for the Devil's throne!

## 9.

I faced Life boldly and unafraid—  
 Should I flinch as Death draws near?  
 Life's but a game Death and I have played  
 Many a wearisome year:  
*Hai!* to the gallant friends I made—  
 Slave and swordsman and lissom maid!—  
 I begrudge no foot of the road I strayed—

The road which endeth . . . *here*.



## Author's Note

Like many another novelist and story-teller to the manner born, my first ambition was in the direction of poetry. As most of my colleagues eventually found to their chagrin, the direction was a false lead, beckoning into a blind labyrinth. But beginning about 1948, verses by the countless hundreds literally poured from my brain — which should have been busy soaking up Merritt and Burroughs, Howard and Brackett, Vance and Leiber, and striving to excell in the magnificent genre wherein they are dominant divinities, for in that field my true career was to be found.

It goes without saying that by far the greatest portion of these “poems” were the purest essence of vapid doggerel — puerile and derivative, stale and juiceless — mere juvenile garbage. This is not the self-drepreciating phoney modesty some writers affect, but simple honesty. In all candor, for the most part, my verse did not even strive for the sheer and delectable corn of comparable verse by such vastly pleasurable fantasy poets as Howard, Lovecraft or Smith. Had I aimed myself in that direction, I might have accomplished a certain body of decently entertaining work — as did they. But, no, I strove for unthinkable goals: to be a *real* poet.

These dreams are dead, although certain of my ambitions were not without some admirable qualities. I once tackled the epic and composed some five thousand lines of heroic pentameter on the theme of a certain Macedonian conqueror. It seemed to me then — it seems to me now — that his magnificent and unparalleled career deserved its Homer as much as Achilles his. But even my *Alexandriad* I set aside, never to take up again.

I certainly don't feel the world lost a brilliant poet when I

turned to the fantasy novel. However, not all of my poetic *oeuvre* was a thorough waste of wood-pulp. From many thousands, I have culled a rigorous few: I print them here, as much because Derleth asked me to as to enbalm something of my vanished youth. Perhaps they will give you pleasure, some of them: the ones I have chosen entertain me yet. I am particularly fond of the meaningless and yet, somehow, meaningful mysticism of "Merlin, Enchanted"; the quiet, sombre mood of "The Forgotten" pleases me; the verses to Dunsany, Smith and Bok testify to my deep love, admiration and affection for their genius; the rip-snorting gusto of the "Death-Song of Conan the Cimmerian" delights me with the vigor of its thumping meter and pleases my ear as a technical achievement, for, of course, it was written in careful imitation of Howard's own style.

The earliest of these verses is "Shard" written about 1947 when I was a boy of seventeen mooning away over books in sunny St. Petersburg, Florida; the newest is the "Death-Song of Conan the Cimmerian," written over an August 1972 weekend in a Detroit hotelroom during a science fiction convention whereat I was guest of honor. The toil of composition wearied my insomnia-afflicted brain to the point of slumber; I do hope, however, that reading these verses will not put *you* to sleep!

— LIN CARTER

*Hollis, Long Island, New York*



Three thousand copies of this book have been printed and bound by The Lakeside Press, R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company, composed from Compugraphic Oracle (prose in Garamond) and printed by web offset on 60# Mead Offset. The binding cloth is Holliston Black Novelex.

readers, collectors and connoisseurs. But in his own right, as author of some two dozen novels and collections of short stories, he is acclaimed as one of the most gifted and popular writers of today—particularly in the genre of heroic fantasy, or “Sword and Sorcery,” as buffs of the field term their favorite reading matter. As well, in collaboration with L. Sprague de Camp, Carter has helped extend and complete the fragmentary series of “Conan” stories left unfinished at the death of Robert E. Howard.

Most recently, Lin Carter has become entranced by the Cthulhu Mythos and has turned to the crafting of exquisite miniature short stories and poems in the macabre field. Arkham House patrons will recall having seen the first few of these new Cthulhu Mythos stories in issues of *The Arkham Collector* and in the last anthology by the late August Derleth, *Dark Things*. For certain of these tales, Mr. Carter has constructed an invented Californian locale similar to Lovecraft's Arkham-Dunwich-Innsmouth milieu and Ramsey Campbell's Severn Valley. For other tales, he has experimented delightfully with episodes and narratives he pretends were “translated” from the abominable pages of such imaginary tomes as the *Book of Eibon*, the *Pnakotic Manuscripts*, and, of course, the utterly unmentionable *Necronomicon* itself. These tales have aroused the enthusiasm of Arkham House patrons, who recognize in them a subtle artistry of pure stylistic mastery by a writer who has successfully captured the flavor and mood and color of Lovecraft and Clark Ashton Smith than has any other writer of Carter's generation.

The present volume collects together all of the macabre verse of Lin Carter that he considers worthy of preservation. The central sonnet-cycle, of course, is an affectionate and knowing imitation of Lovecraft's own “Fungi from Yuggoth” sequence, skillfully written and cleverly connected (through its introductory notes) to the central matter of Mr. Carter's own additions to the Mythos. The additional poems, in several moods, form encomiums and memorials to Clark Ashton Smith, Lord Dunsany, Hannes Bok and Robert E. Howard.

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*The jacket is the work of Tim Kirk.*



*Photo by Judy Appleton & Gloria Martin*

## LIN CARTER

Lin Carter and his wife share an old Greek Revival house on Long Island with seven dogs, a fascinating collection of curiosities and antiques and artworks, a stupendous private library of fifteen thousand volumes, and an elusive resident ghost. Mr. Carter is a member of several clubs, among them The Sax Rohmer Society, The Sons of the Desert, The Hyborian Legion, The James Branch Cabell Society, The Dark Brotherhood, The Trap Door Spiders, and The Swordsmen and Sorcerers' Guild of America, Ltd., the exclusive organization of "Sword and Sorcery" writers of which Lin Carter is a Founding Father.