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LOVECRAP

by ARTHUR JEAN COX

The imagery of Lovecraft's stories is seldom sexual. An exception is "The Picture in the House," which has a strong undercurrent of eroticism, morbidly displaced: Perhaps this is why the story didn't seem to be so popular as the others? In one case, the imagery is fecal. The classic story, "The Call of Cthulhu," is an excremental fantasy. A few jottings from the story:

...and from some undetermined point below had come a voice that was not a voice; a chaotic sensation which only fancy could transmute into sound, but which he attempted to render by the almost unpronounceable jumble of letters, "Cthulhu fhtagn."

A picture of Cthulhu:

Above these apparent hieroglyphics was a figure of evidently pictorial intent, though its impressionistic execution forbade a very clear idea of its nature...it was the general outline of the whole which made it most shockingly frightful.

The italics are Lovecraft's. Later, a statuette of the monster, much less ambiguous, is seen. It is shown in side-view sitting on a seat -- "squatting," says the author -- its elevated knees clasped by huge fore-paws. "The aspect of the whole was abnormally lifelike, and the more subtly fearful because its source was so totally unknown."

And then, the actual emergence of Cthulhu, Himself, "ravening for delight," from his slimy recess on an ooze-covered island projecting above the waters. The door to this recess opens in no ordinary way:

In this fantasy of prismatic distortion it moved anomalously in a diagonal way, so that all the rules of matter and perspective seemed upset...The odor arising from the newly opened depths was intolerable, and at length the quick-eared Hawkins thought he heard a nasty, slopping sound down there. Everyone listened, and everyone was listening still when it lumbered slobberingly into sight and gropingly squeezed its gelatinous green immensity through the black doorway into the tainted outside air of that poison city of madness.

The monster pursues the yacht, which turns to ram it:

There was a mighty eddying and foaming in the noisome brine...There was a burst as of an exploding bladder, a slushy nastiness as of a cloven sunfish, a stench as of a thousand opened graves, and a sound that the chronicler would not put on paper. For an instant the ship was befouled by an acrid and blinding green cloud, and then there was only a venomous seething astern....

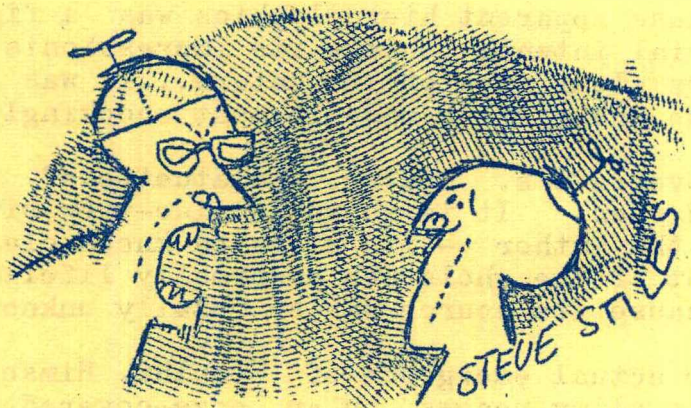
But Cthulhu's "scattered plasticity...nebulously" recombines. It returns to its recess and the island fortuitously sinks. "Who knows the end? What has risen may sink, and what has sunk may rise. Loathsomeness waits and dreams in the deep, and decay spreads over the tottering cities of men."

O mighty and dread Cthulhu, thou art but a turd flushed down the toilet!

What Lovecraft has done is to dignify the act of defecation and its products by investing both with cosmic awe --

But, stop ambitious Muse, in time;
Nor dwell on Subjects too sublime!

(Swift)



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