

## Introduction

“Come By, Come Buy”—this has been the incessant, incantatory cry of the supernatural writers offering their macabre merchandise to unsuspecting, restless readers. The Bible warns us that the house of the wicked will be destroyed and the tent of the upright will flourish! For me the writer of the eerie stuff just sets up his tent in a *Wood Beyond the Ordinary World* specifically because he has the ability to see in a Tolkien like manner ‘through the brick wall in time.’ In the manner of a C. S. Lewis he provides plenty of pools cum portals into the preternatural; where we are supposed to deep dive into the depths of the unearthly to discover the lair of a Grendel’s dam or that of a poison emitting Kaliya Naga. And as exemplified in *The Magician’s Nephew* the end of this supernatural narrative is accompanied by the drying up of these pellucid portals of strange realms.

With this demolition of the haunted house of horrors, the ruin and the rust, the dust and the debris of the graveyard is piled high on the spooky paths of these texts. With their ominous entries the Witch of Endor, Grendel, Dracula and Frankenstein crowd the lanes of these narratives of the menacing and the mysterious. Like the green branches carried by the young virgin soldiers to vanquish the monster, Macbeth haunting his blood-stained castle, the writers of the supernatural employ their own emerald light to vanquish the darkness and the demons they had previously let loose. These texts turn out to be a curious combination of the celebrations of Halloween and the Deepavali—all rolled into one. Often the writers actually establish the ghost only to shrink it, return the world from the foul and the foggy state to the fair and the green one.

Indeed, along with the elves, fairies, ghosts, witches, werewolves, vampires, zombies, the *rakshasis*, *daityas* and the *betals* are also creatures creeping out of our own bubbling mindscapes and these

authors of the ominous simply turn out to be the facilitators who hold up their lamps to reveal the monsters which march across the icy caves of our subterranean mindsets. And occasionally reveal in this strange realm of thunder, lightning and rain of our existence, a cheerful Casper or an obliging genie or two. Today supernatural literature cannot be dismissed simply as *fleurs du Mal*; from angel romances to vampire love narratives, from Gothic misadventures to werewolf transformations—here is a bizarre breeding ground of the fantastic, a haunting harvest of temptations and the tempted.

In our publication we have accommodated discussions on a wide variety of the incredible—ranging from the Anglo-Saxon elves of the hoary past to the modern preoccupation with the spectres who walk the talk in the urban jungles of the necropolis. The articles have been arranged in a chronological fashion; the erudite discussion on the elves occupying the pages of the Old English Leechbooks is followed by the insightful paper on the fairy supernatural of the Medieval tradition. Scholarly deliberations on the Renaissance obsession with witchcraft are followed by a perceptive meditation on the Victorian supernatural—on the spectropoetics of Gothic Marxism.

The American absorption in vampires and the undead have also been included here. It is the need of the hour today to align the global with the local; to analyse the literatures of the uncanny both from the West as well as the East. The popular Bengali engrossment with the *bhut* or the ghost and the *rakshasi* of the Bengali fairy tale have also not been ignored. We have three sensitive explorations of the regional supernatural in this issue. Two earnest student responses—one on the miracles of the New Testament and another on John Donne's plague—have also been accepted for publication. The concluding contribution is an illuminating interview of S. T. Joshi, the celebrated and unquestioned expert on H. P. Lovecraft.

Lovecraft, the somewhat neglected American exponent of the weird and horror narrative, certainly deserves a greater publicity and attention from the academic researchers today. This interview is,

again, a student initiative. Thus here, indeed, is the tempting plenty, a veritable Goblin Market of the supernatural sort.

This singular year of the pandemic has been witness to the birth of a new genre of the supernatural—*Quar Horror*. The latest to arrive on the scene and on our screens is all about the horrors associated with the Covid-19 quarantine. In the film *Host* (2020), shot remotely for three months, the director Rob Savage uses a normal Zoom meeting to unleash his brand of the eerie and the unearthly. A demon is released in the course of a ‘safe’ Zoom meeting and terrible deaths and devastation follow. This irrational horror that now haunts the housebound under quarantine must soon be shown the door and the paranoid offered the psychoanalyst’s couch. From its projection on the screen, Quar Horror must now be dealt with on the page. Once this text of the upright is set up and Quar Horror tackled, let us hope that all will be right with our weird world, at least as right as it can possibly be under these ‘cabin’d, cribb’d, confined’ circumstances; it is important for our mental wellbeing. I can only hope another issue on the supernatural somewhere will deal with this new offspring of the uncanny—the Quarantine Horror, thus ensuring our release when we are completely ‘bound in/To saucy doubts and fears.’

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