

The Forbidden Mysteries in the works of H. P. Lovecraft

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the forbidden mysteries in the works of H. P. Lovecraft. Man gained knowledge from the sin of eating the fruit from the tree of knowledge, according to Christianity. Knowledge is forbidden because it leads human beings towards their doom. Lovecraft is always interested in the mysterious things of the world. His stories focus on the hidden secrets and the less explored objects of the world. He created mysterious creatures from the dream world and based on the inspiration he gained from his predecessors. The knowledge of knowing too much digs one's grave on his back. Lovecraft is a chief exponent of making myth from his own visions. The forbidden knowledge creates chaos in the lives of the protagonists of Lovecraft. After knowing the mysteries the protagonists lives becomes mysterious as well and they are haunted by disasters.

Key words: Book, Experience, Knowledge, Mysteries, Myth, World

Howard Phillips Lovecraft is one of the prominent writers of the speculative fiction in American Horror Literature. His short stories affirm the horror and weird nature of the world. He created myths and mysteries in his works. He portrayed new dreamscapes with weird creatures based on his dreams. His works got acclaimed after his death. His style of writing horror stories is called as "Lovecraftian Horror." Many writers take him as their model for writing and he gives number of ideas to develop horror elements in fiction through his short stories. He worships Poe because he is like a god-father to Lovecraft in the literary field. He is inspired by mythologies and folklores and he gets inspired from these myths. He has an interest in astronomy and wants to read about space but his wish becomes an unfinished dream. The interest on space and mythology drives him to fictionalised alien creatures and myth.

Lovecraft has written about more than seventy short stories and all stories revolve around a kind of mystery, terror, and horror. He begins to write poems in his early age. He leads his life as a lonely child, his father died when he was a child and his family lost their wealth. Due to his health issues he drops out of his school and unable to continue his higher studies. His grandfather tells him stories and influenced him to read many books. His inherent fear of being alienated is reflected in his stories. He often writes about mysteries lies in the forbidden knowledge. He employs occult themes in his short stories even though he is not an occultist. Many readers find them as real and begin to believe it.

The first ever sin of mankind starts with the temptation of Satan's words and go with his idea of eating the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge. Eve is the first person to commit the sin. She is flattered by the words of Satan. She believes him and decides to eat the prohibited fruit. After she eats the fruit she urges Adam to take the fruit but he refuses at first

then slowly he is convinced by the words of Eve. This is the first sin of man that leads him to make many sins. The forefathers of human kind go against the wish of God and get the curse from the almighty. The sin is committed by the first race of man but the punishment continues till now and the human race will endure this endless suffering throughout their life time. The exploration of a forbidden act will be rewarded by sin, madness, and death.

Man's nature is to search for new things and acquire new knowledge. Sometimes this exploration leads him to discover the path of creativity but most of the times it makes him crazy and even makes him miserable. Human beings are greedy by nature. They want to control nature and want all the things of the world would revolve around as per their wish. Humanity has a desire to master over the nature and wants to rule the entire planet. Lovecraft's several stories trace the encounter between humanity and the forbidden secrets of the world.

The great tragic play *Dr. Faustus* discusses the events in the life of Faustus who is a great scholar but his life ends with disasters. He mastered different subjects but he finds something is lagging in his knowledge. Then he decided to read the forbidden subject "Necromancy" or "Black Magic". As per the guidance of Satan he studied the black magic and signed the bond of lending his soul to Satan. He surrenders his soul after the twenty four years of enjoyment. He does not know that the sufferings of hell are waiting to catch him behind the merriment. At the end of the day he realizes his mistake but fate never let him go. He is going to undergo the everlasting turmoil. Thus the thirst for knowing more knowledge is rewarded by sin and death. Ben Jonson's *Alchemist* is a comic drama based on alchemy. There is a belief that an alchemist can turn metals into gold.

In the novel *Frankenstein*, the tragedy is born from the exploration of forbidden knowledge going against the nature. Victor wants to change the life and death pattern of man.

After his mother's death he wants to create an endless life for man and to defeat the death. He learns the secrets of medicine and starts his experiments to overcome death. In the process he creates a monster by connecting different parts of the different human bodies. Soon he successfully grants life to it in the end creating a monster instead of a human being. After the creation of the monster the unhappy things occur in the life of Victor Frankenstein. He lost his brother and his beloved; they are murdered by the monster. At the end he also dies and the monster is ready to give up its life after knowing the death of its master.

In the works of Lovecraft most of the narrators want to explore the forbidden things. Like him they need to acquire more knowledge and discover more things. "The Book" is an unfinished story of Lovecraft; the narrator of the story shares his experiences he has gained through a strange book. He is confused how to express his views and terrible visions. He gets the unnamed mysterious book from the dark forest. He does not know the title of the book and some of the pages were missing. It is a hand written book and it may be written before the invention of printing press. The book fascinates him so he starts to read the pages. Through the reading of some paragraphs he comes to conclusion that the book is about "black magic" and it will have the power to open the gates of the another world. It may also open the mysteries of the hidden world.

After that he gets immersed into the book, it changes his perception of understanding the world. Through his reading he finds a parallel world which is entirely new to him. This strange vision numbs him and his senses revolve around the past, the present, and the future. He then draws the five consecutive fire circles and read the incantations from the book. He stands in the middle of the circles in the attic room. Suddenly he is taken by the dark wind into the new world with the city of weird architecture. He sees green plains and he finds a green coloured square shaped building. The narrator gets tensed and afraid of the place. He

then opens his eyes and realised he is in the same attic room. He learned that the mysterious things he experienced are created by the incantations of the book. After that terrible experience he becomes exhausted. The incidents are like a haunted dream and he is never able to forget. The narrator feels miserable after the exploration of the forbidden book. The occult practice of the narrator according to the book and his visions are expressed by Lovecraft as follows:

But still I read more—in hidden, forgotten books and scrolls to which my new vision led me—and pushed through fresh gateways of space and being and life-patterns toward the core of the unknown cosmos. I remember the night I made the five concentric circles of fire on the floor, and stood in the innermost one chanting that monstrous litany the messenger from Tartary had brought. The walls melted away, and I was swept by the black wind through the gulfs of fathomless grey with the needle-like pinnacles of unknown mountain miles below me. (299)

The same kind of experience is experienced by an unnamed narrator from the short story “The Book of Sand” by Borges. There is a forbidden book and it is an endless book. One can read the book but unable to finish the book because it starts to multiply its pages. The narrator gets this book from a book seller as a gift. The book is wrapped by a cloth and he says he brought the book from India. It is inscribed with the word Bombay and Holy Writ as titles of the bounded cover. But the name of the book is “The Book of Sand” because it grows like infinite sand one cannot count its pages. It is book of infinite pages and he opens the book and finds it is written in the unknown language with several illustrations. He then placed the book in his book shelf. Later he is preoccupied with the thought of the book. At last he discovers that the book is a creepy one and becomes afraid of the book. He wants to

get rid of the book so he thinks to burn it but he changes his mind because it may harm the people if he burns it. The narrator plans to conceal the book in the National Library. He successfully hides the book in the book shelf of the basement. Then he is relieved from the fear of the forbidden book of never ending pages. This prohibited book has no starting point and ending, it is like a creeper which keeps on growing infinitely. Borges is of the opinion that hunger for knowledge is also a monster that devours the starving person, when the person attempts to consume more knowledge. Like the book unquenchable thirst for knowledge consumes the energy of a person. The growing pages and the nature of the book are described by Borges as follows:

I opened the book at random. The script was strange to me. The pages, which were worn and typographically poor, were laid out in double columns, as in a Bible. The text was closely printed, and it was ordered in versicles. In the upper corners of the pages were Arabic numbers. I noticed that one left-hand page bore the number (let us say) 40,514 and the facing right-hand page 999. I turned the leaf; it was numbered with eight digits. It also bore a small illustration, like the kind used in dictionaries an anchor drawn with pen and ink, as if by a schoolboy's clumsy hand. (118)

Lovecraft's "The History of the Necronomicon" is a short story but reads like a historical document. It is about the Abdul Alhazred and his work Necronomicon. The original title of the book is *Al Azif-azif*, it refers to the buzzing sounds of insects or howling of demons. The book is written during the end of his life. He shares the mystery occurred in the life of Alhazred as ". . . his final death or disappearance (738 A. D.) many terrible and conflicting things are told. . . . seized by an invisible monster in broad daylight and devoured horribly before a large number of fright-frozen witnesses." (475).Ebn Khallikah, biographer

of Alhazred says that he is taken away by the invisible evil thing and he worships Yogsothoth and Cthulhu. His book attains popularity in 950 A.D. over philosophers and is translated in Greek under the title *Necronomicon* by Theodorus Philates. It is also translated in Latin by Olas Wormius. It is printed twice in fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. One is kept in Germany and the next is printed in Spanish. It is banned by the Pope Gregory IX. It is believed that its copies are kept in the libraries and museums of several nations and some copies exist in secret. This book is banned in many countries. R. W. Chambers says that the idea of the book is taken from the novel *The King in Yellow*. Lovecraft refers to this mad Mohamed and his book in his work "The Nameless City." Through the short history of necronomicon Lovecraft creates a pseudo history and myth to make the readers feel that the myth it is real. Lovecraft is really a great myth maker.

Lovecraft is an exponent of making myths and mysteries in his works. The forbidden things are the recurrent elements of his short stories. The narrators have undergone the thrilling experience after getting the knowledge of forbidden mysteries. Lovecraft combines the horror and seriousness within the story to evoke the interest. Thus Lovecraft is the master of the prohibited knowledge with the blending of horror and suspense. His short stories portray the predicament of humanity falling prey to the forbidden mysteries of the world.

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