

“HYPNOS”

AN ANNOTATED EDITION

For H.P. Lovecraft on his 130th birthday, 20th August 2020. Version 1.0.



“Hypnose” (1904) by Sascha Schneider (Germany, 1870-1927).

FRONT ILLUSTRATION: “Hypnose”, first appeared in print in 1902 in the most popular German manual on the practice of hypnosis.¹ Hypnos was once deemed a god of sleep, but not the god of dreams. The older bearded figure with cat-like hair is probably meant to be Oneiros, god of dreams. Note that the German artist Sascha Schneider (1870-1927) has visually associated poppies (opium) and a vine (wine) with the sleeping-standing figure of Hypnos. The third plant in the picture is Hyacinth, presumably for Hyacinthus of Sparta, the beloved boy of Apollo and also Thamyris. Possibly this last plant is intended to quietly indicate, to those aware of Greek myth, that sexual satisfaction can also be a soporific. The rather phallic nature of these flower-stalks with their white effusions presses home the visual allusion. Interestingly the poet Loveman — friend of H.P. Lovecraft and the dedicatee of the story “Hypnos” — uses hyacinth flowers to allude to Hypnos in his long poem “The Hermaphrodite”.

The English translation of Heck’s *Iconographic Encyclopedia* (Vol. IV, 1852) usefully discusses the distinction made by the ancients in depicting Sleep...

“Among the representations of Hypnos we must carefully distinguish between *material sleep* and the *genius of sleep*. The artists usually conceived the former as twin brother of death, a boy with closed eyes lying in the bosom of his foster-mother Night. [...] The *genius of sleep*, on the contrary, is usually represented as a winged boy with an inverted torch, or as a young man standing with reclining head and closed eyes, the left arm leaning on a stump, and the right hand holding the inverted torch.”

Here we see this reclining head, and the open hand though not the inverted slipped torch — but there is a rock on the ground that would be in the place of a dropped fabric torch-head. The flick of hair curling above the ears somewhat suggests small wings emerging from the temples.

¹ Michael J. Cowan, *Cult of the Will: Nervousness and German Modernity*, Penn State Press, 2008, page 143.

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Hypnos²

by H.P. Lovecraft

To S. L.³

“Apropos of sleep, that sinister adventure of all our nights, we may say that men go to bed daily with an audacity that would be incomprehensible if we did not know that it is the result of ignorance of the danger.”⁴

—Baudelaire.⁵

² *Hypnos* — The text I have used was copied from www.hplovecraft.com — but with the paragraphing, American spellings, italicization, and the Greek end name then checked and corrected with reference to S.T. Joshi’s definitive Penguin Classics edition. The story was written in March 1922 or thereabouts, and then published in May 1923 in *The National Amateur*. It was published again in the bumper May/June/July 1924 issue of the magazine *Weird Tales* — this was the issue that was allegedly banned from circulation in Indiana.

³ *Dedication* — This dedication to Samuel Loveman (1887?–1976), written in pen, was found on a typescript copy of “Hypnos”. On this see S.T. Joshi, *I Am Providence*, page 417.

⁴ *Apropos of sleep* — The idea, followed by a pointer to the “motto”, appeared as an early item in Lovecraft’s *Commonplace Book* of ‘story ideas’...

“23. The man who would not sleep—dares not sleep—takes drugs to keep himself awake. Finally falls asleep—and something happens. Motto from Baudelaire p.214.4”. (this entry dates to pre-1919)

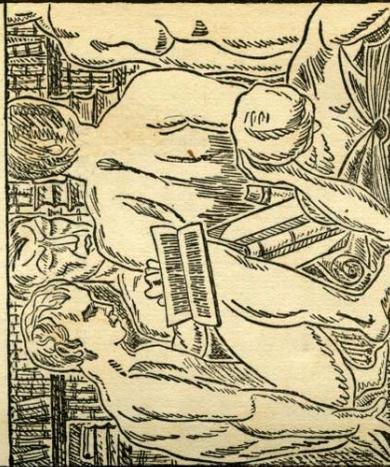
Also somewhat relevant to “Hypnos” is the earlier *Commonplace Book* item...

“20. Man journeys into the past—or imaginative realm—leaving bodily shell behind.” (pre-1919)

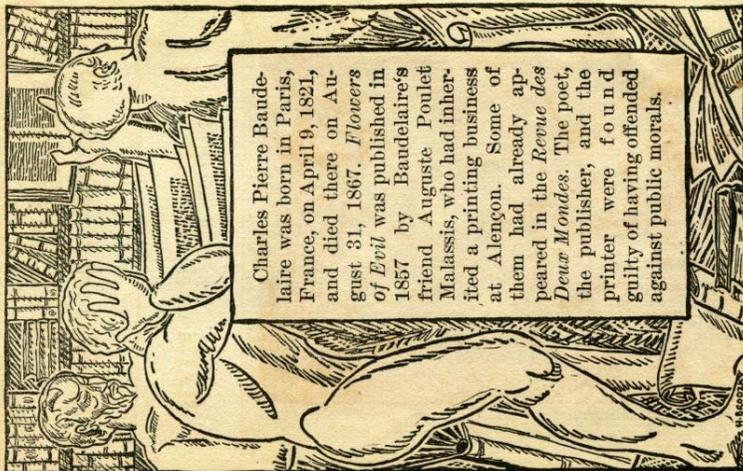
⁵ *Baudelaire* — S. T. Joshi has tracked this line down to a specific volume of Baudelaire owned by Lovecraft, *Baudelaire, His Prose and Poetry* (1919). The book has a complete selection of the poetry, and also gives prose notes found after the author’s death, Lovecraft’s quotation being taken from the latter.

**BAUDELAIRE:
HIS PROSE AND POETRY**

Edited by T. R. SMITH



BON AND LIVERIGHT
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK



Charles Pierre Baudelaire was born in Paris, France, on April 9, 1821, and died there on August 31, 1867. *Flowers of Evil* was published in 1857 by Baudelaire's friend Auguste Poulet Malassis, who had inherited a printing business at Alençon. Some of them had already appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. The poet, the publisher, and the printer were found guilty of having offended against public morals.

Thus we know that Lovecraft's edition also opens with two remarkable illustrations drawn by Brodsky, as shown above. Also of note is that Samuel Loveman, to whom "Hypnos" was dedicated, had made good translations of Baudelaire by early 1922. Hart Crane, in a 1922 letter on Loveman...

"You will like my classic, puritan, inhibited friend Sam Loveman who translates Baudelaire charmingly! It is hard to get him to do anything outside the imagination,—but he is charming and has just given me a

most charming work on Greek Vases (made in Deutschland) in which satyrs with great erections prance to the ceremonies of Dionysius with all the fervour of de Gourmont's descriptions of sexual sacrifice in *Physique de L'Amour*, which I am lately reading in trans." — letter c. June 1922, Crane still in Cleveland, *The letters of Hart Crane, 1916-1932* (1952).

Loveman published such translations in his amateur journal *The Saturnian*. Which ran from June 1921 to March 1922, with March containing both Baudelaire and Verlaine. Loveman had probably obtained the unexpurgated French volumes he needed with the aid of Hart Crane, Crane having ordered them from Paris in late 1920. Lovecraft read Loveman's amateur journal *The Saturnian*, and also records having his friend Galpin's "Gallick" French books shipped to Providence for his own reading. Despite his lack of ability in the language, by June 1922 Lovecraft had even attempted his own translation of a poem by Baudelaire (letter to Galpin, 20th June 1922). Loveman's translations from the French in *The Saturnian* and in typescript had been the spur which encouraged Alfred Galpin, then age 20, to meet with Loveman...

"Baudelaire and Verlaine, still [then] vaguely considered symbolists, were my own favorites in 1922. ... I was drawn [to meet him] in part by my admiration for the translations that Loveman made of these "symbolist" poets, in the manner of our idol Arthur Symons [British poet and author of *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, revised ed. 1908; and *Charles Baudelaire : a study*, 1920] — Alfred Galpin, from "A Boat in the Tower: Rimbaud in Cleveland, 1922", *Renaissance*, Vol. 25. No. 1, Autumn 1972.

Presumably this spur arose because Galpin was sent copies of *The Saturnian* or saw the poems in typescript, as Lovecraft was promoting Loveman's poetry...

"As an admirer of Verlaine and Baudelaire, you may enjoy looking over the enclosed translations by our scintillant fellow-amateur Samuel Loveman. (To be returned ultimately to me.)" — Lovecraft, *Selected Letters I*, page 166.

Loveman... "had known [Hart] Crane from boyhood" (Frank Belknap Long, *The Early Long*, 1975, page XV) and — according to Loveman — he and Hart Crane became lovers, probably by the Autumn of 1922 following Lovecraft's visit to Cleveland. Crane's above comment that... "It is hard to get him to do anything outside the imagination" has some bearing on the themes of life vs. art in "Hypnos". In a letter of 1924, Crane enlarges on his 1922 comment thus...

"I see literature as very closely related to life,—its essence, in fact. But for Sam, all art is a refuge away from life," — Hart Crane, from a letter of 23rd Sept 1924, Brooklyn, NYC., from *The letters of Hart Crane, 1916-1932*, 1952.

May the merciful gods, if indeed there be such, guard those hours when no power of the will, or drug that the cunning of man devises, can keep me from the chasm of sleep. Death is merciful, for there is no return therefrom, but with him who has come back out of the nethermost chambers of night, haggard and knowing, peace rests nevermore. Fool that I was to plunge with such unsanctioned frenzy into mysteries no man was meant to penetrate; fool or god that *he* was — my only friend, who led me and went before me, and who in the end passed into terrors which may yet be mine!

We met, I recall, in a railway station,⁶ where he was the centre of a crowd of the vulgarly curious. He was unconscious, having fallen⁷ in a kind of convulsion which imparted to his slight black-clad body a

⁶ *We met* — When writing the story circa March 1922, Lovecraft had yet to meet Loveman face-to-face. While usually rhetorically eager in his letters to meet his young correspondents — e.g. “Damn me if I wouldn’t give ten years of my declining life to see that little divvle Alfredus [Galpin] ; to gaze one moment upon the flower-like face of my chee-ild” (letter to Kleiner, 21st September 1921) etc — he does not seem to have been making plans to actually do so in Loveman’s case. But on 3rd April 1922 Lovecraft was inveigled by telephone, at short notice, into suddenly taking the five-hour train trip from Providence to New York City. There he would meet Loveman in the Pennsylvania Station. Sadly a mix-up meant they actually met a short while later on the steps of 259 Parkside, Brooklyn Heights. For Lovecraft’s account of this fateful day see *Letters from New York*, pages 1-3.

⁷ *fallen* — Lovecraft’s seminal poem “The City” (published October 1919) also features a fallen statue as the central motif. See my recent annotated *The annotated “The City” (1919)* for full details and a lengthy discussion of the possibly meanings. See also: the poem “Talent” by Loveman: “Dante saw hell, an opal lit with ice, / And heaven, the loneliness of love long flown; / I, who have neither hell nor paradise, / Breathe speech and beauty into hearts of stone.” Loveman was a great admirer of Ancient Greek sculpture, and would have known that — for many readers — his lines would evoke the myth in which a sculptor brings his statues to life and to love.

strange rigidity.⁸ I think he was then approaching forty years of age,⁹ for there were deep lines in the face, wan and hollow-cheeked, but oval and actually *beautiful*; and touches of gray in the thick, waving hair and small full beard which had once been of the deepest raven black.¹⁰

⁸ *kind of convulsion* — To see a faint or an epileptic fit or similar, on the street, must at that time have been far more common than it is today. There was also at that time the idea that an artist was attuned to “vibrations” of various sorts that others could not catch. To physically faint was the sign in the literary Gothic of the high status and highly-sensitive individual, exemplified by the poetic notion that a poem of genius may be said to have been “caught from the hand of the fainting poet”. An 1837 poem refers to the way that the Muse... “Shone on the fainting Poet’s eye upturn’d”. It was current as late as 1923, when Andre Chevrillon has... “Shelley, the poet of the fainting ecstatic soul” — from *Three Studies in English Literature: Kipling, Galsworthy, Shakespeare*.

⁹ *forty years of age* — In April 1922 Samuel Loveman was around age 35, although the current University of Delaware archive of his correspondence has “b.1885?” on his biography, which would make him a year or two older than that. As this relates to possible models for this character, certainly Poe died at 40, though Lord Dunsany was 43 at the time “Hypnos” was written – see next note. Lovecraft had discovered Dunsany’s work in the Autumn/Fall of 1919.

¹⁰ *raven* — Peter Cannon’s introductory *H.P. Lovecraft* (1989) took the use of the word ‘raven’ to indicate that Lovecraft intends the reader to divine that Poe (author of the famous poem “The Raven”) is this man in “Hypnos”. Certainly Long later claimed to recall that Lovecraft once raised aloft his copy of “Hypnos” and dedicated it to Poe, at Poe’s birthplace. But even if Long’s memory was correct — and his often vague or muddled recollections of events were made after a period of more than fifty years — this does not mean that Lovecraft intended this key Hypnos character to be a 1:1 Poe for the reader. There is indeed Poe’s magnificent high brow to consider, but Poe was not otherwise what one might call handsome. Given the other internal evidence in “Hypnos”, my feeling is that the appearance of Lovecraft’s beautiful man is a typically Lovecraftian conflation of multiple sources, in this case the mostly likely source being Samuel Loveman himself, overlaid with a some touches of Poe and of Long via Lord Dunsany (who had a the tower studio-chamber in Kent, England, of which more later). On the possible Loveman resemblance we can note that he was also dark in appearance, as is the man in the story. Before Lovecraft met Loveman, a photograph had been sent...

“Loveman, in the dream [I had of him], looked exactly like the snapshots of himself which he has sent me—a large, robust young man, not the least Semitic in features (albeit dark), and very handsome save for a

His brow was white as the marble of Pentelicus,¹¹ and of a height and breadth almost god-like. I said to myself, with all the ardour of a sculptor, that this man was a faun's statue¹² out of antique Hellas,¹³

pair of protruding ears.” — Lovecraft, writing on... “the frightful dream I had the night after I received S.L.’s [Loveman’s] latest letter”, 11th December 1919.

¹¹ *Mount Pentelicus* — site of quarries that were major suppliers of the perfect fine white marble with a beautiful sheen in sunlight, that enabled Pericleian Athens to become known as a major school of sculpture in the classical world.

¹² *faun* — A faun was a common mythological figure in Ancient Greece, having erect pointed animal ears and the tail of a buck deer or horse. Fauns were helpers and follower of Dionysius, part of his hedonistic woodland revels. They were symbolic of a male on the cusp between boyhood and manhood, vigorous but graceful and essentially innocent. It was the later Romans who confused the faun figure with the wood-god Pan and with satyrs, and introduced the currently accepted ‘half-male half-goat’ appearance and the playing of the ‘Pan pipes’. In 1924 Lovecraft gives some indication of what he understands a male who is like-a-faun to be, in his essay “The Work of Frank Belknap Long Jr.”...

“He [Long] is a young faun strayed out of Arcady, innocent and vibrant” — from the *United Amateur*, May 1924.

In terms of living people, Lovecraft seems to have held to the modern distinction between innocent or naïve fauns and licentious animalistic satyrs. There is evidence for this from a letter to Galpin (31st August 1921) written near the date of “Hypnos”...

“First came Smiffkins [‘Tryout’ Smith], who had received the note I had put in his mail slot the day before, and who was ready and waiting under a gnarled tree. How I like that queer old cuss! He is in truth a wild woodland thing — a real faun if there ever was one — and if I were an artist I would draw him with goat’s feet”.

Lovecraft considers a faun can be older, and yet age alone does not make the faun turn into a satyr. He suggests the same to Kleiner, 12th June 1921...

“[‘Tryout’] Smith says he wants to leave me all his old amateur papers, but I tell him he must live on for ever, like the kindly, gracious old faun that he is! [...] I believe he is really a faun, just dwelling for a while on the rim of the sylvan shades that gave him birth!”

He further refers to fauns in a November 1922 letter to Loveman... “remember me to all the fauns in Wade and Ruckerfeller Parks!” (*Letters to Maurice W. Moe*, page 488), though here the fauns are presumed to be the openly swishy gay men Lovecraft had met on his visit to Cleveland, such as the young composer Gordon Hatfield. Loveman did start a Colophon Club early in 1923 (not to be

dug from a temple's ruins¹⁴ and brought somehow to life in our stifling age only to feel the chill and pressure of devastating years. And when he opened his immense, sunken, and wildly luminous black eyes I knew he would be thenceforth my only friend— the only friend of one who had never possessed a friend¹⁵ before— for I saw that such eyes

confused with the famous Club later organised by Lovecraft's other friend Vrest Orton) at which the members were read Lovecraft's "Hypnos" (*Letters to Maurice W. Moe*, page 490), but the reference to Loveman's local "fauns" pre-dates that.

¹³ *Hellas* — Lovecraft called Samuel Loveman... "the last of the Hellenes — a golden god of the elder world, fallen upon pygmies" ("Bureau of Critics" column in the *National Amateur*, March 1922. Quoted in S.T. Joshi's *I Am Providence*). Of *Hellas*, meaning Ancient Greece, Lovecraft wrote a number of poems to Greece and in the Grecian manner around the period 1920 ("Hellas", "On a Grecian Colonnade in a Park" and others) and the beautiful fantasy story "The Quest of Iranon" (February 1921) also has a remarkably Greek air. Lovecraft had also allowed Loveman to read his story "The Quest of Iranon", shortly after it was written in late February 1921 (letter to Kleiner, 23rd April 1921). "Iranon" is the most beautiful of the wistful 'Dunsany' pieces from Lovecraft's pen, and those familiar with this story will readily appreciate why Loveman wept over the sadness of the tale. It also has certain thematic parallels with "Hypnos", in its evocations of friendship and beauty. Lovecraft also wrote later that...

"The Hellenes [Ancient Greeks], with their strange beauty-worship and defective moral ideas, are to be admired and pitied at once, as luminous but remote phantoms..." — "The Literature of Rome", *United Amateur*, November 1918.

Note also that references to Greek sculpture are also present in Lovecraft's earlier story "The Tree" (1920) and "The Temple" (1920).

¹⁴ *temple's ruins* — perhaps Lovecraft's small nod to the origin of "Hypnos" is his earlier story "The Temple" (1920). See my comparison table for the two stories, given at the end of this annotated edition.

¹⁵ *my only friend* — Samuel Loveman was perhaps Lovecraft's first real friend, in terms of someone who was an intellectual equal and not a young "sonny boy" to be tutored and guided. Loveman was very well versed in ancient classical and Elizabethan literature, and in fine literature in general... "Loveman, you may know, has a vast library of rare first editions and other treasures precious to the bibliophile's heart" — letter by Lovecraft, 11th December 1919. Inseparable or very close male friendship is a plot point found in a number of early Lovecraft stories such as "The Hound", "Randolph Carter", and "The Quest of Iranon".

must have looked fully upon the grandeur and the terror of realms beyond normal consciousness and reality; realms which I had cherished in fancy, but vainly sought. So as I drove the crowd away I told him he must come home with me and be my teacher and leader in unfathomed mysteries, and he assented without speaking a word.¹⁶ Afterward I found that his voice was music¹⁷— the music¹⁸ of deep viols¹⁹ and of crystalline spheres.²⁰ We talked often in the night, and

Note also the two friends in “The Moon Bog” which, in its dreams and shafts of light, even has other basic elements in common with “Hypnos”. Close friendship can also be found in Lovecraft’s work ten years after “Hypnos”. Lovecraft opens his Hazel Heald revision story “The Man of Stone” (1932) with the statement on Ben Hayden that... “I had been his closest acquaintance for years, and our Damon and Pythias friendship made us inseparable at all times.” This classical reference is surely Lovecraft’s, and it refers to two young male friends in an Ancient Greek colony of the first century, who lived together and who were willing to die for each other.

¹⁶ *he assented* — Lovecraft was about to meet Loveman, with whom he had been silently corresponding by letter for, to the point that Loveman had become his best friend, all by correspondence. When they met, Lovecraft read “Hypnos” to Loveman, and Loveman read parts of his long poem “The Hermaphrodite”. This was in Sonia’s apartment, but Sonia had tactfully gone shopping and left them alone for many hours. “The Hermaphrodite” title refers to Hermaphroditus, deemed a handsome son of Aphrodite the goddess of love, in which two bodies of male and female were said to be equally merged. The emerging understanding in the early gay culture of England and Germany, circa the early 1920s, was that a male ‘invert’ was best to be understood as being ‘a woman in a man’s body’.

¹⁷ *voice* — in a letter, Lovecraft writes of Samuel Loveman that... “his voice is soft and mellow” — from *Letters from New York*, page 2.

¹⁸ *music* — perhaps a foreshadowing of the power of Hypnos, god of sleep, in which Lovecraft here alludes to the power of such music to envelop one in drowsiness. Another of Loveman’s great interests was music.

¹⁹ *viol or ‘viola da gamba’* — a stringed musical instrument invented shortly before the Elizabethan period, and very popular during the time of Shakespeare. Loveman was a self-taught expert on Elizabethan theatre, literature and music.

²⁰ *spheres* — in the Elizabethan period there was the poetic notion that the stars were ornaments attached to crystalline spheres that revolved above the Earth, an idea reflected in some works by Shakespeare. The movement of these spheres was supposed to generate ‘the music of the spheres’. As a specialist in

in the day, when I chiseled busts of him and carved miniature heads in ivory²¹ to immortalise his different expressions.²²

Of our studies it is impossible to speak, since they held so slight a connection with anything of the world as living men conceive it. They were of that vaster and more appalling universe of dim entity and consciousness which lies deeper than matter, time, and space, and whose existence we suspect only in certain forms of sleep— those rare dreams beyond dreams which come never to common men, and but once or twice in the lifetime of imaginative men.²³ The cosmos of our

Elizabethan literature, Samuel Lovecraft would no doubt have seen the historical meaning in the story's evocation of cosmic music. The ultimate origin of the theory of crystal spheres lies far back in Ancient Greece.

²¹ *ivory* — Lovecraft's slightly earlier story, "The Temple" (1920) muses on the destructive power of small sculpture — "a very odd bit of ivory carved to represent a youth's head crowned with laurel" — and like "Hypnos" links sculpture with male beauty.

²² *miniature beads* — Lovecraft was fond of small sculpture and *bas-relief* tiles, and at the end of his life the shelves of his small bedroom area was adorned with gifts of small figurative sculptures made by Robert Barlow or ancient artefacts given to him by Loveman. Loveman had built up an impressive collection of art objects, although Lovecraft only saw the collection in September 1922, after "Hypnos" was written. Loveman would later gift his friend valuable items from the Hart Crane collection...

"...over to Loveman's new flat at 17 Middagh Street — where for the first time his various art treasures are adequately display'd. My generous host presented me with two fine museum objects (don't get envious, O Fellow-Curator! [Morton]) — to wit, a prehistorick stone *eikon* from Mexico, and an African flint implement, with primitively graven ivory handle; both from the collection of the late Hart Crane, which Crane's mother turned over to him." — Lovecraft to Morton in 1933, *Selected Letters* IV, pages 128-29. The next Christmas there were more such gifts from Loveman... "a real Egyptian *ushabti* (small funerary statuette) 5000 years old, a Mayan stone idol of almost equal antiquity, & a carved wooden monkey from the East Indian island of Bali." — Lovecraft to Toldridge in 1934, *Selected Letters* IV, pages 347.

²³ *dreams* — The conversations on dreams between Loveman and Lovecraft in the early 1920s, and it seems likely that there was such, is now lost due to the destruction of the overwhelming majority of their letters. Those that survive

waking knowledge, born from such an universe as a bubble²⁴ is born from the pipe of a jester, touches it only as such a bubble may touch its sardonic source when sucked back by the jester's whim.²⁵ Men of learning suspect it little and ignore it mostly. Wise men have interpreted dreams, and the gods have laughed.²⁶ One man with

are to be found annotated in the back of *Letters to Maurice W. Moe*. Some have turned up from time to time, suggesting not all were destroyed. One undated two-page letter said to be from circa 1928 mysteriously turned up for sale in 2008. Hailing Loveman as "Aonian Endymion", Lovecraft added to his already long list of names by signing himself as "Theobaldus Love". This is possibly the same as the September 1930 letter in the 2018 volume of *Moe* letters, but there Lovecraft signs himself Theobaldus Senex ("Theobaldus the Senile").

²⁴ *bubble* — A 'bubble universe' theory was common until c. 1920...

"our universe could have arisen as a bubble from a finite part of an infinite universe without beginning or end, or we may live in a genuine steady-state universe without beginning or end. ... This was the common view prior to about 1920." —Alain Blanchard, *Physical Cosmology*, Editions Frontieres, page 56.

Lovecraft could be alluding here to some theory about the cycle of expansion and contraction in the universe. But if so then Lovecraft must have picked it up from commentary on Einstein's general relativity, which appeared to imply that the universe should be either contracting or expanding. This idea was not very widely known until the later 1920s when Edwin Hubble provided measured confirmations of the apparent expansion of the universe, but it is not impossible that Lovecraft had read some early musings on the matter in a science journal or book review. An alternative explanation would be that Lovecraft had taken special note of Poe's long poem "Eureka" about the beginnings and ultimate fate of our universe, which has...

"a spookily intuitive description of the Big Bang theory more than 70 years before astrophysicists came up with the idea ... "Eureka" goes on to propose that all the scattered and blown-apart atoms of the universe are now rushing together again." (Eliza Strickland, *Nautilus*, 10th September 2014).

²⁵ *jester* — Lovecraft had a few years earlier characterised Time as a jester, in his poem "Bells" (1919)...

"The jester Time stalks darkly thro' the mead" [mead=thick moist meadow grass].

²⁶ *interpreted dreams* — the early psychologist Sigmund Freud. Lovecraft discovered Freud in Spring 1921, and though intrigued on certain points he was not overly impressed, especially on the matter of dream interpretation. In

Oriental eyes has said that all time and space are relative,²⁷ and men have laughed. But even that man with Oriental eyes has done no more than suspect.²⁸ I had wished and tried to do more than suspect, and my friend had tried and partly succeeded. Then we both tried together, and with exotic drugs²⁹ courted terrible and forbidden dreams in the tower studio chamber³⁰ of the old manor-house in hoary Kent.³¹

“Beyond ‘The Wall of Sleep’” (1919) he talks of... “Freud [...] with his puerile symbolism”.

²⁷ *man with Oriental eyes* — The scientist Albert Einstein. Lovecraft’s attitude to ‘Orientals’ was not as highly prejudiced in early 1922 as it would be later, and he was rather intrigued by Japanese culture and his favourite film-star of the time was a young male Japanese actor. He became more prejudiced after his mid 1920s experiences in New York City. However, since Einstein was Jewish, it seems probable that Lovecraft is here using ‘Orientals’ as a poetic substitute for Jewish. This is, perhaps, another internal indication that the story was written for the Jewish Samuel Loveman, and was specifically meant to be read to him face-to-face when they met.

²⁸ *suspect* — this appears to allude to the then-unproven nature of Einstein’s theories of relativity. Also, it appears that Lovecraft only half grasped and sometimes misunderstood the theories, as did many others in the 1920s...

“It is worth noting that Einstein denies altogether the existence of the ether. For him there is no substance whatsoever in inter-planetary and interstellar space; radiant energy [light] being something substantial projected through utter nothingness. So far I have been speaking of Einstein’s first and simpler theories. I cannot state my own position yet, for I am bewildered by the conflict of evidence.” — Lovecraft in a letter to Alfred Galpin, April 1920.

²⁹ *exotic drugs* — Lovecraft shunned liquor and narcotics, but he was obviously aware of their role in the lives of many writers and artists and was interested in their ‘literary effects’. Formulas containing opium-derived drugs that today would be thought of as ‘hard’ were then often available ‘over the counter’ in general stores, so the use of “exotic” does indicate more *outré* drugs.

³⁰ *tower studio chamber* — Loveman’s friend and lover Hart Crane had a tower chamber of a kind in Cleveland, the furnishings of which Lovecraft displayed an accurate intimacy with in his parodic modernist poem “Plaster-all” (*The Ancient Track*, 2nd ed., pages 254-256). Presumably these intimate details had come to Lovecraft via Loveman, or Lovecraft may have visited the place. However, the more likely influence on this “tower studio chamber” setting is outlined in the next footnote. A somewhat similar tower setting had been used in Lovecraft’s

Among the agonies of these after days is that chief of torments— inarticulateness. What I learned and saw in those hours of impious³² exploration can never be told— for want of symbols or suggestions in any language.³³ I say this because from first to last our discoveries partook only of the nature of *sensations*; sensations correlated with no impression which the nervous system of normal humanity is capable of receiving.³⁴ They were sensations, yet within them lay unbelievable

story “The Moon-Bog” (March 1921) a year earlier, but that use was probably just conventionally Gothic.

³¹ *Kent* — why Kent? It seems quite possible to me that the choice of the county of Kent was a nod to Lord Dunsany. One of Dunsany’s two main residences being English childhood home at Dunstall Priory, Shoreham, Sevenoaks, Kent. This fact was known to Lovecraft, since he had to write this address on the correspondence he sent to ask Dunsany to accept the role of 1920 Laureate Judge of Poetry for the United Amateur Press Association. Finding this address active, Lovecraft then passed it to his young friend Galpin in a letter of April 1920. Further confirmation of Lovecraft’s use of Dunsany’s residence is found in the text of “Hypnos” itself, in the “tower studio chamber” since there is indeed a tower in Dunsany’s preserved Kent home, with rooms inside it. A visitor who knew Dunsany remembered the... “yew trees, just outside the window of my tower room” at Kent (Hazel Littlefield, in *Critical Essays on Lord Dunsany*, page 21). English Heritage notes that... “The chief feature of the house [1806] is a round tower with conical slate roof”. At his ancestral home, an ancient Irish castle, Dunsany usually worked in a small room at the top of one of the towers. Thus one supposes he may have had a similar “tower studio chamber” in the tower at his Kent home, although I can find no reference to which room he liked to work in while he was resident in Kent. Lovecraft had heard Dunsany speak about his work in person, and could have gleaned such details from his talk or from newspaper profiles of the writer.

³² *impious* — This not a reference to imp creatures, but is the opposite of *piety* and has a meaning of being ‘disrespectful of god’, or ‘dissenting from the very idea of god’.

³³ *any language* — Lovecraft is of course famous for the “unspeakable” nature of his horrors and secrets, and it was also a strong feature of the closeted gay life of the time. Frank Belknap Long takes this as his opening gambit in “The Space Eaters” (1928), one of the earliest stories to feature Lovecraft as a character.

³⁴ *normal humanity* — Lovecraft implies that aesthetes are sensitive to vibrations and sensations that are simply unavailable to ordinary people.

elements of time and space— things which at bottom possess no distinct and definite existence. Human utterance can best convey the general character of our experiences by calling them *plungings* or *soarings*; for in every period of revelation some part of our minds broke boldly away from all that is real and present, rushing aerially³⁵ along shocking, unlighted, and fear-haunted abysses, and occasionally *tearing* through certain well-marked and typical obstacles describable only as viscous, uncouth clouds of vapors. In these black and bodiless flights³⁶

³⁵ *rushing aerially* — This recalls the nightmares of Lovecraft’s young boyhood, in which he would find himself snatched up for airborne flights by the dreaded leather-winged and faceless ‘night gaunts’.

³⁶ *bodiless flights* — Lovecraft also has this kind of cosmic and trans-cosmic voyaging in “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” (1919) and “From Beyond” (1920). Hypnos was deemed to fly. In an ancient sculpture Hypnos is shown...

“in a running position that is meant to indicate flying: his body is therefore inclined forward, left leg advanced in a wide stride, outstretched right arm pouring a potion to induce sleep, left arm bent back holding poppies.” — Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway, *Hellenistic Sculpture*, University of Wisconsin Press, page 172.



The more famous British Museum bronze head of Hypnos has a bird’s wing sprouting from his head. Originally there were two wings, to symbolize flight, thought one had been lost by accident. This was found in 1868; noticed in *The Art Journal* in 1874 (“We have the exquisite bronze head of Hypnos, the sleep-god, with wings of some night-bird bearing it aloft, and in the face the strong fluttering pulse as of something in flight”); proclaimed by *Blackwood’s magazine* in 1888 (“No one should visit the Museum without going to see the head of Aphrodite and the winged head of *Hypnos*, the god of sleep, which are shown in the second *bronze* room”); and documented in a scholarly manner in English in 1899 in *British Museum Bronzes*.

we were sometimes alone and sometimes together. When we were together, my friend was always far ahead; I could comprehend his presence despite the absence of form by a species of pictorial memory whereby his face appeared to me, golden from a strange light and frightful with its weird beauty, its anomalously youthful cheeks, its burning eyes, its Olympian³⁷ brow, and its shadowing hair and growth of beard.

Of the progress of time we kept no record, for time had become to us the merest illusion. I know only that there must have been something very singular involved, since we came at length to marvel why we did not grow old.³⁸ Our discourse was unholy, and always

This bronze was well known to the French aesthetic movement, partly due to the famous painting which featured it, Khnopff's "I Lock the Door Upon Myself" (1891).

In what other ways could Lovecraft have learned of Hypnos? Loveman could have undoubtedly told him much in his letters. Lovecraft's extensive early reading on dreams and dream-lore, as well as on Greek and Roman mythology, must surely have meant that he was familiar with the name Hypnos from a relatively early age. He owned *Harper's Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities*, most probably in the Second Edition, 1897. Its 1,700 pages explains why he was unwilling to mail it out as a loan and he called it... "a volume without which I could not exist". This is obviously an extremely comprehensive work, so much so that one really has to wonder why Hypnos has only the most cursory and dismissive four-word entry in it: "The god of sleep." Thus, this capacious volume would not have been of any assistance. Lovecraft also had the *Manual of Classical Literature: from the German of J.J. Eschenburg* owned in his grandfather's 1846 edition, and Baird's *The Classical Manual* which was a sort of student equivalent of the *Eschenburg*. But even if these could not provide insight, there was also the excellent Public Library.

³⁷ *Olympian brow* — Not only a male facial feature, alluding to the gods of Olympus, but also poetically implying either a god-like 'sending forth' of thoughts of genius or a god-like frown of mighty displeasure.

³⁸ *did not grow old* — Both Frank Belknap Long and his father were uncannily youthful in their appearance, despite being much older. Lovecraft also deeply cherished his own childhood and boyhood, and in later life was repeatedly to be found in the company of youthful acolytes and juvenile correspondents. Oscar Wilde had of course fruitfully explored the theme, something "Hypnos" partly responds to, and others such as Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* would follow in 1928.

hideously ambitious — no god or demon could have aspired to discoveries and conquest like those which we planned in whispers. I shiver as I speak of them, and dare not be explicit; though I will say that my friend once wrote on paper a wish which he dared not utter with his tongue, and which made me burn the paper and look affrightedly out of the window at the spangled night sky. I will hint — only hint— that he had designs which involved the rulership of the visible universe and more; designs whereby the earth and the stars would move at his command, and the destinies of all living things be his.³⁹ I affirm— I swear— that I had no share in these extreme aspirations. Anything my friend may have said or written to the contrary must be erroneous, for I am no man of strength⁴⁰ to risk the unmentionable spheres by which alone one might achieve success.

Both Wilde and Woolf were in part exploring erotic dissidence from the normal. A decade later Lovecraft remarked that...

“homosexuality is a rare theme for novels — partly because public attention was seldom called to it (except briefly during the Wilde period) until a decade ago” — Lovecraft letter to Shea, 1933, in *Selected Letters* IV, page 234.

Thus Lovecraft understood c.1923, the year after “Hypnos”, as being a year in which literary homosexuality came to more prominence in literary world. Possibly he was alluding here to the death of Marcel Proust in November 1922, and the subsequent obituaries and commentary on Proust’s life and personality?

³⁹ *rulership* — A key character in Lovecraft’s “From Beyond” (1920) expresses a similar hubris, and he meets a similar end...

“I have seen beyond the bounds of infinity and drawn down daemons from the stars. . . . I have harnessed the shadows that stride from world to world to sow death and madness. . . . Space belongs to me, do you hear?”

⁴⁰ *no man of strength* — This is echoed by Lovecraft’s own bodily weaknesses, which had recently caused him to be failed after several Army recruitment tests in which he had volunteered to be sent to fight in France. Here is Lovecraft alluding to these weaknesses, in making the story “The Statement of Randolph Carter” (1919) from the intense December 1919 dream he had of Loveman, directly after having received a letter from him...

There was a night when winds from unknown spaces whirled us irresistibly into limitless vacua⁴¹ beyond all thought and entity. Perceptions of the most maddeningly untransmissible sort thronged upon us; perceptions of infinity which at the time convulsed us with joy, yet which are now partly lost to my memory and partly incapable of presentation to others. Viscous obstacles were clawed through in rapid succession, and at length I felt that we had been borne to realms of greater remoteness than any we had previously known.⁴² My friend was vastly in advance as we plunged into this awesome ocean of virgin aether, and I could see the sinister exultation on his floating, luminous, too-youthful memory-face. Suddenly that face became dim and quickly disappeared, and in a brief space I found myself projected against an obstacle which I could not penetrate. It was like the others, yet incalculably denser; a sticky clammy mass, if such terms can be applied to analogous qualities in a non-material sphere.⁴³

“I’m really sorry”, he [Loveman] said in a mellow, pleasant voice; cultivated, and not very deep, “to have to ask you to stay above ground, but I couldn’t answer for the consequences if you were to go down with me. Honestly, I doubt if anyone with a nervous system like yours could see it through. You can’t imagine what I shall have to see and do — not even from what the book said and from what I have told you — and I don’t think anyone without ironclad nerves could ever go down and come out of that place alive and sane. At any rate, this is no place for anybody who can’t pass an army physical examination.”

⁴¹ *vacua* — discreet spherical spaces, each evacuated to form a vacuum. In science, the later ‘string theory’ would posit similar infinite ranges of vacua.

⁴² *obstacles* — The use of a drug to go through a barrier is also used in Lovecraft’s short “Ex Oblivione” (late 1920/early 1921)... “I learned of the drug which would unlock the gate and drive me through”, and as such it can be seen as precursor to “Hypnos”.

⁴³ The symbolism seems deliberately intended to convey sexual expression: “convulsed us with joy” / “exultation [in his] face” / “virgin aether” / “I could not penetrate” / “a sticky clammy mass”. Lovecraft would have been aware of Loveman’s tendency to see phallic sexual symbolism in things...

I had, I felt, been halted by a barrier which my friend and leader had successfully passed. Struggling anew, I came to the end of the drug-dream and opened my physical eyes to the tower studio in whose opposite corner reclined the pallid and still unconscious form of my fellow dreamer, weirdly haggard and wildly beautiful as the moon shed gold-green light⁴⁴ on his marble features. Then, after a short interval, the form in the corner stirred; and may pitying heaven keep from my sight and sound another thing like that which took place before me. I cannot tell you how he shrieked, or what vistas of unvisitable hells gleamed for a second in black eyes crazed with fright. I can only say that I fainted,⁴⁵ and did not stir till he himself recovered and shook me in his frenzy for someone to keep away the horror and desolation.

That was the end of our voluntary searchings in the caverns of dream. Awed, shaken, and portentous, my friend who had been beyond the barrier warned me that we must never venture within those realms again. What he had seen, he dared not tell me; but he said from his wisdom that we must sleep as little as possible, even if drugs

“Loveman, who has done enough delving in that line to see *phalli* in most things from church steeples to mushrooms” — Lovecraft letter to Clark Ashton Smith, 14th May 1926.

⁴⁴ *gold-green* — It would make more sense to have “cold clean” here, but S.T. Joshi’s corrected text gives “gold-green” as correct. Lovecraft does not here allude to the corona of a lunar eclipse which, as an astronomer, he would have known is of a dull red colour. Perhaps “gold-green” is simply descriptive, a tint noted by Lovecraft on the clearest of astronomical observation nights in his youth — when he had extensively studied the moon with a good telescope — and since lost to modern smog-bound observers? See my *Annotated Nyarlathotep* for more discussion on the symbolism of green. Or perhaps Lovecraft intended to indicate clear Egyptian skies, of the sort noted by E.C. Hope-Edwardes in *Eau-de-Nil: a chronicle [of recent travel in Egypt]* (1882)...

“There was a glorious moon : the sky full of pale gold-green light, the steep sides of Sheykh-Haridi casting long yellow reflections in the water”

⁴⁵ *fainted* — See my previous note on the symbolism of fainting.

were necessary to keep us awake. That he was right, I soon learned from the unutterable fear which engulfed me whenever consciousness lapsed. After each short and inevitable sleep I seemed older, whilst my friend aged with a rapidity almost shocking. It is hideous to see wrinkles form and hair whiten almost before one's eyes.⁴⁶ Our mode of life was now totally altered. Heretofore a recluse⁴⁷ so far as I know—his true name and origin never having passed his lips—my friend now became frantic in his fear of solitude. At night he would not be alone, nor would the company of a few persons calm him. His sole relief was obtained in revelry of the most general and boisterous sort; so that few assemblies of the young and gay were unknown to us. Our appearance and age seemed to excite in most cases a ridicule which I keenly resented,⁴⁸ but which my friend considered a lesser evil than solitude.

⁴⁶ *wrinkles form and hair whiten* — Both Loveman and Lovecraft were then visibly ageing, and were no longer youths. But when all the aspects of Loveman's person were summed up after their first meeting, Lovecraft felt there was... "a net result captivatingly boyish" — *Letters from New York*, page 2. As Lovecraft gathered a young crowd around him he increasingly began adopting the pose of someone who was 'old before his time', and could thus be considered a 'grandpa'. In this he can be seen as following the fashions of the young generation that came-of-age before his own, and who as students had often affected an amusing and fun-poking 'old fogey' stance while young.

⁴⁷ *recluse* — Lovecraft was more or less a social recluse himself in the years before 1922, although in summer 1922 he would suddenly be enticed to plunge into a short social whirl with fellow artists and writers, many of them friends of Loveman. Thus Lovecraft will himself come to follow the trajectory of the man in the story.

⁴⁸ *young and gay .. ridicule* — Again this seems to anticipate Lovecraft's own near future trajectory, as he would go to a variety of bookshop readings and parties with Loveman, including what appear to have been predominantly (but discreetly) gay parties hosted in Cleveland by Hart Crane and Samuel Loveman. Lovecraft later recalled of one obviously gay man he encountered there that he... "thought me a very crude, stupid, commonplace, masculine sort of person" (*Selected Letters I*, page 281) and "When I saw that marcelled *what is it* I didn't know whether to kiss it or kill it! It used to sit cross-legged on the floor at Elgin's & gaze soulfully upward at [Samuel] Loveman. It didn't like me &

Especially was he afraid to be out of doors alone when the stars were shining, and if forced to this condition he would often glance furtively at the sky as if hunted by some monstrous thing therein. He did not always glance at the same place in the sky— it seemed to be a different place at different times. On spring evenings it would be low in the northeast. In the summer it would be nearly overhead. In the autumn it would be in the northwest. In winter it would be in the east, but mostly if in the small hours of morning. Midwinter evenings seemed least dreadful to him.⁴⁹ Only after two years did I connect this fear⁵⁰ with anything in particular; but then I began to see that he must be looking at a special spot on the celestial vault whose position at different times corresponded to the direction of his glance— a spot roughly marked by the constellation Corona Borealis.

We now had a studio in London,⁵¹ never separating, but never discussing the days when we had sought to plumb the mysteries of the unreal world. We were aged and weak from our drugs, dissipations, and nervous overstrain, and the thinning hair⁵² and beard of my friend

[Alfred] Galpin — we was too horrid, rough & mannish for it!” (to Morton, 8th January 1924).

⁴⁹ *it* — Corona Borealis, ‘the northern crown’, not to be confused with the Aurora Borealis or ‘northern lights’. As Lovecraft also stated in one of his local astronomy newspaper columns, this is a constellation that rises in the spring and has passed into the west by the late summer. In myth it was deemed the crown of Ariadne, made for her by Bacchus and translated into the heavens after her death.

⁵⁰ *this fear* — The idea of a malign connection between a star (in this case, a star cluster) and a person on earth is also featured in Lovecraft’s “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” and “Polaris”.

⁵¹ *London* — A natural setting for Lovecraft. He was an avid Anglophile, and later in the 1920s he made a very intensive personal study of the history of London via maps and books. But he already knew a very great deal about it in the 18th century through reading *The Spectator* and others.

⁵² *thinning hair* — Loveman was at that time balding, in a distinguished ‘receding hairline’ way. Admittedly, Lovecraft may not have known that from

had become snow-white. Our freedom from long sleep was surprising, for seldom did we succumb more than an hour or two at a time to the shadow which had now grown so frightful a menace. Then came one January of fog and rain, when money ran low and drugs were hard to buy. My statues and ivory heads were all sold,⁵³ and I had no means to purchase new materials, or energy to fashion them even had I possessed them. We suffered terribly, and on a certain night my friend sank into a deep-breathing sleep from which I could not awaken him. I can recall the scene now—the desolate, pitch-black garret studio under the eaves with the rain beating down; the ticking of our lone clock; the fancied ticking of our watches as they rested on the dressing-table;⁵⁴ the creaking of some swaying shutter in a remote part

the photographic portrait Loveman had sent him (a hat might have been worn), but he could have known it from remarks made in Loveman's letters.

⁵³ *statues and ivory heads* — Gavin Callaghan has perceptively pointed out (in his *H. P. Lovecraft's Dark Arcadia*, page 51) the way in which the portrayal of the sculptor slowly devolves in Lovecraft's work, from inspired Hellenic genius in "The Tree" (1920), via the languid young dreamer in "The Call of Cthulhu" (1925-26), to the loathsomely decadent frescoes of "At The Mountains of Madness" (1931). His personal tastes in sculpture also appear to have moved from the austere public statues of the late 1910s to the small grotesqueries made by Smith and Barlow in the 1930s.

⁵⁴ *ticking .. watches* — In myth Saturn was deemed the author of Time, and Loveman's amateur journal was titled *The Saturnian*. Baudelaire had made the claim in the famous *Les Fleurs du mal* that he had authored a book "orgiastic and saturnian". Loveman's amateur journal was titled *The Saturnian*, and Lovecraft may well have realized that Loveman was using the journal's name in the sense used by the French decadent poets, rather than in an astronomical or an Ancient Roman manner (the festival of 'Saturnalia'). It was picked up by the French poet Verlaine who then wrote of his homosexuality... "I was truly born a Saturnian" and who titled his first volume of verse *Poemes Saturniens*. Loveman's Verlaine translations also appeared in his journal *The Saturnian* for March 1922, so it seems clear that Loveman was using the word Saturnian as it arose from the French decadent milieu. Also of interest here is that...

"According to Rivers, who bases his claim on several examples taken from Proust, in those times 'Saturnian' was a "code word for

of the house; certain distant city noises muffled by fog and space; and, worst of all, the deep, steady, sinister breathing of my friend on the couch— a rhythmical breathing which seemed to measure moments of supernal⁵⁵ fear and agony for his spirit as it wandered in spheres forbidden, unimagined, and hideously remote. The tension of my vigil became oppressive, and a wild train of trivial impressions and associations thronged through my almost unhinged mind. I heard a clock strike somewhere— not ours, for that was not a striking clock— and my morbid fancy found in this a new starting-point for idle wanderings. Clocks— time— space— infinity— and then my fancy reverted to the locale as I reflected that even now, beyond the roof and the fog and the rain and the atmosphere, Corona Borealis was rising in the northeast.⁵⁶ Corona Borealis, which my friend had appeared to dread, and whose scintillant semicircle of stars⁵⁷ must even now be

‘homosexual’” — Angel Sahuquillo, *Federico Garcia Lorca and the Culture of Male Homosexuality*, McFarland, 2007, page 178.

Also, time was a concept close to Lovecraft’s heart. He lived in a modernising culture in which the ticking clock held more and more sway over one’s life, and yet he himself was most unpunctual — seemingly usually being at least a half-hour late for any meeting, and holding to very irregular hours in sleeping and waking. I don’t recall ever having encountered any mention of him as having generally worn a wristwatch or a pocket-watch. Presumably, as a free spirit, he felt that ‘time was made for slaves’ and thus he deliberately tried to navigate time without the aid of such things.

⁵⁵ *supernal* — Meaning ‘emanating from the skies or celestial realms above’.

⁵⁶ *rising in the northeast* — Perhaps it would be visible in a January sky, if not for the rain and the infamous smogs which wreathed London at that time. If so it would be the first rising of the year, as it was not first visible from Providence on a January night, but only on a clear February night...

“In the north a few stars of Hercules and Corona Borealis...” — H.P. Lovecraft, “The Heavens in February”, in *Collected Essays: Science*.

⁵⁷ *semicircle of stars* — Note that Lovecraft does not say a ‘ring’ of stars. In this he seems to subtly turn the reader away from the traditional medieval style of ring crown, toward a Bacchic corona from the older Greek culture — a woven head wreath of metal laurel leaves in a crescent-moon shape. The British Museum has some very fine examples of these on display. In his letters

glowing unseen through the measureless abysses of aether.⁵⁸ All at once my feverishly sensitive ears seemed to detect a new and wholly distinct component in the soft medley of drug-magnified sounds— a low and damnably insistent whine from very far away; droning, clamoring, mocking, calling, *from the northeast*.

But it was not that distant whine which robbed me of my faculties and set upon my soul such a seal of fright as may never in life be removed; not that which drew the shrieks and excited the convulsions which caused lodgers⁵⁹ and police to break down the door. It was not what I *heard*, but what I *saw*; for in that dark, locked, shuttered, and

Lovecraft also imagined, in an amused way, that many of his young poet friends as bearing such wreaths on their god-like brows. More seriously, so did many of his occasional poems to his friends which included reference to the Greeks and mythology. For instance, to the young Galpin, then “pois’d on manhood’s brink”, “Jove, seeing thee, from Ganymede would turn;” (*The Ancient Track*, 2nd ed. page 139). Such examples are numerous, and will be easily found once a subject index is produced for Lovecraft’s complete poems. For a balanced discussion of aspects of Lovecraft’s attentiveness to young male beauty in his young friends, see Ken Faig, Jr., “Lavender Ajays of the Red-Scare Period: 1917-1920”, *The Fossil*, No. 329, July 2006. The discussion occurs within a much larger examination of the amateur career of the lesbian Elsa Gidlow and her colleagues in Montreal, who published Canada’s first gay and lesbian publication, *Les Mouches Fantastique*. Lovecraft read the first issue of that, and responded trenchantly to its aesthetic flaunting in his *The Conservative*, July 1918: “Must we forever shut ourselves in such an artificial shrine [of overblown aestheticism], away from the pure light of sun and stars, and the natural currents of normal existence?”. Lovecraft alluded to Plato’s *Symposium* to contrast the magazine’s apparently-obvious focus on the hedonistic “Dionaeon Eros” side of desire, with what appears to have been his own preferred focus on what there he called “pure Uranian beauty”. For more on Gidlow see *The Fossil* No. 332.

⁵⁸ *aether* — Does not simply mean ‘mist’, but has a scientific meaning in the context of the er’s conception of the cosmos. See previous note on Einstein.

⁵⁹ *lodgers* — evidently then the two had been living in ‘digs’ in a cheap rooming or lodging house. A similar scene of curious fellow lodgers, entering a room after the strange union of two men, occurs at the end of Lovecraft’s dream-story “The Evil Clergyman” (1933). Like “Hypnos” that story also ends with the protagonist staring (in a mirror, in that later story) at his own altered and transfigured face.

curtained room there appeared from the black northeast corner a shaft of horrible red-gold light⁶⁰— a shaft which bore with it no glow to disperse the darkness,⁶¹ but which streamed only upon the recumbent head of the troubled sleeper,⁶² bringing out in hideous duplication the luminous and strangely youthful memory-face as I had known it in

⁶⁰ *red-gold light* — the symbolism of ‘the dawn’ is obvious, but there may be a deeper allusion of the love of Hypnos for Endymion, a shepherd boy, as will be explained. Gay pioneer Karl-Heinrich Ulrichs had in 1879 pointed out that the Greek poet Licymnius of Chios...

“suggests that it was the god Hypnos (Sleep) who loved [the shepherd boy] Endymion and lulled him to sleep with his eyes open so that the god might forever gaze into them.” — *GTBTQ Encyclopaedia*, entry for “Endymion”, originally from *Research on the Riddle of Man-Manly Love* (1879) by Karl-Heinrich Ulrichs, and again in *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (1883) by John Addington Symonds.

“But Hypnos much delighted
In the bright beams which shot from his eyes,
And lulled the youth [Endymion] to sleep with unclosed lids.” —
Licymnius, *Athenaens* (1854), giving Licymnius, translated by C.D. Yonge who gives the poem together with a frank discussion of Greek homosexuality.

In respect of Licymnius’s line “the bright beams which shot from his eyes” it is then very interesting that Lovecraft draws a special and foreshadowing attention to what he calls the “burning eyes” of Hypnos... “wildly luminous black eyes” and “the black, liquid, and deep-sunken eyes open in terror”. The colour of Lovecraft’s shaft of “*red-gold light*” might then be a further indication of Lovecraft’s knowledge of the Hypnos-Endymion myth, since...

“This [Hypnos-Endymion] myth led to the association of sunset with Endymion, who was seen as the setting sun” — *Christopher Dewdney*, *Acquainted With the Night : excursions through the world after dark* (2005); and “the name ‘Endymion’ refers specially to the dying or setting sun” — Helene Adeline Guerber, *Myths of Greece and Rome*, 1938.

Obviously the objection here is that Lovecraft’s setting in “Hypnos” is the dawn, rather than a setting sun, but the build-up in the story requires the night-time setting.

⁶¹ *disperse the darkness* — something akin to this idea was developed in Lovecraft’s late story “The Haunter of the Dark”, written in November 1935.

⁶² *recumbent head* — see the illustration which fronts this annotated edition.

dreams of abysmal space and unshackled time, when my friend had pushed behind the barrier to those secret, innermost and forbidden caverns of nightmare.

And as I looked, I beheld the head rise, the black, liquid, and deep-sunken eyes open in terror, and the thin, shadowed lips part as if for a scream too frightful to be uttered. There dwelt in that ghastly and flexible face, as it shone bodiless, luminous, and rejuvenated in the blackness, more of stark, teeming, brain-shattering fear than all the rest of heaven and earth has ever revealed to me. No word was spoken amidst the distant sound that grew nearer and nearer, but as I followed the memory-face's mad stare along that cursed shaft of light to its source, the source whence also the whining came, I, too, saw for an instant⁶³ what it saw, and fell with ringing ears in that fit of shrieking epilepsy which brought the lodgers and the police. Never could I tell, try as I might, what it actually was that I saw; nor could the still face tell, for although it must have seen more than I did, it will never speak again. But always I shall guard against the mocking and insatiate Hypnos, lord of sleep,⁶⁴ against the night sky, and against the mad ambitions of knowledge and philosophy.⁶⁵

⁶³ *saw for an instant* — In mid-October 1924 Lovecraft would lightly re-work this scene to serve as the climax of his story “The Shunned House” — in which two men similarly sleep together in a room and there experience hideous cosmic dreams. The narrator then awakes and sees that a supernatural entity has engulfed the other man, who has become “flexible” under the influence of ray beams that are aimed at him... “He was at once a devil and a multitude, a charnelhouse and a pageant. Lit by the mixed and uncertain beams, that gelatinous face assumed a dozen — a score — a hundred — aspects” that shifted between “masculine and feminine”. As in “Hypnos”, after the ambivalent man vanishes the narrator “could scarcely recall what was dream and what was reality”.

⁶⁴ *lord of sleep* — One would have expected to find this phrase somewhere in 19th century poetry, but it appears to be unique to Lovecraft. Decades later it appears to become a stock western description of the key Indian god *Siva* or

Just what happened is unknown, for not only was my own mind unseated by the strange and hideous thing, but others were tainted with a forgetfulness which can mean nothing if not madness. They have said, I know not for what reason, that I never had a friend; but that art, philosophy, and insanity had filled all my tragic life. The lodgers and police on that night soothed me, and the doctor administered something to quiet me,⁶⁶ nor did anyone see what a nightmare event had taken place. My stricken friend moved them to no pity, but what they found on the couch in the studio made them give me a praise which sickened me, and now a fame which I spurn in despair as I sit for hours, bald, gray-bearded, shriveled, palsied,⁶⁷ drug-crazed, and broken, adoring and praying to the object they found.⁶⁸

For they deny that I sold the last of my statuary, and point with ecstasy at the thing which the shining shaft of light left cold, petrified,

Shiva, who is, interestingly, deemed a hermaphrodite. Later German translations of Egyptian sacred texts would also use the phrase for Osiris.

⁶⁵ *mad ambitions of knowledge and philosophy* — Lovecraft will later re-work this sentiment at the start of “The Call of Cthulhu”, linking knowledge with literal madness.

⁶⁶ *something to quiet me* — Drugs can sometimes be used to control and direct, as well as to wildly liberate the imagination. Lovecraft, with his personal and professional interest in the madhouse, may have been familiar with the use of sedatives to calm the agitated.

⁶⁷ *palsied* — Being a paralysis and loss of sensation usually on one side of the body, and having varying types and causes. Sometimes one side of the face ‘drops’ and the eyes can also have limited movement. The implied rigidity subtly echoes the rigidity of the sculpted face in the story.

⁶⁸ *praying to the object* — It appears that there was no actual cult to Hypnos in antiquity, or at least no real trace of one was ever found. The modern notion of a later Hypnos cult at Troizen apparently rests only on the flimsiest of archeological evidence. But, according to Pausanias the ancient geographer (working c.143–176 AD), there were once statues of Hypnos and his brother at Sparta. Though possibly this related to the Hypnos of *material sleep* and his brother Thanatos (Death, specifically the ‘good death’ of a quiet parting), deemed the sons of Nyx (‘Night’) and Erebus (‘Darkness’).

and unvocal. It is all that remains of my friend; the friend who led me on to madness and wreckage; a godlike head of such marble as only old Hellas⁶⁹ could yield, young with the youth that is outside time, and with beauteous bearded face, curved, smiling lips, Olympian brow, and dense locks waving and poppy-crowned.⁷⁰ They say that that haunting memory-face is modeled from my own, as it was at twenty-five;⁷¹ but

⁶⁹ *Hellas* — Ancient Greece. See previous note on the word.

⁷⁰ *poppy-crowned* — Oscar Wilde had used this to allude to Hypnos (“that poppy-crowned God”) in his poem “Humanitad”. Poppies are found in connection with Hypnos at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in which there is apparently on display a certain carved sculpture of Hypnos, one of several there. Possibly Loveman may even have taken Lovecraft to see it, on that first visit to New York shortly after the writing of “Hypnos”. The carving features Hypnos holding a poppy over Endymion...

‘Hypnos, a bearded winged figure of ugly countenance ... holds a poppy over the sleeping Endymion. One [also] finds him on the other Endymion sarcophagus in the Metropolitan Museum...’
Millard Meissn, *De Artibus Opuscula XL: essays in honor of Erwin Panofsky* (1961).

One would love to know if the “ugly countenance” might even bear any resemblance to Lovecraft himself, and if Loveman might have remarked on this resemblance in a letter? Sadly there only appears to be a picture of the other, more conventional, carving available online. Possibly the presence of the carving is just a co-incidence in relation to the story “Hypnos”.

⁷¹ *modeled from my own* — There may also be just touch of a reflected self-parody here. Loveman was by his nature a very anxious man, and before they met he was afraid that Lovecraft had been so “adoring” of him via poetry (see “To Samuel Loveman”) and in letters, that meeting his idol in the flesh would be a shattering blow to Lovecraft. One even wonders if the story “Hypnos” was not partly his gently deflating and coded reply to Loveman’s timid and covert romantic overture? Loveman was then aged 34, and Lovecraft was 31.

But more importantly here is a nod to a third myth of classical antiquity is alluded to at the final point in the story. That of Narcissus — the beautiful boy who fell in love with his own reflection in a pool. Transfixed by his own image, as is the narrator of the story “Hypnos” in various forms, Narcissus eventually kills himself to escape the trap (for the more or less original story, see Ovid). The Narcissus myth was the basis for Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in which Wilde added an age discrepancy to the reflection idea (young man, ancient portrait) while giving the ending suicide a new twist. Lovecraft has reversed Wilde’s ending at the end of his “Hypnos” (old man, young portrait)

upon the marble base is carved a single name in the letters of Attica⁷²—ΥΙΝΟΣ.⁷³

and implies (though only very loosely) that “despair” may lead to suicide as a way out of the trap. “Hypnos” is dedicated to Samuel Loveman, who was then steeped in such classical literary references and decadent artistic subcultures, and who would thus have easily divined both of the oblique cultural references. Such cultural references had been developed and deployed under a shadow of a very real persecution. For instance, shortly before Lovecraft’s birth the artist Hazeltine had been prosecuted in Providence for painting a nude entitled “Narcissus” (see the Introduction to the *Catalogue of the Memorial Exhibition of Charles Walter Stetson*, page 9).

“Hypnos” also has in general obvious parallels to the Ancient Greek myth given by Ovid, in which the sculptor Pygmalion fell in love with one of his sculptures which came to life. George Bernard Shaw’s popular play *Pygmalion*, first staged with success in 1913, drew on this myth and it would have been hard for Lovecraft not to have been aware of the Pygmalion myth in early 1922. Later Lovecraft would show in his essay *Supernatural Horror in Literature* that he was aware of a ‘statue bride’ tradition emerging in the early Gothic, when he comments on...

“... the eerie wealth which German song had commenced to provide. Thomas Moore adapted from such sources the legend of the ghoulish statue-bride (later used by Prosper Merimee in “The Venus of Ille”, and traceable back to great antiquity) which echoes so shiveringly in his ballad of “The Ring.”

modeled from my own could also allude to the way that a son resembles the father. Indeed, Hypnos was deemed by the later mythmakers to have “hundreds of sons” actively involved in the inculcation of nightly dreams — most prominent among these were the trio: Phantasos (animator of inanimate things in dreams); Morpheus (bringer of dreams, and animator of images of people in dreams); and Phobetor (bringer of nightmares, and animator of animals in dreams).

⁷² *Attica* — ancient Greek political region, of which Athens was the most powerful centre.

⁷³ ΥΙΝΟΣ — “Hypnos”. I am grateful to S.T. Joshi for the precise Greek lettering. Lovecraft used the book *A Greek-English Lexicon* (1843) for his translation of occasional ancient Greek words he came across. He could read Latin, but his Greek was very poor.

Contextual texts for the annotated “Hypnos”

1. Tristram Burges

from “The Cause of Man” (1796).

Destitute of passions, [primitive] man had stood, like the marble statue, without a motion; and eternally worn the same smile or frown which the last touch of nature’s hand left impressed on his countenance. [Yet] Guided by reason, [civilized] man has traveled through the abstruse regions of the philosophic world, he has originated rules by which he can direct the ship through the pathless ocean and measure the comet’s flight over the fields of unlimited space. ... [And] By imagination, man seems to verge towards creative power. Aided by this, he can perform all the wonders of sculpture and painting. He can almost make the marble speak. He can almost make the brook murmur down the painted landscape. Often, on the pinions of imagination, he soars aloft where the eye has never traveled; where other stars glitter on the mantle of night, and a more effulgent sun lights up the blushes of morning. Flying from world to world, he gazes on all the glories of creation: or, lighting on the distant margin of the universe, darts tire eye of fancy over the mighty void, where power creative never yet has energised, where existence still sleeps in the wide abyss of possibility. By imagination, he can travel back to the source of time; converse with successive generations of men; and kindle into emulation, while he surveys the monumental trophies of

ancient art and glory. He can sail down the stream of time, until he loses “sight of stars and sun, by wandering into those retired parts of eternity, when the heavens and the earth shall be no more.”⁷⁴ To these unequivocal characteristics of greatness in man, let us adduce the testimony of nature herself. Surrounding creation subserves the wants and proclaims the dignity of man. For him day and night visit the world. For him the seasons walk their splendid round. For him the earth teems with riches, and the heavens smile with beneficence. All creation is accurately adjusted to his capacity for bliss. He tastes the dainties of festivity, breathes the perfumes of morning, revels on the charms of melody, and regales his eye with all the painted beauties of vision. ... Do not all these shining tints brighten on the portrait of man? Yes. He rejoices in munificence; he toils for universal felicity; he develops the mysteries of nature; he aggregates the goods of space, of duration, and even arrests the attention of earth and heaven.

— Tristram Burges, from “The Cause of Man”.

My commentary: The above is from an oration given by Burges to Rhode Island College, in September 1796. Published in *Memoir Of Tristram Burges: With Selections From His Speeches And Occasional Writings*, 1835. It has strong similarities to the cosmic flying scenes in “Hypnos”. Burges was the student of Dr. Maxcy, the president of Rhode Island College. These passages from his oration were widely... “selected as exercises for declamation, in many schools or colleges” in the early 19th century (*Memoir of Tristram Burges*, p.27).

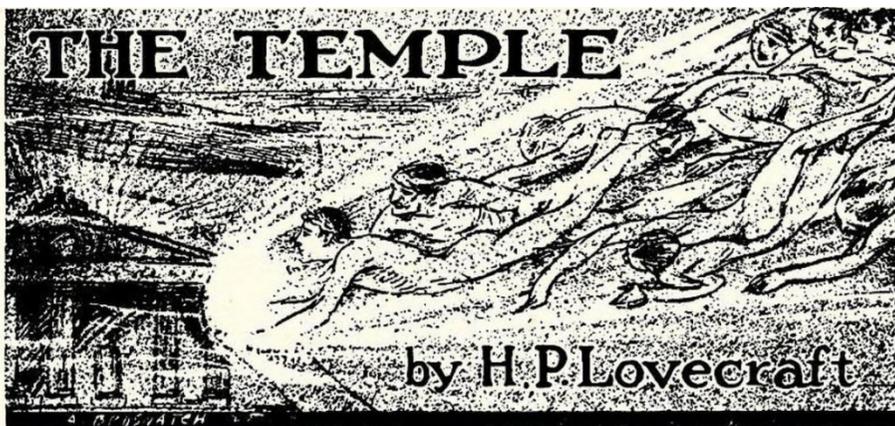
⁷⁴ Burges’s quotation is a condensing of Addison.

Part of these passages then formed Lesson LXXVIII in the many examples of style contained in the 1802 writing manual (Abner Alden's *The Reader*, 1802). *The Reader* was the very same book that the young Lovecraft studied so avidly, while learning how to write in the 18th century manner...

“For my guidance in correct composition [in early boyhood] I chose a deliciously quaint and compendious volume which my great-grandfather had used at school, and which I still treasure sacredly minus its covers: [he gives the complete text of *The Reader's* title page ...] I attacked it with almost savage violence. [...] Little by little I hammered every rule and precept and example into my receptive system, till in a month or so I was beginning to write coherent verse in the ancient style.”

— Lovecraft in a letter to Bernard Austin Dwyer,
from 3rd March 1927.

2. “The Temple” (1920) and “Hypnos” (1922)



Andrew Brosnatch header illustration for the first appearance of “The Temple”, in the September 1925 issue of *Weird Tales*.

I here demonstrate that in the writing of “Hypnos” Lovecraft obviously followed a skeleton of elements abstracted from his earlier short story “The Temple”. There is of course a similar central theme in both stories, the debilitating and fatefully dangerous allure of the sculptural representation of a beautiful male.⁷⁵ But in the following table I show precisely how Lovecraft not only re-used the elements of “The Temple”, but re-used them in “Hypnos” *in the same order* as they had appeared there.

⁷⁵ Note also the similarity of “The Temple” to Lovecraft’s underwater ending of his August 1920 poem “On a Grecian Colonnade in a Park” (*The Ancient Track*, 2nd ed., page 153): “Glaucus waits [for] me, clad in kelpy green / The portal calls, beyond that wat’ry door / lies all the bliss my heart has ever known [...] So as pale forms by sunken altars praise / Deserted gods of years remote and blest, / I, too, shall tread again those ancient ways, / And in the templed deeps sink down to rest.” Glaucus was deemed a mortal seaman, transformed into a sea-god by eating a magic herb.

“THE TEMPLE”

IN PLOT ORDER:

“HYPNOS”

IN PLOT ORDER:

<p>A man, “young, rather dark, and very handsome; probably an Italian or Greek” is found prone and unconscious, and he is soon surrounded by a vulgar crowd.</p>	<p>A man with a “strange rigidity” is found. In face he is “actually beautiful” with “raven black” hair and a brow compared to a Greek sculpture. He is found prone and unconscious and he is soon surrounded by a vulgar crowd.</p>
<p>The eyes of the unconscious (dead?) man then open and stare in an uncanny way... “many seemed to entertain a queer delusion that they gazed steadily and mockingly”.</p>	<p>The eyes of the unconscious man then unexpectedly open... “he opened his immense, sunken, and wildly luminous black eyes”.</p>
<p>The crew of the submarine come under the near total influence of the strange and beautiful youth (ivory carving).</p>	<p>The narrator of the story comes under the near total influence of the beautiful man.</p>
<p>Heinrich and Klenze find themselves alone in a confined submarine. They drift through strange dark worlds under the sea.</p>	<p>The narrator and his friend find themselves alone in their manor house in Kent. They drift through strange and dark cosmic vistas.</p>
<p>Heinrich and Klenze face death, as their supplies and air are set to run out. Their submarine becomes less and less habitable, and until the lights expire and the narrator states “I awoke in darkness”. (Klenze dies).</p>	<p>The narrator and his friend face death, “weak from our drugs, dissipations, and nervous overstrain”. They are forced to move to a squalid “garret studio”, a “dark, locked, shuttered, and curtained room” which at the crucial moment is “desolate, pitch-black”. (The friend dies).</p>
<p>The doomed Klenze hears the constant calling of the beautiful youth and his mysterious temple.</p>	<p>The narrator’s doomed friend fears the constant calling of the Corona Borealis.</p>
<p>Heinrich hears “an aural delusion; a sensation of rhythmic, melodic sound as</p>	<p>The narrator hears “a new and wholly distinct component in the soft medley of</p>

<p>of some wild yet beautiful chant or choral hymn” coming from the Temple.</p>	<p>drug-magnified sounds” coming from the Corona Borealis.</p>
<p>Heinrich “lighted some matches and poured a stiff dose of sodium bromide solution, which seemed to calm me”.</p>	<p>The narrator remarks that “the doctor administered something to quiet me”.</p>
<p>Heinrich effects extensive searchlight explorations of the ruins, seeing what Klenze had seen, and coming to glimpse the awful truth: “The head of the radiant god in the sculptures on the rock temple is the same as that carven bit of ivory which the dead sailor brought from the sea and which poor Klenze carried back into the sea.”</p>	<p>The narrator follows a shaft of light to see what his friend saw, and this comes to glimpse the awful truth: “I followed the memory-face’s mad stare along that cursed shaft of light to its source, the source whence also the whining came, I, too, saw for an instant what it saw”.</p>
<p>Heinrich goes insane. “subjective and unreal creations of my overtaxed mind”, and “this madness of my own will”.</p>	<p>The narrator goes insane. His “mind unseated by the strange and hideous thing”</p>
<p>Even at the last, Heinrich feels a helpless and irresistible urge to worship the youth in the carving and in the Temple: “over all rose thoughts and fears which centred in the youth from the sea and the ivory image whose carving was duplicated on the frieze and columns of the temple before me”. He enters the Temple.</p>	<p>Even at the last, the narrator feels a helpless and irresistible urge to worship the youth in the carving: “as I sit for hours, bald, gray-bearded, shriveled, palsied, drug-crazed, and broken, adoring and praying to the object they found” ... “a godlike head of such marble as only old Hellas could yield, young with the youth that is outside time”. He is heading for the Madhouse (implied).</p>

3. Lovecraft letter to Reinhart Kleiner on Samuel Loveman, dated 15th April 1922

“Concerning the personality of S: Loveman, Esq., I believe you are right in assuming that he seeks to cover his aesthetick predilections with a masque of the commonplace. In externals, it may be said that he succeeds to no mean extent; but the penetrating vision is not slow to discover the sensitive artist beneath his worldly robes. Perhaps I had a particular advantage in the making of such discoveries, since I had the honour of his company for a full day amidst the classical *reliquiae* [meaning, statues, relics etc] of the Metropolitan Museum, where we cast aside the centuries & revell’d in antique visions that bore us through the tombs of Aegyptus [Egypt], the Academes of Hellas [Ancient Greece], & the Forum & Temples of ROMA.CAPVT.MVNDI [Ancient Rome]. In such an artistick paradise the need for protective colouring departs, & one may exhibit his appreciation of beauty without fear of the ridicule of the vulgar & stupid. The underlying sensitiveness of our colleague was many times display’d during our sojourn, largely in connexion with apprehensions regarding the impression he produced upon others. He was at great pains to inquire how well he fulfill’d my expectations of him, & was a whole day miserable because of the seeming indifference of young [Frank Belknap] Long; who in truth, however, entertain’d the most ardent regard & admiration for him. Loveman undoubtedly suffers very keenly from small things which scarce perturb the generality of mankind. He is not sufficiently a cynick, & is made timid by situations which have no effect at all upon me, who am contemptuous of all men & things. It is this sensitive desire to escape comment which impels him to adopt the disguise of commonplace demeanour— a disguise which I am myself adopting to an increasing degree, tho’ I do it not from sensitiveness but from cynicism & contempt of pretence. Loveman himself remarks, in a note this morning receiv’d from him, “If you found me a little more human & a little less of the myth you had expected, impute it to no other desire than the one I have always had— to be perfectly natural & not too obviously the artist.”

4. On *The Hermaphrodite*.

Samuel Loveman's long poem *The Hermaphrodite* appeared in 1926 from The Recluse Press (350 copies), then as demand grew it saw publication in the book *The Hermaphrodite and Other Poems* in 1936 from the Caxton Printers. It will soon be easily found in good form in the revised and expanded edition of *Out of the Immortal Night* (forthcoming). I am unsure if the poem will be annotated there, so as to explicate it for those not trained in the classics.

“Loveman's book is a collection—one long narrative poem (the title poem), & a variety of short lyrics dating all the way from about 1912 to the present. No—the main poem has nothing to do with human abnormality, & will doubtless disappoint many smut-hounds who buy the book. It deals with a mythological being typifying pure beauty—the beauty that is beyond sex. It re-creates the atmosphere & colour of the Hellenistic world—the Graeco-Oriental era following Alexander the Great, when Alexandria, Antioch, & Pergamum were the prevailing centres of culture—as well as any poem I can think of.” — H. P. Lovecraft to Richard F. Searight, 15th April 1936, in *Letters to Richard F. Searight* pages 75-76.

The first lines of *The Hermaphrodite* are:

Out of the deep, immortal night
Came to me the Hermaphrodite,
Moonlight-breasted, pale, antique,
He spoke to me in deathless Greek:
“Brother of mine, it has been thus
Since I came forth from Anthemus.
Before the Satyrs' gate of gold
I stood with wingèd eyes grown bold,
Fire on my lips, music, light—

The unfathomable Hermaphrodite.
'Whither goest thou—whence?' they prayed.
Then to their laurelled priests I said:
'Behold me, who of gods am wrought,
Burning desire and profound thought;
I, where the star-brimmed evening falls,
Would follow my folk, the Bacchanals,
To Phrixæ, then to Sybaris,
Where their still-flowery worship is,
Then on and on to Pergamon,
A marble city in the sun.
Long have I tarried, yet to me cries
The flame that follows the flame that dies;
I pass—but worship me, hold me still,
Body and soul inseparable. . . .”

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