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New Cthulhu: The Recent Weird



Synopsis

For more than 80 years H.P. Lovecraft has inspired writers of supernatural fiction, artists, musicians, filmmakers, and gaming. His themes of cosmic indifference, the utter insignificance of humankind, minds invaded by the alien, and the horrors of history " written with a pervasive atmosphere of unexplainable dread " remain not only viable motifs, but are more relevant than ever as we explore the mysteries of a universe in which our planet is infinitesimal and climatic change is overwhelming it. In the first decade of the twenty-first century the best supernatural writers no longer imitate Lovecraft, but they are profoundly influenced by the genre and the mythos he created. *New Cthulhu: The Recent Weird* presents some of the best of this new Lovecraftian fiction " bizarre, subtle, atmospheric, metaphysical, psychological, filled with strange creatures and stranger characters " eldritch, unsettling, evocative, and darkly appealing.

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Customer Reviews

I labor under a geas that compels me to buy pretty much every new Lovecraftian anthology or pastiche that comes down the Aylesbury pike. The upside is that sooner or later I read a lot of stories that have, or claim to have, that good old HPL-tinged cosmic horror and weirdness. The downside is that many new anthologies contain a fair number of stories I've already encountered, sometimes more than once. *New Cthulhu: The Recent Weird* is no exception. It's a very good array of tales, and I'm happy to have it in my library. It would be an even greater treat for a reader to whom more of the stories would be new. China Mieville's "Details," Neil Gaiman's "A Study in

Emerald," and Charles Stross's "A Colder War" are among the stories likely to be familiar to most fans of Lovecraftian fiction. Deservedly so--they're great stories. I also especially liked Caitlin Kiernan's "Pickman's Other Model (1929)," Marc Laidlaw's "The Vicar of R'lyeh," Michael Marshall Smith's "Fair Exchange," and Norman Partridge's "Lesser Demons." *New Cthulhu: The Recent Weird* is a well-chosen and smartly edited anthology; one nice touch is the use of quotations from HPL as epigraphs. The anthology's main shortcoming is that it is but one entry in the increasingly crowded field of Cthulhu-themed or Lovecraftian anthos, and treads a somewhat well-trodden path. But better a little repetition than the unthinkable: a dearth of cosmic horror. That would be a real nightmare.

I spent an entire hour writing an initial review in which I typed out the entire Contents page and remarked on my favorite of the stories; but for some reason (perhaps because I quoted text from one of the stories), has banned that initial review. Annoy'd, I claimed that I would no longer write reviews for . But this book is so good, and I am one of its writers, and I feel impelled to support my editor and publisher with some sort of review. There is a rad new trend, it seems, among publishers: the use of "Cthulhu" as a selling tool. More and more books with the Great Old One's name as title are evident: CTHULHU'S REIGN, THE BOOK OF CTHULHU; even S. T. Joshi's BLACK WINGS will undergo a title change when it is reprinted by Titan Books in March of 2012, it will nigh be know as BLACK WINGS OF CTHULHU. S. T. is rather annoy'd at ye alteration. But I see all of this as a good thing, because the writing of Lovecraftian weird fiction is my obsession. *NEW CTHULHU: THE RECENT WEIRD* is one of ye finest new titles to use R'lyeh's Lord as title portion, and its brilliance comes from the professionalism of its authors and editor. If we are going to write tales that pay homage to H. P. Lovecraft, it behooves us to do our very best with such work. Some of that very best is in this book. Paula's Introduction is quite good. She discusses the growing genre of the Mythos, relates biographical information concerning H. P. Lovecraft, and devotes space to the question of "What is Lovecraftian?" The brilliant thing about modern Lovecraftian fiction, penned by professionals of the genre, is that people have their own very personal and unique ideas about what makes up a Lovecraftian story. Very few of the writers in this book can be called "Lovecraftian writers," and that is a part of the book's stength. The book opens with Caitlin R. Kiernan's "Pickman's Other Model (1929)," which I first read in *BLACK WINGS*. I do consider Caitlin an authentic Lovecraftian artist because Lovecraft has inspired and infiltrated so much of her work. She is absolutely brilliant, evoking mood, atmosphere, and unique characterization. She weaves her spell of words, tells her decadent tale, and we are completely drawn in until the shocking ending. I first

read John Langan's "Mr. Gaunt" is his collection, MR. GAUNT AND OTHER UNEASY ENCOUNTERS. "Uneasy" is the perfect word for this amazing tale. It held my attention absolutely, its mysteries come together to form a single thread of horror. It is one of the creepiest tales that I have ever read, and its monster (its inhuman monster, as contrasted to the mortal one) lingers within one's haunted mind. The writing of this story is especially fine. Laird Barron has become, with but two collections from Night Shade Books, one of today's vitally impressive and important genre artists. One hesitates to call him "Lovecraftian," his work is so utterly original and fine. He is subtly Lovecraftian, yet potently so. "Old Virginia," reprinted here, is one of his most gripping tales. I cannot remember having read any fiction by Sarah Monette until reading "Bringing Helena Back" in this book. I was instantly impressed. She has a very literary style, with prose that flows and captivating dialog that brings to life her outre characters. There is also a dead cool Lovecraftian ambiance in this story. One thing that distinguishes the new tales of Lovecraftian horror from professional writers is their originality and intelligent, and both aspects are in plenitude herein. This story is so good that it hath inspired me to order the author's themed short story collection, THE BONE KEY. There are many other fascinating tales by talented writers such as William Browning Spencer, Don Webb, the delightful and talented Cody Goodfellow, and the amazing China Mieville. Michael Shea, who is a genius when it comes to writing tales of the Cthulhu Mythos (of which he has written gobs) is well-represented with his story, "Tsathoggua." This book also introduced me to writers whom I have never encountered before this. One of the really enjoyable aspects of the book is that each tale is prefaced with a quote from a story by H. P. Lovecraft. Caitlin's story is prefaced by lines from "Pickman's Model," Neil Gaiman's "A Study in Emerald" (a Sherlock Holmes tale) is prefaced by lines from HPL's "The Call of Cthulhu" and Doyle's "A Study in Scarlett." I was especially pleased with the portion of "The Thing on the Doorstep" that perfectly preludes my own story in the book. I love this book and can highly recommend it. I see that it is on Kindle for a very reasonable price.

This anthology is chock full of fairly recent (in most cases) Mythos stories. The only problem is that almost every one of these stories has appeared in some other similar anthology within the last few years. If you don't collect Mythos stories then you will probably be happy with what is, to you, new material. If you are another collector as I am you will find little, if anything, new here.

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