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Preface

Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849), Stefan Grabiński (1887–1936), Jean Ray (1887–1964), Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890–1937) – the four writers of horror, gothic, or “weird” fiction need no further introduction to any aficionado of fantastic literature. They continue to have a profound influence on literature and popular culture, and to inspire new generations of writers, film directors, heavy and doom metal musicians, and creators of computer games.

The critics of fantastic literature have often pointed to ample evidence of mutual fascination, permeation, and mysterious correspondences in the works of the four writers. Grabiński is commonly referred to as a “Polish Poe” or a “Polish Lovecraft,” Ray is known as a “Flemish Lovecraft,” and both Lovecraft and Grabiński admitted to being inspired by Poe’s work. Grabiński wrote an essay on Poe (“The Prince of Fantasts”), and Lovecraft devoted one of the chapters of his *Supernatural Horror in Literature* to the American writer, and made him a character in his short story entitled “The Shunned House.” According to Karol Irzykowski, a critic of Grabiński’s fantastic literature, when the first translations of Lovecraft’s fiction allegedly appeared in Poland in the 1930s, the translator used a pseudonym “Zalny” which is the name Grabiński adopted when he first published his works.

The four writers’ fiction is characterized by the same motifs, dark obsessions, and philosophical visions of the world and the human. Grabiński, Ray, and Lovecraft draw on Poe’s characterization of the

macabre, and the themes of ubiquitous death with its physical symptoms, of the influence of drugs and alcohol on one's perception of reality, of madness, and of blurring the borderline between the dream and the awake. Lovecraft dreamed up his own mythology with the pantheon of otherworldly, incredible creatures endowed with unearthly powers. Their prospective return (both in dreams and in reality) becomes the source of "cosmic horror": irrational fear of the unknown, the inconceivable, and the unnamed, which comes to light when one faces phenomena which cannot be rationally explained and hence may engender madness. Grabiński also developed his mythology of cosmic, great motion – with the central figure of the Motion Demon – and the mythology of fire with the characters of elementals, Red Magda, and fire-born spirits. The Polish author uses the motifs of parallel worlds (also present in Ray's and Lovecraft's *oeuvres*), and of demonic women (reminiscent of Poe's Ligeia, Morella, Eleanor, and Berenice). Finally, Jean Ray's fiction is characterized by the themes of black magic, occultism, demonology, cosmic fear of the unknown, forbidden books bringing to mind the Lovecraftian Necronomicon, and mysterious cults evocative of both Lovecraft's and Grabiński's works.

This publication aims at examining the mysterious parallels shaping the works of the four writers, as well as showing the uniqueness of each author's personal vision of fantastic literature as a genre, filled with intertextual references to both fantastic and mainstream literature. Some interdisciplinary articles of the monograph concentrate on the issues arising from the translation of their fiction.

The first group of texts is mostly concerned with E.A. Poe and H.P. Lovecraft, and far less with J. Ray.

In his article "'Non si lascia leggere': il male e gli abissi del tempo in Poe e Lovecraft," Francesco Marroni paints the picture of a metropolis as an abyss of evil, presented in *The Man of the Crowd* by E.A. Poe and *At the Mountains of Madness* by H.P. Lovecraft, also referring to Poe's fiction. In his novella, Lovecraft describes a city hidden in the Antarctic: a mythical, archaic world of horror and barbarity.

Luca Ambrogiani ("Empty, White Apocalypse: The Spatial and Linguistic End of the World in Edgar Allan Poe and Howard Phillips Lovecraft") attempts to compare Poe's and Lovecraft's works, particularly their methods of literary interpretation.



Arnaud Huftier (“Jean Ray au révélateur : « L’Edgar Poe belge » ou « Le Lovecraft flamand »?”) reflects upon the influence of E.A. Poe and H.P. Lovecraft on Jean Ray. He also examines the issue of nationality and its significance in Ray’s fiction.

In their articles (“Edgar Allan Poe e André de Lorde : alla ricerca dello spavento,” “The Madwoman by the Fireplace: A Comparative Survey of Gothic Horror by Edgar Allan Poe and Harriet Prescott Spofford”), Tomasz Kaczmarek and Gianna Carroni analyze the influence of E.A. Poe on, respectively, André de Lorde and Harriet Prescott Spofford.

Agnieszka Łazicka („Zatrważający związek człowieka z samym sobą”. Znaczenie fantastyki Edgara Allana Poego dla twórczości Charles'a Baudelaire'a”) concentrates on the relationship between the literary works of E.A. Poe and Charles Baudelaire – the translator of Poe’s fiction into French.

Karolina Kwaśna (“The Concept of Equivalent Effect in Translation of Howard Phillips Lovecraft’s Works”) focuses on translation strategies (including Jin Di’s theory of equivalent effect) particularly relevant for the Polish readers of H.P. Lovecraft’s *oeuvre*.

The next part of the monograph is mostly dedicated to the Polish author – Stefan Grabiński.

Katarzyna Gadomska (“La conception du métafantastique de Stefan Grabiński, à l'exemple de *L'Ombre de Baphomet*”) analyzes Grabiński’s philosophic concept of metafantastic literature at the example of his novel *Baphomet's Shadow*.

Joanna-Warmuzińska-Rogóż (“Au carrefour des trois codes ou comment traduire la prose de Stefan Grabiński en français”) discusses the specifics of translation of Grabiński’s fiction into French, based on the notions of semantic dominant and translation codes.

Mariagrazia Pelaia (“Demoni del moto, talpe di galleria, donne lunari: il ritorno della magia organicista attraverso l'universo meccanico ferroviario di Stefan Grabiński? *Appunti a margine di una traduzione in lingua italiana*”), a renowned translator of Grabiński’s literary works into Italian, attempts to look at chosen female protagonists of *The Motion Demon* from a different perspective, founded upon the theories of Carolyn Merchant and Marija Gimbutas.

Claudio Salmeri (“La riscoperta di Stefan Grabiński. Traduzioni e ricezione dello scrittore in Italia”) analyzes the reception, translation, and reviews of Grabiński’s *oeuvre* in Italy.



Edyta Izabela Rudolf („Literatura w cieniu choroby, czyli tuberkulinowe fantazmaty Grabińskiego”) seeks to answer the question how tuberculosis – a stigmatizing and ostracizing disease – has influenced Grabiński’s writing. She also wonders if his fantastic fiction based on the fear of horrors in the imagined world symbolizes the suffering and the lethal disease in the real world.

Through Eric Santner’s notion of “spectral materialism,” Katarzyna Trzeciak (“Widmowy materializm Stefana Grabińskiego”) examines how Grabiński’s protagonists cope with the materialism of the reality filled with virtual anxiety that distorts the perception of space-time.

Michał Nikodem („Stefan Grabiński i kolej – szkic z pogranicza literaturoznawstwa i kolejnictwa”) analyzes the vocabulary in Grabiński’s “train horror” and wonders how the author’s knowledge of the railways has influenced the construction of *The Motion Demon*.

The last part of the monograph is dedicated to the relations between the works of Stefan Grabiński and the fiction of E.A. Poe and H.P. Lovecraft.

Małgorzata Ślarzyńska („Naturalny nadmiar luster. Wenecja w opowiadaniach Stefana Grabińskiego i Edgara Allana Poego”) talks about Venice as the setting of two short stories: *The Assignment* by E.A. Poe and *Passion (L'Appassionata)* by Stefan Grabiński. The author discusses the textual strategies used by both writers in the face of linguistic and cultural strangeness.

Agnieszka Łoska („Demoniczne kobiety Edgara Allana Poego i Stefana Grabińskiego”) searches for parallels between the visions of demonic, vampiric women in Stefan Grabiński’s (Sara, Mafra) and E.A. Poe’s fiction (Berenice, Ligeia).

Tomasz Rożkiewicz („Polsko-amerykańskie różnice i podobieństwa kulturowe oraz ich odzwierciedlenia w utworach Stefana Grabińskiego, Edgara Allana Poego i Howarda Phillipsa Lovecrafta”) concentrates on the differences visible in Poe’s, Lovecraft’s, and Grabiński’s fiction, often resulting from a cultural dissonance between the American and Polish culture.

The authors of the aforementioned articles aimed at presenting the originality of each individual writer’s concept of fantastic literature, as well as examining the parallels between them. It is worth emphasizing that among the authors of the articles are distinguished



experts on fantastic literature (such as Prof. Arnaud Huftier and Prof. Francesco Marroni) and renowned literary translators (Maria-grazia Pelaia). The presence of academics from the U.S.A., France, Italy, and Poland in the monograph proves that the *oeuvre* of the four writers – Poe, Grabiński, Ray, and Lovecraft – is not only becoming more popular over time, but even attaining cult status. Their fiction is alive, constantly re-read and re-interpreted.

Katarzyna Gadomska, Agnieszka Loska

Translated by *Anna Swoboda*

