
A Note About the Necronomicon

Posted by WarlockAsylum - 2009/05/20 12:01

This thread discusses the Content article: A Note About the Necronomicon

I often wonder why this word "fiction" is often applied to the field of Necronomicon studies, especially when it comes to the Simon Necronomicon of all. It's like someone is trying to clear up a mess of rumors that I fell people have to investigate themselves. I am often wonder why haven't anyone asked themselves the question as to what grimoire ISN'T fictional?

Be Well

Re:A Note About the Necronomicon

Posted by jlv61560 - 2010/03/10 23:04

To some degree, some of the foolishness over the Necronomicon is due to Chaosium's publishing of the "Call of Cthulhu" roleplaying game back in 1981.

Among the many things they did as part of the ever-growing list of supplements they published to support their game, they created a series of "scholarly articles" that purported to discuss the linguistic roots of things supposedly in the Necronomicon, even to the point of explaining how the entirely bogus Arabic name of Abdul Alhazred was clearly a corruption of the "correct" form of Abd al-Azred perpetrated by poor western scholarship and poor translations across several languages over the centuries. Other such bogus articles debated the commonality of the Great Old Ones in civilizations around the globe, again frequently through study of obscure forms of Chinese pictographs and so on.

To me, the amazing part is that these speculative fiction articles held up so well and were so easily supported by actual facts and clever data manipulation. Clearly Lovecraft did a wonderful job of following his own dictum about creating a short story as if it were a hoax and providing amazing verisimilitude as part of the hoax creation. As a result of all of this, we saw a book first purporting to be the Necronomicon published in paperback in the early 1980's. Filled with nonsense and drivel, it was both boring and obtuse, but it helped perpetuate the hoax by contributing to it and claiming to be an unabridged translation of an earlier work, etc, etc, etc.... And so a steady stream of what purport to be "genuine" copies of a fictional book have streamed out over the years. I wonder why no one has bothered to publish a "genuine" copy of Cultes des Ghoules?

Re:A Note About the Necronomicon

Posted by Alhazret - 2010/03/26 12:06

I wonder why no one has bothered to publish a "genuine" copy of Cultes des Ghoules?

If I were going to tackle a mythos-tome -other- than the Necronomicon, it would certainly be a heavily expurgated English translation of Prinn's Saracenic Rituals. Of all the tomes, that is (to me) the most interesting and the most easily supported by a huge wealth of convincing supporting data. It would be easy enough to make it appear that Daraul, Shah, and others were drawing on the Prinn's text as a source for there work...

Could be great fun for the whole family.

Re:A Note About the Necronomicon

Posted by Alhazret - 2010/03/26 12:41

WarlockAsylum wrote:

This thread discusses the Content article: A Note About the Necronomicon I am often wonder why haven't anyone asked themselves the question as to what grimoire ISN'T fictional?

Owen Davies made precisely that point in his recently published Grimoires - A History of Magic Books saying that: "But as a piece of magical literature it, and other Necronomicons, are no less 'worthy' than their predecessors. Like other famous grimoires explored in this book, it is their falsity that makes them genuine."

Very few of the grimoires were written by their supposed authors and almost none of them existed in the time period they were supposedly written.

Typically these books start out as nothing more than entertaining stories, legends, and rumor. It is only much later that somebody gets around to actually writing them.

Likewise it was not uncommon for there to be many books claiming to be the same work (Such as Solomon's legendary text on magic).

The so-called "fake" Necronomicons are in fact highly -typical- of the grimoire tradition.

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Re:A Note About the Necronomicon

Posted by jlv61560 - 2010/03/27 00:50

Alas, the "so-called 'fake' Necronomicons" are fake precisely because they fail to provide any of the verisimilitude HPL discusses. Were they to provide mysterious quatrains and that sort of thing instead of regurgitated pastiches of warmed over "sorcery" hokum (all from a western tradition instead of an Arabic one), they might be more enjoyable!

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Re:A Note About the Necronomicon

Posted by Alhazret - 2010/03/30 09:00

"Were they to provide mysterious quatrains and that sort of thing instead of regurgitated pastiches of warmed over "sorcery" hokum (all from a western tradition instead of an Arabic one), they might be more enjoyable!"

Quite so. My inability to write "mysterious quatrains" will undoubtedly keep me from trying my hand at writing such a text.

However, that won't stop me from exploring (in some detail) the meaningful parallels between the mythos and 8th century Arab materials. HPL picked about the perfect time for Alhazred. The older Arab shamanism (cf the kahin and sha'ir) was still alive and kicking and about 40-50 years before Alhazred's death the banu Umayya had initiated a massive effort to translate non-Arab materials on alchemy, astrology and other occult "sciences". The 9th century crackdown on all things interpretable as shirk wouldn't have occurred in his life time so he would have had carte-blanche. The importation of all sorts of weird barbarous names was occurring and many of these were from Greco-Egyptian sources (so names containing "thoth" and "hotep", and references to figures like Nephre(n)ka etc would be expected).

Really it is the perfect period for a figure like Alhazred to have lived.

Seventy years earlier and he wouldn't have had plausible access to important source material. Seventy years later and he likely would have shared the fate of Hallaj and others of his ilk. There was a small window for a man like Alhazred to have flourished unimpeded in Yemen and Damascus and HPL zeroed in on it with remarkable precision. I doubt that was an accident, as he owned a book on Harun al-Rashid (which discusses the Umayyads at some length). So I suspect he had enough interest in such matters to make an educated guess as to what a likely period would have been for someone like Alhazred.

And as it happens, he nailed it.

Best Regards,
Ryan Parker

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Re:A Note About the Necronomicon

Posted by Alhazret - 2010/03/30 11:02

they created a series of "scholarly articles" that purported to discuss the linguistic roots of things supposedly in the Necronomicon,

I'd like to point out the William J. Hamblin isn't the only one to produce some high quality material of that sort. _A Critical Commentary on the Necronomicon_ by Robert M. Price is a brilliant example of what can be done if you have the ability to do a little research and too few hobbies. Others have done worthwhile work in this area (but they tend to be much shorter than Price's 80 page article). Pierre Crapon de Caprona has written some stuff that (if you explore it a little) turns out to have some remarkable leads in it. One such lead is mentioned below.

Other such bogus articles debated the commonality of the Great Old Ones in civilizations around the globe

An Arabic word meaning both "Great" and "Old" is kabiir. So, the word Kabiirin can literally mean "the Great Old Ones". Although Caprona mentioned this in an article he wrote, he scarcely scratched the surface in terms of exploring the term's significance in a mythos context. Apropos the pre-Adamite Jinn, its use is quite interesting. The group of shadowy Chthonic deities called the Kaberoi in Greek mythology are quite clearly related (as are the Latin Cabiri). The use of the term "gibborim" with reference to the Nephilim is fascinating. This last use is most probably derivative of the Syrian and Phoenician "Great Gods" who were also called "kabiri".

These deities appear to have been important figures throughout the Near East, and yet the subject must have been surrounded by secrecy as (in nearly every case) they are quite mysterious and little can be said about them beyond that they are equivalent to the archaic titan / Gods-before-the-Gods motif.

Anyway, I'd suggest that Kabiirin was the term used by Alhazred in his Al 'Azif for "Great Old Ones" and that a more detailed exploration of the term could produce some interesting material in terms of seeming to illustrate an awareness of the Great Old Ones cross-culturally (as the kabiri myth seems to have spread quite widely and they are reasonable approximations of the Old Ones)

Warmly yours
Ryan Parker

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Re:A Note About the Necronomicon

Posted by jlv61560 - 2010/03/30 19:17

You've got that exactly right...speaking of "nailing it!" :-)

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