

## THE LOVECRAFTISATION OF ADOLF J. FORT

*A story of love and discovery*

Experience is something that, at a certain point in life, opens up the doors to a world of memories and past actions that you see with a perspective you couldn't ever imagine. You suddenly realise that you can distinguish between the things or actions you did right in the past and the ones you refuse to recognise as wrongly done. This fall of the youth's veil of arrogance isn't always good for the ego. But you learn from your mistakes and your experience grows even more. And that is good, because after all experience is not transferable.

One of the things I did right in the past was to read: since I can remember I've read anything that has fallen into my hands, and even what's not - yes, I reluctantly admit that I'm the nosy figure that peeks over your shoulder on the bus. But I can't help it. My eyes go unconsciously towards the writing, because I know that you could find something worth learning or enjoying on any page.

On weekends, when I was free of the embarrassing burden that means going out with your parents - when you're thirteen or fourteen years old -, I used to go to a flea market that opens only on Sundays in Barcelona, a place that used to have the biggest collection of used books, records and comics a youngster as me had even dreamed about.

One day, Lady Luck decided for me and I bought two small novellas, part of a series entitled "Tales of Horror and Fright" published by the Spanish publisher Dronte Books. The first book of the series contained two stories: "The Shadow Out of Time", by H.P.L. and "Close Behind Him", by John Wyndham.

Used to the young reader's literature, the disturbing firsts words of the HPL story sunk like a hammer hitting my mind:

*"After twenty-two years of nightmare and terror, saved only by a desperate conviction of the mythical source of certain impressions, I am unwilling to vouch for the truth of that which I think I found in Western Australia on the night of 17-18 July 1935. There is reason to hope that my experience was wholly or partly an hallucination - for which, indeed, abundant causes existed. And yet, its realism was so hideous that I sometimes find hope impossible."*

A few days after I finished the reading, I was still grateful for the sun's warmth in the streets of Barcelona. My literature perspective had changed forever, and that exciting story had been the spark that I needed then to initiate the search for other stories with the same

strength. And I found them as a collection of small books published by Alianza Editorial, which had a more than impressive catalogue of horror, science fiction and essay at that time.

Victim of my own yearn, I dove into the fantastic worlds of Asimov, Borges, Clarke, Poe, Lord Dunsany, Lem, Howard and others and decided, at my sixteen years of age, that literature was to be my life companion alongside with music, my other passion.

But even when I was reading more and more complex and fantastic tales, my mind always retained the strange but pleasurable experience of 'fear' that I had when I was reading the Master of Providence's story.

Later in time, another unique opportunity was presented to me: HPL's universe had been converted into a splendid role game which I immediately adopted. I became the Keeper, the figure that handled the threads of the scenarios for the other players. Little by little, I started to change or adapt some scenario details, making them more comfortable to my players or to familiar environments. At last, I decided to write my own scenario, based on my own ideas and everything that I had learned from the game mechanics.

The outcome was a deadly 'pastiche' entitled "The Blue Effigy", and I say deadly because none of my players survived the dreadful annihilation I unleashed over them. I had taken too seriously the works of HPL and disregarded playability.

But that served, besides accepting hard criticism from my outraged friends, to root the idea that I had been thinking about for a long time: to write a complete story, following the writing style and the technique of Howard Philips Lovecraft.

This time, I said to myself, I was going to do it right. First of all, the idea. Then, a basic script to roleplay it and test its strong and feeble points. And from the outcome of it, I would see if it was worth or simply rubbish.

I've never seen my friends connect with a story so fast. They assumed their characters in a snap and before I realised, I was receiving a very superior feedback than the one I anticipated. In the end, the scenario had to be played in two days, because new scenes emerged from the original plot and I wasn't going to leave them untested, and the players seemed also very happy with it.

When the spectacular game was finished, lots of notes containing feelings, impressions and enough story material were on my table to work the idea of a book with serious ease .

But it was only when I took notice that Timun Mas/Planeta Publishers was searching for not published

horror Spanish authors that I decided - spurred by my dynamic wife, who has always had faith in me - to compile everything I had and make a book.

The northern part of Spain known as Cantabria, with its idyllic valleys and green mountains has the honour of being the place that saw the birth of "Las Cuatro Damas". Besides Galicia, what better place to develop a story of arcane terrors, impossible creatures and dark forests that treasure blasphemous relics from preternatural times?

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