The Adolescence of Blogs, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh', and H. P. Lovecraft: Cultural Attitudes versus Social Behaviour

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A proper respect for the integrity of social history is one thing; a willingness to sacrifice what fiction clearly reveals about changing values to the historical test of altered practices is quite another. Cognitive dissonance ensures that cultural attitudes and social behaviour are not always in step, especially at moments of transition. In the early modern period, for example, when romantic love was increasingly seen as the proper basis for courtship on the stage, arranged marriages were still a common social practice. It is perfectly possible that parents could side with Romeo and Juliet at the theatre, while assuming the right to choose their own children's marriage partners at home.

–Catherine Belsey[1]

On 18 May 2004, Zachary Marsh published the first post on his personal blog in his LiveJournal account. Eighteen posts later, on 20 June 2004, Marsh revealed that he, like all members of his patrilineage from his great-great-great-grandfather onwards, was in fact a monster. This last post quite obviously revealed that this blog's news was fiction, one adapted from 'The Shadow over Innsmouth', a short story by H. P. Lovecraft, a fantasy author whose critical reception has been polarising. All of the blog's posts appeared together as part of a satiric online news article by Matthew Baldwin on 21 June 2004 and entitled 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh'. In *A Future for Criticism*, Catherine Belsey notes that fictions can reveal that 'cultural attitudes and social behaviour are not always in step, especially at moments of transition'; we argue here that this fictitious online 'news' article significantly demonstrates this paradigm. Displaying the less critically esteemed features of blogs as sources for its humour, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' satirises blogs precisely at the time when they were transitioning into a numerically significant popular medium of literary expression. By also using the content of a fantasy writer who has at times been critically panned as a hack, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' further suggested a commensurate suspicion about blogs' literary value. 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' is a timely and telling cultural artefact of a moment of transition because it demonstrates that

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[1] Catherine Belsey, *A Future for Criticism* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), pp. 75–76.

blogs had enough cultural capital for their purported literary value to be instantly recognised, yet easily satirised. That is, blogs were increasingly growing as a form of literary expression, but were not yet fully appreciated critically.

To demonstrate how 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' exhibits the tensions of a period of transition, this article first briefly locates this period of transition for blogs, identifying the adolescent growth-spurt when they grew in number from a few hundred into several million. Second, the article examines a fictional text that was produced within this period of transition, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh'. As its title suggests, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' pulls LiveJournal into its fiction — an actual blogging platform that was popular with teenage bloggers. 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' foregrounds the negative literary characteristics that one might expect to find in self-published teenage writings. The article also shows how 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' evokes H. P. Lovecraft's lore for similar effect. This evocation is appropriate given that some critical assessment of this fantasy writer and amateur journalist has also often been dismissive. Finally, the article shows how the adaptation of both LiveJournal and Lovecraftian lore in 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' in the service of satire demonstrates that 'cultural attitudes and social behaviour are not always in step, particularly at moments of transition'.

1. The Adolescence of Blogs

The blog is a literary form with a largely knowable, documented past. Indeed, the year of its inception and even some of the first bloggers can be identified. The advent of the first popular browsers in 1993 and 1994, Mosaic and Netscape, cleared the path for the wide and episodic digital dissemination of news of a more personal sort. For example, Justin Hall, the blogger subsequently suggested as 'the founding father of personal bloggers',[2] started his personal blog links.net in 1994, revealing events in his life from his father's suicide to his own romantic involvements.[3] Blogs did not immediately proliferate from this point, though. Rebecca Blood, for instance, reported that '[i]n 1998 there were just a handful of sites of the type that are now identified as weblogs [...] Jesse's [James Garrett, editor of *Infosift*] "page of only weblogs" lists the 23 known to be in existence at the beginning of 1999', but also

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[2] Jeffrey Rosen, 'Your Blog or Mine?', *New York Times Magazine* (14 December 2004), <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/19/magazine/19PHENOM.html?_r=0> [accessed 2 August 2015] (p. 2).
[3] For a sense of the readership of Hall's blog, see Rob Wittig, 'Justin Hall and the Birth of the 'Blogs', *Electronic Book Review*, 23 March 2003, <http://www.electronicbookreview.com/thread/electropoetics/serial> [accessed 4 May 2011].

suggested that the growth of the genre was well underway.[4] In 2008, Jill Walker Rettberg could better recognise the rapidity with which blogs subsequently grew and situated her monograph in those terms, stating, 'ten years ago, the word "blog" didn't exist. Today, mainstream media routinely use the word without bothering to explain it. Weblogs have become part of popular consciousness with a speed that is remarkable by any standard.'[5] Walker Rettberg's claim is statistically verifiable. For example, by September 2008, the blog-tracking site Technorati had indexed 133 million blogs.[6] From zero to 133 million in the space of fifteen years: blogs had become a mature literary entity — numerically, at least — with remarkable speed.

A sampling of more quantitative and anecdotal evidence supports 2003–04 as the period in which blogs experienced their adolescent growth spurt. Technorati's first 'State of the Blogosphere Report' illustrated blogs' growth from the thousands into the millions in this period. In March 2003, Technorati was tracking fewer than two hundred thousand blogs; by September 2004, it was tracking over four million. By its statistics, the blogosphere had at least doubled in size once every five months between June 2003 and October 2004.[7] Blogs' growth into a popular literary medium and their relative newness can also be recognised in their adaptation into a more traditional print medium. On one hand, Salam Pax's, Mimi Smartypants's, and Julie Powell's writings were widely read and were free to anyone with an internet connection; on the other hand, their respective blogs, 'Where is Raed?', 'Mimi Smartypants', and 'The Julie/Julia Project' were all adapted and re-mediated into books around this time: *Salam Pax: The Baghdad Blog* (2003), *The World According to Mimi Smartypants* (2004), and *Julie and Julia* (2005).[8] Such re-mediation suggests that blogs were perceived to be profitable in print even though they were freely accessible electronically.[9]

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[4] Rebecca Blood, 'Weblogs: A History and Perspective', *Rebecca's Pocket*, 7 September 2000, <http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html> [accessed 4 May 2011].

[5] Jill Walker Rettberg, *Blogging* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008), p. 1.

[6] David Sifry, 'Technorati's State of the Blogosphere, September 2008', *Sifry's Alerts*, <http://www.sifry.com/alerts/2008/09/technoratis-state-of-the-blogosphere-september-2008/> [accessed 5 June 2014].

[7] David Sifry, 'State of the Blogosphere, October 2004', *Technorati*, 10 October 2004, <http://www.sifry.com/alerts/archives/000245.html> [accessed 4 May 2011].

[8] Salam Pax, *Salam Pax: The Baghdad Blog* (Melbourne: Text, 2003); Mimi Smartypants, *The World According to Mimi Smartypants* (London: HarperCollins, 2004); and Julie Powell, *Julie and Julia: 365 Days, 524 Recipes, 1 Tiny Apartment Kitchen: How One Girl Risked Her Marriage, Her Job, and Her Sanity to Master the Art of Living* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2005).

[9] When each one of these was adapted for print publication, it was changed either marginally or greatly from its electronic form. The most common change was to remove the standard narrative order of blogs (i.e. reverse chronological order — discussed below). For the popularity of 'Where is Raed', see Rory McCarthy, 'Salam's Story', *The Guardian*, 30 May 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/may/30/iraq.digitalmedia> [accessed 19 September 2014] and Kirsten L. McCauliff, 'Blogging in Baghdad: The Practice of Collective Citizenship on the Blog *Baghdad Burning*', *Communication Studies*, 62:1 (2011), 58–73 (p. 62). 'The Julie/Julia

Such re-mediation also suggests a growing sense that some (at the very least economic) literary merit could be found in these freely published, increasingly numerous texts that reflected the rhythms of the diverse daily lives of the bloggers. For example, while the diary-type blogs of Salam Pax and Mimy Smartypants both recorded the quotidian nature of urban settings, Pax's 'Where is Raed?' documented the difficulties of life in Baghdad whereas 'Mimi Smartypants' indulged in the problems and musing of urban America. 'The Julie/Julia Project' also emanated from urban United States, but it was a 'goal-orientated' type of blog, setting out to document the cooking of all of the recipes in Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* within a year.[10] While each of these three blogs documented the everyday experiences of the blogger, such disparate topics (life during the government of Saddam Hussein, first-world musings, or cooking goals) and divisions into types or sub-genres (diary-type or goal-orientated) are indicative of the diverse literary possibilities that the ever-increasing popularity of blogs would continue to usher in. 2003–04 were the years of transition from blogs' naissance towards the maturity of which Walker Rettberg wrote.

Yet, as with many such transitions, the critical enthusiasm for the new genre did not necessarily coincide with its popular use. That is, blogs were sometimes perceived as an inferior literary product — perhaps because anyone *could* publish a blog and because many bloggers tended to forgo the more traditional editorial processes that had long moderated the quality of widely disseminated publications (in that bloggers often wrote, edited, and then published their own work). For example, the year after Walker Rettberg noted that blogs had become part of the popular consciousness, a sports-blogger (another subgenre of blog — the 'topic-driven' blog) named Jared Morris mused on the use of performance-enhancing drugs in American professional baseball, discussing the case of Philadelphia Phillies' Raul Ibanez, a player who was having one of the best years of his career at age 37. Morris considered factors that may have contributed to Ibanez's success, mentioning performance-enhancing drugs in the post.[11] John Gonzalez, a columnist for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, read the blog

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Project', of course, eventually evolved into a 2009 Hollywood feature film, *Julie & Julia*, dir. by Nora Ephron (Columbia Pictures, 2009).

[10] Julia Powell, 'The Book', *The Julie/Julia Project*, 25 August 2002, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110819073749/http://blogs.salon.com/0001399/2002/08/25.html> [accessed 6 August 2015].

[11] Jerod Morris, 'The Curious Case of Raul Ibanez', *Midwest Sports Fans*, 8 June 2009, <http://www.midwestsportsfans.com/2009/06/raul-ibanez-great-start-comes-with-steroid-speculation/#comment-7814> [accessed 22 August 2014].

and challenged it the next day.[12] ESPN, one of the largest sports media producers in the US, later quoted Ibanez defending himself and berating the blogger:

> 'You can have my urine, my hair, my blood, my stool — anything you can test,' Ibanez said, according to the report. 'I'll give you back every dime I've ever made' if the test is positive, he added.
> 'I'll put that up against the jobs of anyone who writes this stuff,' he said, according to the Inquirer. 'Make them accountable. There should be more credibility than some 42-year-old blogger typing in his mother's basement. It demeans everything you've done with one stroke of the pen.'[13]

There are two points here that suggest that the medium itself was not yet fully accepted critically, even if it was increasingly common. The first is the anachronistic metaphor, 'one stroke of the pen'. Ibanez was railing against an inherently electronic medium, but his phrasing suggests a residual way of thinking about the medium. The second and more significant point comes in the derisive suppositions about the socio-economic status of the blogger. 'Some 42-year-old blogger typing in his mother's basement' certainly has pejorative connotations about bloggers and the work that they may be capable of producing. Regardless of how one judges the quality of Morris's piece, it should be noted that he was 27 years old and a university graduate, a rather typical demographic for bloggers around that time.[14] This gap between popular use and pejorative perception of blogs and bloggers is precisely what 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' straddles through its appropriation of LiveJournal and Lovecraft: on one side, simply because blogs proved recognisable enough to be satirised, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' suggests the growing popularity of blogs; on the other side, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' employs a combination of the blogging platform with an author who can hardly be seen as valorising, as we shall now see.

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[12] John Gonzalez, 'A Cheap Shot at Ibanez', *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 June 2009, <http://archive.today/bNBXJ> [accessed 22 August 2014].
[13] ESPN News Services, 'Ibanez Willing to Prove He's Clean', *ESPN*, updated 25 August 2010, <http://sports.espn.go.com/mlb/news/story?id =4248759> [accessed 22 August 2014]. Cf. Joe Posanski, 'What's Eating Raul', *Sports Illustrated*, 11 June 2009, <http://www.si.com/more-sports/2009/06/11/raul-ibanez [accessed 22 August 2014].
[14] For example, Technorati surveyed 7200 bloggers the following year. Two-thirds of those respondents were male, 65% were between the ages of 18–44, and, most tellingly here, 'bloggers [were] more affluent and educated than the general population: 79% [had] college degrees/43% [had] graduate degrees; 1/3 [had] a household income of $75K+; 1/4 [had] a household income of $100K+'. David Sifry, 'State of the Blogosphere 2010', *Technorati*, 3 November 2010, <http://technorati.com/state-of-the-blogosphere-2010/> [accessed 22 August 2014].

2. 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' and H. P. Lovecraft: Social Behaviour and Cultural Attitudes

Satire can only succeed when its audience sufficiently recognises the object of its derision. The appearance of 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' on 21 June 2004 in the 'stories' section of 'The Morning News' (in which 'stories', according to its masthead, included 'Extremely humorous humor, and occasionally things less extreme. Fiction in a blue-moon and some non-fiction too'[15]) testifies to a period of transition where blogging was becoming an increasingly popular, recognisable social behaviour but was perhaps less critically appreciated. 'The Morning News', the electronic venue in which Baldwin published, initially self-identified as a weblog/zine, but, as its masthead reported,

> In 2002, they relaunched The Morning News as a daily-published online magazine with a dedicated staff of some of the Web's best writers (see below for staff bios). Since then, The Morning News has been consistently recognized as one of the Internet's finest publications (e.g., the *Columbia Journalism Review*) and its readership has grown to include — we can only hope — you.[16]

Its link to the *Columbia Journalism Review* revealed in part why this electronic publication could not be called a blog: 'The site is not a blog, insists Rosecrans Baldwin, the *News*'s twenty-six-year-old editor, since it uses different voices'.[17] Between this quotation and the change in format and designation noted by the masthead, 'The Morning News' seemed to distance itself noticeably from the appellation of blog. An insistence on quality is also noticeable. For instance, it employed numerous positive phrases in the masthead: 'dedicated staff', 'some of the Web's best writers', 'consistently recognized as one of the Internet's finest publications', and 'readership has grown'. The link to the *Columbia Journalism Review* itself suggests positive readership. The online magazine seemed to be distinguishing itself from the dubious qualities associated with much of the writing in the blogosphere — the very writing that 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' satirises. As the masthead goes on to put it, '[e]ach story we publish goes through multiple rounds of editing and one round of fact-checking. Writers are expected to work with the editors on revisions, for as many rounds as

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[15] 'Masthead', *The Morning News*, 22 June 2004, <http://web.archive.org/web/20040619083912/http://www.themorningnews.org/masthead/> [accessed 18 September 2014].
[16] 'Masthead', *The Morning News*, 22 June 2004, <http://web.archive.org/web/20040619083912/http://www.themorningnews.org/masthead/> [accessed 18 September 2014].
[17] Jacqueline Reeves, 'The New Online Magazines: A Hunger For Voice', *Columbia Journalism Review*, 42:3 (2003), 25 (p. 25).

the editors see fit.'[18] Indeed, one of the objects of satire in 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' is a lack of editing, a lack not evident in the product that 'The Morning News' was then producing. As we shall see, the article's satire comes from the blog's under-edited posts that were located in a contemporaneous blogging platform popular with teens (LiveJournal) and that conveyed fictional content adapted from a story by a fantasy author whom criticism has sometimes portrayed as little more than a hack (Lovecraft).

As can be seen through a comparison of the two fictions, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' clearly calls upon H. P. Lovecraft's 'The Shadow over Innsmouth'. The anonymous narrator of Lovecraft's story is celebrating his 'coming of age' in 1927 with a tour of Lovecraft's customarily gothicised vision of New England.[19] Seeking a cheaper option than the costly train from the (real) city of Newburyport to the fictional town of Arkham, he learns of a bus service involving a stop in the semi-derelict Massachusetts fishing village of Innsmouth, a place of ill repute and a home of strange-looking, odorous locals. Enthusiastically seizing the opportunity to visit this provincial curiosity, the narrator alights in Innsmouth, and while investigating the decaying village, he hears a rambling story from the town drunk that reveals the genesis of the town's reputation. The townsfolk entered into a pact with a race of immortal fish-demons in order to gain plentiful fishing and gold jewellery. The demons eventually forced the humans to interbreed with them, resulting in insane half-breeds who become increasingly fish-like as they age. After hearing this story, the narrator is accosted by locals and flees the town in terror, pursued by a mob of the mongrel fish-creatures. He escapes — only to discover later that Captain Obed Marsh, the Innsmouth sailor who instigated the pact and participated in its worst aspects, was his great-great grandfather.[20] The story ends with the narrator beginning to acquire the 'Innsmouth look' himself.

Over the course of the posts in 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh', Marsh blogs an exceptionally similar story, but with content and a register more appropriate to a twenty-first-century American teen. Marsh, a recent high-school graduate, relates that he has received a swimming scholarship to Miskatonic University in Arkham, another institution of Lovecraft's

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[18] 'Contact', *The Morning News*, 22 June 2004, <http://web.archive.org/web/20040613184015/http://themorningnews.org/contact/ [accessed 18 September 2014].

[19] H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Shadow over Innsmouth', in *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*, ed. by S. T. Joshi (New York: Penguin, 1999), pp. 268–335 (pp. 269–70). The narrator is nameless in 'The Shadow over Innsmouth'; however, in Lovecraft's far less widely circulated notes to the story, he is named as 'Robert [Martin] Olmstead'. See H. P. Lovecraft, 'Notes for The Shadow Over Innsmouth', in *Collected Essays Vol. V*, ed. by S. T. Joshi (New York: Hippocampus Press, 2006), pp. 249–53 (p. 251)).

[20] Obed Marsh and his offspring intermarried with the demons (p. 305), and their descendants manifested fish-like deformities (p. 288).

fictionalised New England.[21] Hearing about his son's scholarship and subsequent journey to his town of Innsmouth, Marsh's father (who has not seen his son in ten years because he and Marsh's mother had divorced) instant-messages his son and offers him an apartment and a job listing forty boxes of gold jewellery on eBay. A seemingly angst-ridden teen, Zachary Marsh blogs about the tedium of living in Innsmouth, hanging out with his friends, and taking offence to being called 'The Lizard King' on account of his peculiar looks. Eventually, through a local drunk, Marsh (like Lovecraft's anonymous narrator) learns the history of Innsmouth, and, in the blog's hurried final post, recognises his place in that history:

> HOLY SHIT!!!!!!!! there was just a knock at my door and i figured it was probably my dad so i went to answer it but when i looked through the peephole i saw there was this fucking monster outside, with like a hundred more on the street, and they all looked like the things that old drunk guy was talking about. i locked the deadbolt but the knokcign got louder and louder and now I think they are trying to break down the door!
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> at firsyt i thought they were attacking, but the more i think about it the more i think i recognized the monster that was knocking. i think it's my dad. and i dfon't think they're here to kill me i think they are here to WELCOME ME!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
>
> the door is breaking there coming inside.. i have to hit post, no time to spellcheck. if anyone is reding this send help to 1465 babson street, innsmouth
>
> also, chekc out <u>subservient chicken</u>[22] its hilarious lol[23]

Such writing is not far from a caricature of any one of the fact-skewed, ill-written blogs suggested by Ibanez's socio-economic profiling of Morris (the blogger who mused about the possibility of performance-enhancing drugs in professional baseball cited earlier). Further, as we shall shortly see, the quality of Lovecraft's writing has at times been treated equally negatively.

The choice of LiveJournal seems to satirise the social behaviour of a specific demographic, one perhaps not associated with the creation of 'Literature'. Now largely supplanted by other platforms, LiveJournal once had significant currency among teenagers, particularly during the 2003–04 proliferation of blogs. For example, recognising that LiveJournal was popular among high-school and college students, Biz Stone noted that

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[21] In 'The Shadow over Innsmouth', as one might expect, the town folk are all exceptionally fond of the water 'and swam a great deal in both river and harbour. Swimming races out to Devil Reef were very common, and everyone in sight seemed well able to share in this arduous sport' (pp. 286–87).

[22] 'Subservient Chicken' was a video advertisement campaign by Burger King that went viral in 2004.

[23] Matthew Baldwin, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh', *The Morning News*, 21 June 2004, <http://www.themorningnews.org/archives/stories/the_livejournal_of_zachary [accessed 18 May 2011]. Further references are given after quotations in the text, abbreviated to 'Zachary Marsh'. As the post suggests, all of the typographical errors are Marsh's.

'Blogger may have gotten all the hype, but LiveJournal was no slouch with the numbers, clocking in at over 1 million registered users in 2002, and more than 3.5 million registered users (and growing) in 2004.'[24] In their random-digit telephone survey of 7,012 American adults between November 2005 and April 2006, The Pew Internet and American Life Project found LiveJournal to be the most popularly named blogging platform amongst bloggers (n=308), accounting for 13% of bloggers surveyed. This percentage was higher among young bloggers: 'nearly one in five of our 18–29 year old bloggers used LiveJournal'.[25] Further, as Angela Thomas has demonstrated in examining fictional blogs, teenage writers used to use LiveJournal to publish role-play/fan fiction-style blogs whereby they assumed the personality of characters from established fictional worlds, such as characters from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.[26] The fictional Zachary Marsh fits well with many aspects of these social practices in that he is a recent American high-school graduate using one of the most popular free blogging platforms of his time. What is more, his contemporary real-life counterparts were blogging similar content as a form of fantastical escapism. These similarities alone make 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' very much a revealing artefact of how the literature of LiveJournal was perceived: that is, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' seems to suggest that plentiful (perhaps under-edited) adolescent musings might provide surprising insight into an individual, but do not immediately provide well-crafted literature. The appropriation of Lovecraftian lore adds a further dimension to this dynamic.

From one critical point of view, H. P. Lovecraft would seem to deepen the nature of the implied literary critique of blogs that 'Zachary Marsh' undertakes, as Lovecraft himself engaged in alternative forms of publishing that were self-indulging or that avoided more traditional routes. From his early 20s, Lovecraft was involved in the amateur journalism movement, a literary phenomenon that existed for a century or so from around 1860. Amateur writers, most of them American, would produce articles and essays on topics that moved them. This work was then mailed to organised regional 'manuscript bureaus', which brought it to the attention of the amateur editors who would produce small mimeograph or carbon-

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[24] Biz Stone, *Who Let the Blogs Out?* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2004), p. 26. Matt Welch states that LiveJournal reported 1.2 million users in 2003. See Welch, 'Blogworld and Its Gravity: The New Amateur Journalists Weigh In', *Columbia Journalism Review*, 42:3 (2003), 21–26 (p. 24).

[25] Amanda Lenhart and Susannah Fox, 'Bloggers: A Portrait of the Internet's New Storytellers', *Pew Internet Group*, 19 July 2006, part 4, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2006/07/19/part-4-the-practice-of-blogging/> [accessed 3 December 2014].

[26] E.g. Buffy, <http://www.livejournal.com/users/xbuffysummersx/>; Xander, <http://livejournal.com/users/xander_harris/>; Willow, <http://livejournal.com/users/red-witch/>; etc. See Angela Thomas, 'Fictional Blogs', in *Uses of Blogs*, ed. by Axel Bruns and Joanne Jacobs (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), pp. 199–210 (pp. 203–04).

paper runs of promising material. These publications, mostly taking the form of small-scale literary journals, were then circulated to interested members via mailing lists. Lovecraft became involved in 1914, swiftly climbing the ranks of the movement.[27] He served as an official for both of the associations which facilitated his hobby (the United Amateur Press Association and the National Amateur Press Association), contributing extensively to their official journals as well as editing his own, *The Conservative*, from 1915–1923. He was primarily loyal to the UAPA, an organisation notionally more dedicated to literary pursuits than the competing NAPA, but he also joined the NAPA 'as early as 1917' and remained intermittently prominent within both groups for many years.[28] Such support for the dissemination of amateur writing could fairly be seen as support for a print-era precursor of free blogging platforms. Had Lovecraft been born a century later, he would likely have had a LiveJournal account; indeed, he might have been a moderator.

As the following survey of the negative criticisms of Lovecraft's works might suggest, the use of Lovecraft's content in 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' likely reflected a negative contemporaneous cultural attitude towards blogs' perceived literary value.[29] Equally, the use of LiveJournal to present Lovecraft's fictions could have reflected a long-standing negative critical attitude towards Lovecraft's literary output. It is likely that the qualities that LiveJournal brings to Lovecraft and that Lovecraft brings to LiveJournal were mutually damning in this fiction — particularly when one recalls that 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' is a conspicuously poorly edited series of blog posts, but was published in an online magazine which stressed its strict adherence to close editing. It is difficult to imagine the marriage of LiveJournal and Lovecraft as anything but mutually derisive in this particular instance. Lovecraft's work was essentially ignored in his lifetime, and some of the critical attention since his death has been less than sympathetic. Reading Lovecraft in 1945, Edmund Wilson famously stated that '[t]he only horror in most of these fictions is the horror of bad taste and bad art'. He continued,

> One of Lovecraft's worst faults is his incessant effort to work up the expectations of the reader by sprinkling his stories with such adjectives as 'horrible' 'terrible' 'frightful' 'awesome' 'eerie' 'weird' 'forbidden'

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[27] S. T. Joshi, *H. P. Lovecraft: A Life* (West Warwick: Necronomicon Press, 1996), pp. 98–101.

[28] Joshi, p. 101.

[29] Similarly, when one considers American President George W. Bush's frequent malapropisms and often perceived blundering, *The Onion*'s satirical article 'CIA Asks Bush to Discontinue Blog' is also indicative of such an attitude. *The Onion*'s article appeared a month after Baldwin's. 'CIA Asks Bush to Discontinue Blog', *The Onion*, 4 August 2004, <http://www.theonion.com/articles/cia-asks-bush-to-discontinue-blog,1200/> [accessed 29 September 2014].

'unhallowed' 'unholy' 'blasphemous' 'hellish' and 'infernal.' Surely one of the primary rules for writing an effective tale of horror is never to use any of these words — especially if you are going, at the end, to produce an invisible whistling octopus.[30]

Lovecraft's style continued to be a subject of negative criticism. In 1962 Colin Wilson, purporting to admire aspects of Lovecraft's work, nevertheless damned him as 'one of the worst and most florid writers of the twentieth century', 'a bad writer' whose worst stories devolve into 'absurdity and bathos'. Lovecraft's finer stories fair little better. 'The Rats in the Walls' is, for Wilson, 'as clumsy as ever', while his most famous work, 'The Call of Cthulhu', 'is powerful and interesting in the first half, but tails off into vague horrors'.[31] Likewise, 'The Shadow Out of Time', says Wilson, would 'suffice to make Lovecraft a minor classic, if it were not so overwritten and full of unnecessary adjectives and occasional tautologies'.[32]

1975 saw the first major biography of Lovecraft, by L. Sprague de Camp. De Camp was less dismissive of Lovecraft's prose, but he dwelt on numerous anecdotes that display Lovecraft's personal pretensions, unprofessional behaviour, and reactionary social opinions.[33] This appraisal obviously did little for Lovecraft's reputation. Discussing Lovecraft in his survey of the American gothic tradition, David Punter also struggled to find constructive things to say about Lovecraft:

> Lovecraft is a literary sore point: ever since his death in 1937, his life and work have been submerged in a cultism which transcends anything lavished on Peake or J. R. R. Tolkien, yet the few critics who have bothered to spend any time reading him have been massively dissatisfied […] his writing is crude, repetitive, compulsively readable, the essence of pulp fiction. Most of the time he reduces Gothic motifs to a kind of mechanism; his place in the tradition is not as an innovator or even modifier, but more as a latter-day invoker of past horrors.[34]

Such thoughts are typical of one prominent critical perception of Lovecraft. This critical perception has often dismissed Lovecraft as a hack, naïve at best and offensive at worst, a man whose finite authorial powers could not support his literary ambitions. More sympathetic

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[30] Edmund Wilson, 'Tales of the Marvellous and the Ridiculous', in *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism*, ed. by S. T. Joshi (Athens: Ohio State University Press, 1980), pp. 46–49 (p. 48).
[31] Colin Wilson, *The Strength to Dream: The Literature of the Imagination* (Online publication: Maurice Bassett, 2006), pp. 2–6.
[32] Colin Wilson, pp. 113–14.
[33] L. Sprague de Camp, *Lovecraft: A Biography* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), pp. 94–99; cf. pp. 230–31, 444–45.
[34] David Punter*, The Literature of Terror* (London: Longman, 1980), pp. 281–88.

criticism has only gradually dispelled such opinions. In 2004, the year 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' appeared, Punter's opinions of Lovecraft were only slightly improved:

> His fiction is one that is entirely concerned with the production of horrific effects […] his style is wordy, profuse, yet capable of producing a short sharp shock. He has sometimes been compared to Edgar Allan Poe, but he possesses little of Poe's gift for shocking intimacy.[35]

Such assessments naturally precipitate a general perception of Lovecraft as a famously minor writer whose work is ripe for parody or satire, a perception that seems to be reinforced by 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh'. It would take the most ardent defender of Lovecraft (and, as we shall soon see, pro-Lovecraft criticism has also emerged) to see the marrying of Lovecraftian lore with the numerous banal posts and the lack of editing in 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' as enhancing critical appraisal either of Lovecraft's or bloggers' literary output. Indeed, one would not need to stretch too far to apply parts of the previously cited criticism of Lovecraft (e.g. 'absurdity and bathos' or 'the few critics who have bothered to spend any time reading him have been massively dissatisfied') to such posts as, '[w]ent to the store today, the cashier asked if I had any coupons but pronounced it like "QUEUE-pons". There's no "q" in "coupons" people!!' ('Zachary Marsh'), or

> Sorry I haven't updated in a while, not a whole lot going on since my car died and I'm stuck here, now. I was going to go to Elliot's Tueday but when I turned the key in the ignition: nothing. I guess I know where my first paycheck is going. Fuck. :(
> More bad news: Creed Calls It Quits. It's totally bummed. No, psyche, I'm just kidding. Creed sucks. ('Zachary Marsh')

Comprising such posts and suggesting the long tradition of Lovecraftian writing as modestly executed, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' seemed to project a rather bleak critical outlook for blogs.

The dissemination of Lovecraft's work, leitmotifs, and characters also seems to make them appropriate subjects for derisively humorous adaptation. His stories were initially published in pulp magazines such as *Weird Tales* (his chief outlet) and *Amazing Stories*, journals dedicated to little more than the generation of sales to a target demographic.[36] Lovecraft himself was vocally critical of the formula-writing that he saw in the other material published in those forums, but submitted them there anyway, due to a shortage of alternative

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[35] Glennis Byron and David Punter, *The Gothic* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 143–44.
[36] Joshi, p. 296.

outlets and a lack of esteem for his own material, for which he seldom made great claims.[37] The initial appearance of Lovecraft's stories in pulp magazines eventually led to his monsters becoming some of the very stock characters about which he complained. This process began in Lovecraft's lifetime when he endorsed other authors' use of the names and indicia of his various demonic aliens, and indeed incorporated their ideas into his own subsequent work.[38] Such cross-pollination, he felt, added verisimilitude to the works of all concerned. After his death, writers such as August Derleth produced numerous reiterations of Lovecraft's leitmotif of sensible, respectable men becoming embroiled in mind-bending alien conspiracies.[39] Derleth is the most prominent representative of a large group of 'Lovecraftian' writers who rework Lovecraft's conspiracies with a straight face, unleashing them on characters of their own devising. The cross-species miscegenation of 'The Shadow Over Innsmouth' is particularly fertile in this regard. In 1953, for example, Derleth produced 'The Seal of R'lyeh',[40] a story in which antiquarian Marius Phillips discovers his ancestral connection to the first mate of Obed Marsh, and therefore the Innsmouth cult that Marsh instigated.[41] Derleth, Robert Bloch, Alan Moore and others similarly revisit Lovecraftian ideas such as the global machinations of the cult worshipping the monster Cthulhu or the glimpses of supernatural oddities offered in Lovecraft's 1930 cycle of 'pseudo-sonnets' *The Fungi from Yuggoth*.[42] Other writers ape Lovecraft's style, producing pastiches and parodies. 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' could straightforwardly be described as another example of this tradition.

It is important to note that Lovecraft has also always had his defenders. Victoria Nelson ties his reputation to a broader trend in American history to ghettoise fantasy into pulp media.[43] She also notes that this habit has slackened since the 1960s, which may partly

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[37] Joshi, p. 491.

[38] Joshi, p. 503–06.

[39] Derleth was personally acquainted with Lovecraft and became his chief posthumous champion; it was he, for example, who coined the term 'Cthulhu Mythos', the widely accepted name for Lovecraft's pantheon of monsters. Since his own death in 1970, Derleth has been criticised for this and other presumptions. See Joshi, pp. 645–46.

[40] August Derleth, 'The Seal of R'lyeh', in *The Cthulhu Mythos*, ed. by Ramsay Campbell (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1997), pp. 231–55.

[41] In Derleth's story, the cult is introduced to Innsmouth when Captain Obadiah Marsh and his first mate Cyrus Phillips both take mysterious new wives (pp. 238–39). Derleth contradicts his source material here; Lovecraft's story identifies Obed Marsh — note the 'e' — as the instigator, and his first mate, one Matt Eliot, as a dissenting voice who disappears after trying to rally opposition to the cult among Innsmouth's Christian and Masonic establishment, before the interbreeding began (pp. 300–02). In Baldwin's satire, Zachary Marsh has a young friend named Elliot who disappears (abducted by the monsters) after overenthusiastically singing the pop song 'Faith' at a karaoke event.

[42] Joshi, p. 466.

[43] Victoria Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 78–79.

account for the subsequent crescendo of pro-Lovecraft criticism.[44] In 1976 Paul Buhle described Lovecraft as making noteworthy, original contributions to the tradition of Poe, while other critics cite similar connections with authors such as Beckford and Hawthorne.[45] By the 1980s, writers such as Donald Burleson and S. T. Joshi were counter-balancing the dismissals of Wilson and Punter; Joshi's 1996 biography contains chapter-length digressions emphasising the intellectual rigour of his subject's work. Lovecraft's work has become substantially more well-known as a result. Cthulhu, the most famous of his monsters, has been referenced in television shows such as *South Park*.[46] The monster's intentionally unpronounceable name is now sufficiently commonplace to be recognised by modern spellcheckers. Even so, Lovecraft's literary status remains unsettled. A volume of his fiction was published by the Library of America in 2005, but Steffen Hantke has queried the timing and editing of this book, which he suggests places Lovecraft in a position that 'differs from conventional canonicity'.[47] Lovecraft's rehabilitation was well underway by the blog era, but his exact literary merit remains a 'charged matter' into the present day.[48]

'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' still seems to present Lovecraft and his creations as famously poorly written literature, choosing to marry them with a contemporaneous blogging platform geared towards a teenage audience. In doing so, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' demonstrates a perception of blogs as forums for bathos and triviality, particularly when their content is presented as 'news'. One can see such implied bathos in several posts (such as 'which Muppet are you?' or 'I never thought of myself as a really good hugger, but a lot of people tell me that I am so I must be'), but it is perhaps most noticeable in the final post that we have previously noted, one in which the blogger faces potential death at the hands of a monster. The post stresses the magnitude of the events, foregrounding Marsh's urgency in his desire to mark the moment and the intensity of his revelation. It begins with profane, exclamatory shouting ('HOLY SHIT') which gives way to revelatory shouting ('WELCOME ME'). It suggests haste and therefore lack of editing ('no time to spellcheck') as well as the seriousness of the climactic moment (via dead-bolting the door and a call for

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[44] Nelson, p. 82.

[45] Paul Buhle, 'Dystopia as Utopia: Howard Phillips Lovecraft and the Unknown Content of American Horror Literature', in *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism*, ed. by S. T. Joshi (Athens: Ohio State University Press, 1980), pp. 196–210 (p. 200).

[46] 'Coon vs. Coon and Friends', *South Park*, dir. by Trey Parker, 10 November 2010.

[47] Steffen Hantke, 'From the Library of America to the Mountains of Madness: Recent Discourse on H. P. Lovecraft', in *New Critical Essays on H. P. Lovecraft*, ed. by Dave Simmons (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), pp. 135–56 (pp. 141–42).

[48] Roger Luckhurst, 'Introduction', in *H. P. Lovecraft: The Classic Horror Stories*, ed. by Roger Luckhurst (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. vii–xxviii (p. xix).

help). The post is punctuated with numerous exclamation points. Yet, despite the apparent importance of this moment to the rest of his (possibly very short) life, Marsh allows his final written thoughts to link to Subservient Chicken, a viral video meant to amuse. This post and final link raise questions as to what constitutes news and who is worthy of reporting it. News publishing in the pre-blogging era was often heavily mediated, going from an author through a general editor, copy editor, printer, and the like. Blogging eliminated most of these processes. Bloggers decide what is significant in the rhythms of their daily life and self-publish those insights however they see fit — as Ibanez most certainly seemed to have protested relative to Morris's blog that conjectured about the use of performance-enhancing drugs in professional baseball. At any given moment, promoting a video advertisement campaign for Burger King may be as significant as discovering one's monstrous heritage mere seconds earlier or greeting death seconds later. Indeed, such choice of what is important to publish freely and widely seems to have been part of the resistance to blogging in the first place. This final post in 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' in particular, a post that works as the punch-line upon which the satire ultimately hangs, seems to reveal the tension between cultural attitudes and social behaviour at this moment of transition.

3. What This Fiction Reveals

The satire 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' functions through adaptation in two ways, neither of which valorise blogging; rather, those two ways reveal how cultural attitudes and social behaviour were not quite in step in 2003–04. Firstly, as already mentioned, it adapts the content of Lovecraft's story. It takes an old tale and makes it contemporary.[49] However, rather than having a blogger who contributes to the understanding of real, supposedly newsworthy events (such as Salam Pax in Iraq, for example), it has an angst-ridden teenager with largely first-world, middle-class problems. The derisory humour of the piece partially stems from the marriage of Lovecraft's debatably terrifying revelations with a supposedly typical teenage blogger's ham-handed attempts to record banal events as newsworthy. The

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[49] This is not an uncommon occurrence for Lovecraftian lore in the digital age. For example, another Lovecraft story comically adapted is 'The Call of Cthulhu'. 'The Adventures of Lil' Cthulhu', a flash animation, re-imagines Lovecraft's monster Cthulhu as the infant protagonist of a quasi-educational children's cartoon. Or again more recently, the moderator for the Lovecraft subreddit (/r/Lovecraft) has repeatedly commented on the overabundance of comic fare posted there: 'Practically everyone likes lulz. That said, not everything should be lulz. This has all been said before, and yet we still end up removing an average of about one post each day (sometimes more) simply because the subject matter is light, comedic, of little to no real tangible relevance to Lovecraft or Lovecraftian horror (tentacles alone do not a Lovecraftian reference make)', suggesting that those in search of lighter fare go to /r/cthulhu. Cthulhufhtagn. See 'Some clarification about /r/lovecraft', *Reddit*, 22 June 2012, <reddit.com/r/Lovecraft/> [accessed 9 September 2014].

confirmation of the existence of Lovecraft's fish-demons — the climax of Lovecraft's story, deflated in the eyes of many critics by sixty pages of heavy-handed foreshadowing — is further let down in Baldwin's re-mediation through references to memes and adolescent hugging. 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' evokes parallels between Lovecraft's and the average teen blogger's reputations as overenthusiastic writers of top-heavy prose.

Such satire, though, might both miss and hit the point. Rachael Mizsei Ward argues that comic extrapolations of ostensibly horrific literature serve a valuable purpose. She notes in particular the rendition of Cthulhu (the most famous of Lovecraft's mind-bending materialist demons) as a plush toy available for sale on numerous websites. Such material representation of this terrifying monster has parallels with Baldwin's article. The toys pursue comedy value by depicting Cthulhu — a mountain-sized, man-eating demon who induces catatonic psychosis by his mere presence — as a helpless, childlike creature with stubby, useless limbs and a blankly cheerful facial expression. Noting the parallel with the Kewpie dolls popular in Lovecraft's lifetime, Ward argues that the Cthulhu plushies are similarly subservient to their consumer's interpretations; their blankness becomes a canvas for whatever connotations the consumer wishes to endow them with.[50] As Lovecraft is an author of fantasy and science fiction stereotypically associated with 'geek' subcultures, Ward argues that these toys should be seen as 'secret handshakes' of a sort, allowing people to 'express affiliation with geekdom'.[51] A negatively polarised position on geekdom might see marginalisation instead of affiliation in such associations. It might see an image of computer literacy, awkwardness, arrested development, and social marginality — almost precisely the sort of image Ibanez evoked with his aforementioned dismissal of bloggers living in their mother's basement, and perhaps a similar image suggested by Zachary Marsh (who is computer literate, needs free accommodation provided by a parent, has physical characteristics for which he is mocked, and so on). The digital age has seen various formerly mocked attributes of geekdom enter the cultural mainstream. Lovecraftian pseudo-mythology and blogging are among those attributes; if the satire of 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' was impossible in 1994 because blogs were just being born, it likely would have lacked much comedic impact in 2014 because blogging had become far more critically embraced. For example, one could argue that the computer-*illiterate* are now the socially marginalised. 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' is representative of its moment, when these two cultural

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[50] Rachael Mizsei Ward, 'Plushies, My Little Cthulhu and Chibithulhu: The Transformation of Cthulhu from Horrific Body to Cute Body', *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*, 12 (2013), 87–106 (p. 100).

[51] Mizsei Ward, p. 105. 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh', being replete with allusions to Lovecraftian lore that would be wholly lost on an uninitiated reader, is itself another excellent example of such a 'handshake'.

phenomena were both well known enough to be lampooned without explanation because they had not entirely shed the critical and social stigma with which they had initially been burdened.

Secondly, the satire of 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' functions by subverting the normative literary characteristics of blogs, showing again how cultural attitudes and social behaviour were not quite in step in 2003–04. There are two characteristics in Jill Walker's contemporaneous definition of 'blog' in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* that bear on the discussion here, both of which were adapted in the service of this satire. First, blogs were usually published by an individual (recall that this was one of the reasons that 'The Morning News' gave for eschewing identification as a blog) and could therefore be exceptionally personal, but the standard expectation was that they were 'non-fiction'.[52] In this matter, blogs and news articles should have been on the same side of literary taxonomic binaries: fact over fiction, history over fabrication, and representation over fantasy. As a supposed item of news (even if satirical), 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' initially seemed to support fact, history, and representation, but inevitably subverted them. Its news wasn't really that Zachary Marsh was an alien; its news was a representation of the perception that blogs could be questionably factual, have overt subjectivity, and represent fantastical or less traditionally newsworthy content. That is, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' presented these taxonomic binaries as laughably blurred. Second, blogs are also frequently updated (in that they comprise frequent posts) with those updates appearing in reverse chronological order over time; the most recent post to be composed eventually appears as the newest, top-most post on the webpage. The next post might not take that position for minutes, hours, or days — whenever it is eventually composed and posted. 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' does begin with a sense of its ending, but that sense comes from meta-narrative provided by Baldwin as a (mock) news reporter:

> This morning the authorities entered the home on Babson and found it deserted, the floors slick with mud and seaweed. On the computer was the LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh, with a notice reading 'Update Successful.' ('Zachary Marsh')

Noticeably, this meta-narrative is written in the form of a lede — it contains information tailored to pique interest followed by a temporary silence to propel the reader forward. 'The

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[52] Jill Walker, 'Blog', in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. by David Herman and others (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 45 (p. 45).

LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' then eschews reverse chronological order, presenting all of the posts from first to last as one would present the gradual building of forensic evidence that leads to solving the crime. The temporary silence created by the meta-narrative now becomes relative to how quickly the reader can read the whole blog (from first to presumably last post) rather than to how much real-life time passes between yet-to-be-created posts. A reader of 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' does not need to wait weeks, days, or minutes for the next post to appear. For that matter, the reader does not even need to wait the mere seconds that it might take to click on links to archived posts. Rather, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' as an article collates all of the posts together into one fixed document. That is, there seems to be a tacit expectation of residual pre-blog reading habits that will help this particular satire to function. The punchline of 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' really only has punch because the blog's most recent post is positioned, not at the top of the page and the beginning of the 'narrative' as blog-convention would demand, but rather at the end.

'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' marries the perceived negative characteristics of Lovecraft (possibly a hack) with LiveJournal (a platform often associated with teenage writing) and allows the writing to seem un-edited (at least in terms of obvious orthographic or grammatical errors). It also marries residual ways (completely collected and fixed text) and emergent ways (individual posts, though their reverse chronological order is subverted) of experiencing type-written text. Further, such marriages are performed by an article published in an online magazine that made positive claims towards literariness while distancing itself from its previous designation as weblog/zine. Together, such characteristics are what make 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' a valuable cultural artefact. These characteristics display 'how cultural attitudes and social behaviour are not always in step at moments of transition'. 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' as satire tacitly acknowledges that blogs were a sufficiently recognisable news-making literary enterprise, but underscores blogs' somewhat parlous reputation for doing so; it subverts blogs' reverse chronological order to present the overtly subjective and obviously fantastical content of the final post of a blog as a punch-line. It demonstrates that in 2004 this medium could be subject to ridicule, just as Lovecraft's fiction has at times been. The medium was still in the process of earning the gravitas and currency with which it has gradually been attributed. Ultimately, 'The LiveJournal of Zachary Marsh' reminds us of adolescence in general — a period of sharp growth and commensurate struggle to establish the qualities for which one will be valued in later life.

Trafficking in Death and (Un)dead Bodies:
Necro-Politics and Poetics in the Works of Ann Radcliffe

Carol Margaret Davison

At the conclusion of his essay 'The Melancholy Briton: Enlightenment Sources of the Gothic' (2009), Peter Walmsley states that

> Ann Radcliffe's [*The*] *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), with its unquiet graves, its terrors of entombment in a foreign land, and its complex negotiations with Catholicism, partakes of a tradition of nationalist discourse about death that reaches back through [Laurence] Sterne and [Edward] Young, claiming the melancholy of the bereaved and the serious propensity to live with death in view, once again, as the peculiar property of the British psyche.[1]

Apart from this single, overarching claim, Walmsley offers no examination of Radcliffe's masterpiece as read through the lens of what may be referred to as the Death Question. Piggybacking on his astute observation that the gothic emerges out of a 'wider [, national] discourse of death' and that it evidences the 'obsession with death' that Marilyn Butler rightly claims as prevalent in literature produced between 1760 and 1790, I would suggest that there is a great deal at stake, particularly in regard to national identity and its religious inflections, in Radcliffe's engagement with the Death Question.[2] Under that aegis may be placed the issue of our social duty towards the dead, the existence and status of the afterlife, and modes of mourning and memorialisation. In its representation of a transitional era characterised by a new culture of death practices, Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* foregrounds the fraught inter-generational politics between the living and the dead (who often remain undead) as they, effectively, negotiate a new social contract reflective of national values. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* also supports Thomas Laqueur's claim that cultural

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[1] Peter Walmsley, 'The Melancholy Briton: Enlightenment Sources of the Gothic', in *Enlightening Romanticism, Romancing the Enlightenment: British Novels from 1750 to 1832*, ed. by Miriam L. Wallace (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 39–54 (p. 53).
[2] Walmsley, p. 39; and Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background, 1760–1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 53.