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Études de Stylistique Anglaise

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Introduction: Lovecraft's use of dialect and the 'New England backwoods' variety

- ¹ Howard Philips Lovecraft was a New England writer through and through. Most of his stories are set in New England and his descriptions and scenery conjure up visions of New England, even though it may sometimes be a fantasized region, something of a 'dream New England' (Eckhardt 2011, 81). In addition, Lovecraft clearly associated himself with New England and self-identified as 'an old-fashioned, soil-loving, conservative Yankee' (Eckhardt 2011, 81). In his works, we can find a few attempts at encoding a specific dialect, which Joshi (2002, 406) labels the 'backwoods New England dialect'. Lovecraft's first effort is to be found in the short story 'The Picture in the House' (1921, henceforth 'Picture'), in which the dialect is spoken by a 'loathsome', 'old', 'white-bearded' and 'ragged' man (p. 3)¹ who appears to have grown uncannily old on account of cannibalism. We later find a lengthier attempt at encoding this dialect in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* (1936, henceforth *Innsmouth*) in the long monologue delivered by Zadok Allen (henceforth, ZA), a very old alcoholic and one of the few completely human residents of Innsmouth, a town in which the locals are turning into fish-like creatures known as the 'Deep Ones'. Joshi (2002, 406) maintains that ZA's speech is 'Lovecraft's most exhaustive utilization of backwoods New England dialect'. The term *backwoods* refers to 'an area that is far from population centers or that is held to be culturally backwards' (www.thefreedictionary.com). As to the phrase *New England backwoods*, it is also used by other authors and critics to name the dialect that is marginally encoded in Lovecraft's works (e.g. Eckhardt 2011, Janicker 2007). However, the reference to the variety is never a direct one; it is always referred to through Joshi's

work. Furthermore, none of the authors ever explain what this variety of English really was, and a definition seems to be either avoided or taken for granted. In 'Picture' (p. 3), the narrator writes about the antagonist:

His speech was very curious, an extreme form of Yankee dialect I had thought long extinct; and I studied it closely as he sat down opposite me for conversation.

- 2 The narrator's words most probably indicate that Lovecraft himself considered that the variety was extinct and that he was somewhat bringing it back to life with the speech he crafted for the characters of 'Picture' and *Innsmouth*. As the quote shows, the dialect may be associated with the original Yankees, Puritans who left Britain to escape religious persecution and founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1628. Most of them came from southeast England and had a rather high social status (Schilling 2016, 38). From the perspective of the literary encoding however, the main question is what the dialect meant to Lovecraft specifically. An answer may be found in his correspondence. In a letter he wrote in 1929, he noted that Yankee farmers did not speak any differently from the way he did (Eckhardt 2011, 89). Yet, in a 1928 letter he had previously written to his aunt, the author had commented on specific features of the 'rustics' of Vermont, particularly on the way they pronounced *down* and *around* as 'daown' and 'araound' (in Joshi 1996, 143), spellings which he would later abundantly use to encode the pronunciations of the anonymous cannibal and of ZA. The apparent contradiction between the content of the two letters suggests that the author's perception of the dialect was at best rather paradoxical, if not downright unclear. It follows that the markers he used to bring the New England backwoods dialect back to life may be expected not to be entirely in keeping with the actual features of the variety. In fact, some of the features that are represented appear to be more stereotypical of common ways of encoding spoken English than of any intrinsic New England characteristics.
- 3 According to Eckhardt (2011, 89), Lovecraft's dialect encoding may have been inspired by Lowell's *Biglow Papers* (1848-1862), which is considered 'satirical poetry in Yankee dialect' (*Encyclopædia Britannica*). Even in Lowell's time, the dialect was thought to be long extinct, which reinforces the notion that Lovecraft must have considered it an 'ancient' way of speaking. Below is the beginning of the poem entitled 'What Mr Robinson Thinks', taken from the *Bartleby* website. In blue are the various spellings that are meant to render dialectal forms or orality. They will not be discussed here but, as some of them are also used by Lovecraft, they will be discussed in the section on dialect encoding.

GUVENER B. is a sensible man;
He stays to his home an' looks arter his folks;
He draws his furrer ez straight ez he can,
An' into nobody's tater-patch pokes;
But John P.
Robinson he
Sez he wunt vote fer Guvener B.

My! aint it terrible? Wut shall we du?
We can't never choose him o' course,—thet's flat;
Guess we shall hev to come round, (don't you?)
An' go in fer thunder an' guns, an' all that;
Fer John P.
Robinson he
Sez he wunt vote fer Guvener B.

Gineral C. is a drefle smart man:
 He's ben on all sides thet give places or pelf;
 But consistency still wuz a part of his plan,—
 He's ben true to *one* party,—an' thet is himself,—
 So John P.
 Robinson he
 Sez he shall vote fer Gineral C.

- 4 From the point of view of diatopic variation, the first thorough information on New England dialects that we have access to comes from *The Linguistic Atlas of New England* (Kurath 1939-1943). According to Eckhardt (2011), Lovecraft was familiar with Kurath's work. More recent studies exist of course, but they are not necessarily relevant to discuss Lovecraft's works. There were originally two supra-dialects in New England: an Eastern one and a Western one. Within the Eastern variety, a distinction can be established between a Northern and a Southern dialect. The Eastern dialect was mostly spoken in Maine, New Hampshire, East Massachusetts, East Connecticut and Rhode Island. The Western dialect was primarily used in Vermont, West Massachusetts and West Connecticut (Nagy and Roberts 2008, 52). A Northeastern type of dialect came to be associated to Boston, New Hampshire and Maine². Some of Lovecraft's stories take place in 'Lovecraft country', a term popularized by Chaosium, the producers of *Call of Cthulhu*, a role-playing game based on Lovecraft's works. These stories are located in Northeastern Massachusetts and, sometimes, in the southern part of Vermont. The fictitious town of Innsmouth is meant to be situated north of Boston. As a result, the dialectal markers associated to ZA may be expected to be typical of Northeast New England or at least Eastern New England. Of course, Lovecraft country being an imaginary place, its location is likely to be a rather abstract one, which may have consequences on the dialectal encoding found in the texts. Let us thus turn to the linguistic features typical of (North)eastern New England to determine to what extent they are encoded in Lovecraft's attempts at recreating the New England backwoods dialect.

(North)eastern new England: linguistic features

- 5 Some 20,000 'original Yankees' arrived in the New England region between 1629 and 1641 (Schilling 2016, 38). They brought with them pronunciations typical of a southeastern type of Early Modern English (Schneider 2011, 78). The wealthier came to live 'in what would soon become the cultural center of New England, Boston. They oriented toward England, especially toward London, its political and cultural center' (Schilling 2016, 16-17). At the beginning of the 17th century, it had become quite common to hear non-rhotic pronunciations of English (i.e. pronunciations in which post-vocalic /r/s had disappeared) in southeastern England, particularly in and around London. This process started at the end of the 16th century with the weakening of /r/, which was until then either trilled or tapped (Navarro 2016, 57). The weakening mostly affected /r/s in post-vocalic position, which came to be gradually vocalized. Given the prestige of London, this innovation had begun to be viewed positively when it was transported to New England by the Yankees. Non-rhoticity is the number one Eastern New England feature; it is common knowledge among the American population that some parts of new England are non-rhotic, and this feature is often publicly displayed in the media (Navarro 2015, 393).

- 6 The second Eastern New England feature that is public knowledge, even though it is not caricatured as often as non-rhoticity, is the specific pronunciation of the vowel of the BATH lexical set³ (a set of words sometimes also referred to as *ask words*). The quality of the vowel is an open front [a], as opposed to the slightly less open [æ] of General American (Nagy and Roberts 2008, 52). The same vowel is also used in the START lexical set, as opposed to the back vowel [ɑ]. To render the 'r-lessness' and the particular vowel quality in BATH and START, the following stereotypical sentence is often used in relation to a Boston accent: *Park your car in Harvard yard*. It is then pronounced ['pa:k jə 'ka:ɹɪn 'ha:vəd 'ja:d].
- 7 Non-rhoticity and the quality of the vowels of BATH and START are features that may be reminiscent of British pronunciations and that may be partly explained by the influence of England on New England varieties. Indeed, families that belonged to the upper strata of New England society long continued to send their children to school in England, which helped maintain social and linguistic links with the 'mother country' (Fridland 2015, 50). In addition, regular connections between Boston harbor and the coastal regions of the South contributed to fostering contact with other non-rhotic speakers with similar links to England. New England dialects and Southern American English have sometimes been called conservative varieties, partly because they 'retained Colonial-era pronunciations longer than the settlers in the intervening Midland dialect area [such as] *bust* for *burst*, *gyarden* for *garden*, *sairy* for *sarah*, *feller* for *fellow*, *bile* for *boil*, *tyune* for *tune*, and *runnin* for *running*' (Schilling 2016, 41).
- 8 Even though it is receding today, the phenomenon known as *Canadian raising* occurs in the areas of New England that are close to the Canadian border (Nagy and Roberts 2008, 58). The first element of the diphthongs of PRICE and MOUTH is centralized, yielding realizations such [əɪ] and [əʊ] (Glain 2013, 94) or [ɐɪ] and [ɐʊ] (Navarro 2013, 290). It is worth noting that such diphthongs were on the way out in the 1930s (Kurath 1939-1943). In fact, the particular diphthongs of Canadian raising may be seen as intermediate steps in the Great Vowel Shift, which again points to the retention of older pronunciations. Other regional features include the possible monophthongization of GOAT into [o:] or [ɔ:], respectively a close-mid or an open-mid vowel (Nagy and Roberts 2008, 58). In the NEAR, SQUARE and CURE lexical sets, Meier (2009, 206) notes the possible insertion of a glide in Boston English. Owing to the lack of rhoticity, he explains that 'the transition from the first to the second element of the diphthong may be abrupt enough in some words, or in some speakers, to warrant the use of [j] or [w]' (e.g. *fear* ['fɛjə], *square* ['skwɛje], *cure* ['kjʊwə]). This process facilitates articulation and occurs in other non-rhotic varieties of English, most notably in Welsh English (Glain 2013, 63; Meier 2009, 113). Another specificity concerns the vowel /ɜ:/, which displays considerable variation in Maine when it occurs in front of a consonant. It may then be realized [ə], [ɜ] or [ɛ].
- 9 Apart from the realizational specificities seen so far, Eastern New England varieties are also characterized by vocalic mergers. They share with Southern dialects what is known as the 'pin/pen merger', that is the merger of /ɪ/ and /e/ in front of nasals, which makes the words *pin* and *pen* homophones. Even though it is not as common in front of nasals as it is in the South, the merger of the two vowels can be found in other environments, particularly in front of /l/.⁴ On the other hand, the merger of the vowels in words such as *marry*, *merry* and *Mary* (when the vowels precede /r/), common in most North American accents, does not traditionally occur in New England, where

three distinct vowels are maintained (/eə/ + /r/, /æ/ + /r/, /e/ + /r/; Labov, Ash and Boberg 2006). Yet, in the emergence of regional pronunciations, it seems that /r/ still had an effect on the preceding vowel, which yielded specific realizations which may be archaic today. As early as the end of the 18th century, Webster (1789, 103) mentioned the pronunciation of 'e' as 'a' in front of 'r'. The example he gave was that of *mercy*, pronounced *marcy*. More recently, Wells (1982, 519) mentioned the realization of the vowel of SQUARE as [æə], which he supposed may have been 'a dated feature'. This lowering of /e/ is also triggered by /l/. In a book aiming at helping actors and actresses take on specific accents, Machlin (2006, 63-64) recommends such pronunciations as 'whar' for 'where' and 'waal' for 'well', which she associates with the 'Yankee dialect'. She writes that 'rural types [...] still abound in northern Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine' and she labels their dialect a 'conservative' one (p. 64). The distinction between the NORTH and FORCE lexical sets is maintained in typical Boston pronunciations (Labov, Ash and Boberg 2006), while the two vowels have merged in most North American accents, and indeed in most of the English-speaking world.

- 10 The pronunciation of the suffix <-ing> as [ɪn] (as opposed to [ɪŋ]), often graphically marked <in'>, is often listed as a typical New England feature (e.g. Meier 2009, 167). However, it is supposed to be 'typical' of so many accents that it does not mean much in terms of typicality.
- 11 From a lexical point of view, New England has retained words that have receded elsewhere. As Schilling (2016, 41) writes:

New England and the American South to this day share conservative linguistic usages like 'piazza' for 'veranda' or 'porch,' 'spider' for 'skillet' or 'frying pan,' and 'nor'easter' for a storm whose winds blow from a northeasterly direction.
- 12 However, none of these words or of other typical lexical items associated to New England (cf. Schilling 2016, Wolfram and Schilling 2016) are used by Lovecraft in his encoding. The author resorts to other processes, which we shall now turn to.

What dialectal encoding for Zadok Allen?

- 13 It comes as a surprise to find no markers of non-rhoticity in the speech of ZA. What is prototypically considered the main feature of Eastern New England is not even hinted at. It is rather difficult to try and explain the reasons behind this choice. In fact, it may not have been a choice at all on the part of the author, who may have neglected the feature or considered that it was so common that it did not even need any encoding. On the other hand, Lovecraft may have wanted to render older pronunciations, which dated back to the pre-colonial era. The third possibility is that the absence or non-rhoticity may have been a way of encoding Western new England pronunciations. However, this is not very likely given that ZA is described as an Innsmouth native.
- 14 Certain New England features are encoded through spelling changes. This is the case of the absence of historical merger in words such as *marry*, *merry* and *Mary* and of the lowering of the vowel of SQUARE. In ZA's monologue, the words *where* and *there* are systematically transcribed as <whar> and <thar>, with the letter <a> seemingly representing the lowering of the first element of the diphthong. The lowering of /ɛ/ to [æ] in front of /l/ is also evoked in the spelling of *well* as <wal> (6 occurrences in *Innsmouth*). The 'pin/pen merger' is clearly encoded by an inversion of the letters <e>

and <i> in certain words, but Lovecraft goes further by suggesting a generalization of the merger to other environments than the strictly pre-nasal position:

I kin mind him a-tellin' abaout furren parts... (p. 15, *can*)

only he was agin' folks's doin' (p. 15, *against*, with a reduction of the consonant cluster /st/)

an' ef they cud git more (p. 16, *if*)

an' gittin' all kinds o' favour in return (p. 16, *getting*)

- 15 The MOUTH lexical set is systematically transcribed <aow> in ZA's speech (e.g. <daown> for *down*, <haow> for *how*). The introduction of the letter <a> breaks the spelling convention and 'breaks' the quality of the vowel, which appears to the reader as if it was produced in two stages: a-ow. This is due to the high frequency of the digraph <ow> in written English, which is likely to be deciphered as one phoneme by the reader. As written previously, MOUTH is prone to undergoing Canadian raising in certain parts of New England. The encoding does not make it possible to account for the raising, but it is the sign of a different pronunciation. Because it points to something different from the norm, it helps produce a certain *effet de réel* (Barthes 1968). The choice of the <aow> form is particularly telling as it is systematic (54 occurrences) and as we know from Lovecraft's correspondence with his aunt that this is how the author perceived the pronunciation of the MOUTH lexical in the speech of some rural New Englanders. Given the relationship between Canadian raising and former pronunciations of English, the orthographic change proposed for MOUTH may also have allowed Lovecraft to encode pronunciations that were becoming archaic at the time of writing, as explained in Kurath (1939-1943). The retention of former pronunciations is also encoded in the spelling of certain lexical words:

Matt Eliot, his fust mate, talked a lot, too... [...] (p. 15, *first*)

picters o' monsters them awful picters o' frog-fish monsters was supposed to be picters o' these things [...] (p. 16, *pictures*)

Mebbe they was the kind o' critters as got all the mermaid stories an' sech started. (p. 16, *creatures*)

- 16 The spelling <fust> evokes Colonial-era pronunciations such as the example of 'burst' given by Schilling (2016, 41), while the forms <picters> and <critters> similarly suggest former pronunciations that were the norm before /tʃ/ was introduced in such words through a historic process of palatalization.
- 17 The monophthongization of GOAT is rendered by yet another deviation from spelling norms. The contraction of *do not* is systemically spelled <dun't> (10 occurrences), not once is it spelled <don't>. However, the result of the monophthongization points to a pronunciation of a [ʌ] type, as opposed to the [o:] or [ɔ:] that the literature associates with a New England accent. Indeed, grapho-phonological rules equate the letter <u> with /ʌ/ in stressed syllables when the vowel is checked, as it is with the last two consonants <nt> in <dun't> (e.g. Duchet 2018). In a similar way, *railroad* is spelled <railrud> (p. 19, p. 20). However, the 'monophthongized spelling' does not apply to all items of the GOAT lexical set, as other words such as *choked* and *nobody* are spelled conventionally.
- 18 Maine's great variability of the NURSE vowel, when it occurs in front of a consonant, may be encoded by different written forms:
- he larnt that they's things on this arth as most folks never heerd abaout? (p. 16, *learnt, earth, heard*).

- 19 The form <heerd> may point to a raised vowel, suggesting a pronunciation of an [e] or an [i:] type. The first two rather evoke a lowering of the vowel towards the area of [æ] or [a]. The same logic applies to <arly> (p. 17). If there is no regularity behind the encoding, Lovecraft makes it clear that 'something is happening' with the NURSE lexical set, maybe on account of the great variability of the pronunciations of the Northern part of the region.
- 20 In short, Lovecraft's encoding of dialect does not correspond to a specific variety of Northeastern New England. Instead, the features that can be deciphered point to various dialectal areas of New England.

Eye-dialect

- 21 In terms of accent encoding, it is more difficult to account for the written forms in the following words of the SQUARE lexical set:
- they got over bein' skeert (p. 16, *scared*)
they dun't keer (p. 16, *care*)
- 22 The only quality that the <ee> may evoke is that of a raised vowel, and not the lowered one that Wells (1982, 519) considers dated. In addition, the consonant modification <c> → <k> in *scared* and *care* cannot render a pronunciation other than /k/, the regular one. Therefore, the orthographic nonconformities constitute what may be called cases of eye-dialect, that is spelling changes that do not encode any deviations from the regular pronunciations but that point to non-standard forms (Jobert 2018, 143), as does the spelling of <waal> (for *well*) with only one <l>. Instances of eye-dialect actually abound in the text. Here are a few examples
- Says they'd orter git better gods (p. 15, *ought to*)
Matt he says the natives araound thar had all the fish they cud ketch (p. 15, *could catch*)
[...] they was the kind o' critters as got all the mermaid stories an' sech started (p. 16, *such*)
- 23 While it does not seem to encode non-rhoticity given the absence of this feature in the rest of ZA's monologue, the spelling <orter> suggests a lengthening of the preceding vowel to [ɔ:] on account of the presence of the graphic <r>, which gives <o> its r-colored quality. In <kud ketch>, while the spelling of *catch* with <e> may evoke a raised vowel, the <u> in *could* cannot point to a deviation from a mainstream pronunciation as it appears in a grammatical word and would thus normally correspond to a reduced vowel most likely pronounced [ə]. It is unclear if the written form <sech> is used to render the quality of a reduced vowel, as the use of the letter <e> often does. This is because the word *such* does not normally reduce, even though Wells (2008, 789) notes that it has the 'occasional weak form' [sətʃ]. This is more likely another instance of eye-dialect.

Evoking spoken English

- 24 Lovecraft's encoding not only aims at evoking a particular geographical variety, its goal is also the written representation of an oral variety. In addition to diatopic variation, ZA's speech therefore also provides readers with an interesting case of diamesic

variation (Mioni 1983), in that it proposes adaptations from what would normally be an oral code to a written one (Lacaze 2020). One of the processes that evoke orality is the systematic use of <in> for the verbal ending *-ing*, encoding a pronunciation with /n/ instead of /ŋ/. This spelling could in fact encode both orality and dialect. Indeed, this feature is said to be particularly frequent in New England dialects, but it is common with so many varieties that it may lose its idiosyncratic quality, while still clearly indicating orality. To evoke an oral code, as opposed to a particular dialect of the language, Lovecraft encodes a great many connected speech processes, such as elisions and reductions. For example, *for* is often written <fer> to represent a reduced vowel and the weak form [fə(r)] of the function word (25 occurrences in ZA's speech). Another marker of orality is the apostrophe, which the author uses to render consonant elision in <kep> (for *kept*, p. 15, p. 17), <an> (for *and*, used 146 times, whereas <and> is only used twice) or <'n> (for *than*, 11 occurrences, <than> being only used twice). In <kep> and <an>, the specific elision that is hinted at corresponds to consonant cluster reduction (CCR), a process which is very common across varieties of English in word-final clusters. The clusters that are simplified are /pt/ and /nd/, respectively. In <'n>, it is the initial /ð/ and the /ə/ of /ðən/ which are elided, the transcription pointing to a syllabic [n]. Written forms such as <Gate o' hell>, <Ol' Cap'n> or <bring 'em> (p.15) encode similar phoneme elisions (/v/ in *Gate of hell*; /d/, /t/ and /ə/ in *Old Captain*; /ð/ in *bring them*). The spelling <'em> is the usual form for the reduction of /ðem/ to [ə̃m]. Again, the vowel <e> is used to render the value of [ə].

- 25 *Maybe* is written <mebbe> (p. 16, 18, 21) to suggest the reduction of the vowel /eɪ/, the pronunciation of which is encoded as monophthongized on account of grapho-phonological rules (<e> followed by two consonants). This amounts to a loss of phonological weight with the reduction of the first vowel from two moras to only one. Wells (2008, 495) notes that ['mebi], the pronunciation which the graphic <mebbe> indicates, is a 'casual form' of *maybe*, which confirms the tendency towards the encoding of orality that characterizes the speech of ZA.
- 26 The written form <ud> is used 17 times for *would* in the monologue (e.g. 'Them as ud help special, ud git special rewards', p. 20). The regular spelling of the modal is not used once in an affirmative sentence (on the other hand, <wouldn't>, which would be stressed in connected speech, is used 5 times). Lovecraft's spelling seems to indicate a degree of reduction, suggesting the /əd/ pronunciation, a step towards cliticization, and thereby representing connected speech processes rather effectively. However, this is not always the case. A somewhat less convincing way of encoding connected speech is to be found in ZA's opening sentence:

Thar's whar it all begun—that cursed place of all wickedness whar the deep water starts. (p.15)

- 27 In the demonstrative *that*, the modification from <t> to <r> is most certainly used to evoke the process of flapping, which is associated with the most common way of realizing /t/ in intervocalic position at the onset of unstressed syllables in American English. This can be found within words (e.g. *better*) or across word boundaries, where /t/ is re-syllabified to the onset of the next syllable (e.g. *that is the case*). The spelling with <r> evokes the pronunciation that is equated with, for example, Spanish or Italian <r> (e.g. Spanish *pero*, Italian *caminare*). Lovecraft comes very close to using real phonetic spelling in this particular case, as the IPA symbol for the flap is [ɾ] (cf. *better* ['beɾə(r)], *that is* ['ðætɪz]⁵). However, the pronunciation with a flap cannot be found in

front of the clitic <'s> (*that's*) as a vowel is necessary after /t/ to trigger the process of flapping. Instead, an elision of /t/ (CCR) would be more likely in real spoken English. The written form used by Lovecraft therefore evokes orality, without necessarily encoding a connected speech process that would occur in the context.

Non-standard grammatical features

- 28 Lovecraft resorts to a number of non-standard grammatical features to further craft the speech of ZA, a process which is most certainly used to account for the positioning of the character on the social ladder. The prototypically non-standard *ain't* is used 9 times and is even spelled with an initial <h> twice, to mark a non-standard pronunciation:

Can't git me—I hain't done nothin' nor told nobody nothin'— (p. 21)

Wal, even ef I hain't told nobody nothin' yet, I'm a-goin' to naow! (p. 21)

- 29 ZA's speech displays a certain 'confusion' between the past and past participle forms of verbs in relation to the forms that one would expect to find in Standard English, an inversion of forms which is often found across non-standard varieties of English. For example, *done* is used instead of *did* 3 times. In other cases, the *have/had* auxiliary is omitted in verb phrases that would be conjugated in the present perfect or the past perfect in Standard English (5 occurrences):

Ol' Cap'n Obed done it. (p. 15)

Tell me what he done with that funny-shaped lead thingumajig as Walakea give him? (p.19)

they wanted to mix like *they done* with the Kanakys [...] (p. 19)

- 30 These deviations from Standard English are social markers. They can be taken by the reader as signs of a lack of education, particularly in contrast with the narrator's very polished way of expressing himself. A similar conclusion can be drawn from ZA's disregarding Standard English verb agreement or his 'confusion' of personal pronoun and possessive determiner:

Told abaout an island east of Otaheité whar they was a lot o' stone ruins [...] (p. 15, with the substitution of *they* for *there*)

Them things told the Kanakys that [...] (p. 15)

- 31 Another example of non-standard language, also found in a great many non-standard varieties of English, is the use of negative concord, a feature commonly known as "double negatives".

Never was nobody like Cap'n Obed—old limb o' Satan! (p. 15)

- 32 Apart from indicating non-standard forms of English, the use of double negatives also points to past forms of the language, as negative concord was common until 18th-century prescriptivists like Lowth (1762) clearly took a stance against it because they considered it ran counter to the rules of logic. Yet, negative concord was a more common pattern in Old English. McWhorter (2012, 79) gives the following Old English example:

An ne mehte nanes wæpnes gewældan.

(None not could none weapons hold.)

- 33 Even at the time of Shakespeare, negative concord was still found regularly, as can be for example found in In Richard III (Act 4, scene 4: 'I never was nor never will be').

- 34 Finally, the cumulative effect of non-standard features and former forms of the language is also found in such forms as *a-privateerin'* (p. 15), *a-tellin'* (p. 15), *a-talkin'* (p. 17), *a-cursin'* (p. 18), in which the archaic attachment *a-*, which is used 15 times in ZA's speech, indicates that the action is ongoing.

Paralinguistic Vocal Features

- 35 Paralinguistic Vocal Features (PVF) are those which contribute to the expression of attitude by a speaker (Brown 1990, 112). They work as 'emotion markers and appear in clusters in emotionally charged episodes' (Jobert 2013). They are 'non-linguistic elements that mark the speaker's state at the moment of the enunciation' (Boichard 2013, 34).
- 36 In *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, PVF become more and more obvious as the reader gets closer to the end of ZA's monologue and as the character's attitude becomes increasingly strange. They even cluster when the character begins to lose control as he panics at the thought of being attacked by the fish-like inhabitants of Innsmouth. Italics and question marks contribute to expressing the character's confusion, as does the complete breakdown of his language into an inarticulate scream, which is typographically marked by capitals and therefore clearly stands out from the rest of the text. The use of dashes signals confusion, and the closer ZA gets to the end of his monologue, the more confused he becomes, which suggests insanity. In addition, the various processes used to encode dialect and orality are also used in greater numbers than in any other parts of the story. They work together with PVF to shape the speech of ZA at this most crucial moment. I have marked these processes in bold in the following passage:

Wal, Sir, let me tell **ye** that **ain't** the **wust!**"

[...]

"Curse **ye**, **dun't** set **thar a-starin'** at me with **them** eyes—I tell Obed Marsh he's in hell, **an' hez** got to stay **thar!** Heh, heh . . . in hell, I **says!** Can't **git** me—I **hain't** done **nothin' nor** told **nobody nothin'**—

"Oh, you, young **feller?** Wal, even **ef** I **hain't** told **nobody nothin'** yet, I'm **a-goin'** to **naow!** You **jest set** still **an'** listen to me, boy—this is what I **ain't never** told **nobody.** . . . I **says** I didn't do **no pryin' arter** that night—but I **faound things aout jest the same!**

[...]

"Hey, **d'ye** hear me? I tell ye I know what **them** things **be**—I seen 'em one night when . . . EH—AHHHH—AH! E'YAAHHHH. . . ." (p. 21)

Dialect, story-telling and literary genre

"The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown"

(Lovecraft 1927, in Lovecraft 2011)

- 37 Regarding the backwoods New England dialect, Eckhardt (2011, 88) writes:

Nowhere have I encountered such an accent, nor has anyone (including a student of dialects from central Massachusetts) whom I have asked about this.

- 38 It might therefore be wondered whether the backwoods New England dialect might not be an imaginary one. The definition quoted above, 'an area [...] held to be culturally backward', indeed lacks precision. This is clearly the case of Innsmouth, which is presented as isolated from the rest of Massachusetts. The fact that the variety is supposed to be old (cf. *Old Yankee*) makes perfect sense in the world depicted by Lovecraft, as Innsmouth is an 'ancient Massachusetts seaport' (p. 1, my emphasis).
- 39 Given that the cannibal in 'Picture' is even older than ZA, a dialect which is partly imaginary and partly archaic is used 'to help establish the extreme age of these figures' (Eckhardt 2011, 89). Linguistic markers are used as attitudinal markers and markers of 'weirdness' (one of the labels used to for Lovecraft's genre being *weird fiction*). ZA is presented as an insane figure, his words are called 'mad' (twice) or 'insane' (5 times) by the narrator, and the character even calls himself 'crazy' at one point (p. 21). As to the other user of the dialect, the cannibal in 'Picture', 'his madness [...] seemed beyond dispute' (p. 5). The use of the dialect therefore establishes madness, a key motif in Lovecraft's works. Horror is never far from madness in Lovecraft. The people who visited Innsmouth before the narrator are said to have been 'horrified' (p. 1). Yet, nowhere is horror more clearly suggested than in the opening of *The Picture in the House*, with a chilling introduction of backwoods New England:

Searchers after horror haunt strange, far places. For them are the catacombs of Ptolemais, and the carven mausolea of the nightmare countries. They climb to the moonlit towers of ruined Rhine castles, and falter down black cobwebbed steps beneath the scattered stones of forgotten cities in Asia. The haunted wood and the desolate mountain are their shrines, and they linger around the sinister monoliths on uninhabited islands. But the true epicure in the terrible, to whom a new thrill of unutterable ghastliness is the chief end and justification of existence, esteems most of all the ancient, lonely farmhouses of backwoods New England; for there the dark elements of strength, solitude, grotesqueness, and ignorance combine to form the perfection of the hideous. (p.1)

- 40 Fear is an essential ingredient in Lovecraft's fiction. The antagonist of 'Picture', a character who is defined by the way he speaks as soon as he opens his mouth (p. 3), suggests that he has a craving for human flesh. It is suggested that he murdered travelers who came across his house to satisfy this hunger and that he has somehow extended his own life through cannibalism. With the inhabitants of Innsmouth turning into fish-like creatures, we are dealing with abnormal, fantastic characters. In the label of 'weird fiction', 'weird' is a 'term used loosely to describe Fantasy, Supernatural fiction and Horror tales [...]' (Clute and Grant 1997). The genre 'is usually, roughly, conceived of as a rather breathless and generically slippery macabre fiction, a dark fantastic ('horror' plus 'fantasy') often featuring nontraditional alien monsters (thus plus 'science fiction')' (Miéville 2009, 514). The amount of detail provided on such defamiliarizing elements produces an *effet de réel* different from that previously noted, which arises from the details that allow the reader to relate to another form of reality – that of human experience and human emotions, such as fear. Paradoxically though it may seem, this helps Lovecraft suggest an unheard-of, fantastic reality. Indeed, if we consider the traditional definition by Todorov, we may say that the narrators of the two stories go through a *fantastic* experience, which tests the very limits of their comprehension of the world. Indeed, the fantastic 'is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event' (Todorov 2007, 25). In the two stories, the speech of the characters partakes of the construction of a Lovecraftian atmosphere based on the unknown and on the

fantastic. The possibility that the dialect recreated by Lovecraft may be entirely imaginary and the fact that it is in real life virtually unknown works very well within a framework of horrific and fictional recreation. It appears to have never been encountered (Eckhardt 2011, 88). Being beyond describable, it helps the author establish the horror of the stories. Madness, horror and the unknown are predominant themes in Lovecraft's works (Gire 2018, 1). The term *cosmic horror* has also been used to describe Lovecraft's fiction; it may be defined as 'a subgenre of horror fiction and weird fiction that emphasizes the horror of the unknowable and incomprehensible' (Davis 2019). It is precisely the fact that the truth of the world the characters live in is impossible to understand that creates horror and that leads to madness once it is actually understood (ZA knows about the mutation, the narrator of 'Picture' begins to understand the reality about the old man). Knowledge 'unavoidably leads to madness or death' (Gire 2018, 127). Gire (2018, 2) notes that 'the incipit of the masterpiece *The Call of Cthulhu* is very explicit on this topic, the narrator is highlighting the ambivalent nature of mankind's ignorance which is both a curse and a bliss'.

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. (Lovecraft 2014, 381)

- 41 In 'Picture' and in *Innsmouth*, the protagonist is given access to knowledge through the 'spoken words' of the two characters. From the point of view of the reader, knowledge is acquired through the decoding of the carefully crafted proposition designed by Lovecraft to render dialect and orality. Beyond the much-studied stylistic characteristics of Lovecraft's narratives, dialogues should not be neglected. They also contribute to anchoring the stories in a Lovecraftian literary genre.

Conclusion

- 42 The encoding used for the speech of ZA or the cannibal contributes to creating a specific atmosphere, while helping to anchor the stories in a particular genre. In perfect keeping with this literary genre, the encoded features participate in a form of defamiliarization that may have readers lose their bearings and that makes them need to accommodate towards ZA's speech in order to gain access to the world created by the author. The encoding does not evoke some of the central features of the expected New England dialect (non-rhoticity is not suggested; nothing evokes a vowel with an [a:] quality). Sometimes, we may be under the impression that Western New England features are encoded in the monologue, which is rather paradoxical. It seems that various sub-dialects of New England are suggested in Lovecraft's proposition. The signs of this dialectal encoding work together with markers of orality, instances of eye-dialect, non-grammatical markers and older forms of speech to create a linguistic construct which is a representation, not a faithful rendering of dialect. It is thus a vision that is more aesthetic and artistic than it is realistic. Therefore, we are not dealing with a true 'rebirth of the backwoods New England dialect', except perhaps in an artistic sense, since Lovecraft found inspiration in Lowell's encoding of this variety. This is entirely in keeping with Bakhtine's principle (1978: 182):

Le romancier ne vise pas du tout à une reproduction linguistique (dialectologique) exacte et complète de l'empirisme des langages étrangers qu'il introduit, il ne vise qu'à la maîtrise littéraire des représentations de ces langages.

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NOTES

1. Unless otherwise specified, all quote and page numbers are taken from *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* (Lovecraft 2018 [1936]).
2. Even though these dialectal areas are based on historical varieties, their legacy has had an influence on the linguistic landscape of New England today (Nagy and Roberts 2008).
3. The classification of *lexical sets* was introduced by Wells (1982). Each lexical set is defined in relation to the pronunciation of its vowel in Received Pronunciation and General American and is named after a representative key word which is conventionally written in small capitals. For example, the lexical set GOOSE refers to all the words that have the stressed vowel /u(:)/ in Received Pronunciation and General American. BATH refers to all the words that have /ɑ:/ in in Received Pronunciation and /æ/ in General American.
4. All other things being considered, mergers tend to occur more frequently in front of /r/ and /l/, particularly in North American varieties (Labov, Ash and Boberg 2006).
5. The symbol [ɾ], which is the one that is sometimes used in pronunciation dictionaries for a flap (e.g. ['beɾə(r)]), is not a symbol of the IPA.

ABSTRACTS

Howard Philips Lovecraft's main attempts at encoding a New England dialect are to be found in "The Picture in the House" (1920) and *The Shadow over Innsmouth* (1936). In both stories, the variety used is described as the *New England backwoods dialect*, an Old Yankee variety. The problem is that Lovecraft's correspondence shows that his perception of the dialect was not entirely clear. Therefore, the markers he used in his attempt to bring the dialect back to life may be expected not to be entirely in keeping with the actual features of the New England backwoods variety. On another level, it may be wondered to what extent Lovecraft's carefully crafted linguistic proposition partakes of the fictional universe created by the author and of the genre that he is famous for. In this paper, I propose to review the linguistic features that might be expected to be

associated with *Lovecraft country* and the Old Yankee dialect. I then study Lovecraft's way of encoding dialect in the speech of Zadok Allen, the old drunkard in *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, to determine which of these characteristics are actually used in the process. In addition to features that belong to several sub-categories of New England pronunciations, the author uses markers of oral language, markers of eye-dialect, non-grammatical features and markers of former dialectal varieties. Such a combination of devices may allow Lovecraft to create an *effet de réel* (Barthes 1968). At the same time, the use of paralinguistic features (Brown 1990) and the description of the characters as very old and 'abnormal' partake of the construction of the *cosmic horror* that the author is famous for. In that sense, Lovecraft's use of dialect is central to the process of storytelling, while it anchors the story in a certain literary genre.

Les principales tentatives d'encodage d'un dialecte spécifique de la Nouvelle-Angleterre chez Howard Philips Lovecraft se trouvent dans « The Picture in the House » (1920) et *The Shadow over Innsmouth* (1936). La variété représentée dans les deux histoires est décrite sous le nom de *New England backwoods dialect*. Or, la correspondance de l'auteur laisse entrevoir une conception quelque peu floue de ce dialecte *Old Yankee*. On peut donc s'attendre à ce que les marqueurs utilisés pour l'encodage ne soient pas en parfaite adéquation avec les caractéristiques de la variété du *New England backwoods*. Sur un autre plan, on peut se demander dans quelle mesure la proposition linguistique soigneusement élaborée par Lovecraft participe de l'univers fictif créé par l'auteur et du genre littéraire pour lequel celui-ci est célèbre. Après avoir recensé les principales caractéristiques linguistiques qui correspondent aux « terres de Lovecraft » et au dialecte *Old Yankee*, je recense les procédés d'encodage graphique utilisés par l'auteur pour représenter le parler de Zadok Allen, le vieil alcoolique de *The Shadow over Innsmouth*. En plus de traits caractéristiques de plusieurs sous-catégories de prononciations de la Nouvelle-Angleterre, l'auteur utilise des marqueurs d'oralité et de dialecte pour l'œil, ainsi que des traits non-grammaticaux et des marqueurs de variétés dialectales anciennes. Cette variété de procédés participe à la création d'un certain « effet de réel » (Barthes 1968). En parallèle, l'utilisation de traits paralinguistiques vocaux (Brown 1990) et le fait que les personnages qui utilisent le dialecte soient décrits comme très vieux et anormaux servent à créer « l'horreur cosmique » pour laquelle l'auteur est connu. L'utilisation du dialecte chez Lovecraft est ainsi primordiale dans le processus de narration, en même temps qu'elle permet d'ancrer l'histoire dans un certain genre littéraire.

INDEX

Mots-clés: Lovecraft, dialectes, dialecte New England backwoods, Old Yankee, encodage dialectal, variation diatopique, variation diamésique, oralité, horreur cosmique

Keywords: Lovecraft, dialects, New England backwoods, Old Yankee, dialectal encoding, diatopic variation, diametic variation, orality, cosmic horror

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