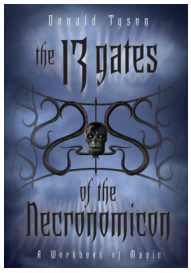
Are you a magician, inspired by the works of H.P. Lovecraft? Would you rather be summoned for jury duty to Azathoth’s Court over the People’s Court? Do your nightly prayers consist of “Ph‘nglui mglw‘nafh Cthulhu R‘lyeh wgah‘nagl fhtagn”? If you answered “Yes” to any or all of these questions, nonfiction occult writer Donald Tyson’s (pictured) newest addition to his extensive Lovecraftian repertoire, THE 13 GATES OF THE NECRONOMICON: A WORKBOOK OF MAGIC (just out from Llewllyn Publications) will make a great addition to your library.

Now, let’s get one thing straight: I am by no means an aspiring warlock in any sense of the term, and consider myself slightly more than a casual Lovecraft fan in regard to the pursuit of knowledge beyond simply enjoying the stories. But fear not, ye nonchalant children of the Great Old Ones! Not fitting into that mystical niche doesn’t necessarily mean you will get nothing out of this book.



If my comprehension is correct, the titular gates symbolize the 13 points of entry to the astral reality behind the Necronomicon mythos, represented as a walled-in city. The book is broken up into four sections: Persons, Places, Things and Sorceries, each being one of the four sides of the wall. Three contain four gates, while the remaining section has only one. The knowledge gained from reading this volume is intended to help construct the basis of a system of magic, which are the keys to gain entrance. However, once inside, and after the knowledge is grasped, I’d recommend checking out some of Tyson’s other literature, because a grimoire this book is not.

The most extraordinary part of 13 GATES is the book’s glossary aspect. Woven throughout the astral projection, spirit communication, magical rights and invocations are immensely interesting “history” lessons, along with a dictionary that any Cthulhu nut would give their rightmost tentacle to possess. As far as I can tell, every deity, creature, species, race, person, place and thing that

has ever popped its head (or whatever can be considered a head) up in Lovecraft’s works is defined, explained, examined and given a purpose in the pursuit of greater knowledge. That makes this the perfect book to keep handy for reference while reading any of the works it‘s based on. I’m sure I’ll be grabbing this little monster off my shelf every time I plunge headfirst into the House of R’lyeh.

If there is an overlord of Lovecraftian nonfiction, my money is on Tyson as the reigning king. Since 1988, he has written many books on the subject, including what many consider to be the most complete of the NECRONOMICON “translations.” Chances are, if you’re at all interested in the mythos, you probably have a few of his books in your creepy collection already. The comprehensive, crippling research apparent in his previous efforts is just as evident in this one. It’s hard not to respect the amount of passion that was put into it. And although sparse, the hand-painted, monochromatic illustrations provided by his wife Jenny make for a nice visual accompaniment.

Persuasion of the existence of Lovecraft’s beings and worlds is by no means the intent of this book. The reader is assumed to either already believe, or want to believe, thus seeking roots for their practice. But even the curious fan can get into this one. If you get nothing else out of this tome, at least it will leave you with an extensive and extraordinary enough vocabulary to get a response of “Gesundheit” from 99 percent of the people you meet.

{jcomments on}