

**Title:** Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herbert S. Gorman's Shadows over Innsmouth

**Synopsis:** In "Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herbert S. Gorman's Shadows over Innsmouth" I explore how Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" and Herbert S. Gorman's *The Place Called Dagon* partially inspired H.P. Lovecraft's "The Shadow over Innsmouth," specifically the use of what Stephen King called the trope of "the peculiar little town."

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## **Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herbert S. Gorman’s Shadows over Innsmouth**

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### **Introduction**

H.P. Lovecraft’s “The Shadow over Innsmouth” is a classic of horror fiction. In it, an outsider finds himself in a town where he is not wanted, and he soon discovers the residents are hiding a dark secret. The trope of a community with a dark secret has become increasingly popular in horror fiction and cinema. The Folk Horror film *Apostle* was released in 2018, followed by *Midsommar* in 2019. Both films concerned outsiders venturing to secluded locations ruled by secret cults. Folk Horror makes particularly frequent use of this trope as Folk Horror tends to focus on “landscape [,] isolation [,] and skewed moral beliefs” (Paciorek 13-14). The trope of the community with a dark secret is now widespread throughout the horror genre, but when H.P. Lovecraft wrote “The Shadow over Innsmouth” it was still somewhat new. There were only two previous examples of its use before Lovecraft wrote the story. I employ close reading and the comparison of texts to illustrate how Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown” created the original town with a dark secret and inspired Herbert S. Gorman’s *The Place Called Dagon*, which influenced “The Shadow over Innsmouth.”

### **Peculiar Little Towns**

The horror fiction genre comprises many works across multiple media that deal with isolated communities concealing dark secrets. There is the terrible ritual hidden by the pagan villagers who live on Summerisle in *The Wicker Man* (1973). In *The Stepford Wives* (1972) by Ira Levin, husbands ensure their wives do not discover the truth of what goes on in the town’s men’s club.

As recently as 2019, Ari Aster’s film *Midsommar* explored the mysteries of a remote Swedish commune and their midsummer celebration. The works employ what Stephen King calls the trope of the peculiar little town.

Having achieved both widespread critical and commercial success over his five-decade career as a horror writer, it is not surprising that King has both named and used this trope. In the notes for his short story collection *Nightmares & Dreamscapes* (1993) King coins the name for “the peculiar little town” (King 883) trope while discussing his tale “You Know They Got a Hell of a Band”:

There are at least two stories in this book about what the lead female character thinks of as “the peculiar little town.” This is one; “Rainy Season” is the other. There will be readers who may think I’ve visited “the peculiar little town” once or twice too often, and some may note similarities between these two pieces and an earlier story of mine, “Children of the Corn.” (883)

As King admits, he has used “the peculiar little town” trope at least three times in his fiction. One of these three works, “The Children of the Corn,” was even adapted into a feature film in 1984, making that story one of his better-known works in popular culture. King observes: “There are certain horror-tale archetypes which stand out with the authority of mesas in the desert. The haunted-house story; the return-from-the-grave story; the peculiar-little-town story” (883). H.P. Lovecraft’s “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” stands out as focusing on a peculiar little town.

In that story, an unnamed narrator explores the Massachusetts seaport of Innsmouth as part of a “sightseeing, antiquarian, and genealogical” (CF 3.160) tour of New England. Once in the town, the narrator supplies Zadok Allen, the local drunk, with whiskey in exchange for

information about how the town made a deal with “frog-fish monsters” (CF 3.188) to mix with their kind in exchange for gold and eternal life for the town’s hybrid offspring (CF 3.184-201). Once the natives are aware the narrator knows Innsmouth’s secret, they trap him in the town and attempt to capture him (CF 3.202-223). The narrator’s last encounter with the residents of Innsmouth proves the validity of Allen’s drunken claims because the narrator glimpses “blasphemous fish-frogs [...] living and horrible” (CF 3.223). In the closing pages of the story, the narrator discovers his great-grandmother hailed from Innsmouth (CF 3.227), and he “had acquired *the Innsmouth look*” (CF 3.229) of a fish-frog-human hybrid. After some convincing dreams, the narrator declares he plans to join “the Deep Ones” to “dwell amidst wonder and glory for ever” (CF 3.230).

Clearly, Innsmouth is a peculiar little town hiding a dark secret. “The Shadow over Innsmouth” shares the same trope as Stephen King’s “Children of the Corn,” “You Know They Got a Hell of a Band,” and “Rainy Season” as well as *The Wicker Man*, *The Stepford Wives*, and *Midsommar*. Other works share this trope, but “The Shadow over Innsmouth” is one of the earliest examples of its implementation, having been published in 1936. There are only two examples of the peculiar little town trope’s use before “The Shadow over Innsmouth.” Herbert S. Gorman used it in his novel *The Place Called Dagon* in 1927, and Nathaniel Hawthorne created it in his short story “Young Goodman Brown.” Both stories served to influence “The Shadow over Innsmouth.”

### **Salem: The Original Peculiar Little Town**

In his seminal essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature,” Lovecraft describes American horror fiction as emanating from “an environment in which black whisperings of sinister grandmas

were heard far beyond the chimney corner, and in which tales of witchcraft and unbelievable secret monstrosities lingered long after the dread days of the Salem nightmare” (CE 2.104).

Lovecraft realizes that Salem is an especially important touchstone for the horror genre in America. He also realizes that Nathaniel Hawthorne, “scion of antique Salem and great-grandson of one of the bloodiest of the old witchcraft judges” (CE 2. 104), is an important writer for the horror genre in America. Lovecraft says of Hawthorne:

In Hawthorne we have none of the violence, the daring, the high colouring, the intense dramatic sense, the cosmic malignity, and the undivided and impersonal artistry of Poe. Here, instead, is a gentle soul cramped by the Puritanism of early New England; shadowed and wistful, and grieved at an amoral universe which everywhere transcends the conventional patterns thought by our forefathers to represent divine and immutable law. Evil, a very real force to Hawthorne, appears on every hand as a lurking and conquering adversary; and the visible world becomes in his fancy a theatre of infinite tragedy and woe, with unseen half-existent influences hovering over it and through it, battling for supremacy and moulding the destinies of the hapless mortals who form its vain and self-deluded population. The heritage of American weirdness was his to a most intense degree, and he saw a dismal throng of vague specters behind the common phenomena of life; but he was not disinterested enough to value impressions, sensations, and beauties of narration for their own sake. He must needs weave his phantasy into some quietly melancholy fabric of didactic or allegorical cast, in which his meekly resigned cynicism may display with naïve moral appraisal the perfidy of a human race which he cannot cease to cherish and mourn despite his insight into its hypocrisy. (CE 2.104-105)

Lovecraft does not mention “Young Goodman Brown” in “Supernatural Horror in Literature,” but the plot of the story conforms perfectly to Lovecraft’s description of Hawthorne’s prose. The tale starts when the protagonist, Goodman Brown, leaves his wife, Faith, and ventures into the woods outside “Salem Village” (24). On his way deeper into the woods, Brown contemplates the morality of his journey as he meets several people from Salem (24-31). Finally, he arrives at a Witches’ Sabbath in the depths of the forest where “quivering to and fro between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land” (31). The Witches’ Sabbath is led by a “dark figure” (32), whom one could argue is similar to Nyarlathotep as depicted in “The Dreams in the Witch House,” since that story drew as heavily on “Young Goodman Brown” as on the legends of Salem.

In the climax of “Young Goodman Brown,” Brown and his wife, whom he is shocked to find at the ceremony, are baptized “by the shape of evil” (33). Goodman Brown tells his wife to “resist the wicked one” (33), but immediately after saying this, Brown “found himself amid calm night and solitude” (34) as the ceremony vanishes, and he finds himself alone in the woods. Brown is left unsure whether his night was a dream or not, but the experience leaves him “a stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate, man” (34). Even his relationships with his wife and family are forever altered: “Often, awaking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith; and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled, and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away” (34).

Hawthorne wrote “Young Goodman Brown” to be interpreted in many ways. There is undoubtedly an allegorical reading due to the protagonist being named “Goodman” and his wife being named “Faith,” but the most basic, literal reading of the story tells the tale of a man who discovers his hometown of Salem is populated by residents claiming to be Christians but who are actually witches. In other words, “Young Goodman Brown” uses the peculiar little town trope. In fact, because this is the earliest instance of the “peculiar little town” trope’s use, it is highly probable that “Young Goodman Brown” is the wellspring for this trope, and that would make Salem, Massachusetts the original peculiar little town. Of course, as discussed earlier, Lovecraft never explicitly states that he read “Young Goodman Brown,” but he does explicitly state he read a novel that is heavily influenced by it.

### **Young Goodman Brown’s Influence on *The Place Called Dagon***

Herbert S. Gorman is certainly not as well-known as either Hawthorne or Lovecraft. Larry Creasy says of Gorman, “Only his non-fiction books [...] remain marginally available, having found safe havens from oblivion among the dusty shelves of university and high school libraries” (11). However, thanks to Lovecraft’s writing a single sentence about Gorman in “Supernatural Horror in Fiction,” *The Place Called Dagon* continues to be read to this day. Lovecraft stated:

A less subtle and well-balanced but nevertheless highly effective creation is Herbert S. Gorman’s novel, *The Place Called Dagon*, which relates the dark history of a western Massachusetts backwater where the descendants of refugees from the Salem witchcraft still keep alive the morbid and degenerate horrors of the Black Sabbat” (CE 2.110).

Gorman’s novel follows the protagonist, Doctor Dreeme, as he tries to discover what makes the residents of the town of Marlborough Massachusetts so odd. As Dreeme reflects, “An

excessive reticence possessed these leather-skinned delvers in the soil, these small-shopkeepers, and even the scattering of professional men who conducted the affairs of Marlborough” (Gorman 17). Dreeme is eventually filled in on the secrets of Marlborough by his predecessor, Humphrey Lathrop. He tells Dreeme that the witches who survived Salem settled Marlborough, and “These farmers are the descendants” (134). Furthermore, he tells Dreeme that their ritual meeting location is called “Dagon” (134). Dreeme journeys to Dagon to rescue his love interest, Deborah, before the gathered residents can use her as a “sacrifice” (170). Unlike “Young Goodman Brown” and “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” *The Place Called Dagon* has a happy ending with both antagonists dead and Dreeme happily engaged to marry Deborah (184).

It must be noted that in the text of *The Place Called Dagon*, the town of Salem is the direct progenitor of Marlborough. In the novel, one “peculiar little town” gave birth to another. The connections between “Young Goodman Brown” and *The Place Called Dagon* do not stop there. Creasy explains most of the commonalities between the two works below:

The theme of ancestral guilt, like that of the supernatural, is frequently an element in much of Hawthorne’s work, and both are present in the story “Young Goodman Brown,” which originally appeared in the collection *Mosses from an Old Manse* in 1846. We find in this tale the basis for *The Place Called Dagon*. The parallels are numerous and obvious [...] Suffice to say that Gorman’s Dr. Dreeme is an extension of the impetuous Goodman Brown, as both are inexorably drawn into satanic confrontations through their own meddling—meddling that places both of them amidst the notorious Black Mass celebrations of witch-lore. Both characters must weigh their infernal temptations against the love of an innocent woman, and both are forced to make

desperate journeys through primeval haunted woods, as they speed toward their respective destinies. (12-13)

There is also “the use of both Hawthorne and Gorman of the historical figure of Martha Carrier” (Creasy 13). In “Young Goodman Brown,” the character appears bringing Faith to the accursed alter, “Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female [Faith], led between Goody Cloyse [...] and Martha Carrier, who had received the Devil’s promise to be queen of hell” (32). As Creasy continues, “The *femme fatale* character Martha Westcott is the direct descendant of Martha Carrier in *Dagon*, and the specter of the ancestor witch makes an appearance in a flashback scene” (13). There are so many instances of continuity between “Young Goodman Brown” and *The Place Called Dagon* that it is reminiscent of the various Cthulhu Mythos pastiches written by subsequent scribes after Lovecraft’s death.

Marlborough is not as iconic as Salem, and Gorman is not as widely read as Hawthorne, but *The Place Called Dagon* forms an essential link in the chain from “Young Goodman Brown” to “The Shadow over Innsmouth.” It also forms an essential second instance of the use of the peculiar little town trope. In the conclusion to his introduction, Creasy remarks:

And so, long before Stephen King’s Salem’s Lot, Thomas Tryon’s Harvest Home, Charles L. Grant’s Oxrun Station, or any of the other haunted towns, beleaguered villages, and conspiratorial communities that have become standard stomping grounds in modern horror fiction, Herbert S. Gorman’s Marlborough [...] has existed as an unjustly neglected landmark. (14)

### **Hawthorne and Gorman’s Influence on The Shadow over Innsmouth**

It is certainly tempting to assume that the word “Dagon” in the title and story of *The Place Called Dagon* is an immediate connection to H.P. Lovecraft’s work. “The author’s decision to use the ancient Phoenician deity’s name for the accursed gathering place of the witches in his novel is unclear,” (Creasy 13). There are numerous other connections that can be drawn between *The Place Called Dagon* and “The Shadow over Innsmouth.” Perhaps the easiest is the fact that both towns are described as decrepit. Gorman writes of Marlborough:

There was no reason why the outer world should impinge too strongly on Marlborough, for, after all, the valley was a cul-de-sac, a cache into which the Past had thrust an untidy bundle of urges and traditions and left them there to rot in the sunlight. And Dreeme seemed to see the Marlborough of the future stretching out like a corpse in the bright sunlight of the valley and striving [...] striving [...] He shuddered at the picture so suddenly brought up before his mind, a picture of a white leprous mass struggling to live, dead and yet never dying, with closed eyes that continually quivered with blue lips rolling back over yellow decayed teeth, with long skeleton fingers opening and shutting and fighting against the *rigor mortis* of Time. (44-45)

Of Innsmouth, Lovecraft writes: “The vast huddle of sagging gambrel roofs and peaked gables conveyed with offensive clearness the idea of wormy decay.” (CF 3.172). He continues, “The decay was worst close to the waterfront” (CF 3.173). The locations are described synonymously with Marlborough likened to “rot” (Gorman 45) and Innsmouth to “decay” (CF 3.172).

The similarities between *The Place Called Dagon* and “The Shadow over Innsmouth” continue beyond the descriptions of the locations. Both stories contain two similar characters.

The first similar character is described In the Afterword to *The Place Called Dagon*, where S.T. Joshi states:

Lathrop appears to be the fount of all knowledge in the region [Marlborough]; and in this sense he bears a certain resemblance to Zadok Allen in “The Shadow over Innsmouth.” Like Lathrop, Zadok is an aged toper who knows the ancient secrets of Innsmouth but will reveal them only when his tongue is sufficiently loosened by draughts of bootleg whiskey (Lathrop’s preferred tippie is apple-jack). (186)

Lovecraft describes Zadok Allen thus:

This hoary character, Zadok Allen, was ninety-six years old and somewhat touched in the head, besides being the town drunkard. He was a strange, furtive creature who constantly looked over his shoulder as if afraid of something, and when sober could not be persuaded to talk at all with strangers. He was, however, unable to resist any offer of his favorite poison; and once drunk would furnish the most astonishing fragments of whispered reminiscence.” (CF 3.179)

Humphrey Lathrop is a respectable, retired doctor, but the following exchange between Lathrop and his wife shows the reader he does have his love of alcohol in common with Allen.

“Lucinda,” ordered Lathrop, “bring a bottle of apple-jack, and two tumblers.”

The vinegar face grew still longer. A thin mouth, a mere slit in the wrinkled face, shriveled in severe disapproval.

“You had some apple-jack this mornin’,” announced a high nasal voice.

“I’m going to have some more now,” answered Lathrop blandly. (Gorman 56)

In addition to their love of alcohol and providing vast swaths of vital background information for the stories, both Lathrop and Allen are tricked by the protagonists into

drinking more than they should to get them to talk more openly. While Lathrop leaves his sitting room, Dreeme “poured out the amber liquor” he was drinking, and Dreeme accepts a subsequent glass, but while Dreeme takes a “brief swallow” of the next cup, Lathrop makes a comment before “draining off the tumbler” (Gorman 57). This series of descriptions leads the reader to assume that Dreeme is maintaining his senses as Lathrop is getting drunk. Lovecraft has his protagonist perform a similar trick on Allen. As the narrator of “The Shadow over Innsmouth” says, “I began to dole out more liquor to the ancient tippler; meanwhile eating my own frugal lunch” (CF 3.186). This sentence makes it clear that the narrator is not getting drunk while Allen is. Both Allen and Lathrop serve similar purposes in the narratives of Lovecraft and Gorman.

The second duo of similar characters is Uriah Carrier in *The Place Called Dagon* and Obed Marsh in “The Shadow over Innsmouth.” Both characters are sailors who founded the evil that has festered in their respective towns. Uriah Carrier’s influence on the creation of Obed Marsh is particularly interesting because it creates a direct line from “Young Goodman Brown” to “The Shadow over Innsmouth” through *The Place Called Dagon*. This direct line exists because Uriah Carrier is a descendant of Martha Carrier, who appears in “Young Goodman Brown,” and as Gorman says, Uriah Carrier “had been a ship-mate of Hawthorne of Salem, the one who died of fever at Surinam and whose son wrote books” (59). That makes two connections from “Young Goodman Brown” to Uriah Carrier’s character in *The Place Called Dagon*. The first is that he is a descendant of a character in “Young Goodman Brown,” and the second is that he served with Nathaniel Hawthorne’s father in the fiction of *The Place Called Dagon*.

Lathrop describes Uriah Carrier as follows: “He had hunted whales in the Pacific, had terrorized and robbed the natives of Tahiti, had blackbirded off the African Gold Coast, had carried a Manchu woman about with him for mistress, had retired, returned to Marlborough” (59). When Lathrop informs Dreeme of the witch cult in Marlborough, he advises that “The black book they carried with them was the black book of old Uriah Carrier” (134). Lathrop finishes his explanation of Carrier by stating that “he [Uriah Carrier] was the last Black Man” (137), the man responsible for leading the Witches’ Sabbath in Marlborough. That gives a clear picture of Uriah Carrier as both a sailor who traveled to the Pacific and a fountainhead for the cult that infected Marlborough through his “black book” (134), which was passed down from the original Salem witches and his ancestor Martha Carrier.

Compare Uriah Carrier with Obed Marsh. Marsh sailed to the “Saouth Sea Islands” and was “the only one as kep’ on with the East-Injy an’ Pacific trade” (CF 3.186-187). Both Carrier and Marsh are said to have sailed to the Pacific. Also, Allen says Obed called “folks stupid fer goin to Christian meetin’ an’ bearin’ their burden meek an’ lowly” (CF 3.187). Marsh said that the residents of Innsmouth “orter git better gods like some o’ the folks in the Injies—gods as ud bring ‘em good fishin’ in return for their sacrifices, an’ ud reely answer folks’s prayers” (CF 3.187). Later, Allen relays how “Obed he kinder takes charge an’ says things is goin’ to be changed... others’ll worship with us at meeting’ –time, an’ sarten haouses hez got to entertain guests...they wanted to mix like they done with the Kanakys, an’ he fer one didn’t feel baound to stop ‘em.” (CF 3.196). Both Uriah Carrier and Obed Marsh are the reason the residents of their respective towns change religions and initiate the secret history at the start of both *The*

*Place Called Dagon* and “The Shadow over Innsmouth.” Carrier is the fountainhead for the witch cult in Marlborough, and Marsh is the person who starts Innsmouth’s relationship with the Deep Ones.

The fact that both *The Place Called Dagon* and “The Shadow over Innsmouth” concern outsiders discovering a secret cult at the heart of their respective towns of Marlborough and Innsmouth cannot be overlooked. The ritual place in *The Place Called Dagon* is of particularly interesting focus in the passage below:

One place they kept sacred. It was a hidden place, known only to the adepts. It was there that they buried the bones of the hanged witches, those poor bodies that they had carried for two hundred miles through the thick wilderness. There, too, they raised the Devil Stone upon which the Black Man stood during the great ceremonies. They called the place Dagon and strewed it with ashes. I can picture that place lighted by torches at midnight. I can picture the rapt faces of the witches and the compelling eyes of the Black Man as he stood above them and called on Satan, on Beelzebub, on Asmodeus, the fiends that he imagined served his purpose.” (134)

As with Uriah Carrier, this is another place a direct line can be drawn from “Young Goodman Brown” to “The Shadow over Innsmouth.” The ritual place description in “Young Goodman Brown” is remarkably like the description of Dagon. Hawthorne wrote, “At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an altar or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting” (31). Clearly, Gorman’s Dagon is inspired by the altar in “Young Goodman Brown.”

In “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” the ritual place of the residents is “Devil Reef” (CF 3.193). The reader never gets to visit Devil Reef in the text, but the fact that the “Devil Stone” (Gorman 134) shares the same first descriptor is an interesting observation. There are further similarities. Like the Devil Stone, Devil’s Reef comes into existence because of a transfer of something with supernatural powers. In *The Place Called Dagon* this is the bones of the witches killed in Salem, and in “The Shadow over Innsmouth” it is a “funny kind o’ thingumajig made aout o’ lead or something,” that Obed is told to drop in the water to “bring up the fish things from any place in the water whar they might be a nest of ‘em” (CF 3.191). Zadok Allen states that Marsh did summon the Deep Ones because “Cap’n Obed an’ twenty odd other folks used to row aout to Devil Reef in the dead’o night an’ chant things” (CF 3.193).

In addition to the other similarities, the ritual sites in “Young Goodman Brown,” *The Place Called Dagon*, and “The Shadow over Innsmouth” all serve a sinister purpose. In “Young Goodman Brown,” it is the devil’s “baptism” (33), in *The Place Called Dagon*, it is to “cleanse [...] by charms and sacrifices” (170), and in “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” it is “sacrificing heaps o’ their young men n’ maidens to some kind o’ god-things that lived under the sea,” (CF 3.188).

Regarding *The Place Called Dagon* and “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” there is one final observation. In *The Place Called Dagon*, the initial representation of the primary antagonist of the novel, Jeffery Westcott, is similar in detail to Lovecraft’s description of a Deep One. Gorman writes of Westcott’s face:

It was curiously ridged in the center, as though the two sides of the skull had been pressed together while molten and so joined, leaving a cloven line where the bone had bulged upward on either side. The ears were long and rose thin and prominent on either

side of the curious head. The broad brow slanted back at an obvious angle and the chin, blue also with incipient hair, thrust forward aggressively, the ensemble giving the impression of semi-malignant imperiousness. Westcott’s nose was broken and this accident accentuated the curious profile which he presented when he turned his head, a profile almost ape-like but redeemed by a certain vitality of knowledge. (23)

Compare that monstrous description, especially the implication of Westcott’s “ape-like” devolved features, to Lovecraft’s description of a human-Deep One hybrid.

His age was perhaps thirty-five, but the odd, deep creases in the sides of his neck made him seem older when one did not study his dull, expressionless face. He had a narrow head, bulging, watery blue eyes that seemed never to wink, a flat nose, a receding forehead and chin, and singularly undeveloped ears. His long, thick lip and coarse-poured, greyish cheeks seemed almost beardless except for some sparse yellow hairs that straggled and curled in irregular patches; and in places the surface seemed queerly irregular, as if peeling from some cutaneous disease. (CF 3.170)

Westcott is not revealed to be anything more than human, but it is still interesting how much his introductory description shares with Lovecraft’s presentation of a human-Deep One hybrid. Both have particularly monstrous visages, with unusual hair growth, and both have features that indicate they are a step down on the evolutionary scale, Westcott being compared to an ape, and the human-Deep One hybrid having actual gills, “deep creases in the sides of his neck,” (CF 3.170).

If a reader were to keep probing into *The Place Called Dagon* and “The Shadow over Innsmouth” there are certainly more similarities to be uncovered, but those noted above are manifest. Lovecraft, whether consciously or unconsciously, was influenced by elements of *The*

*Place Called Dagon*, and due to the influence of “Young Goodman Brown” on *The Place Called Dagon*, “The Shadow over Innsmouth” was also influenced by “Young Goodman Brown.” In the Afterword to *The Place Called Dagon*, S.T. Joshi states, “the novel may well have influenced Lovecraft, specifically in ‘The Dunwich Horror’ (1928), ‘The Shadow Over Innsmouth’ (1931) and ‘The Dreams in the Witch House’ (1932)” (Afterword 185). Hawthorne and Gorman are certainly not the only influences on “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” Lovecraft was also inspired by the works of both Irvin S. Cobb and Algernon Blackwood as well as a trip to Newburyport (Joshi, “Headnotes” 195). It is undeniable that *The Place Called Dagon* and (by extension) “Young Goodman Brown” also served as ingredients in the sauce of “The Shadow over Innsmouth.”

## **Conclusion**

H.P. Lovecraft did not invent the “peculiar little town” trope, but “The Shadow over Innsmouth” is one of the earliest uses of it in horror fiction. Nathaniel Hawthorne employed it in his story “Young Goodman Brown,” in which the “grave, reputable, and pious people” (31) of Salem were revealed to be involved in a secret witch coven. In Herbert S. Gorman’s *The Place Called Dagon*, Daniel Dreeme discovers “faces [...] once viewed in the quiet lanes of Marlborough” (160) engaged in “orgiastic liturgies of the Witches’ Sabaoth” (161) continuing the “Salem coven” (133). Lovecraft read *The Place Called Dagon* prior to writing “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” and as S.T. Joshi’s has observed, Lovecraft concluded it held his interest “because of the authentic New England colour & certain isolated bits of weird atmosphere whose merit is undeniable” (Afterword 183). *The Place Called Dagon* and “The Shadow over Innsmouth” share several similarities. Innsmouth is likened to “decay” (CF 3.172) while Marlborough is likened to

“rot” (Gorman 45). Each writer’s respective description of their setting points to deteriorating towns. The characters of Humphrey Lathrop and Uriah Carrier in *The Place Called Dagon* are replicated as Zadok Allen and Obed Marsh in “The Shadow over Innsmouth.” The ritual locations of the “Devil Stone” (Dagon) and the “Devil’s Reef” (Innsmouth) are similar in name, purpose, and origin. The antagonists in both tales share similarly devolved descriptions. Thus, the original “peculiar little town” of Salem had a direct impact on the creation of Innsmouth because Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Young Goodman Brown” was highly influential on Herbert S. Gorman’s writing of *The Place Called Dagon*, which H.P. Lovecraft drew inspiration from to create aspects of “The Shadow over Innsmouth.”

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