
H.P. LOVECRAFT
THE CALL OF
CTHULHU
F.BERTMER

“The Call of Cthulhu”
Written by H.P. Lovecraft
Introduction and critical edition work by
Benjamin Smith-Donaldson

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Biography of H.P. Lovecraft

Born on August 20, 1890, Howard Philips Lovecraft came from an affluent family in Providence, RI. He grew up raised primarily by his mother and maternal grandfather; his father had died from complications of untreated syphilis while Lovecraft was still young. Most of Lovecraft's time early in life was spent at home, where he became an avid reader and fan of Edgar Allan Poe. Although he did attend high school as a teen, a nervous breakdown stopped him from finishing. Lovecraft became reclusive after this, communicating with the world outside primarily through the few journalistic piece he would publish at this time. In 1923 he would publish his first story with the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, which would later publish *The Call of Cthulhu* and several other short stories. Although he died in obscurity and poverty in 1937, losing a battle against cancer, his work would go on to develop into its own genre, one he referred to as weird fiction, and would influence generations of horror and fantasy writers to come, including acknowledged masters like Stephen King and Neil Gaiman.

Chronology

1890	August 20: Howard Philips Lovecraft (hereafter HPL) born in Providence, RI.
1893	HPL's father, Winfield Scott Lovecraft, suffers a mental breakdown and is hospitalized. Begins reading.
1895	First reading of *Arabian Nights*, a strong influence on HPL's literary career.
1896	Nonextant first story "The Noble Eavesdropper" is suspected to have been written.
1897	HPL's earliest surviving work, a poem titled "The Poem of Ulysses" is created.
1898	July 19: Winfield Scott Lovecraft dies of the neurosyphillis that caused his initial breakdown. HPL is introduced to the work of his largest literary inspiration, Edgar Allan Poe and writes a number of his own stories (nonextant). Begins studying chemistry.
1899	Produces a handwritten journal named *The Scientific Gazette* using a hectograph.
1902	While reading books in his maternal grandmother's library, HPL discovers an interest in astronomy.
1903	Begins producing a second hectographed journal titled *The Rhode Island Journal of Astronomy.*
1904	Whipple Van Buren Philips, HPL's maternal grandfather, dies, beginning the collapse of the family's financial estate. Begins attending Hope St. High School.
1905	Writes "The Best in the Cave"
1906	HPL appears in print for the first time with a letter to *The Providence Sunday Journal* on astronomy.
1908	Following a mental breakdown, HPL withdraws from Hope St. High School and becomes reclusive. Writes "The Alchemist."
1913	Emerges from isolation with letter to *Argosy* attacking an author for love stories HPL deemed insipid.
1914	Invited to join United Amateur Press Association (UAPA) based on continued debate in letters to *Argosy.* Begins writing columns on astronomy for *The Providence Evening News*.
1915	Begins writing columns for *The Ashville (N.C.) Gazette News*. Publishes his first issue of an amateur journal titled *The Conservative*.
1917	Writes first fiction since "The Alchemist" with "The Tomb" and "Dagon." Attempts to enlist in the RI National Guard and the U.S. Army but is rejected due to mother's influence. Serves for a short time as the president of UAPA.

1919	Sarah Susan Lovecraft, HPL's mother, suffers a nervous breakdown of her own and is committed to Butler Hospital. Writes “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” and “The Statement of Randolph Carter” “Dagon” published by *The Vagrant*, first story to be printed.
1921	May 24: Susan Sarah Lovecraft dies in Butler Hospital during a gall bladder operation. Writes “Herbert West – Reanimator” for *Home Brew*, making this HPL's first professionally published story. Writes “The Nameless City” and “The Music of Erich Zann.”
1922	Continues writing stories for *Home Brew*, including “The Hound.”
1923	“Dagon” becomes HPL's first story to be published by *Weird Tales*.
1924	Marries Sonia Haft Greene. Declines editorial position with *Weird Tales*. Writes “The Shunned House.” Ghostwrites “Under the Pyramids” (which will be published as “Imprisoned With the Pharaohs”) for Harry Houdini.
1925	Sonia takes job in Cleveland while HPL moves to Brooklyn, NY. Writes “The Horror at Red Hook” and “Supernatural Horror in Literature.”
1926	Returns to Providence, RI. Writes “The Call of Cthulhu.” Begins corresponding with August Derleth, who would become a close of friend of HPL and would continue his legacy posthumously.
1927	Writes first full-length novel, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. Begins corresponding with Donald Wandrei, who would later publish HPL's posthumous works through Arkham House Publishing alongside August Derleth.
1928	Writes “The Dunwich Horror.”
1929	Divorce from Sonia Haft Greene. Writes *Fungi from Yuggoth*.
1930	Writes “The Whisperer in the Darkness.” Longest nonfiction work “A Description of the Town of Quebeck” written after three day trip to Quebec. Begins corresponding with Robert E. Howard (author of the *Conan the Barbarian* series).
1931	Writes *At the Mountains of Madness* and “The Shadow over Innsmouth.”
1932	July 3: The elder of two of HPL's beloved aunts, Lillian D. Clark, dies. Writes “The Dreams in the Witch House.”
1933	Moves in with his other aunt, Annie E. P. Gamwell. Writes “The Thing on the Doorstep.” Begins corresponding with Robert Bloch (author of *Psycho*).
1934	Writes “The Shadow Out of Time.”
1935	Writes his last major work, “The Hunter in the Dark.”

1936	The only book released while HPL was living, *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, is crudely published. Correspondent Robert E. Howard commits suicide. Diagnosed with intestinal cancer.
1937	March 15: dies from malnutrition and other effects of cancer. Friend R. H. Barlow named as literary executor.
1939	Arkham House Publishing created by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei. The first of several HPL books to be published by Arkham House, *The Outsider and Others* is released.

Publication History

The following is an abbreviated publication history of *The Call of Cthulhu*. Because the story has been published literally countless times, included here are primarily only major publications and those currently in print while omitting minor releases, electronic variations and those not written in the English language. Entries are sorted chronologically with page numbers provided when possible.

Weird Tales, 11, No. 2 (February 1928), 159–78, 287.

The Outsider and Others. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1939.

Best Supernatural Stories of H.P. Lovecraft. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1945.

The Lurking Fear: And Other Stories. New York: Avon Book Co., 1947.

The Color Out of Space. New York: Lancer Books, 1963.

The Best of H.P. Lovecraft: Bloodcurdling Tales of Horror and the Macabre. New York: Ballantine Books, 1982, 76–99.

The Dunwich Horror and Others. Ed. S.T. Joshi. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1984, 125–54.

Tales of H.P. Lovecraft. Ed. Joyce Carol Oates. Hopewell, NJ: The Ecco Press, 1997, 52–76.

More Annotated H.P. Lovecraft. Ed. S.T. Joshi and Peter Cannon. New York, NY: Dell Publishing, 1999, 172–216.

The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories. New York: Penguin Books, 1999, 139–69.

H.P. Lovecraft: Tales. New York, NY: The Library of America, 2005, 167–96.

H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction. New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, 2008, 355–379.

H.P. Lovecraft: The Complete Fiction. New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, 2011, 355–379.

H.P. Lovecraft Goes to the Movies. New York, NY: Fall River, October 2011, 220–254.

The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories (deluxe edition). New York, NY: Penguin USA, 2011, 139–169.

Crawling Chaos – Selected Weird Fiction, Volume One: 1917–1927. London: Creation Oneiros,

2012, 189–215.

The Best of H.P. Lovecraft: Tales that Truly Terrify from the Master of Horror. London, UK: Prion Books, 2012, 67–98.

The Lovecraft Library, Volume 2: The Call of Cthulhu and Other Mythos Tales. New York, NY: IDW Publishing, 2012, 17–52.

H.P. Lovecraft: Great Tales of Horror. New York, NY: Fall River Press, 2012, 1–25.

The Classic Horror Stories. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013, 24–52.

The Complete Cthulhu Mythos Tales. New York, NY: Fall River Press, 2013, 36–61.

Introduction

When Howard Philips Lovecraft first wrote "The Call of Cthulhu" he viewed it as being distinctly mediocre. He referred to it as, "rather middling – not as bad as the worst, but full of cheap and cumbrous touches," (*Selected Letters V*, 348) with no idea the impact it would make on the literary world. Even the editor of the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, the publication in which this story would later be published, initially declined the submission, only accepting it when falsely informed by a friend of Lovecraft that the author was considering submitting the work to another magazine. In February of 1928, two years after being written, "The Call of Cthulhu" was put into print. Although *Weird Tales* was a popular pulp magazine at the time, the medium was generally not considered in high regard among literary critics. The central work of the Cthulhu Mythos (a term coined by August Derleth, a friend and colleague to Lovecraft) and ultimately even the genre of weird fiction would not gain any serious notoriety until well after Lovecraft's death.

The Cthulhu Mythos is a moniker given to the universe in which most of Lovecraft's subsequent stories and Lovecraftian tales inspired by his work are set. That phrase now encompasses a wide range of mediums, from literature to movies, video games and music, just to name a few. While that term wasn't used until after Lovecraft's death, weird fiction was one he embraced happily during his lifetime. This appropriately named genre describes macabre stories of the early 20th century, before the advent of genres for niche audiences, such as horror and fantasy. For Lovecraft, however, weird fiction encompassed something far more complex.

The author described his reason for writing fiction as a means to allow him to visualize the beauty of the more subtle and unseen parts of our world. On writing weird fiction in particular he said, "I choose weird stories because they suit my inclination best." Regarding his choice to use horror as a tool in this process he explains, "Fear is our deepest and strongest emotion, and the one which best

lends itself to the creation of nature-defying illusions" ("Notes on Writing Weird Fiction" 42). He expounds on this in "Supernatural Horror in Literature," a long and well-known essay, by saying "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" ("Supernatural Horror in Literature" 48). It is exactly this, Lovecraft's passion for and exquisite attention to the human emotion of fear, that allowed his work to thrive. His methods worked so well that Cthulhu, an entity only prominently featured in this single story, would evolve into something almost as alive in society as on the page.

Given the impact of "The Call of Cthulhu" on modern culture, we are forced to ask exactly how Lovecraft was able to achieve this. Put more succinctly, what makes this story so great? The answer lies as much in Lovecraft's motivations as in his methods. His motivation was, in his own words, "to give myself the satisfaction of visualising more clearly and detailedly and stably the vague, elusive, fragmentary impressions of wonder, beauty, and adventurous expectancy" ("Supernatural Horror in Literature" 47). With this statement, he points out that the emphasis is not a detailed plot but, rather, a detailed world of things peripheral and obscure.

Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in "The Call of Cthulhu." To offer a brief synopsis, the protagonist finds some papers amongst his deceased uncle's belongings which he thinks are interesting so he decides to research the topic himself. He doesn't do anything extraordinary or dangerous and nothing terrible happens to him. The only conflict our main character encounters at all is that he finds the writings he gathers to be frightening. Even so, the tale grips the reader with suspense and begs a certain amount of urgency just to reach the conclusion. The story's ability to do this is owed directly to how Lovecraft went about reaching his goal; the method of using dread to obtain a response is universally effective.

Lovecraft correctly cites fear as being among the deepest of human emotions and specifically references fear of the unknown but the actual delivery comes in many forms. In "The Call of Cthulhu,"

Lovecraft introduces the fear of the unknown by forcing the reader to question what they know as true and possible. The answers are left out time and again; we are given only brief second-hand glimpses of what might be at the edges of perception. In this way, the lack of any substantial plot is exactly what draws the reader in. Because the accounts we have are inherently unreliable, coming from a person who hasn't witnessed or experienced anything out of the ordinary himself, every answer only begs more questions.

Lovecraft interweaves other distinct types of fear into this, as well. He uses, for instance, a unique fear of nonexistence. Kathy Behrendt defines this aptly in her article for *Philosophical Psychology* as "fear of the loss of our unique perspective and set of personal possibilities" (671). "The Call of Cthulhu" presents to us a universe so impossibly vast, so full of creatures and technologies and languages that human beings cannot even comprehend, that we feel impossibly small by contrast. Lovecraft commented on this in his letter to Farnsworth Wright, editor of *Weird Tales*, when he submitted "The Call of Cthulhu" the second time. "Now all my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large" (*Selected Letters II* 150). The very idea of infinity, he says, scares us by making us non-existent in comparison. The sensation evoked is like an intensification of being lost in an ocean that stretches to the horizon in every direction; this ocean has no horizons.

Although our narrator is left unharmed throughout the course of his story, we are also presented a strong fear of death. We know from the onset that the narrator's informant is dead. We read about other people involved with the events as we go on, all equally deceased. The narrator scribes his story to us constantly aware that his own demise could be close at hand. Although distinct, this particular type of fear can easily be tied to the larger fear of the unknown. "There must be many kinds of this fear," John Hollander tells us about the fear of death in his essay for *Social Research* (869). He follows by suggesting that it may be beneficial to consider whether we are afraid of something directly or afraid

of the possible outcome of something when differentiating specific fears from nameless ones (870). Because there is no physical vessel to be afraid of, fears of death and the unknown overlap perfectly to suit Lovecraft's manipulation of terror and awe.

Finally, one more specific type of fear, drawn up from Lovecraft's own troubled history, controls the mood of this story. Called agateophobia, this is the fear of being or becoming insane. This provides a counter measure to the fear of death, ensuring that some anxiety is always present as we read. On one side of the coin, we fear for the narrator's survival. On the other, if the narrator does survive, the only other explanation is psychosis, which is in some ways equally frightening. This is a prominent anxiety in "The Call of Cthulhu." Madness is not just possible but, in some cases, inevitable. When Briden, a sailor in the story, looks upon Cthulhu he finds that the sight alone is enough to drive him into mad hysterics. We are given fear in the form of something so incomprehensible that simply trying to conceive of it will break a man's mind.

This theme of impending madness is so detailed in Lovecraft's work that it has become almost a requirement of the Cthulhu Mythos. We can even see this expressed in *The Call of Cthulhu* role playing game, a modern interpretation of Lovecraft's work set into a unique medium. In it, sanity is given a numerical score that is decreased as players encounter the weirder things hidden throughout the imagined world. The game's rule book does well to explain the loss of sanity as it relates to Lovecraft's work: "[The player characters] confront knowledge and entities of alien horror and terrifying implications. Such experiences shake and shatter belief in the normal world" (Petersen 70).

While it is the culmination of many fears that propels Lovecraft's work, insanity is a topic Lovecraft was particularly well-versed in. At eight years old, in 1898, his father passed away after spending five years in the local Butler Hospital where he had been committed from a mental breakdown. His medical record there at the time stated, "For a year past he has shown obscure symptoms of mental disease—doing and saying strange things at times" (Joshi 13). More than twenty

years later, in 1929, his mother would be committed to the same hospital for mental illness where she, too, would die. In her case, the doctor reported that the "found disorder had been evidenced for fifteen years; that in all, abnormality had existed at least twenty-six years" (Joshi 14). In between this time, Lovecraft suffered his own nervous breakdown and in 1908 would withdraw from high school to spend the next five years in isolation. The nature of his breakdown is questionable, as the only source able to verify this was Lovecraft himself, but it remains clear that a history of mental illness precluded the writing of "The Call of Cthulhu" and all the following works of the Cthulhu Mythos.

It is possible, perhaps even likely, that these personal encounters with psychosis gave Lovecraft the insight needed to breathe life into his work, making something that could spread out to create and claim its own universe. He accomplishes the task of instilling fear, however, not by being insane but by driving the reader insane, combining multiple inescapable frights to cripple the audience. The strangeness of this is that the readers, themselves driven nearly to the point of madness from fear, continue to return to this work nearly a century later.

There are a number of speculative reasons as to why people enjoy being afraid. Some psychologists explain that it functions similar to play, wherein it is used to practice responses in safe environments for application in actual scenarios. Others suggest that adrenaline released from the fear response is what we find enticing and relate the quickened pulse and sweaty palms of terror to the physical manifestations of love and passion that we also enjoy. Some propose that the sensation of having "made it through" a frightening situation is the reward, given once the fear has subsided rather than at its height as others indicate. Research has shown about a third of people are "thrill seekers" in one form or another (Jarrett 812). This doesn't necessarily indicate that a third of people are avid sky-divers and stunt car drivers, just that they enjoy and seek out the rush of emotions like fear, such as that presented in literature. As further studies have indicated, "The more negative affect a person reports experiencing during horror, the more likely they are to say that they enjoy the genre" (Jarrett, 814). In

short, the scarier something is, the more we like it. Lovecraft used this psychological principle to its fullest, building both an empire and an entire universe on the solid foundation of fear itself.

Moving forward, Lovecraft would expand the universe he'd created, manifesting creatures from different times and places in space, many older than humanity and some older than the Earth itself. Throughout all of this, Cthulhu remains in the background, being mentioned only as a reference and never seen directly, except for in this particular story. The unique use of terror's effect on the human psyche coupled with Lovecraft's style of lurid detail and description, even with only thin plot advancements to hold the tale together, have held this work up as a masterpiece of horror literature. Psychology can explain from many angles how the techniques used in "The Call of Cthulhu" are effective and each explanation is likely valid, at least to some degree, but the burden of greatness falls not with a person's ability to feel complex emotions but with Lovecraft himself. Through his blending of fear with mystery and imagery we are given a persistent *tour de force* that is still growing.

It seems that Lovecraft was correct in stating that horror would be the best route to envisioning what is by nature unseen. As Lovecraft himself stated, "That my results are successful may well be disputed" ("Notes on Writing Weird fiction" 46), and of course it has been shown that two-thirds of people probably don't enjoy horror as a genre. He even says when pitching this story to the editor of *Weird Tales* for the second time, "In practice, I presume that few commonplace readers would have any use for a story written on these psychological principles" (*Selected Letters II* 150). The fact remains, however, that something in "The Call of Cthulhu" has drawn countless fans, writers, artists and others to heed the same call.

The Call of Cthulhu[1]

Of such great powers or beings there may be conceivably a survival... a survival of a hugely remote period when... consciousness was manifested, perhaps, in shapes and forms long since withdrawn before the tide of advancing humanity... forms of which poetry and legend alone have caught a flying memory and called them gods, monsters, mythical beings of all sorts and kinds...
- Algernon Blackwood[2]

I. The Horror In Clay

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. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.

Theosophists have guessed at the awesome grandeur of the cosmic cycle wherein our world and human race form transient incidents. They have hinted at strange survivals in terms which would freeze the blood if not masked by a bland optimism. But it is not from them that there came the single glimpse of forbidden eons which chills me when I think of it and maddens me when I dream of it. That glimpse, like all dread glimpses of truth, flashed out from an accidental piecing together of separated things - in this case an old newspaper item and the notes of a dead professor. I hope that no one else will accomplish this piecing out; certainly, if I live, I shall never knowingly supply a link in so hideous a chain. I think that the professor, too intended to keep silent regarding the part he knew, and that he would have destroyed his notes had not sudden death seized him.

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1 Because the sounds are described as strictly inhuman, there is no correct pronunciation, though Lovecraft suggested multiple in various missives.

2 An English novelist and author of *The Centaur*, from which this epitaph was taken. Lovecraft cites Blackwood as a master of fiction in his essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature."

My knowledge of the thing began in the winter of 1926-27 with the death of my great-uncle, George Gammell Angell, Professor Emeritus of Semitic Languages in Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island. Professor Angell was widely known as an authority on ancient inscriptions, and had frequently been resorted to by the heads of prominent museums; so that his passing at the age of ninety-two may be recalled by many. Locally, interest was intensified by the obscurity of the cause of death. The professor had been stricken whilst returning from the Newport boat; falling suddenly; as witnesses said, after having been jostled by a nautical-looking negro who had come from one of the queer dark courts on the precipitous hillside which formed a short cut from the waterfront to the deceased's home in Williams Street. Physicians were unable to find any visible disorder, but concluded after perplexed debate that some obscure lesion of the heart, induced by the brisk ascent of so steep a hill by so elderly a man, was responsible for the end. At the time I saw no reason to dissent from this dictum, but latterly I am inclined to wonder - and more than wonder.

As my great-uncle's heir and executor, for he died a childless widower, I was expected to go over his papers with some thoroughness; and for that purpose moved his entire set of files and boxes to my quarters in Boston. Much of the material which I correlated will be later published by the American Archaeological Society[3], but there was one box which I found exceedingly puzzling, and which I felt much averse from showing to other eyes. It had been locked and I did not find the key till it occurred to me to examine the personal ring which the professor carried in his pocket. Then, indeed, I succeeded in opening it, but when I did so seemed only to be confronted by a greater and more closely locked barrier. For what could be the meaning of the queer clay bas-relief[4] and the disjointed jottings, ramblings, and cuttings which I found? Had my uncle, in his latter years become credulous of the most superficial impostures? I resolved to search out the eccentric sculptor responsible for this apparent disturbance of an old man's peace of mind.

3 Despite likenesses to actual organizations, this is a fictional group.
4 A type of sculpture in which shapes and figures are modeled from a flat background by subtracting from the whole.

The bas-relief was a rough rectangle less than an inch thick and about five by six inches in area; obviously of modern origin. Its designs, however, were far from modern in atmosphere and suggestion; for, although the vagaries of cubism and futurism are many and wild, they do not often reproduce that cryptic regularity which lurks in prehistoric writing. And writing of some kind the bulk of these designs seemed certainly to be; though my memory, despite much the papers and collections of my uncle, failed in any way to identify this particular species, or even hint at its remotest affiliations.

Above these apparent hieroglyphics was a figure of evident pictorial intent, though its impressionistic execution forbade a very clear idea of its nature. It seemed to be a sort of monster, or symbol representing a monster, of a form which only a diseased fancy could conceive. If I say that my somewhat extravagant imagination yielded simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature, I shall not be unfaithful to the spirit of the thing. A pulpy, tentacled head surmounted a grotesque and scaly body with rudimentary wings; but it was the *general outline* of the whole which made it most shockingly frightful. Behind the figure was a vague suggestions of a Cyclopean[5] architectural background.

The writing accompanying this oddity was, aside from a stack of press cuttings, in Professor Angell's most recent hand; and made no pretense to literary style. What seemed to be the main document was headed "CTHULHU CULT" in characters painstakingly printed to avoid the erroneous reading of a word so unheard-of. This manuscript was divided into two sections, the first of which was headed "1925 - Dream and Dream Work of H.A. Wilcox, 7 Thomas St., Providence, R. I.", and the second, "Narrative of Inspector John R. Legrasse, 121 Bienville St., New Orleans, La., at 1908 A. A. S. Mtg. - Notes on Same, & Prof. Webb's Acct." The other manuscript papers were brief notes, some of them accounts of the queer dreams of different persons, some of them citations from theosophical[6]

5 Stonework typical to Mycenaean architecture characterized by massive stones fitted closely together to make walls. This word comes from Greek cultures who speculated that only the mythical cyclops could move the huge stones that comprised the walls of Mycenae.

6 Theosophy refers to a system of philosophy centered on examining humanity, divinity and the world and drawing out the origins and connections between them.

books and magazines (notably W. Scott-Elliot's *Atlantis and the Lost Lemuria*), and the rest comments on long-surviving secret societies and hidden cults, with references to passages in such mythological and anthropological source-books as Frazer's *Golden Bough* and Miss Murray's *Witch-Cult in Western Europe*. The cuttings largely alluded to outré mental illness and outbreaks of group folly or mania in the spring of 1925.

The first half of the principal manuscript told a very particular tale. It appears that on March 1st, 1925, a thin, dark young man of neurotic and excited aspect had called upon Professor Angell bearing the singular clay bas-relief, which was then exceedingly damp and fresh. His card bore the name of Henry Anthony Wilcox, and my uncle had recognized him as the youngest son of an excellent family slightly known to him, who had latterly been studying sculpture at the Rhode Island School of Design and living alone at the Fleur-de-Lys Building[7] near that institution. Wilcox was a precocious youth of known genius but great eccentricity, and had from childhood excited attention through the strange stories and odd dreams he was in the habit of relating. He called himself "psychically hypersensitive", but the staid folk of the ancient commercial city dismissed him as merely "queer." Never mingling much with his kind, he had dropped gradually from social visibility, and was now known only to a small group of esthetes from other towns. Even the Providence Art Club, anxious to preserve its conservatism, had found him quite hopeless.

On the occasion of the visit, ran the professor's manuscript, the sculptor abruptly asked for the benefit of his host's archeological knowledge in identifying the hieroglyphics of the bas-relief. He spoke in a dreamy, stilted manner which suggested pose and alienated sympathy; and my uncle showed some sharpness in replying, for the conspicuous freshness of the tablet implied kinship with anything but archeology. Young Wilcox's rejoinder, which impressed my uncle enough to make him recall and record it verbatim, was of a fantastically poetic cast which must have typified his whole conversation,

7 This is an actual building in Providence RI, notable for having a front side covered in bas-reliefs, one of which vaguely resembles the one described in this story.

and which I have since found highly characteristic of him. He said, "It is new, indeed, for I made it last night in a dream of strange cities; and dreams are older than brooding Tyre, or the contemplative Sphinx, or garden-girdled Babylon."

It was then that he began that rambling tale which suddenly played upon a sleeping memory and won the fevered interest of my uncle. There had been a slight earthquake tremor the night before, the most considerable felt in New England for some years; and Wilcox's imagination had been keenly affected. Upon retiring, he had had an unprecedented dream of great Cyclopean cities of Titan blocks and sky-flung monoliths, all dripping with green ooze and sinister with latent horror. Hieroglyphics had covered the walls and pillars, and from some undetermined point below had come a voice that was not a voice; a chaotic sensation which only fancy could transmute into sound, but which he attempted to render by the almost unpronounceable jumble of letters:*"Cthulhu fhtagn."*

This verbal jumble was the key to the recollection which excited and disturbed Professor Angell. He questioned the sculptor with scientific minuteness; and studied with frantic intensity the bas-relief on which the youth had found himself working, chilled and clad only in his night clothes, when waking had stolen bewilderingly over him. My uncle blamed his old age, Wilcox afterwards said, for his slowness in recognizing both hieroglyphics and pictorial design. Many of his questions seemed highly out of place to his visitor, especially those which tried to connect the latter with strange cults or societies; and Wilcox could not understand the repeated promises of silence which he was offered in exchange for an admission of membership in some widespread mystical or paganly religious body. When Professor Angell became convinced that the sculptor was indeed ignorant of any cult or system of cryptic lore, he besieged his visitor with demands for future reports of dreams. This bore regular fruit, for after the first interview the manuscript records daily calls of the young man, during which he related startling fragments of nocturnal imaginery whose burden was always some terrible Cyclopean vista of dark and dripping stone, with a subterrene voice or intelligence shouting monotonously in

enigmatical sense-impacts uninscribable save as gibberish. The two sounds frequently repeated are those rendered by the letters *"Cthulhu"* and *"R'lyeh."*

On March 23, the manuscript continued, Wilcox failed to appear; and inquiries at his quarters revealed that he had been stricken with an obscure sort of fever and taken to the home of his family in Waterman Street. He had cried out in the night, arousing several other artists in the building, and had manifested since then only alternations of unconsciousness and delirium. My uncle at once telephoned the family, and from that time forward kept close watch of the case; calling often at the Thayer Street office of Dr. Tobey, whom he learned to be in charge. The youth's febrile mind, apparently, was dwelling on strange things; and the doctor shuddered now and then as he spoke of them. They included not only a repetition of what he had formerly dreamed, but touched wildly on a gigantic thing "miles high" which walked or lumbered about.

He at no time fully described this object but occasional frantic words, as repeated by Dr. Tobey, convinced the professor that it must be identical with the nameless monstrosity he had sought to depict in his dream-sculpture. Reference to this object, the doctor added, was invariably a prelude to the young man's subsidence into lethargy. His temperature, oddly enough, was not greatly above normal; but the whole condition was otherwise such as to suggest true fever rather than mental disorder.
On April 2 at about 3 P.M. every trace of Wilcox's malady suddenly ceased. He sat upright in bed, astonished to find himself at home and completely ignorant of what had happened in dream or reality since the night of March 22. Pronounced well by his physician, he returned to his quarters in three days; but to Professor Angell he was of no further assistance. All traces of strange dreaming had vanished with his recovery, and my uncle kept no record of his night-thoughts after a week of pointless and irrelevant accounts of thoroughly usual visions.

Here the first part of the manuscript ended, but references to certain of the scattered notes gave me much material for thought - so much, in fact, that only the ingrained skepticism then forming my

philosophy can account for my continued distrust of the artist. The notes in question were those descriptive of the dreams of various persons covering the same period as that in which young Wilcox had had his strange visitations. My uncle, it seems, had quickly instituted a prodigiously far-flung body of inquires amongst nearly all the friends whom he could question without impertinence, asking for nightly reports of their dreams, and the dates of any notable visions for some time past. The reception of his request seems to have varied; but he must, at the very least, have received more responses than any ordinary man could have handled without a secretary. This original correspondence was not preserved, but his notes formed a thorough and really significant digest. Average people in society and business - New England's traditional "salt of the earth" - gave an almost completely negative result, though scattered cases of uneasy but formless nocturnal impressions appear here and there, always between March 23 and and April 2 - the period of young Wilcox's delirium. Scientific men were little more affected, though four cases of vague description suggest fugitive glimpses of strange landscapes, and in one case there is mentioned a dread of something abnormal.

It was from the artists and poets that the pertinent answers came, and I know that panic would have broken loose had they been able to compare notes. As it was, lacking their original letters, I half suspected the compiler of having asked leading questions, or of having edited the correspondence in corroboration of what he had latently resolved to see. That is why I continued to feel that Wilcox, somehow cognizant of the old data which my uncle had possessed, had been imposing on the veteran scientist. These responses from esthetes told disturbing tale. From February 28[8] to April 2 a large proportion of them had dreamed very bizarre things, the intensity of the dreams being immeasurably the stronger during the period of the sculptor's delirium. Over a fourth of those who reported anything, reported scenes and half-sounds not unlike those which Wilcox had described; and some of the dreamers confessed acute fear of the gigantic nameless thing visible toward the last. One case, which

8 February 28, 1925 was the date of the Charlevoix-Kamouraska earthquake, noted as being one of the strongest in Canadian history.

the note describes with emphasis, was very sad. The subject, a widely known architect with leanings toward theosophy and occultism, went violently insane on the date of young Wilcox's seizure, and expired several months later after incessant screamings to be saved from some escaped denizen of hell. Had my uncle referred to these cases by name instead of merely by number, I should have attempted some corroboration and personal investigation; but as it was, I succeeded in tracing down only a few. All of these, however, bore out the notes in full. I have often wondered if all the the objects of the professor's questioning felt as puzzled as did this fraction. It is well that no explanation shall ever reach them.

The press cuttings, as I have intimated, touched on cases of panic, mania, and eccentricity during the given period. Professor Angell must have employed a cutting bureau, for the number of extracts was tremendous, and the sources scattered throughout the globe. Here was a nocturnal suicide in London, where a lone sleeper had leaped from a window after a shocking cry. Here likewise a rambling letter to the editor of a paper in South America, where a fanatic deduces a dire future from visions he has seen. A dispatch from California describes a theosophist colony as donning white robes en masse for some "glorious fulfiment" which never arrives, whilst items from India speak guardedly of serious native unrest toward the end of March 22-23.

The west of Ireland, too, is full of wild rumour and legendry, and a fantastic painter named Ardois-Bonnot hangs a blasphemous *Dream Landscape*[9] in the Paris spring salon of 1926. And so numerous are the recorded troubles in insane asylums that only a miracle can have stopped the medical fraternity from noting strange parallelisms and drawing mystified conclusions. A weird bunch of cuttings, all told; and I can at this date scarcely envisage the callous rationalism with which I set them aside. But I was then convinced that young Wilcox had known of the older matters mentioned by the professor.

9 The artist and art are both fictional but this painting has been reproduced by artists inspired by Lovecraft's work.

II. The Tale of Inspector Legrasse.

The older matters which had made the sculptor's dream and bas-relief so significant to my uncle formed the subject of the second half of his long manuscript. Once before, it appears, Professor Angell had seen the hellish outlines of the nameless monstrosity, puzzled over the unknown hieroglyphics, and heard the ominous syllables which can be rendered only as *"Cthulhu"*; and all this in so stirring and horrible a connexion that it is small wonder he pursued young Wilcox with queries and demands for data.

This earlier experience had come in 1908, seventeen years before, when the American Archaeological Society held its annual meeting in St. Louis. Professor Angell, as befitted one of his authority and attainments, had had a prominent part in all the deliberations; and was one of the first to be approached by the several outsiders who took advantage of the convocation to offer questions for correct answering and problems for expert solution.

The chief of these outsiders, and in a short time the focus of interest for the entire meeting, was a commonplace-looking middle-aged man who had travelled all the way from New Orleans for certain special information unobtainable from any local source. His name was John Raymond Legrasse, and he was by profession an Inspector of Police. With him he bore the subject of his visit, a grotesque, repulsive, and apparently very ancient stone statuette whose origin he was at a loss to determine. It must not be fancied that Inspector Legrasse had the least interest in archaeology. On the contrary, his wish for enlightenment was prompted by purely professional considerations. The statuette, idol, fetish, or whatever it was, had been captured some months before in the wooded swamps south of New Orleans during a raid on a supposed voodoo meeting[10]; and so singular and hideous were the rites connected with it, that the police could not but realise that they had stumbled on a dark cult totally

10 A particular set of spiritual folkways known as “New Orleans Voodoo” was prominently practiced at the time.

unknown to them, and infinitely more diabolic than even the blackest of the African voodoo circles. Of its origin, apart from the erratic and unbelievable tales extorted from the captured members, absolutely nothing was to be discovered; hence the anxiety of the police for any antiquarian lore which might help them to place the frightful symbol, and through it track down the cult to its fountain-head.

Inspector Legrasse was scarcely prepared for the sensation which his offering created. One sight of the thing had been enough to throw the assembled men of science into a state of tense excitement, and they lost no time in crowding around him to gaze at the diminutive figure whose utter strangeness and air of genuinely abysmal antiquity hinted so potently at unopened and archaic vistas. No recognised school of sculpture had animated this terrible object, yet centuries and even thousands of years seemed recorded in its dim and greenish surface of unplaceable stone.

The figure, which was finally passed slowly from man to man for close and careful study, was between seven and eight inches in height, and of exquisitely artistic workmanship. It represented a monster of vaguely anthropoid outline, but with an octopus-like head whose face was a mass of feelers, a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long, narrow wings behind. This thing, which seemed instinct with a fearsome and unnatural malignancy, was of a somewhat bloated corpulence, and squatted evilly on a rectangular block or pedestal covered with undecipherable characters. The tips of the wings touched the back edge of the block, the seat occupied the centre, whilst the long, curved claws of the doubled-up, crouching hind legs gripped the front edge and extended a quarter of the way clown toward the bottom of the pedestal. The cephalopod head was bent forward, so that the ends of the facial feelers brushed the backs of huge fore paws which clasped the croucher's elevated knees. The aspect of the whole was abnormally life-like, and the more subtly fearful because its source was so totally unknown. Its vast, awesome, and incalculable age was unmistakable; yet not one link did it shew with any known type of art belonging to civilisation's youth - or indeed to any other time. Totally separate and apart, its very material was a mystery; for the soapy,

greenish-black stone with its golden or iridescent flecks and striations resembled nothing familiar to geology or mineralogy. The characters along the base were equally baffling; and no member present, despite a representation of half the world's expert learning in this field, could form the least notion of even their remotest linguistic kinship. They, like the subject and material, belonged to something horribly remote and distinct from mankind as we know it. something frightfully suggestive of old and unhallowed cycles of life in which our world and our conceptions have no part.

And yet, as the members severally shook their heads and confessed defeat at the Inspector's problem, there was one man in that gathering who suspected a touch of bizarre familiarity in the monstrous shape and writing, and who presently told with some diffidence of the odd trifle he knew. This person was the late William Channing Webb, Professor of Anthropology in Princeton University, and an explorer of no slight note. Professor Webb had been engaged, forty-eight years before, in a tour of Greenland and Iceland in search of some Runic inscriptions which he failed to unearth; and whilst high up on the West Greenland coast had encountered a singular tribe or cult of degenerate Esquimaux whose religion, a curious form of devil-worship, chilled him with its deliberate bloodthirstiness and repulsiveness. It was a faith of which other Esquimaux knew little, and which they mentioned only with shudders, saying that it had come down from horribly ancient aeons before ever the world was made. Besides nameless rites and human sacrifices there were certain queer hereditary rituals addressed to a supreme elder devil or *tornasuk*; and of this Professor Webb had taken a careful phonetic copy from an aged *angekok*[11] or wizard-priest, expressing the sounds in Roman letters as best he knew how. But just now of prime significance was the fetish which this cult had cherished, and around which they danced when the aurora leaped high over the ice cliffs. It was, the professor stated, a very crude bas-relief of stone, comprising a hideous picture and some cryptic writing. And so far as he could tell, it was a rough parallel in all essential features of the bestial thing now lying before the meeting.

11 *Tornasuk* and *angekok* are Inuit words. To clarify the descriptions given, the first refers to a supreme deity and ruler of the underworld while the second indicates a shaman.

This data, received with suspense and astonishment by the assembled members, proved doubly exciting to Inspector Legrasse; and he began at once to ply his informant with questions. Having noted and copied an oral ritual among the swamp cult-worshippers his men had arrested, he besought the professor to remember as best he might the syllables taken down amongst the diabolist Esquimaux. There then followed an exhaustive comparison of details, and a moment of really awed silence when both detective and scientist agreed on the virtual identity of the phrase common to two hellish rituals so many worlds of distance apart. What, in substance, both the Esquimaux wizards and the Louisiana swamp-priests had chanted to their kindred idols was something very like this: the word-divisions being guessed at from traditional breaks in the phrase as chanted aloud:

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn."

Legrasse had one point in advance of Professor Webb, for several among his mongrel prisoners had repeated to him what older celebrants had told them the words meant. This text, as given, ran something like this:

"In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming."

And now, in response to a general and urgent demand, Inspector Legrasse related as fully as possible his experience with the swamp worshippers; telling a story to which I could see my uncle attached profound significance. It savoured of the wildest dreams of myth-maker and theosophist, and disclosed an astonishing degree of cosmic imagination among such half-castes and pariahs as might be least expected to possess it.

On November 1st, 1907, there had come to the New Orleans police a frantic summons from the swamp and lagoon country to the south. The squatters there, mostly primitive but good-natured descendants of Lafitte's men, were in the grip of stark terror from an unknown thing which had stolen upon them in the night. It was voodoo, apparently, but voodoo of a more terrible sort than they had ever known; and some of their women and children had disappeared since the malevolent tom-tom had

begun its incessant beating far within the black haunted woods where no dweller ventured. There were insane shouts and harrowing screams, soul-chilling chants and dancing devil-flames; and, the frightened messenger added, the people could stand it no more.

So a body of twenty police, filling two carriages and an automobile, had set out in the late afternoon with the shivering squatter as a guide. At the end of the passable road they alighted, and for miles splashed on in silence through the terrible cypress woods where day never came. Ugly roots and malignant hanging nooses of Spanish moss beset them, and now and then a pile of dank stones or fragment of a rotting wall intensified by its hint of morbid habitation a depression which every malformed tree and every fungous islet combined to create. At length the squatter settlement, a miserable huddle of huts, hove in sight; and hysterical dwellers ran out to cluster around the group of bobbing lanterns. The muffled beat of tom-toms was now faintly audible far, far ahead; and a curdling shriek came at infrequent intervals when the wind shifted. A reddish glare, too, seemed to filter through pale undergrowth beyond the endless avenues of forest night. Reluctant even to be left alone again, each one of the cowed squatters refused point-blank to advance another inch toward the scene of unholy worship, so Inspector Legrasse and his nineteen colleagues plunged on unguided into black arcades of horror that none of them had ever trod before.

The region now entered by the police was one of traditionally evil repute, substantially unknown and untraversed by white men. There were legends of a hidden lake unglimpsed by mortal sight, in which dwelt a huge, formless white polypous thing with luminous eyes; and squatters whispered that bat-winged devils flew up out of caverns in inner earth to worship it at midnight. They said it had been there before d'Iberville, before La Salle[12], before the Indians, and before even the wholesome beasts and birds of the woods. It was nightmare itself, and to see it was to die. But it made men dream, and so they knew enough to keep away. The present voodoo orgy was, indeed, on the

12 Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville and Robert de La Salle were early French explorers in the Louisiana area.

merest fringe of this abhorred area, but that location was bad enough; hence perhaps the very place of the worship had terrified the squatters more than the shocking sounds and incidents.

Only poetry or madness could do justice to the noises heard by Legrasse's men as they ploughed on through the black morass toward the red glare and muffled tom-toms. There are vocal qualities peculiar to men, and vocal qualities peculiar to beasts; and it is terrible to hear the one when the source should yield the other. Animal fury and orgiastic license here whipped themselves to daemoniac heights by howls and squawking ecstacies that tore and reverberated through those nighted woods like pestilential tempests from the gulfs of hell. Now and then the less organized ululation would cease, and from what seemed a well-drilled chorus of hoarse voices would rise in sing-song chant that hideous phrase or ritual:

"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn."

Then the men, having reached a spot where the trees were thinner, came suddenly in sight of the spectacle itself. Four of them reeled, one fainted, and two were shaken into a frantic cry which the mad cacophony of the orgy fortunately deadened. Legrasse dashed swamp water on the face of the fainting man, and all stood trembling and nearly hypnotised with horror.

In a natural glade of the swamp stood a grassy island of perhaps an acre's extent, clear of trees and tolerably dry. On this now leaped and twisted a more indescribable horde of human abnormality than any but a Sime or an Angarola[13] could paint. Void of clothing, this hybrid spawn were braying, bellowing, and writhing about a monstrous ring-shaped bonfire; in the centre of which, revealed by occasional rifts in the curtain of flame, stood a great granite monolith some eight feet in height; on top of which, incongruous in its diminutiveness, rested the noxious carven statuette. From a wide circle of ten scaffolds set up at regular intervals with the flame-girt monolith as a centre hung, head downward, the oddly marred bodies of the helpless squatters who had disappeared. It was inside this circle that the

13 Sidney Sime and Anthony Angarola were both famous painters at the time. Sime was best known for his illustrations for Irish author Lord Dunsany, a prominent influence on Lovecraft's own work.

ring of worshippers jumped and roared, the general direction of the mass motion being from left to right in endless Bacchanal between the ring of bodies and the ring of fire.

It may have been only imagination and it may have been only echoes which induced one of the men, an excitable Spaniard, to fancy he heard antiphonal responses to the ritual from some far and unillumined spot deeper within the wood of ancient legendry and horror. This man, Joseph D. Galvez, I later met and questioned; and he proved distractingly imaginative. He indeed went so far as to hint of the faint beating of great wings, and of a glimpse of shining eyes and a mountainous white bulk beyond the remotest trees but I suppose he had been hearing too much native superstition.

Actually, the horrified pause of the men was of comparatively brief duration. Duty came first; and although there must have been nearly a hundred mongrel celebrants in the throng, the police relied on their firearms and plunged determinedly into the nauseous rout. For five minutes the resultant din and chaos were beyond description. Wild blows were struck, shots were fired, and escapes were made; but in the end Legrasse was able to count some forty-seven sullen prisoners, whom he forced to dress in haste and fall into line between two rows of policemen. Five of the worshippers lay dead, and two severely wounded ones were carried away on improvised stretchers by their fellow-prisoners. The image on the monolith, of course, was carefully removed and carried back by Legrasse.

Examined at headquarters after a trip of intense strain and weariness, the prisoners all proved to be men of a very low, mixed-blooded, and mentally aberrant type. Most were seamen, and a sprinkling of Negroes and mulattoes, largely West Indians or Brava Portuguese from the Cape Verde Islands, gave a colouring of voodooism to the heterogeneous cult. But before many questions were asked, it became manifest that something far deeper and older than Negro fetishism was involved. Degraded and ignorant as they were, the creatures held with surprising consistency to the central idea of their loathsome faith.

They worshipped, so they said, the Great Old Ones who lived ages before there were any men,

and who came to the young world out of the sky. Those Old Ones were gone now, inside the earth and under the sea; but their dead bodies had told their secrets in dreams to the first men, who formed a cult which had never died. This was that cult, and the prisoners said it had always existed and always would exist, hidden in distant wastes and dark places all over the world until the time when the great priest Cthulhu, from his dark house in the mighty city of R'lyeh under the waters, should rise and bring the earth again beneath his sway. Some day he would call, when the stars were ready, and the secret cult would always be waiting to liberate him.

Meanwhile no more must be told. There was a secret which even torture could not extract. Mankind was not absolutely alone among the conscious things of earth, for shapes came out of the dark to visit the faithful few. But these were not the Great Old Ones. No man had ever seen the Old Ones. The carven idol was great Cthulhu, but none might say whether or not the others were precisely like him. No one could read the old writing now, but things were told by word of mouth. The chanted ritual was not the secret - that was never spoken aloud, only whispered. The chant meant only this: "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming."

Only two of the prisoners were found sane enough to be hanged, and the rest were committed to various institutions. All denied a part in the ritual murders, and averred that the killing had been done by Black Winged Ones which had come to them from their immemorial meeting-place in the haunted wood. But of those mysterious allies no coherent account could ever be gained. What the police did extract, came mainly from the immensely aged mestizo named Castro, who claimed to have sailed to strange ports and talked with undying leaders of the cult in the mountains of China.

Old Castro remembered bits of hideous legend that paled the speculations of theosophists and made man and the world seem recent and transient indeed. There had been aeons when other Things ruled on the earth, and They had had great cities. Remains of Them, he said the deathless Chinamen had told him, were still be found as Cyclopean stones on islands in the Pacific. They all died vast

epochs of time before men came, but there were arts which could revive Them when the stars had come round again to the right positions in the cycle of eternity. They had, indeed, come themselves from the stars, and brought Their images with Them.

These Great Old Ones, Castro continued, were not composed altogether of flesh and blood. They had shape - for did not this star-fashioned image prove it? - but that shape was not made of matter. When the stars were right, They could plunge from world to world through the sky; but when the stars were wrong, They could not live. But although They no longer lived, They would never really die. They all lay in stone houses in Their great city of R'lyeh, preserved by the spells of mighty Cthulhu for a glorious surrection when the stars and the earth might once more be ready for Them. But at that time some force from outside must serve to liberate Their bodies. The spells that preserved them intact likewise prevented Them from making an initial move, and They could only lie awake in the dark and think whilst uncounted millions of years rolled by. They knew all that was occurring in the universe, for Their mode of speech was transmitted thought. Even now They talked in Their tombs. When, after infinities of chaos, the first men came, the Great Old Ones spoke to the sensitive among them by moulding their dreams; for only thus could Their language reach the fleshly minds of mammals. Then, whispered Castro, those first men formed the cult around tall idols which the Great Ones shewed them; idols brought in dim eras from dark stars. That cult would never die till the stars came right again, and the secret priests would take great Cthulhu from His tomb to revive His subjects and resume His rule of earth. The time would be easy to know, for then mankind would have become as the Great Old Ones; free and wild and beyond good and evil, with laws and morals thrown aside and all men shouting and killing and revelling in joy. Then the liberated Old Ones would teach them new ways to shout and kill and revel and enjoy themselves, and all the earth would flame with a holocaust of ecstasy and freedom. Meanwhile the cult, by appropriate rites, must keep alive the memory of those ancient ways and shadow forth the prophecy of their return.

In the elder time chosen men had talked with the entombed Old Ones in dreams, but then something happened. The great stone city R'lyeh, with its monoliths and sepulchres, had sunk beneath the waves; and the deep waters, full of the one primal mystery through which not even thought can pass, had cut off the spectral intercourse. But memory never died, and the high-priests said that the city would rise again when the stars were right. Then came out of the earth the black spirits of earth, mouldy and shadowy, and full of dim rumours picked up in caverns beneath forgotten sea-bottoms. But of them old Castro dared not speak much. He cut himself off hurriedly, and no amount of persuasion or subtlety could elicit more in this direction. The size of the Old Ones, too, he curiously declined to mention. Of the cult, he said that he thought the centre lay amid the pathless desert of Arabia, where Irem, the City of Pillars[14], dreams hidden and untouched. It was not allied to the European witch-cult, and was virtually unknown beyond its members. No book had ever really hinted of it, though the deathless Chinamen said that there were double meanings in the *Necronomicon*[15] of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred which the initiated might read as they chose, especially the much-discussed couplet:

That is not dead which can eternal lie,

And with strange aeons even death may die.

Legrasse, deeply impressed and not a little bewildered, had inquired in vain concerning the historic affiliations of the cult. Castro, apparently, had told the truth when he said that it was wholly secret. The authorities at Tulane University could shed no light upon either cult or image, and now the detective had come to the highest authorities in the country and met with no more than the Greenland tale of Professor Webb.

The feverish interest aroused at the meeting by Legrasse's tale, corroborated as it was by the statuette, is echoed in the subsequent correspondence of those who attended; although scant mention

14 Usually known as “Iram of the Pillars,” but associated with many possible spellings, is a lost city referenced in the Quran.

15 The *Necronomicon* is a fictional book of the Cthulhu Mythos that stands as one of the most widely used references today, being included in many of Lovecraft's stories and countless other works of literature, film and art.

occurs in the formal publications of the society. Caution is the first care of those accustomed to face occasional charlatanry and imposture. Legrasse for some time lent the image to Professor Webb, but at the latter's death it was returned to him and remains in his possession, where I viewed it not long ago. It is truly a terrible thing, and unmistakably akin to the dream-sculpture of young Wilcox.

That my uncle was excited by the tale of the sculptor I did not wonder, for what thoughts must arise upon hearing, after a knowledge of what Legrasse had learned of the cult, of a sensitive young man who had *dreamed* not only the figure and exact hieroglyphics of the swamp-found image and the Greenland devil tablet, but had come *in his dreams* upon at least three of the precise words of the formula uttered alike by Esquimaux diabolists and mongrel Louisianans? Professor Angell's instant start on an investigation of the utmost thoroughness was eminently natural; though privately I suspected young Wilcox of having heard of the cult in some indirect way, and of having invented a series of dreams to heighten and continue the mystery at my uncle's expense. The dream-narratives and cuttings collected by the professor were, of course, strong corroboration; but the rationalism of my mind and the extravagance of the whole subject led me to adopt what I thought the most sensible conclusions. So, after thoroughly studying the manuscript again and correlating the theosophical and anthropological notes with the cult narrative of Legrasse, I made a trip to Providence to see the sculptor and give him the rebuke I thought proper for so boldly imposing upon a learned and aged man.

Wilcox still lived alone in the Fleur-de-Lys Building in Thomas Street, a hideous Victorian imitation of seventeenth century Breton Architecture which flaunts its stuccoed front amidst the lovely olonial houses on the ancient hill, and under the very shadow of the finest Georgian steeple in America, I found him at work in his rooms, and at once conceded from the specimens scattered about that his genius is indeed profound and authentic. He will, I believe, some time be heard from as one of the great decadents; for he has crystallised in clay and will one day mirror in marble those nightmares and

phantasies which Arthur Machen[16] evokes in prose, and Clark Ashton Smith[17] makes visible in verse and in painting.

Dark, frail, and somewhat unkempt in aspect, he turned languidly at my knock and asked me my business without rising. Then I told him who I was, he displayed some interest; for my uncle had excited his curiosity in probing his strange dreams, yet had never explained the reason for the study. I did not enlarge his knowledge in this regard, but sought with some subtlety to draw him out. In a short time I became convinced of his absolute sincerity, for he spoke of the dreams in a manner none could mistake. They and their subconscious residuum had influenced his art profoundly, and he shewed me a morbid statue whose contours almost made me shake with the potency of its black suggestion. He could not recall having seen the original of this thing except in his own dream bas-relief, but the outlines had formed themselves insensibly under his hands. It was, no doubt, the giant shape he had raved of in delirium. That he really knew nothing of the hidden cult, save from what my uncle's relentless catechism had let fall, he soon made clear; and again I strove to think of some way in which he could possibly have received the weird impressions.

He talked of his dreams in a strangely poetic fashion; making me see with terrible vividness the damp Cyclopean city of slimy green stone - whose *geometry*, he oddly said, was *all wrong* - and hear with frightened expectancy the ceaseless, half-mental calling from underground: *"Cthulhu fhtagn", "Cthulhu fhtagn."*

These words had formed part of that dread ritual which told of dead Cthulhu's dream-vigil in his stone vault at R'lyeh, and I felt deeply moved despite my rational beliefs. Wilcox, I was sure, had heard of the cult in some casual way, and had soon forgotten it amidst the mass of his equally weird reading and imagining. Later, by virtue of its sheer impressiveness, it had found subconscious expression in

16 Machen is noted as one of the “Modern Masters” in Lovecraft's essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature” and is cited as an early influence of what would become the Cthulhu Mythos.

17 Clark Ashton Smith was a correspondent and friend of Lovecraft who is now best known for his work expanding the Cthulhu Mythos.

dreams, in the bas-relief, and in the terrible statue I now beheld; so that his imposture upon my uncle had been a very innocent one. The youth was of a type, at once slightly affected and slightly ill-mannered, which I could never like, but I was willing enough now to admit both his genius and his honesty. I took leave of him amicably, and wish him all the success his talent promises.

The matter of the cult still remained to fascinate me, and at times I had visions of personal fame from researches into its origin and connexions. I visited New Orleans, talked with Legrasse and others of that old-time raiding-party, saw the frightful image, and even questioned such of the mongrel prisoners as still survived. Old Castro, unfortunately, had been dead for some years. What I now heard so graphically at first-hand, though it was really no more than a detailed confirmation of what my uncle had written, excited me afresh; for I felt sure that I was on the track of a very real, very secret, and very ancient religion whose discovery would make me an anthropologist of note. My attitude was still one of absolute materialism, as l wish it still were, and I discounted with almost inexplicable perversity the coincidence of the dream notes and odd cuttings collected by Professor Angell.

One thing I began to suspect, and which I now fear I know, is that my uncle's death was far from natural. He fell on a narrow hill street leading up from an ancient waterfront swarming with foreign mongrels, after a careless push from a Negro sailor. I did not forget the mixed blood and marine pursuits of the cult-members in Louisiana, and would not be surprised to learn of secret methods and rites and beliefs. Legrasse and his men, it is true, have been let alone; but in Norway a certain seaman who saw things is dead. Might not the deeper inquiries of my uncle after encountering the sculptor's data have come to sinister ears? I think Professor Angell died because he knew too much, or because he was likely to learn too much. Whether I shall go as he did remains to be seen, for I have learned much now.

III. The Madness from the Sea

If heaven ever wishes to grant me a boon, it will be a total effacing of the results of a mere chance which fixed my eye on a certain stray piece of shelf-paper. It was nothing on which I would naturally have stumbled in the course of my daily round, for it was an old number of an Australian journal, the *Sydney Bulletin* for April 18, 1925. It had escaped even the cutting bureau which had at the time of its issuance been avidly collecting material for my uncle's research.

I had largely given over my inquiries into what Professor Angell called the "Cthulhu Cult", and was visiting a learned friend in Paterson, New Jersey; the curator of a local museum and a mineralogist of note. Examining one day the reserve specimens roughly set on the storage shelves in a rear room of the museum, my eye was caught by an odd picture in one of the old papers spread beneath the stones. It was the Sydney Bulletin I have mentioned, for my friend had wide affiliations in all conceivable foreign parts; and the picture was a half-tone cut of a hideous stone image almost identical with that which Legrasse had found in the swamp.

Eagerly clearing the sheet of its precious contents, I scanned the item in detail; and was disappointed to find it of only moderate length. What it suggested, however, was of portentous significance to my flagging quest; and I carefully tore it out for immediate action. It read as follows:

MYSTERY DERELICT FOUND AT SEA

Vigilant Arrives With Helpless Armed New Zealand Yacht in Tow. One Survivor and Dead Man Found Aboard. Tale of Desperate Battle and Deaths at Sea. Rescued Seaman Refuses Particulars of Strange Experience. Odd Idol Found in His Possession. Inquiry to Follow.

The Morrison Co.'s freighter *Vigilant*, bound from Valparaiso, arrived this morning at its wharf in Darling Harbour, having in tow the battled and disabled but heavily armed steam yacht *Alert* of Dunedin, N.Z., which was sighted April 12th in S. Latitude 34°21', W. Longitude 152°17', with one

living and one dead man aboard.

The Vigilant left Valparaiso March 25th, and on April 2nd was driven considerably south of her course by exceptionally heavy storms and monster waves. On April 12th the derelict was sighted; and though apparently deserted, was found upon boarding to contain one survivor in a half-delirious condition and one man who had evidently been dead for more than a week. The living man was clutching a horrible stone idol of unknown origin, about foot in height, regarding whose nature authorities at Sydney University, the Royal Society, and the Museum in College Street all profess complete bafflement, and which the survivor says he found in the cabin of the yacht, in a small carved shrine of common pattern.

This man, after recovering his senses, told an exceedingly strange story of piracy and slaughter. He is Gustaf Johansen, a Norwegian of some intelligence, and had been second mate of the two-masted schooner *Emma* of Auckland, which sailed for Callao February 20th with a complement of eleven men. The Emma, he says, was delayed and thrown widely south of her course by the great storm of March 1st, and on March 22nd, in S. Latitude 49°51' W. Longitude 128°34', encountered the *Alert*, manned by a queer and evil-looking crew of Kanakas and half-castes. Being ordered peremptorily to turn back, Capt. Collins refused; whereupon the strange crew began to fire savagely and without warning upon the schooner with a peculiarly heavy battery of brass cannon forming part of the yacht's equipment. The *Emma*'s men shewed fight, says the survivor, and though the schooner began to sink from shots beneath the water-line they managed to heave alongside their enemy and board her, grappling with the savage crew on the yacht's deck, and being forced to kill them all, the number being slightly superior, because of their particularly abhorrent and desperate though rather clumsy mode of fighting.

Three of the *Emma*'s men, including Capt. Collins and First Mate Green, were killed; and the remaining eight under Second Mate Johansen proceeded to navigate the captured yacht, going ahead in their original direction to see if any reason for their ordering back had existed. The next day, it appears,

they raised and landed on a small island, although none is known to exist in that part of the ocean; and six of the men somehow died ashore, though Johansen is queerly reticent about this part of his story, and speaks only of their falling into a rock chasm. Later, it seems, he and one companion boarded the yacht and tried to manage her, but were beaten about by the storm of April 2nd, From that time till his rescue on the 12th the man remembers little, and he does not even recall when William Briden, his companion, died. Briden's death reveals no apparent cause, and was probably due to excitement or exposure. Cable advices from Dunedin report that the *Alert* was well known there as an island trader, and bore an evil reputation along the waterfront, It was owned by a curious group of half-castes whose frequent meetings and night trips to the woods attracted no little curiosity; and it had set sail in great haste just after the storm and earth tremors of March 1st. Our Auckland correspondent gives the *Emma* and her crew an excellent reputation, and Johansen is described as a sober and worthy man. The admiralty will institute an inquiry on the whole matter beginning tomorrow, at which every effort will be made to induce Johansen to speak more freely than he has done hitherto.

This was all, together with the picture of the hellish image; but what a train of ideas it started in my mind! Here were new treasuries of data on the Cthulhu Cult, and evidence that it had strange interests at sea as well as on land. What motive prompted the hybrid crew to order back the *Emma* as they sailed about with their hideous idol? What was the unknown island on which six of the *Emma*'s crew had died, and about which the mate Johansen was so secretive? What had the vice-admiralty's investigation brought out, and what was known of the noxious cult in Dunedin? And most marvellous of all, what deep and more than natural linkage of dates was this which gave a malign and now undeniable significance to the various turns of events so carefully noted by my uncle?

March 1st - or February 28th according to the International Date Line - the earthquake and storm had come. From Dunedin the Alert and her noisome crew had darted eagerly forth as if imperiously summoned, and on the other side of the earth poets and artists had begun to dream of a

strange, dank Cyclopean city whilst a young sculptor had moulded in his sleep the form of the dreaded Cthulhu. March 23rd the crew of the Emma landed on an unknown island and left six men dead; and on that date the dreams of sensitive men assumed a heightened vividness and darkened with dread of a giant monster's malign pursuit, whilst an architect had gone mad and a sculptor had lapsed suddenly into delirium! And what of this storm of April 2nd - the date on which all dreams of the dank city ceased, and Wilcox emerged unharmed from the bondage of strange fever? What of all this - and of those hints of old Castro about the sunken, star-born Old Ones and their coming reign; their faithful cult *and their mastery of dreams?* Was I tottering on the brink of cosmic horrors beyond man's power to bear? If so, they must be horrors of the mind alone, for in some way the second of April had put a stop to whatever monstrous menace had begun its siege of mankind's soul.

That evening, after a day of hurried cabling and arranging, I bade my host adieu and took a train for San Francisco. In less than a month I was in Dunedin; where, however, I found that little was known of the strange cult-members who had lingered in the old sea-taverns. Waterfront scum was far too common for special mentnon; though there was vague talk about one inland trip these mongrels had made, during which faint drumming and red flame were noted on the distant hills. In Auckland I learned that Johansen had returned *with yellow hair turned white* after a perfunctory and inconclusive questioning at Sydney, and had thereafter sold his cottage in West Street and sailed with his wife to his old home in Oslo. Of his stirring experience he would tell his friends no more than he had told the admiralty officials, and all they could do was to give me his Oslo address.

After that I went to Sydney and talked profitlessly with seamen and members of the vice-admiralty court. I saw the *Alert*, now sold and in commercial use, at Circular Quay in Sydney Cove, but gained nothing from its non-committal bulk. The crouching image with its cuttlefish head, dragon body, scaly wings, and hieroglyphed pedestal, was preserved in the Museum at Hyde Park; and I studied it long and well, finding it a thing of balefully exquisite workmanship, and with the same utter mystery,

terrible antiquity, and unearthly strangeness of material which I had noted in Legrasse's smaller specimen. Geologists, the curator told me, had found it a monstrous puzzle; for they vowed that the world held no rock like it. Then I thought with a shudder of what Old Castro had told Legrasse about the Old Ones; "They had come from the stars, and had brought Their images with Them."

Shaken with such a mental revolution as I had never before known, I now resolved to visit Mate Johansen in Oslo. Sailing for London, I reembarked at once for the Norwegian capital; and one autumn day landed at the trim wharves in the shadow of the Egeberg. Johansen's address, I discovered, lay in the Old Town of King Harold Haardrada, which kept alive the name of Oslo during all the centuries that the greater city masqueraded as "Christiana." I made the brief trip by taxicab, and knocked with palpitant heart at the door of a neat and ancient building with plastered front. A sad-faced woman in black answered my summons, and I was stung th disappointment when she told me in halting English that Gustaf Johansen was no more.

He had not long survived his return, said his wife, for the doings sea in 1925 had broken him. He had told her no more than he told the public, but had left a long manuscript - of "technical matters" as he said - written in English, evidently in order to guard her from the peril of casual perusal. During a walk rough a narrow lane near the Gothenburg dock, a bundle of papers falling from an attic window had knocked him down. Two Lascar sailors at once helped him to his feet, but before the ambulance could reach him he was dead. Physicians found no adequate cause the end, and laid it to heart trouble and a weakened constitution. I now felt gnawing at my vitals that dark terror which will never leave me till I, too, am at rest; "accidentally" or otherwise. Persuad-g the widow that my connexion with her husband's "technical matters" was sufficient to entitle me to his manuscript, I bore the document away and began to read it on the London boat.

It was a simple, rambling thing - a naive sailor's effort at a post-facto diary - and strove to recall day by day that last awful voyage. I cannot attempt to transcribe it verbatim in all its cloudiness and

redundance, but I will tell its gist enough to shew why the sound the water against the vessel's sides became so unendurable to me that I stopped my ears with cotton.

Johansen, thank God, did not know quite all, even though he saw the city and the Thing, but I shall never sleep calmly again when I think of the horrors that lurk ceaselessly behind life in time and in space, and of those unhallowed blasphemies from elder stars which dream beneath the sea, known and favoured by a nightmare cult ready and eager to loose them upon the world whenever another earthquake shall heave their monstrous stone city again to the sun and air.

Johansen's voyage had begun just as he told it to the vice-admiralty. The *Emma*, in ballast, had cleared Auckland on February 20th, and had felt the full force of that earthquake-born tempest which must have heaved up from the sea-bottom the horrors that filled men's dreams. Once more under control, the ship was making good progress when held up by the *Alert* on March 22nd, and I could feel the mate's regret as he wrote of her bombardment and sinking. Of the swarthy cult-fiends on the *Alert* he speaks with significant horror. There was some peculiarly abominable quality about them which made their destruction seem almost a duty, and Johansen shews ingenuous wonder at the charge of ruthlessness brought against his party during the proceedings of the court of inquiry. Then, driven ahead by curiosity in their captured yacht under Johansen's command, the men sight a great stone pillar sticking out of the sea, and in S. Latitude 47°9', W. Longitude l23°43', come upon a coastline of mingled mud, ooze, and weedy Cyclopean masonry which can be nothing less than the tangible substance of earth's supreme terror - the nightmare corpse-city of R'lyeh, that was built in measureless aeons behind history by the vast, loathsome shapes that seeped down from the dark stars. There lay great Cthulhu and his hordes, hidden in green slimy vaults and sending out at last, after cycles incalculable, the thoughts that spread fear to the dreams of the sensitive and called imperiously to the faithfull to come on a pilgrimage of liberation and restoration. All this Johansen did not suspect, but God knows he soon saw enough!

I suppose that only a single mountain-top, the hideous monolith-crowned citadel whereon great Cthulhu was buried, actually emerged from the waters. When I think of the extent of all that may be brooding down there I almost wish to kill myself forthwith. Johansen and his men were awed by the cosmic majesty of this dripping Babylon of elder daemons, and must have guessed without guidance that it was nothing of this or of any sane planet. Awe at the unbelievable size of the greenish stone blocks, at the dizzying height of the great carven monolith, and at the stupefying identity of the colossal statues and bas-reliefs with the queer image found in the shrine on the *Alert*, is poignantly visible in every line of the mates frightened description.

Without knowing what futurism is like, Johansen achieved something very close to it when he spoke of the city; for instead of describing any definite structure or building, he dwells only on broad impressions of vast angles and stone surfaces - surfaces too great to belong to anything right or proper for this earth, and impious with horrible images and hieroglyphs. I mention his talk about angles because it suggests something Wilcox had told me of his awful dreams. He said that the geometry of the dream-place he saw was abnormal, non-Euclidean, and loathsomely redolent of spheres and dimensions apart from ours. Now an unlettered seaman felt the same thing whilst gazing at the terrible reality.

Johansen and his men landed at a sloping mud-bank on this monstrous Acropolis, and clambered slipperily up over titan oozy blocks which could have been no mortal staircase. The very sun of heaven seemed distorted when viewed through the polarising miasma welling out from this sea-soaked perversion, and twisted menace and suspense lurked leeringly in those crazily elusive angles of carven rock where a second glance shewed concavity after the first shewed convexity.

Something very like fright had come over all the explorers before anything more definite than rock and ooze and weed was seen. Each would have fled had he not feared the scorn of the others, and it was only half-heartedly that they searched - vainly, as it proved - for some portable souvenir to bear

away.

It was Rodriguez the Portuguese who climbed up the foot of the monolith and shouted of what he had found. The rest followed him, and looked curiously at the immense carved door with the now familiar squid-dragon bas-relief. It was, Johansen said, like a great barn-door; and they all felt that it was a door because of the ornate lintel, threshold, and jambs around it, though they could not decide whether it lay flat like a trap-door or slantwise like an outside cellar-door. As Wilcox would have said, the geometry of the place was all wrong. One could not be sure that the sea and the ground were horizontal, hence the relative position of everything else seemed phantasmally variable.

Briden pushed at the stone in several places without result. Then Donovan felt over it delicately around the edge, pressing each point separately as he went. He climbed interminably along the grotesque stone moulding - that is, one would call it climbing if the thing was not after all horizontal - and the men wondered how any door in the universe could be so vast. Then, very softly and slowly, the acre-great lintel began to give inward at the top; and they saw that it was balauced

Donovan slid or somehow propelled himself down or along the jamb and rejoined his fellows, and everyone watched the queer recession of the monstrously carven portal. In this phantasy of prismatic distortion it moved anomalously in a diagonal way, so that all the rules of matter and perspective seemed upset.

The aperture was black with a darkness almost material. That tenebrousness was indeed a *positive quality*; for it obscured such parts of the inner walls as ought to have been revealed, and actually burst forth like smoke from its aeon-long imprisonment, visibly darkening the sun as it slunk away into the shrunken and gibbous sky on flapping membraneous wings. The odour rising from the newly opened depths was intolerable, and at length the quick-eared Hawkins thought he heard a nasty, slopping sound down there. Everyone listened, and everyone was listening still when It lumbered slobberingly into sight and gropingly squeezed Its gelatinous green immensity through the black

doorway into the tainted outside air of that poison city of madness.

Poor Johansen's handwriting almost gave out when he wrote of this. Of the six men who never reached the ship, he thinks two perished of pure fright in that accursed instant. The Thing cannot be described - there is no language for such abysms of shrieking and immemorial lunacy, such eldritch contradictions of all matter, force, and cosmic order. A mountain walked or stumbled. God! What wonder that across the earth a great architect went mad, and poor Wilcox raved with fever in that telepathic instant? The Thing of the idols, the green, sticky spawn of the stars, had awaked to claim his own. The stars were right again, and what an age-old cult had failed to do by design, a band of innocent sailors had done by accident. After vigintillions of years great Cthulhu was loose again, and ravening for delight.

Three men were swept up by the flabby claws before anybody turned. God rest them, if there be any rest in the universe. They were Donovan, Guerrera, and Angstrom. Parker slipped as the other three were plunging frenziedly over endless vistas of green-crusted rock to the boat, and Johansen swears he was swallowed up by an angle of masonry which shouldn't have been there; an angle which was acute, but behaved as if it were obtuse. So only Briden and Johansen reached the boat, and pulled desperately for the *Alert* as the mountainous monstrosity flopped down the slimy stones and hesitated, floundering at the edge of the water.

Steam had not been suffered to go down entirely, despite the departure of all hands for the shore; and it was the work of only a few moments of feverish rushing up and down between wheel and engines to get the *Alert* under way. Slowly, amidst the distorted horrors of that indescribable scene, she began to churn the lethal waters; whilst on the masonry of that charnel shore that was not of earth the titan Thing from the stars slavered and gibbered like Polypheme cursing the fleeing ship of Odysseus. Then, bolder than the storied Cyclops, great Cthulhu slid greasily into the water and began to pursue with vast wave-raising strokes of cosmic potency. Briden looked back and went mad, laughing shrilly

as he kept on laughing at intervals till death found him one night in the cabin whilst Johansen was wandering deliriously.

But Johansen had not given out yet. Knowing that the Thing could surely overtake the *Alert* until steam was fully up, he resolved on a desperate chance; and, setting the engine for full speed, ran lightning-like on deck and reversed the wheel. There was a mighty eddying and foaming in the noisome brine, and as the steam mounted higher and higher the brave Norwegian drove his vessel head on against the pursuing jelly which rose above the unclean froth like the stern of a daemon galleon. The awful squid-head with writhing feelers came nearly up to the bowsprit of the sturdy yacht, but johansen drove on relentlessly. There was a bursting as of an exploding bladder, a slushy nastiness as of a cloven sunfish, a stench as of a thousand opened graves, and a sound that the chronicler could not put on paper. For an instant the ship was befouled by an acrid and blinding green cloud, and then there was only a venomous seething astern; where - God in heaven! - the scattered plasticity of that nameless sky-spawn was nebulously *recombining* in its hateful original form, whilst its distance widened every second as the *Alert* gained impetus from its mounting steam.

That was all. After that Johansen only brooded over the idol in the cabin and attended to a few matters of food for himself and the laughing maniac by his side. He did not try to navigate after the first bold flight, for the reaction had taken something out of his soul. Then came the storm of April 2nd, and a gathering of the clouds about his consciousness. There is a sense of spectral whirling through liquid gulfs of infinity, of dizzying rides through reeling universes on a comets tail, and of hysterical plunges from the pit to the moon and from the moon back again to the pit, all livened by a cachinnating chorus of the distorted, hilarious elder gods and the green, bat-winged mocking imps of Tartarus.

Out of that dream came rescue-the *Vigilant*, the vice-admiralty court, the streets of Dunedin, and the long voyage back home to the old house by the Egeberg. He could not tell - they would think him mad. He would write of what he knew before death came, but his wife must not guess. Death would be

a boon if only it could blot out the memories.

That was the document I read, and now I have placed it in the tin box beside the bas-relief and the papers of Professor Angell. With it shall go this record of mine - this test of my own sanity, wherein is pieced together that which I hope may never be pieced together again. I have looked upon all that the universe has to hold of horror, and even the skies of spring and the flowers of summer must ever afterward be poison to me. But I do not think my life will be long. As my uncle went, as poor Johansen went, so I shall go. I know too much, and the cult still lives.

Cthulhu still lives, too, I suppose, again in that chasm of stone which has shielded him since the sun was young. His accursed city is sunken once more, for the Vigilant sailed over the spot after the April storm; but his ministers on earth still bellow and prance and slay around idol-capped monoliths in lonely places. He must have been trapped by the sinking whilst within his black abyss, or else the world would by now be screaming with fright and frenzy. Who knows the end? What has risen may sink, and what has sunk may rise. Loathsomeness waits and dreams in the deep, and decay spreads over the tottering cities of men. A time will come - but I must not and cannot think! Let me pray that, if I do not survive this manuscript, my executors may put caution before audacity and see that it meets no other eye.

Appendix A: Literary Context

"Notes on Writing Weird Fiction"

by H.P. Lovecraft

My reason for writing stories is to give myself the satisfaction of visualising more clearly and detailedly and stably the vague, elusive, fragmentary impressions of wonder, beauty, and adventurous expectancy which are conveyed to me by certain sights (scenic, architectural, atmospheric, etc.), ideas, occurrences, and images encountered in art and literature. I choose weird stories because they suit my inclination best—one of my strongest and most persistent wishes being to achieve, momentarily, the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law which for ever imprison us and frustrate our curiosity about the infinite cosmic spaces beyond the radius of our sight and analysis. These stories frequently emphasise the element of horror because fear is our deepest and strongest emotion, and the one which best lends itself to the creation of nature-defying illusions. Horror and the unknown or the strange are always closely connected, so that it is hard to create a convincing picture of shattered natural law or cosmic alienage or "outsideness" without laying stress on the emotion of fear. The reason why time plays a great part in so many of my tales is that this element looms up in my mind as the most profoundly dramatic and grimly terrible thing in the universe. Conflict with time seems to me the most potent and fruitful theme in all human expression.

While my chosen form of story-writing is obviously a special and perhaps a narrow one, it is none the less a persistent and permanent type of expression, as old as literature itself. There will always be a small percentage of persons who feel a burning curiosity about unknown outer space, and a burning desire to escape from the prison-house of the known and the real into those enchanted lands of incredible adventure and infinite possibilities which dreams open up to us, and which things like deep

woods, fantastic urban towers, and flaming sunsets momentarily suggest. These persons include great authors as well as insignificant amateurs like myself—Dunsany, Poe, Arthur Machen, M. R. James, Algernon Blackwood, and Walter de la Mare being typical masters in this field.

As to how I write a story—there is no one way. Each one of my tales has a different history. Once or twice I have literally written out a dream; but usually I start with a mood or idea or image which I wish to express, and revolve it in my mind until I can think of a good way of embodying it in some chain of dramatic occurrences capable of being recorded in concrete terms. I tend to run through a mental list of the basic conditions or situations best adapted to such a mood or idea or image, and then begin to speculate on logical and naturally motivated explanations of the given mood or idea or image in terms of the basic condition or situation chosen.

The actual process of writing is of course as varied as the choice of theme and initial conception; but if the history of all my tales were analysed, it is just possible that the following set of rules might be deduced from the average procedure:

(1) Prepare a synopsis or scenario of events in the order of their absolute occurrence—not the order of their narration. Describe with enough fulness to cover all vital points and motivate all incidents planned. Details, comments, and estimates of consequences are sometimes desirable in this temporary framework.

(2) Prepare a second synopsis or scenario of events—this one in order of narration (not actual occurrence), with ample fulness and detail, and with notes as to changing perspective, stresses, and climax. Change the original synopsis to fit if such a change will increase the dramatic force or general effectiveness of the story. Interpolate or delete incidents at will—never being bound by the original conception even if the ultimate result be a tale wholly different from that first planned. Let additions and alterations be made whenever suggested by anything in the formulating process.

(3) Write out the story—rapidly, fluently, and not too critically—following the second or

narrative-order synopsis. Change incidents and plot whenever the developing process seems to suggest such change, never being bound by any previous design. If the development suddenly reveals new opportunities for dramatic effect or vivid storytelling, add whatever is thought advantageous—going back and reconciling the early parts to the new plan. Insert and delete whole sections if necessary or desirable, trying different beginnings and endings until the best arrangement is found. But be sure that all references throughout the story are thoroughly reconciled with the final design. Remove all possible superfluities—words, sentences, paragraphs, or whole episodes or elements—observing the usual precautions about the reconciling of all references.

(4) Revise the entire text, paying attention to vocabulary, syntax, rhythm of prose, proportioning of parts, niceties of tone, grace and convincingness or transitions (scene to scene, slow and detailed action to rapid and sketchy time-covering action and vice versa… etc., etc., etc.), effectiveness of beginning, ending, climaxes, etc., dramatic suspense and interest, plausibility and atmosphere, and various other elements.

(5) Prepare a neatly typed copy—not hesitating to add final revisory touches where they seem in order.

The first of these stages is often purely a mental one—a set of conditions and happenings being worked out in my head, and never set down until I am ready to prepare a detailed synopsis of events in order of narration. Then, too, I sometimes begin even the actual writing before I know how I shall develop the idea—this beginning forming a problem to be motivated and exploited.

There are, I think, four distinct types of weird story; one expressing a mood or feeling, another expressing a pictorial conception, a third expressing a general situation, condition, legend, or intellectual conception, and a fourth explaining a definite tableau or specific dramatic situation or climax. In another way, weird tales may be grouped into two rough categories—those in which the marvel or horror concerns some condition or phenomenon, and those in which it concerns some action

of persons in connexion with a bizarre condition or phenomenon.

Each weird story—to speak more particularly of the horror type—seems to involve five definite elements: (a) some basic, underlying horror or abnormality—condition, entity, etc.—, (b) the general effects or bearings of the horror, (c) the mode of manifestation—object embodying the horror and phenomena observed—, (d) the types of fear-reaction pertaining to the horror, and (e) the specific effects of the horror in relation to the given set of conditions.

In writing a weird story I always try very carefully to achieve the right mood and atmosphere, and place the emphasis where it belongs. One cannot, except in immature pulp charlatan–fiction, present an account of impossible, improbable, or inconceivable phenomena as a commonplace narrative of objective acts and conventional emotions. Inconceivable events and conditions have a special handicap to overcome, and this can be accomplished only through the maintenance of a careful realism in every phase of the story except that touching on the one given marvel. This marvel must be treated very impressively and deliberately—with a careful emotional "build-up"—else it will seem flat and unconvincing. Being the principal thing in the story, its mere existence should overshadow the characters and events. But the characters and events must be consistent and natural except where they touch the single marvel. In relation to the central wonder, the characters should shew the same overwhelming emotion which similar characters would shew toward such a wonder in real life. Never have a wonder taken for granted. Even when the characters are supposed to be accustomed to the wonder I try to weave an air of awe and impressiveness corresponding to what the reader should feel. A casual style ruins any serious fantasy.

Atmosphere, not action, is the great desideratum of weird fiction. Indeed, all that a wonder story can ever be is a vivid picture of a certain type of human mood. The moment it tries to be anything else it becomes cheap, puerile, and unconvincing. Prime emphasis should be given to subtle suggestion—imperceptible hints and touches of selective associative detail which express shadings of moods and

build up a vague illusion of the strange reality of the unreal. Avoid bald catalogues of incredible happenings which can have no substance or meaning apart from a sustaining cloud of colour and symbolism.

These are the rules or standards which I have followed—consciously or unconsciously—ever since I first attempted the serious writing of fantasy. That my results are successful may well be disputed—but I feel at least sure that, had I ignored the considerations mentioned in the last few paragraphs, they would have been much worse than they are.

Excerpt from "Supernatural Horror in Literature"

by H.P. Lovecraft

Chapter I

Introduction

The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown. These facts few psychologists will dispute, and their admitted truth must establish for all time the genuineness and dignity of the weirdly horrible tale as a literary form. Against it are discharged all the shafts of a materialistic sophistication which clings to frequently felt emotions and external events, and of a naively insipid idealism which deprecates the aesthetic motive and calls for a didactic literature to uplift the reader toward a suitable degree of smirking optimism. But in spite of all this opposition the weird tale has survived, developed, and attained remarkable heights of perfection; founded as it is on a profound and elementary principle whose appeal, if not always universal, must necessarily be poignant and permanent to minds of the requisite sensitiveness.

The appeal of the spectrally macabre is generally narrow because it demands from the reader a certain degree of imagination and a capacity for detachment from every-day life. Relatively few are free enough from the spell of the daily routine to respond to rappings from outside, and tales of ordinary feelings and events, or of common sentimental distortions of such feelings and events, will always take first place in the taste of the majority; rightly, perhaps, since of course these ordinary matters make up the greater part of human experience. But the sensitive are always with us, and sometimes a curious streak of fancy invades an obscure corner of the very hardest head; so that no amount of rationalisation, reform, or Freudian analysis can quite annul the thrill of the chimney-corner whisper or the lonely wood. There is here involved a psychological pattern or tradition as real and as deeply grounded in mental experience as any other pattern or tradition of mankind; coeval with the religious feeling and closely related to many aspects of it, and too much a part of our inmost biological

heritage to lose keen potency over a very important, though not numerically great, minority of our species.

Man's first instincts and emotions formed his response to the environment in which he found himself. Definite feelings based on pleasure and pain grew up around the phenomena whose causes and effects he understood, whilst around those which he did not understand—and the universe teemed with them in the early days—were naturally woven such personifications, marvellous interpretations, and sensations of awe and fear as would be hit upon by a race having few and simple ideas and limited experience. The unknown, being likewise the unpredictable, became for our primitive forefathers a terrible and omnipotent source of boons and calamities visited upon mankind for cryptic and wholly extra-terrestrial reasons, and thus clearly belonging to spheres of existence whereof we know nothing and wherein we have no part. The phenomenon of dreaming likewise helped to build up the notion of an unreal or spiritual world; and in general, all the conditions of savage dawn-life so strongly conduced toward a feeling of the supernatural, that we need not wonder at the thoroughness with which man's very hereditary essence has become saturated with religion and superstition. That saturation must, as a matter of plain scientific fact, be regarded as virtually permanent so far as the subconscious mind and inner instincts are concerned; for though the area of the unknown has been steadily contracting for thousands of years, an infinite reservoir of mystery still engulfs most of the outer cosmos, whilst a vast residuum of powerful inherited associations clings around all the objects and processes that were once mysterious, however well they may now be explained. And more than this, there is an actual physiological fixation of the old instincts in our nervous tissue, which would make them obscurely operative even were the conscious mind to be purged of all sources of wonder.

Because we remember pain and the menace of death more vividly than pleasure, and because our feelings toward the beneficent aspects of the unknown have from the first been captured and formalised by conventional religious rituals, it has fallen to the lot of the darker and more maleficent side of cosmic mystery to figure chiefly in our popular supernatural folklore. This tendency, too, is

naturally enhanced by the fact that uncertainty and danger are always closely allied; thus making any kind of an unknown world a world of peril and evil possibilities. When to this sense of fear and evil the inevitable fascination of wonder and curiosity is superadded, there is born a composite body of keen emotion and imaginative provocation whose vitality must of necessity endure as long as the human race itself. Children will always be afraid of the dark, and men with minds sensitive to hereditary impulse will always tremble at the thought of the hidden and fathomless worlds of strange life which may pulsate in the gulfs beyond the stars, or press hideously upon our own globe in unholy dimensions which only the dead and the moonstruck can glimpse.

With this foundation, no one need wonder at the existence of a literature of cosmic fear. It has always existed, and always will exist; and no better evidence of its tenacious vigour can be cited than the impulse which now and then drives writers of totally opposite leanings to try their hands at it in isolated tales, as if to discharge from their minds certain phantasmal shapes which would otherwise haunt them. Thus Dickens wrote several eerie narratives; Browning, the hideous poem “Childe Roland”; Henry James, The Turn of the Screw; Dr. Holmes, the subtle novel Elsie Venner; F. Marion Crawford, “The Upper Berth” and a number of other examples; Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, social worker, “The Yellow Wall Paper”; whilst the humourist W. W. Jacobs produced that able melodramatic bit called “The Monkey’s Paw”.

This type of fear-literature must not be confounded with a type externally similar but psychologically widely different; the literature of mere physical fear and the mundanely gruesome. Such writing, to be sure, has its place, as has the conventional or even whimsical or humorous ghost story where formalism or the author’s knowing wink removes the true sense of the morbidly unnatural; but these things are not the literature of cosmic fear in its purest sense. The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that

most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space.

Naturally we cannot expect all weird tales to conform absolutely to any theoretical model. Creative minds are uneven, and the best of fabrics have their dull spots. Moreover, much of the choicest weird work is unconscious; appearing in memorable fragments scattered through material whose massed effect may be of a very different cast. Atmosphere is the all-important thing, for the final criterion of authenticity is not the dovetailing of a plot but the creation of a given sensation. We may say, as a general thing, that a weird story whose intent is to teach or produce a social effect, or one in which the horrors are finally explained away by natural means, is not a genuine tale of cosmic fear; but it remains a fact that such narratives often possess, in isolated sections, atmospheric touches which fulfil every condition of true supernatural horror-literature. Therefore we must judge a weird tale not by the author's intent, or by the mere mechanics of the plot; but by the emotional level which it attains at its least mundane point. If the proper sensations are excited, such a "high spot" must be admitted on its own merits as weird literature, no matter how prosaically it is later dragged down. The one test of the really weird is simply this—whether or not there be excited in the reader a profound sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers; a subtle attitude of awed listening, as if for the beating of black wings or the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe's utmost rim. And of course, the more completely and unifiedly a story conveys this atmosphere, the better it is as a work of art in the given medium.

Excerpt from The Dweller in the Darkness

by August Derleth

III

The occurrences of that first night more than anything else decided our direction on the following day. For, realizing that we were too ill-informed to cope with any understanding with what was taking place, Laird set the dictaphone for that second night, and we started out for Wausau and Professor Partier, planning to return on the following day. With forethought, Laird carried with him our copy of the notes Gardner had left, skeletal as they were.

Professor Partier, at first reluctant to see us, admitted us finally to his study in the heart of the Wisconsin city, and cleared books and papers from two chairs so that we could sit down. Though he had the appearance of an old man, wore a long white beard, and a fringe of white hair straggled from under his black skullcap, he was as agile as a young man; he was thin, his fingers were bony, his face gaunt, with deep black eyes, and his features were set in an expression that was one of profound cynicism, disdainful, almost contemptuous, and he made no effort to make us comfortable, beyond providing places for us to sit. He recognized Laird as Professor Gardner's secretary, said brusquely that he was a busy man preparing what would doubtless be his last book for his publishers, and he would be obliged to us if we would state the object of our visit as concisely as possible.

"What do you know of Cthulhu?" asked Laird bluntly.

The professor's reaction was astonishing. From an old man whose entire attitude had been one of superiority and aloof disdain, he became instantly wary and alert; with exaggerated care he put down the pencil he had been holding, his eyes never once left Laird's face, and he leaned forward a little over his desk.

"So," he said, "you come to me." He laughed then, a laugh which was like the cackling of some centenarian. "You come to me to ask about Cthulhu. Why?"

Laird explained curtly that we were bent upon discovering what had happened to Professor Gardner. He told as much as he thought necessary, while the old man closed his eyes, picked up his pencil once more, and tapping gently with it, listened with marked care, prompting Laird from time to time. When he had finished, Professor Partier opened his eyes slowly and looked from one to the other of us with an expression that was not unlike one of pity mixed with pain.

"So he mentioned me, did he? But I had no contact with him other than one telephone call." He pursed his lips. "He had more reference to an earlier controversy than to his discoveries at Rick's Lake. I would like now to give you a little advice."

"That's what we came for."

"Go away from that place, and forget all about it."

Laird shook his head in determination.

Partier estimated him, his dark eyes challenging his decision; but Laird did not falter. He had embarked upon this venture, and he meant to see it through.

"These are not forces with which common men have been accustomed to deal," said the old man then. "We are frankly not equipped to do so." He began then, without other preamble, to talk of matters so far removed from the mundane as to be almost beyond conception. Indeed, it was some time before I began to comprehend what he was hinting at, for his concept was so broad and breathtaking that it was difficult for anyone accustomed to so prosaic an existence as mine to grasp. Perhaps it was because Partier began obliquely by suggesting that it was not Cthulhu or his minions who haunted Rick's Lake, but clearly another; the existence of the slab and what was carved upon it clearly indicated the nature of the being who dwelled there from time to time. Professor Gardner had in final analysis got on to the right path, despite thinking that Partier did not believe it. Who was the Blind, Faceless One but Nyarlathotep? Certainly not Shub-Niggurath, the Black Goat of a Thousand Young.

Here Laird interrupted him to press for something more understandable, and then at last, realizing that we knew nothing, the professor went on, still in that vaguely irritable oblique manner, to

expound mythology—a mythology of pre-human life not only on the earth, but on the stars of all the universe. “We know nothing,” he repeated from time to time. “We know nothing at all. But there are certain signs, certain shunned places. Rick’s Lake is one of them.” He spoke of beings whose very names were awesome—of the Elder Gods who live on Betelgeuse, remote in time and space, who had cast out into space the Great Old Ones, led by Azathoth and Yog-Sothoth, and numbering among them the primal spawn of the amphibious Cthulhu, the bat-like followers of Hastur the Unspeakable, of Lloigor, Zhar, and Ithaqua, who walked the winds and interstellar space, the earth beings, Nyarlathotep and Shub-Niggurath—the evil beings who sought always to triumph once more over the Elder Gods, who had shut them out or imprisoned them—as Cthulhu long ago slept in the ocean realm of R’lyeh, as Hastur was imprisoned upon a black star near Aldebaran in the Hyades. Long before human beings walked the earth, the conflict between the Elder Gods and the Great Old Ones had taken place; and from time to time the Old Ones had made a resurgence toward power, sometimes to be stopped by direct interference by the Elder Gods, but more often by the agency of human or non-human beings serving to bring about a conflict among the beings of the elements, for, as Gardner’s notes indicated, the evil Old Ones were elemental forces. And every time there had been a resurgence, the mark of it had been left deep upon man’s memory—though every attempt was made to eliminate the evidence and quiet survivors.

“What happened at Innsmouth, Massachusetts, for instance?” he asked tensely. “What took place at Dunwich? In the wilds of Vermont? At the old Tuttle house on the Aylesbury pike? What of the mysterious cult of Cthulhu, and the utterly strange voyage of exploration to the Mountains of Madness? What beings dwelt on the hidden and shunned Plateau of Leng? And what of Kadath in the Cold Waste? Lovecraft knew! Gardner and many another have sought to discover those secrets, to link the incredible happenings which have taken place here and there on the face of the planet—but it is not desired by the Old Ones that mere man shall know too much. Be warned!”

He took up Gardner’s notes without giving either of us a chance to say anything, and studied

them, putting on a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles which made him look more ancient than ever, and going on talking, more to himself than to us, saying that it was held that the Old Ones had achieved a higher degree of development in some aspects of science than was hitherto believed possible, but that, of course, nothing was known. The way in which he consistently emphasized this indicated very clearly that only a fool or an idiot would disbelieve, proof or no proof. But in the next sentence, he admitted that there was certain proof—the revolting and bestial plaque bearing a representation of a hellish monstrosity walking on the winds above the earth found in the hand of Josiah Alwyn when his body was discovered on a small Pacific island months after his incredible disappearance from his home in Wisconsin; the drawings made by Professor Gardner—and, even more than anything else, that curious slab of carven stones in the forest at Rick's Lake.

[...]

Appendix B: Historical Context

Letter from Robert E. Howard to H.P. Lovecraft

July, 1933

Dear Mr. Lovecraft,

I am sending on to you the enclosed manuscript, according to instructions. I read it the same day I received it, and I hardly know how to express my admiration for the splendid work you and Mr. Price have accomplished. I was most intrigued by the personalities of "Etienne de Marigny" and "Ward Phillips"! And hope these fine characters will be used again.

My sensations while reading this story are rather difficult to describe. The effect of reality was remarkable. Some of the speculations were over my head, at the first reading--not from any lack of clarity, but simply because of their cosmic depth.

The Dhole-haunted planet of Yaddith conjures up tantalizing vistas of surmise, and I hope you will use it in future stories. I hope, too, that you'll decide to get poor Randolph Carter out of his frightful predicament. I remember "The Silver Key"--yet remember is hardly the word to use. I have constantly referred to that story in my meditations ever since I read it, years ago--have probably thought of it more than any other story that ever appeared in Weird Tales. There was something about it that struck deep. I read it aloud to Tevis Clyde Smith, and he agreed with me as to its cosmic depth.

I should be answering herewith your recent--and as always, interesting letter; but I'm swamped with work just now. However, I hope to answer it in full soon. Our points of disagreement are not so radical as I had previously thought.

Thanks for the picture folder, and please present my best wishes to Mr. Long. I here enclose a few snaps taken at old Fort McKavett, which lies in Menard County, 155 miles southwest of here, three miles from the head of the San Saba River, mentioned in tale and fable, and in connection with the Lost

Bowie Mine, mentioned in a previous letter. McKavett is fascinating--a village of ruins and semiruins, people living in the old unruined barracks and soldier's quarters, among the remnants of other buildings which have not stood the test of time. I was in too big a hurry to get much of its history, or many pictures, but I hope to return there some day for more data. The fort was established in 1871 by the Federal government which was foolish enough to station negro troops there; their arrogance led to a fierce and bloody war between the fort and the inhabitants of the country--a wild, hilly, rocky, thickly timbered expanse--in which the natives had the best of it, and in 1883 the fort was definitely abandoned. Don't bother to return these snaps; I have duplicates of them.

Cordially,

Robert E. Howard

Letter from H.P. Lovecraft to Farnsworth Wright (5 July 1927)

10 Barnes St.

Providence, R. I.

July 5, 1927

My dear Mr. Wright:–

In accordance with your suggestion I am re-submitting *The Call of Cthulhu,* though possibly you will still think it a trifle too bizarre for a clientele who demand their weirdness in name only, and who like to keep both feet pretty solidly on the ground of the known and the familiar. As I said some time ago, I doubt if my work-and especially my later products-would "go" very well with the sort of readers whose reactions are represented in the *Eyrie.* The general trend of the yarns which seem to suit the public is that of essential normality of outlook and simplicity of point of view-with thoroughly conventional human values and motives predominating, and with brisk action of the bestseller type as an indispensable attribute. The weird element in such material does not extend far into the fabric-it is the artificial weirdness of the fireside tale and the Victorian ghost story, and remains external camouflage even in the seemingly wildest of the "interplanetary" concoctions. You can see *this* sort of thing at its best in Seabury Quin and at its worst in the general run of contributors. It is exactly what the majority want-for if they were to see a really weird tale they wouldn't know what it's all about. This is quite obvious from the way they object to the *reprints,* which in many cases have brought them the genuine article.

Now all my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large. To me there is nothing but puerility in a tale in which the human form – and the local human passions and conditions and standards – are depicted as native to other worlds or other universes. To achieve the essence of real

externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all. Only the human scenes and characters must have human qualities. *These* must be handled with unsparing *realism, (not* catch-penny *romanticism)* but when we cross the line to the boundless and hideous unknown – the shadow-haunted *Outside* – we must remember to leave our humanity – and terrestrialism at the threshold.

So much for theory. In practice, I presume that few commonplace readers would have any use for a story written on these psychological principles. They want their conventional best-seller values and motives kept paramount throughout the abysses of apocalyptic vision and extra-Einsteinian chaos, and would not deem an "interplanetary" tale in the least interesting if it did not have its Martian (or Jovian or Venerian or Saturnian) heroine fall in love with the young voyager from Earth and thereby incur the jealousy of the inevitable Prince Kongros (or Zeelar or Hoshkosh or Norkog) who at once proceeds *to* usurp the throne etc.; or if it did not have its Martian (or etc.) nomenclature follow a closely terrestrial pattern, with an indo-Germanic *'-a'* name for the Princess and something disagreeable and Semitic for the villain. Now I couldn't grind out that sort of junk if my life depended on it. If I were writing an "interplanetary" tale it would deal with beings organised very differently from mundane mammalia, and obeying motives wholly alien to anythmg we know upon Earth-the exact degree of alienage depending, of course, on the scene of the tale; whether laid in the solar system, the visible galactic universe outside the solar system, or the *utterly unplumbed* gulfs still farther out – the nameless vortices of never-dreamed-of strangeness, where form and symmetry, light and heat, even matter and energy themselves, may be unthinkably metamorphosed or totally wanting. I have merely got at the edge of this in Cthulhu, where I have been careful to avoid terrestrialism in the few linguistic and nomenclatural specimens from Outside which I present. All very well – but will the readers stand for it? That's all they're likely to get from me in the future-except when I deal with definitely terrestrial

scenes – and I am the last one to urge the acceptance of material of doubtful value to the magazine's particular purpose. Even when I deal with the mundanely weird, moreover, I shan't be likely to stress the popular artificial values and emotions of cheap fiction.

However – you can best judge this matter from some recent samples of my scribbling; wherefore I'll enclose, purely for your personal perusal, (although gawd knows you can print 'em if you like, since nobody else is likely to do so!) two characteristic neo-Lovecraftian outbursts – *The Silver Key* and *The Strange High House in the Mist.* I fancy you won't find much of professional interest in 'em – so that you may be sure your readers aren't missing much! When I do write any more things with a fairly earthly "slant", I'll certainly send them along, but my winter fiction crop consisted only of two novelettes too long for any but serial use, (and I haven't had the energy to type them yet, either!) whilst this spring and summer I've been *too* busy with revisory and kindred activities to write more than one tale – which, oddly enough, was accepted at once by *Amazing Stories* despite its full possession of the non-terrestrial qualities so characteristic of my recent work. Toward autumn I hope to arrange for some writing leisure, and shall then 'get off my chest' several plots which have been insistently clamouring for expression lately. Among these are at least two which I shall try on you – though they won't seem much like the recent *Weird Tales* type .....

I remain-most sincerely yrs.

H.P. Lovecraft.

Letter from H.P. Lovecraft to Farnsworth Wright (16 July 1927)

10 Barnes St.

Providence, R. I.

July 16, 1927

My dear Mr. Wright:–

I am very glad to hear that you have found *Cthulhu* available for use and assure you that $165.00 is entirely adequate remuneration . I hope that Price will like *The Strange High Home,* and would certainly be surprised and pleased if it found its way to ultimate publication! A third pleasure is given me by the news of *Red Hook's* anthological reprinting; and I'd like to see the book if you can get me a copy later on. I can most emphatically and advantageously use any royalties, be they ever so humble, which may chance to trickle in from Mr. Lovell. …

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yrs.

H.P. L.

Letter from H.P. Lovecraft to Farnsworth Wright (8 Nov 1928)

10 Barnes St.

Providence, R. I.

Nov. 8, 1928

My dear Wright:–

I hate to bother you, but I though I'd ask what you think of the enclosed – which came in the envelope you have just forwarded to me. I don't believe I would ever be likely to achieve a more profitable re-sale of *Cthulhu* so would be inclined to accept Mr. Harre's offer but for the fact that I recall your mentioning *Cthulhu* as one of the things you might like to reprint yourself some time in a collection of my stuff. Of course, that plan may have long been abandoned-it must have been a year or more ago that it was broached – but I thought I ought to ask you nevertheless before disposing of *Cthulhu* otherwise. If you *do* want it eventually, .r think I'll suggest to Harre' that he use my *Colour Out of Space* – which, by the way, got a three-star or Roll of Honour classification in O'Brien's annual *Transcript* article last month. I'm rather interested in the idea of a new anthology, and hope that some of my popularly unknown favourites will be included. In answering Mr. Harre' I am suggesting that he use Shiel's *Ho11se of Sormds* and Robert W. Chambers' *Yellow Sign* and *Harbo11r-Master.* '

With best wishes, and hoping to hear soon about Cthulhu, I

remain Yr. most oblig' d and obt.

H. P. L.

Appendix C: Critical Sources

Excerpt from A Dreamer and a Visionary: H.P. Lovecraft in his Time

by S.T. Joshi

[...]

First on the agenda is 'The Call of Cthulhu', written probably in August or September. This story had, as noted previously, been plotted a full year earlier, on 12–13 August 1925. The plot of this well-known tale does not need elaborate description. The narrator, Francis Wayland Thurston, tells of the peculiar facts he has learned,

both from the papers of his recently deceased grand-uncle, George Gammell Angell, and from personal investigation. The upshot of his investigations is the revelation that an awesome cosmic entity, Cthulhu, had come from the stars in the dawn of time and established a stone city, R'lyeh, which then sank into the Pacific

Ocean. In early March 1925, the city rose from the waters as the result of an earthquake, and Cthulhu momentarily emerges; but, presumably because the stars are not 'ready', the city sinks again, returning Cthulhu to the bottom of the ocean. But the mere existence of this titanic entity is an unending source of profound unease to Thurston because it shows how tenuous is mankind's vaunted supremacy upon this planet.

It is difficult to convey by this bald summary the rich texture of this substantial work: its implications of cosmic menace, its insidiously gradual climax, its complexity of structure and multitude of narrative voices, and the absolute perfection of its style—sober and clinical at the outset, but reaching at the end heights of prose-poetic horror that attain an almost epic grandeur.

The origin of the tale goes back even beyond the evidently detailed plot-synopsis of 1925. Its

kernel is recorded in an entry in his commonplace book (no. 25) that must date to 1920, about a man visiting a museum of antiquities with a statue he has just made. This is a fairly literal encapsulation of a dream Lovecraft had in early 1920, which he describes at length in two letters of the period. The dominant literary influence on the tale is Guy de Maupassant's 'The Horla'. In 'Supernatural Horror in Literature' Lovecraft writes that it 'relat[es] the advent to France of an invisible being who lives on water and milk, sways the minds of others, and seems to be the vanguard of a horde of extra-terrestrial organisms arrived on earth to subjugate and overwhelm mankind, this tense narrative is perhaps without a peer in its particular department. Cthulhu is not, of course, invisible, but the rest of the description tallies uncannily with the events of the story. Nevertheless, it must frankly be admitted that Lovecraft himself handles the theme with vastly greater subtlety and richness than Maupassant. There may also be a Machen influence; especially relevant is 'Novel of the Black Seal', where Professor Gregg, like Thurston, pieces together disparate bits of information that by themselves reveal little but, when taken together, suggest an appalling horror awaiting the human race.

Many of the locales in Providence are real, notably the Fleur-de-Lys building at 7 Thomas Street, where the artist Wilcox (who fashioned a sculpture of Cthulhu after dreaming about him) resides. The earthquake cited in the story is also a real event. Steven J. Mariconda, who has written exhaustively on the genesis of the tale, notes: 'In New York, lamps fell from tables and mirrors from walls; walls themselves cracked, and windows shattered; people fled into the street.'17 Interestingly, the celebrated underwater city of R'lyeh, brought up by this earthquake, was first coined by Lovecraft as L'yeh.

The true importance of 'The Call of Cthulhu', however, lies not in its incorporation of autobiographical details nor even in its intrinsic excellence, but in its being the first significant contribution to what came to be called the 'Cthulhu Mythos'. This tale contains nearly all the elements that would be utilized in subsequent 'Cthulhu Mythos' fiction by Lovecraft and others. There is, to be

sure, something going on in many of the tales of Lovecraft's last decade of writing: they are frequently interrelated by a complex series of cross-references to a constantly evolving body of imagined myth, and many of them build upon features—superficial or profound as the case may be—in previous tales. But certain basic points can now be made, although even some of these are not without controversy: first, Lovecraft himself did not coin the term 'Cthulhu Mythos'; second, Lovecraft felt that *all* his tales embodied his basic philosophical principles; third, the mythos, if it can be said to be anything, is not the tales themselves nor even the philosophy behind the tales, but a series of *plot devices* utilized to convey that philosophy. Let us study each of these points further.

[...]

Excerpt from H.P. Lovecraft in Popular Culture

by Don G. Smith

The Cthulhu Mythos

As noted in the preface, many of Lovecraft's stories are considered to compose what critics call the "Cthulhu Mythos." The best relatively short explanation of this literary phenomenon is provided by Chris Jarocha-Ernst in introducing his "Bibliography of the Cthulhu Mythos":

> The Cthulhu Mythos is a name given to the collected fiction, both prose and poetry, about a set of alien beings, invented by H.P. Lovecraft, his friends, and his admirers. It is what is today termed a "shared world": a number of writers use the same settings, characters, objects, and concepts in otherwise unrelated stories (i.e., it's not necessarily a series, though some series have been set in the Mythos). Most often, these are horror stories, though the Mythos does include science fiction, high fantasy, sword-and-sorcery, and, in at least one case, mainstream fiction.
>
> In the world of the Cthulhu Mythos, alien beings known to us only as the Great Old Ones came to this planet eons ago and ruled. Through unknowable events (some claim a cosmic war with opposing entities, some merely a time of rest), these beings lost their hold and are now either asleep, somehow restricted to certain areas, or located elsewhere in time and space. Here on Earth, primal memories of these beings gave birth to many of humanity's diverse mythologies, and the Great Old Ones were revered as gods. As always, there were those who would exchange their very souls for a taste of terrestrial power, and who

> dared to record their rites in blasphemous books, and so the worship of the Great Old Ones began and continues in secrecy to this day. Occasionally, an innocent learns the horrendous truths behind the sheer veil of reality and glimpses the ultratelluric chasms that exist, unknown to most, beneath our mundane existence. The Cthulhu Mythos stories chronicle the adventures of such unfortunates, frequently in as high-blown a style as the later sentences of this paragraph are in.*

Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos stories obviously reflect the author's own materialistic world view that human beings occupy no special place in the universe. At times, those who worship beings from another world or dimension side against humanity, and the outcome is unclear. This distrust of "the other" runs through Lovecraft's fiction and reflects his own perspective on immigration and the destruction of Western civilization. It would be difficult, even if possible, to read every Cthulhu Mythos story ever written. Chris Jarocha-Ernst's "Bibliography of the Cthulhu Mythos" lists about 1,000 stories. The focus of this book is on H.P. Lovecraft in popular culture, and only peripherally on other writers who were influenced by Lovecraft. Those interested in the broader Cthulhu Mythos perspective may find Jarocha-Ernst's website a good starting point.

In *Lovecraft: A Look Behind the Cthulhu Mythos* (1972), Lin Carter provides a "complete bibliography" up to the publication date. That bibliography is included here with the addition of the place and date the stories were published, followed by a brief synopsis. Comments are added only for the pieces the author has read. Annotations of Lovecraft's own stories appeareg in Part One, and so are not repeated here. Comments are added, however, on a few other Mythos writings by Lovecraft that are not stories. Happy hunting, you Mythos maniacs!

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* Jarocha-Ernst, Chris. *Klarkash- Ton and the Cthulhu Mythos.* 1996. The Eldritch Dark. 2005 <www.eldritchdark.com/bio/cas_and_the_cthulhu_rnythos.htrnl.

Excerpt from Lovecraft: A Study in the Fantastic

by Maurice Lévy

translated by S.T. Joshi

7

CTHULHU

> So from the wells of night to the gulfs of space, and from the gulfs of space to the wells of night, ever the praises of Great Cthulhu, of Tsathoggua, and of Him Who is not to be Named.
>
> –"The Whisperer in Darkness"

At the risk of shocking or deceiving we would like here to repeat, before going any further in our analysis, how Lovecraft's tales seem to us distinct from science fiction. The cosmic dimension of the settings, the "entities" from Outside, and the scientific experiments were for Lovecraft a means, not an end: the oftentimes feeble pretext for a reverie where space and time are arranged very differently. Science fiction is basically a forward-looking genre, preoccupied with the future, where anguish is projected in forms conceived from the data of the then current science. In a way it is a dream that outruns science and, from embryonic elements, invents what scholars and technologists establish or rigorously create later. In a science fiction tale the imaginary always runs the risk of descending to the real.

Lovecraft's art, however, is essentially regressive, oriented toward a fabulous past and rooted in myth. In this it is an authentically fantastic art, forever belonging to the realm of chimeras and the unverifiable. We might even be tempted to say that the fantastic is, on the axis of the imagination, rigorously opposed to science fiction.

In science fiction tales the cosmos is a virgin space, a space to be conquered, a place of sublimation; time is time to come. In Lovecraft, space is perceived as a void, a depth; time, as the

mythical time of beginnings. And in the depths of time, at the other end of the cosmos, horror lurks. It is not man who will recklessly explore new worlds with prodigious machines; it is the Unknown, which, under diverse yet always unholy forms, breaks out on our planet.

The initiative is not on the side of the human race, which instead serves as the field of observation and ... experimentation for fabulously different beings who are phenomenally more advanced scientifically and technologically than man. In Lovecraft, knowledge and technical efficiency are not found at the end of human evolution, but at the beginning. For him, the notion of progress, in the modern sense of the term, is devoid of meaning. On the contrary, the history of the civilizations that from time immemorial have followed one another on our planet has been one of a slow and irreversible decadence. Contemporary man is not defined by his future conquests of space or by his ever growing mastery of natural phenomena, but as one who has lost what the Great Old Ones knew before him. Coming from deep regions of the ether, these primordial beings established themselves on the earth millions of years before man ever appeared.

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