A Fictitious Universe of the Cthulhu Mythos

Diplomová práce

Vedoucí diplomové práce:
Alexandra Hubáčková, M.A., Ph.D.
PhDr. Světlana Obenausová, MLitt, Ph.D.

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Introduction

The aim of the diploma project is to examine Howard Phillips Lovecraft’s fiction and introduce some aspects of it to readers. The study focuses on the shared universe he created in his most influential works. As H. P. Lovecraft’s work is very extensive and varied to be examined as one piece, the study concentrates on a structure called the Cthulhu Mythos. The objective is to introduce stories whose fictitious aspects developed into the Cthulhu Mythos and examine their common features which make them regarded as parts of the cycle, considering their interconnection, use and differences.

Before I start to analyse H. P. Lovecraft’s work I would like to describe his life in short to point out important events that influenced his literary work. This brief biography is the first part of my diploma project and in the second one I want to concentrate on the Cthulhu Mythos.

I chose this topic for my diploma project because I had known the stories by H. P. Lovecraft very well and had found the fictitious world formed by stories overlapping each other a most interesting subject to work up in a study. I understand it as an appropriate way to demonstrate what made him exceptional among other authors of weird fiction as well as to show which figures of literature shaped his way of writing; in terms of a content and form as well.
1 Lovecraft: A Biography

Readers who have encountered books by H. P. Lovecraft recognize this writer as an author of mysterious stories filled up with entities coming from the dark infinite space that surrounds us without our knowing of it. Stories full of creatures that are immensely more powerful in comparison with the abilities of the humankind living on a little spec, which we call the Earth, flying through an immeasurable vastness of cosmos. Narratives that are, despite their date of origin, still able to evoke that certain feeling of fear and uncertainty that comes to readers when touching a menacing emptiness behind the edge of the world we live in.

An influential writer of macabre stories he certainly was. But can Lovecraft and his personality be defined by the work he created? It is essential for us to know the life he led and turning points that changed a course of it if we want to understand the background which Lovecraft’s literary fictitious world is built on.

1.1 Childhood

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born on 20 August 1890 in Providence, which was the biggest city of Rhode Island. In his letters he often emphasized his notable ancestry and T. S. Joshi states that he could trace it almost to the Mayflower (2007). This theory is nonetheless described by Lévy rather as a manifestation of Lovecraft’s imagination and craving for ancestral purity than an unquestionable fact. He points out that dates and other details often differ in Lovecraft’s letters (1998 p. 18).

Lovecraft spent a great part of childhood in a real luxurious mansion of his wealthy maternal grandfather, Whipple Van Buren
Phillips, in his native town where Lovecraft and his mother Susie moved from Auburndale after his father’s (Winfield Lovecraft) death. Whipple Van Buren Phillips was a wealthy and cultivated man who had an important role in Lovecraft’s life as he replaced his father. He traveled a lot and gladly stirred Lovecraft’s imagination by stories of his journeys. Lovecraft did not have a chance to get to know his father and spoke very little of him. Later in a letter he wrote that he had suffered from paralysis which had seized him in 1893 and that he had spent next five years in a hospital, unconscious (Lévy, 1998 p. 18).

Yet the reason of Winfield’s death was not paresis, as his son thought (or as he must have been told), but as Joshi states, another serious disease: syphilis (2001 p. 15). Lovecraft must not have been told any information about the nature of his father’s death. He was only two years old when Winfield Lovecraft was taken to hospital where he later died (Joshi, 2001 p. 15).

The person stricken the most by an agonizing course of Winfield’s disease was Susie Lovecraft. The tragedy and the circumstances she was aware of (the character of the infection) caused her a trauma which she never fully recovered from. Joshi writes that the event could have caused an onset of a psychological disorder that led to her admittance to Butler Hospital twenty six years later (2001 p. 15).

As it was mentioned earlier, after his father’s death Lovecraft came to live with Phillipses and his mother back to Providence. But the effects of absence of father appeared instantly after Winfield was taken to hospital. The situation naturally brought him more strongly under his mother’s influence. Other people that he became very close to were his two aunts, his grandmother Robie, and grandfather Whipple (Joshi, 2001 p. 17).

Lévy in his “Study in the Fantastic” notices that Lovecraft’s mother was disturbed by knowledge of the nature of her husband’s illness and “abusively cherished her son in a possessive way (1998 p. 19).” But Joshi writes
that even before the tragic events Susie’s attitude towards her son’s upbringing was not of the strict ones. A story told by Winfield Townley Scott, a poet and a friend of Lovecraft, depicts Susie simply as an overprotective mother:

“On their summer vacations at Dudley, Massachusetts …, Mrs. Lovecraft refused to eat her dinner in the dining room, not to leave her sleeping son alone for an hour one floor above. When a diminutive teacher-friend, Miss Ella Sweeney, took the rather rangy youngster to walk, holding his hand, she was enjoined by Howard’s mother to stoop a little lest she pull the boy’s arm from its socket. (Joshi, 2001 p. 33)”

Lovecraft himself admitted: “My array of toys, books, and other youthful pleasures was virtually unlimited at this time...” “Whatever he wanted, he seems to have got (Joshi, 2001 p. 33).

Luckily his careful mother was not the only person to have influence on education and development of Lovecraft. Whipple Van Buren Phillips proved to be a perfectly suitable substitution for Lovecraft’s father (Joshi, 2001 p. 17). The staying in grandfather’s mansion was the happiest part of Lovecraft’s life.

...in the house where he was born, where everything was familiar to him, where he had his roots. Later, exiled in New York among hordes of strangers, these images of his “native home” and his sheltered childhood were his only means of defense against madness and suicide. To his inmost self, Providence remained a haven, a place of rest, a dream city to which he could flee from alienating reality (Lévy, 1998 p. 19).

Whipple Van Buren Phillips indeed participated a great deal in this joyful times Lovecraft went through. He wrote letters from his journeys, brought presents and showed Lovecraft pieces of art which he had got on his travels. He even cured Lovecraft of fear of the dark by letting him walk through dark rooms of his mansion at the age of five. And of course, as a
rich man, Whipple provided him and his mother with enough money to live an unstressed almost idyllic life (Joshi, 2001 p. 17).

It is thought that Lovecraft started reading when he was four. Lévy states that he had a capacious family library to use in Whipple’s mansion, which he did a lot because of his poor health making him unable to attend school. Very early he got interested in Grimm, Poe, and even Hawthorne (1998 p. 19). Among his favorite books there were also the “Arabian Nights”. The effect was immediate as Lovecraft fell for stories rich in mysterious places like crypts, tombs, caves, deserted cities and other important features that would later shape the world of his own works (Joshi, 2001 pp. 17-18).

At that time a famous name ‘Abdul Alhazred’ was coined. Without doubt under the impression of tales taking place in those faraway lands the name for the forthcoming character of his many works was born (Joshi, 2001 p. 18).

1.2 Lovecraft, a Nightmarer

Aside from this literary influence, there came another experience that had its share on development of his perception of the world; grandmother’s death in the year 1896. The effect was not caused only by the mere loss of a member of family, because Lovecraft did not have any exceptionally close relationship to his grandmother. He was stricken by a change that the event brought to the atmosphere of the environment he lived in. Lovecraft described it as a shock that the members of family around him never really overcame. Later Lovecraft wrote:

“The black attire of my mother and aunts terrified and repelled me to such an extent that I would surreptitiously pin bits of bright cloth or paper to their
skirts for sheer relief. They had to make a careful survey of their attire before receiving callers or going out! (Joshi, 2001 p. 19)”

The description of those events was made by Lovecraft years after the experience, but though it can sound not really seriously, it is clear that the episode had had a profound impression upon him. The consequences were serious enough:

“... And then it was that my former high spirits received their damper. I began to have nightmares of the most hideous description, peopled with things which I called ‘night-gaunts’ – a compound word of my own coinage. I used to draw them after waking (...). In dreams they were wont to whirl me through space at a sickening rate of speed, the while fretting and impelling me with their detestable tridents.... (Joshi, 2001 p. 19)”

At this point, Joshi uses a term “a nightmarer” for what Lovecraft became after this experience. And he was right, for many of Lovecraft’s future stories would be inspired by his dark dreams¹.

Lovecraft himself claimed that he started to write at the age of six (in the year of his grandmother’s death). His first works were pieces of poetry on the topic of gods and heroes, later inspired by the classical themes of antiquity that survived in a form of ‘The Poem of Ulysses: or, The Odyssey: Written for Young People’. Even if it can be hardly understood as a valuable piece of Lovecraft’s literary work, it was a great example of concision. Twelve-thousand lines of Homer’s poem were reduced to eighty-eight lines. (Joshi, 2001 p. 22).

Lovecraft tended to appreciate works of the eighteenth century, building a curious sympathy for books with the “long s.”² He was keen on

¹For instance, Stories like “The Statement of Randolph Carter” or “The Doom that Came to Sarnath” were told by Lovecraft to be virtual transcriptions of his dark dreams (Lovecraft, 1965 p. 121).

²Long s: a letter which looks like f without the right-hand part of its crossbar. Used in most works printed before about 1800 (Britannica, 2010).
reading all typical prose writers and poets. He was interested more in essayist than early novelists (Joshi, 2007). He also loved Greco-Roman mythology, which easily awakened his imagination: “At an age when others were playing with hoops, he built altars where he offered divers sacrifices to Pan, Apollo, and Minerva (Lévy, 19).”

1.3 First Writing

The first prosaic work of fiction dates to 1897 and it should have been a story of a boy who hears a gathering of subterranean creatures in a cave. But the work did not endure to these days and it is hard to guess the main influence on the topic and the form (Joshi, et al., 2001 p. 132). Joshi attributes it to his reading of the Arabian Nights and to the exceptional relationship with his grandfather Whipple, who was probably the only family member fond of this kind of fiction. Lovecraft later wrote in a letter:

“I never heard oral weird tales except from my grandfather – who, observing my tastes in reading, used to devise all sorts of impromptu original yarns about black woods, unfathomed caves, winged horrors (like the ‘night-gauns’ of my dreams, about which I used to tell him), old witches with sinister cauldrons, and ‘deep, low, moaning sounds’. He obviously drew most of his imagery from the early gothic romances – Radcliffe, Lewis, Maturin, etc. (Joshi, 2001 p. 25).”

But this first attempt came to existence before one of the most important milestones in the evolution of his ‘literary’ life which made him the writer we know; discovery of works by Edgar Allan Poe (Joshi, 2001 p. 25), which he did at age eight. This event gave his writing a crucial impulse (Joshi, 2007).

At this time he also became interested in the sciences; first chemistry, then astronomy. Undoubtedly due to unconditional love of his
mother and her determination to provide him with whatever he needed, a small chemical laboratory was built for young Lovecraft in the cellar, where he performed strange (and sometimes dangerous) experiments (Lévy, 1998 p. 19). Lovecraft’s enthusiasm for sciences resulted in his writing of a number of short chemical tracts and publishing his own “magazine” “The Scientific Gazette” (in March 1899) (Its first issue describes one of the experiments: *There was a great explosion in the Providence Laboratory this afternoon. While experimenting, some potassium blew up causing great damage to everyone*’ (Joshi, 2001 p. 28).

As we mentioned above, he became keen on astronomy as well and later in his life he himself was convinced that astronomy was one of central influences of his early years, especially because it led to his philosophy of cosmicism (Joshi, 2007).

Above-mentioned reading of Poe’s work gave Lovecraft very important impulse to his writing. However, Joshi states that it is difficult to exactly recognize or clearly point out influence of Poe in the first Lovecraft’s stories that survived to these days (The Little Glass Bottle, The Secret Cave, John Loos Adventure, The Mystery of the Grave Yard, etc.). The last of the mentioned stories “The Mystery of the Grave Yard” with subtitle “A Dead Man’s Revenge” and a sub-title “A Detective Story” leads to another influential subject of Lovecraft’s interest of those days; the dime novel 3.

Lovecraft was interested in the best pieces of literature (Greek and Latin literature, Shakespeare, Keats and Shelley, etc.) and the cheapest popular fiction at the same time. However, he always distinguished between good and bad weird tales (Joshi, 2001 p. 27).

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3A type of inexpensive, usually paperback, melodramatic novel of adventure popular in the US roughly between 1860 and 1915; it often featured a western theme (Britannica, 2010).
Despite the fact that he suffered from weak psychical health that caused him his first “near-breakdown”, as he lately called these collapses, during his school years (at Hope High) he did not have any serious problems, and notwithstanding that he was a rather lonely kind of a teenager, soon he made friends with some youngsters of his age. Later he tended to regard this period of his life a nice one.

However, sometimes there was a certain tense between him and teachers. He had several disputes and later gladly described an argument with a ‘fat old lady English teacher’ named Mrs. Blake who accused him of plagiaritorism. She questioned originality of a paper submitted by Lovecraft with an explanation that she had read it in a newspaper. Lovecraft admitted that he had copied the piece of text from a newspaper and gave her a print of a magazine the Pawtuxet Valley Gleaner containing his own article “Can the Moon Be Reached by Man?” (Joshi, 2001 p. 49).

1.4 Whipple Phillips’s Death

During these rather joyful years of his life another tragic moment came suddenly with his grandfather’s passing away. It is important to notice how greatly was Lovecraft’s childhood and subsequently all his life affected by life and, sadly, also by the death of this man.

The death of Whipple Phillips in 1904 had two calamitous effects: it robbed Lovecraft of one of his major early influences (...); moreover, because of the mismanagement of affairs by Phillips's business associates, Phillips's fortune was squandered and the Lovecrafts were forced to move out of their palatial mansion. Lovecraft never recovered from the loss of his birthplace: in the short run it drove him almost to suicide… in the long run it led to a sense of loss and displacement that his early readings only augmented (Joshi, 2007).
As he and his mother Susie lived in a mansion on Whipple’s expenses they had to find a cheaper place to live. They found a little house in the same street as they lived before, but the change of the environment and the loss of his birthplace, to one so endowed with a sense of place, was shattering (Joshi, 2001 p. 47).

After the death of his grandfather, another person from Lovecraft’s family became that sort of father replacement to him as Whipple had been; his uncle Dr Franklin Chase Clark. Being a translator of Homer, Virgil, Lucretius, and Statius into English, Clark exerted great influence on Lovecraft in the area of verse but also of prose. It is not clear whether he somehow had a hand in Lovecraft’s first work that was explicitly racist: “De Triumpho Naturae: The Triumph of Nature over Northern Ignorance” (July 1905). Joshi describes the tract as twenty-four lines paraphrasing of several central arguments taken from a book “The Color Line: A Brief in Behalf of the Unborn”4 (1905) by William Benjamin Smith (2001 p. 55).

It is necessary to point out that H. P. Lovecraft was a racist for all his life and the before-mentioned tract was not in the least the only proof of it. He came from a part of the world where there it was perfectly normal to regard white race superb to others and he and his all family belonged to advocates of extreme right. He even sympathized with early fascism in Europe and admired Hitler and his work “Mein Kampf” (Lévy, 1998 p. 27).

In the age of fifteen he finished his first story that somewhat point us to his later works; “The Beast in the Cave”. It is a story of a man who gets lost in Mammoth Cave and finds a strange creature who eventually turns out to be a man who had lived in the cave for long years (Joshi, 2001

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4 A racist pseudoscientific tract labeled “an ethnological inquiry”. One of the main ideas of the work, well known in after-civil-war American south, is that if science provides a script (race struggle) and religion gives it moral pretext, the sacrifice of the black race is both divine and organic necessity (Bercovitch, 2005 pp. 468-469).
Although this still was not any of his “masterpieces” Lovecraft himself later admitted that it was the first story worth reading he had written (Joshi, 2001 p. 56).

“The Beast in the Cave” is followed by another tale that bears influence of Poe stories: “The Alchemist” (1908). But after some other unfinished works he decided to go a path of a scientist and not a storywriter (2001, p. 58).

At that time his famous philosophy “cosmicism” was born and Lovecraft himself comments his developing attitude towards understanding our existence in collection of essays “A Confession of Unfaith”:

*By my thirteenth birthday I was thoroughly impressed with man’s impermanence and insignificance, and by my seventeenth, about which time I did some particularly detailed writing on the subject, I had formed in all essential particulars my present pessimistic cosmic views. The futility of all existence began to impress and oppress me; and my references to human progress, formerly hopeful, began to decline in enthusiasm* (Joshi, et al., 2001 p. 60).

As he did reasonably well at the High School, it seemed he was inevitably going to become an academian and to deal with the story-writing only as some kind of a hobby. But it did not happened and Joshi suggested that the reason for a crucial change in Lovecraft’s life was his fourth “near-breakdown” (2001, p. 61). This collapse caused that Lovecraft never graduated from the high school and thus he could not attend the university, which he later repented a lot; soon he realized that it would have been wise to get some training in a clerical position that would provide him with an employment of some kind. In his letter to one of his friends he states:

*I made the mistake in youth of not realising that literary endeavour does not always mean an income. I ought to have trained myself for some routine clerical work (like Charles Lamb’s or Hawthorne’s) affording a dependable stipend*
yet leaving my mind free enough for a certain amount of creative activity – but in the absence of immediate need I was too damned a fool to look ahead. I seemed to think that sufficient money for ordinary needs was something which everyone had as a matter of course – and if I ran short, I ‘could always sell a story or poem or something’. Well – My calculations were inaccurate! (Joshi, 2001 p. 66)

Joshi adds that his mother was indeed, despite her love for him, disappointed by him not being able to finish his education and after he left school he became much more closed to the world then before (2001, p. 66).

### 1.5 Adult Age

There are not many examples of Lovecraft’s prosaic efforts from this period of his life but quite a few poems, sadly most of them are connected by a topic of racism. Lovecraft’s first published poem is called “Providence in 2000 A. D.” and it is a satire about an Englishman who comes back to Rhode Island in the year 2000 and finds everything changed by foreigners. Some of other poems which Lovecraft wrote at that time are even more spiteful, but they were not published in that period. For example “New-England Fallen” (1912) is a really poor racist poem speaking of mythical ages when members of undeveloped foreign tribe infiltrated and corrupted a New England’s society established by Anglo-Saxon clan (Joshi, 2001 p. 71).

Lovecraft’s ignorant racism is best exposed in another short poem from the group of the nasty ones called “On the Creation of Niggers” (1912):

*When, long ago, the Gods created Earth,*

*In Jove’s fair image Man was shap’d at birth,*

*The beasts for lesser parts were next design’d*

*Yet were they too remote from humankind,*
To fill this gap, and join the rest to man,
Th’ Olympian host conceiv’d a clever plan.
A beast they wrought, in semi-human figure,
Fill’d it with vice, and call’d the thing a NIGGER (Joshi, 2001 pp. 72-73)

1.6 Amateur Writing

In the year 1914 (at the age of twenty-four) Lovecraft joined the United Amateur Press Association (UAPA). Lévy recognizes this event as an important point in Lovecraft’s life for he met people of different views and activities among whom he quickly became a significant member thanks to his talents (1998 p. 20).

The UAPA (and its rival, the National Amateur Press Association, which Lovecraft later joined) associated authors writing and publishing their own journals. The quality of the writers and their works differed a great deal. As a member of the organization, Lovecraft produced an amazing quantity of amateur writings in the course of that decade. Not only did he edit thirteen numbers of “The Conservative”\(^5\), but he also sent essays and poems to be published in other magazines.

Lovecraft prepared the official periodical of the UAPA, “The United Amateur”, for publication and became President and Chairman of the Department of Public Criticism (Joshi, 2007).

Later Lovecraft admitted that UAPA gave him the opportunity to write at the time when he desperately needed it. Living only with his mother, closed to the world as much as never before, suddenly he felt that his literary efforts were not pointless in environment of amateurdom:

“Amateur Journalism has provided me with the very world in which I live. Of a nervous and reserved temperament, and cursed with an aspiration which far

\(^5\) His own paper containing many of Lovecraft’s racially oriented poems and essays.
exceeds my endeavour, and singularly unable to derive enjoyment from ordinary miscellaneous activities... For the first time I could imagine that my clumsy gropings after art were a little more than faint cries lost in the unlistening void (Joshi, 2001 pp. 78-79).”

At that time, he also began to keep up an abundant correspondence, which became one of the most important activities for him. At one time, Lovecraft was able to maintain an epistolary communication with more than one hundred regular correspondents.

The amateur world served Lovecraft as a lifebuoy firstly, later as a preparative for professional publication. Very often he expressed his opinion on contemporaneous political situation in his poems but they lacked a certain quality that would make them a worthy part of his work. Through poems of those years he conveyed his furious disagreement with USA’s not intervening into the events of the First World War. Joshi points out that after the outbreak of war Lovecraft did not understand it as a German attack on European countries but as a fight of two members of his beloved tribe; Anglo-Saxons. England and Germany were part of the Teutonic race which he looked at as superior to others (2001 p. 95).

In an essay “The Crime of the Century” he claims:

*High above such national crimes as the Servian plots against Austria or the German disregard of Belgian neutrality, high above such sad matters as the destruction of innocent lives and property, looms the supremest of all crimes, an offence not only against conventional morality but against Nature itself; the violation of race* (2006 p. 13).

As Lévy states, Lovecraft edited and published an amateur journal “The Conservative” from 1915 on, in which he wrote offensively on the pacifists’ philosophy and preached “Pan-Saxonism”, that should be the dominance of English and connate nations over the less developed divisions of mankind (1998 p. 27).
His anti-pacifist filosofical point of view is expressed and explained clearly in the article “At the Roots” from the year 1918 (The United Amateur) which the following extract is taken from:

“…Four years ago a large part of the civilised world laboured under certain biological fallacies which may, in a sense, be held responsible for the extent and duration of the present conflict. These fallacies, which were the foundation of pacifism and other pernicious forms of social and political radicalism, dealt with the capacity of man to evolve mentally beyond his former state of subservience to primate instinct and pugnacity, and to conduct his affairs and international or interracial relations on a basis of reason and good-will. That belief in such capability is unscientific and childishly naive, is beside the question. The fact remains, that the most civilised part of the world, including our own AngloSaxondom, did entertain enough of these notions to relax military vigilance, lay stress on points of honour, place trust in treaties, and permit a powerful and unscrupulous nation to indulge unchecked and unsuspected in nearly fifty years of preparation for world-wide robbery and slaughter. We are reaping the result of our simplicity. The past is over…

We must recognise the essential underlaying savagery in the animal called man, and return to older and sounder principles of national life and defense. We must realise that man’s nature will remain the same so long as he remains man; that civilisation is but a slight coverlet beneath which the dominant beast sleeps lightly and ever ready to awake. To preserve civilisation, we must deal scientifically with the brute element, using only genuine biological principles…

Dangerous beyond description are the voices sometimes heard today, decrying the continuance of armament after the close of the present hostilities. The specific application of the scientific truth regarding man’s native instincts will be found in the adoption of a post-bellum international programme. Obviously, we must take into account the primordial substructure and arrange for the upholding of culture by methods which will stand the acid test of stress and conflicting ambitions. In disillusioned diplomacy, ample armament, and universal military training alone will be found the solution of the world’s difficulties. It will not be a
perfect solution, because humanity is not perfect. It will not abolish war, because war is the expression of a natural human tendency. But it will at least produce an approximate stability of social and political conditions, and prevent the menace of the entire world by the greed of any one of its constituent parts (Lovecraft, 1918).”

Much more racialist concept is visible in another piece of text published in “The United Amateur”, “Americanism”. Lovecraft understands the essential principle of his country as an “expanded Anglo-Saxonism. It is the spirit of England, transplanted to a soil of vast extent and diversity, and nourished for a time under pioneer conditions calculated to increase its democratic aspects without impairing its fundamental virtues. It is the spirit of truth, honour, justice, morality, moderation, individualism, conservative liberty, magnanimity, toleration, enterprise, industriousness, and progress…”

The so called “melting pot” poses a great danger to America and its development from the point of view of Lovecraft:

It is true that this country has received a vast influx of non-English immigrants who come hither to enjoy without hardship the liberties which our British ancestors carved out in toil and bloodshed. It is also true that such of them as belong to the Teutonic and Celtic races are capable of assimilation to our English type and of becoming valuable acquisitions to the population. But, from this it does not follow that a mixture of really alien blood or ideas has accomplished or can accomplish anything but harm (Lovecraft, 1919).

Aside these articles and poems usualy containing extreme views of a severe rightist Lovecraft certainly was, he started to publish pieces of his prosaic work of weird fiction: in the year 1916 he issued “The Alchemist” in The United Amateur and 1919 was the year in which one of his well
known weird-fiction stories “Dagon”\(^6\) was published. “Dagon” became a significant point on a way to the creation of the Cthulhu Mythos\(^7\).

In the year 1918 he wrote “Polaris” inspired by his own dream, as it was in many other cases. The narrator of the story dreams repeatedly of a world which he becomes a part of for a while. The story ends with the narrator’s realization that our world to which he wakes up is not the real one, but vice-versa, it is a dream which he cannot escape.

Next year another story came to being; “Beyond the Wall of Sleep”. It described an encounter of an inhabitant of the Catskill Mountains region of New York State by an extraterrestrial entity. Joshi implies that the Lovecraft’s story was inspired by a newspaper article in the New York Tribune. *This article appeared on 27 April 1919, and actually mentions a backwoods family named Slater or Slahter, the exact character name used by Lovecraft in his story* (2001 p. 109). The story culminates in the disconcerting communication of an extraterrestrial entity with the narrator:

…”Joe Slater is dead," came the soul-petrifying voice of an agency from beyond the wall of sleep. My opened eyes sought the couch of pain in curious horror, but the blue eyes were still calmly gazing, and the countenance was still intelligently animated. "He is better dead, for he was unfit to bear the active intellect of cosmic entity. His gross body could not undergo the needed adjustments between ethereal life and planet life. He was too much an animal, too little a man; yet it is through his deficiency that you have come to discover me, for the cosmic and planet souls rightly should never meet. He has been in my torment and diurnal prison for forty-two of your terrestrial years.”

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\(^6\) This story will be examined in the chapter 2.3.5.

\(^7\) Shared universe based on a pantheon of non-human entities, extraterrestrials, deities living in Lovecraft’s stories. It will be more thoroughly examined later in the study. The term “Cthulhu Mythos” was never used by Lovecraft and its coinage is attributed to August Derleth (Joshi, Schultz 2001 p. 50).
"I am an entity like that which you yourself become in the freedom of dreamless sleep... Next year I may be dwelling in the Egypt which you call ancient, or in the cruel empire of Tsan Chan which is to come three thousand years hence. You and I have drifted to the worlds that reel about the red Arcturus, and dwelt in the bodies of the insect-philosophers that crawl proudly over the fourth moon of Jupiter. How little does the earth self know life and its extent! How little, indeed, ought it to know for its own tranquility!... (Lovecraft, 1971 pp. 38-39).

1.7 Mother’s Death

In the year 1918 a sad moment altered Lovecraft’s life. His mother Susie broke down and was taken to Butler Hospital. The reason for the collapse was explained as a strain of financial worries. It surely brought many changes to Lovecraft’s life, but due to their complicated relationship and despite the gravity of the event it could have had positive effects on him as well.

Despite the fact that Susie admired her son greatly and loved him to the point of worship, she in her over-protectiveness controlled and inevitably delimited his life during Lovecraft’s childhood and puberty as well as in his adult years. She must have nourished the idea of his invalidity and she was much too worried about him and his health to let him develop more freely into a sound adult. We can see an example in Susie’s pulling strings to put a stop to Lovecraft’s attempt to enlist to the army in May 1917 (Joshi, 2001 pp. 120-121). Joshi points out that after her transport to the hospital Lovecraft may have found that sort of freedom he had never known before. Needles to add that he was repeatedly assured by the doctors, that there was no physical danger that Susie would be exposed to (2001 p. 125).
At this point in life he meets work by another important person in the world of weird fiction; an Anglo-Irish writer and dramatist Lord Dunsany, whose fiction Lovecraft later regarded as the central influence to his writing; “The first paragraph of A Dreamer’s Tales arrested me as with an electrick shock, and I had not read two pages before I became a Dunsany devotee for life,” wrote Lovecraft later to one of his friends (Joshi, 2001 p. 135) In another letter from the year 1923 he writes: “Dunsany has influenced me more than anyone else except Poe – his rich language, his cosmic point of view, his remote dream –world, and his exquisite sense of the fantastic all appeal to me more than anything else in modern literature. My first encounter with him – in the autumn of 1919 – gave an immense impetus to my writing; perhaps the greatest it has ever had (Lévy, 1998 p. 33).”

Joshi, comparing Dunsany’s early tales and plays with work of Lovecraft, finds many similarities in terms of thematic and philosophical concept: skepticism, hostility to industrialism, the importance of a dream that is able to change the grey world into a beautiful place, the evocative use of language. Lovecraft attended Dunsany’s lecture under an impression of reading A Dreamer’s tales but after that he never met him in person or corresponded with him (Joshi, 2001 pp. 135-136).

In those days Lovecraft created many other tales of supernatural horror and a lot of them are a proof of his improving technique. A well known story, “The Statement of Randolph Carter” (1919), belongs to the better ones of that era, although the plot is as simple as predictable: the narrator, Randolph, makes a companion to his friend Harley Warren who is exploring a sepulcher. While he is told to wait outside Harley descents down the tomb connected with Randolph by the telephone. The story ends with Harley disappearing in the crypt for good after encountering some infernal forces and Carter’s fleeing from the cemetery:

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8 A short story collection regarded as one of Dunsany’s best works and a representative of the summit of his early fiction-writing career (Joshi, 1995 p. 43).
…Once more came the voice of my friend, still hoarse with fear, and now apparently tinged with despair: "I can't tell you, Carter! It's too utterly beyond thought -- I dare not tell you -- no man could know it and live -- Great God! I never dreamed of this!" …"Nearly over now -- don't make it harder -- cover up those damned steps and run for your life -- you're losing time -- so long, Carter -- won't see you again."

…Here Warren's whisper swelled into a cry; a cry that gradually rose to a shriek fraught with all the horror of the ages…

…"Curse these hellish things -- legions -- My God! Beat it! Beat it! BEAT IT! (Lovecraft, 1971 pp. 182-183)."

Lovecraft’s letter to August Derleth reveals an interesting thing; the story is almost a literal transcription of one of his dreams. After describing the dream in the letter he writes:

I intend to weave this picture into a story, as I wove another dream-picture into “The Doom that Came to Sarnath”. I wonder, though, if I have a right to claim authorship of things I dream? I hate to take credit, when I did not really think out the picture with my own conscious wits. Yet if I do not take credit, who’n Heaven will I give credit tuh? Coleridge 1270 claimed “Kubla Khan”, so I guess I’ll claim the thing an’ let it go at that. But believe muh, that was some dream! (Lovecraft, 1965 p. 121)

In 1920 he wrote “From Beyond”, which is a tale of a scientist who invents a machine that allows people to see invisible entities living in our world without our realizing of it.

One of the most appreciated tales by Lovecraft of this era is a story of a creature that has to face shocking self-knowledge, “Outsider”. A story that Lovecraft himself later described as “too glibly mechanical in its climatic effect, almost comic in the bombastic pomposity of its language… (Joshi, 2001 p. 114)” is believed to be his “signature tale” by many. (And sometimes very autobiographical as well, which Joshi denies by noticing Lovecraft’s happy times of his childhood not corresponding with the dark atmosphere
of the story. Due to a number of obvious influences Joshi understands the story rather as an experiment in pastiche than an expression of psychological wounds (2001 p. 141).

Lovecraft in his later years felt that “Outsider” was a “literal though unconscious imitation of Poe at its very height (Joshi, 2001 p. 140),” and when reading the story we cannot overlook some aspect where we clearly recognize the inspiration by one of his most admired authors:

I know not where I was born, save that the castle was infinitely old and infinitely horrible, full of dark passages and having high ceilings where the eye could find only cobwebs and shadows. The stones in the crumbling corridors seemed always hideously damp, and there was an accursed smell everywhere, as of the piled-up corpses of dead generations. It was never light, so that I used sometimes to light candles and gaze steadily at them for relief, nor was there any sun outdoors, since the terrible trees grew high above the topmost accessible tower… (Lovecraft, 1971 p. 107).

1.8 Becoming a Professional

On 24 May 1921 a tragedy shattered not very strong nerves of H. P. Lovecraft. His mother died after an unsuccessful gall bladder operation at Butler Hospital where she had been staying since her break-down. Nine days after the event Lovecraft wrote that it was impossible for him to sleep or to concentrate on his work. He thought about a suicide as he saw the reason to live gone with his mother. In one of his letters, Lovecraft wrote: During my mother’s life-time I was aware that voluntary euthanasia on my part would cause her distress, but it is now possible for me to regulate the term of my existence with the assurance that my end would cause no one more than a passing annoyance (Joshi, 2001 p. 143).
Lévy states that Lovecraft moved the responsibility on his daily life to his aunts and concealed himself deeper in dream. His stories became more gruesome as his dreams did (1998 p. 21).

But his destiny was not the same as of another famous author of fantastic literature Lovecraft kept correspondence with, R. E. Howard (a creator of popular stories of Conan), who fifteen years later, at the age of thirty, shot himself after realizing that his mother would never regain consciousness from a coma (Burke, 2006). Joshi admits that despite the grief Lovecraft was struck with, he overcame the initial shock and he came back to continue the previous way of life in not so long time (2001 p. 145). As soon as his physical health got better, he started to travel a lot (Lévy, 1998 p. 21).

At that time, as he had to deal with his bad economic situation, he began writing professionally; however, he did not separate himself from the amateur world entirely. In spite of being one of his poorest fictional stories, the tale “Herbert West – Reanimator” became the first piece of work he got a real payment for (Joshi, 2001 p. 160). It is a story remotely similar to Shelley’s Frankenstein; the main character brings recently died people back to life. Lovecraft started to publish his older stories in “Weird Tales” and soon became an author whose tales appeared on the pages of this magazine regularly. Other Lovecraft’s stories belonging to that era are for example “The Music of Erich Zann”, “Hypnos”, “The Hound”, “The Rats in the Walls” or “The Unnamable”.

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9 It is usually thought that R. E. Howard was unnaturally dependent upon his mother. On the other hand, Burke implies that it would be simplistic to believe that R. E. Howard killed himself just out of despondency as there could have been other reasons for his suicide (2006).
1.9 Marriage and New York

After his mother’s death two very important events happened. In the year 1921 he met Sonia Haft Greene, a woman that admired him and would become his wife in a few years, and in the year 1923 he discovered a Welsh writer whose work influenced Lovecraft’s fiction a great deal, Arthur Machen. This author, notorious mainly for a scandalous literary piece of work filled with (for that time) obscene sexuality, “The Great God Pan” (1890) (Eckersley, 2008), became an amusing source of inspiration for Lovecraft. He particularly loved Machen’s horror stories; “The White People”, “The Shining Pyramid”, “The Black Seal”, “The White Powder”\textsuperscript{10} and others.

Joshi states that the Welshman’s work clearly filtered into Lovecraft’s imagination and eventually emerged in a quite transformed but still perceptible manner in some of his best-known stories (2001 p. 169).

Sonia Green, indeed, changed Lovecraft’s life very much, even though their marriage did not survive very long. Sonia was an attractive descendant of a Russian Jew family. She was seven years older than Lovecraft who was fascinated not only by her good looks but also by her dedication to the amateur world.

Sonia first admired Lovecraft’s personality but soon she fell for him thoroughly. It took three years for them to get married. It was a paradox that the wife of such an extreme rightist should be a Jew but Lovecraft recognized her as an assimilated member of society (Joshi, 2001 p. 221). She provided him with a care and love he lost with his mother and it was because of her he moved to New York. At first it looked as a good idea as

\textsuperscript{10} “The Black Seal” and “The White Powder” belong to a collection of horror tales linked in a single frame, “The Three Impostors”: The first one is a story of an anthropologist who discovers a throwback race of people living secretly in the Welsh mountains. The other story describes a young man’s degeneration into primordial slime after taking some substance (Eckersley, 2008).
he hoped he would be able to find a job there, but soon he came to hate the city. Its enormity, commercialism, stress, slums and above all “the hordes of aliens” made him feel unsecure and scared. Under the impression of foreign inhabitants who “stole” New York from the white people, he wrote a story “The Horror at Red Hook”. It was not the best of his works and it exposes Lovecraft’s enraged racism of that period (Joshi, 2001 p. 220).

Red Hook is a maze of hybrid squalor near the ancient waterfront opposite Governor’s Island, with dirty highways climbing the hill from the wharves to that higher ground where the decayed lengths of Clinton and Court Streets lead off toward the Borough Hall. ...

The population is a hopeless tangle and enigma; Syrian, Spanish, Italian, and Negro elements impinging upon one another, and fragments of Scandinavian and American belts lying not far distant. It is a babel of sound and filth, and sends out strange cries to answer the lapping oily waves at its grimy piers and the monstrous organ litanies of the harbour whistles. Here long ago a brighter picture dwelt, with clear-eyed mariners on the lower streets and homes of taste and substance where the larger houses line the hill. One can trace the relics of this former happiness in the trim shapes of the buildings, the occasional graceful churches, and the evidences of original art and background in bits of detail here and there… (Lovecraft, 1987 p. 249).

Another story written during his stay in New York was a tale “He” where the narrator, aside from the loathing of the city peopled with strange creatures, expresses his longing for return to the place of his previous life. I never sought to return to those tenebrous labyrinths, nor would I direct any sane man thither if I could. Of who or what that ancient creature was, I have no idea; but I repeat that the city is dead and full of unsuspected horrors. Whither he has gone, I do not know; but I have gone home to the pure New England lanes up which fragrant sea-winds sweep at evening (Lovecraft, 1987 p. 276).
As we mentioned above, the marriage did not last for long. After the wedding there came problems. Sonia's shop that secured decent income to the couple collapsed, Lovecraft was not able to find a job in New York and Sonia’s fragile health forced her to undergo convalescences in various rest homes. Joshi recognizes the main problem in Lovecraft’s growing hatred towards the city, which even many friends, Lovecraft had in New York, were not able to help him get rid of (2007).

In 1925 Sonia went to look for work in the Midwest and only occasionally did she come back to New York where Lovecraft stayed. Next year, Lovecraft enthusiastically returned to Providence and refused to ever come back to New York although he still loved Sonia. Another problem, this time posed by Lovecraft’s aunts, appeared when she decided to move to Providence as well and to set up shop there. In her memoir she describes the reaction to her proposal: "At the time the aunts gently but firmly informed me that neither they nor Howard could afford to have Howard’s wife work for a living in Providence. That was that. I now knew where we all stood. Pride preferred to suffer in silence; both theirs and mine (Joshi, 2007)." Joshi writes that the reputation of the family was too valuable for the aunts to let a wife, who would work as a tradeswoman, damage it. The marriage was heading towards its end.

Lovecraft returned to his way of life as he knew it before the relationship with Sonia and his New York stay, but the experience he had gone through changed him inevitably. He stopped admiring only the eithteenth century and its values and started to take notice of the modern life as well. In an outbreak of activity he wrote “The Call of Cthulhu,” “The Case of Charles Dexter Ward,” “The Silver Key,” and several other stories. He became, in the last ten years of his life, the man who most comes to mind when we hear the name Lovecraft (Joshi, 2007).

In the first tale on the list “The Call of Cthulhu” he provides a summary of his those-days views; his disbelief in humankind’s inability to
succeed in its further process of evolution. The story represents a very important point in the course of Lovecraft’s work development as it is the first considerable contribution to what was later called the “Cthulhu Mythos”\(^\text{11}\) (Joshi, 2001 p. 243).

In 1927 he wrote another of his most appreciated stories: “The Case of Charles Dexter Ward”. The tale describes rise and fall of an evil sorcerer of ancient times who is resurrected to this age by his descendant, Charles Ward. The sorcerer, Joseph Curwen, kills Charles Ward and takes his identity. Due to an inability to cope with those-days world he is caught and put to a mental asylum. He manages to run away but is later killed by Marinus Bicknell Willet who investigates his escape and reveals his devilish ambitions. One of the main inspirations for the narrative was Lovecraft’s reading historical “Providence in Colonial Times”.

This story taking place in Lovecraft’s hometown is regarded one of his finest works but the tale is interesting not only for its plot but for many autobiographical elements as well (2001 p. 255).

1.10 End of a Life

After finishing another story deserving valued a lot by his audience, “The Colour Out of Space,” (1927) his brisk wave of writing started to descend quickly. By 1930 he had published a lot of narratives in “Weird Tales” (and the last mentioned also appeared in “Amazing Stories”) but Lovecraft never got an opportunity to make a collection of tales which would bear his name. This fact could have been a trigger that made him start to doubt himself and his ability to write fiction.

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\(^1\) We already approached a term “Cthulhu Mythos” in the chapter 2.4 in association with the story “Dagon” which is regarded a part of the “mythos” but certainly not as important and determining as “The Call of Cthulhu.”
There were some attempts to give Lovecraft what he deserved: for example the editor of “Weird Tales” wanted to publish a collection of Lovecraft’s tales with a title “The Outsider and Other Stories”, but the idea fell through (Joshi, 2007).

A real disaster was a rejection of his high-rate story “At the Mountains of Madness” (1931) by “Weird Tales” and refusal to publish some of his older tales by G. P. Putnam’s Sons. After these events he never got back to his previous shape and his works lost some of their earlier quality. In 1936 Lovecraft wrote in one of his letters: "I'm farther from doing what I want to do than I was 20 years ago (Joshi, 2007)."

On 10 March 1937 H. P. Lovecraft died from cancer in Jane Brown Memorial Hospital. In the last years of his life he spent a lot of time writing letters to numerous correspondents.

His work gained deserved popularity after his death thanks to some of his fans and followers (mainly August Derleth) who published collections of his tales and continued with widening a shared universe they found in his work thus keeping his heritage alive.
2 The Cthulhu Mythos

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

Lovecraft was an influential author of weird-fiction prose and his work is a repository of ideas and depictions which affected many writers and other artists, including contemporary ones (let us mention Stephen King or Hans Ruedi Giger as examples).

Lovecraft’s stories grew up in a mind fed by dark dreams and morbid imagination of a writer who, seeing his loving world dying at the dawn of a new century, questioned the progress of the humankind. At the beginning, the most important influence for him was works by E. A. Poe and many of the early stories are a proof of where he drew his inspiration. However, unlike Poe, he did not search through the depths of a human mind but turned his attention to the space above us with its infinite darkness and cold. Human race in his stories is not the summit of the evolution but just one of civilizations that indwell our planet for a limited time. There had been other cultures when we came to rule the Earth and there are going to be others to claim it once they gather strength to do so.

A feature that the majority of his stories have in common is a striking cognition of our fragility and inability that condemns us to fail in the fight with the powers we are not match for; the powers from beyond our space and our imagination. This feeling of helplessness is actually an aspect of the philosophy of cosmicism which Lovecraft created. His absolute skepticism about our future in this indifferent world without God brings no pleasant views of days to come.

His renowned story “The Call of Cthulhu” (1926) opens with these illustrative words:

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.

To summarize it; our days are counted and there is nothing we can change about it. It is not that Lovecraft opposed scientific progress (Schweitzer, 2001 p. 30), he just stated what he thought inevitable; with a help of sciences we will find out how immensely insignificant we really are in the scope of the whole space.

Lovecraft, however apathetic to life or death in his philosophy, detested the path our civilization took at the turn of the century. All the mingling of cultures, mixing of races, dilution of the Anglo-Saxon nation made him scared about the future. Not Poe’s or Machen’s stories but the contact with chaos of the racial melting pot in New York had the biggest share on giving birth to the frightening creatures threatening our bare existence in many stories by Lovecraft.

Cosmicism and Lovecraft’s detest of the world of New York slums and dirty streets full of immigrants are also a well recognizable source of inspiration (aside clearly literary influences) in the stories which are linked by an appearance of an ancient cult worshipping creatures that inhabited the Earth long before the first humans came to build foundations of our civilization. This conception resulted into a mythos widened by many Lovecraft’s followers and admirers – “the Cthulhu Mythos”.
2.2 Origin of the Cthulhu Mythos

What could be a better proof of a writer’s greatness than a fact that he is considered a “myth-maker”? How many of such authors do we know? However, a problem with the “Cthulhu Mythos” (sometimes called Lovecraft Mythos) is that it was not Lovecraft himself who brought it to life.

The real author or rather inventor of the mythos was undoubtedly a friend and correspondent of Lovecraft, August Derleth. His is the greatest contribution to endurance of Lovecraft’s legacy. Due to a lack of interest of publishers, he and his friends founded a publishing company “Arkham House” and printed collections of Lovecraft’s stories after his death. As a real devotee to his work he continued writing stories based on Lovecraft’s notes and created a new line of stories vaguely related to original tales. He coined the term “Cthulhu Mythos”, a term Lovecraft himself never used.

On the other hand, as a result of his own peculiar understanding of the Lovecraft’s work he artificially turned it into something it had never meant to be. He created a real functioning system of beings matching the conception of a valid pantheon.

On the top of it, by mixing original ideas with his philosophy, being influenced by his Catholic belief, he abandoned the basic feature of Lovecraft’s cosmicism, an indifference of the cold space to any human values. So, another problem is not far to seek; “the Cthulhu Mythos” came to being after the death of a writer to whom it is ascribed and the original tales by Lovecraft are sometimes very inappropriate ones to fit in.

“The Cthulhu Mythos” is based on a group of Lovecraft’s stories connected by unimaginable creatures of extraterrestrial origin to which a monster named “Cthulhu” belongs. They came to Earth eons before our civilization had even started.
In an autobiographical essay “Some Notes on a Nonentity” Lovecraft wrote: *About 1919 the discovery of Lord Dunsany – from whom I got the idea of the artificial pantheon and myth-background represented by “Cthulhu”, “Yog-Sothoth”…* (2006 pp. 209-210), which reveals that it was Dunsany (whose “A Dreamer’s Tales” captivated Lovecraft so much) who gave him an inspiriting idea of creating some kind of god-like creatures’ system. However, Lovecraft did not literally adopted this way of writing; while Dunsany describes an exact structure of gods with their unchangeable ranks and positions\(^\text{12}\), a fictitious world of Lovecraft’s “Cthulhu Mythos” tales is not a coherent unit with integral basis as the crucial facts often differ from one tale to another.

### 2.3 The Cthulhu Mythos Stories

Number of stories that are considered to be parts of the Cthulhu Mythos may vary because there is not an exact pattern to apply when we define a valid Cthulhu cycle story. Some stories containing aspects of the mythos had come to existence long before the basic principle was established and sometimes it is not easy to decide if a tale is a legitimate part of the Cthulhu Mythos. We will now introduce some of the basic stories related to the cycle.

The central story in terms of understanding the Cthulhu Mythos is a narrative “The Call of Cthulhu.”

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\(^\text{12}\) In his short-story collections “Time and the Gods” or “The Gods of Pegana” Dunsany comes up with the pantheon with the main god Mana-Yood-Sushai who created Skarl the Drummer and other gods: e.g. Slid, the god of waters, Roon, the God of Going, Tribogee the Lord of Dusk... (Dunsany, 2005).
2.3.1 The Call of Cthulhu

The story was written in the year 1926 and in rich language it describes an “investigation” of the narrator, Francis Wayland Thurston. Francis learns some strange facts about cults from various places in the world and soon realizes that the data form pieces of a terrible puzzle whose solution means sleepless nights for the one who recognizes our unavoidable destiny.

As the only heir of his late grand-uncle, George Gammell Angell, Professor Emeritus of Semitic Languages in Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, he goes through his heritage when he stumbles over an outlandish bas-relief:

...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 suggestion of a Cyclopean architectural background...

He also finds materials containing notes on examination of a sculptor, Henry Anthony Wilcox, who created the bas-relief, referring on strange nightmares he suffered from for limited time. The nightmares obviously made him carve the sculpture. Professor’s observations bring a disturbing evidence of other people who experienced odd dark dreams during the same period, very similar to dreams described by Wilcox:

...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."

From other materials, Francis learns about an existence of a cult in New Orleans with practices and rituals similar to a tribe of “degenerate Esquimaux whose religion,” was “a curious form of devil-worship… Besides nameless rites and human sacrifices there were certain queer hereditary rituals addressed to a supreme elder devil or tornasuk;…”

Both of these sects adored a statuette of an abominable appearance:

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.

Unexplainably, the creature depicted by the statuettes clearly matches the description of a monster from Wilcox dreams.

From testimony of a member of the cult written in professor’s notes there are many places this sect practices its rituals. They worship creatures called the Great Old Ones that came to Earth when the sun was young and ruled the planet. They had a developed civilization but they died ages
before men came to reign. Now the scary part: they are not dead completely, they dwell at the bottom of a sea, in one of their cities that sank in the course of ages that passed, waiting for the time when stars are right for them to rise again. 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.

Despite their might they need an impulse from outside to help them break the spell that protects them and prevents them from life at the same time. The impulse will be performed by the hands of cult members.

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. The statuettes are images of the Great Old Ones they brought with them from the stars.

Then Francis starts his own exploration and finds out that some sailors really found the lost city that emerged for several days from the sea and encountered an immense monster that killed most of them. The emersion of the tomb of the Great Old Ones was the reason for many people dreaming strange dreams as the monsters communicate through telepathy. They entered minds of psychologically sensitive people as they did so at the dusk of our civilization to make servants out of humankind.

So, what do we know about the extraterrestrial race of the Old Ones? They stay dormant in the depth of an ocean for innumerable cycles
awaiting the suitable moment to resurrect and take over our planet. They are concealed to any man in their apparently eternal sleep and sometimes maintain communication with their worshippers through thoughts that come to sensitive people in the form of a dream. The cult, they created at the dawn of mankind, will one day help the monstrous beings wake up, abandon their shelter and rise again. With them there is a monster called Cthulhu, who is their high wizard.

The story is often regarded a masterpiece and it really possess certain qualities that make it an awesome reading. The mystery of strange dreams that comport with a cult sculpture, the pieces of puzzle which reveal an appalling fact that we are not the ones on the top of the food chain; all those and many other aspects of the story make it a real gem on the field of the weird fiction. But, indeed, it has its flaws.

The Great Old Ones went to their hibernation ages before men came to rule the Earth. So how did they know there would be someone to help them wake up?

We know that they are very powerful creatures waiting for the time the stars are right but what are they going to do then? Are they really planning to teach us new ways to shout and kill and revel and enjoy ourselves? What an intimidating image. One would expect something more devastating from such creatures. Lovecraft’s images of New York slums are clearly recognizable in the conception of our civilization’s downfall. Another aspect whose effects cause considerable damage to the tale is the way of using the narrator. Francis is never a part of the action. He just links the pieces of information from other people’s testimonies. He never approaches the Great Old Ones himself, not even any member of the cult, which really dilutes the final result. We do not care for him and even though he fears for his own life at the end (not very rational fear – how could the sectarians know that he is aware of the existence of the cult) we never really get any close to him to be sympathetic enough. Moreover, it is
usual for Lovecraft’s stories to end up with the main character’s suicide or death or at least in a condition near to these.

As it was stated above, this story is significant in the group of tales of the Cthulhu Mythos for important information about great Cthulhu, the Great Old Ones and also about a cult that holds traditions and rites to be prepared for the task set countless centuries ago.

We find out that Cthulhu needn’t be the same creature as the Great Old Ones. He is their high priest and nobody knows what the Great Old Ones look like, not even worshippers who possess a statuette of the Great Cthulhu: The carven idol was great Cthulhu, but none might say whether or not the others were precisely like him.

As was mentioned above a great deal of inspiration comes from Dunsany’s tales but there are more authors who indirectly participated on the creation of the story. Joshi mentions Guy de Maupassant’s short story “The Horla” (1887) as a major influence (2001 p. 243). Lovecraft regarded Maupassant highly and so he did the horror story narrating of a man increasingly dominated by a supernatural being he calls Horla. In his essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature” Lovecraft wrote:

The horror-tales of the powerful and cynical Guy de Maupassant, written as his final madness gradually overtook him, present individualities of their own; being rather the morbid outpourings of a realistic mind in a pathological state than the healthy imaginative products of a vision naturally disposed toward phantasy and sensitive to the normal illusions of the unseen. Nevertheless they are of the keenest interest and poignancy; suggesting with marvelous force the imminence of nameless terrors, and the relentless dogging of an ill-starred individual by hideous and menacing representatives of the outer blackness (2008 p. 30).

A mysterious invisible being comes to torture the protagonist in a physical and psychical way. First he feels ill and suffers from fever. After some days he starts to feel the presence of a creature he calls “Horla”. It
watches him, makes unable to sleep. Soon it starts to affect his life unbearably; August 14. I am lost! Somebody possesses my soul and governs it! Somebody orders all my acts, all my movements, all my thoughts. I am no longer anything in myself, nothing except an enslaved and terrified spectator of all the things which I do. I wish to go out; I cannot. He does not wish to, and so I remain,… (Maupassant, 2001). The most interesting connection to Lovecraft’s work is, however, incorporated in this point of the story:

A new being! Why not? It was assuredly bound to come! Why should we be the last? We do not distinguish it, like all the others created before us? The reason is, that its nature is more perfect, its body finer and more finished than ours, that ours is so weak, so awkwardly conceived, encumbered with organs that are always tired, always on the strain like locks that are too complicated, which lives like a plant and like a beast, nourishing itself with difficulty on air, herbs nad flesh, an animal machine, which is a prey to maladies, to malformations… (Maupassant, 2001).

There is clearly visible idea in “Horla” which was taken into account by Lovecraft while writing “The Call of Cthulhu”; the existence of beings greatly superior to us that can easily overpower us on the physical and psychical level, and the fact that we are not at all the final product of creation.

In terms of structure of the story Joshi recognizes a significant influence in the story “The Novel of the Black Seal” (1895) by Arthur Machen as its main character, Professor Gregg, puts together pieces of information that on their own disclose just a little, but after connecting them, they make a terrible picture of a dismay awaiting our civilization (2001 p. 243).

“The Novel of the Black Seal” is a part of “The Three Impostors” which Lovecraft regarded an exceptional work of weird fiction; in his essay he wrote:
Here we find in its most artistic form a favourite weird conception of the author’s; the notion that beneath the mounds and rocks of the wild Welsh hills dwell subterraneously that squat primitive race whose vestiges gave rise to our common folk legends of fairies, elves, and the “little people,” and whose acts are even now responsible for certain unexplained disappearances, and occasional substitutions of strange dark “changelings” for normal infants (2008 p. 61).

Another source of inspiration suggested by Robert M. Price is Lord Alfred Tennyson’s poem “The Kraken” (1830) (Lovecraft, 1996 p. 9); in this case it is a nature of the extraterrestrial creatures what Lovecraft borrowed from the poem as there is an obvious link between the physical appearance of the Kraken and the Old Ones as well as between the milieu they are staying in.

Below the thunders of the upper deep;
Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep
The Kraken sleepeth: faintest sunlights flee
About his shadowy sides: above him swell
Huge sponges of millennial growth and height;
And far away into the sickly light,
From many a wondrous grot and secret cell
Unnumbered and enormous polypi
Winnow with giant arms the slumbering green.
There hath he lain for ages and will lie
Battening upon huge sea-worms in his sleep,
Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;
Then once by man and angels to be seen,
In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die (Tennyson, 2005).
2.3.2 The Dunwich Horror

While the monsters of “The Call of Cthulhu” were of a similar physical character as Tennyson’s Kraken, the basic concept of the bizarre race of creatures from another world is very dissimilar in a latter tale of the Cthulhu cycle, “The Dunwich Horror” (1928). While “The Call of Cthulhu” defines them as immense monsters hibernating at the bottom of a sea, “The Dunwich Horror’s” approach is more up to date. Not dark inaccessible depths of an ocean but worlds between spaces we know - dimensions we cannot get a glimpse of - and the boundaries separating them, keep the monsters away. The story describes an attempt of Old Whateley and his grandson Wilbur to summon a mighty being with incantations and rites; the creature is called Yog-Sothoth and it is an “Other God\textsuperscript{13}” that is able to cross the boundaries and open gates between worlds and thus let the Old Ones enter our space.

Yog-Sothoth knows the gate. Yog-Sothoth is the gate. Yog-Sothoth is the key and guardian of the gate. Past, present, future, all are one in Yog-Sothoth. He knows where the Old Ones broke through of old, and where They shall break through again. He knows where They had trod earth’s fields, and where They still tread them, and why no one can behold Them as They tread. By Their smell can men sometimes know Them near, but of Their semblance can no man know, saving only in the features of those They have begotten on mankind; and of those are there many sorts, differing in likeness from man’s truest eidolon to that shape without sight or substance which is Them. They walk unseen and foul in lonely places where the Words have been spoken and the Rites howled through at their Seasons. The wind gibbers with Their voices, and the earth mutters with Their consciousness. They bend the forest and crush the city, yet may not forest or city

\textsuperscript{13} “Other Gods” sometimes called “Outer Gods” are mighty beings belonging to the pantheon of the Cthulhu Mythos but the creatures overlap with a pantheon of the Dream Mythos. Their power goes far beyond the abilities of the Old Ones. “The Other Gods” were coined in the story of the same name in the year 1921: “The other gods! The other gods! The gods of the outer hells that guard the feeble gods of earth!... (Lovecraft, 1987 p. 131).”
behold the hand that smites. ... Yog-Sothoth is the key to the gate, whereby the spheres meet (Lovecraft, 2007 pp. 191-192).

Lévy ascribes the premise of existence of more reality layers, aside from the one we are able to perceive, to Lovecraft's knowledge of a research and theories by Albert Einstein. Similar principle is used in a tale “The Silver Key” (1926) (1998 pp. 52-53).

Yog-Sothoth takes the place of the “main” evil monster and the role of Great Cthulhu is reduced even in relation to the Old Ones: Great Cthulhu is Their cousin, yet can he spy Them only dimly. ... As a foulness shall ye know Them. Their hand is at your throats, yet ye see Them not; and Their habitation is even one with your guarded threshold. ... (Lovecraft, 2007 p. 191)

The Old Ones' state of existence does not actually change gravity of the situation and the basic incident stays the same: Man rules now where They ruled once; They shall soon rule where man rules now. After summer is winter, after winter summer. They wait patient and potent, for here shall They reign again (Lovecraft, 2007 p. 192)."

Lovecraft brings into existence other beings that are immensely more powerful than the Great Old Ones in this case personalized by an inter-dimensional god, Yog-Sothoth.

Despite a popularity it immediately gained among readers and publishers, Joshi considers this tale a poor one and labels it “not much more than a pastiche. (2001 p. 274)” For example: a theme of sexual relationship of a monster and a woman appears at the beginning of the story is borrowed from Machen’s notorious tale “The Great God Pan”, an invisible monster the protagonist fights at the end comes from M. Rud’s “Ooze”\(^\text{14}\) (Joshi, 2001).

\(^{14}\) A mediocre short story Published in “Weird Tales” in March 1923 describing a troubles caused by scientific experiment that turned peaceful animals into a dangerous monster (Joshi, et al., 2001).
The main imperfection is found in the move from a subtly built atmosphere of his previous stories to sensational action resulting in a battle between good and evil represented by the offspring of dark powers and the protagonist, Henry Armitage.

It is true that the story lacks some features that make “The Call of Cthulhu” and other stories like “The Colour out of Space” (1927) or even “Dagon” (1917)\textsuperscript{15} extraordinary reading. Furthermore, Lovecraft in “The Dunwich Horror” had actually marked a way which many an admirer of his later followed; it is hardly necessary to say that the result was not always the highest-rate fiction.

Nevertheless, a reaction of Lovecraft’s audience was enthusiastic and August Derleth thought it to be one of the best stories by Lovecraft. “The Dunwich Horror” was published in “Weird Tales” and Lovecraft gained a very decent amount of money for it – cheque for $240.00, which was the largest single payment he had ever got for original fiction (Joshi, 2001 p. 274).

\textit{“The Dunwich Horror”}, however flawed or trendy, is in particular a perfect blend of those-day scientific topics with a medieval magic. Old Whateley’s incantations and rituals are to summon a creature living in other dimensions which exist simultaneously with our layer of space. Lovecraft was fond of employing those-days achievements of sciences into his stories and in this one he splendidly mixed Einstein’s theories with black magic giving it a feeling of a real weird fiction.

The shift to an even more scientific approach, even if in a very different manner from “The Dunwich Horror”, is perceptible in another

\textsuperscript{15} Despite the fact that the story was written a long time before the Lovecraft’s works started to form a world of the Cthulhu Mythos, it can be considered a part of it, due to some characteristic features common for the Cthulhu-Cycle. The same goes for some other Lovecraft’s works of an earlier date of origin (The Doom that Came to Sarnath, The Nameless City...)

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tale that is a great fusion of weird fiction and science fiction, “At the Mountains of Madness” (1931).

### 2.3.3 At the Mountains of Madness

Schweitzer in his “Discovering H. P. Lovecraft” suggests that if Lovecraft needed some sort of black magic to built a story of “The Dunwich Horror”, in “At the Mountains of Madness” we find that the extraterrestrial entities are quite enough in themselves to awaken all our supernatural dread, without any medieval trappings whatsoever (2001 pp. 8-9).

Robert M. Price and S. T. Joshi confirm Schweitzer’s hypothesis about absence of magic features and point out the process of “demythologizing” of the Cthulhu Mythos as the protagonists learns that myths are just an interpretation of reality (Joshi, 2001 p. 301). Magic is substituted by highly developed sciences.

The narrator, a geologist William Dyer, describes an expedition to the Antarctic that reached a point where there no one had ever been before. They find fossils of strange creatures in a place that indicates their enormous age – the Old Ones. From the bulletin of researches that participate on the expedition we get a perfect description:

"Objects are eight feet long all over. Six-foot, five-ridged barrel torso three and five-tenths feet central diameter, one foot end diameters. Dark gray, flexible, and infinitely tough. Seven-foot membranous wings of same color, found folded, spread out of furrows between ridges. Wing framework tubular or glandular, of lighter gray, with orifices at wing tips. Spread wings have serrated edge. Around equator, one at central apex of each of the five vertical, stave-like ridges are five systems of light gray flexible arms or tentacles found tightly folded to torso but expansible to maximum length of over three feet. Like arms of primitive crinoid. Single stalks three inches diameter branch after six inches into five substalks, each
of which branches after eight inches into small, tapering tentacles or tendrils, giving each stalk a total of twenty-five tentacles.

"At top of torso blunt, bulbous neck of lighter gray, with gill-like suggestions, holds yellowish five-pointed starfish-shaped apparent head covered with three-inch wiry cilia of various prismatic colors.

"Head thick and puffy, about two feet point to point, with three-inch flexible yellowish tubes projecting from each point. Slit in exact center of top probably breathing aperture. At end of each tube is spherical expansion where yellowish membrane rolls back on handling to reveal glassy, red-irised globe, evidently an eye (Lovecraft, 2007 p. 294).

Later on, they discover ruins of a giant town belonging to an unknown civilization beyond an enormously high wall of mountains. After some dramatic events they find paintings that give them precious and exceptionally detailed information about the history and life of the race, whose specimens they found.

...Being nonpairing and semivegetable in structure, the Old Ones had no biological basis for the family phase of mammal life, but seemed to organize large households on the principles of comfortable space-utility and - as we deduced from the pictured occupations and diversions of co-dwellers - congenial mental association. In furnishing their homes they kept everything in the center of the huge rooms, leaving all the wall spaces free for decorative treatment. Lighting, in the case of the land inhabitants, was accomplished by a device probably electro-chemical in nature. Both on land and under water they used curious tables, chairs and couches like cylindrical frames - for they rested and slept upright with folded-down tentacles - and racks for hinged sets of dotted surfaces forming their books.

Government was evidently complex and probably socialistic, though no certainties in this regard could be deduced from the sculptures we saw. There was extensive commerce, both local and between different cities - certain small, flat

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16 The place is suggested to be “plateau of Leng” which will be dealt with in a chapter 2.4.1.
counters, five-pointed and inscribed, serving as money… (Lovecraft, 2007 p. 333).

The Old Ones founded cities not only on the Earth but also on many other places in the space, using an unknown source and principle of energy, and they were capable of interstellar flights on their vast membranous wings (Lovecraft, 2007 p. 330). (Lovecraft was keen on employing those-days scientific discoveries but we must admit; in this case he made some mistake.)

They had their own slave race, so called Shoggoths, who were bred to do hard work on the building of cities. According to Dyer’s description, they are vaster than any subway train - a shapeless congeries of protoplasmic bubbles, faintly self-luminous, and with myriads of temporary eyes forming and un-forming as pustules of greenish light.

Colonization of the planet started in the ocean, where the Old Ones lived for long ages but later they expanded on the land without trouble.

As the Old Ones were enormously resistant creatures they survived many transformations of the Earth and they easily overcame destruction of their many cities by geological activities. But then, another race from the space came to conquer the planet:

...a land race of beings shaped like octopi and probably corresponding to fabulous prehuman spawn of Cthulhu - soon began filtering down from cosmic infinity and precipitated a monstrous war which for a time drove the Old Ones wholly back to the sea - a colossal blow in view of the increasing land settlements. Later peace was made, and the new lands were given to the Cthulhu spawn whilst the Old Ones held the sea and the older lands. New land cities were founded - the greatest of them in the Antarctic, for this region of first arrival was sacred. From then on, as before, the Antarctic remained the center of the Old Ones’ (Lovecraft, 2007 p. 334).

In “The Call of Cthulhu” was Cthulhu a high wizard of the Great Old Ones who slept in a sunken city R’lyeh, here, spawn of Cthulhu
attacked the race of the Great Old Ones. R’lyeh figures in “At the Mountains of Madness” as a city built by the Cthulhu spawn on a piece of land in the Pacific that later submerged, due to a geologic activity, and took the city into the deep of an ocean with all its inhabitants. The Old Ones became supreme on the planet again. But the peace was not to last forever. Soon the slave-race of Shoggoths stood up against their creators after ages of subjugation and the uprising turned the Earth into a warzone again.

Pictures of this war, and of the headless, slime-coated fashion in which the Shoggoths typically left their slain victims, held a marvelously fearsome quality despite the intervening abyss of untold ages. The Old Ones had used curious weapons of molecular and atomic disturbances against the rebel entities, and in the end had achieved a complete victory. Thereafter the sculptures showed a period in which Shoggoths were tamed and broken by armed Old Ones as the wild horses of the American west were tamed by cowboys (Lovecraft, 2007 p. 336).

In the course of the Jurassic age their civilization was threatened once again by an appearance of another, Mi-Go17. Mi-Go drove the Old Ones out of all the northern lands, though they were powerless to disturb those in the sea. Little by little the slow retreat of the elder race to their original antarctic habitat was beginning (Lovecraft, 2007 p. 336).

In a dramatic climax the protagonists finds out that the culture of the Old Ones was finally destroyed by Shoggoths who eventually gained enough intelligence to use their supreme physical abilities for their benefit.

As I previously wrote, the mythos and the pantheon of gods and creatures are not of a consistent structure and members of them occupy various posts that differ from one story to another. “At the Mountains of Madness” is a priceless probe into the everyday life of the Great Old Ones.

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17 An extraterrestrial race first mentioned in a story “The Whisperer in Darkness” where it is described as *Abominable Snow-Men who lurk hideously amidst the ice and rock pinnacles of the Himalayan summits* (Lovecraft, 2007 p. 222).
However, we find them in greatly dissimilar posts to those they occupy in previously mentioned tales.

In contrary to impressions from previous works on this topic, the Old Ones are not creatures that could menace our world with their indestructible power but pitiable victims to their own product, the Shoggoths. Radiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star spawn - whatever they had been, they were men! …men of another age and another order of being (Lovecraft, 2007 p. 361). And it is in a perfect accord with the philosophy of cosmicism, where nothing is forever and a feared race can finally become a prey to another one that will one day stand on the highest position of the abstract ladder; but of course, not for always.

Lovecraft puts them in the position of admirable species of great intelligence and highly developed culture. The evil Old Ones from “The Call of Cthulhu” are replaced by the spawn of Cthulhu in their dead city of R’lyeh. Shoggoths represent monsters that are perilous to the entire world, and that destroyed a whole civilization once (which can easily happen again). These beings, a result of Old Ones’ extraordinarily developed sciences, are the fittest creatures to rule the world due to their qualities designed for the hardest slave work and in-the-course-of-ages gained intellect.

Shoggoths, told to not have their own language, endlessly repeat a cry “tekeli-li” imitating a language of their long-gone masters. The cry “Tekeli-li” is an element that had appeared in Poe’s “Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket”, which has made some readers believe it was a sequel to Poe’s story (Joshi, 2001 p. 301). This assumption is not apt at all as the sound “tekeli-li” is the only thing that expressively links the two works. Of course, in all Lovecraft’s stories there can be found a strong
influence of E. A. Poe but this single allusion feels rather as homage to an admired author than a real attempt to complete his story\textsuperscript{18}.

The concept of coarse but physically strong slaves’ rebellion destroying a highly developed culture emphasizes one of the most inspirational elements in the works of Lovecraft; New York and its melting pot of many various nationalities “threatening” the culture of New England with its growing power and influence.

Lovecraft’s racism was altered by his two-year stay in New York where he had followed his wife. If he hated Jews and regarded African-Americans a race condemned to annihilation, after living in New York he must have felt that the Anglo-Saxon civilization, like the Great Old Ones’ culture, can once find itself overpowered by hordes of inferior races sprawling from dirty slums of huge American cities and slowly infesting whole America (Joshi, 2001 p. 236). However, his shameful racist views appear in a much more explicit way in many of his works throughout his career.

A perfect example where Lovecraft’s racist views blended thoroughly into the basic concept of his story is a novella “The Shadow over Innsmouth” written in 1931.

\subsection*{2.3.4 The Shadow over Innsmouth}

The premise of the tale, described by S. T. Joshi as Lovecraft’s greatest tale of degeneration (2001 p. 305), is devastating effect of interspecies reproduction.

\textsuperscript{18} The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket ends unexpectedly with the main character heading towards a chasm opening in front of his ship. The last note is of a huge human figure of perfect whiteness appearing on the board. There were many speculations about its meaning and some mislead readers could look for an explanation in Lovecraft’s story due to the allusion.
The narrator of the story comes by accident to a town Innsmouth to find out that it is somehow aloof of the rest of the world. He is said that: *it's a queer kind of a town down at the mouth of the Manuxet. Used to be almost a city - quite a port before the War of 1812 - but all gone to pieces in the last hundred years or so. No railroad now - B. and M. never went through, and the branch line from Rowley was given up years ago* (Lovecraft, 1999 p. 270). The denizens are described as strange people with narrow heads, flat noses, starry eyes “that never seem to shut, and their skin ain't quite right. Rough and scabby, and the sides of the necks are all shriveled or creased up. Get bald, too, very young. The older fellows look the worst … Animals hate 'em - they used to have lots of horse trouble before the autos came in" (Lovecraft, 1999 p. 273).

When the narrator gets to the town he meets an old drunkard Zadok Allen who turns out to be a great source of further information about Innsmouth and its inhabitants, moreover he is not affected as the other inhabitants of the town are.

He tells the narrator a story of Deep Ones, frog-like people, discovered by a captain Obed Marsh who encountered a tribe of Kanakys, natives on an island “…whar they was a lot o' stone ruins older'n anybody knew anying abaout, kind o' like them on Ponape, in the Carolines, but with carven's of faces that looked like the big statues on Easter Island. Thar was a little volcanic island near thar, too, whar they was other ruins with diff'rent carvin' - ruins all wore away like they'd ben under the sea onct, an' with picters of awful monsters all over 'em (Lovecraft, 1999 p. 295).”

The Deep Ones had given the natives wealth and prosperity in return for human sacrifice. *It seems these Kanakys was sacrificin' heaps o' their young men an' maidens to some kind o' god-things that lived under the sea, an' gittin' all kinds o' favour in return. They met the things on the little islet with the queer ruins, an' it seems them awful picters o' frog-fish monsters was supposed to be picters o' these things* (Lovecraft, 1999 p. 296).
The creatures from the bottom of the sea did not only “traded” with the Kanakys, they also mated with them in order to make beings that would be a mixture of the two races that never dies. Everything alive come aout o' the water onct an' only needs a little change to go back agin. Them things told the Kanakys that ef they mixed bloods there’d be children as ud look human at fust, but later turn more’n more like the things, till finally they’d take to the water an' jine the main lot o' things daown thar (Lovecraft, 1999 p. 297). Obed Marsh, knowing all this, decided to help Innsmouth by calling the Deep Ones to save the town with their wealth when it had got into troubles.

Here Zadok’s story ends and the narrator, after some time, comes to horrifying realization that he is actually related to Innsmouth inhabitants; the narrator himself is a descendant of Obed Marsh and as a result of mixed genes he starts to change into the hybrid fitting the description of Innsmouth dwellers. After thinking about a suicide he finally decides not to kill himself and accepts his destiny; since not only his physique is altered by the extraterrestrial genes but his mind changes as well.

That morning the mirror definitely told me I had acquired the Innsmouth look…

…So far I have not shot myself as my uncle Douglas did. I bought an automatic and almost took the step, but certain dreams deterred me. The tense extremes of horror are lessening, and I feel queerly drawn toward the unknown sea-deeps instead of fearing them. I hear and do strange things in sleep, and awake with a kind of exaltation instead of terror. I do not believe I need to wait for the full change as most have waited…

…Stupendous and unheard-of splendors await me below, and I shall seek them soon. Ia-R’lyehl Cihuha flgagnl id Ia! No, I shall not shoot myself - I cannot be made to shoot myself! (Lovecraft, 1999 p. 335).

To the main sources of inspiration, according to Joshi, belongs a story “Fishhead” (1987) by Irvin S. Cobb (2001 p. 306) of which Lovecraft wrote: Fishhead, an early achievement, is banefully effective in its portrayal of
unnatural affinities between a hybrid idiot and the strange fish of an isolated lake, which at the last avenge their biped kinsman’s murder (2008 p. 48).

Another tale that influenced Lovecraft when writing “The Shadow over Innsmouth” was Robert W. Chambers’s “The Harbor-Master” (1904) (Joshi, 2001 p. 306). The basic idea of the story is that there is a spot at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean which is “inhabited by the remnants of the last race of amphibious human beings (Chambers, 2006 p. 27)” a member of which the feared figure of the harbor master is: he had gills, like a fish’s gills, … it had a soft, fleshy hole for a mouth, and its eyes were luminous and lidless and fixed (Chambers, 2006 p. 31).

In the two mentioned influential stories, the plot is concerned with a single specimen of a mixed race, which is a very different approach from Lovecraft’s. The most likely work to serve as an inspiration at this point is a story “Ancient Sorceries” (1908) by Algernon Blackwood (Joshi, 2001 p. 306) which treats of inhabitants of a French town turning into cats every night.

They passed swiftly and silently, shaped like immense cats, in an endless procession across the pictured glass…

… And these figures, as they lowered themselves down from the windows, were human, he saw; but once safely in the yard they fell upon all fours and changed in the swiftest possible second into – cats – huge, silent cats. They ran in streams to join the main body in the hall beyond (Blackwood, 2006 pp. 26-27).

Another important aspect of the story “Ancient Sorceries” used in “The Shadow over Innsmouth” is its ending where the narrator’s ancestry is traced in the town where he met the strange people.

The circle of Cthulhu Mythos creatures is widened by coinage of the underwater frog-fish men, the Deep Ones19. There is just a subtle note on the Old Ones made by old Zadok when talking about the Deep Ones.

19 Never again did they appear in a story by Lovecraft.
The Deep Ones are not as strong as the Great Old Ones are but still they are said to be able to cope easily with the whole mankind if they needed it.

“The Kanakys told 'em as haow folks from the other islands might wanta wipe 'an out if they got wind o' their bein' thar, but they says they dun't keer much, because they cud wipe aout the hull brood o' humans ef they was willin' to bother - that is, any as didn't be, sarten signs sech as was used onct by the lost Old Ones, whoever they was (Lovecraft, 1999 p. 297).”

There is not a clear explanation why they stay in their town at the bottom of a sea and it seems that they need us just for breeding and making the hybrids. Logic of the story sometimes stumbles a little; the Deep Ones’ reason for interbreeding hinted in a narrator’s dream is a slow overpowering of the Earth; which, on the other hand, does not flawlessly coincide with the suggested power they possess. There is not an obvious advantage they would gain from mixing their genes with ours.

Other creatures mentioned in the story are Mother Hydra and Father Dagon. It is not clear whether they are the Deep Ones or the Old Ones. The two and Cthulhu are worshipped by the Innsmouth people through the Church named Order of Dagon. Zadok in his monologue tells the narrator: “All in the band of the faithful - Order 0' Dagon - an' the children shud never die, but go back to the Mother Hydra an' Father Dagon what we all come from onct ... Ia! Ia! Cthulhu fhtagn! Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah-nagl fhtaga - (Lovecraft, 1999 p. 304)."

As the last line of the excerpt suggests, the Old Ones and Cthulhu met the same destiny as in “The Call of Cthulhu”20 and they are waiting for their time to come in the sunken city R’lyeh. Shoggoths are mentioned in the tale to be used by the Deep Ones for building their cities.

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20 Ia! Ia! Cthulhu fhtagn! Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah-nagl fhtaga is translated in “The Call of Cthulhu” as "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming (Lovecraft, 1999 p. 150)."
The very last paragraph of the story (We shall swim out to that brooding reef in the sea and dive down through black abysses to Cyclopean and many-columned Y'ha-nthlei, and in that lair of the Deep Ones we shall dwell amidst wonder and glory for ever) (Lovecraft, 1999 p. 335) is recognized by Joshi to be a parody of the 23rd Psalm (“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever”) (2001 p. 240). This is not a very surprising discovery when we learn that Lovecraft became an absolute atheist in his youth, regarding religion completely refuted by sciences (Joshi, et al., 2001 p. 124), (which also rules out an interpretation of his texts as a parallel to Christian mythology (Joshi, et al., 2001 p. 53).

Dagon, whose name the order of worshipers takes In “The Shadow over Innsmouth”, is, however, a creature that appeared many years before in a tale of the same name. The story “Dagon” was written in the year 1917 and it brought some themes that proved to be very important in next decades as they developed in his later Cthulhu Mythos work.

2.3.5 Dagon

The story takes place in the midst of the First World War. The narrator is a mariner who escaped Germans on a lifeboat and gets lost on the sea. After long sleep he wakes up on a piece of land that is actually part of the sea-bottom that was elevated from under the water by volcanic activity. There was nothing within hearing, and nothing in sight save a vast reach of black slime; yet the very completeness of the stillness and the homogeneity of the landscape oppressed me with a nauseating fear (Lovecraft, 1999 p. 2). After days of walking he gets to an immense pit at whose bottom there is a huge monolith. Narrator’s dread reaches his top when a creature comes out of water while he is examining the monolith. Stricken by horror he runs back to his boat and after a storm he wakes up in a San Francisco hospital.
The story ends with the narrator rushing to the window after hearing a noise of the creature at the door of the hospital room.

Aside its decent quality, and excellent atmosphere, the story is interesting for an introduction the readers to one of elements of Cthulhu Mythos: the deity Dagon.

...A closer scrutiny filled me with sensations I cannot express; for despite its enormous magnitude, and its position in an abyss which had yawned at the bottom of the sea since the world was young, I perceived beyond a doubt that the strange object was a well-shaped monolith whose massive bulk had known the workmanship and perhaps the worship of living and thinking creatures...

... Awestruck at this unexpected glimpse into a past beyond the conception of the most daring anthropologist, I stood musing whilst the moon cast queer reflections on the silent channel before me. Then suddenly I saw it. ...Vast, Polyphemus-like, and loathsome, it darted like a stupendous monster of nightmares to the monolith, about which it flung its gigantic scaly arms, the while it bowed its hideous head and gave vent to certain measured sounds. I think I went mad then... (Lovecraft, 1971 p. 27).

Joshi implies that for this story (and than many others) Lovecraft found his main inspiration in Poe: “In particular, the idiom Lovecraft evolved in his early tales: dense, a little overheated, lacked with archaic and recondite terms, almost wholly lacking in ‘realistic’ character portrayal, and almost entirely given over to exposition and narration, with a near complete absence of dialogue... (2001 p. 108).”

The narrator of “Dagon” actually describes a ritual of a creature admiring a statue of a god. We can assume this specimen belongs to a bigger community of the species. The similarity with not aging hybrid cultists from New England worshipping Cthulhu (and other mighty creatures, presumably the Old Ones) from “The Shadow over Innsmouth” is obvious.
The first on the list of Cthulhu cycle stories, “The Call of Cthulhu,” mentions other three places where the worshippers of the Great Old Ones execute their rituals and practices their “religion”: a perverted sect of West Greenland Eskimos, a swamp cult of Louisiana and community of deathless priests somewhere in China.

One of Lovecraft stories, “The Festival” (1923)\(^\text{21}\), which was written three years before “The Call of Cthulhu”, is another tale dealing with a society of worshippers.

### 2.3.5 The Festival

The tale describes a community of sectarians from the point of view of a visitor, who is invited to take part in celebration of the Yuletide – Christmas. The ceremony is held in a town which is a part of Lovecraft’s fictional setting of New England, Kingsport\(^\text{22}\). The narrator is beckoned as a descendant of a family belonging to the local community.

The ritual is carried out in the underground cave underneath a church in the aforementioned town. The narrator is horrified by the people silently descending into an abyss under the temple and his fear reaches the top when he recognizes that the society, he is asked to become a part of, befriend with creatures which are not from our world.

*Out of the unimaginable blackness beyond the gangrenous glare of that cold flame, out of the tartarean leagues through which that oily river rolled*

\(^{21}\) Despite the fact that it was written three years before “The Call of Cthulhu”, it is invariably considered a part of the Cthulhu Mythos for reasons explained later in the study.

\(^{22}\) Kingsport, Massachusetts appeared for the first time in a story “The Terrible Old Man” (1920) (Joshi, et al., 2001 p. 137). Lovecraft alone stated that Kingsport is more or less based on a real town Marblehead in Massachusetts (2006 p. 210) whose visit inspired Lovecraft to write “The Festival” (Joshi, et al., 2001 p. 92).
uncanny, unheard, and unsuspected, there flopped rhythmically a horde of tame, trained, hybrid winged things that no sound eye could ever wholly grasp, or sound brain ever wholly remember. They were not altogether crows, nor moles, nor buzzards, nor ants, nor vampire bats, nor decomposed human beings; but something I cannot and must not recall. They flopped limply along, half with their webbed feet and half with their membranous wings; and as they reached the throng of celebrants the cowled figures seized and mounted them, and rode off one by one along the reaches of that unlighted river, into pits and galleries of panic where poison springs feed frightful and undiscoverable cataracts (Lovecraft, 2007 p. 28).

After meeting these creatures the narrator escapes the sectarians and with luck he ends up at the hospital with dark images of mankind’s destiny tormenting his fragile mind.

Neither the Great Old Ones nor other mighty creatures worshipped by Kingsport’s community are mentioned and the narrator meets only unnamed beings that are rather animals of an unearthly origin than monsters that would possess a real power.

Despite absence of the Old Ones or Cthulhu, or at least a reference to them, the story fits in the Cthulhu Cycle well. It is so because of another feature which is typical for the Cthulhu stories: presence of the dreadful “Book of Dead Names”; “Necronomicon”.

### 2.4 Necronomicon

Before the tale “The Festival” is over the protagonist reads a mysterious piece of text that makes him shiver from trepidation:

“The nethermost caverns,” …, "are not for the fathoming of eyes that see; for their marvels are strange and terrific. Cursed the ground where dead thoughts live new and oddly bodied, and evil the mind that is held by no head. Wisely did
Ibn Schacabao say, that happy is the tomb where no wizard hath lain, and happy the town at night whose wizards are all ashes. For it is of old rumour that the soul of the devil-bought hasteth not from his charnel clay, but fatur and instructeth the very worm that gnaws; till out of corruption horrid life springs, and the dull scavengers of earth wax crafty to vex it and swell monstrous to plague it. Great holes secretly are digged where earth's pores ought to suffice, and things have learnt to walk that ought to crawl. (Lovecraft, 1987 p. 216)."

Those hair-raising lines are an extract from a well-known though imaginary book called “Necronomicon”. It is always described as an extremely dangerous book which can bring creatures from other worlds to our dimension (e.g. Yog-Sothoth, Old Ones in “The Dunwich Horror”) and people who coped with it often perished in a cruel way (as its author did). That is the reason its translations are safely locked in just a few libraries and there is only small chance to get hold of the perilous tome.

### 2.4.1 History of the Necronomicon

The first explicit mention of the “Necronomicon” is made a story “The Hound” (1922) (Joshi, et al., 2001 p. 118).

After its coinage in “The Hound” Necronomicon appeared in many tales by Lovecraft; e.g. “The Call of Cthulhu”, “The Dunwich Horror”, “The Case of Charles Dexter Ward”, “The Festival” and others while having an important role in them.

In the year 1927 Lovecraft wrote “History of the Necronomicon”\(^{23}\). It was rather a sketch, of not more than three pages, made for the purpose of keeping the information organized (Joshi, 2001 p. 264), but it provides us with a summary of the ideas and imaginary account of this typical feature of the Cthulhu Mythos:

\(^{23}\) Published in 1938.
Original title Al Azif — azif being the word used by Arabs to designate that nocturnal sound (made by insects) suppos’d to be the howling of daemons.

... (1228) Olaus Wormius made a Latin translation later in the Middle Ages, and the Latin text was printed twice — once in the fifteenth century in black-letter (evidently in Germany) and once in the seventeenth (prob. Spanish) — both editions being without identifying marks, and located as to time and place by internal typographical evidence only. The work both Latin and Greek was banned by Pope Gregory IX in 1232, shortly after its Latin translation, which called attention to it.

... A seventeenth-century edition is in the Widener Library at Harvard, and in the library of Miskatonic University at Arkham. Also in the library of the University of Buenos Ayres. Numerous other copies probably exist in secret, and a fifteenth-century one is persistently rumoured to form part of the collection of a celebrated American millionaire.

### 2.4.2 Abdul Alhazred

The imaginary author is a mad Arab Abdul Alhazred whose name came to existence long years before it became what we know it now. Lovecraft in his essay “Some Notes on a Nonentity” writes: When I was five the Arabian Nights claimed me, and I spent hours in playing Arab – calling myself “Abdul Alhazred”, which some kindly elder\(^24\) had suggested to me as a typical Saracen name (2006 pp. 207-208). In view of the fact that Lovecraft was a keen reader since his early childhood, the most probable meaning of the name is an equivoque all-has-read (Pearsall, 2005 p. 25).

\(^{24}\) Joshi identifies the person as the family lawyer, Albert A. Baker. The name Abdul Alhazred is from the point of view of Arabic grammar inappropriate (2001 p. 18).
The name first appeared in a story “The Nameless City”\textsuperscript{25} (1921) (Joshi, et al., 2001 p. 182), which was a moment the Cthulhu Mythos started to shape itself according to Darrel Schweitzer (2001 p. 80).

There is not a mention of the wicked book the mad Arab created, however, a famous verse of his is cited here:

\textit{That is not dead which can eternal lie},

\textit{And with strange aeons death may die} (Lovecraft, 1999 p. 156).

Later in Lovecraft’s stories the verse was explained to be a fragment from the Necronomicon related to the Great Old Ones sleeping in a sunken city.

In “History of the Necronomicon” Abdul Alhazred is described as a mad poet of Sanaa, in Yemen, who is said to have flourished during the period of the Omniade caliph, circa 700 A.D.

\ldots\ The book was a product of Abdul’s old age, which was spent in Damascus,\ldots\ Alhazred died – or disappeared – under terrible circumstances in the year 738.

\ldots\ He is said by Ebn Khallikan (12th cent. biographer) to have been seized by an invisible monster in broad daylight and devoured horribly before a large number of fright-frozen witnesses.

In his book Abdul Alhazred wrote about mythical creatures and incantations serving to summon them. In “The Mountains of Madness” the extraterrestrials are recognized as monsters depicted by Abdul Alhazred and even the place where the protagonists find the remnants of extraterrestrial civilization is defined as the Plateau of Leng which Alhazred also mentioned in the Necronomicon.

\textsuperscript{25} Despite its significance for development of the Cthulhu Mythos it can sometimes be regarded a part of another cycle of stories which Lovecraft created; the Dream Cycle.
2.4.3 The Plateau of Leng

The Plateau of Leng is a mysterious place where terrible creatures live hidden from our sight; a place so dreadful that Even Alhazred is said to be reluctant to discuss the existence of it (Lovecraft, 1999 p. 368).

Aside from “The Mountains of Madness”, The Plateau of Leng is used two more times in Lovecraft’s fiction and, as the whole “mythology” differs in his works, the place where the narrators of the stories find it changes: "The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath" describes it as an area populated by repulsive, horned men in the far north of the Dreamlands. In “The Hound”, it is a place in Central Asia where a corpse-eating cult lives.

2.4.4 “Real” Necronomicon

The book, despite being a product of Lovecraft’s imagination, became an object of interest of many readers believing it had really existed. Even now, you can easily find on-line materials defending authenticity of the book and impressions of that title have been really published several times since Necronomicon became a famous fictional piece of work.

This is not a surprising reaction as Lovecraft was keen on making use of imaginary books in combination with names of real books as well, in order to make the list more realistic. For instance, in “The Festival” the narrator visits a house that belongs to his ascendants where he finds some terrifying pieces of literature:

...old Morryster's wild Marvels of Science, the terrible Saducismus Triumphatus of Joseph Glanvil, published in 1681, the shocking Daemonolatreja of Remigius, printed in 1595 at Lyons, and worst of all, the unmentionable Necronomicon of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred, in Olaus Wormius' forbidden
Latin translation; a book which I had never seen, but of which I had heard monstrous things whispered (Lovecraft, 1987).

Quite an interesting stack of books: “Marvels of Science” is a name of a book borrowed from a story “The Man and the Snake” by Ambrose Bierce whom Lovecraft regarded one of the best, though underrated, American authors (Lovecraft, 2006 pp. 47,49). “Saducismus Triumphatus” is a real work by Joseph Glanvill published in England in 1681; it concerns the existence of witches and other paranormal powers. “Daemonolatreja” or “Daemonolatreiae libri tres” is another real book by Nicholas Remy (Remigius), a famous witch-hunter of the 16th century.

That goes for geography of Lovecraft’s fictional world as well; he often put imaginary towns (Arkham, Innsmouth, Kingsport, Dunwich…) among real places of New England geography.
Conclusion

The objective was to point out some fictitious aspects of Lovecraft’s work that compose a shared universe of the Cthulhu Mythos and describe them. The study focuses on the most influential works that are the basic parts of the mythos as well.

The biography in the first part of the study should provide a reader with a short account of the literary influences and events of his life that had an important impact on his writing.

In spite of not very good accessibility of biographical materials concerning Lovecraft’s life, books by S. T. Joshi provided me with a priceless source of information and in the first part of the study I worked mainly with his “A Dreamer and a Visionary, H. P. Lovecraft in His time” (which I believe to be the best work of its kind).

As Lovecraft’s prosaic work is published completely in collections of his stories which were the main topic in the second part, there were no problems with gaining the materials.
**Literary Sources**


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<td>Diplomová práce je zaměřena na povídky H. P. Lovecrafta, jež se řadí do cyklu „Cthulhu Mythos“. Zabývá se jak typickými prvky této skupiny povídek, tak vlivy a inspirací, které formovaly charakteristický styl jeho děl.</td>
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