The Creation, Evolution and Aftermath of Lovecraftian Horror

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The untrodden realms of the vast and unknown cosmos may hold within myriads of ancient and horrifying secrets, unraveling of which can drive an individual to a mockingly insurmountable madness. Only the psychologically and intellectually sensitive may come to the forbidden knowledge and realization of the existence of such unnamable cosmic mysteries and shudder in merciless solitude at those horrendous cosmic vistas and entities to whom the existence of mankind holds absolutely no value or importance.

When I first read a short story by H. P. Lovecraft (I think it was “The Unnamable”), something changed in me. I have not been the same ever since. The shock may be compared to the revelation of gruesome and forbidden knowledge to Lovecraft’s unfortunate protagonists, but I sure was fortunate to have such cosmically weird and aesthetically bizarre vistas opened before my eyes. Cosmic horror has affected my perspectives and has modified my artistic and aesthetic views and approaches. I, very much like most of Lovecraft’s enthusiastic readers, take joy in the fantastic journeys on which Lovecraft accompanies me to those untrodden, forbidden and monstrous realms where cosmic terror reigns; where in the implausibly frail hearts of men cosmic horror prevails and where I am beckoned to look straight into the indifferent eye of the intergalactic universe, and shiver of inexplicably fiendish joy.

I consider it to be my mission to familiarize the reader even more with H. P. Lovecraft and his grotesquely sublime universe of horror.

Negin Ghodrati
Chapter 1– An Introduction to H. P. Lovecraft and Cosmic Horror

Howard Phillips Lovecraft, more widely known as H. P. Lovecraft, was an American author, a prominent figure in twentieth century horror, fantasy and science-fiction and particularly, a subgenre known as "weird fiction" which includes those tales of the macabre that combine the supernatural, mythical and scientific elements. Born in 1890 in Providence, Rhode Island, he wrote some of the most influential short stories and novellas in horror genre, such as "Dagon," "The Call of Cthulhu," "The Colour Out of Space," "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward," "At the Mountains of Madness" and "The Shadow Over Innsmouth." He was a self-taught scholar and a misanthropic visionary who created a type of horror in literature, known as "cosmic horror" and the uniqueness of his fictional worlds, characters and concepts have resulted in the emergence of a sub-genre of horror fiction called "Lovecraftian horror," named after the author himself. He was a rather unknown author in his own time and published his stories mostly in the pulp magazines of the time, as an amateur writer. However, after his death in 1937 and especially in the second half of the twentieth century, his work started to get recognized and appreciated. His writings and concepts have ever since been applied, demonstrated and elaborated by numerous other writers, visual artists, filmmakers and video game developers. The aim of this thesis is to introduce and analyze H. P. Lovecraft’s cosmic horror. More specifically, it is an attempt to analyze the origins, creation process and evolution of cosmic horror in Lovecraft’s life and writings and discuss the aftermath of cosmic horror in our time and its influences on popular culture.

As mentioned, Lovecraft did not attain much fame and credit for his work during his somewhat short lifespan (August 20, 1890 – March 15, 1937), even though he was a prolific and intellectual author and epistolarian. The emergence of his popularity has been slow, but it has finally arrived and is expanding noticeably (Burleson Critical ix). He is now considered by many writers and scholars to be one of the most influential horror writers of the twentieth century. His work has influenced and inspired a remarkable number of famous writers and artists. Among them are the contemporary horror writer Stephen King, the author and artist Clive Barker, comic artist Alan Moore, movie
directors Dan O'Bannon, Stuart Gordon, John Carpenter and Guillermo Del Toro, and the surrealist artists H. R. Giger and Jean Giraud. Through Lovecraft’s writings and correspondence was born a shared fictional universe which August Derleth—one of Lovecraft's contemporaries and a correspondent—named "Cthulhu Mythos." This fictional world; this quasi-mythology is based on and borrows material from Lovecraft's stories, themes and style. Some commonly shared elements in the Cthulhu Mythos—which the Mythos writers borrowed freely from Lovecraft—are his fictitious book of knowledge forbidden to man: the Necronomicon, his astral and extraterrestrial alien "gods" or antagonists known mainly as the “Old Ones” and a large number of his coinages of the names of places and characters. The fictitious places Lovecraft mentions or sets his stories in have led the author and musician, Keith Herber, to coin the term “Lovecraft Country,” combining those real and fictitious cities and locations Lovecraft and later writers of Cthulhu Mythos apply in their writings. A number of more recurrent cities in Cthulhu Mythos are Arkham, Dunwich and Innsmouth, all supposedly in Massachusetts.

A central notion in Lovecraft's fiction is "Cosmicism," a concept which was developed and applied by Lovecraft in the beginning of the twentieth century; the idea and philosophy that mankind is absolutely insignificant and irrelevant in the vast cosmos and intergalactic arrangement (Lovecraft Annotated 12), that life is genuinely inconceivable to the human mind and the universe is fundamentally indifferent or hostile toward mankind and that a peek into this very truth and the forbidden secrets of the universe can drive one to misery, madness or even death. The concept of cosmicism generates in mankind a type of fear, referred to as "cosmic fear" or "cosmic horror." Cosmic fear—which is vibrantly present in the whole Cthulhu Mythos—has been employed by many horror and weird fiction writers ever since and is the essence and the key factor in the creation of Lovecraftian horror fiction. Interestingly, a great deal of cosmic horror can be sought in late twentieth and twenty-first century art, entertainment and literature. As digital media develops in film special effects, video games and art, the more popular and noticeable cosmic horror and Lovecraft become. Since the late twentieth century, a large number of his stories have been adapted into plays, films and games. This concept will be further explained in this chapter.

There are several themes and concepts which indicate the presence of cosmicism in fiction and portray the insignificance of mankind in the vast cosmos and are emblems
of Lovecraftian horror. The protagonist of a Lovecraftian tale is normally depicted as a misanthropic and dethatched individual; powerless when faced with the elements of the unknown. A certain helplessness and hopelessness dominates Lovecraft’s protagonists. Examples of this are observed in many tales, such as "Dagon," "Beyond the Wall of Sleep," "The Call of Cthulhu," The Shadow Out of Time and many others. Another main theme is the unknown itself, or rather the unknowable, inexplicable and forbidden knowledge. Stories like "The Call of Cthulhu," "The Book" and "The Unnamable" demonstrate this theme very well. The characters often face unanswered questions and unresolved mysteries. This theme results in other themes, such as madness and the fragility of human sanity in Lovecraft. When faced with a glimpse of the forbidden and the unknown, the miserable protagonists such as the ones in tales like "Dagon," "The Call of Cthulhu" and "The Book," fall into insanity and oblivion. A Lovecraftian tale may also depict the inability of human sciences in dealing with the unknown and uncovering its secrets. This is demonstrated in its best form in "The Colour Out of Space." Tainted genealogy and inherited guilt is another recognizable Lovecraftian theme; the fact that the character cannot possibly escape his own decadent bloodline, no matter how harmless or good-natured he is. This theme dominates Lovecraft’s longest tale, The Case of Charles Dexter Ward and is also present in The Shadow Over Innsmouth and several others. The concept of "fate" as an inseparable fragment of cosmicism is another theme and similar to the character’s ancestry and bad bloodline, is careless to the nature of the individual and forces itself upon him, such as presented in stories like "Dagon." Moreover, extraterrestrial phenomena are present in many of Lovecraft’s tales; all his unknown and unknowable “gods” are ancient extraterrestrial beings. The "Old Ones" are ancient alien life forms who came to earth from the stars, eons before mankind existed. The Old Ones have a strong presence in stories like "The Colour Out of Space," "The Whisperer in Darkness," At the Mountains of Madness and The Shadow Out of Time.

Lovecraft's writing style is known for its frequent and conscious utilization of various literary devices, such as archaism, alliteration, anaphora, metaphor, symbolism and colloquialism, which give him his own unique style for creating his own type of horror. Moreover, his style of writing projects his lifelong desire to be an English gentleman of the early eighteenth century. To some critics, Lovecraft’s style is considered weak, inconsistent, naïve and over-dramatic. However, during the course of his life, Lovecraft continually and meticulously kept perfecting and modifying his prose
S. T. Joshi—an award-winning critic, novelist and a leading figure in the study of H. P. Lovecraft—says in the introduction to Lovecraft’s *The Complete Fiction* about his style that:

…it was quite clearly chosen with deliberation to create the maximum emotive impact and to harmonize with the *outré* conceptions filling his tales. As his career progressed, Lovecraft reined in some of its floridity, so that his prose became an almost mathematically precise tool in conveying the fusion of horror and science fiction that typified his later work. (xiii)

In other words, his style of writing is one of the key factors in the creation of cosmic horror. This will be further discussed in the texts presented in Chapter 2.

As mentioned, my intention is to introduce and analyze Lovecraftian and cosmic horror, first by taking a look at the author’s previous influences, inspirations and his life and then by demonstrating the creation of cosmic fear in his fiction and finally, by portraying its emergence in popular culture and modern art and entertainment.

In order to achieve the aim of this thesis, I will first give a brief introduction in this chapter to horror and Gothic literature whence the Lovecraftian tale emerged. Several prominent horror writers who—in Lovecraft’s view—helped create and promote horror fiction and the weird tale and in one way or another inspired or influenced Lovecraft’s writing career will be introduced, as well. Afterwards, a short biography of H.P. Lovecraft will be given to point out some of the different phases of his life which might have affected his writing, leading to the perfection and evolution of his cosmic horror. In addition, the texts which are going to be examined in Chapter 2 will be introduced here and the time, mentality and atmosphere they were written in will be mentioned for the reader to later decide whether the horror in each text might have been affected by the events and attitudes of the time of its production.

In Chapter 2, the creation of cosmic horror in some of Lovecraft’s texts will be investigated. A brief synopsis of the story will be provided and the elements of cosmic horror and their creation in the text will be portrayed and analyzed through some passages of each text. In addition, various insights, ideas and criticism of different scholars, critics and writers will be employed. The texts are chosen and analyzed
chronologically by the order of their production, so that the creation process, advancement, modification and evolution of cosmic horror can be perceived more clearly and tangibly.

Chapter 3 will study the aftermath of Lovecraft's cosmic horror; the influence of Lovecraft, his literature and his cosmic horror on pop culture and mainly on modern art and entertainment. That proves necessary in the study of cosmic horror, since Lovecraft’s literature has not only revolutionized modern horror fiction, but has also transformed a considerably large amount of visual arts, movies, video games and musical productions. Prominent Lovecraftian productions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century will be introduced and their Lovecraftian elements and connections to his texts will be pointed out. Chapter 3 will demonstrate Lovecraft's more recent popularity and the appearance of his fictions and notions in various modern media productions.

Finally, in my conclusion, a summary of the three chapters will be given to review my analyses and further clarify my viewpoints. The attempt is for the reader—already familiarized by then with Lovecraft’s influences, life, works and position in modern culture—to have a clearer notion of cosmic horror and its creation and also hopefully, its uniqueness and fascination.

"Horror fiction" or "horror fantasy" is a genre of literature which intends to create in the reader feelings of fear, terror and awe. Lovecraft's essay, "Supernatural Horror in Literature," is in fact one of the finest historical analyses of horror literature (Joshi & Schultz, 256) and serves as a guide to a large part of Lovecraft’s literary background and heritage. This brief introduction to horror fiction is chiefly indebted to this essay. As declared by himself and other scholars, Lovecraft's major influence was Edgar Allan Poe and furthermore, writers such as Lord Dunsany, Arthur Machen, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Robert W. Chambers, and Algernon Blackwood. However, reading through his brief yet thorough account of horror literature, one realizes the extensiveness of Lovecraft's reading of which horror fiction is actually only one part. A summary of "Supernatural Horror in Literature" follows, and the genre’s effects on Lovecraft’s literature are addressed.

Horror can be caused by the supernatural or the non-supernatural. Lovecraft declares that supernatural horror has its roots in the earliest human folklore, archaic ballads, sacred texts, various chronicles and many ceremonial and ritualistic texts and
incantations in various forms of, such as demons, the Devil and the like. With the Middle Ages came the transformation of all existing horror tales into more expressive form. Bards and minstrels and parents and grandparents told abundantly of witches, vampires, werewolves, ghouls and specters. The final step would have been the transformation of the chanted song and tale into formal literary composition. Through the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century, the fragments of horror were used copiously in various texts, but still under the guise of accepted literature. The horror tale finally developed into a genre titled "Gothic horror" in the eighteenth century with the publication of the book Castle of Otranto (1764), which even though it was called "mediocre" and "unconvincing" by Lovecraft (Lovecraft Complete 1048), made its writer, Horace Walpole, the founder of the horror story as a permanent and official form. The term "Gothic horror" or "Gothic fiction" normally indicates that the story combines elements of both horror and romance and it usually contains certain elements, such as a hero, a cruel tyrant and a virginal maiden.

“Gothic Horror” appeared throughout the eighteenth century in the works of many prominent authors. Mrs. Ann Radcliffe (9 July 1764 – 7 February 1823) took horror and macabre to a higher level and her strong visual imagination grants a genuine sense of unearthly and supernatural to her writings. Her only flaws according to Lovecraft were "prosaic disillusionment" and destroying the supernatural in the ending by mechanical explanations, "erroneous geography and history" and last but not least "insipid little poems" throughout her text (Lovecraft Complete 1050). Lovecraft criticizes the fact that she resolves the mysteries by physical and natural explanations and with her conservative, eighteenth-century rationalism (Mulvey-Roberts 182). But still Lovecraft mentions Radcliffe's most noticeable feature, which was her ability to create a brilliant atmosphere; producing the feel of the supernatural in her writings. Lovecraft praises her for adding to the genre "a genuine sense of the unearthly in scene and incident which closely approached genius; every touch of setting and action contributing artistically to the impression of illimitable frightfulness which she wished to convey" (Lovecraft Complete 1050). She might not have influenced Lovecraft directly, but still some Radcliffian influence is observed in his elaborate and tangible descriptions of unearthly vistas and frightful atmospheres. She wrote six novels, most famous of which is Mysteries of Udolpho (1794). The atmosphere of supernatural horror in this book, hidden manuscripts
and secrets behind the veils may remind one of Lovecraft and especially, his theme of forbidden knowledge.

Among other prominent eighteenth century figures was Matthew Gregory Lewis. An English novelist and dramatist educated at Oxford, he was often referred to as “Monk” Lewis, because of the fame and success of his Gothic novel, The Monk. The Monk offers a far more unrestrained version of Gothic and horror than mere sentimental romance and Radcliffian explained supernatural. Lovecraft asserts that by breaking the Radcliffian tradition in Gothic, Lewis expanded the field of the genre. The Monk became so popular and widely-read that Lewis' newly-gained social entrée brought him the friendship of such literary titans as Scott, Byron and Shelley (Mulvey-Roberts 149).

Later on, eastern tales—introduced to European literature by the French translation of Arabian Nights—became a fashion and inspired many writers, such as the eccentric William Beckförd, who wrote the novel Vathek. Beckförd, apparently the wealthiest commoner in England at the time, grew up in Oriental luxury and it fascinated him, so he familiarized himself with the Oriental Gothic. One of Lovecraft’s earliest fascinations was the Arabian Nights which made him read more into the literature of the orient and even assume the pseudonym of Abdul Alhazred, the mad Arab and the author of his fictitious book, the Necronomicon. In several of Lovecraft’s short stories—particularly in his Dunsanian tales—the description of eastern architecture, characters and elements, such as minarets, alchemists and Arabian deserts are given. Tales like "The Doom that Came to Sarnath," "The Nameless City" and "Celephaïs" are filled with such visions. In fact, the exotic oriental imagery, combined with the astral and outré atmosphere of his stories, help create the essence of cosmic horror. Lovecraft praises Beckförd and acknowledges him as a source of inspiration but complains that he lacks the essential mysticism which is necessary to weird fiction, arguing it is due to a Latin hardness and clearness in his text which stops the sheer supernatural fright from evolving (Lovecraft Complete 1056).

Lovecraft declares that it was with the creation of the horror masterpiece Melmoth the Wanderer (1820)—penned by the eccentric Irish clergyman Charles Robert Maturin (25 September 1782 – 30 October 1824)—that the Gothic tale accomplished an unprecedented level of spiritual fright (Lovecraft Complete 1052). Melmoth consists of five tales, unraveling the supernatural destiny of Melmoth, who is granted a 150-year life
extension for selling his soul in exchange for some forbidden knowledge (Mulvey-Roberts 159). This recalls two things: Goethe's Faust by which Maturin was greatly inspired and Lovecraft's frequently-used notions of knowledge forbidden to man and madness. Lovecraft says about Maturin and Melmoth the Wanderer that:

Without a doubt Maturin is a man of authentic genius, and he was so recognised by Balzac, who grouped Melmoth with Molière's Don Juan, Goethe's Faust, and Byron's Manfred as the supreme allegorical figures of modern European literature, and wrote a whimsical piece called "Melmoth Reconciled"… Scott, Rossetti, Thackeray, and Baudelaire are the other titans who gave Maturin their unqualified admiration, and … Oscar Wilde, after his disgrace and exile, chose for his last days in Paris the assumed name of "Sebastian Melmoth". (Lovecraft Complete 1053)

Lovecraft then comments on Mary Shelley's Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus, which was published anonymously for the first time in London in 1818. Lovecraft argues that the novel accomplished the supremacy in horror-making, but is tinged with moral didacticism (Lovecraft Complete 1057), which Lovecraft often criticizes and considers a major flaw in a weird tale. Still, Lovecraft was greatly inspired by Frankenstein and the scenes of body-snatching and corpse experiments in his "Herbert West—Reanimator" and "The Thing at the Doorstep" remind one of Frankenstein. Shelley's monstrous birth invention is also evident in Lovecraftian tales such as The Shadow Over Innsmouth or "The Dunwich Horror", in which the characters' realizations of their monstrous births and ancestry change the course of their lives. Frankenstein can be categorized as embryonic science-fiction (Mulvey-Roberts 215), which Lovecraft enjoyed and applied in several stories of his own works. The grave-digging, necromancy, and resurrection of the dead in The Case of Charles Dexter Ward and the dissection and biological experiments on the alien samples in At the Mountains of Madness may categorize these texts as embryonic science-fiction, too.

Lovecraft then discusses Sir Walter Scott (15 August 1771 – 21 September 1832) who employed the weird, frequently. He declares that in some of Scott's narrations "the
spectral and the diabolic is enhanced by a grotesque homeliness of speech and atmosphere" (Lovecraft Complete 1057). Thomas Moore and Charles Dickens joined the rank of the macabre through a couple of their works. Thomas Moore's poem *Alciphron* and his novel *The Epicurean* (1827), and Dickens' *The Single-man* (1866) are examples of such works. Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) is another example of a classic horror tale. The post-Darwin/pre-Dracula atavism, degeneration, devolution and malformation (Mulvey-Roberts 222) in this tale may remind one of Lovecraft's protagonist in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* who is descended from the "Deep Ones"—who are some alien fish-like entities—and "Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family" whose protagonist has a simian ancestor. Lovecraft states that *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë with its "bleak, windswept Yorkshire moors and the violent, distorted lives they foster" and "Heathcliff, the modified Byronic villain-hero" who proves to be more of a "diabolic spirit rather than a human being," is no simple Gothic tale. It is as Lovecraft puts it, "a tense expression of man's shuddering reaction to the unknown" (Lovecraft Complete 1060), a theme frequently used by Lovecraft himself.

In *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, Lovecraft devotes an entire chapter to his main influence who was none other than Edgar Allan Poe. Poe was an "opener of artistic vistas" who directly affected not only the weird and horror fiction, but the whole short fiction genre, in general. Even though Poe's main passion was poetry and poems like *The Raven* and *Ulalume* were definite highlights of his artistic life, his major success was in his short fiction. Lovecraft mentions that to Poe we owe the modern horror story in its final and perfected form and that he established a new standard of realism in the annals of literary horror (Lovecraft Complete 1066). One reason for him to enjoy and admire Poe was that Lovecraft like Poe despised a hollow moral didacticism in stories, and wrote about Poe that, "the author always acting as a vivid and detached chronicler rather than as a teacher, sympathizer, or vendor of opinion" (Lovecraft Complete 1065). His most recurring themes deal with questions of death, including its physical signs, the effects of decomposition, concerns of premature burial, and the reanimation of the dead (Kennedy 3); themes which can be detected repeatedly in Lovecraft's works. He also found those elements of the unknown and the weird that he had sought, ever since he was a little boy, in Poe. Poe inspired him to take a deep look into the vast, cruel and mysterious heart of the unknown and macabre cosmos. He says about Poe's writings that:
Verses and tales alike sustain the burthen of cosmic panic. The raven whose noisome beak pierces the heart, the ghouls that toll iron bells in pestilential steeples, the vault of Ulalume in the black October night, the shocking spires and domes under the sea, the "wild, weird clime that lieth, sublime, out of Space — out of Time" — all these things and more leer at us amidst maniacal rattlings in the seething nightmare of the poetry.

(Lovecraft *Complete* 1067)

Lovecraft also claims that Poe produced the final and perfected state of horror and weird tale. To Lovecraft's pleasure, no such things as happy endings, virtue rewarded, hollow moral didacticism, acceptance of popular standards and values, striving of the author to force his own opinions and taking sides are observed in Poe. Poe simply expresses and interprets the events and sensations as they are, regardless of their being good or evil, pleasant or repulsive, right or wrong, "with the author always acting as a vivid and detached chronicler rather than as a teacher, sympathizer, or vendor of opinion" (Lovecraft *Complete* 1065). As observed in Lovecraft's own fiction:

…pain rather than pleasure, decay rather than growth, terror rather than tranquility, and which are fundamentally either adverse or indifferent to the tastes and traditional outward sentiments of mankind, and to the health, sanity, and normal expansive welfare of the species. (Lovecraft *Complete* 1066)

Also, Lovecraft reminds us that in Poe we observe a scientific psychological attitude never observed before; something later writers were forced to conform to in order to compete at all, and that was mainly how Poe initiated the definite change in the mainstream of macabre and horror writing. In other words, Poe explored the origin of terror which is the human mind (Mulvey-Roberts 173). Lovecraft then categorizes Poe's tales:

…some of which contain a purer essence of spiritual horror than others. The tales of logic and ratiocination, forerunners of the modern detective story, are not to be included at all in weird literature; whilst certain others, …an extravagance which relegates
them to the borderline of the grotesque. Still a third group deals
with abnormal psychology and monomania in such a way as to
express terror but not weirdness. A substantial residuum, however,
represents the literature of supernatural horror in its acutest form;
and gives their author a permanent and unassailable place as deity
and fountainhead of all modern diabolic fiction. (Lovecraft
Complete 1067)

A preoccupation with terror and decay is apparent in Poe, both in his verse and
prose. He tends to pierce into the dead of the night and veils of death and reign as the
unquestionable king of terrifying mysteries of time and space. Still, Lovecraft asks the
audience to recognize and forgive Poe's minor defects which in his opinion are "His
pretence to profound and obscure scholarship, his blundering ventures in stilted and
laboured pseudo-humor, and his often vitriolic outbursts of critical prejudice" (Lovecraft
Complete 1066). In tales like Ligeia and The Fall of the House of Usher Poe reaches the
top summits of mastery and artistry. He understands so perfectly the "very mechanics and
physiology of fear and strangeness" (Lovecraft Complete 1069). As Lovecraft describes
Poe's typical protagonists, one realizes just how greatly his own protagonists are inspired
by Poe's:

… generally a dark, handsome, proud, melancholy, intellectual,
highly sensitive, capricious, introspective, isolated, and
sometimes slightly mad gentleman of ancient family and opulent
circumstances; usually deeply learned in strange lore, and darkly
ambitious of penetrating to forbidden secrets of the universe.

Such characters are observed in many of Lovecraft's tales such as "The Alchemist," "Cool
Air," "The Music of Erich Zann," "The Book" and many others. With Poe, Lovecraft
shares various similarities; both lost their fathers at a young age, loved poetry and used
archaism frequently, and both created their own world of horrifying fantasy and the
weird. In a letter to Frank Belknap Long in 1922, Lovecraft wrote:

To me Poe is the apex of fantastic art –there was in him a
vast and cosmic vision. . . . this terrible realization of the
mysteries beyond the stars. I do find it in Dunsany, though in much weaker form, and diluted with a certain shrewd self-consciousness which Poe sublimely lacked. There may be something rather sophomoric in my intense and unalterable devotion to Poe . . . but I do not think it so far amiss as the average ultra-modern would hasten to pronounce it. (Steiner 60)

Lovecraft then comments on the Continental pieces, one of the most artistic of which he believes to be the German classic Undine (1811), by Friedrich Heinrich Karl (5 November 1767 – 14 February 1841). He also mentions Balzac and Victor Hugo as French writers who applied supernaturalism and were active in the weird. But he mentions that it was probably left to Théophile Gautier to represent "an authentic French sense of the unreal world" with a "spectral mastery" (Lovecraft Complete 1062). Forbidden and horrifying visions and visits are portrayed in some of his short tales such as "Avatar," "The Foot of the Mummy" and "Clarimonde" which may remind one of Lovecraft's horrific vistas portrayed in stories like "Rats in the Wall," or "Imprisoned with the Pharaohs." Gustave Flaubert ably continued Gautier's path and created works like the poetic fantasy Temptation of St. Anthony. Also among the French writers, Lovecraft mentions Baudelaire who was deeply influenced by Edgar Allan Poe, as well.

Then Lovecraft explains about Jewish folklore as an influence in the realm of the weird and supernatural horror and that it "has preserved much of the terror and mystery of the past." There are "haunting shadowy suggestions of marvels and horrors" in tales, such as German novel The Golem (1914) by Gustav Meyrink, and the drama The Dybbuk by the Jewish writer who wrote under the pseudonym of Ansky.

Another prominent writer Lovecraft was greatly influenced with was the American novelist and short story writer Nathaniel Hawthorne, who was the great-grandson of one of the harshest witchcraft judges by the name of William Hathorne. As youths, Hawthorne and Lovecraft shared many similarities; they both grew up without a father and lived with their mothers for so long that they developed a bizarre sort of love and hate relationship with them. They both had a solitary and bookish childhood and moreover, at some point during their youth they became totally isolated hermits, but
Unlike Lovecraft who most probably spent this time reading voluminously, Hawthorne had a lonely creativity during that time (Mulvey-Roberts 108). According to Lovecraft, unlike Poe and his mastery in violence, daring, cosmic malignity and impersonal artistry, Hawthorne "is a gentle soul cramped by the Puritanism … and grieved at an unmoral universe which everywhere transcends the conventional patterns thought by our forefathers to represent divine and immutable law" (Lovecraft Complete 1070). And again unlike Poe, Hawthorne's mood and attitude belonged to the age which closed with him, since he left no well-defined posterity. His weird is a unique kind; evil is a very real force in Hawthorne, lurking everywhere, making the world into a theater of infinite tragedy and woe. Hawthorne presents his weird fantasy and supernatural phenomena through didactic or allegorical representations. Obviously, this is not the sort of moral didacticism which Lovecraft despises. Hawthorne's is that of the New World; depicting how the so-called "modern and reformed" Calvinist theology of the time was in itself a medieval prison; its bars being superstition and religious fanaticism. His story The House of the Seven Gables (1851) may in many respects be considered the American Version of Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto (Mulvey-Roberts 110). Therefore, supernatural horror is never a primary object in Hawthorne. His manner of portraying the weird is always gentle and elusive. Lovecraft says, "Hawthorne avoids all violence of diction or movement, and keeps his implications of terror well in the background; but occasional glimpses amply serve to sustain the mood and redeem the work from pure allegorical aridity" (Lovecraft Complete 1073).

Many of his short tales gently exhibit the macabre and the weirdness of atmosphere and incident: tales such as Edward Randolph's Portrait (1838) with its diabolic moments and The Scarlett Letter (1850) with the dark imagery of the characters' suffering and endurance. But Lovecraft discusses that the most prominent among Hawthorne's weird material is presented in his novel The House of the Seven Gables which tells of an ancestral curse lurking in an ancient house in Salem. Lovecraft has used the same concept in several tales, such as "The Alchemist" and "The Dreams in the Witch House." Lovecraft calls this tale an "…immortal tale — New England's greatest contribution to weird literature" (Lovecraft Complete 1072).

Closer to real greatness in Lovecraft's view is Ambrose Bierce (1842 – c1914). All of his tales are tales of horror and even though many of them deal with natural physical and psychological horror, many others are dedicated to the realm of the weird and
supernatural. Samuel Loveman, a poet and critic who was personally acquainted with Bierce, refers to him as the "shadow-maker" for the unholy terror in his tales, still tacit confirmation with Nature is in every instance insisted upon (Lovecraft Complete 1074). Loveman also mentions that there is some "inhumanity" present in Bierce. Lovecraft states that this inhumanity is created in Bierce by his sardonic comedy and graveyard humor. For example in The Damned Thing (1893) we read, "One does not always eat what is on the table," describing a dead body laid out for a coroner's inspection. It is remarks of this kind that makes Bierce's horror somewhat "inhuman." To Lovecraft, Bierce's weakness is his mechanical and artificial stylistic flaws derived from his journalistic models and probably because his "stories circle around the issue of misperception to the point of fatal error" (Mulvey-Roberts 23), but the "grim malevolence" is present in all his tales (Lovecraft Complete 1074). His story The Death of Halpin Frayser was called "the most fiendishly ghastly tale in the literature of Anglo-Saxon race" (Lovecraft Complete 1074). His weird tales appear mostly in two volumes Can Such Things Be and In the Midst of Life, the former almost entirely dedicated to the supernatural. In Bierce, the truth of the events is not the issue, but how they are perceived and the difference they make to the perceiver. "Even quite absurd superstitious beliefs may have devastating effects, and prove to be true..." (Mulvey-Roberts 24).

In the eighteen-nineties, the early works of Robert W. Chambers, such as his series of tales The King in Yellow, introduced a different quality of supernatural horror. The most powerful tale in the series, Lovecraft believes, is probably "The Yellow Sign" which introduces a creepy churchyard watchman with a puffy face like a grave-worm's. The background of the whole series is a monstrous book whose perusal brings madness and tragedy. We know through Lovecraft's correspondence that he was highly influenced by The King in Yellow, but it is a controversial issue whether Lovecraft was inspired by Chambers in creating his famous fictitious book, The Necronomicon. It is even argued that Lovecraft had not read that work until 1927 (Joshi & Schultz, 38). In any event, Lovecraft highly admired The King in Yellow.

Afterwards, Lovecraft explains about the versatile humorist, Irvin S. Cobb (June 23, 1876 – March 11, 1944) who depicts an unnatural bond between a hybrid idiot and a strange fish from a remote land, in his tale "Fishhead" (1911). In his later works, we observe a great deal of weird and impossible science. It is possible that the monstrous fish-like entities and hybrids of Lovecraft in The Shadow Over Innsmouth have been
inspired by Cobb's "Fishhead" and Lovecraft's "The Rats in the Walls" by Cobb's "The Unbroken Chain" (1923). Lovecraft's immense fear of the sea, sea creatures and even seafood might be another reason behind his monstrous aquatic entities, such as Cthulhu, Dagon, or the "Deep Ones." Another highly-effective creation in the American weird is the novel The Place Called Dagon (1927) by Herbert S. Gorman (1893-1954). It is a tale about decadent refugees from Salem witchcraft. "Dagon" is also the title of one of Lovecraft's earliest short stories in which his fear of the sea creatures may be observed through the depiction of some monstrous and repulsive aquatic deities. The themes of Edward Lucas White (May 11, 1866 – March 30, 1934) arise mostly from actual dreams. His tales—as Lovecraft puts it—have "an oblique sort of glamour." Lovecraft himself has mentioned in a number of his letters and notes that some of his themes and stories have come to him in dreams. He claims that the name Necronomicon had come to him in a dream, as well. Of younger Americans, Lovecraft mentions a faithful correspondent of his by the name of Clark Ashton Smith (13 January 1893 – 14 August 1961) who created incredibly bizarre vistas in his short stories that deal with different eons and dimensions, containing creative weird names of characters and places, such as Hyperborea, Tsathoggua, or Zothique. He was one of "the big three" weird fiction writers for the pulp magazine Weird Tales, along with Robert E. Howard and Lovecraft. Similar to Lovecraft’s, his fiction is noticeably marked by an extraordinarily wide and ornate vocabulary and a cosmic outlook. His chaotic and cosmically horrifying poem The Hashish-Eater was the reason Smith received a fan letter from Lovecraft, after which a strong and prolonged correspondence began. They often borrowed each other's invented names of places and strange gods and entities.

In Britain, Rudyard Kipling approached supernatural fantasy in such tales as The Mark of the Beast and The Phantom Rickshaw. Lovecraft identifies Kipling's weakness in his "omnipresent mannerisms" (Lovecraft Complete 1079). Bram Stoker created such horrific conceptions in tales like The Lair of the White Worm, The Jewel of Seven Stars and his most famous creation Dracula which has become the modern standard for scary vampire myths.

Of his contemporary writers of the weird and supernatural, Lovecraft also mentions the versatile Arthur Machen, who was a major influence. Machen was a man of letters who portrayed elements of "hidden horror and brooding fright" in his tales. Lovecraft calls Machen's tale, The Hill of Dreams, "an epic of the sensitive aesthetic mind"
This story deals with a hero responding to the magic of an ancient Welsh environment. Machen with his Celtic heritage tells of some domed hills, archaic forests and Roman ruins; the kind of setting we observe in some of Lovecraft's tales, such as "Celephaïs," "The Quest of Iranon" and some other "Dream Cycle" stories which were either based on an actual dream, or seemed as if they occurred in a dream or a dream-like adventure. Machen's visions were so spectacular that the American poet Frank Belknap Long—another friend and correspondent of Lovecraft—has summarized his magic in a sonnet called On Reading Arthur Machen. One of Machen's most famous horror tales is The Great God Pan (1894) which at the time was accused of being unwholesome and degenerate (Mulvey-Roberts 151). A less complex, yet fine in artistic value is a chronicle by the name of The White People. Although somewhat known as a writer of decadent horror, he probably gained the praise and imitation of Lovecraft, mainly through his fantastic ability to evoke the spirit of the place (Mulvey-Roberts 152); an ability of Poe's as well, that Lovecraft highly admired.

Another more modern master of horror and a major influence whom Lovecraft comments on is Algernon Blackwood (14 March 1869 – 10 December 1951) whose idea of an unreal world constantly pressing upon ours must have inspired Lovecraft. He calls Blackwood "one absolute and unquestioned master of weird atmosphere" which he simply creates with a small "fragment of humourless psychological description" (Lovecraft Complete 1091). It was his tales such as "The Willows" and "The Wendigo" that showed his ability to create such fantastic pictures of the mood and made him a big favorite of Lovecraft. However, he identifies Blackwood's weakness in his occasional ethical didacticism, whimsicality and his frequent use of modern and cheesy occultism. Among other famous tales of his is "Physician Extraordinary" from his collection John Silence (1908) and The Incredible Adventures (1914).

One huge influence on Lovecraft is none other than Edward John Moreton Drax Plunkett, Eighteenth Baron Dunsany, known as Lord Dunsany. He is the "inventor of a new mythology and weaver of surprising folklore." His tales are mainly dedicated to a "strange world of fantastic beauty" and are in contrast with the coarseness and ugliness of the twentieth-century everyday life and modernity Lovecraft so used to despise. Lovecraft mentions that Dunsany's tales are "the most truly cosmic" in the literature of any period:
As sensitive as Poe to dramatic values and the significance of isolated words and details, and far better equipped rhetorically through a simple lyric style based on the prose of the King James Bible, this author draws with tremendous effectiveness on nearly every body of myth and legend within the circle of European culture; producing a composite or eclectic cycle of phantasy in which Eastern colour, Hellenic form, Teutonic sombreness and Celtic wistful-ness are so superbly blended that each sustains and supplements the rest without sacrifice or perfect congruity and homogeneity. (Lovecraft Complete 1093)

Lovecraft recognizes Dunsany's major focus to be on beauty rather than horror and believes that a hint of humor and irony makes his exotic tales even more unique. He tells of jade and copper domes, beautiful sunsets and ivory minarets of dream cities. However, the occasional touch of cosmic fear is apparent when he tells of monstrous things and incredible dooms. This touch may be observed in such works as The Book of Wonder. Bizarre creatures and places he introduces in his tales, such as Hlo_Hlo, Gibbelins, Gnoles, City of Never and the Sphinx and such, give room to the creation of cosmic fright in his fiction. Lord Dunsany's fantasy with its biblical and lofty style and its invented pantheon of ancient gods, beauty of its style and cosmicism of its conception, highly influenced Lovecraft's Mythos with its own gods or primordial entities, such as Yog-Sothoth, Azathoth, Nyarlathotep and the like. Interestingly enough, Dunsany abandoned his created mythology early in his career. Lovecraft was so enchanted by Dunsany's work that he actually produced some stories, he himself referred to as his "Dunsanian Tales."

*Supernatural Horror in Literature* portrays how modern horror and weird fiction hailed from the heart of eighteenth-century Gothic tale. Weird tales often blend the supernatural, mythical, and even scientific. Lovecraft describes "Weird Fiction" or "Weird Tale," as:

The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint,
expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space. (Lovecraft Complete 1043)

Therefore, Lovecraft’s fiction stands out from mere horror or fantasy. There is "something more." This genre of horror mainly blends the supernatural, mythical, and scientific and adds to them all a touch of the unknown: "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" (Lovecraft Complete 1041). The "weird tale" label actually evolved from the magazine, Weird Tales; the stories therein often combined fantasy elements, existential and physical terror, and science fiction devices (Shaviro 33). It is also possible to conclude from Supernatural Horror in Literature that it was in fact Lovecraft’s attempt to establish a literary tradition to which his own fiction and pessimistic visions might be said to belong.

To be able to fully grasp the essence of the true weird tale, Lovecraft insists, one needs to have a mind of the "requisite sensitiveness." (Lovecraft Complete 1041). Lovecraft repeats the word "sensitive" so often in his essays, letters and fiction. In Supernatural Horror in Literature alone we come across terms such as "intellectually sensitive," "sensitive mind," "requisite sensitiveness" and "the sensitive" many times. The mind of Lovecraft's sensitive perceiver—as is witnessed in Bierce as well—is ready for those fantastic, unearthly and overwhelming vistas of the unknown. He believes that those who have been sucked into the daily-life affairs and routines are not among those, but "the sensitive are always with us, and sometimes a curious streak of fancy invades an obscure corner of the very hardest head" (Lovecraft Complete 1060). The enthusiastic readers of the weird tale probably have a tendency to become one with, or strongly relate to those vistas of horror and fantasy; those who have lived a big part of their lives wandering through imaginary realms of the weird and the macabre, out of the domain of conventional and traditional aestheticism. That is probably why weird fiction, its themes and perceptions in general, are not necessarily appealing to all kinds of readers. But those who wish to familiarize themselves with and enjoy the cosmic feel created by Lovecraft, need to remember that "…Children will always be afraid of the dark, and men with minds sensitive to hereditary impulse will always tremble at the thought of the hidden and
fathomless worlds of strange life which may pulsate in the gulfs beyond the stars, or press hideously upon our own globe in unholy dimensions which only the dead and the moon-struck can glimpse" (Lovecraft Complete 1043).

As briefly explained, cosmicism insists on the insignificant status of mankind in the vast scheme of cosmos and the intergalactic system. At the recognition of this very fact, cosmic horror appears and develops. When Lovecraft’s characters come to the realization that their life and mankind’s existence, intelligence and efforts are but a blot in the vast scheme of cosmos and that the universe if merely indifferent towards them, they experience the cosmic horror Lovecraft creates so masterfully in so many of his stories. Various cosmic entities exist in the fiction of Lovecraft and Mythos writers, usually referred to as "The Great Old Ones," "The Outer Gods," "The Deep Ones," "The Elder Things" and others. Lovecraft mentions these entities first in his famous short story, "The Call of Cthulhu" where a police inspector talks about some cultists they had arrested during some bizarre and nasty ritualistic performances:

They worshipped, so they said, the Great Old Ones who lived ages before there were any men, and who came to the young world out of the sky. Those Old Ones were gone now, inside the earth and under the sea; but their dead bodies had told their secrets in dreams to the first men, who formed a cult which had never died. (Lovecraft Complete 366)

Lovecraft did not refer to those Old Ones as supernatural, but solely as extraterrestrial. They are neither good nor evil, and human notions of morality have no meaning for these beings. Indeed, they exist in cosmic realms beyond human understanding. As a symbol, they represent the kind of universe that Lovecraft believed in, a universe in which humanity is an insignificant blot, fated to come and go, its appearance unnoticed and its passing unmourned (Burleson Survey 1284).

Michelle Houllebecq, an award-winning French author, filmmaker and poet in his book, *H. P. Lovecraft: Against the World, Against Life* states about H. P. Lovecraft’s cosmic horror that:
Of course, life has no meaning. But neither does death. And this is another thing that curdles the blood when one discovers Lovecraft's universe. The deaths of his heroes have no meaning. Death brings no appeasement. It in no way allows the story to conclude. Implacably, HPL destroys his characters, evoking only the dismemberment of marionettes. Indifferent to these pitiful vicissitudes, cosmic fear continues to expand. It swells and takes form. Great Cthulhu emerges from his slumber. (32)

The above passage demonstrates Lovecraft’s cosmicism, beautifully. In addition, S.T. Joshi believes that Lovecraft suffered a sort of disillusion when he contemplated the infinite space; coming to the realization of the futility of all human effort in light of the vastness of the cosmos and the inconsequentiality of mankind in it. But according to Joshi, Lovecraft turned this pessimism to his advantage later on, and it even became a tranquilizer for him against the tragedies of his own life, such as his failure to graduate from high school and enter college, his failure to find a real and secure job, his dissatisfaction with the progress of his writing and his perpetual and harsh self-criticism. Cosmicism could make these failures sound cosmically unimportant. Thus, Lovecraft evolved his pessimism to indifferentism (Joshi Dreamer 132). The philosophy of cosmicism also rejects the existence of any divine presence; so basically, man is alone in the realm of cosmos which is not even necessarily hostile towards him, but merely indifferent and uncaring. The enormous universe and its ancient history, affairs and entities do not even acknowledge the existence of mankind, and are as careless towards them as mankind is towards insects. But mostly, Lovecraft's view toward religion is very similar to that of human knowledge and living; that religion cannot save mankind, neither can spirituality and not even his vast range of knowledge. Humans and all their aspects are unimaginably insignificant in the intergalactic cosmos. Thus Lovecraft could be called a "cosmic indifferentist" rather than an "atheist." The horror is mainly created by the indifferentism of the vast cosmos and its ancient entities to which mankind is absolutely irrelevant. In fact, we may be able to say that Lovecraft was too laid-back and misanthropic to be an active hater of religion and a hot-tempered atheist. He says this about writing weird fiction:

I write weird stories because they suit my inclination best. I have a strong and persistent wish to—momentarily—suspend
or violate the illusion of time, space, and natural law. The natural laws of the universe imprison us, and frustrate our curiosity about the infinite cosmic spaces beyond our sight and analysis. My stories frequently emphasize the element of horror. Fear is our deepest and strongest emotion. Fear best lends itself to the creation of Nature-defying illusions.

(Loucks “Notes”)

According to many critics, there are three almost distinctive eras apparent in the fiction of Lovecraft. Macabre stories (approximately 1905–1920); mainly inspired by the works of Edgar Allan Poe, Dream Cycle stories (approximately 1920–1927); inspired a great deal by the works of Lord Dunsany, and finally, Lovecraft's Mythos stories or as August Derleth has coined them, "Cthulhu Mythos" (approximately 1925–1935); the most genuinely Lovecraftian of all Lovecraft's writings. Although Lovecraft never mentioned these categories in his writings, he once wrote in a Letter to Elizabeth Toldridge, March 8, 1929 that, "There are my 'Poe' pieces and my 'Dunsany pieces' – but alas – where are any Lovecraft pieces?" (Lovecraft Visible 65-66). Interestingly, his Lovecraft pieces were being prodigiously produced at the time he said that.

Lovecraft had read Poe since the age of eight. It is practically impossible to point out a number of Lovecraft’s stories which were influenced by Poe, since Lovecraft was majorly influenced by him and Poe’s traces are evident in many or even all of his tales, even if by paying homage to Poe by references and quotes. Nevertheless, some noticeable tales from his “Poe Era” are “The Beast in the Cave” (1905), “The Alchemist” (1908), “The Tomb” (1917), “Dagon” (1918), “The Statement of Randolph Carter” (1919). Except “The Alchemist” and “Randolph Carter,” these tales will be analyzed in the next chapter.

In 1919 Lovecraft first read the fantasy of Lord Dunsany and soon saw him speak in Boston. Most of Lovecraft's "Dream Cycle" stories are highly influenced by Lord Dunsany; the ones concerned with the dreamlands and alternative dimensions that can be entered via dreams. Some noticeable stories of this era are “Polaris” (1918), “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” (1919), “The Quest of Iranon” (1921), “The Nameless City” (1921), and “The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath” (1926). Interestingly and peculiarly, Lovecraft wrote his first Dunsanian tale, “Polaris,” before knowing the Irish master and his work. Although the visions of both authors may have similarities, the great similarity of style
could have also been due to the fact that both authors were highly inspired by Edgar Allan Poe. “Polaris” and “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” will be analyzed in the next chapter.

Interestingly, Lovecraft’s first appearance in print was not because of his fiction. At about the age of eight he became interested in chemistry and astronomy. He even produced a couple of journals, such as *The Scientific Gazette* and *The Rhode Island Journal of Astronomy* for his friends to read. His first officially printed material appeared in 1906 in an astronomical column of a scientific journal and from then on he started writing those columns for various magazines.

Presenting a brief biography of Lovecraft proves necessary for me to be able to depict the creation and evolution of "cosmic horror" through different periods and phases of Lovecraft's life and also present and explain a categorization of Lovecraft's works. To have a thorough look at his biography, it might be a good idea to read through S.T. Joshi's book, *Lovecraft: A life* and tens of thousands of letters Lovecraft wrote to various friends, writers, scholars and important figures of his time, collected in several publications, such as Arkham House's five-volume of *Selected Letters, 1911-1924* (1964). Most of the biographical references I am going to apply are summarized from S.T. Joshi's *Lovecraft: A Life*.

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born on August 20, 1890 in Providence, Rhode Island. His mother was Sarah Susan Phillips Lovecraft and his father was Winfield Scott Lovecraft, a traveling salesman. Lovecraft was an exceptional and peculiar kid. It is said that he recited poetry when he was two, started reading at age three, and writing at age six or seven. As a kid he was so fascinated by the book *Arabian Nights* that he had read by the age of five, when he developed a huge interest in Arabic themes and even chose the pseudonym of “Abdul Alhazred.” Later on, he used that name in several of his stories to refer to the author of a notorious and gruesome fictitious book, the *Necronomicon*. Later on, he discovered Greek mythology and read the children’s versions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In fact, his earliest surviving literary work is a verse of 88 lines, titled *The Poem of Ulysses* (1897), paraphrasing the *Odyssey*. It is said that his earliest fiction was a story called *The Noble Eavesdropper*, written as early as 1896. He had by then already discovered weird fiction. After the death of his father in 1898, his grandfather, Whipple Van Buren Phillips had a major role in Lovecraft's upbringing. For one thing, he sure was one major influence in Lovecraft's interest in the weird and Gothic
tales, since he used to entertain him with such stories from time to time and since Lovecraft was primarily a lonely and physically-ill child, his thirst for learning and reading into the weird became more intense.

The death of Lovecraft’s grandfather in 1904 caused irreparable financial difficulties for Lovecraft and his mother and they were forced to leave their luxurious Victorian home. In his letters, he mentions that his relationship with his mother was a love and hate relationship and that she often called him “ugly” and unattractive. It could be discussed whether this caused Lovecraft to have a low self-esteem, since he was always extremely and harshly critical of his own work while warmly encouraging, inspiring and guiding other authors he corresponded with. It is said that Lovecraft never got over the trauma of losing his indulging grandfather and mainly his birthplace. He took long and lonely walks and bicycle rides and was totally devastated. He even contemplated suicide, but the thirst for knowledge and learning discouraged the thoughts of suicide. In 1908, he suffered a nervous breakdown that caused him to leave school and fail to enter Brown University, and although he was one of the most formidable self-taught scholars of his time, the shame of not having gotten a university education never left him. It is said that he was literally a hermit from 1908 to 1913 and no one knows what exactly he was doing. It is mainly assumed that he took up intense and heavy readings of science, Gothic and weird tales and different magazines. However, he reemerged in a very strange way. In 1913, Angered by the stories of Fred Jackson in The Argosy—one of the early pulp magazines of the time—he wrote a letter in verse, attacking the writer which actually turned into a heated debate in the letter column. Lovecraft’s responses were always in heroic couplets reminiscent of Dryden and Pope. Edward F. Daas, president of the United Amateur Press Association (UAPA), noticed the argument and invited Lovecraft to join the UAPA, and Lovecraft did so in early 1914. This single event practically saved Lovecraft and his works from falling into oblivion. He wrote “The Tomb” and “Dagon” in quick succession in the summer of 1917. Around this time he began a network of correspondence with friends, scholars and associates, and eventually became one of the greatest and most prolific epistolarians of the century. In fact it was so voluminous that it has been estimated that he may have written around 30,000 letters, a figure which places him second only to Voltaire as an epistolarian.

A few weeks after the death of his mother in 1921, Lovecraft attended an amateur journalism convention in Boston. It was on this occasion that he first met his future wife, Sonia Haft Greene who was a Russian Jew and was seven years older than him. Lovecraft
moved to New York into Sonia’s apartment in Brooklyn, but they faced various financial troubles almost immediately; Sonia's business went bankrupt, and although Lovecraft attempted to secure work, few were willing to hire a thirty-four-year-old-man with no job experience. In 1925, Sonia found a job in Cleveland, Ohio and Lovecraft moved into a shabby apartment in a densely-populated immigrant neighborhood in Brooklyn, called Red Hook. He started to become increasingly depressed by isolation and the masses of foreigners in the city. His fiction turned from the nostalgic and mysterious Providence atmosphere, such as in “The Shunned House” (1924) to the bleak and misanthropic, such as in “The Horror at Red Hook” and “He” (both 1924), which totally reflect the immense shift of his feelings and attitudes towards his new residence. His failure to secure any work in such an enormous city and witnessing how easily and quickly the fresh immigrant workers and new-comers were able to find jobs and blend into the growing social context of the modern New York life—especially with his misanthropic New England background and opinion of himself as a privileged Anglo-Saxon—intensified his conceptual racism into a very real and tangible fear. This fear is absolutely apparent in his New York tales and particularly, “The Horror at Red Hook.” No wonder why his New York tales are sometimes referred to as his "exile stories." Finally, he returned to his precious Providence in 1926 and a divorce from Sonia in 1929 was inevitable.

Lovecraft needed to take all that which traumatized him in New York back with him to his precious Providence, where his genius juices would flow and the colonial architecture and scenery of New England would remind him of his lonely and mystical childhood and youth. Only there he could mix the atmosphere with the trauma of New York and create his most significant masterpieces. His initial idealistic and genealogical and conservative racism was intensified and realistically materialized by living in that very poor neighborhoods in New York and being robbed of work (and once even clothes) by immigrants. This fact, mixed with the rotten atmosphere of the neighborhood he lived in paved the way for the creation of Lovecraft's most horrifying and detestable monsters, imagery and localities; the black, loathsome and dreaded Shoggoths in At the Mountains of Madness who were initially created to serve a high alien race and who later rise against their masters and defeat them and gain power, the fungi from the remote planet Yuggoth in “The Whisperer in Darkness” and many others. Michel Houellebecq declares that:
New York had marked him forever. During the course of 1925, his hatred of the "foul mongrels" of this modern Babylon, the "foreign colossus that gibbers and howls vulgarly..." did not cease to exasperate him and drove him delirious. It could even be posited that a fundamental figure in his body of work—the idea of a grand, titanic city, in whose foundations crawl repugnant nightmare beings—spring directly from his New York experience. (103)

It is very likely that the dead city of R'lyeh in "The Call of Cthulhu" with its "wrong" architectural geometry, the green and repulsive ooze covering its surfaces and its titanic Cyclopean masonry, along with the alien monster lying and waiting in it is in fact another nightmarish vision of New York. S. T. Joshi in an interview explains about Lovecraft's racism that:

It’s easy to condemn Lovecraft unthinkingly from our own historical perspective (a perspective that includes the Holocaust, the civil rights movement, and so on), and at the same time it is easy to excuse Lovecraft as merely a "product of his times." …My own take has been that Lovecraft's racism was an intellectual error… (Tibbetts 13)

Indeed Joshi believes that it was an intellectual error that Lovecraft made in failing to exhibit more flexibility of mind to new evidence and occurrences, but it is also crucial to add that even though a mistake, his racism was a key factor in the perfection and elaboration of his comic horror and entities. The return to Providence, Rhode Island was probably the second birth of Lovecraft as an author. The rebirth begins with probably Lovecraft's most famous story, "The Call of Cthulhu."

Lovecraft wrote his finest tales, and continued his extraordinarily vast correspondence after his return to Providence. Among these great texts, “The Call of Cthulhu,” “The Colour Out of Space” and *At the Mountains of Madness* will be discussed in Chapter 2. His return initiated a wave of astonishing creativity in Lovecraft. He also
helped so many young authors, such as August Derleth, Donald Wandrei, Robert Bloch and Fritz Leiber in their writing career. However, his later stories, written two or three years before his death, were strangely long and complex and difficult to sell, so he supported himself largely by the ghost-writing of stories, poetry, and non-fiction works. He was incredibly shattered at the suicide of one of his closest correspondents, Robert E. Howard in 1936, but by this time, his own illness (cancer of the intestine) had largely progressed and nothing could be done to treat it. He died on March 15, 1937 in Jane Brown Memorial Hospital.

Lovecraft never had a proper book published in his lifetime and his stories, essays, and poems were scattered in a huge number of amateur or pulp magazines. But the interesting friendships he had made merely by correspondence saved his works from perishing: August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, two of his prominent pen-friends, formed a publishing house, called Arkham House to publish Lovecraft’s work. The first was The Outsider and Others (1939). Eventually Lovecraft’s work became available in paperback and was translated into a dozen languages. Today his fiction, essays, poems, and letters are widely available. Many authors have followed in his footsteps in writing and hundreds of artists, film producers, video game developers and even fashion designers have been heavily inspired and influenced by Lovecraft. Much remains to be done in the study of Lovecraft, but thanks to the intrinsic merit of his own work and to the diligence of his associates and supporters, Lovecraft has gained an unassailable niche in the canon of American and world literature.
Chapter 2 – The Creation Process and Evolution of Cosmic Horror in Lovecraft’s Fiction

In this chapter, the evolution of H. P. Lovecraft’s cosmicism through his own texts will be analyzed. The stories will be examined in two major categories: 1) tales written before “The Call of Cthulhu” and 2) “The Call of Cthulhu” and the tales written after it. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Lovecraftian horror, its qualities, components and means of expression entered a whole new phase with Lovecraft’s return to Providence, RI from New York and “The Call of Cthulhu.” The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate the creation process and those qualities and components of cosmic horror in both categories, in order to show the birth, growth and gradual evolution and perfection of cosmic horror in Lovecraft’s fiction. In other words, it is concerned mainly with the coming together of all the factors and elements in H. P. Lovecraft’s texts which result in the creation of cosmic and “Lovecraftian” horror.

The stories discussed on this chapter are chosen based on their importance in the progression and evolution of Lovecraft’s writing career, the strength and frequency of their components of cosmic horror, or the ones which helped create a Lovecraftian influence on popular culture.

The texts analyzed in the first category portray different stages of Lovecraft’s writing before his return to Providence, RI and contain different components of Lovecraft’s fiction which he gradually modified and perfected and which led to the creation of his “great texts.” The Lovecraftian elements of cosmic horror will be analyzed in each text and their connection to future “Lovecraftian” texts will be pointed out. From the first category, “The Beast in the Cave,” “The Tomb,” “Dagon,” “Polaris,” “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” and “The Music of Erich Zann” will be discussed. The stories of the second category will be selected from Michel Houellebecq’s list of Lovecraft’s “great texts.” He puts Lovecraft’s texts in four categories, or as he refers to them, "circles." The first circle is Lovecraft’s poems and correspondence. The second, the stories he participated in, his collaborations, ghost writings, plus the stories August Derleth has written based on notes and fragments left by Lovecraft. The third circle
includes the stories written by Lovecraft himself and the fourth circle—which is a subcategory of the third—includes some of those stories written by Lovecraft after his return from New York to Providence, RI which contain the most refined and evolved Lovecraftian elements and are referred to as "the great texts." Houellebecq recognizes the great texts and the date of their composition as follows (Houellebecq 40):

"The Call of Cthulhu" (1926)
"The Colour Out of Space" (1927)
"The Dunwich Horror" (1928)
"The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930)
At the Mountains of Madness (1931)
"The Dreams in the Witch House" (1932)
The Shadow Over Innsmouth (1932)
The Shadow Out of Time (1934)

Among these great texts, “The Call of Cthulhu,” “The Colour Out of Space” and “At the Mountains of Madness” will be discussed in this chapter. After his return to Providence, RI, Lovecraft’s horror stories “fall on or close to the border between science fiction and fantasy” (De Camp 333), whilst before that they were mainly in the realm of Gothic, macabre and fantasy (the Dunsanian tales are mostly fantasy). His tales of Gothic and macabre are not the focus of this chapter, as they are mainly pastiches of Poe and even though some are magnificent horror tales, do not contain strong elements of cosmic horror which this chapter attempts to analyze. The three “great texts” which will be discussed on this chapter are perfect samples of different approaches of Lovecraft in creating cosmic horror, after his return. In At the Mountains of Madness (similar to “The Whisperer in Darkness” and The Shadow Out of Time), we observe more science fiction than fantasy. “The Colour Out of Space” is more fantasy than science fiction and “The Call of Cthulhu” falls on the boundary (De Camp 333). They all demonstrate strong, yet different forms of cosmically horrifying atmospheres, incidents and visualizations. These stories are indeed some of Lovecraft’s best and play an important role in securing Lovecraft’s position as a prominent icon in popular culture. "The Call of Cthulhu" plays an important role in the transformation and evolution of Lovecraftian horror with the new vistas it opened into cosmic fear. "The Colour Out of Space," which Lovecraft favored and considered his best work, contains some of the most profound and innovative imagery and components of cosmic horror. And finally, At the Mountains of Madness
contains a recital of doings of alien cosmic entities (De Camp 334) and evokes a unique type of extraterrestrial horror through its gruesome Antarctic atmosphere and its hidden, forbidden and horrifying mysteries. Houellebecq states about Lovecraft's writings that:

Lovecraft's body of work can be compared to a gigantic dream machine, of astounding breadth and efficacy. There is nothing tranquil or discreet in his literature. Its impact on the reader's mind is savagely, frighteningly brutal, and dangerously slow to dissipate. Rereading produces no notable modification other than that, eventually, one ends up wondering: *how does he do it?* (42)

This chapter attempts to find out, at least to some extent.

1. **Pre-Cthulhu Tales**

Lovecraft's juvenilia go back to 1897, some of which have survived his own destruction of the texts. He was highly critical and sometimes even cruel and unjust to his own works, but among his early tales he spoke of a few favorably. “The Beast in the Cave” and “Dagon” are among these stories. Several of these tales will be analyzed, since before writing "The Call of Cthulhu," Lovecraft’s fiction, style and technique of horror-making went through various and noticeable phases and changes. As mentioned before, this is due to the fact that his style was gradually shaping itself through his reading of several other authors and imitating them. Therefore, recognizing the Lovecraftian elements in these tales from the borrowed material may help portray the creation process of his cosmic horror.

*“The Beast in the Cave” (1905)*

This story tells of a man who splits from his group and gets lost while visiting Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. As he loses all hope after the expiration of his torch and failure in finding a way out of the cave in mere darkness, he suddenly begins to feel a presence near him. Since from the creature's manner of moving and breathing the narrator finds it non-human, he becomes determined to hit the thing with a big sharp rock, which he succeeds in doing and hears the thing fall on the ground. Soon after, his guide finds
him and together they decide to investigate the thing which turns out to be dying. After a closer look, they discover that the creature is in fact a very distorted, pale and anthropoid-like human being who was also probably lost in the cave long before. The story is pretty short and simple, yet Lovecraft's style of writing and choice of vocabulary to describe the protagonist's thoughts and fears is capable of creating such feelings of suspense and tangibility in the reader that can only show Lovecraft at his start of becoming one of the masters of horror. Lovecraft's huge passion for scientific and classical reading at the time of writing “The Beast in the Cave” somewhat decreased his earlier interest in the supernatural (Lovecraft Visible 347). However, the feel of the supernatural and unearthly, plus Lovecraft's classic "fear of the unknown" linger in "The Beast in the Cave." The initial fear of the protagonist is created by being lost in the dark and the complicated networks of the cave. This fear becomes greater by remembering the accounts of tubercular patients who used to seek sojourn in caves. Even though this fear is very human and tangible, he is still haunted by "the unearthly stillness of this subterranean region" (Lovecraft Complete 2). Sensing the approach of a non-human entity adds to the horror and even though the protagonist describes the impact of the footfalls as soft and stealthy like those of a quadruped feline, he later on admits that the conduct of the creature was in fact very unusual since it had intervals in its locomotion that the protagonist fancied were done on two legs, instead of four. This small observation, mixed with Lovecraft's fantastic diction in describing the narrator's uneasy feelings about the nature of the thing, changes the whole dynamic of the existing horror, since the reader may assume the creature to be something of an unknown origin at this point, which somehow transforms natural horror into supernatural horror.

Near the end of the story, the description of the fallen creature which is described as a very rare, pale, less hairy and feeble anthropoid, adds to the feel of the unknown in the story. The reader now faces the fact that the thing does not resemble any known anthropoid and the description of the jet-black eyes lacking irises creates even more alien horror. At the very end of the story, however, all sorts of horror are replaced by wonder, compassion and reverence, for as the dying creature turns its head towards the audience and whispers its last utterances, they realize that the beast was, or had once been a man. However, this epiphany is not the "prosaic disillusionment" Lovecraft criticizes in writers such as Ann Radcliffe, since he is not necessarily providing a "mechanical explanation" in the end and—as in many of his later stories—leaves the judgment and speculation to
the reader. This is apparent in the fact that the reader never gets to hear the malformed man's side of the story; of his origin, how he got in the cave in the first place, how long he had been there, or for what purpose he had been stealthily approaching the protagonist. His whole state and characteristics are alien, even though the audience's compassion is acquired after the realization of the truth. And even then, the untold story of the malformed man helps create a certain degree of cosmic fear, since after all, the truth is forever unknowable. This early short story clearly shows several fictional characteristics of Lovecraft as an adult writer. Lovecraft almost always creates his type of horror through the power of suggestion, mood and atmosphere, rather than action (De Camp 44). This is exactly what the fourteen-year-old Lovecraft is doing in "The Beast in the Cave." It paves the way for him to practice his mastery of horror in future writings.

“The Tomb” (1917)

This tale was written after nine quiescent years—a period further discussed in chapter 1—and was the first story Lovecraft wrote as an adult. "The Tomb," which obviously belongs to Lovecraft's Poe era, is somewhat devoid of Lovecraft's originality as a horror writer. In a letter in January 1920 to the correspondence group the "Gallomo," Lovecraft admits about "The Tomb" that, "For a long time I was too indolent to do anything… My narrative pen was very rusty… But the spell of the gruesome was upon me… At last – A Poe again! [...] I really felt that the new attempt was inferior both to the "Beast" and 'Alchemist'" (Lovecraft Visible 67). Still, the tale introduces the reader to Lovecraft's passion for old places and constructions. The inspiration for writing "The Tomb" actually came from a walk in 1917 Lovecraft had with his aunt through an old cemetery and saw a particular crumbling tombstone, dating from 1711. Lovecraft says in the same letter mentioned above that:

Here lay a man…who might easily have seen Mr. Dryden had he been in the right part of London at the right time! Why could I not talk with him, and enter more intimately into the life of my chosen age? I looked long at the grave, and the night after I returned home I began my first story of the new series – "The Tomb." (Lovecraft Visible 67)
This is where the main importance of "The Tomb" lies; in bringing Lovecraft back to the scene of horror and weird writing.

“Dagon” (1917)

After "The Beast in the Cave," it is "Dagon" that once again creates some sort of cosmic and alien horror. Lovecraft himself liked "Dagon" much better than "The Tomb." Even though it still contains the grim diction and the atmosphere of Poe, it belongs to a whole different genre of horror; a kind of horror being shaped and evolved with H. P. Lovecraft himself. In the same letter to Gallomo he also says about "Dagon" that, "I rather liked the thing myself […] I had been reading Poe again – for about the ten millionth time. The new or rather revived mood was hard to dismiss, and after limbering up my style a bit with practice work I perpetrated "Dagon" in August. To me it seemed better than "The Tomb" – smoother, less halting and angular" (Lovecraft Visible 67).

"Dagon," in spite of being uncomplicated and straightforward, portrays the alien and otherworldly in a new and intense fashion. Even though Lovecraft mentions in a letter to Alvin Earl Perry on October 4, 1935, that "Often one or more of the things supposed to be done on paper can better be done in one's head – so that many tales (such as my … "Dagon") never had any kind of written synopsis" (Lovecraft Visible 265).

The prisoner of a German sea-raider manages to escape and ends up drifting aimlessly, waiting for rescue. When he wakes up after a night's sleep, he finds himself in a black mire filled with carcasses of fish and sea creatures, instead of the ocean waters and realizes that the mire extends around as far as he can see. He starts an overland journey towards a hummock, after the mire dries out. He feels at the edge of the world as he reaches the summit at night and observes the other side, for there is nothing but the same scenery with its valleys and slopes as far as the eye can see. He descends to the other side and witnesses a very huge and strange rock on an opposite slope and his horror mixed with excitement increases when he realizes that the rock is not the work of nature and is in fact a well-shaped and engraved monolith, depicting hieroglyphics containing mostly aquatic symbols. Then he witnesses a channel of water and curious bas-reliefs near the monolith and observes peculiar carvings on them; aquatic creatures unknown to mankind in battles with each other and other things. He figures out it must be the workmanship of some ancient sea-tribe who worshipped these mythological deities, but
soon after, a creature emerges from the water and writhes and bows around the monolith in a worshipping manner. Insane with fear he ascends the hummock to return to his boat. After waking up in a San Francisco hospital, having been rescued and remembering very little from his journey back to his boat, he hears of no such thing as an upheaval of the ocean floor and decides to keep his story a secret. But now he is haunted with the images of those detestable sea creatures and has sought shelter in morphine which has made him addicted. Having no money to supply more drugs, he decides to commit suicide: "It is at night, especially when the moon is gibbous and waning, that I see the thing. I tried morphine; but the drug has given only transient surcease, and has drawn me into its clutches as a hopeless slave. So now I am to end it all…" (Lovecraft Complete 27). The story ends with the narrator rushing towards the window to cast himself down when he hears a slippery lumbering sound at the door.

This early tale was mainly inspired by one of Lovecraft's own nightmares. About the dream he said that he saw a hideous crawl and felt like the ooze was sucking him down (Joshi & Schultz, 58). As mentioned, Lovecraft was known to detest fish and seafood: "I have hated fish and feared the sea and everything connected with it since I was two years old" (De Camp 73). This hatred is the main factor behind the creation of such terrible aquatic aliens; the hideous creature in “Dagon,” Cthulhu—whose facial features remind one of an octopus—and another race of the "Old Ones" known as the "Deep Ones" who have supposedly come from the stars eons before and live at the bottom of some ancient waters and play a central role in tales like The Shadow Over Innsmouth. "Dagon" is Lovecraft's first story to mention these aquatic abominations and therefore, marks the advent of the aquatic cosmic horror in Lovecraft. Moreover, this story has the pattern of most of Lovecraft’s later tales and shows the beginning of a stronger Lovecraftian trend in his fiction. It has the same first-person narrative by an ineffectual bachelor who comes upon some anomaly which violates the natural law and after making the shattering discovery that it is probably real, has to face death or insanity (De Camp 126).

The story begins with the narrator's declaration of his addiction and upcoming suicide. It is easy to figure out that the narrator must have suffered a great shock or trauma to fall into such a miserable state. The story is very simple and not much explanation is given about the narrator and his imprisonment by the German sea-raider. Similar to the majority of Lovecraft's characters, the protagonist does not matter. It is
merely the cosmic wonder that matters and "...its mere existence should overshadow the characters and events" (Loucks “Movies”). He only happens to be there to witness the cosmic phenomena. As usual with Lovecraft, the scenery, the anticipation of horror and the emotions building up to the encounter with cosmic horror are in fact more horrible and terrifying than the encounter itself. That is why Lovecraft, especially in his "great texts," avoids depicting the encounter explicitly. In "Dagon," the encounter is vaguely and hazily described and the whole nature of the thing and its story is only implied. Indeed it is a horrible encounter, but the cosmic horror is more tangibly felt in the description of the overnight change of scenery from the ocean to a barren land, the land's immensity and void, the nocturnal imagery of the uninhabited land, and the perpetual presence of strange and repulsive fish-odor through the narrator's journey, plus the description of the narrator's imaginations and speculations about the nature of the inhabitants of the depths and their aquatic residence and unknown deeds. In his essay, "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction," Lovecraft also states that, "Prime emphasis should be given to subtle suggestion—imperceptible hints and touches of selective associative detail which express shadings of moods and build up a vague illusion of the strange reality of the unreal" (Loucks “Notes”). It is also fascinating how Lovecraft switches from a normal and realistic discourse while describing natural surroundings and phenomena to this type of prose-poetic one in portraying things, places and incidents which have to do with the beyond. It is as if the narrator goes into this Zen-type state when describing the otherworldly phenomena and this helps create cosmic fear:

I have said that the unbroken monotony of the rolling plain was a source of vague horror to me; but I think my horror was greater when I gained the summit of the mound and looked down the other side into an immeasurable pit or canyon, whose black recesses the moon had not yet soared high enough to illumine. I felt myself on the edge of the world, peering over the rim into a fathomless chaos of eternal night. (Lovecraft

Complete 25)

As Lovecraft often does, the truth of the story is left for the reader to decide. We are never told of the intensity of the encounter, of the exact reason why the character suffers a weak and painful mental state after the cosmic incident. It makes you think whether you would have acted and felt the same way had any element of the unknown
revealed itself to you. Again in his "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction" Lovecraft instructs us that, "In relation to the central wonder, the characters should shew the same overwhelming emotion which similar characters would shew toward such a wonder in real life" (Loucks “Notes”). Therefore, the narrator's pitiable condition probably becomes quite understandable for the reader, even though he will never learn of the sheer truth of the incident. Even this passage—the narrator's testimony of the whole thing—does not clear up anything solid. He admits that he sometimes wonders if it was all but a dream. However:

This I ask myself, but ever does there come before me a hideously vivid vision in reply. I cannot think of the deep sea without shuddering at the nameless things that may at this very moment be crawling and floundering on its slimy bed, worshipping their ancient stone idols and carving their own detestable likenesses on submarine obelisks of water-soaked granite. I dream of a day when they may rise above the billows to drag down in their reeking talons the remnants of puny, war-exhausted mankind—of a day when the land shall sink, and the dark ocean floor shall ascend amidst universal pandemonium. (Lovecraft Complete 27)

It is remarkable how this very early tale entirely follows all Lovecraft's instructions for writing weird and supernatural fiction. "Dagon" is probably the earliest of Lovecraft's works in which we see more of Lovecraft himself, rather than Poe, Dunsany or Machen.

“Polaris” (1918)

After both "The Tomb" and "Dagon" were admired and published by W. Paul Cook, editor of the amateur press journal The Vagrant, Lovecraft found an immense inspiration and ego-boost to keep writing and wrote "Polaris." This is where a new chapter in Lovecraft's writing begins. In the same letter to the Gallomo, mentioned before, he says in a very exhilarated and informal tone that, "...I hustled with a new yarn – 'Polaris' – which you fellers saw before anyone else. That really was an important milestone in muh brilliant career – for its unconscious resemblance to the work of
Dunsany is all that finally led to my acquaintance with that then unknown source of inspiration" (Lovecraft Visible 68). The narrator, living by a swamp, is kept sleepless by the sight of the Pole Star or Polaris which always winks "hideously like an insane watching eye which strives to convey some strange message, yet recalls nothing save that it once had a message to convey" (Lovecraft Complete 33). On the night of the aurora he dreams of a domed, gilded and dreamy city in which he first has no physical presence and is a mere observer, but later in his dream he takes a physical form in the dream-city as one of its inhabitants and introduces the city as Olathoë in the land of Lomar which is on the verge of battle with its enemies who are hellish and yellow fiends called Inutos. The narrator, not allowed to join the battle because of his weak physical status and poor health, is assigned to the watchtower to signal the invasion of Inutos. He witnesses Polaris in the watchtower and hears a rhyme as if from the star which makes him sleep and wakes up in his house by the swamp. Anxious to fulfill his duty as a watchman he tries to "shake off this unnatural dream of a house of stone and brick south of a sinister swamp and a cemetery on a low hillock…” (Lovecraft Complete 34) and go back to Lomar, but he does not succeed and merely keeps staring at Polaris at night.

Lovecraft had not read Dunsany yet when writing "Polaris," but it is very similar in style and essence to Dunsany. It could indeed be that both writers were influenced greatly by Poe. Still, there are non-Poe elements and feels in both "Polaris" and Dunsany, and the reader may be astounded by such unknown mental connections between the two writers. Lovecraft declares in a long letter in 1918 to the theist, Maurice W. Moe that the main inspiration of "Polaris" had come from one of his own dreams:

Several nights ago I had a strange dream of strange cities – a city of many palaces and gilded domes, lying in a hollow betwixt ranges of grey, horrible hills… But certainly I had no corporeal existence… I felt that I had once known it well, and that if I could remember, I should be carried back to a very remote period—many thousand years, when something vaguely horrible had happened. (Joshi Subtler 73)

In "Polaris," what creates cosmic horror is the fact that the concepts of time and space are lost and new eons and horizons reveal themselves to the narrator. With these concepts lost to him, his whole view of the world and its system is shattered and he is left in awe.
and wonder as in which dimension presents the reality and which the dream, but he cannot figure it out. It is not to be realized which is this cosmic entity and this dream-creature and which is a human being. The narrator's human self is in fact a cosmic entity to the other world; the world he cannot decide if it is real or just a dream. The time, the space and the universe are all indifferent to the narrator. His existence is meaningless in both dimensions. He is fundamentally and essentially irrelevant to the whole system and cannot discover its unknowable secrets and workings. This concept of ‘Polaris’ is indeed brilliant, but it is an example of a tale which makes Lovecraft open to harsh criticism and parody, due to its over-written and over-dramatic fiction. The American writer, De Camp (November 27, 1907 – November 6, 2000), says about ‘Polaris’ that even though it has a strong impact on first reading:

Stuffing a narrative with adjectives and adverbs like “uncanny,” “hellish,” “weirdly,” “hideously,” “evil,” “eldritch,” “shocking” and “sinister” was Lovecraft’s worst fictional vice…. The reason is that all such words denote, not physical facts, but the narrator’s emotional reaction to facts. (128)

Particularly, many of Lovecraft’s Dunsanian dream-cycle tales suffer from this stylistic tendency. Still, with all these weaknesses, ‘Polaris’ manages to introduce a fresh kind of horror through its skewed concepts of time and dimension; a primeval, dream-like, prose-poetic kind of cosmic horror if you will. After all, the process of cosmic horror’s evolution and perfection is what this thesis is concerned with.

“Beyond the Wall of Sleep” (1919)

In this story, a cosmic entity takes over the body of a peasant—a "Catskill degenerate," who murders a neighbor in a horrifyingly ghastly manner and is therefore brought to the mental hospital where the narrator works. The entity somewhat haunts the narrator's dreams which are of ethereal settings and beings, and finally ends up communicating with the narrator through unspoken mental and intellectual means. The cosmic horror in this story reaches its peak at the nonverbal speech of the entity through the dead peasant, which the narrator retells in words. Passages of this sort in Lovecraft
reveal the theme of mankind’s ignorance towards the complexity and vastness of the universe and his unimportant and small position in it:

I am an entity like that which you yourself become in the freedom of dreamless sleep…we are all roamers of vast spaces and travellers in many ages. Next year I may be dwelling in the dark 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 of life and its extent! How little, indeed, ought it to know for its own tranquillity! (Lovecraft Complete 44)

This is another prose-poetic passage which demonstrates the notion of cosmicism, perfectly.

“The Music of Erich Zann” (1921)

Another of Lovecraft's favorites is "The Music of Erich Zann." The narrator meets a mute violinist by the name of Erich Zann in his building which is situated in a street he proves unable to find again later. Zann's peculiar notes and music appear to have otherworldly nature and seem to hold back unearthly entities from his window which seemingly opens to the black abysses of another dimension. Even though Lovecraft himself declares the story as Dunsanian (Lovecraft Visible 211), "The Music of Erich Zann" contains the weird that Lovecraft applies most of the time. In "Some Notes on a Nonentity" (1933) Lovecraft says about weird fiction that:

I believe that weird writing offers a serious field not unworthy of the best literary artists...Spectral fiction should be realistic and atmospheric - confining its departure from Nature to the one supernatural channel chosen, and remembering that scene, and phenomena are more important in conveying what is to be conveyed than are characters and plot. The "punch" of a truly
weird tale is simply some violation or transcending of fixed cosmic law - an imaginative escape from palling reality - hence phenomena rather than persons are the logical "heroes". Horrors, I believe, should be original - the use of common myths and legends being a weakening influence. (Lovecraft Visible 349)

The above passage explains the whole Lovecraftian outlook on the horror tale and the whole nature of Cthulhu Mythos and “The Music of Erich Zann” fits the description perfectly. Even though the term Cthulhu Mythos contains the name "Cthulhu" which emerged in 1926, it is arguably applicable to many earlier tales depicting the weird, unearthly and cosmic phenomena lurking behind the veil of natural incidents and places; as it was depicted in several samples of these pre-Cthulhu texts. This is completely obvious in "The Music of Erich Zann" and it could as well be categorized as one of the Cthulhu Mythos tales. The narrator does not matter, even Erich Zann does not matter; what matters is the weird and supernatural phenomenon waiting outside Zann's window. The nature of the phenomena is entirely unknown and cosmic and Zann, cursed by discovering the ethereal notes of beyond is doomed to live with them. The narrator's curiosity makes him a victim to the knowledge of the phenomenon, as well. Yet, he is lucky enough to never find that street, the building and Erich Zann again after he flees. The way the narrator describes the whole neighborhood, its inhabitants, the odorous foggy river and the irregularity of the architecture creates the feel of another dimension beyond the city in which the narrator used to dwell. The whole street probably belongs to the realm of the phenomenon and holds cosmic entities and incidents within. Lovecraft's famous theme of "forbidden knowledge" is apparent in "The Music of Erich Zann," but Lovecraft still needs to travel to New York, live in the horror of Red Hook neighborhood in poverty and fear of unfamiliar immigrants and then return to Providence, in order for his themes and cosmic horror and phenomena to become much more elaborate.

Lovecraft wrote several tales between “Erich Zann” and “Cthulhu” (1921-1926) and some of them are truly outstanding horror tales. “Herbert West–Reanimator” (1921-22) is basically a zombie story portraying scientifically reanimated corpses which have uncontrollable temperaments. The story reminds one of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein. It
is quite different from other Lovecraft’s tales and due to the absence of cosmicism therein, cannot be considered as a Lovecraftian horror story. “The Lurking Fear” (1922) and “The Rats in the Walls” (1923) portray themes of inherited guilt and decadent genealogy which are better portrayed in “The Case of Charles Dexter Ward” and The Shadow Over Innsmouth. “The Shunned House” (1924) is more of a ghost story with no cosmic quality. “The Horror at Red Hook” (1925) portrays the theme of fate really well, but also lacks the necessary cosmicism to be considered “Lovecraftian.” In fact, the type of horror in this tale is represented in a more evolved and effective way in The Shadow Over Innsmouth and finally, “Cool Air” (1926) which contains the kind of gruesome fear and atmosphere similar to which are seen in “Reanimator” and again lacks the elements of cosmic horror.

1. “The Call of Cthulhu” and Post-Cthulhu Tales

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Lovecraft’s return to Providence, Rhode Island was probably his second birth as an author. The rebirth begins with Lovecraft’s most famous story, "The Call of Cthulhu." When resubmitting it to Weird Tales after having been rejected once, Lovecraft writes in a letter to Farnsworth Wright, the magazine’s editor, on July 5, 1927 that:

Now all my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large. […] To achieve the essence of real externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all. (Lovecraft Visible 209)

And indeed this premise marks all of his tales written between 1926 and his death in 1937 by different degrees, which is why those with a true feel of the external and cosmic horror stand out as the “great texts.”
“The Call of Cthulhu” (1926)

Published for the first time in February 1928 in *Weird Tales*, this story marks the advent of a creative outburst in Lovecraft's writings. Its reception and criticism has been very diverse. Lovecraft, as usual merciless and harsh in criticism of his own writings, calls the story "rather middling—not as bad as the worst, but full of cheap and cumbrous touches" (*Lovecraft Letters* 348). Robert E. Howard, on the other hand, regards it as "…a masterpiece, which I am sure will live as one of the highest achievements of literature.... Mr. Lovecraft holds a unique position in the literary world; he has grasped, to all intents, the worlds outside our paltry ken" (*Lovecraft More Annotated* 7). The sentence with which Lovecraft begins the story may denote the whole theme of cosmic indifferentism and forbidden knowledge in this tale: “The most merciful in the world, I think, is the inability of human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far” (*Lovecraft Complete* 355). The critic, E. F. Bleiler, refers to the story as "a fragmented essay with narrative inclusions" (Bleiler 478). The story does in fact look like a fragmented essay and is presented as a manuscript "found among the papers of the late Francis Wayland Thurston of Boston" (*Lovecraft Complete* 355). In the manuscript, Thurston recounts his discovery of notes left behind by his great-uncle, George Gammell Angell, and his own investigations regarding those notes. Therefore, the story is mainly told through various notes, journals, jottings, newspaper cuttings and manuscripts.

In the first chapter of the story, “The Horror in Clay,” the protagonist, as the only heir and executor of his great-uncle, who incidentally died at the age of ninety-two of a somewhat suspicious cause, is reviewing his uncle’s papers, when he discovers a curious box containing a queer bas-relief and some incoherent jottings, ramblings and cuttings. He describes the bas-relief in the following manner:

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. (Lovecraft Complete 357)

The bas-relief seems to be of a mysterious, otherworldly and unheard-of nature. The creature resembles nothing known to mankind and the background of the Cyclopean architecture—a masonry style with walls built normally of huge and unworked limestone boulders which are roughly fitted together—creates an air of alienation and externality about the whole thing. According to the manuscript, Wilcox eventually goes back to normal and his molding dreams and feverish nightmares end, as if the extraterrestrial other has left him alone. Yet, there is evidence that during the same time that Wilcox underwent the inexplicable condition, a lot of disturbance and turmoil of the same nature had been observed all over the planet. Therefore, the fact that Wilcox recovered would probably not relieve neither Professor Angell, nor the reader, since the abnormality had been observed elsewhere, as well. This fact may emphasize the encompassing power of the cosmic other, spreading all over the world. It is mentioned that Wilcox heard a voice speaking in an unknown tongue, of which he could only make out a phrase similar to “Cthulhu fhtagn.” In explaining these jumbles of letters—which will later on be used in other tales as an incantation to Cthulhu and the Old Ones—Lovecraft explains that they were an attempt to emphasize the non-human quality of Cthulhu and the Old Ones to show that these utterances were not made by human vocal organs (De Camp 272). Similar word jumbles and even the name “Cthulhu” emphasize the externality and alien aspect of the Old Ones which helps the creation of cosmic horror.

In the second half of Professor Angell’s manuscript and the second chapter of the book, “The Tale of Inspector Legrasse,” the reader is introduced to some older affairs and events which made the case of Wilcox significant and interesting to Professor Angell; the account of how he had come to learn about "Cthulhu," the first time. Apparently, a New Orleans police officer named John Raymond Legrasse had brought a statuette composed of an unidentifiable greenish-black stone to a meeting of the American Archaeological Society in St. Louis, Missouri—where Professor Angell had been present—for the assembled antiquarians to identify. He had explained that it "had been captured some months before in the wooded swamps south of New Orleans during a raid on a supposed voodoo meeting" (Lovecraft Complete 361). It resembled the Wilcox sculpture and represented a "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” (Lovecraft Complete 362). The same
prose-poetic style is applied in describing the cosmic entity and strange phenomena in "The Call of Cthulhu." The described image, associated with the dream-carven bas-relief and the peculiar story of Inspector Lagrasse about arresting a degenerate crowd who were worshiping the statuette and making sacrifices to it, implies the existence of a horror with deep, ancient and supernatural roots.

In the last chapter of the story, “Madness from the Sea,” the narrator finally acquires a first-hand account of an encounter with the cosmic other, Cthulhu. After some investigations in Australia and Norway, Thurston attains a manuscript written by a Norwegian sailor before his death which reveals the true events of a horrendous sea voyage he and his crew experienced while sailing in the Pacific. Very important to reaching a climax in cosmic horror, it is most probably a true account of the occurrences. According to the sailor’s manuscript, they had reached an uncharted island which is described as "a coast-line of mingled mud, ooze, and weedy Cyclopean masonry which can be nothing less the tangible substance of earth's supreme terror — the nightmare corpse-city of R'lyeh" (Lovecraft Complete 375) where Cthulhu has been said to be waiting, while dead and dreaming, for the stars to be right to rise again. When the sailors manage to open a monstrously carven portal, they are confronted by a new horror:

It lumbered slobberingly into sight and gropingly squeezed its gelatinous green immensity through the black doorway...
The stars were right again, and what an age-old cult had failed to do by design, a band of innocent sailors had done by accident. After vigintillations of years great Cthulhu was loose again, and ravening for delight. (Lovecraft Complete 377)

Here, Cthulhu is described as "a mountain [who] walked or stumbled..." (Lovecraft Complete 377). The sailor was the only survivor who while fleeing, realized that Cthulhu had entered the water, so he turned the vessel and rammed the creature's head only to witness it immediately reforming. After he finishes reading the manuscript, Thurston realizes that he is now a target, thinking "I know too much, and the cult still lives" (Lovecraft Complete 379). This first-hand account of an encounter with Cthulhu at the corpse-city of R’lyeh in the midst of the Pacific Ocean, even though horrifying, leaves the final decision about the truth of the thing to the reader. This is how Lovecraft achieves the effects he is seeking to create; producing cosmic horror through suggestion and uncertainty:
HPL's writings have but one aim: to bring the reader to a state of *fascination*. The only human sentiments he is interested in are wonderment and fear. He constructs his universe upon these and these alone. It is clearly a limitation, but a conscious, deliberate one. An authentic creativity cannot exist without a certain degree of self-imposed blindness. (Houellebecq 59)

Although not really a character, Cthulhu plays a major role in the story as the antagonist and delivers the cosmic horror to the audience by merely proving to exist.

Like so many of Lovecraft's characters, Francis Wayland Thurston is another victim; a victim of knowledge, curiosity and the information he unknowingly ended up being exposed to. Lovecraft's theme of forbidden knowledge dominates "The Call of Cthulhu." The insignificance of each and every one of the characters in this story creates more cosmic horror than the encounter with Cthulhu. Cthulhu and his race from the beyond exist and there is absolutely nothing man can do and nothing to know about their true intentions and upcoming plans. As Michel Houellebecq states about Lovecraft’s heroes:

Lovecraft's heroes strip themselves of life. Renouncing all human joy, they become pure intellects, pure spirits striving toward a single goal: the search for knowledge. At the end of their quest, a terrifying revelation awaits them: from the swamps of Louisiana to the frozen plateaus of the Antarctic desert, in the very heart of New York and in the somber vales of Vermont's countryside, everything proclaims the *universal presence of evil*. (111)

“The Colour Out of Space” (1927)

This tale first appeared in the science fiction magazine named *Amazing Stories*, in September 1927. The narrator intends to survey a new reservoir in Arkham, Massachusetts, called by the locals "Blasted Heath" and shunned for years. The story begins with a Poe-like description of the area, but the descriptions throughout the story become increasingly more powerful.
West of Arkham the hills rise wild, and there are valleys with deep woods that no axe has ever cut. There are dark narrow glens where the trees slope fantastically, and where thin brooklets trickle without ever having caught the glint of sunlight… The old folk have gone away, and foreigners do not like to live there… The place is not good for imagination, and does not bring restful dreams at night… Upon everything was a haze of restlessness and oppression; a touch of the unreal and the grotesque…

(Lovecraft Complete 594)

This initial description creates an atmosphere of alienation, desolation and fear. The fact that people do not like to live there and that the place feels grotesque and brings uneasy dreams and restlessness prepare the reader to learn more about a certain incident or incidents that might have happened there to leave the area abandoned and shunned.

A supposedly crazy local by the name of Ammi Pierce helps the narrator uncover the secrets of the area by telling him of his own personal experience and familiarity with the neighborhood and its former residents. Apparently, the land used to belong to a farmer by the name of Nahum Gardner and as Ammi declared, the problem started when a meteorite crashed into Nahum's land in 1882. The meteorite is indeed a peculiar one. It is perpetually warm and keeps shrinking in size. It leaves traces of some sort of color unknown to mankind. Scientists, excited about the phenomena, come to Nahum's farm and take samples of the meteorite which has a very peculiar and unknown texture, as well. Their analyses and investigations lead nowhere and they're unable to determine the origin of the meteorite, since it does not fall within any categories and does not follow any scientific laws known to mankind. It draws what is seemingly lightning to itself and eventually disappears, as if absorbed into the soil. The next season, Nahum's crops are very large and abundant, but inedible and ruined. Nahum blames this on the meteorite, while it is only the beginning of a ghastly horror in his residence.

In only a year, the phenomenon spreads around to the vegetation and the animals of the neighborhood, giving them a horrifyingly deformed and twisted shape. Plants start to faintly emit light in the dark and have slight movements. Nahum's wife goes mad and gets locked in the attic room and the family isolate themselves from the rest of the
townspeople and the only contact remains Ammi. Soon after, the vegetation and livestock start turning grey and the plants turn into some grayish powder. One of Nahum's sons goes mad like his mother and eventually dies and another one goes missing when trying to bring water from the well which has apparently gone tainted. Ammi visits the farm after a while of not hearing from Nahum and faces the horrifying scenery and the pitiful state of Nahum and his family. The last son has gone missing and Ammi puts Nahum's wife out of her misery and then flees the farm after Nahum is taken by the horror, too. When later Ammi comes back with six other men to investigate the area, they find Nahum dead and the skeletons of the two missing sons at the bottom of the well with some other creatures. They have a terrible and strange experience at night at the farm and they witness a light emitting from the well with the same unearthly color. The men flee in fright and when looking back, realize that the horror envelops the land and everything is luminous with the strange color and suddenly the hideous thing shoots along with the diseased contents into the sky, like a meteorite. However, only Ammi witnesses that a part of the color tries to follow the rest into the sky and fails, so it returns to the well and this is what sends his faculties into a shattered state. In the end, the narrator declares that he has no opinion about the whole situation and hopes that the new reservoir clears the neighborhood from whatever evil might have resided therein.

The inspiration for writing "The Colour Out of Space," Lovecraft states, was the Scituate Reservoir built in 1926 in Rhode Island. However, S. T. Joshi believes that he had definitely been thinking of the construction of Quabbin Reservoir which is located in central Massachusetts where the story takes place. Making of Quabbin Reservoir also resulted in the abandonment and submersion of the entire region (Joshi & Schultz, 42). This tale is considered by many as the hallmark of Lovecraft's work and it remains his personal favorite, as he states in his "Some Notes on a Nonentity" (Lovecraft Visible 349). "The Colour Out of Space" portrays the macabre influences of Poe, the horrifying imagery of Machen, the fantastic and dream-like visions of Dunsany, the influences of the scientific era of Lovecraft, his unique alien and extraterrestrial creation unlike any alien entity created before him and a touch of cosmic horror and indifferentism apparent in many of H. P. Lovecraft's works.

The theme of science in "The Colour Out of Space" is absolutely remarkable and in fact, helps the creation of cosmic horror even further. When three professors from Miskatonic University of Arkham take specimens from the stone, which prove incredibly
soft and plastic-like to the college for testing, they face baffling results. Apparently the specimen:

…had faded wholly away when they put it in a glass beaker. The beaker had gone, too, and the wise men talked of the strange stone's affinity for silicon. It had acted quite unbelievably in that well-ordered laboratory; doing nothing at all and showing no occluded gases when heated on charcoal, being wholly negative in the borax bead, and soon proving itself absolutely non-volatile at any producible temperature… and when upon heating before the spectroscope it displayed shining bands unlike any known colours of the normal spectrum… (Lovecraft Complete 597)

Similar passages explaining scientific experiments and discussions about the meteorite and its strange behavior show Lovecraft's vast knowledge of chemistry, biology and astronomy. However, the role of science in creating cosmic horror in this story is remarkable. The fragment behaves strangely in each and every scientific experiment at the lab. Scientific treatment of the specimen is rejected by the phenomena in order to indicate an alien and otherworldly nature of the meteorite and create immense cosmic horror, due to the unexplainable nature and behavior of the specimen. Portraying mankind's weakness and powerlessness in dealing with the unearthly phenomena and the futility of scientific efforts and accomplishments in delving into the unknown or explaining or controlling it, could be effective factors in the creation of cosmic horror and the fear of the "outside" in this story. About Lovecraft's use of science in his tales, Michel Houellebecq says:

In his final stories, Lovecraft uses the multiform descriptive methods of science… These all serve to evoke a multifaceted universe where the most heterogeneous fields of knowledge intersect and converge to generate the poetic trance that accompanies the revelation of forbidden truths. (76)

And that:
It would seem to be a discovery he made alone: that using science's vocabulary can serve as an extraordinary stimulant to the poetic imagination. The precise, minutely detailed content, dense and theoretical, encyclopedic in its perspective, produces a hallucinatory and thrilling effect. (74)

In fact, the involvement of the academics in the matter could create in the reader a sense of safety and relief, but then their failure increases the horror even more. After the scientists experiment on a second specimen:

Aside from being almost plastic, having heat, magnetism, and slight luminosity, cooling slightly in powerful acids, possessing an unknown spectrum, wasting away in air, and attacking silicon compounds with mutual destruction as a result, it presented no identifying features whatsoever; and at the end of the tests the college scientists were forced to own that they could not place it. It was nothing of this earth, but a piece of the great outside; and as such dowered with outside properties and obedient to outside laws. (Lovecraft Complete 599)

Whatever this "great outside" is, it is outside the range of mankind's understanding and control, and indeed man fears what he does not understand or cannot control. The intensity of cosmic horror is increased by the admittance of failure in revealing the nature of the stone by the scientists.

As long as the stone exists, even though it keeps shrinking, the story still roams in the realm of the weird and science-fiction; the scientists' attempts, the Arkham papers' interest and people's attention to the incident and to Nahum, all indicate excitement, wonder and curiosity. It is after the stone wholly disappears when the public interest is diminished and the actual horror reveals itself. After Nahum's crops—which grow to look incredibly glossy, phenomenal in size and luscious—prove to be absolutely inedible and ruined, we may feel the presence of something abnormal, dangerous and evil in that soil
into which the meteorite disappeared. The plump and beautiful fruit and vegetables seem to join the domain of the unknown and the inexplicable and therefore, there is new horror. Lovecraft applies this technique often that the things, characters and places once familiar turn grotesque, fearful and inexplicable when any element from the "outside" intervenes. Simple farm crops become a source of horror. The fear is intensified when Nahum tells Ammi of strange footprints in the snow which must belong to rabbits, foxes and squirrels, but something about the nature and the arrangement of the footprints is not right and worries Nahum. Ammi only believes him when he himself witnesses a rabbit with strangely long and alien leaps and a slightly altered look. Observing the phenomena in animals as well, adds to the fright. The reader is ready for more, for worse. Lovecraft's descriptions of the bizarre observations are incredibly slick and implicit, which rather implies the horror rather than explicitly depicting it.

They were the usual winter prints of red squirrels, white rabbits, and foxes, but the brooding farmer professed to see something not quite right about their nature and arrangement. He was never specific… a rabbit had run across the road, and the leaps of that rabbit were longer than either Ammi or his horse liked. (Lovecraft Complete 600)

Even the more explicit portrayal of the phenomena is somewhat vague and leaves the reader in wonder of the true shape and nature of the thing:

The proportions of its body seemed slightly altered in a queer way impossible to describe, while its face had taken on an expression which no one ever saw in a woodchuck before. (Lovecraft Complete 600)

With slight and vaguely-described alterations, a simple woodchuck turns into a horrifying abomination which leaves its hunters in fright and awe. With Nahum and his family appearing less in public and isolating themselves, the reader may sense the increasing power of the phenomenon. The anomalous vegetations around Nahum's land and their indescribable color, the strange odor around the plants and the locals' strange and abnormal observations intensify the fear. Extremely visual descriptions of nocturnal
observations and activities on Nahum's land and the inability of the family and townspeople to explain and stop them are wonderful examples of the supernatural and cosmic horror; the abundance and immensity of the vegetations, the moving of the boughs under the moonlit sky in no wind as if moving due to the flowing sap inside them, and eventually, this:

A dim though distinct luminosity seemed to inhere in all the vegetation, grass, leaves, and blossoms alike, while at one moment a detached piece of the phosphorescence appeared to stir furtively in the yard near the barn.

(Lovecraft Complete 602)

Associating the colors with those emitted from the meteorite, the reader may realize that the color is only called "color," due to analogies and concepts known to mankind and that it may not be a color at all. We can see that even though not much happens through the course of the story and it mainly points out strange observations and brings detailed descriptions of abnormalities and gradual changes, the suspense keeps increasing throughout the story. The relaxed and calm tone and language of the story, in my view, even adds to the sense of fear and impatience. And at the point in the story when we begin to witness further horrifying and tragic descriptions of the situation, we realize that the cosmic phenomenon has completely and comfortably established itself. To illustrate the horrifying effect, there is a powerful passage about Nahum's wife going mad which eventually results in Nahum's decision to lock her in the attic:

…the poor woman screamed about things in the air which she could not describe. In her raving there was not a single specific noun, but only verbs and pronouns. Things moved and changed and fluttered, and ears tingled to impulses which were not wholly sounds. Something was taken away - she was being drained of something - something was fastening itself on her that ought not to be - someone must make it keep off - nothing was ever still in the night - the walls and windows shifted. (Lovecraft Complete 603)

Or this other passage, when Ammi visits Nahum and notices:
He and the boys continued to use the tainted supply, drinking it as listlessly and mechanically as they ate their meagre and ill-cooked meals and did their thankless and monotonous chores through the aimless days. There was something of stolid resignation about them all, as if they walked half in another world between lines of nameless guards to a certain and familiar doom. (Lovecraft *Complete 604*)

Such passages are good examples of high contrast throughout the course of "The Colour Out of Space." In the same story, we have the excruciatingly academic and scientific explanations of the experiments and procedures and we also observe this sort of prose-poetic descriptions of other phenomena, such as Mrs. Garden's shattered state of mind, or the family's behavior and attitude. This indeed is a very powerful tool applied by Lovecraft to depict the attempts of mankind applying science and logic to uncover the secrets of the unknown and after their failure, lead the whole tale into the unknown and leave the character or the characters without a refuge and doomed to facing the cosmic phenomena and the horror and evil they cause. Houellebecq states about the idle state of Lovecraft's characters that:

> Assailed by abominable perceptions, Lovecraft's characters function as silent, motionless, utterly powerless, paralyzed observers. They would like nothing more than to escape, or to plump the deep torpor of a merciful faint. No such luck. They will remain glued in place while around them the nightmare begins to unravel. While visual, auditory, olfactory, and tactile perceptions accumulate and are deployed in a hideous crescendo. (69)

As all efforts in understanding and resolving the issue fail, the horror keeps moving toward its peak; the fruits and plants and the livestock start to turn grey and fragile and fall into pieces before they die and horrendous collapse and disintegration of anything alive is witnessed, one of Nahum's sons goes mad like his mother and is locked in another attic room and eventually dies in a manner "which could not be told," another son goes absolutely lethargic and indifferent and the youngest son keeps screaming and the
screams are occasionally answered with screams from the attic room by the mad mother, and he finally disappears after a visit to the well to bring water. In this chaos, the cosmic horror grows and pervades. There is something beyond human sciences here, whose failure Lovecraft wishes to portray when encountered with the "outside" and the unknowable. Nahum wonders, "It must all be a judgment of some sort; though he could not fancy what for, since he had always walked uprightly in the Lord's ways so far as he knew" (Lovecraft Complete 606). The cosmic entity does not care for the Lord, religion and science. It is indifferent to human existence, deeds and sufferings. The cosmic entity merely 'is' and does not care if its existence shatters mankind's existence. Its purpose in entering the human world is as unknown and unimaginable as its nature. The character or characters fall victim to it, simply because they were 'there' and this utter indifference of the "outside" creates inexplicable horror.

The climax is when Ammi decides to pay Nahum a visit, since he had not heard from him for quite a while. He faces a horrifying scene at the farm; everything greyish and disintegrating, Nahum is weak and delirious, another son missing and supposedly living in the well and a terrifying encounter at Mrs. Gardner's attic room. The malicious odor in the room astounds him and he finds but a dark form at the corner of the room and strange "colours" dancing before his eyes and at their passing, he felt some vapor-like creature brushed against him. The alien entity had obviously taken over Nahum's wife as well and even though not mentioned explicitly, the reader realizes that Ammi must have put an end to Mrs. Gardner's misery before leaving and locking that accursed attic room:

There are things which cannot be mentioned, and what is done in common humanity is sometimes cruelly judged by the law. I gathered that no moving thing was left in that attic room, and that to leave anything capable of motion there would have been a deed so monstrous as to damn any accountable being to eternal torment. (Lovecraft Complete 607)

Customary to Lovecraft's style—implying the supernatural horror and leaving it to the reader to decide about the nature and the deeds of the thing—this passage not only gives the reader the idea that Ammi had killed Nahum's wife, but also makes the reader
wonder about the creature or creatures inside that room and what exactly they had done to Mrs. Gardner. When Ammi is still there, the thing, the entity, the supposed "colour," takes over Nahum as well and as Nahum is disintegrating and turning grey, he utters his last words about the cosmic incident. He said that it burned and that the thing lives in the well and that it sucked the life out of everything and that the only thing he could see was the indescribable color. Ammi runs away after Nahum's total disintegration. Neither Ammi's observation nor Nahum's last words shed any light on the nature of the thing, but introduce the reader to a whole new kind of cosmic entity with the most destructive and domineering behavior which looks like a strange color.

When Ammi returns with three police officers, a coroner, a medical examiner and the vet who had tried to treat the livestock, they find the land having turned entirely grey as if turned into some sort of dust. They examine the well and witness a repulsive and terrifying scene at the bottom of the well; the two lost sons in almost skeletal forms plus a bubbling and oozing slime at the bottom of the well, which the inspection by a very long pole proved bottomless. The scene is absolutely dreadful and horrifying, especially since we know Nahum and his family had done nothing to deserve such a painful fate, but this is how the cosmic horror reveals itself; through its randomness and indifference. As Ammi and the six men spend the night, they witness a sharp light emitting out of the well:

It was a monstrous constellation of unnatural light, like a glutted swarm of corpse-fed fireflies dancing hellish sarabands over an accursed marsh, and its colour was that same nameless intrusion which Ammi had come to recognize and dread… It was no longer shining out; it was pouring out; and as the shapeless stream of unplaceable colour left the well it seemed to flow directly into the sky.

( Lovecraft Complete 612)

“It” was leaving. Why did it come or why did it leave, no one knows. However, the horror is not entirely over, since as the men are fleeing the farm, Ammi turns his head only to witness that some portion of the "colour" tried to reach the rest and shoot out of the well, but fell back into the well in defeat; as if it could not catch up with the rest.
After hearing Ammi's story, the narrator states his own opinion about the whole thing and the story and even though he seems to believe that something terrible really happened in that place and that Ammi was not a liar or a completely mad man, he still wishes for the place to turn into a reservoir and believes that the new waters and sights and residents will clear the area of its bad reputation and evil feel. However, it is no consolation to mankind, since the reader knows what keeps dwelling in those accursed abodes; the alien entity which could not get away, the cosmic phenomenon, the colour out of space. S. T. Joshi puts beautifully about "The Colour Out of Space" in an interview that:

Its best feature is the utter inscrutability of the entity (or entities) populating that baleful meteor… They cannot possibly be called "evil" or "malevolent," even though they wreak terrible havoc on the unfortunate family that encounters them; it is not even clear that they are even animate… they are a true piece of the "outside"—an utterly alien species whose thought-processes and motivations we are incapable of understanding. (Tibbetts 12)

\textbf{At the Mountains of Madness (1931)}

Lovecraft was devastated when this short novel got rejected by \textit{Weird Tales} due to its length. It then first got published five years later in the February, March and April issues of the science fiction magazine, “Astounding Stories,” in 1936. As mentioned earlier, \textit{At the Mountains of Madness} ventures into the realm of science fiction much more than the tales preceding it. Lovecraft had been fascinated by Antarctica since an early age and had written small treatises on early Antarctic explorers, such as Borchgrevink and Scott and eagerly followed their voyage reports. He was also extremely fascinated with Poe’s \textit{Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym} whose concluding section is set in Antarctica (Lovecraft \textit{Annotated} 17). There was no one inspiration for Lovecraft to write \textit{At the Mountains of madness} and at reading it, one may realize how much of Lovecraft’s personal interests and previous works, inspirations and influences are referred to in this story. Cosmic horror reaches one of its highest peaks in this tale and Lovecraft considered it his most ambitious work (Lovecraft \textit{Annotated} 176). This is a tale in which Lovecraft’s fictional world comes together and the origins and the story of different races of the Old
Ones and their history and deeds are explained. *At the Mountains of Madness* is indeed “…pivotal to his evolving conception of weird fiction and of his pseudomythology” (Lovecraft *Annotated* 18). Moreover, in this story, Lovecraft’s profound knowledge of geography, geology, paleontology and biology lay some excruciatingly authentic scientific groundwork in the beginning of the story which creates “…the most convincing atmosphere of verisimilitude…” (Lovecraft *Annotated* 18) and help establish an atmosphere of bizarre and tangible cosmic horror, unique to Lovecraft’s work.

On finding out about a big scientific expedition to Antarctica and hoping to prevent it, William Dyer—a professor of geology at Miskatonic University of Arkham—finds it necessary to reveal some untold secrets he and the expedition team he led had discovered in Antarctica on a previous journey; secrets they decided not to disclose. But now he finds it necessary to tell the story. The purpose of their journey had been to obtain deep-level specimens of rock and soil from different regions of the Antarctic Continent by the help of a remarkable new drill made by a Professor Pabodie (engineering department) who along with Professor Lake (biology department) and Professor Atwood (Physics department) accompany Dyer on the expedition. Among the team members, there is a young graduate by the name of Danforth who is interested in bizarre readings and has read the *Necronomicon*—which is kept at the Miskatonic University library under lock and key—entirely and speaks a lot of Poe and quotes from Poe’s *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* at the sight of the Antarctic mountains; Lovecraft’s way of further paying homage to his master. He also mentions the Russian painter and philosopher, Nicholas Roerich, whose odd paintings had extremely fascinated Lovecraft. From the beginning, the attempt is to establish the mountains as frightening and mysterious, referring to them initially as “the great barren peaks of mystery” (Lovecraft *Complete* 726):

> Through the desolate summits swept raging intermittent guts of the terrible Antarctic wind; whose cadences sometimes held vague suggestions of a wild and half-sentient musical piping…. Something about the scene reminded me of the strange and disturbing Asian paintings of Nicholas Roerich, and of the still stranger and more disturbing descriptions of the evilly fabled plateau of Leng which occur in the dreaded *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred. (Lovecraft *Complete* 726)
Even though the goal of the expedition is originally geological, Professor Lake of the biology department sets out with a smaller group to investigate some fossilized markings he has spotted on a very ancient triangular stone slate. Although no one else shows any interest, Lake finds them extremely peculiar and is convinced that the marking is “...the print of some bulky, unknown and radically unclassifiable organism of considerably advanced evolution...” (Lovecraft Complete 730). Markings of such an evolved organism on an ancient slate—which is recognized to be over 500 million years old—foreshadows the revelation of some shocking and possibly horrifying facts about the place. We are once again at the presence of Lovecraft’s unknowable, unclassifiable and unidentifiable; some of his finest ingredients of creating cosmic horror. Lake keeps transmitting the reports of their sub-expedition to the main base. On his flight over the region, he discovers extremely high mountains, higher than Himalayas and fancies cube-shaped establishments on them which do not seem to be entirely the work of nature. This may remind the reader of the scene in “Dagon” when the narrator reaches the huge and strangely-carven monolith and shudders at the realization that it had been in fact the craftsmanship of intelligent beings. Even though Lake is not entirely sure about this, still the contemplation of the possibility of such thing creates cosmic and alien horror. The speculation of what may lie beneath this scarcely-trodden realm of ice that is unknown to human knowledge and sciences is a great source of supernatural and cosmic fear. Joshi discusses that Antarctica had been indeed a perfect setting for this tale, since by the 1920s, it was still largely unexplored and there were a considerable number of blank areas on its map. “Lovecraft could exercise his imagination in filling them in with titanic mountains and cities built by extraterrestrial races, with little fear of immediate contradiction” (Lovecraft Annotated 18). Very much like “The Call of Cthulhu,” At the Mountain of Madness mentions painstakingly exact and accurate geographic coordination and the latitude and longitude are persistently stated.

At chiseling and examining the markings, Lake and his crew discover a deep prehistoric cave full of fossils, shells and bones of various eras and species. It astonishes them greatly, but the most peculiar are 14 specimens of some ancient life form they discover in the cave and carefully bring out. Among those, eight are immaculate, but six are badly damaged. Their inexplicably evolved features are puzzling to Lake and he finds it impossible for them to have developed by the prehistoric era they lived in. Since the bizarre and leathery outer texture of the specimens loses hardness to some extent and
becomes more flexible when exposed to the sun, Lake decides to perform a dissection on one of the damaged specimens. While observing and examining the cave, Lovecraft does not hesitate to exhibit his enormous knowledge of paleontology and biology. In fact, Lakes’s report describes such meticulously detailed scientific observations that the integration of the data about the 14 ancient life forms sounds almost strangely real and believable. Like “The Colour Out of Space,” *At the Mountains of Madness* establishes and applies the human sciences and knowledge at first, in order to intensify the degree of cosmic horror at their failure against the will and might of the Old Ones and the unknowable ancient secrets of the universe.

The dissection report is the last thing Dyer hears from Lake and his crew. Therefore, he and the rest of the crew fly to Lake’s camp to inspect the situation. They face a horrifying scene where all men and dogs are slain, a man and dog cautiously dissected and another man by the name of Gedney and a dog vanished. They also find six damaged unknown life forms carefully buried in a curious manner and the eight pristine ones disappeared. The bizarre and alien manner of the slaughter and the burial of the specimens (upright and under a star-shaped snow mound), suggests that they were not performed by human beings and this, plus the fact that the eight undamaged specimens had somehow vanished, help increase the cosmic fear.

Dyer and Dansforth fly over the area in search for the lost man and dog and possible answers. When they fly over the mountains, they realize that the mountains are in fact the immense walls of a deserted stone city which they decide to explore. The Cyclopean masonry of the city with its cones and cubes is absolutely alien to human architecture and the strange sculptures, bas-reliefs and hieroglyphics indicate that the city used to be inhabited by the ancient creatures “poor Lake” had discovered. Due to the resemblance of these creatures and their city to some monstrous descriptions in the dreaded *Necronomicon*, Dyer and Danforh decide to call those creatures the “Elder Things.” From the murals, they find out that the Elder Things had come to earth eons ago when the earth was young. S. T. Joshi reminds us that in his later tales, Lovecraft was more interested in “supplements rather than contradictions” of known phenomena in the weird tale, in order to create what he terms in one of his letters as “non-supernatural cosmic art.” And in fact, this is how Lovecraft’s blending of weird fiction with science fiction became became the hallmark of his writing career (*Lovecraft Annotated* 18). Aside from the strong scientific groundwork of this story, the account of the history of
the “Elder Things” in *At the Mountains of Madness* helps the creation of this non-supernatural cosmic art with “demythologizing” of the “gods” of his Cthulhu Mythos (Lovecraft *Annotated 19*). Joshi states about Cthulhu Mythos and *At the Mountains of Madness* that:

> While it may be true that some members of this invented pantheon…remain “godlike,” this novel emphatically confirms what had been evident all along: the most of the “gods” are mere extraterrestrials whom human beings began to worship through sheer ignorance of their origins and purpose. (Lovecraft *Annotated 19*)

In fact, this demythologization creates even more cosmic and extraterrestrial horror by giving the Old Ones more realistic and plausible origins and history and this is exactly what Lovecraft has presents so immaculately in *At the Mountains of Madness*.

Cosmic horror in this story reaches its peak when Dyer and Danforth realize from the murals of the “Elder Things” that they were the ones who created earth life. They used to make different living organisms for various purposes and experiments. “It was under the sea, at first for food and later for other purposes, that they created earth-life…. They had done the same thing on other planets” (Lovecraft *Complete 771*). The murals indicate that the “Elder Things” created a sort of life form mainly for carrying the heavy loads underwater, whose features perfectly matched the description of some gruesome beings known as “shoggoths” in the *Necronomicon*. The Old Ones also created a variety of primitive vertebrates for various purposes, in the later years of their existence:

> These vertebrates, as well as an infinity of other life forms…were the products of unguided evolution acting on life cells made by the Old Ones, but escaping beyond their radius of attention. They had been suffered to develop unchecked because they had not come in conflict with the dominant beings. Bothersome forms, of course, were mechanically exterminated. It interested us to see in some of the very last and most decadent sculptures a shambling, primitive mammal, used sometimes for food and sometimes as an amusing buffoon by the land dwellers, whose vaguely simian and
human foreshadowings were unmistakable. (Lovecraft Complete 774)

This brief passage above is in fact the climax of cosmic horror in this tale; when man’s view is opened to the core of its existence and creation and beholds nothing. His creation had merely been “the products of unguided evolution.” Human being is but a blot in the vast scheme of cosmos and his creation and existence hold no noble meaning or purpose. Lovecraft whose views on humanity and its role in the universe had always been extremely pessimistic and misanthropic, has flawlessly “…embodied his misanthropy in providing a degrading origin of our species” (Lovecraft Annotated 19). Never in any previous tale had Lovecraft suggested this hideously the irrelevance of mankind in universe and never had he conveyed such dominantly present and pervasive cosmic fear.

The murals also illustrate several battles of the Elder Things with other races of the Old Ones, like the Mi-Go (the cosmic entity from “The Whisperer in Darkness”) or the spawn of Cthulhu who came to earth later. Dyer and Danforth find out that even though shoggoths were created by the Old Ones to perform all tasks and take all forms, they later on had gained independence and forced the Elder Things to abandon their city. Going deeper into the city, they find Gedney and the dog; frozen and wrapped in adhesive plaster, as if preserved for careful experiments by the Elder Things. However, later on, they come across several slaughtered Elder Things and encounter a race of enormous albino and blind penguins which seem to be kept as livestock by the entities which dwelled in the abandoned city and had obviously murdered the Elder Things. At some point, Dyer expresses pity towards both humans and the Elder Things and acknowledges that the Old Ones were simply trying to conduct scientific experiment and examination, not murder. Their intentions had been no different than Lake’s when he decided to dissect the alien specimen:

They had not been even savages—for what indeed had they done? That awful awakening in the cold of an unknown epoch—perhaps an attack by the furry, frantically barking quadrupeds, and a dazed defense against them and the equally frantic white simians with the queer wrappings and paraphernalia ... poor Lake, poor Gedney... and poor Old Ones! Scientists to the last - what had they done that we
would not have done in their place? God, what intelligence
and persistence! What a facing of the incredible, just as those
carven kinsmen and forbears had faced things only a little
less incredible! Radiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star
spawn - whatever they had been, they were men! (Lovecraft
Complete 798)

In the above passage, the irrelevance and insignificance of mankind gets to a
degree that sympathy is acquired for those Old Ones who had slaughtered Lake and his
crew. Lovecraft draws this sympathy to them by stating that both men and the Old Ones
had been victimized only for their thirst for knowledge and science. Finally, when they
come face-to-face with one of those horrifyingly grotesque beings—which is none but a
Shoggoth—Dyer and Danforth run for their lives and escape from the monstrous city and
the dreadful peaks in a quivering and unstable flight.

Dyer is telling the story to prevent the explorers from approaching those monstrous
mountains lest they lose hideous and unimaginable horrors on earth.

It is a shame that Weird Tale had to reject the story, since this incident extremely
saddened and embittered Lovecraft and probably disappointed him for further cosmic
creations. It is such a shame, since as partially demonstrated, At the Mountains of
Madness—with its vast and meticulous scientific groundwork and its presentation of the
finest and most immaculate kinds of Lovecraftian cosmic horror—is indeed one of
Lovecraft’s greatest works. It is almost painful to read Lovecraft state the following:

…Wright explained his rejection of the “Mountains of Madness”
in almost the same language as that which “explained” other
recent rejections to Long and Derleth. It was “too long”, “not
easily divisible into parts”, “not convincing”—and so on. Just
what he has said of other things of mine…. Those once-rejected
and later-accepted things include “Cthulhu”, “The Tomb”, and
many others. It is very possible that I am growing stale…but if so
it merely signifies the end of my fictional attempts. (Lovecraft
270)
Chapter 3 – The Aftermath of Cosmic Horror and its Influences on Pop Culture

For a man who didn’t believe in the afterlife, H. P. Lovecraft sure is having a remarkable one.


Even though the term was officially coined in the nineteenth century, “popular culture” is as old as man and has come into existence through folklore and word-of-mouth. Horror—and especially supernatural horror—has its roots in folklore, so in fact, supernatural horror has always been an integral part of popular culture. However, the emergence of Gothic and horror fiction—Lovecraft’s works included—in popular culture marked an important point in the history of pop culture. In this chapter, some influences of H. P. Lovecraft’s fiction and his cosmic horror on a number of popular horror productions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century will be analyzed, in an attempt to depict the position of Lovecraft’s literature among the media of popular culture. The emphasis is mainly on those noticeable productions which portray the cosmic aspect of Lovecraft’s work.

The majority of Gothic and horror fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries still belonged to the realm of official culture and were published by well-known and established publications of the era, addressed to the well-educated and the privileged. At the turn of the twentieth century, however, there came the advent of cheaper books and pulp journals and periodicals which also triggered a booming increase in horror writing. Pulp magazines such as Horror Stories, Astounding Stories and Weird Tales became homes for horror writers, including Lovecraft. In a way, by choosing the path of amateur journalism, Lovecraft entered his fiction into a new form of popular culture which was very fresh and had a select audience.
Popular culture entered a whole different and more evolved phase with the advent of cinema and Gothic literature, in particular affected early cinema to a great extent. On the importance of horror film as a powerful tool of popular culture, Mark A. Vieira, in his book *Hollywood Horror*, states that horror movies “have sprung from prolific typewriters to crawl, jump and fly across Hollywood soundstages and finally take residence in our consciousness” (Vieira 6). Today, the incredible developments in digital media, such as special effects in cinema, digital visual arts and video games have taken popular culture and especially fantasy, horror and science fiction to a whole new level.

But where does Lovecraft come in? As mentioned, he was a relatively unknown author in his own time and even though his stories were published in popular pulp magazines of the time such as *Weird Tales*, not many readers knew his name. However, this relatively unknown recluse of Providence managed to influence a great number of young and contemporary writers like Clark Ashton Smith and August Derleth who became good friends of his, even though they never met in person. They and several other authors who corresponded with him and were influenced by him became known as the “Lovecraft Circle.” Some other members of the Lovecraft Circle include Frank Belknap Long, Donald Wandrei, R. H. Barlow, Robert E. Howard (the creator of Conan the Barbarian) and Robert Bloch (the author of Psycho). His enormous correspondence was the key factor in the emergence of Cthulhu Mythos and the public familiarity with his cosmic horror. Many of the writers mentioned, used Lovecraft's themes, notions, places and creatures in their own writings and borrowed freely from him. Lovecraft normally welcomed this, mainly because he believed that the citation of his invented monsters, places and tomes would give them more credibility (Lovecraft *Complete* xii). He continually guided, encouraged and supported these writers in creating weird and supernatural horror in their writings and wrote a short essay titled “Notes on Writing Weird Fiction” as a guideline for the enthusiastic authors in the field. This led to the creation of an enormous amount of “Lovecraftian” literature outside the writings of Lovecraft, even after his death.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the term “Cthulhu Mythos” was not coined by Lovecraft himself, but the fact that the elements of Lovecraftian quasi-mythology have been used in the future writings of various authors, gives this title credibility. The advent of Cthulhu Mythos was the earliest form of Lovecraft’s influence on horror pop culture and the Mythos still keeps growing and flourishing through the means of pop culture.
Today, many horror writers admit that they have been deeply influenced by Lovecraft. Among them are Neil Gaiman, Alan Moore, F. Paul Wilson and the prolific horror writer, Stephen King. He states about Lovecraft’s fiction that, “…Lovecraft opened the way for us. He looms over all of us. I can’t think of any important horror fiction that doesn’t owe a lot to him” (Tibbetts 301). Recently, in addition to an enormous Lovecraftian literature produced, numerous movies, games and other productions could be considered parts of Cthulhu Mythos, as well. In a way, it could even be said that what the legendary modern mythmaker, J. R. R. Tolkien, did in the realm of fantasy, Lovecraft did in the realm of the weird, horror and science fiction story.

As explained in Chapter 2, Lovecraft’s technique and style of conveying his own type of horror is unique and does not match any established standards. His technique—which many of his contemporaries and modern horror writers have followed—seems to be the only effective way of transferring the monstrous quality of his creations and demonstrating cosmic horror and Lovecraftian atmospheres. As partially demonstrated in Chapter 2, Lovecraft creates these effects through some agonizingly complicated, detailed and highly conscious procedures. Therefore, it is much easier for horror writers, artists, filmmakers and video game developers to apply the ready-made material than to try to go through the same procedures to create similar effects. After reading Lovecraft’s “The Colour Out of Space,” Ramsey Campbell, “one of the pre-eminent masters of dark fiction” (Tibbetts 35), in an interview at the World Fantasy Convention in Chicago (1983) said about Lovecraft’s work and the growing public interest that:

It really disturbed me, with its attitude that all nature is malevolent. He says everything is “tainted” with what he called a “loathsome contagion”?! …one reason why he is the most influential horror writer is the same reason M. R. James is the most influential ghost story writer and Alfred Hitchcock the most influential maker of suspense films—which is to say that they all display their technique. The technique on the surface is integral to the way they do things. It does look easier to copy than it is. It’s…more a relentless anticipation of something terrible. One can certainly see…why people are
attracted to try and do the same thing, because you can’t see a display of exactly how to do it. (Tibbetts 37)

Lovecraft’s “gods,” names, incidents and settings were all created as if for our age; for the age of scientific and technological wonders and for the age when those weird paragraphs of cosmic horror and the Old Ones could be put into concepts for video games, arts and especially digital arts, modern horror writing and special effects in cinema. No wonder why they were not exactly popular during Lovecraft’s life span. This chapter’s major emphasis is on Lovecraftian cinema which has given him a prominent position in popular culture. These productions have repeatedly appeared in several Lovecraftian events and conventions, such as H. P. Lovecraft Film Festival & CthulhuCon which was founded in 1995 and has been held yearly ever since, MythosCon which was first held in 2011 and has covered all aspects of Lovecraft and his influence on pop culture, and NecronomiCon which was first held in 1993 and has been honoring Lovecraft and Cthulhu Mythos. S. T. Joshi in an interview before attending the H. P. Lovecraft Film Festival states about the festival and then Lovecraft in pop culture that:

…I believe it has done a great service in generating interest in Lovecraft among younger people. We have to face the fact that the youth of today are “weird” in the sense that us oldsters never will be. While I am quite happy remaining with the printed page, most people today need their aesthetic stimuli in various media formats. The Film Festival has inspired numerous amateur or independent filmmakers to do wonderful things with Lovecraft’s work, and I think this has had a marked effect in keeping Lovecraft alive as a pop culture phenomenon. (Tibbets 15)

The following productions have appeared abundantly at the mentioned Lovecraftian events.

**Lovecraft in Cinema**

There was a drastic change in horror film in the second half of the twentieth century. “America in the 1950s was a scared and scary place. The 1940s had ended with the
proliferation of atomic weapons…the public began to question the culpability, indeed the
sanity of the scientific world” (Vieira 153). This is a major reason why science and
science fiction entered the realm of horror film. With its scientific touch, Lovecraft’s
fiction proved to appeal to adaptation into late twentieth-century movies. H. P.
Lovecraft’s official website puts Lovecraft’s cinema into three categories: 1) movie
adaptations of Lovecraft’s fiction, 2) Lovecraft inspired movies which are not based on
Lovecraft’s stories, but make references to Lovecraft’s characters, places and names, and
3) Lovecraftian movies which do not refer to Lovecraft’s writings explicitly, but have a
Lovecraftian tone, touch and feel to them. The movies in this last group are usually more
remarkable than those movie adaptations based on Lovecraft’s texts (Loucks “Notes”).

1) Lovecraft Movie Adaptations

One of the main reasons for the lack of a remarkable success of Lovecraft’s movie
adaptations could probably be the absence of stable and strong protagonists in
Lovecraft’s fiction. Hollywood usually needs strong characters, heroes, motivators,
believers, symbolic human beings and other types of remarkable characters. Lovecraft’s
so-called “protagonist” is normally an unfortunate soul who regardless of not having
done anything wrong, suffers a horrible fate or at least some terrible realization and is
extremely powerless toward the phenomenon he is facing. His existence holds no value
or importance to the events of the story and his doom is sad, whether he is naturally good
or evil. This lack of solid and heroic characters in Lovecraft, accompanied with
Lovecraft’s fantastic visions and bizarre and unique creations and settings—which
demand an extremely high budget in movie production—and moreover, the short length
of his stories result in great difficulties to adapt them into film. Nate Yapp—the editor in
chief of the horror movie website Classic-Horror.com—states about the weakness of
these adaptations that:

Despite an amazing talent for atmosphere, Lovecraft’s stories
approached horror from a subjective emotional experience.
Locations and ghastly beasts alike were described by the effect
they had on a character, and even that was often beyond the
scope of mere words. While such a technique makes for an
imaginative read, it also presents a peculiar challenge to the
The Haunted Palace (1963)

The earliest movie adaptation of a Lovecraft story is *The Haunted Palace*. Even though “The Haunted Palace” is the name of a poem by Edgar Allan Poe (1839), the movie is an adaptation of H. P. Lovecraft’s *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, starring Vincent Price as Charles Dexter Ward. The story is loosely based on the novella and instead of Charles Dexter Ward invoking his sinister ancestor Joseph Curwen, Curwen’s spirit possesses Charles and does gruesome things. *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* is a classic Gothic horror tale in nature and its faint cosmic horror comes only from mentioning one of Lovecraft’s cosmic entities named Yog-Sothoth and the elder gods in incantations and monstrous invocations. The movie borrows greatly from the novella; such as the names of characters, the town which is Arkham and the practice of the supposed forbidden formulae in the *Necronomicon*, but the events and roles of the characters are modified and twisted greatly. Still, the movie like the novella is a classic Gothic horror. There is a hint of cosmic and Lovecraftian horror at the very end of the movie when Charles Dexter Ward declares that “As a matter of fact, we don’t fully understand ourselves. We obey. That is all” and uncovers an immense well with the cosmic entity lurking at the bottom.

Die, Monster, Die! (1965)

*Die, Monster, Die!* starring Boris Karloff is loosely based on Lovecraft’s “The Colour Out of Space.” It was directed by Roger Corman, the art director of *The Haunted Palace* and applies the theme of “evil ancestor” as was used in *The Haunted Palace* and Lovecraft’s novella, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, as well. Even though crippled by a weak screenplay, *Die, Monster, Die!* contains more cosmic elements than *The Haunted Palace*, since it emphasizes the science fiction aspect of the story where the Lovecraftian cosmic horror is somewhat more tangible. “The most Lovecraftian element appears right up front: a title sequence of swirling cosmic colors...invoking the feeling of the short
story’s ‘shining bands unlike any known colours of the normal spectrum’” (Migliore & Strysik, 12). Stephen Reinhart—a science student—goes to Arkham, England (instead of Lovecraft’s Arkham, Massachusetts) to visit his fiancée Susan Witley. Susan’s father—the master of the house—Nahum Witley (instead of Nahum Gardner the farmer in “The Colour Out of Space”) appears in a wheelchair and seems unwelcoming to the young man. Susan’s mother has recently become very ill and bedridden and is always behind bed curtains. Stephen, having detected peculiar lights and colors emitting from the mansion’s greenhouse, sets out to find out what is going on in there with Susan and they discover giant and plump plants and vegetations of great sizes. The scene certainly calls to mind the image of Nahum Farmer’s land after the meteorite gradually infiltrated into it and the growth of abnormally large and plump, yet inedible plants and fruits in “The Colour Out of Space.” They then discover a stone emitting some kind of radiation and some abnormal creatures whose abnormality—Stephen explains—must have resulted from radiations which cause genetic mutations. These creatures look strangely aquatic, while in “The Colour Out of Space,” it is explained that the rabbits and other little animals around the farm had been developing new disturbing and abnormal physical features. Still, the creatures in Die, Monster, Die! call to mind the mutations caused by the strange meteorite in “The Colour Out of Space.” Eventually, Susan’s mother Leticia turns into an anomaly and dies which reminds us of Nabby Gardner in Lovecraft’s story. Mr. Witley explains to Stephen that he has been under the impression that the radioactive stone is a gift from his grandfather Corbin Witley to turn the barren land fertile and filled with enormous plants and crops. However, the stone’s radioactive radiation has caused only malice and mutation. The scene of the abnormally large vegetations at the greenhouse, the strange meteorite emitting bizarre colors and radiations, the mutated creatures resulting from these radiations and the transformation of the residents of the Witley house to non-human mutants all transfer a degree of cosmic horror, even though the script is very weak and the movie cannot be considered a successful horror classic.

Both movies have taken only a few Lovecraftian concepts and twisted or modified them in different ways. The main attention caused by these movies at the time of their production probably resulted from the presence of horror film legends, such as Vincent Price and Boris Karloff. Nevertheless, these movies introduced Lovecraft’s fiction into horror film and therefore, are of great importance.
**Dagon (2001)**

Even though *Dagon* is named after Lovecraft’s early short story “Dagon,” the movie is mainly based on *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, which is the director’s most favorite story of Lovecraft’s (Migliore & Strysik, 65). It is directed by Stuart Gordon who has directed a number of Poe and Lovecraft-related films, as well. Some of his Lovecraft movie adaptations are *Re-Animator* (1985) which is based on Lovecraft’s short story “Herbert West—Reanimator,” *From Beyond* (1986) which is based on a Lovecraft short story with the same name and *Dreams in the Witch-House* (2005) based on a story with the same name. Among these movies, *Re-Animator* was a somewhat big success, since it is quite different from most other Lovecraft’s tales; the story applies completely different techniques and lacks the cosmic horror and fantastic beings, which is why it will not be discussed here. In *Dagon*, a young tycoon who is a successful graduate of the Miskatonic University and his wife end up in a remote Spanish fishing town, due to a strange storm and a boat accident. They try to seek help from what they think is a church and a priest in there, but they soon find out that they are prey to an ancient cult whose half-human practitioners are the offspring of the ancient old one, “Dagon,” and make human sacrifices for it, due to the promise of eternal life in a beautiful and glorious realm. The movie has a fantastic setting, very much similar to what Lovecraft described in the short story, even though the time setting is modern.

*Dagon* is a decent Lovecraft adaptation and portrays the type of horror in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* which is one of the best works of H. P. Lovecraft. A common theme in *Dagon* the movie, *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* and “The Call of Cthulhu”—which was discussed in Chapter 2—is “forbidden knowledge.” The couple faces a horrifying fate, only because the boat accident brought them to the strange island. As all Lovecraft’s protagonists, the couple is merely a victim. This fact is a major factor which creates cosmic horror in this film. Another factor is simply the hybrid and unnatural looking residents of the fishing town who have no human values and are merely indifferent toward the fates of the victims. The first encounter with supernatural horror in the film is when the tycoon’s wife tries to ask a man whom she assumes to be a priest some questions and realizes that the man has webbed hands. *Dagon* is not a powerful movie, but it shows great respect and appreciation for Lovecraft’s fiction and therefore, probably does not disappoint Lovecraft’s readers (Buchanan).
The Call of Cthulhu (2005)

The Call of Cthulhu is a silent and black and white film which looks as if it was made at the time of its writing by Lovecraft. This fact justifies the lack of high-tech special effects for portraying Cthulhu and the dead city of R’lyeh and makes the movie into a perfectly silent horror film. It is the most faithful and accurate Lovecraft movie adaptation to this date. I believe that the main success of this film comes from the fact that it is silent. Therefore, each scene reminds the viewer of reading the same paragraphs in the short story itself. To me, it felt like I was reading “The Call of Cthulhu,” rather than watching it which was truly the most perfect way of adapting Lovecraft.

2) Lovecraft Inspired Movies

Evil Dead Series

In the famous Evil Dead series; The Evil Dead (1982), Evil Dead II (1987) and the third Evil Dead movie Army of Darkness (1993) which are essentially zombie movies starring Bruce Campbell, the chaos and mayhem begins with finding a copy of the Necronomicon in a cabin in the woods.

In the Mouth of Madness (1995)

In the Mouth of Madness is a highly Lovecraftian movie and makes numerous references to both Stephen King and his master, H. P. Lovecraft and applies Lovecraftian themes of insanity and the “Old Ones,” and makes use of the New England setting that we recognize from Lovecraft’s stories. John Carpenter, the director of the film, declares that admires Lovecraft and has been highly influenced by him (Miglior, Strysik 36). Among his other Lovecraft inspired films, a remarkable one is The Thing (1982).

The insurance investigator, John Trent, is hired by a book publisher to track down the famous horror writer, Sutter Cane who has disappeared before publishing his latest book, The Hobb’s End Horror. His stories seem to cause paranoia and insanity in the readers and Trent needs to find Sutter, since the town has become the scene of absolute chaos. When arriving at the mysterious and sinister town of Hobb’s End, Trent realizes
that the town is a fraction of Sutter Cane’s twisted imagination, which has the capability to alter the course of reality. Apparently, Cane has been applying an enormous and ancient evil force which unleashed this nightmarish chaos. His ancient evil creatures are unleashed and chase Trent, seeking to get to the other side and to reality.

There are various Lovecraftian elements and references in this movie. The small and peculiar town of Hobb’s End—with its abnormal and hybrid inhabitants—calls to mind the town of Innsmouth from Lovecraft’s The Shadow Over Innsmouth. Sutter Cane’s book titles remind us of Lovecraft’s tales; for example, Hobb’s End Horror brings to mind The Dunwich Horror. Moreover, the ancient evil creatures in the film perfectly match the description of Lovecraft’s Old Ones. John Carpenter—the famous horror film director and the director of In the Mouth of Madness—states that he originally planned to make an adaptation of Lovecraft’s The Shadow Over Innsmouth, but due to the difficulty of its production, he had to change his plan. He admits that his attempt has been for In the Mouth of Madness to be a Lovecraftian movie and for Sutter Cane to portray Lovecraft “…with his creatures just on the other side ready to come on through; creatures that have been here longer than man has…” (Miglior, Strysik 40).

In my view, this is a Lovecraftian film and belongs to the third group, but as it was presented in H. P. Lovecraft’s official website in the second group, I discussed the movie here.

3) Lovecraftian Movies

These movies have a “Lovecraftian feel” to them are some of the most remarkable modern horror/fantasy/science-fiction movies whose number is noticeably increasing. Many of these movies have extremely high ratings and are wonderful productions. H. P Lovecraft’s official website (Loucks “Notes”) introduces a number of movies as “Lovecraftian movies.” Among them, Alien (1979) will be discussed in this chapter. Another highly Lovecraftian movie—supposedly a prequel to Alien—is Prometheus (2012). These highly Lovecraftian movies have played a remarkable role in securing Lovecraft’s position in pop culture.
Directed by Ridley Scott and scripted by Dan O’Bannon, *Alien* is a phenomenal horror/science-fiction movie which is deeply influenced by the atmospheres, settings and creatures of H. P. Lovecraft. A brief synopsis of the storyline is necessary, but I mainly wish to analyze the Lovecraftian origins, elements and atmosphere of this production.

The year is 2087. On its way back to earth, the commercial spaceship *Nostromo* with its seven crew members, receives a distress call from an unknown nearby planetoid. Three members set out to investigate the transmission, while the rest of the crew stay in the spaceship to make repairs, since it suffered some damage at landing. This very beginning may remind us of *At the Mountains of Madness* where Professor Lake and some crew members split from the main team to investigate the peculiar markings on the triangular slate and faced a horrifying fate and—very much like the feeling created in the book—the audience may feel uneasy about the separate investigation of the three crew members of *Nostromo*. The investigators discover a gigantic and abandoned alien spaceship and find out it has been the origin of the unknown transmission. They discover the remains of a gargantuan alien and a chamber of laid eggs. This also reminds us of when Dyer and Danforth discover that ancient and abandoned stone city of the “Elder Things” in *At the Mountains of Madness* and come to the realization that it was not entirely deserted. When in the movie an egg is hatched, the new-born alien creature attaches itself to a crew member’s face. Brought back to the ship, the attached creature is carefully examined and its blood proves to be a type of extremely strong acid, in contrast to the blood of Lovecraft’s “Old Ones” which is usually a thick dark-green fluid. The creature seemingly lets go of the crew member and dies, but when the man tries to eat food, he starts choking and an alien creature rips out through his chest, killing him instantly and escapes. The alien becomes fully grown and enormous in a very short time and kills several crew members brutally when they chase it. The manner of the creature’s kill may also remind us of the gruesome slaughter at the Lake Camp which Dyer and the rest by the Old Ones. On the spaceship, the attempts to flush the alien out of the spaceship prove futile when they realize their science officer is an android and is ordered to bring the alien back to “the company” even at the expense of everyone’s life. Warrant Officer Ripley succeeds in activating the spaceship’s self-destruct to prevent the alien from reaching the earth. She loses sight of the alien and gets on the shuttle before the spaceship explodes. While getting ready to go back to earth, she realizes that the alien has
hidden in the shuttle and is with her. She finally manages to shoot the alien out of the shuttle and blast it into space by activating the shuttle engine.

*Alien* is possibly the most Lovecraftian movie ever produced. The tangible presence of cosmic horror in this film is caused by various factors. Let us start with the Lovecraft influence on the creators of *Alien*. Dan O’Bannon, one of the creators of the story of the film and its screenplay writer had been fascinated by Lovecraft since an early age. Dan O’ Bannon shares his insight about the author and the Lovecraftian cinema in an interview for the H. P. Lovecraft Film Festival & CthulhuCon, after winning the “Howie” Award. He admits that Lovecraft is so hard to film adequately. He believes there is only one Lovecraft adaptation which really works and that is *Re-Animator* (1985) and it is a success because it is based on an atypical Lovecraft story which is a powerful story, but is written with different techniques than Lovecraft normally uses (JaSunni 1). *Alien* has a lot to do with atmosphere, the way Lovecraft creates his cosmic horror. Even though the merciless alien creature is very scary, it is in fact the atmosphere of the film that produces such unknown and tense fear which is extremely Lovecraftian in nature; no wonder, since Dan O’Bannon’s attempt was to create cosmic horror through a Lovecraftian production. In the same interview mentioned above, he talks about Lovecraft’s influence in the writing of the storyline of *Alien* and the difficulties in creating cosmic horror in cinema:

It’s very very difficult to achieve that tone in film… I tried very hard in *Alien* to do that… *Alien* was strongly influenced tone-wise of Lovecraft… You can’t adapt Lovecraft effectively without extremely visual style. It has to be very stylized and very particular. What you need is a cinematic equivalent of Lovecraft’s prose. That’s the problem… So it’s still there to be done… (JaSunni 1)

And still filmmakers are struggling to create perfect Lovecraftian films and achieve the thrill of doing the seemingly undoable. Another of the more successful productions is *Prometheus* (2012) which will be discussed here, as well.

One undeniable creator of *Alien* is the Swiss artist, H. R. Giger who was also influenced by Lovecraft and published his images in 1978, titled *Necronomicon*. Giger admired Lovecraft’s work. Particularly, the title and idea of the dreaded *Necronomicon* inspired him greatly. Giger’s explicitly Lovecraftian pieces are few, but the horror
created in most of his masterpieces is indeed that of Lovecraftian and cosmic horror. In
*Alien*, we see his extremely Lovecraftian designs for the first time; the organic/mechanic
design of the gigantic alien spaceship, other alien designs and most significantly, the
main alien creature. Dan O'Bannon says about Giger’s work in the same interview
mentioned above that there is indeed no other artist to convey Lovecraft with such a
fantastic quality that Giger does. O’Bannon met Giger in Paris, along with several other
visual artists such as Jean "Moebius" Giraud and Chris Foss who are incidentally inspired
and influenced by Lovecraft greatly. Giger showed O’Bannon his *Necronomicon* which
in O’Bannon’s words “transformed” him. He immediately asked for Giger’s cooperation
in later projects (JaSunni 2) and the design for *Alien* is indeed one of Giger’s memorable
masterpieces. The primitively-shaped alien creature itself reminds one of Lovecraft’s
primeval Old Ones. The design of the movie is highly Lovecraftian:

> HPL’s motto of “atmosphere, not action” pervades the film
> much like the primordial gases covering the unknown
> planet…where the creature is discovered as a leathery egg
> inside an organic…spaceship, a sense that would have given
> Lovecraft chills. (Miglior, Strysik 32)

*Alien* with its fervent Lovecraftian quality and pervading cosmic fear could be
considered an eminent component of the Cthulhu Mythos.

**Prometheus (2012)**

The plot of the movie is very similar to *Alien* and is set in the *Alien* universe, as well. A
team of scientists and explorers arrive at this very remote planet to investigate a clue they
have discovered about the origins of life on earth. Instead of a distress call—like in
*Alien*—the team discovers some traces of civilization and find evidence to prove that
ever life had been created and engineered by an alien race. Like in *Alien*—and *At the
Mountains of Madness*—after several inconceivable discoveries, soon the thrill turns to
terror and excitement to survival.

The core idea and feel of the movie is Lovecraftian, since the whole story is based
on the idea in *At the Mountains of Madness* that human beings and all earth life were
originally created by a race of highly-evolved aliens, who created life and organisms for
multiple purposes. Ridley Scott, the director of *Prometheus*, lists *Chariots of the Gods?*, written by the Swiss author Erich von Däniken, as one inspiration for making the movie. This book suggests the theory of “Ancient Astronauts,” which became extremely popular in the late 1960s and 1970s with its publication in 1968. In 2004, Jason Colavito in an article in *Skeptic* magazine claims that von Däniken plagiarized many concepts of *Chariots of the Gods?*, including that of the ancient astronauts, from a French book titled *Le Matin des Magiciens (The Dawn of the Magicians)*. This book was written by the editors of a French magazine, *Planete*, which was heavily influenced by Cthulhu Mythos and first introduced Lovecraft’s fictional concept of alien gods as a nonfiction theory. Colavito brings evidence from both Lovecraft and Däniken’s texts to prove his claim (Colavito). He finally states:

> So that is the intellectual journey from Providence to Paris to the Swiss hotel where von Daniken wrote his book, and we can see how Lovecraft’s science fiction became Von Daniken’s pseudoscientific nonfiction. (Colavito)

*Prometheus* is rich with the concepts and realizations seen in *At the Mountains of Madness* and therefore, its incidents, setting, atmosphere and the whole feel of the movie transfers a strong and chilling cosmic fear.

**Lovecraft in Games**

Lovecraft has strongly influenced the gaming world. In fact, it is possible that more gamers are into H. P. Lovecraft than readers. However, this phenomenon is only caused by the peculiar nature of his literature which can only be brought to life by very strong imaginations of sensitive readers, or elaborate traditional or digital visualizations like those of visual arts and video games. The role-playing game *Call of Cthulhu*, which has been published by the famous role-playing game publisher Chaosium, has been in print for about 30 years. The game has been translated into several languages and has won major awards from 1982 to 2003. This game is capable of inflicting the most Lovecraftian kind of horror and atmosphere on the player, since they start off playing the roles of ordinary people who are sucked into Lovecraftian mysteries, lore and horrifying adventures and incidents. Throughout the game, the players get to learn more and more
about the indifference of the cosmos at large toward mankind and lose more “sanity points.” In this game, the gamers face a terrible fate more often than triumph. This terrible fate is either death, or losing one’s sanity points and ending up in a mental asylum.

More video games apply Lovecraftian names, tones, atmospheres and concepts every day. One of the Lovecraft video game adaptations is *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* (2005) which is actually based on *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* with a major subplot of *The Shadow Out of Time*. It is an action-adventure survival horror videogame. Action-adventure is a very diverse videogame genre and many games can be categorized as such. However, “survival horror” indicates that the game is inspired by horror fiction and players feel less powerful in this type of action/adventure, due to the horror nature of the opponents and events. It is in a first person perspective and the player starts off as an investigator looking for a missing person in Innsmouth, but eventually realizes that there is something wrong with the people and places in the city and the hostility begins. The fact that the player has no weapons for a long time in the beginning of the game, adds to the Lovecraftian touch, since it creates the feeling of powerlessness and irrelevance of Lovecraft’s characters in the player. One of the reviewers of the famous gaming website, “GameSpot,” calls the game an “atmospheric experience” in which the combination of shooting and stealth works really well in creating a bizarre Lovecraftian experience (Kasavin).

There is still so much to come out of Lovecraftian concepts. Each and every one will be competing with the older ones. The world of video games is applying more and more of Lovecraft and every popular horror, fantasy or science fiction related game uses at least one Lovecraftian element or concept. Even some of the major massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG)—such as World of Warcraft (WoW) which has been entertaining the gamers all around the globe since 1994—have applied multiple Lovecraftian themes and elements like the theme of the “Old Gods” or the use of Lovecraftian characters and names. The renowned movie director Guillermo Del Toro—the director of *Pan’s Labyrinth* (2006) and *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* (2012)—who is greatly fascinated and inspired by Lovecraft, is talking about making the movie adaptation of *At the Mountains of Madness*. The endless possibility of Lovecraftian productions in cinema, video games, arts and entertainment is almost unfathomable. Indeed as Dan O’Bannon—the writer of Alien—put it, “…it’s still there to be done.”
Conclusion

In this thesis, my attempt was to familiarize the reader with a genre of horror fiction known as “Lovecraftian horror” and the concept of “cosmic horror” in H. P. Lovecraft’s fiction, and to analyze the origins, creation process, evolution and aftermath of cosmic horror. In order to do so, in Chapter 1, I first provided an introduction to horror and Gothic fiction and H. P. Lovecraft’s life and writings. Then, in Chapter 2, I examined the creation process and gradual refinement and evolution of cosmic horror through analyzing a number of Lovecraft’s texts. Finally, in Chapter 3, I demonstrated the aftermath of cosmic horror and its influences on pop culture through analyzing several late twentieth and early twenty-first century productions. My hope is for the reader to be further familiarized with the concept of cosmic horror and possibly piece together those aspects and components of Lovecraft’s life and writings which may have played a role in the creation of Lovecraftian and cosmic horror and have given a prominent position to this author in pop culture.

The aim of Chapter 1 was to provide an introduction to H. P. Lovecraft’s cosmic horror and its origins. Through a summary and analysis of Lovecraft’s essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature”—which is a brief history of Gothic, horror and weird fiction—I pointed out the genre’s influences on Lovecraft’s writing and his creating of cosmic horror. I also referred to several elements and characteristics of these works which Lovecraft addresses in his essay and may have been influenced with in creating his cosmic horror. I found out that—as Lovecraft puts it in his essay—his most prominent influence had been Edgar Allan Poe and his tales of the macabre, the unearthly, the fantastic and the psychologically-agonizing. Moreover, Hawthorne’s omnipresent and lurking evil, Arthur’s Machen’s “hidden horror and brooding fright,” Algernon Blackwood’s masterfully weird atmosphere and Lord Dunsany’s strange fantasy and pantheon of gods had been other major influences on Lovecraft’s fiction. However, in addition to these most noticeable inspirations, there had been many others which Lovecraft addresses in “Supernatural Horror in Literature.” Among them are; the exotic and forbidden mysteries of Arabian Nights, the unearthly and eerie Radcliffian atmospheres, the spiritual fright of Melmoth, the monstrous births in Frankenstein, the
spectral and unearthly worlds of Gautier, real and lurking evil in Hawthorne and the “shadow-making” and unholy terror in Bierce. I concluded that the essay might have been Lovecraft’s attempt to establish a literary tradition to which his own fiction and notions could belong.

In the second part of Chapter 1, I presented a brief biography of H. P. Lovecraft and discussed the possible links between the events in his life and his writings at the time of those events. Many of his tales are introduced in that section and their main themes are pointed out. I mentioned that Lovecraft was a recluse since childhood and took pleasure in voluminous readings, lonely walks and writing poems, fictions, treatises and articles. Gradually, he started corresponding with various authors, critics and literary enthusiasts, which led to the total of about 30,000 letters many of which have been published by Arkham House in a five-volume book titled, Selected Letters. I addressed two important turning points in Lovecraft’s life which changed the course of his writing career; the first incident was getting noticed by Edward F. Daas, president of the United Amateur Press Association (UAPA), who asked Lovecraft to join the UAPA. This incident, brought Lovecraft out of a long period of idleness, referred to as his “blank period.” Another turning point in Lovecraft’s writing was his return to Providence, RI after living in New York for 2 years as a married man. This return was the advent of a productive and genius flow in Lovecraft’s writing when he wrote his finest pieces—or “the great texts”—starting with “The Call of Cthulhu.”

My aim in Chapter 2 was to demonstrate the creation process of Lovecraft’s cosmic horror in various stages of his writing career and depict its gradual evolution and perfection. In order to do so, I analyzed Lovecraft’s stories in 2 major groups; the stories which were written before “The Call of Cthulhu” and “Cthulhu” and the tales after it. This is because, as mentioned, Lovecraft’s return to Providence, RI after which he wrote “The Call of Cthulhu,” marked a noticeable change and growth in his fiction. Brief synopses of the stories are given and all effective elements which could possibly create cosmic horror in the selected texts are pointed out and the views and insights of several writers, scholars and critics on the texts are presented, as well.

I traced cosmic horror in a range of Lovecraft’s texts between “The Beast in the Cave” and At the Mountains of Madness. Cosmic horror reveals itself in various forms and qualities throughout these tales. In his earlier tales, there are but faint traces of
cosmic horror, since Lovecraft had still been imitating either Edgar Allan Poe, or Lord Dunsany’s writing and most of his tales at that time conveyed a feel of the Gothic, macabre or fantasy. As he gradually found his own voice and style, Lovecraft’s cosmic horror became increasingly tangible and recognizable and his fiction turned into weird fiction, rather than Gothic. I portrayed how “The Call of Cthulhu” marks the advent of a new horror genre which is now known as “Lovecraftian horror.” Cosmic horror is also analyzed in two other very powerful post-Cthulhu tales; “The Colour Out of Space” and *At the Mountains of Madness*. I pointed out that the horror in “The Colour Out of Space” is more fantasy than science fiction, *At the Mountains of Madness* is more science fiction than fantasy and “The Call of Cthulhu” falls into the border of both fantasy and science fiction. I presented multiple excerpts from these tales to discuss the cosmic element and feel in them. It is pointed out that “Cthulhu” and the tales written after it are sometimes referred to as “the great texts” and that they ventured into the realm of science fiction more evidently than the tales preceding them.

In Chapter 3, I introduced several modern productions of pop culture from the late twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries and analyzed the Lovecraftian influence on them. The elements of cosmic horror in the productions are pointed out and their relation to particular Lovecraftian notions is argued. The focus of the chapter is on Lovecraft in cinema where he has become known as a prominent icon of pop culture. Lovecraft’s cinema is analyzed in three main groups; Lovecraft’s movie adaptations, movies containing references to by Lovecraft’s fiction, his characters, notions or incidents and finally, Lovecraftian movies, which contain the tangible and recognizable feelings of cosmic horror, even though they may not make direct or explicit references to Lovecraft. Lastly, I analyzed Lovecraft’s influence on a number of role playing and video games and pointed out the Lovecraftian and cosmic elements in them.

I attempted to compare and contrast Lovecraft’s movie adaptations to the actual story, in order to show the Lovecraftian concepts conveyed in them. A brief synopsis of the storyline is given and its cosmic elements are discussed. In this chapter, I discussed possibly the most Lovecraftian movie ever produced, *Alien* (1979), in more detail. Parts of an interview with the screenplay writer of *Alien* are presented to piece together the elements and techniques which create Lovecraftian horror in the film.
The three presented chapters attempt to familiarize the reader with Lovecraftian horror. After reading Chapter 1 and 2, one may be able decide whether there is a link between H. P. Lovecraft’s own life and influences with the creation of cosmic horror in his fiction. By presenting summaries of his essay, his biography and his texts, such a conclusion may be possible. I believe that Lovecraft’s life and fiction come together to help produce and evolve cosmic and Lovecraftian horror. I also believe that the application and demonstration of cosmic horror in the media of popular culture have secured Lovecraft’s position as an undeniable icon of popular culture in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Based on the limitations of the current thesis, I believe further research should analyze other stories by H. P. Lovecraft and their possible links to his life and the works which influenced him. There are many major works and “great texts” yet to be discussed and cosmic horror in those other tales may be analyzed, since the creation process and techniques of presenting cosmic horror vary in Lovecraft. Such a research may help extend our understanding of different forms of Lovecraftian and cosmic horror which make Lovecraft one of the undeniable masters of modern horror fiction. Moreover, further Lovecraftian productions in art and entertainment can be examined; there are tons of movies and games presenting Lovecraftian components and cosmic horror. Other media of pop culture—such as graphic novels, comics and visual arts—are still there to be analyzed, as well. Such researches may help us further recognize Lovecraft’s position as a highly influential figure in pop culture.
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