Cthulhu Waits Dreaming

A Jungian Exploration of Dreams and the Unconscious in the Works of H.P. Lovecraft

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Master of Philosophy in European Languages
ENG4390 – Master's Thesis in Literature in English (60 credits)

Department of Literature, Area Studies, and European Languages
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15th November 2019

Ph’nglui mglw’nafh Cthulhu R’lyeh wgah’nagl fhtagn

In his house at R’lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thanks my supervisor Juan Christian Pellicer for his useful feedback and help in developing my ideas, his support and understanding, and his patience with my somewhat erratic writing schedule. I would also like to thank the staff of the Oslo University Library for their helpfulness and efficiency.

Abbreviations

CF	*H.P. Lovecraft: Collected Fiction*
CW	*The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*
SHL	*Supernatural Horror in Literature*
SL	*H.P. Lovecraft: Selected Letters*

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1. Introduction

Howard Phillips Lovecraft is today considered by many to be one of the greatest American writers of the twentieth century. This, however, was not always the case. Lovecraft worked on his literary craft with devotion and exacting perfectionism, but achieved little success or recognition during his lifetime save for amongst a small circle of enthusiastic devotees. his stories not being considered “literary” enough, they were only published in cheap pulp magazines, usually alongside works of vastly inferior quality. It was some decades after his death from cancer in 1937, at the age of only 46, that he began to gain recognition amongst readers and critics. Even today amongst some academics there is a view that horror fiction does not quite qualify as being great literature, perhaps with the exception of some of the great Gothic classics of the nineteenth century, and there remains a resistance to take Lovecraft quite as seriously as a writer as he merits.

This was, I must admit, an attitude I somewhat uncritically shared to a certain extent before I had actually read any of Lovecraft’s work. The idea of writing an academic thesis examining Lovecraft’s writing therefore took me somewhat by surprise. In my first year of the English Literature degree program, whilst greatly enjoying studying the works of more “serious” authors such as Charlotte Brontë and John Milton, I picked up a second-hand collection of Lovecraft’s stories for what I thought would be some light reading during the Easter break.

From the first story I read, *The Call of Cthulhu*, my expectations of light reading were swept away, and I was gripped in a way that I had seldom experienced before. When in the course of researching this thesis I came across the following quote from Carl Jung I immediately understood the kind of experience he was referring to:

> [The] pregnant language [of works that at openly symbolic] cries out at us that they mean more than they say. We can put our finger on the symbol at once, even though we may not be able to unriddle its meaning to our entire satisfaction. A symbol remains a perpetual challenge to our thoughts and feelings. That probably explains why a symbolic work is so stimulating, why it grips us so intensely, but also why it seldom affords us a purely aesthetic enjoyment. (CW 15, p.77)

Lovecraft wrote a particular kind of horror fiction for which his preferred term was *weird fiction* or the *weird tale*. In his important critical essay, *Supernatural Horror in Literature* he makes it clear that in the weird tale the source of horror is cosmic and existential, it is “the fear of the unknown” (SHL, p.25). He says of the weird tale:

> This type of fear-literature must not be confounded with a type externally similar but psychologically widely different; the literature of mere physical fear and the mundanely gruesome. […] 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. (SHL, p.27–28)

When I had made the decision to write about Lovecraft, the question then naturally arose as to what kind of theoretical basis I should use. In the course I took on literary theory, I found myself most naturally drawn to the psychoanalytic approach, perhaps because of my natural disposition as an introvert. However, to the extent I was familiar with psychology and psychotherapy from previous reading and personal experience, I had always found Freudian theories somewhat reductive and unsatisfying and been more naturally drawn to the more holistic approach of C.G. Jung and his theories of the mind, which he called *analytical psychology*.

But was there such a thing as Jungian literary criticism? Such a thing had certainly not been mentioned in my classes on literary theory. A little research revealed that there was indeed such a thing as Jungian literary criticism, and even a book or two with that very title, but that rather like Lovecraft, Jung was somewhat neglected in the field of literary studies. The more I read of both of these two geniuses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries though, the more I felt that this neglect was unjustified, and something I wished to contribute in at least some small way to remedying by making th admittedly slightly eccentric choice to write a thesis using analytical psychology to interpret the works of H.P. Lovecraft.

Jung was born in 1875, fifteen years before Lovecraft, and so they were both at the height of their creative powers in the 1920s and 1930s. The question therefore naturally arises as

to whether they were aware of each other's work. On the question of whether Jung was aware of Lovecraft, it must be remembered that Lovecraft spent his whole life in obscurity, gaining fame and recognition only posthumously, and so the answer to this question must be an almost certain no. However, we can be quite certain that Lovecraft had heard of Jung, and was reasonable well acquainted with his theory of mind. The principal evidence for this is Lovecraft's correspondence.

To say that Lovecraft was an enthusiastic letter-writer would be a grave understatement. There survive over 100,000 letters written by Lovecraft, many over 50 pages long, making him the second most prolific letter-writer in recorded human history, behind only Voltaire. Many have lamented that Lovecraft did not spend a little less time writing letters and a little more writing fiction, but his letters do at least provide a wealth of information about Lovecraft's life, his preoccupations, and his views on a wide range of subjects. He mentions Freud and Jung in quite a number of his letters, so we can be certain that he was familiar with their ideas.

A more difficult question to answer is whether the fact that so many of Lovecraft's stories lend themselves so well to psychological, and particularly Jungian, interpretations can be taken as an indication that Lovecraft *deliberately* included images and themes inspired by analytical psychology in his stories. This question is, in fact, not only difficult but, barring the discovery of some new piece of evidence which has yet to come to light, frankly impossible to answer. It is nonetheless one which a number of Lovecraft critics have found rather tantalising. The psychologist Yōzan Dirk W. Mosig gives his reflections on this question in the following terms:

> A nice thing about the Jungian analysis is that it is not necessary to assume that Lovecraft actually intended to consciously express such a wealth of psychological meaning in his tales … an artist cannot help but express his personality and inner conflicts in his work, even though he may himself not be consciously aware of the implications of his creative output. Any writer will tend to express his psyche in his tales, even though few authors have done so as powerfully as H.P. Lovecraft. Nevertheless, taking into account several mentions of Freud and Jung in the *Selected Letters* volumes, as well as several passages discussing psychoanalytic theory, it becomes obvious that Lovecraft was well aware of Jung and his work, and that he had a keen understanding of psychoanalytic thought. It is then quite plausible that the gentleman from Providence intentionally chose symbols akin to Jung's to express his vision of the inner struggles of man." (Mosig 1997, p.41–42)

One final point that must be addressed in relation to Lovecraft is his racism. Lovecraft was a quite virulent, unapologetic, and ideological racist, and his racism his evident in many of his stories, including two of the three texts examined in this thesis. The question of how we as modern readers should relate to a man who had remarkable qualities as an artist and a thinker, but whose writings are marred by racism in such a serious way, is a complex and challenging one, and not one I intend to propose a solution to in this thesis. By way of putting it in some kind of fruitful perspective though, I would like to briefly mention the controversy around the World Fantasy Awards.

The WFA is an annual award for fantasy fiction, and until 2016, the award itself was a bust of Lovecraft, in acknowledgement of his preeminent role and influence in the field. Lovecraft's racism, though, led to mounting criticism of this practice, and the design of the award was eventually changed. Nnedi Okorafor, the first black winner of the WFA, puts it powerfully when she says "A statuette of this racist man's head is in my home. A statuette of this racist man's head is one of my greatest honors as a writer."[1]

S.T. Joshi, who is both a leading Lovecraft scholar and himself a person of colour gives a contrasting viewpoint when he says:

> The World Fantasy Award is a purely literary award. It is awarded purely for literary excellence in the field of weird fiction. It commemorated Lovecraft because (a) it was created for the First World Fantasy Convention in 1975, held in Providence, R.I., which was essentially a Lovecraft convention, and (b) it acknowledges Lovecraft's literary greatness, both intrinsically and in terms of his influence. That is all that the award "means." The award says nothing about Lovecraft as a person (just as other awards in this and related fields say nothing about the person or character of the figures they are named for). *The changing of the award is an implicit rejection of Lovecraft's literary status.* It suggests that Lovecraft's racism is so heinous a character flaw that it negates the entirety of his literary achievement.

Although I do not aim to find a resolution to this important conflict of views in this thesis, I do aim to bear it in mind, and to address the racism that is to be found in the stories I discuss.

This thesis is structured in the following way. Chapter 2 provides an overview of Jung's theories of the mind and definitions of the key concepts I will use in the chapters that

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[1] http://nnedi.blogspot.com/2011/12/lovecrafts-racism-world-fantasy-award.html

follow. It also examines Jung's own views on art and creativity, and on how analytical psychology can be used to interpret literature. In Chapter 3 I discuss how the concepts and theories detailed in Chapter 2 can be applied to the works of H.P Lovecraft specifically, and give a brief overview of some of the Jungian criticism of Lovecraft that has been done previously. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 form the main body of the thesis, in which I present my own analytical interpretations of three of Lovecraft's best-known stories: *The Call of Cthulhu* (Chapter 4), The Shadow Over Innsmouth (Chapter 5), and The Shadow Out of Time (Chapter 6). Finally, I draw some of the main threads together in a brief conclusion.

2. Jungian Literary Criticism

In this chapter I wish to accomplish two foundational tasks. The first is to properly introduce the key concepts from analytical psychology that I will be using to analyse three of Lovecraft's stories in the main part of the thesis. The second is to answer the questions of what Jungian literary criticism is, and what contribution it can make to the understanding of art in general, and to the reading and writing of literature in particular.

Carl Gustav Jung was, along with Sigmund Freud, one of the founding pioneers of depth psychology and psychoanalysis. Jung was a younger contemporary of Freud, and for a period they collaborated on the development of the theory and practice of psychoanalysis. It became increasingly clear though that they had divergent ideas about the nature of the human psyche, and this eventually brought their collaboration to an end. Jung's ideas have been influential well beyond the field of psychology, but in literary studies they have not been used nearly as much as those of Freud which, especially as developed by Jaques Lacan, have formed the basis for most psychoanalytic literary criticism. It is my hope that this thesis can make some small contribution to the case that Jungian theories of the mind have much more potential to contribute to the study of literature than their relative underuse thus far would indicate.

As my focus in this thesis is dreams and the unconscious, we will start by examining how Jung understood these two concepts and the relationship between them. This will necessarily also involve discussing the related concepts of archetypes, individuation, the shadow, and symbols.

Archetypes, Symbols, and the Collective Unconscious

The idea of the unconscious is central to Jung's theories of the mind, and it was primarily his disagreement with Freud over the nature of the unconscious that led them to part ways. For Freud, the unconscious consisted of the drives and desires that had been repressed by the conscious mind, as well as that which had simply been forgotten by it. Jung didn't reject this idea of the unconscious, but he came to see it as being incomplete. He termed Freud's conception of the unconscious the *personal unconscious*, and posited

a second, deeper, level which he termed the *collective unconscious*. In his essay *The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, he defined it as follows:

> For Freud […] the unconscious is of an exclusively personal nature, although he was aware of its archaic and mythological thought-forms. A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the *personal unconscious*. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the *collective unconscious*. I have chosen the term "collective" because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us. (CW 9i, p.20)

Jung's belief in the existence of the collective unconscious was based on his extensive study of his own dreams and those of his patients. He noted that certain images and symbols seemed to recur, and that these recurrences could not be adequately explained either in terms of the subject's waking experiences or in terms of repressed neuroses. Moreover, he believed that these images could be identified with those found in the myths and religions of human cultures separated by great distances of time and space. He explained these observations by means of the idea of the archetype, which he defined as follows:

> We can […] speak of an unconscious only in so far as we are able to demonstrate its contents. […] The contents of the collective unconscious […] are known as archetypes. […] For our purposes this term is apposite and helpful, because it tells us that so far as the collective unconscious contents are concerned we are dealing with archaic or – I would say – primordial types, that is, with universal images that have existed since the remotest times. (CW 9i, p.21)

This may sound rather mystical, and indeed one of the most common criticisms of Jung's theory of the collective unconscious has been that it lacks a sufficient empirical foundation and belongs more to the realm of philosophical speculation that to that of science. Indeed, this has been one of the primary factors that has stopped analytical psychology gaining broader acceptance in academia. In another essay, *The Concept of the Collective Unconscious*, Jung responds to this criticism by comparing archetypes with instincts and

insisting that his theory of the collective unconscious rests on an empirical, not a speculative, foundation:

> [I]nstincts are not vague and indefinite by nature, but are specifically formed motive forces which, long before there is any consciousness, and in spite of any degree of consciousness later on, pursue their inherent goals. Consequently they form very close analogies to the archetypes, so close, in fact, that there is good reason for supposing that the archetypes are the unconscious images of the instincts themselves, in other words, that they are *patterns of instinctual behaviour*. The hypothesis of the collective unconscious is, therefore, no more daring than to assume there are instincts. […] Although this reproach of mysticism has frequently been levelled at my concept, I must emphasize yet again that the concept of the collective unconscious is neither a speculative nor a philosophical but an empirical matter. (CW 9i, p.57–58)

It is important to distinguish between archetypes themselves and their manifestations in dreams, myths, or art. The archetype itself is a kind of psychic pattern which Jung considered to be inborn and universal. The particular way in which an archetype is expressed, however, is not universal, but is made up of elements drawn from conscious experience in order to give expression to the archetype. Whilst archetypes are universal, they take on different forms in different times, places, and cultures, as well as in the minds of different people. Jung termed these manifestations *symbols*. Symbols give expression to archetypes, and are thus the language of the unconscious. Jung contrasted them with *signs*, which represent elements of the conscious mind.

Dreams, Dream Interpretation, and the Active Imagination

Just as the unconscious has a central place in Jung's theory of the mind, so does the examination of dreams occupy a central place in the practice of analytical psychology. According to Jung, dreams are "involuntary, spontaneous products of the unconscious psyche and are therefore pure products of nature not falsified by any conscious purpose". (CW 9i, p.62) It is therefore through dreams that we are most readily able to access the unconscious, and it is primarily by interpreting dreams that we are able to gain a greater understanding of its contents.

Jung agreed with Freud that the successful interpretation of a dream cannot be undertaken abstracted from the dreamer. The images and events in a dream cannot be "decoded" by reference to some pre-existing scheme; what is important is the emotional impact and significance those images and events hold for the dreamer. In his essay *On the Nature of Dreams*, Jung described his method of dream interpretation as "taking up the context", saying:

> This consists in making sure that every shade of meaning which each salient feature of the dream has for the dreamer is determined by the associations of the dreamer himself. (CW 8, p.264)

Jung identified two broad categories of dreams, which correspond to the personal and the collective unconscious. In *On the Nature of Dreams* he describes them as follows:

> Not all dreams are of equal importance. Even primitives distinguish between "little" and "big" dreams, or, as we might say, "insignificant" and "significant" dreams. Looked at more closely, "little" dreams are the nightly fragments of fantasy coming from the subjective and personal sphere, and their meaning is limited to the affairs of everyday life. That is why such dreams are easily forgotten, just because their validity is restricted to the day-to-day fluctuations of the psychic balance. Significant dreams, on the other hand, are often remembered for a lifetime, and not infrequently prove ot be the richest jewel in the treasure-house of psychic experience. (CW 8, p.268–269)

It is the "big" or "significant" dreams that Jung considers to be the most interesting, but also the most difficult to interpret. Because they spring from the collective rather than the personal unconscious, the dreamer's subjective associations will not be enough to interpret the dream. In these cases it is necessary to look to myth and folklore, as it is here that we find expression given to the archetypes that form the content of the collective unconscious. In *On the Nature of Dreams*, Jung gives the following example of how looking to mythology is indispensable in successfully interpreting such dreams:

> For example, a young man dreamed of *a great snake that guarded a golden bowl in an underground vault*. To be sure, he had once seen a huge snake in a zoo, but otherwise he could suggest nothing that might have prompted such a dream, except perhaps the reminiscence of fairytales. Judging by this unsatisfactory context the dream, which actually produced a very powerful effect, would have hardly any meaning. But that would not explain its decided emotionality. In such a case we have to go back to mythology, where the combination of snake or dragon with treasure and cave represents an ordeal in the life of the hero. Then it becomes clear that we are

> dealing with a collective emotion, a typical situation full of affect, which is not primarily a personal experience but becomes one only secondarily. Primarily it is a universally human problem which, because it has been overlooked subjectively, forces itself objectively upon the dreamer's consciousness. (CW 8, p.269–270)

Jung considered most dreams to have what he termed a *compensatory* function. That is to say, there is often a conflict between the impulses and desires of the conscious mind and that of the unconscious mind. The unconscious operates, to a degree, independently of the conscious mind, a phenomenon Jung termed *the autonomy of the unconscious*. (CW 8, p.265–266) Jung illustrated this principle in his essay *Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation* by pointing out the fact that when affected by strong emotions, people often act in a way that is at variance with their conscious beliefs and attitudes:

> This tendency to autonomy shows itself above all in affective states, including those of normal people. When in a state of violent affect one says or does things which exceed the ordinary. Not much is needed: love and hate, joy and grief, are often enough to make the ego and the unconscious change places. Very strange ideas can take possession of otherwise healthy people on such occasions. (CW 9i, p.259)

If there is a conflict between the conscious and the unconscious attitude towards a particular situation, then the unconscious mind will tend to give expression to this conflict in dreams. In his essay *General Aspects of Dream Psychology*, Jung described this process as follows:

> The more one-sided his conscious attitude is, and the further it deviates from the optimum, the greater becomes the possibility that vivid dreams with a strongly contrasting but purposive content will appear as an expression of the self-regulation of the psyche. Just as the body reacts purposively to injuries or infections or any abnormal conditions, so the psychic functions react to unnatural or dangerous disturbances with purposive defence-mechanisms. Among these purposive reactions we must include the dream, since it furnishes the unconscious material constellated in a given conscious situation and supplies it to consciousness in symbolical form. (CW 8, p.234)

Whilst Jung considered the compensatory function of dreams to be of great importance, he did not claim that all dreams have a compensatory function. One other type of dream which it will be important for us to consider is the *prospective* dream, which Jung defined as follows:

> The prospective function […] is an anticipation in the unconscious of future conscious achievements, something like a preliminary exercise or sketch, or a plan roughed out in advance. Its symbolic content sometimes outlines the solution of a conflict. […] The occurrence of prospective dreams cannot be denied. It would be wrong to call them prophetic, because at bottom they are no more prophetic than a medical diagnosis or a weather forecast. (CW 8, p.236)

One of the most important techniques of dream interpretation developed by Jung is what is called *active imagination*. This involves taking images and figures which one has encountered in dreams and relating to them consciously and imaginatively, a process June Singer has referred to as “Dreaming the Dream Onwards”. (Singer 1994, Ch.10) Activ imagination is not simply fantasising or daydreaming, but rather bringing the symbols from one’s dream into conscious awareness and allowing them to develop and unfold without too much interference from the conscious mind. In answer to a question following his *Tavistock Lecture V* Jung describes the process as follows:

> A fantasy is more or less your own invention, and remains on the surface of personal things and conscious expectations. But active imagination, as the term denotes, means that the images have a life of their own and that the symbolic events develop according to their own logic – that is, of course, if your conscious reason does not interfere. […] [W]e over-estimate the power of intention and the will. And so when we concentrate on an inner picture and when we are careful not to interrupt the natural flow of events, our unconscious will produce a series of images which make a complete story. (CW 18, p.186–186)

Dreams are thus the primary way in which we can access the contents of the unconscious mind, and through the processes of dream interpretation and active imagination bring some of them into conscious awareness. Whilst it may be obvious that uncovering the compensatory or prospective content of a dream could be of some use to the individual, it may not be immediately obvious why the process of dream interpretation should form such a central part of the theory and practice of analytical psychology. To understand this, we need to look at the concept of *individuation*.

Individuation

The goal of dream work for Jung is “the thorough and conscious assimilation of unconscious contents” (CW 16, p.153). This forms an important part of the process of

individuation, the process of moving towards the psychic wholeness which is the aim of analytical psychology.

In acknowledging that the conscious mind is not the whole of the psyche, it must thereby be acknowledged that the psyche is split – between the conscious mind and the unconscious mind. If we further accept the idea of the autonomy of the unconscious, then it is self-evident that the ordinary human being lives not only in a state of psychic division but, to some degree or another, of conflict. Jung was of the opinion, somewhat essentialist from a modern point of view, that the general tendency amongst Europeans was to attempt to master the unconscious mind with the conscious mind, a task Jung considered to be impossible. In contrast, he saw in Eastern mysticism an attempt to subsume the conscious mind to the unconscious. This too he considered to be an inadvisable pursuit. Individuation, for Jung, was about allowing the conscious and the unconscious to come into active and creative relationship, without one trying to dominate or assimilate the other. As he puts it in his essay *Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation*:

> Conscious and unconscious do not make a whole when one of them is suppressed and injured by the other. If they must contend, let it at least be a fair fight with equal rights on both sides. Both are aspects of life. Consciousness should defend its reason and protect itself, and the chaotic life of the unconscious should be given the chance of having its way too – as much of it as we can stand. This means open conflict and open collaboration at once. That, evidently, is the way human life should be. It is the old game of hammer and anvil: between them the patient iron is forged into an indestructible whole, an "individual." This, roughly, is what I mean by the individuation process. (CW 9i, p.268)

Jung also used the terms *ego* and *Self* in his discussions of this process. The ego in analytical psychology is the somewhat fragile conscious self, it is who the ordinary person who has not pursued individuation thinks that he or she is.[2] The Self, on the other hand, is the archetype of wholeness that exists in the collective unconscious. The process of individuation can thus be discussed both in terms of the coming into ever closer relationship of the conscious and the unconscious, and in terms of the increasing identification of the ego with the Self.

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[2] Jung used the term *ego* in a different way from Freud, for whom it was that part of the psyche that mediated between the external demands of society (the *superego*) and one's instinctual desires and drives (the *id*).

The Shadow

Because the unconscious is precisely that of which one is not aware, the archetypes it contains will naturally consist of those elements of the psyche which do not form part of the ego, our conscious idea of ourselves. This can perhaps most easily be understood in relation to the *anima* (the archetype of the feminine) and the *animus* (the archetype of the masculine). Operating within a binary view of gender, Jung discussed how it is an important and necessary part of the process of individuation and progress towards greater psychic wholeness for men to encounter the *anima* in their unconscious and integrate it more fully into their conscious awareness, and similarly with women and the *animus*.

Another of the most important archetypes Jung identified is that of the *shadow*. Of the anima, the animus, and the shadow, the three archetypes which Jung described as “those which have the most frequent and the most disturbing influence on the ego” (CW 9ii, p.20), he claimed that the shadow was “the easiest to experience” (ibid.) because “its nature can in large measure be inferred from the contents of the personal unconscious”. (ibid.) Jung believed that those aspects of one’s personality which are met with disapproval and censure in the course of being socialised as children are suppressed into the unconscious mind, forming the shadow of the personal unconscious. This shadow – like our physical shadow – is not something we can escape from. It is part of us, and trying to deny it and keep it suppressed only causes us more harm. An important aspect of the process of individuation is to bring the shadow into consciousness and integrate it into one’s personality. This does not mean indulging one’s darker or anti-social desires and tendencies, but accepting and being aware of their existence rather than trying to eliminate them. As Jung puts it:

> Unfortunately there can be no doubt that man is, on the whole, less good than he imagines himself or want to be. Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual’s conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. If an inferiority is conscious, one always has a chance to correct it. Furthermore, it is constantly in contact with other interests, so that it is continually subjected to modifications. But if it is repressed and isolated from consciousness, it never gets corrected, and is liable to burst forth suddenly in a moment of unawareness. (CW 11, p.77)

The shadow, then, represents those darker parts of ourselves that we do not wish to acknowledge and are attempting to keep suppressed in the unconscious. It should be

noted however that by “darker” here what is meant is unseen and unknown rather than intrinsically negative. Indeed, any particular individual’s shadow will often include positive, healthy traits. Growing up in a cultural or family environment where a positive quality such as showing compassion for animals, for example, was seen as weak and unacceptable behaviour, this would equally become suppressed and form part of the shadow. Moreover, positive and negative qualities are often closely linked, such that someone who has suppressed a lot of their ability to become angry, for example, is also likely to have similarly suppressed part of their capacity to be positively assertive and self-confident. Bringing these aspects of the shadow into consciousness through the process of individuation would allow such a person to access their positive qualities of assertiveness whilst at the same time keeping a conscious check on their anger to ensure it does not find expression in inappropriate or unethical ways.

Confronting and integrating our shadow is one of the first and most vital tasks of the journey of individuation, but this is no easy task. As Jung describes it:

> The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no-one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge, and it therefore, as a rule, meets with considerable resistance. Indeed, self-knowledge as a psychotherapeutic measure frequently requires much painstaking work extending over a long period. (CW 9ii, p.20)

Part if the difficulty inherent in the process of confronting the shadow is the phenomenon of *projection*. This is where a trait or personal quality that in fact exists within oneself, but is not conscious or acknowledged, is attributed to other people. To put it another way, because of the effort of suppression involved in keeping our shadow unconscious, we will naturally react negatively to reminders of that shadow that come from outside ourselves. For example, if over-indulgence in food was frowned upon and discouraged in our upbringing, our own greed will be highly likely to form part of our shadow. Seeing someone else happily over-indulging, therefore, will bring forth exaggerated feelings of dislike for that person, precisely because their behaviour is reminding us of a part of our own psyche we are trying to keep suppressed and out of our awareness. Jung described the effects of projection as follows:

> The effect of projection is to isolate the subject from his environment, since instead of a real relation to it there is now an illusory one. Projections change the world into the replica of one's unknown face. In the last analysis, therefore, they lead to an autoerotic or autistic condition in which one dreams a world whose reality remains forever unattainable. (CW 9ii, p.21)

Jung does not only discuss the personal shadow, though, but also the shadow of the collective unconscious, in other words the shadow as a true archetype. He does this primarily in Christian terms, arguing for example that because everything that exists, including evil, proceeds ultimately from God, then the inclusion of the Devil along with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit would form quaternity which would be more whole, and more psychologically and spiritually adequate than the Christian trinity. (CW 11, p.144ff.)

Jung's Views on Art and Creativity

Having now presented the key concepts from analytical psychology which I intend to use in my examination of Lovecraft's writing, we must now turn to the second question with which this chapter intends to deal, namely how Jung's theory of the mind can be used in the criticism and analysis of literature. To do this, we must first understand how Jung viewed art and the creative process, views which he lays out in two important essays: *On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry* (CW 15, pp.65–83) and *Psychology and Literature* (CW 15, pp.84–103)

As with many of Jung's ideas, his starting point is, to a certain degree, a criticism of the Freudian perspective as inadequate. In *On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetry*, he discusses how the Freudian approach to literature is a psychological one in the sense of "bring[ing] certain peculiarities of a work of art into relation with the intimate, personal life of the poet". (CW 15, p.68) However, he criticises this approach as fundamentally reductive, saying:

> It strips the work of art of its shimmering robes and exposes the nakedness and drabness of *Homo sapiens*, to which species the poet and artist also belong. The golden gleam of artistic creation – the original object of discussion – is extinguished as soon as we apply to it the same corrosive method which we use in analysing the fantasies of hysteria. (CW 15, p.69)

Jung's criticism of what he sees as Freud's reductionist approach to art is based on his criticism of Freud's view of the unconscious which, as we have seen, was limited to what Jung called the personal unconscious. Based on the distinction he made between the personal and the collective unconscious, Jung proposed two broad categories of art – *psychological* and *visionary*. The former is the product solely of the conscious mind, whereas the latter is expressive of a creativity which comes from the unconscious and thereby expresses through symbols the archetypes which are to be found in the collective unconscious. From a psychoanalytic standpoint it is primarily visionary works which are of interest, as it is these works which reveal something of the deeper reaches of the human psyche. The distinction between visionary and psychological literature is not though an indication of literary quality, in that a visionary work may be quite crude in its literary form and execution whilst still being an expression of creativity from the unconscious rather than the conscious mind. In *Psychology and Literature*, Jung describes the creation of these two different kinds of art as follows:

> The psychological mode works with materials drawn from man's conscious life – with crucial experiences, powerful emotions, suffering, passion, the stuff of human fate in general. […] The raw material of this kind of creation is derived from the contents of man's consciousness, from his eternally repeated joys and sorrows, but clarified and transfigured by the poet. There is no work left for the psychologist to do. […] Such themes constitute the lot of humankind. […] No obscurity surrounds them, for they fully explain themselves in their own terms. […]
>
> [In] the visionary mode of artistic creation […] everything is reversed. The experience that furnishes the material for artistic creation is no longer familiar. It is something strange that derives its existence from the hinterland of man's mind, as if it had emerged from the abyss of prehuman ages, or from a superhuman world of contrasting light and darkness. It is a primordial experience which surpasses man's understanding and to which in his weakness he may easily succumb. The very enormity of the experience gives it its value and its shattering impact. Sublime, pregnant with meaning, yet chilling the blood with its strangeness, it arises from timeless depths; glamorous, daemonic, and grotesque, it bursts asunder our human standards of value and aesthetic form, a terrifying tangle of eternal chaos, a *crimen laesae majestatis humanae*. On the other hand, it can be a revelation whose heights and depths are beyond our fathoming, or a vision of beauty which we can never put into words. (CW 15, p.89–90)

The two categories of psychological and visionary art are of course not absolute, and in practice the creative processes of many artists will fall somewhere between the two poles Jung describes here. This distinction is nonetheless of central importance for understanding the Jungian perspective on art and literature.

It is in this view of a work of art or literature as arising from the collective unconscious that we can identify the most important and unique contribution analytical psychology can make to the understanding of literature, and in particular how Jungian literary criticism differentiates itself from forms of psychoanalytic criticism which are based directly or indirectly on Freudian theories. What Jung's theory implies is that the psychology of the individual artist or writer is not sufficient to explain a visionary work of art. Such art transcends both the conscious and the personal unconscious mind of the artist, and must be considered as an expression of the collective unconscious itself. In other words, in employing analytical psychology to examine a work of art, it is not sufficient to take into account the psychology of the artist, we must also take into account the psychology of the work itself. The problem with the reductive, Freudian approach is, according to Jung, precisely that:

> [I]t deflects our attention from the psychology of the work of art and focuses it on the psychology of the artist. The latter presents a problem that cannot be denied, but the work of art exists in its own right and cannot be got rid of by changing it into a personal complex. (CW 15, p.92)

This is not to say that the consideration of the psychology of the artist has no place in Jungian literary criticism. It is rather that its proper place is a secondary one, informing the analysis of the work of art, but not determining it. Jung likens this to the relationship between the soil a plant grows in and the plant itself:

> Personal causes have as much or as little to do with a work of art as the soil with the plant that springs from it. We can certainly learn to understand some of the plant's peculiarities by getting to know its habitat, and for the botanist this is an important part of his equipment. But nobody will maintain that everything essential has then been discovered about the plant itself. The personal orientation which the doctor needs when confronted with the question of aetiology in medicine is quite out of place in dealing with a work of art, just because a work of art is not a human being, but is something supra-personal. It is a thing and not a personality; hence it cannot be judged by personal criteria. Indeed, the special significance of a true work of art

> resides in the fact that it has escaped from the limitations of the personal and has soared beyond the personal concerns of its creator. (CW 15, p.71–72)

Jungian Literary Criticism

How, then, are we to approach a work of literature from this perspective? What are the foundational questions the Jungian literary critic needs to ask? The first question is, naturally, whether a work of art is psychological or literary in nature. One way of answering this question is to consider what the artist themselves has revealed about their own creative processes, and consider whether this indicates a more psychological process or a more visionary one. The second way is subjective: it is to consider the emotional impact that the work has on us as a reader. Jung describes the difference between the effect of a psychological work on a reader and the effect of a visionary one in the following terms:

> [The] pregnant language [of works that are openly symbolic] cries out at us that they mean more than they say. We can put our finger on the symbol at once, even though we may not be able to unriddle its meaning to our entire satisfaction. A symbol remains a perpetual challenge to our thoughts and feelings. That probably explains why a symbolic work is so stimulating, why it grips us so intensely, but also why it seldom affords us a purely aesthetic enjoyment. A work that is manifestly not symbolic appeals much more to our aesthetic sensibility because it is complete in itself and fulfils its purpose. (CW 15, p.77)

Of course, neither of these criteria are completely reliable, the first relying on our interpretation of the artist's own description of their creative process and the second being subjective. An alternative approach suggested by Susan Rowland is rather than trying to categorise individual works of literature as either psychological or visionary, we can instead take the categories of psychological and visionary as ways of reading a work of literature, rather than as qualities which ar inherent in the text itself. She illustrates this point by giving a fascinating visionary reading of Pride and Prejudice, a text that has otherwise been considered by Jungian critics to be typically psychological. (Rowland 2018, p.18ff.)

Once we have identified a work of art as visionary – or chosen to read it as such – what is the next question we need to ask? According to Jung, it is "What primordial image lies behind the imagery of art?" (CW 15, p.80) We are then exploring the work of art on its own

terms, as Jung would see it – taking it seriously as an expression of the archetypes of the collective unconscious. The question naturally arises as to why we should do this. What deeper understanding of a work of literature is to be gained from reading it as an expression of the archetypes of the collective unconscious? Jung gives two answers to this question. The first is that reading a visionary work of art allows the reader – and the critic – to engage with these archetypes in a way that furthers the process of individuation:

> Whoever speaks in primordial images speaks with a thousand voices; he enthrals and overpowers, while at the same time he lifts the idea he is seeking to express out of the occasional and the transitory into the realm of the ever-enduring. He transmutes our personal destiny into the destiny of mankind, and evokes in us all those beneficent forces that ever and anon have enabled humanity to find a refuge from every peril and to outlive the longest night. That is the great secret of art, and of its effect upon us. (CW 15, p.81–82)

Bringing the fact of the symbolic nature of the work into consciousness allows us to be affected by it on a deeper level. It will be remembered that the bringing into consciousness of the content of the unconscious is what the process of individuation consists in. Whilst the most important way of doing this is through dream work, engagement with art in this way can be an powerful tool to aid us in the process.

From a Jungian point of view, this is in itself quite a sufficient justification for the practice of Jungian literary criticism. However, Jung also pointed out that using analytical psychology to examine visionary works of art can also have broader social implications beyond readers' and critics' own individuation processes.

As we saw when we looked at Jung's view of dreams, he believed them to have a compensatory function, bringing into the conscious mind in symbolic form something which it is lacking, thus providing an opportunity to bring the psyche into greater balance. The creative process can have the same function. Symbolic works that reflect the personal unconscious would play a similar role to "little" dreams, and so are less interesting from the perspective of analytical psychology. Works that draw on the archetypes of the collective unconscious though, as we have seen, transcend the personal and Jung believed that they could perform a kind of compensatory function on the broader level of society:

> The creative process, so far as we are able to follow it at all, consists in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image, and in elaborating and shaping this image into the finished work. By giving it shape, the artist translates it into the

> language of the present, and so makes it possible for us to find our way back to the deepest springs of life. Therein lies the social significance of art: it is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is most lacking. The unsatisfied yearning of the artist reaches back to the primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the inadequacy and one-sidedness of the present. The artist seizes on this image, and in raising it from deepest unconsciousness he brings it into relation with conscious values, thereby transforming it until it can be accepted by the minds of his contemporaries according to their powers. […] [J]ust as the one-sidedness of the individual's conscious attitude is corrected by reactions from the unconscious, so art represents a process of self-regulation in the life of nations and epochs. (CW 15, p.82)

The importance of reading literature with an awareness of its historical and ideological context has long been acknowledged within literary criticism. Considering the social context of a text from a psychological perspective in the way Jung proposes here is of course open to the charge of becoming excessively subjective and speculative. However, I would suggest that such an approach, if done with appropriate caution, can provide a fresh perspective that could fruitfully complement more established ways of reading texts historically.

Finally, it is important to bear in mind that because, for Jung, works of art which fall into the visionary category are expressions of the unconscious, like the human mind, they can never be fully understood because they can never be made fully conscious. Jung says:

> All concious psychic processes may well be causally explicable; but the creative act, being rooted in the immensity of the unconscious, will forever elude our attempts at understanding. It describes itself only in its manifestations; it can be guessed at, but never wholly grasped. Psychology and aesthetics will always have to turn to one another for help, and the one will not invalidate the other. (CW 15, p.87)

Both as a reader and as a critic, therefore, if we adopt a Jungian approach to a work of literature we must accept a fundamental an unavoidable level of ambiguity and insolubility. Jungian archetypes should not be seen as ciphers with which to decode a work of art – they are keys which open doors into realms which can never be fully mapped. Indeed, we must approach the interpretation of a work of literature in the same way as we would approach the interpretation of a dream, as discussed above. As Jung puts it:

> A great work of art is like a dream; for all its apparent obviousness it does not explain itself and is always ambiguous. A dream never says "you ought" or "this is the truth."

> It presents an image in much the same way as nature allows a plant to grow, and it is up to us to draw conclusions. […] To grasp its meaning, we must allow it to shape us as it shaped [the artist]. Then we also understand the nature of his primordial experience. He has plunged into the healing and redeeming depths of the collective psyche, where man is not lost in the isolation of consciousness and its errors and sufferings, but where all men are caught in a common rhythm which allows the individual to communicate his feelings and strivings to mankind as a whole. (CW 15, p.102)

I have now introduced those concepts taken from analytical psychology which I will use in my examination of the three stories by Lovecraft I have selected. These concepts are: *the unconscious* (both *personal* and *collective*), *archetypes*, *symbols*, *signs*, *dreams* (including the distinction between *big* and *little* dreams and between *compensatory* and *prospective* ones), *dream interpretation*, *the active imagination*, *individuation*, *ego*, *Self*, *shadow*, *anima*, *animus*, *projection*, and the distinction between *psychological* and *visionary* works of art. We must now consider what these concepts can contribute to an analysis of the fiction of H.P. Lovecraft, and discuss the work of two critics who have taken a Jungian approach to Lovecraft previously.

3. Jungian Approaches to Lovecraft

Introduction

In this chapter we will begin by looking at why the works of H.P. Lovecraft lend themselves particularly well to the kind of Jungian criticism detailed in the previous chapter. I will also present the work of two important Lovecraft critics, Yōzan Dirk W. Mosig and Barton Levi St. Armand, who made use of Jungian theories of the mind in their analyses of Lovecraft's work. Finally, I will sketch out my own approach to the three texts I have selected to examine more closely in the following chapters.

Lovecraft as visionary artist

As we have seen, the first question to ask in taking a Jungian approach to a work of art is to ask whether it is a visionary or a psychological work. One of the reasons that I have chosen to base my discussion on Jungian theories is precisely because Lovecraft is a visionary artist *par excellence*. From a very young age, and continuing throughout his life, Lovecraft had an unusually vivid dream life, and it was his dream life that was the primary source and inspiration for his writing. Lovecraft's intense and disturbing dreams began at the age of five, after the death of his grandmother. Lovecraft writes:

> I began to have nightmares of the most hideous description, peopled with *things* which I called "night-gaunts" – a compound word of my own coinage. I used to draw them after waking (perhaps the idea of these figures came from an edition de luxe of *Paradise Lost* with illustrations by Doré, which I discovered one day in the east parlor). In dreams they were wont to whirl me through space at a sickening rate of speed, the while fretting & impelling me with their detestable tridents. It is fully fifteen years – aye, more – since I have seen a "night-gaunt", but even now, when half-asleep & drifting vaguely along over a sea of childhood thoughts, I feel a thrill of fear… & instinctively *struggle to keep awake*. (SL I, p.34–35, note 10)

In his biography of Lovecraft, *I Am Providence*, S.T. Joshi comments in relation to this quote: "And so begins Lovecraft's career as one of the great dreamers – or, to coin a term

that must be coined for the phenomenon, nightmarers – of literary history". (Joshi 2013, p. 34)

We can see from this quote that even at the age of five, Lovecraft was using his nightmares as inspiration for his artistic production in what must be seen as a process analogous to Jung's practice of active imagination.

Lovecraft's life, although significant and filled with creative endeavour, was not a happy one. Yōzan Dirk W. Mosig relates that:

> Lovecraft's view of life was essentially pessimistic. He felt that most people are basically unhappy, and that a life of suffering is not preferable to the oblivion of death. Seriously contemplating suicide, he decided against it on the grounds that the aesthetic pleasure he derived from the study of eighteenth century art slightly tipped the scales in favour of life. (Mosig 1997, p.69)

Visionary creativity creating suffering in the life and the mind of the artist is something Jung observed and commented on:

> Analysis of artists consistently shows not only the strength of the creative impulse arising from the unconscious, but also its capricious and wilful character. […] The unborn work in the psyche of the artist is a force of nature that achieves its end either with tyrannical might or with the subtle cunning of nature herself, quite regardless of the personal fate of the man who is its vehicle. […] We would do well, therefore, to think of the creative process as a living thing implanted in the human psyche. In the language of analytical psychology this living thing is an *autonomous complex*. It is a split-off portion of the psyche, which leads a life of its own outside the hierarchy of consciousness. (CW 15, p.75)

This view of the creative process as an autonomous complex should not be taken to imply that the conscious mind has no role to play in the process. Whilst Lovecraft's primary source of inspiration was his extraordinary dream-life, he also read widely within the genre he preferred to call weird fiction and drew inspiration from the works of other writers (as S.T. Joshi has meticulously detailed in *I Am Providence*). Moreover, Lovecraft was a perfectionist, and would expend a great deal of time and energy in revising his texts until they were polished to his satisfaction. When he was finally happy with them, he consistently refused to allow editors to make any but the most minor changes. Claiming Lovecraft as an exemplar of the visionary artist does not mean that every aspect of his

creative process was unconscious, but that its source and impetus were outside of his conscious control.

In considering Lovecraft as a visionary artist we can look both at what we know of his creative process, but we can also look at the results of this process, the texts themselves. Jung states that when we encounter visionary works of art,

> we would have to be prepared for something suprapersonal that transcends our understanding to the same degree that the author's consciousness was in abeyance during the process of creation. We would expect a strangeness of form and content, thoughts that can only be apprehended intuitively, a language pregnant with meanings, and images that are true symbols because they are the best possible expressions for something unknown – bridges thrown out towards an unseen shore." (CW 15, p.76)

I can think of few authors for whose work this evocative description is more apt than H.P. Lovecraft.

Lovecraft was not only a writer of what he preferred to call weird fiction, he was also a literary critic. His essay *Supernatural Horror in Literature* was one of the first studies which took horror fiction seriously as a literary genre. It will therefore also be instructive to consider what Lovecraft as critic had to say about the kind of literature he was writing. He says that the appeal of the weird tale

> is generally narrow because it demands from the reader a certain degree of imagination and a capacity for detachment from every-day life. Relatively few are free enough from the spell of the daily routine to respond to rappings from outside, and tales of ordinary feelings and events, or of common sentimental distortions of common feelings and events, will always take first place in the taste of the majority; rightly, perhaps, since of course these ordinary matters make up the greater part of human experience. (SHL, p.25)

This is strongly reminiscent of one of Jung's comments on the response of the public to visionary literature:

> [W]hen we turn to the visionary mode [w]e are astonished, confused, bewildered, put on our guard or even repelled; we demand commentaries and explanations. We are reminded of nothing in everyday life, but rather of dreams, night-time fears, and the dark, uncanny recesses of the human mind. The public for the most part repudiates

> this kind of literature, unless it is crudely sensational, and even the literary critic finds it embarrassing. (CW 15, p.90)

We can thus say that not only does Lovecraft's creative process and the writing that he produced reflect Jung's conception of the visionary artist, but so too Lovecraft's view of how he expected the public to respond to his work in is line with what would be expected of a visionary artist.

I now want to give a brief overview of the work of the two critics who have published Jungian criticism of Lovecraft.

Yōzan Dirk W. Mosig

Mosig is a psychologist, critic, and historian currently teaching at the University of Nebraska at Kearney who in the 1970s published a series of influential essays on the works of H.P. Lovecraft. Most relevant for our purposes are *Toward a Greater Appreciation of H.P. Lovecraft: The Analytical Approach* and *The Four Faces of "The Outsider"* and it is these two essays I will consider here as examples of how Jungian criticism of Lovecraft can be undertaken.

In *Toward a Greater Appreciation of H.P. Lovecraft: The Analytical Approach* Mosig brings a Jungian perspective to bear on three of Lovecraft's stories: *The Rats in the Walls*, *The Haunter in the Dark*, and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*. His treatment of *The Rats in the Walls* is very brief, and we will look at this story in more detail when we come on to Barton Levi St. Armand's much more substantial treatment of it. Mosig's approach is to identify different images within the story as symbols for unconscious archetypes – the rats of the title, for example, are identified as a manifestation of the shadow. (Mosig 1997, p.38)

The second text he discusses is *The Haunter of the Dark*, Lovecraft's last story. The protagonist in this tale, Robert Blake, develops a fascination for an abandoned church on Federal Hill, and discovers that it is reputed to be haunted. Breaking into the church to explore, he inadvertently summons a malign creature (the Haunter) which can only go forth from the church in the dark. During a power cut, the creature flies toward Blake's apartment, and he is found dead, his face transfixed with terror.

Mosig again takes the standard Jungian approach of identifying elements of the story as symbols or as representing aspects of the psyche. Federal Hill represents the personal unconscious, and the Haunter is the Shadow "which exists only in darkness (in the unconscious, since light represents consciousness and reason)." (ibid, p.39) Mosig interprets Blake's fatal encounter with the Haunter as follows:

> Blake sees the Haunter, the Shadow, and recognizes it as the horror within himself… and perishes of fright and terror, unable to accept himself for what he really is, his consciousness seared by a knowledge sanity cannot endure. […] The triumph of the Shadow is complete and Blake is dead (or insane, if we interpret death here to represent the annihilation of the ego). Lovecraft is communicating man's inability to achieve self-realisation, to integrate consciousness and unconsciousness and escape insanity. Or perhaps we should read a deeper meaning in this, his last tale: the fusion of consciousness and the Unconscious has occurred, total entropy has taken place, and Blake discovers that the final purpose and goal of all life is DEATH. Lovecraft, the mechanistic philosopher, has made his final statement on the futility of human existence." (ibid, p.39–40)

In his discussion of *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* Mosig describes it as "undoubtedly the richest Lovecraftian tale in terms of psychological symbolism" (ibid, p.40) and it is hard to disagree with this statement. *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* is one of Lovecraft's longest works and can be considered a novella rather than a short story. It forms the centrepiece of Lovecraft's "dream cycle" of stories set in the "Dreamlands". These stories take place entirely within the mind of the protagonist Randolph Carter. Mosig says that the size and symbolic density of the novella preclude him from giving it detailed consideration within the space of an essay, commenting that a "whole book would need to be written to justly discuss and analyse this psychological epic". (ibid, p.40)

He does, though, comment on the final part of the story in the following terms:

> The climax of the novel, when the ego comes face to face with the deepest contents of the Unconscious, is extremely meaningful, because in Randolph Carter we have the only Lovecraftian hero capable of achieving at least a partial integration of his psyche, obtaining some measure of realisation. Carter represents the Wandering Hero archetype, the Self emerging after the mandala has been completed (even though imperfectly) and the psyche has attained some degree of wholeness. (ibid, p. 40–41)

I would take issue with Mosig here only to the extent that, as I shall argue in Chapter 5, I believe that the protagonist of *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* also attains a meaningful degree of individuation.

In the essay *The Four Faces of "The Outsider"*, Mosig presents four different interpretations of the same story, *The Outsider* and then considers their relative merits. *The Outsider* is a short and narratively straightforward tale that is nonetheless effective in generating a tangible atmosphere of horror and suspense. The narrator tells that for as long as he can remember he has lived in a castle surrounded by a dark forest through which it is impossible to escape. There is a tower next to the castle, but the stairs only reach part of the way up. Eventually the protagonist makes the dangerous climb up the inside walls of the tower and emerges from the top of the tower into a churchyard. We now realise that the castle, tower, and forest are all subterranean. In his search for company he discovers a house filled with people and approaches an open window. Suddenly, all the people inside the house stare in his direction, scream in terror, and flee. Unsettled by this, the protagonist begins to make a search of the house, trying to discover the source of the terror, which must after all be nearby. He soon encounters a misshapen and horrifying monster, but when he reaches out to touch it his fingers make contact with the smooth glass of a mirror. This experience of recognition is too overwhelming, and the protagonist flees from the house, his psyche pushing what he has experienced out of consciousness.

Mosig's first interpretation of this story is "The Autobiographic Interpretation: H.P. Lovecraft: Outsider". Here Mosig reads the protagonist as representing Lovecraft himself, especially as a child who spent a lot of time on his own and felt himself to be different from other children. This feeling was reinforced by his mentally ill mother who told him he was ugly, and by the rejections he experienced when trying to join in with the play of other children.

The second is "The Analytical Interpretation: The Outsider, Allegory of the Psyche". Mosig considers the story to be an eminently suitable object for a Jungian interpretation, commenting that:

> "The Outsider" almost appears to have been written to order to fit the analytical theory of Carl Gustav Jung. […] Lovecraft's tale acquires unusual psychological significance when viewed as an allegorical voyage through the Jungian conception of the unfolding human psyche and its fundamental conflicts. Even though Lovecraft's

> letters show that he was well aware of Jung's theory, the question of whether this story is a case of conscious artistry or a manifestation of the author's own unconscious and dynamic psyche, remains unanswered." (ibid, p.60)

In his analytical interpretation of *The Outsider*, Mosig takes the same approach as we saw above, identifying different images in the text as symbols of unconscious archetypes or as aspects of the psyche. The dark castle is a symbol of the collective unconscious, being, from the point of view of the ego, "infinitely old […] and infinitely horrible" (ibid). The time the protagonist spends in the castle represents the time needed for the child's consciousness to develop into that of an adult. The black tower reaching up to the outside world is the process of individuation. The lack of mirrors in the castle is due to the fact that "there can be no opposites, no mirror images, in the unconscious" (ibid, p.62). The crypt at the top of the tower, filled with boxes, is the personal unconscious, The outside world is the conscious mind, and the full moon the protagonist sees when he emerges is a symbol of the mother archetype. The wanderings of the protagonist towards the house filled with light and people symbolise the journey of the psyche towards the archetype of the Self. The moment of recognition and understanding when the protagonist is for the first time faced with a mirror represent's the ego's encounter with the shadow, and his reaction of forgetfulness and flight symbolises the ego's inability to meet and integrate its dark brother. Mosig concludes this interpretation with the comment that:

> Lovecraft, familiar with Jungian theory, was well aware that few, if any, ever achieve any significant approximation to Jung's idealized ego-expansion and self-realization. […] [T]he dreamer from Providence has painted a gloomy and devastating picture of man's destiny: not a glorious psychic integration, but the ever-imminent collapse of the ephemeral illusion of rationality. (ibid, p.65)

The third interpretation is "An Anti-Metaphysical Interpretation: The Absurdity of Post-Mortem Destiny". Here Mosig emphasises Lovecraft's rationalism and complete lack of belief in the supernatural and reads *The Outsider* as a grotesque satire of the idea of life after death. "Lovecraft has granted, for the sake of argument, man's survival after death, and is ready to carry this notion to its absurd implications." (ibid, p.65) The protagonist here is read as a living corpse compelled by its desire for light and companionship to return to the world of the living, with horrifying effect.

The fourth and final interpretation in Mosig's essay is "A Philosophical Interpretation: Man's position in a Mechanistic Universe." In this section of his essay Mosig highlights

Lovecraft's scientific materialist philosophy and the complete absence of meaning and purpose in the cosmos. Here the horror experienced by the Outsider when he sees the truth of his own image is read a representing the horror an ordinary person experiences when faced with their complete cosmic insignificance in the face of the vastness of the universe.

In the final section of his essay, Mosig evaluates each of the four interpretations in turn. Finding problems with each of the first three, he concludes that the philosophical interpretation is the most valid. His evaluation of the analytical interpretation raises questions which anyone undertaking Jungian literary criticism needs to consider carefully:

> [O]ur analytical interpretation is quite vulnerable to the accusation of subjectivism – too many assumptions are made which cannot be empirically verified. And besides, even if a psychological interpretation is adequate, why this particular one? Why not a Freudian explanation[…]? The main defect of all the possible psychoanalytic interpretations is that the theories on which they are based are themselves built on hypothetical constructs of questionable validity. Such theories are usually judged merely by their usefulness in the clinical setting, and not in terms of any absolute parameter of truth or falsehood. And the interpretations can hardly be more valid than the theories they are based on… For this reason […] such interpretations must be taken with a grain of salt. (ibid, p.72)

Mosig's charge of subjectivism must, to a certain degree, be conceded, without thereby conceding the validity or usefulness of a psychoanalytic approach. After all, Mosig himself still found Jungian literary criticism worthwhile enough to engage in it himself. I would argue that it is not necessary to first establish by empirical means the absolute truth of Jung's theories of the mind before they can be validly used as a tool within literary criticism. Just as the criterion by which they are judged in a clinical setting is their usefulness, so too we can apply the same criterion in the context of literary criticism. The value of a particular interpretation or reading of a work of literature does not lie in its absolute truth, but in its usefulness in illuminating the text in a new way, revealing levels of meaning that would otherwise have remained hidden. The goal of a literary critic in presenting a new interpretation of a text should not be to remove or demolish all other existing interpretations, but rather to *add* to them, providing something new and useful. It is certainly in this spirit that I present my own analytical readings of Lovecraft.

Barton Levi St. Armand

St. Armand is Professor Emeritus of English and American Studies at Brown University in Providence RI, Lovecraft's home town. His 1977 monograph *The Roots of Horror in the Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft* uses analytical psychology to examine Lovecraft's story *The Rats in the Walls* in some depth.

Written in 1923, and first published in 1924, *The Rats in the Walls* is one of Lovecraft's best stories from this period. It concerns an American named Delapore who moves to his ancestral estate in England, Exham Priory, and restores the property over the objections of the locals. Delapore is disturbed by the sounds of rats in the walls, and the investigations these sounds prompt him to undertake, as well as a series of dreams, lead him to the grisly discovery that his ancestors were cannibals who reared human beings for their flesh beneath the Priory. When he descends into the caverns underneath the house to investigate the truth of this story for himself he is overcome by animalistic urges and kills and begins to eat a friend who was accompanying him. Delapore ends up in an asylum, protesting his innocence and claiming that the man had been devoured by the rats in the walls.

St. Armand's discussion of *The Rats in the Walls* is of a length and complexity that make it impossible to summarise adequately here, but I would like to draw out some of the more striking points St. Armand makes. One of these points is his observation that Lovecraft's story bears a striking similarity to a dream reported by Jung, saying:

> [I]f it were not for the fact that it was nearly impossible for Lovecraft to have known of Jung's dream, its similarity to the symbolic action of the story might lead one (on purely internal evidence) to cite it as a source. (St. Armand 1977, p.14)

In this dream, Jung reports being in a sitting room on the first floor of a comfortably furnished 18th century style house that was his home, but which he had never seen before. Curious as to what the ground floor was like, he went downstairs and found it to be darker, wood-panelled, and furnished in a 16th century style. Still more curious, he descended to the cellar where he found a flight of stone steps leading to a large vaulted room that seemed to be of Roman origin. Seeing that there was an iron ring set into one of the floor slabs, he pulled it up, discovering a prehistoric tomb containing two skulls, some bones, and some broken pottery. (Jung 1964, p.56)

The similarity between Jung's dream and Lovecraft's story leads St. Armand to conclude that Jung's interpretation of his dream can be used to interpret Lovecraft's story. Jung sees the house as representing the psyche, and the different levels of the building representing different levels of the mind – with the sitting room the conscious mind, the ground floor the upper level of the unconscious, and the cave deeper levels of the unconscious. St. Armand points out though that whilst Jung's dream ends at the discovery of the bones underneath the floor, "in Lovecraft's "Rats" it only begins all over again at a still deeper level and at a more rapid and horrifying rate of descent". (St. Armand, p.30) Where Jung finds a pair of skulls, Delapor discovers a vast trove of misshapen and degenerate skeletons.

St. Armand links Delapore's reconstruction of the house with the piecing together of knowledge that often leads Lovecraft's protagonists to their ruin when they are confronted with a truth that overwhelms them psychologically and existentially. St. Armand reads the dark history of the Delapore family as representing the dark history of humankind, commenting that:

> "The Rats in the Walls" is thus not simply an exploration of the Delapores as a dynasty, but by implication it is also an inquiry into the forbidden genealogy of the larger Family of Man. The rats in the walls are rats in the walls of human nature itself – creatures of appetite and craving, a link to the animal nature of man, agents of madness and revenge, and beings perhaps endowed with supernatural power by the forceful catalyst of Delapore's too-vivid dreams. (ibid, p.24)

St. Armand writes of a doubleness in Lovecraft's work, saying that:

> Lovecraft's tales operate on at least two levels: the first, an instinctive Gothic one calculated to produce in the reader what Victor Hugo called a *frisson nouveau*; the second, an archetypal, psychological, or metaphysical level that (to use one of Poe's favourite metaphors) "has a depth greater than the well of Democritus" (ibid, p.34)

He links this with a doubleness in Lovecraft's character, describing him as:

> modern man *par excellence* because he was also the most extreme example of what contemporary psychologists call "the divided self": the most civilized of conversationalists and the most violent of xenophobes, the most rational of scientists and the most fantastic of visionaries, the most controlled of authors and the most extravagant of artists. This intrinsic doubleness runs through all of his work and his though, for such doubleness is the hallmark of archetypal power, the paradox of numinous symbols assimilated in his art.

This is an important and insightful point, and it is well-made by St. Armand. In my own discussions of Lovecraft I will return to this idea of doubleness, of split, and of conflict in several different contexts.

Approaching Lovecraft

Both Mosig and St. Armand provide good models of how Jungian theories of the mind can sensibly be used in the interpretation of Lovecraft's work. The central method used by both critics is the one identified by Jung as the central question for literary criticism undertaken on the basis of analytical psychology: "What primordial image lies behind the imagery of art?" (CW 15, p.80) The identification of images in the text as symbols of unconscious archetypes of other aspects of the psyche is what both Mosig and St. Armand take as their starting point, and in my own discussions of Lovecraft's tales I intend to use the same method.

As both Mosig and St. Armand point out, every one of Lovecraft's stories lends itself to an analytical interpretation, so the Jungian critic of Lovecraft is somewhat spoiled for choice. In selecting the three tales *The Call of Cthulhu*, *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, and *The Shadow Out of Time*, I allowed myself partly to be guided by an informed subjectivity. That is to say, I considered which of Lovecraft's tales I had found personally to be the most evocative, which had had the most powerful effect on me as a reader. I also decided to focus on Lovecraft's longer stories where the themes are more developed and the material available for the critic to consider is greater. One difficult consideration was whether to include *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* in my selection. It would seem to be the most obvious choice of text for a thesis examining dreams and the unconscious but, as Mosig indicates, the length and complexity of the story would have required me to make this text the sole focus of my thesis if I was to do it justice. In the end I decided that looking at several different stories which lend themselves to drawing out different themes related to Jungian theories of the mind would be a more fruitful approach.

My discussions of these three texts are presented chronologically, in the order in which the stories were written and published. In Chapter 4 on *The Call of Cthulhu*, my main focus is on the figure of Cthulhu as a symbol of the objective shadow. whilst I also look at Lovecraft's philosophy of cosmicism, the relationship between dreams and creativity, and

the racism that mars this story and so much of Lovecraft's work. In Chapter 5 on *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, the main theme is the process of individuation through encountering and integrating the shadow. I also discuss the tension between horror and attraction, and the theme of degeneration and decline that so horrified and repulsed Lovecraft personally. In Chapter 6 on *The Shadow Out of Time* I draw on the celebrated work of Joseph Campbell, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, which was profoundly influenced by Jung's theories, and undertake a close reading of the final section of the story as a subverted symbol of the heroic journey.

4. The Call of Cthulhu

Introduction

The Call of Cthulhu is perhaps Lovecraft's best known short story, and the image of Cthulhu has passed into Western popular culture to such as extent that even those who are not familiar with Lovecraft's story are likely to have encountered it in one way or another. It was written in 1926, shortly after Lovecraft returned to Providence from New York, and was first published in the magazine *Weird Tales* in 1928.

The story contains a number of elements that recur in many of Lovecraft's tales: a protagonist driven by curiosity who discovers truths that threaten both his sanity and his life, amoral and indifferent gods of vast antiquity and crazed cultists who await their return, and a mystery that is resolved piece by piece with Lovecraft masterfully building tension by ensuring that, through careful foreshadowing, the reader is always a step or two ahead of the protagonist. Another element that is unfortunately evident in this and many of Lovecraft's other works is his explicit racism.

The story is divided into three parts. In the first, *The Horror in Clay*, the mystery begins when the narrator and protagonist Francis Wayland Thurston is going through the effects of his late uncle, George Gammell Angell, Professor Emeritus of Semitic Languages at Brown University, as the executor of his estate. Amongst his books and papers, Thurston discovers a locked box, and it is only when he tries the box with one of the keys on his uncle's personal keyring that he is able to open it. The box contains a bas-relief in clay, and a large number of papers. The bas-relief depicts an image of a monster, and a series of symbols Thurston believes to be a form of writing, although it is not in any script he recognises. Thurston comments:

> 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. (CF 2, p.23–24)

The main document is entitled "Cthulhu Cult" and is divided into two sections, one dealing with the "Dream and Dream Work of H. A. Wilcox" and the other with the "Narrative of

Inspector John R. Legrasse." (CF 2, p.24) Thurston's account of the content of this document forms the bulk of the first two of the three parts of the story.

The bas-relief had been brought to Prof. Angell on March 1st 1925 by a young sculptor, Henry Wilcox, who had asked for his help in identifying and deciphering the hieroglyphs on it. Prof. Angell could tell that the bas-relief was not of ancient origin, and indeed Wilcox freely admitted to having made it himself on the basis of a dream he had had the previous night. There had been an earthquake that night, which Wilcox said had affected his imagination. He had dreamed of great cities consisting of massive blocks of stone covered in green slime and imparting a sense of horror. The pillars had been covered in hieroglyphs, and he had heard "a voice that was not a voice" (CF 2, p.26) repeating something that sounded like *"Cthulhu fhtagn*". These words were familiar to Prof. Angell, although as readers we do not discover why until the second part of the story. In the first part we are simply told that the professor questions Wilcox as to whether he is a member of, or has knowledge of, a secret cult, promising silence in exchange for this information. Wilcox's bemusement at these inquiries convinces Prof. Angell that he has no knowledge of any such organisation, and so he asks Wilcox to continue to report his dreams to him.

Wilcox agrees to this, and over the course of the following weeks reports to Prof. Angell a series of dreams very similar to that of March 1st. On March 23rd Wilcox doesn't appear, and when Prof. Angell makes inquiries he discovers that he has fallen into a kind of feverish delirium. From the doctor attending Wilcox, Prof. Angell learns that his dreams have intensified, including now not only the brooding cities and indecipherable words, but also "a gigantic thing 'miles high' which walked or lumbered about" (CF 2, p.27) which Prof. Angell is convinced is the monster depicted in his bas-relief. On April 2nd, Wilcox recovers suddenly from his fever, and has no memory of his dreams – or of anything else – after March 22nd. Although Prof. Angell stays in contact with Wilcox for some weeks after his recovery, he reported no more dreams of the kind that led him to make the bas-relief.

Thurston also discovers in his late uncle's box a large quantity of notes showing that Prof. Angell conducted a wide-ranging investigation of other people's dreams during the same period of February 28th to April 2nd. Amongst ordinary people he had discovered little that was noteworthy except a few cases of nightmares involving a vague sense of dread or unease in the period March 23rd to April 2nd. However, amongst artists and poets Prof. Angell had discovered a significant number who reported dreams very similar in content to

Wilcox's. The box also contains a series of press cuttings detailing suicides, strange visions, occult activity, outbreaks of violence, and the case of a French painter who in the spring of 1926 exhibited a painting entitled "Dream Landscape" which is described as "blasphemous" (CF 2, p.27).

Thurston is of a rational and scientific disposition, and as he relates this information to the reader, he provides rational and sceptical explanations for the strange tale he is telling. When he tells us of the similarity between the dreams of Wilcox and the other artists his uncle had interviewed, he tells us that he "half suspected the compiler of having asked leading questions, or of having edited the correspondence in corroboration of what he had latently resolved to see" (CF 2, p.28) He also comments a number of times that he suspects Wilcox of having known about the Cthulhu cult and Prof. Angell's interest in it, and having deliberately misled or tricked his uncle.

In Part II, *The Tale of Inspector Legrasse*, we discover how Prof. Angell had first encountered the name and the image of Cthulhu. At the annual meeting of the American Archaeological Society in 1908, some seventeen years before his encounter with Henry Wilcox, Prof. Angell had met John Raymond Legrasse, a police inspector from New Orleans. Legrasse had come to the meeting in the hopes of obtaining information about a statuette he had obtained during a raid on a voodoo ceremony. The statue is described as depicting:

> a monster of vaguely anthropoid outline, but with an octopus-like head whose face was a mass of feelers, a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long, narrow wings behind (CF 2, p.31)

From this description and from the mention of indecipherable characters along the base of the statue we as readers, of course, perceive the striking similarities between the statue and Wilcox's bas-relief. We also learn that the stone the statue is made of is of a type previously unknown to geology or mineralogy.

Legrasse tells the story of how he obtained the statue. His tale begins with reports of a series of disappearances amongst people living in a swampy region to the south of New Orleans. They also received reports of people seeing fires, and hearing drums, shouting and screaming coming from the woods. This was attributed to voodoo cult activity. Inspector Legrasse along with twenty of his colleagues raid these cultists. What they discover appals them. They come upon an island of dry land in the swamp, in the centre of

which is a stone monolith surrounded by a ring of fire, atop which sits the statuette Legrasse recovered. Surrounding this is a ring of ten scaffolds from which the bodies of those who have disappeared are hanging. In between these two circles, about a hundred cultists and dancing and cavorting with terrifying abandon. They are chanting a strange phrase over and over again: *“Ph’nglui mglw’nafh Cthulhu R’lyeh wgah’nagl fhtagn*”. (CF 2, p.36) Whilst many of the cultists manage to escape, the police arrest forty-seven of them, whom they are then later able to question.

From questioning the cultists, Legrasse discovers the basic tenets of their belief system. They worship gods they call The Great Old Ones who are vastly older than humankind and who came to the earth from space. These gods are now under the earth and the ocean but at times communicate with people through the medium of dreams. The cultists are keeping the memory of these gods, and especially of the god Cthulhu depicted by the statue, alive in anticipation of the time when the stars are right and Cthulhu calls on his followers to liberate him from his dwelling place underneath the city of R’lyeh.

None of the scholars at the meeting are able to shed any light on the statue or the Cthulhu cult, with the exception of William Channing Webb, Professor of Anthropology at Princeton University. Some forty-eight years previously, Professor Webb had encountered a tribe of Inuit in the west of Greenland “whose religion, a curious form of devil-worship, chilled him with its deliberate bloodthirstiness and repulsiveness” (CF 2, p.32). The focus of their worship was a stone bas-relief consisting of a monstrous image and some writing, both of which bore a strong similarity to Legrasse’s statue. Prof. Webb had made a careful phonetic transcription of the phrase that was chanted in the Inuit cult’s rituals, and when they compared them it was discovered to be the same as the phrase chanted by the cultists Legrasse had raided in Louisiana. Legrasse was able to provide more information on this chant than Webb, because some of the arrested cultists had told Legrasse what it meant. The translation given was: “In his house at R’lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming.” (CF 2, p.38)

Having now gone through the contents of his uncle’s box, Thurston decides to conduct some investigations of his own, and visits Henry Wilcox in Providence. Meeting Wilcox in person and discussing with him his dreams of 1925 convinced Thurston of his honesty, and that he was not, after all, guilty of deliberately misleading his uncle. Thurston also

mentions visiting Inspector Legrasse to inspect the statue in person, and confides in the reader his growing suspicion that his uncle's death was not a natural one.

The action of the third part of the story, *The Madness from the Sea*, is triggered by Thurston chancing upon a newspaper article describing a ship found adrift in the ocean off New Zealand with an idol on board that he recognises from the picture accompanying the article as being almost identical to the statue recovered by Legrasse. According to the article a Norwegian sailor, Gustaf Johansen, had been rescued from the *Alert*, which was found drifting. According to him, his ship the *Emma* had been attacked and sunk by the crew of the *Alert* when the crew of the *Emma* refused their warnings to turn back. However, he and his crew had managed to board and capture the *Alert* during the fight, killing its crew. Impelled by curiosity, they sailed on in the Alert, and discovered an island. Apparently all but two of the surviving crew members had died on the island, with only two escaping on the *Alert*. When the ship was found, only one of these two, Johansen, remained alive.

Thurston travels to Sydney and Auckland in search of Johansen, but discovers he has moved back to his home city of Oslo. In Oslo, he finds that Johansen has died (under similarly suspicious circumstances as his uncle), but is able to obtain Johansen's diary from his widow. The tale from Johansen's diary forms the final part of the story. It tells of the strangeness of the island they landed on, in a way that makes in clear that this must be the city Wilcox described in his dreams. They come upon a vast stone door which they open, inadvertently releasing Cthulhu into the world. Most of the crew either die of terror or are killed by Cthulhu, with only Johansen and one other crew member, Briden, making it back to the *Alert*. Pursued by Cthulhu, Johansen realises he will not be able to outrun the monstrosity, and so puts the engine into reverse and rams him, enabling the ship to escape. Briden has lost his mind completely, and Johansen finds him dead in his cabin some days later. Significantly, the date of this encounter is April 2nd, the same day that Wilcox's fever broke and his dreams of Cthulhu and R'lyeh stopped.

The story concludes bleakly with Thurston telling the reader of his conviction that both his uncle and Johansen were murdered by the Cthulhu cult because they knew too much, and that he expects that he too will soon meet the same fate. His final hope is that if he does not destroy his manuscript before his death, that the executors of his estate will do so, thus bringing the story to a disturbingly full-circle conclusion.

Lovecraft's Philosophy of Cosmicism

The Call of Cthulhu provides us with one of the best and clearest presentations of Lovecraft's worldview, which he described as *cosmicism*. The opening paragraph of the story summarises this philosophy wonderfully:

> The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age. (CF 2, p.21)

From a very young age, Lovecraft had a passionate interest in science, in particular chemistry and astronomy, and his philosophy of life can be seen as a consequence (although not of course an inevitable one) of a mechanistic materialistic worldview based on the natural sciences. The key perspective in Lovecraft's cosmicism is the vastness of the cosmos, especially as in comparison to human beings, and its complete indifference to humankind and its fate. As Lovecraft put it, "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." (SL II, p.150)

Yōzan Dirk W. Mosig argues that Lovecraft's mechanistic materialist worldview informed his writing in a way that made it particularly effective in creating fear and horror in modern readers:

> Philosophically he was a rationalist, a mechanical materialist who harbored no belief in the supernatural, for which reason it seems paradoxical that he should have produced some of the most effective stories of supernatural horror ever written. But perhaps his success was due precisely to his sceptical frame of mind, for what he wrote were, in a sense, stories for unbelievers. He shifted the source of horror from the traditional but no longer believable ghosts and demons, to the vast and unplumbed abysses beyond space and time, and to the equally unknown recesses of the human mind, thus creating the materialistic tale of supernatural horror. (Mosig 1997, p.14–15)

This is, I think, an important insight for understanding Lovecraft's enduring appeal as a writer of horror fiction. The opening line of Lovecraft's study of the history of the weird tale,

Supernatural Horror in Literature, give us some of Lovecraft's best known and most widely quoted words: "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown." (SHL, p.25)

This is a perspective which fits well with Jungian readings of horror fiction. In psychological terms, the unknown is of course the unconscious, and fear is a natural reaction when we come into greater or more sustained contact with it, especially in the form of the shadow. What Mosig is suggesting, quite perceptively in my view, is that whilst the unknown (from a Jungian point of view we could say the archetype of the unknown) plays a similar role in Lovecraft's writing as it does in or weird tales from earlier centuries, the symbols needed to represent the unknown in modern times in order to have the same kind of emotional impact on the reader are different. Whilst archetypes are universal and primordial, the symbols which represent them and through which we can relate to them are not – they are drawn from the imagery of a particular time, place, and culture.

One of the important themes in *The Call of Cthulhu* is the way in which Thurston's relationship to knowledge changes in the course of the story. Initially, he is consumed with curiosity, and keen to unravel the mystery of the box he has discovered amongst his uncle's effects. Although he doesn't tell us so explicitly, the time, energy, and money Thurston expended investigating the Cthulhu cult – travelling from New England to Louisiana, New Zealand, Australia, and Norway – indicate an intense and sustained desire to solve the mystery he has encountered. A tension is created in the story between the investigation Thurston is narrating to us, and the feelings he expresses in relation to it as he does so. Of his stumbling across the article about Gustav Johansen he comments, "If heaven ever wishes to grant me a boon, it will be a total effacing of the results of a mere chance which fixed my eye on a certain stray piece of shelf-paper." (CF 2, p.44) Towards the end of the story, when he has discovered the truth of the existence of the Great Old Ones and the Cthulhu cult, he puts it even more strongly, saying: "I shall never sleep calmly again when I think of the horrors that lurk ceaselessly behind life in time and in space" (CF 2, p.50) and "When I think of the *extent* of all that may be brooding down there I almost wish to kill myself forthwith." (CF 2, p.51)

Thurston's attitude towards the supernatural – the unknown – has also been transformed by his investigations. In the early part of the story he comments frequently on his rational,

scientific worldview, but at one point makes it clear this worldview has not survived his encounter with th awful truth:

> My attitude was still one of absolute materialism, *as I wish it still were*, and I discounted with almost inexplicable perversity the coincidence of the dream notes and odd cuttings collected by Professor Angell. (CF 2, p.43, emphasis in original)

From the perspective of analytical psychology, this tension between the desire to know and the desire to not know can be read as being analogous to the tension between the deep and primal desire for wholeness that is the motivation for the process of individuation, and the fear and resistance that is to be expected when one actually begins to come into relationship with the unconscious, and in particular when one encounters the shadow. The fact that resistance is to be expected in meeting the shadow is a point Jung himself stressed, as discussed in Chapter 2 above.

Archetypes

As we have established, according to Jung the key question for analytical criticism of a work of literature, is “What primordial image lies behind the imagery of art?” (CW 15, p.80), and this is the question we must now turn to in relation to *The Call of Cthulhu*.

The central symbol in this story is undoubtedly that of Cthulhu himself, and in the light of our discussion of Lovecraft’s cosmicism above, it seems to me most appropriate to interpret Cthulhu as a symbol of the shadow – that is to say *not* Lovecraft’s personal shadow located in his personal unconscious, but the objective shadow located in the collective unconscious, the shadow as archetype, the shadow of humankind.

There are a number of characteristics the symbol of Cthulhu possesses that I think make it a particularly potent symbol of the objective shadow. The first is the fact that Cthulhu, like the shadow, is unknown, hidden, inaccessible to the conscious awareness of ordinary people. Not only that, he is dwelling in a vault under the ground, in a city under the water, and as Jung commented, “Water is the commonest symbol for the unconscious.” (CW 9i, p.34) The symbol of depth and descent, of penetrating beneath the earth and/or the sea in the quest for truth and knowledge, is one we find again and again in Lovecraft’s work. Indeed, as we shall see, it plays an important role in all three of the stories discussed in this thesis, as well as in some of Lovecraft’s other best known and most celebrated stories,

such as *At the Mountains of Madness* (CF 3, pp.11–158) and *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (CF 2, pp.214–367).

Not only is Cthulhu hidden in the depths, but when the great stone door to his tomb is opened by the hapless sailors, the darkness within is described in quite striking terms:

> The aperture was black with a darkness almost material. That tenebrousness was indeed a *positive quality*; for it obscured such parts of the inner walls as ought to have been revealed, and actually burst forth like smoke from its aeon-long imprisonment, visibly darkening the sun as it slunk away into the shrunken and gibbous sky on flapping membraneous wings. (CF 2, p.52–53, emphasis in the original)

The darkness from which Cthulhu emerges is not simply the absence of light, but almost a living thing, a shadow made solid.

Secondly, Cthulhu is both recognisable and alien at the same time. The elements of which he is composed are recognisable – dragon, octopus, human – but they are combined in a way which is unfamiliar and deeply unsettling. This parallels the way the shadow is perceived when it is encountered. It has a form in which we can – potentially at least – recognise ourselves, but it also contains everything we are least willing to acknowledge as being part of our psyche and which therefore repulses and horrifies us.

The alienness of Cthulhu is emphasised by the nature of the statue in the possession of Inspector Legrasse. The material it is made of is not one the scholars are able to identify, and indeed Legrasse has learned from Old Castro, the most communicative of the cultists arrested in Louisiana, of their belief that the statue is extra-terrestrial in origin, that the Great Old Ones “had come from the stars, and had brought Their images with Them.” (CF 2, p.48) The origins of the Great Old Ones are not only distant in space, but also in time. According to the Louisiana cultists, they “lived ages before there were any men, and […] came to the young world out of the sky.” (CF 2, p.37) Cthulhu and the other Great Old Ones are primordial. From humanity’s perspective at least, they have always existed – another trait they have in common with archetypes.

Thirdly, Cthulhu is described as being neither dead nor alive. According to Old Castro:

> When the stars were right, They could plunge from world to world through the sky; but when the stars were wrong, They could not live. But although They no longer

> lived, They would never really die. They all lay in stone houses in Their great city of R'lyeh, preserved by the spells of mighty Cthulhu for a glorious resurrection when the stars and the earth might once more be ready for Them. But at that time some force from outside must serve to liberate Their bodies. The spells that preserved Them intact likewise prevented Them from making an initial move, and They could only lie awake in the dark and think whilst uncounted millions of years rolled by. (CF 2, p.39)

A parallel can be seen here between Cthulhu and the other Great Old Ones who dwell neither dead nor alive and the shadow which exists latently within the mind. If we do not come into relationship with the shadow, it still exists – it is not 'dead' – but neither is it really 'alive' to the conscious mind. Also, just as Cthulhu must be awakened by an external force, so too a deliberate effort must be made by the conscious mind in order to come into relationship with the shadow.

Fourthly, Cthulhu is described as being vast in size. In Wilcox's fever dream he is "miles high" (CF 2, p.27), and the description of the sailors' encounter with him in R'lyeh refers to his "immensity" (CF 2, p.53). Also, when Old Castro is being questioned, it is said "The *size* of the Old Ones, too, he curiously declined to mention." (CF 2, p.40) as if to do so would somehow be blasphemous. This sense of overwhelming size and immensity of course reflects Lovecraft's concern to provoke in his readers a sense of awe and fear and their own smallness in relation to the cosmos. He wrote in a letter that what he was trying to achieve in his writing was:

> the aesthetic crystallisation of that burning and inextinguishable feeling of mixed wonder and oppression which the sensitive imagination experiences on scaling itself and its restrictions against the vast and provocative abyss of the unknown. (SL III, p. 294)

From the perspective of analytical psychology, this feeling of being overwhelmed can quite straightforwardly be viewed as analogous to the experience of the ego when it encounters the shadow, especially the objective shadow.

Fifthly, Cthulhu is described as not being solid, even not being truly material at all. According to Castro: "These Great Old Ones […] were not composed altogether of flesh and blood. They had shape […] but that shape was not made of matter." (CF 2, p.39) Also, when Johansen rams Cthulhu with the *Alert*:

> There was a bursting as of an exploding bladder, a slushy nastiness as of a cloven sunfish, a stench as of a thousand opened graves, and a sound that the chronicler would not put on paper. For an instant the ship was befouled by an acrid and blinding green cloud, and then there was only a venomous seething astern; where—God in heaven!—the scattered plasticity of that nameless sky-spawn was nebulously recombining in its hateful original form, whilst its distance widened every second as the Alert gained impetus from its mounting steam. (CF 2, p.54)

This lack of solidity also contributes to Cthulhu being such a potent symbol for the shadow because, as an archetype, the shadow cannot be pinned down into one particular form. Because it can be brought only partly, never fully, into consciousness it can never be fully known to us.

Sixthly, and perhaps most importantly, Cthulhu is associated with a number of the most important qualities that one would expect to find in the objective shadow, and his return is expected by the cultists to herald the liberation of those qualities across the entirety of the earth:

> That cult would never die till the stars came right again, and the secret priests would take great Cthulhu from His tomb to revive His subjects and resume His rule of earth. The time would be easy to know, for then mankind would have become as the Great Old Ones; free and wild and beyond good and evil, with laws and morals thrown aside and all men shouting and killing and revelling in joy. Then the liberated Old Ones would teach them new ways to shout and kill and revel and enjoy themselves, and all the earth would flame with a holocaust of ecstasy and freedom. (CF 2, p.39–40)

The qualities we would most obviously associate with the shadow are the desires for sex and violence, and these drives are clearly referred to in this passage (the first implicitly and the second explicitly). The abandonment of morality, giving free reign to the full range of one's desires, is similarly a quality we would expect to encounter in the shadow. However, it is important to note that the vision of a world ruled by Cthulhu is not simply one of "shouting and killing". It is also one characterised by the positive qualities of ecstasy, freedom, and joy. This recalls the fact that, as discussed in Chapter 2, the shadow contains both positive and negative qualities, just as the ego does.

This also helps to explain why the responses to Cthulhu diverge so drastically. For most people, encountering Cthulhu – even as a vague and barely perceptible presence in a

dream – means horror, madness, and death. The cultists though primarily see him in terms of the positive qualities of freedom and joy, and are thereby completely and fanatically devoted to keeping his memory alive and eagerly anticipate his return.

When, at the climax of the story, Cthulhu finally emerges from his tomb in R'lyeh, the description of him, which is perhaps one of the most powerful and evocative passages in all of Lovecraft's writing, reflects this emotional ambiguity:

> Everyone listened, and everyone was listening still when It lumbered slobberingly into sight and gropingly squeezed Its gelatinous green immensity through the black doorway into the tainted outside air of that poison city of madness. […] The Thing cannot be described—there is no language for such abysms of shrieking and immemorial lunacy, such eldritch contradictions of all matter, force, and cosmic order. A mountain walked or stumbled. God! What wonder that across the earth a great architect went mad, and poor Wilcox raved with fever in that telepathic instant? The Thing of the idols, the green, sticky spawn of the stars, had awaked to claim his own. The stars were right again, and what an age-old cult had failed to do by design, a band of innocent sailors had done by accident. After vigintillions of years great Cthulhu was loose again, and ravening for delight. (CF 2, p.53)

This description inspires both disgust and awe, horror and grandeur. There is even, I would argue, a kind of attraction. Indeed, without conceding too much ground to the Freudians, it could be admitted to be almost erotic. In terms of the human mind, we naturally fear the shadow and are disgusted by it, but if Jung is correct we are also powerfully drawn to the wholeness that can only come from integrating the qualities it represents. The symbol of Cthulhu represents this perhaps as well as any symbol in literature.

Seventhly, and finally, Johansen's dramatic escape from R'lyeh stands as a powerful symbol for the encounter with the shadow. Johansen makes it to the ship, but when he realises that he cannot outrun Cthulhu, "he resolved on a desperate chance; and, setting the engine for full speed, ran lightning-like on deck and reversed the wheel." (CF 2, p.53) If he had simply tried to flee from Cthulhu he would have been destroyed, but by reversing his engines and meeting Cthulhu quite literally head-on, Cthulhu loses his potency – he dissolves – and Johansen is able to escape. Similarly, as discussed in Chapter 2, the more we try to flee from our shadow – the more we try to push it into unconsciousness – the more potent it becomes. It is only by being willing to encounter the shadow that we can

avoid being damaged or destroyed by it.

Whilst Cthulhu is undoubtedly the most important, complex, and evocative symbol in this story, there are a number of others that are worth discussing more briefly. The city of R'lyeh features just as frequently – indeed even more so – as Cthulhu in the dreams of March 1925 catalogued by Prof. Angell. Wilcox describes the "*geometry*" of R'lyeh as he sees it in his dreams as being "*all wrong*" (CF 2, p.43). The massive size of the blocks of stone that make up the city is shown by the repeated use of the adjective "Cyclopean" (e.g. CF 2, p.42) Thurston's account of Johansen's description of the city incorporates these two elements, and adds a reference to futurism:

> Without knowing what futurism is like, Johansen achieved something very close to it when he spoke of the city; for instead of describing any definite structure or building, he dwells only on broad impressions of vast angles and stone surfaces—surfaces too great to belong to any thing right or proper for this earth, and impious with horrible images and hieroglyphs. I mention his talk about angles because it suggests something Wilcox had told me of his awful dreams. He had said that the geometry of the dream-place he saw was abnormal, non-Euclidean, and loathsomely redolent of spheres and dimensions apart from ours. Now an unlettered seaman felt the same thing whilst gazing at the terrible reality. (CF 2, p.51)

The fundamental incomprehensibility of the physical nature of the city is reinforced in the narration of the sailors' encounter with Cthulhu. When they discover the door to Cthulhu's tomb, "they could not decide whether it lay flat like a trap-door or slantwise like an outside cellar-door" (CF 2, p.52) and when they are fleeing from Cthulhu, one of the sailors

> slipped as the other three were plunging frenziedly over endless vistas of green-crusted rock to the boat, and Johansen swears he was swallowed up by an angle of masonry which shouldn't have been there; an angle which was acute, but behaved as if it were obtuse. (CF 2, p.53)

I would suggest that both the incomprehensible strangeness and the overwhelming vastness Lovecraft evokes in his descriptions of R'lyeh mean that it can be read as a symbol of the unconscious mind itself. It is a realm we can imagine and gain some impression of from our dreams but it remains a fundamentally alien landscape and one in which we cannot journey without exposing ourselves to the dangers of death and insanity.

The hieroglyphs that appear throughout the story – in Wilcox's dreams, on the bas-reliefs and statues, and covering the mammoth stone blocks of R'lyeh – and which spell out the invocation chanted by the cultists of Louisiana and Greenland as an invocation of Cthulhu, are also interesting to consider as a symbol. The hieroglyphs clearly represent some form of language, but it is a language that cannot be understood. The cultists know what the chant means and that the hieroglyphs represent this chant in writing only because this information has been passed down via the priests of the cult, not because they have any knowledge or understanding of the language. These hieroglyphs can therefore be interpreted as representing the language of the unconscious, in Jungian terms, symbols. We thus have symbols (in the sense of hieroglyphs) which function as symbols (in the Jungian sense) for the Jungian concept of the symbol. As we saw in Chapter 2, for Jung a symbol represents something that is unconscious, and this is precisely the role that the hieroglyphs play in *The Call of Cthulhu*. For Wilcox, Thurston, Legrasse, and the scholars who examine the statue, of course, they are meaningless and so do not function as symbols for them. They are meaningful to the cultists, however, representing their profoundest aspirations and devotion whilst the object of that devotion remains entirely unknown to them.

Finally, although it does not play a particularly important role in the story, as a resident of Oslo, I would like to briefly consider how the city of Oslo/Christiania functions as a symbol when it is mentioned in connection with Thurston's journey there in search of Gustav Johansen. Thurston tells us:

> Sailing for London, I reëmbarked at once for the Norwegian capital; and one autumn day landed at the trim wharves in the shadow of the Egeberg. Johansen's address, I discovered, lay in the Old Town of King Harold Haardrada, which kept alive the name of Oslo during all the centuries that the greater city masqueraded as "Christiana". (CF 2, p.49)

The city which is today once again known by its original name of Oslo was called Christiania from the early seventeenth century to the early twentieth century. The change in name happened in connection with the re-founding of the city by King Christian IV after a large fire. The new city centre was located a little way away from the older part of the town, and so whilst the city as a whole was called Christiania, the "Old Town" was still referred to as Oslo. The name of the city as a whole was changed back to Oslo in 1925, the year before Lovecraft wrote *The Call of Cthulhu*.

The way the Old Town is described as keeping the original name alive whilst the rest of the city masqueraded as something other than what is truly was is, I think, quite a strong symbol for maintaining contact with something deeper. If we anthropomorphise the city we could say that the Old Town of Oslo represents the part of the psyche which is more in contact with the unconscious, and Christiania the part which is trying to avoid encountering its shadow. Read in this way, the change of name back to Oslo can be read as symbolising willingness to integrate the shadow more into consciousness and thereby a step on the path of individuation. This is reinforced by the fact that the wharves where Thurston lands are described as being “in the shadow of the Egeberg”, a large hill near the centre of Oslo – right next to the Old Town.

The mention of the Egeberg is interesting because is provides the setting for the iconic painting *The Scream* by Edvard Munch. I am not aware of any concrete evidence that Lovecraft was aware of this connection when he wrote *The Call of Cthulhu*, but given the fame that Munch had achieved in the decades preceding Lovecraft’s writing of the story, I find it less plausible that the choice of this location by Lovecraft was a coincidence. After all, just as *The Call of Cthulhu* is one of the greatest depictions of existential terror in literature, so too *The Scream* must be considered one of the greatest of such depictions in visual art.

Dreams and Creativity

As with the great majority of Lovecraft’s stories, the initial inspiration for *The Call of Cthulhu* came from a dream. (Joshi 2013, p.637) In this dream, which he had in 1920, a full five years before writing the story, Lovecraft finds himself in the role that would become Henry Wilcox in the finished story. He has a bas-relief which he has made “in his dreams” (ibid.) and which he brings to the curator of a museum of antiquities. The curator laughs at him because of the obviously recent origins of the bas-relief. Lovecraft replies that “dreams are older than brooding Egypt or the contemplative Sphinx or garden-girdled Babylon” (ibid.), a line that we find, with only the slight modification of “Egypt” being replaced by “Tyre”, in the final text (CF 2, p.25). This encounter between the artist and the older expert forms only a small part of the story of *The Call of Cthulhu* in its finished form. This process of encountering an image in a dream that seems significant, and then elaborating it further into a fully-fledged story is a perfect exemplification of the process of

creating visionary art, and the close relationship this process has with the practice of active imagination.

Quite apart from the text's origins, dreams play a key role in *The Call of Cthulhu* and the functions they have in the story fit very well with the Jungian conception of the nature and function of dreams. Dreams, as we saw in Chapter 2, are the primary way in which we can come into relationship with the contents of the unconscious mind. We have also seen that an important distinction is to be made between "little" dreams which come from the personal unconscious, and "big" dreams which come from the collective unconscious.

This distinction is quite clear in *The Call of Cthulhu*. Wilcox's dreams in the period from March 1st to April 2nd are clearly "big" dreams, whilst the reports he gives to Prof. Angell after he recovers from his fever are described as being "pointless and irrelevant accounts of thoroughly usual visions" (CF 2, p.27). Moreover, as has already been mentioned, the spate of "big" dreams is heralded by an earthquake, which functions superbly as a symbol for the rumblings in the unconscious that precede the eruption of the content of the collective unconscious into dreams.

It is particularly interesting from the perspective of analytical psychology that ordinary people do not have these "big" dreams, and those who do are overwhelmingly artists. Visionary artists are by definition more in touch with, and more sensitive to, the unconscious mind than the average person and so a Jungian would expect such artists to be more susceptible to this kind of dream. Moreover, just as archetypes are communicated to the conscious mind through dreams, it is through dreams that Cthulhu and the other Great Old Ones communicate with human beings:

> When, after infinities of chaos, the first men came, the Great Old Ones spoke to the sensitive among them by moulding their dreams; for only thus could Their language reach the fleshly minds of mammals. (CF 2, p.38–39)

Lovecraft's use of the word "sensitive" in this context is interesting, and it occurs in several other places in the text. In the context of Jung's theory of the mind it makes perfect sense, and indeed is to be expected, that sensitivity to dreams and creative ability would go together. All of this fits in very well with a reading of Cthulhu as a symbol of the archetypal shadow.

When Thurston visits Wilcox, it is clear from the way he describes the young artist's work that he very much fits the mold of the visionary artist in the Jungian sense. His sculptures are all inspired by his dreams of Cthulhu and R'lyeh, and as such his creative process can be seen as performing the same function in his process of individuation as active imagination. Thurston comments in relation to Wilcox's dreams:

> They and their subconscious residuum had influenced his art profoundly, and he shewed me a morbid statue whose contours almost made me shake with the potency of its black suggestion. He could not recall having seen the original of this thing except in his own dream bas-relief, but the outlines had formed themselves insensibly under his hands. It was, no doubt, the giant shape he had raved of in delirium. (CF 2, p.42)

Finally in relation to the topic of dreams, it is emphasised repeatedly in the story that a large number of people in different countries who could not conceivable have been in communication with one another were all having the same dreams at the same time. This strongly recalls the universality of the collective unconscious and parallels Jung's observations that similar symbols are to be found in the mythology and folklore of widely disparate cultures, observations that convinced him of the empirical necessity of the existence of the collective unconscious.

Race and Projection

Finally, we must turn to the overt racism that blights this otherwise brilliant work of literature. It is notable that the devotees of Cthulhu are described in racial terms. The point is made repeatedly not simply that they are non-white, but that they are mixed race, with Lovecraft describing the Louisiana cultists as "of a very low, mixed-blood, and mentally aberrant type" (CF 2, p.37), as "mongrel" (ibid.), as including "negroes and mulattoes" (ibid.) amongst their number, and even as "hybrid spawn" (CF 2, p.36). The *Alert* is described as being "manned by a queer and evil-looking crew of Kanakas and half-castes" (CF 2, p.46) who are also labelled as "savage". (ibid.) Also, the man who "jostled" Thurston's uncle shortly before he collapsed and died, and whom Thurston by the end of the story comes to suspect of having murdered him in described as "a nautical-looking negro". (CF 2, p.22)

Not only that, the cultists are frequently described in animalistic terms, with the clear implication that they are not fully human. When the police are approaching the Louisiana cultists in the woods, the sounds they hear before they come to the island with the bonfire are described as follows:

> There are vocal qualities peculiar to men, and vocal qualities peculiar to beasts; and it is terrible to hear the one when the source should yield the other. Animal fury and orgiastic licence here whipped themselves to daemoniac heights by howls and squawking ecstasies that tore and reverberated through those nighted woods like pestilential tempests from the gulfs of hell. (CF 2, p.35)

When they first see the cultists on the island in the swamp, they are described in the following way:

> On this [island] now leaped and twisted a more indescribable horde of human abnormality than any but a Sime or an Angarola could paint. Void of clothing, this hybrid spawn were braying, bellowing, and writhing about a monstrous ring-shaped bonfire (CF 2, p.36)

From the perspective of analytical psychology I would argue that these racist elements in the story are best interpreted in terms of Lovecraft's personal unconscious rather than in terms of the archetypes of the collective unconscious. In Chapter 2 we discussed the phenomenon of projection, whereby qualities that form part of the (personal) shadow are perceived as being possessed by others outside of one's own mind. Here we begin to stray dangerously close to the territory of using Lovecraft's writings to psychoanalyse him, with all the problems of speculation and reductionism that come with it. However, if we are to continue to read Lovecraft in the twenty-first century and take him seriously as a great writer, we need approaches to reading him that take adequate account of the racism in his work.

Interpreting the racist elements in *The Call of Cthulhu* as projections of Lovcraft's personal shadow fits well with the qualities that are ascribed to the cultists. Lovcraft modelled himself on the ideal of the eighteenth-century gentleman, and so and it is quite reasonable to expect that the desire to shake off moral codes and indulge his base desires with abandon would form part of his shadow. Lovecraft's attitude to sex in this regard is quite interesting. He stated that after he had satisfied his curiosity about the "facts of life" in typically precocious fashion at a young age, he felt no interest in sex whatsoever:

> In the matter of the justly celebrated “facts of life” I didn’t wait for oral information, but exhausted the entire subject in the medical section of the family library […] when I was 8 years old. […] This was because of curiosity & perplexity concerning the strange reticences & embarrassments of adult speech, & the oddly inexplicable allusions & situations in standard literature. The result was the very opposite of what parents generally fear – for instead of giving me an abnormal & precocious interest in sex (as unsatisfied curiosity might have done), it virtually killed my interest in the subject. The whole matter was reduced to prosaic mechanism – a mechanism which I rather despised or at least thought non-glamourous because of its purely animal nature & separation from such things as intellect & beauty – & all the drama was taken out of it. (SL IV, p.355–356, note 13)

Whilst Lovecraft did marry, in 1924, it was his wife who pursued him rather than the other way around, and they lived together for less than a year, conducting the majority of their relationship by letter – an arrangement that seemed to suit Lovecraft well.[3] There is no evidence of his having any romantic relationships – or even interests – prior to his marriage. The question of whether Lovecraft had repressed his sexual drives or whether he was simply largely asexual is of course not one which we can venture to answer, but the hints of sexual abandon that form part of Lovecraft’s racist characterisation of the cultists provides us with a suggestion – no more – of the former.

It is also noteworthy that the sensitivity to the influence of Cthulhu through dreams seems to have a racial element. Alongside the accounts of dreams from the period March 1st to April 2nd, Thurston discovers in his uncle’s box a number of newspaper clippings from the same period:

> A despatch from California describes a theosophist colony as donning white robes en masse for some “glorious fulfilment” which never arrives, whilst items from India speak guardedly of serious native unrest toward the end of March. Voodoo orgies multiply in Hayti, and African outposts report ominous mutterings. American officers in the Philippines find certain tribes bothersome about this time, and New York policemen are mobbed by hysterical Levantines on the night of March 22–23. The west of Ireland, too, is full of wild rumour and legendary (CF 2, p.29)

Although disturbances are mentioned in California and Ireland, it is noticeable that the majority of the incidents referred to involve non-white “natives” or “tribes”. This puts us in mind of Edward Said’s discussion of how people in the West have tended to view

[3] For more on Lovecraft’s marriage see Joshi 2013, esp. Ch.15

themselves as primarily controlled by reason, and constructed an Other which contrasts with this that is ascribed to non-white populations. (Said 1978) This is clearly analogous to Jung's theory of projection.

Conclusion

There can be little doubt that *The Call of Cthulhu* is a visionary work of literature. Indeed, being inspired by a dream it is perhaps paradigmatically so. Whilst there are a number of elements in this story that are interesting from a Jungian point of view, the central symbol is unquestioningly the figure of Cthulhu. In this image, Lovecraft has created a symbol that has captured the imaginations of generations of readers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. My interpretation of Cthulhu as symbolising the shadow is, I think, helpful in explaining the primal fascination so many have felt when they have encountered it. However, no interpretation, especially a psychoanalytic one, should be considered to be final or absolute. Because from the point of view of analytical psychology a symbol represents the unconscious, it can never be fully understood. The symbol of Cthulhu has entered into the modern imagination, and can now be found in other works of literature, in paintings, in games, in GIFs, in memes and in soft toys, and no one interpretation could hope to explain it fully. I hope that in this chapter though I have succeeded in illuminating it from one particular angle, and in doing so demonstrated the usefulness of Jungian theories in the context of literary criticism.

5. The Shadow Over Innsmouth

Introduction

The Shadow Over Innsmouth is a short story that was written by Lovecraft in late 1931. It is therefore among his later works, and was the only one of his stories to be published in book form during the author's lifetime. The story explores a number of themes and motifs that we find again and again in works from all periods of Lovecraft's life. The rich symbolism of the story make it, I believe, an ideal text to explore from a Jungian point of view, focusing particularly on themes related to the the shadow and the process of individuation.

The main character and narrator of the story is a young man named Robert Olmstead,[4] who is travelling in New England in pursuit of his "sightseeing, antiquarian, and genealogical" (CF 3, p.160) interests. There are several aspects of Olmstead's character and habits that recall Lovecraft himself – the interest in genealogy and history, as well as frugality in relation to transport and food. It is this frugality, combined with a lively curiosity that is often the precursor of encounters with the horrific in Lovecraft's works, that leads Olmstead to the town of Innsmouth in the first place.

Lovecraft builds up the suspense masterfully in the first few pages, having Olmstead confide in us as readers that he has first-hand knowledge of a series of events that led to large numbers of raids and arrests in the town of Innsmouth, as well as the demolition of significant sections of the town and the torpedoing of a reef just outside Innsmouth Harbour. Indeed, he tells us that he had a terrifying experience whilst visiting Innsmouth, from which he only barely escaped with his life, and that his recounting of that experience to the authorities upon his escape was what led to the raids. As with many of Lovecraft's protagonists, Olmstead confides that he wishes to share his tale not only as a means of satisfying the curiosity aroused by the rumours surrounding what may or may not have happened at Innsmouth, but as a way of confirming to himself his own sanity and the truth of his recollections.

[4] The character is not named as such in the story itself, but in Lovecraft's notes.

At the beginning of the tale, Olmstead is in Newburyport, Massachusetts, inquiring as to the most economical means of transport to Arkham.[5] When he balks at the price of a train ticket, the agent at the station informs him, with a certain reluctance, about the bus which goes from Newburyport to Arkham via Innsmouth. This bus is certainly cheap, but is generally shunned by the residents of both Newburyport and Arkham, who do their best to avoid contact with the inhabitants of Innsmouth. Olmstead mentions that the agent's "speech shewed him to be no local man", (CF 3, p.162) and it seems that he does not share the fear of the locals towards the Innsmouth folk, viewing it as partly somewhat laughable superstition, and partly racism.

He tells Olmstead about Captain Obed Marsh who is reputed to have made pacts with the devil and brought "imps out of hell to live in Innsmouth" (CF 3, p.162), all the while dismissing the locals' beliefs as "stories would make you laugh" (CF 3, p.162) and cautioning Olmstead not to "take too much stock in what people around here say" (CF 3, p. 162). The agent goes on to say that "the real thing behind the way folks feel is simply race prejudice" (CF 3, p.163), thereby introducing one of the main themes of the story, and one which is examined in detail below. It is his belief that the strangeness of the Innsmouth folk is less to do with any pact with the devil than with the fact that Captain Marsh is reputed to have brought back some "odd specimens" from his travels, who interbred with the locals.

The agent mentions a number of details that are to become important later in the story – the abundance of fish in Innsmouth Harbour, the inadvisability of staying at the Gilman Hotel or indeed staying overnight in Innsmouth at all, the odd jewellery associated with the town, the gold refinery which is the town's only real industry aside from fishing and the mystery of where they get the gold from, as well as the hostility of the Innsmouth folk to strangers and even reports of travellers disappearing or going crazy.

Olmstead, and the reader, are thus left with a series of interrelated mysteries which are enticing enough for him to overcome the vague sense of dread and fear surrounding Innsmouth and take the bus there. When he arrives at Innsmouth on the morning bus, he makes conversation with a friendly teenager (not an Innsmouth native) who works in the local grocery store, and who gives him some advice and a hand-drawn map of the town. He then sets out to explore Innsmouth, and after some time encounters the town drunkard Zadok Allen, whom the boy in the grocery store had informed him was the only one of the

[5] The New England we encounter in Lovecraft's works is a blend of the real and the imagined. Newburyport MA is a real town, Arkham and Innsmouth are not.

locals who might be persuaded to talk to him about the history of the town, provided he was sufficiently drunk. Olmstead takes the opportunity to lead Zadok to a secluded location, ply him with whisky, and listen to his tales.

What he hears from Zadok confirms and explains everything Olmstead has heard earlier, but despite the mounting evidence he struggles to believe what Zadok tells him. Whilst he thinks that they probably build on a grain of truth, he is inclined to dismiss Zadok's stories as for the most part drunken fantasies. The reader, of course, has by this point realised that Olmstead is in fact hearing the full truth about Innsmouth for the first time.

The tale begins with Captain Obed Marsh who in the course of his journeys in the South Sea islands encountered a pair of islands upon which were to be found a series of ancient ruins with images of aquatic monsters carved on them. The waters of these islands contained an abundance of fish, and their inhabitants wore strange golden jewellery with similar monstrous motifs. The ruins were believed to have once lain under the water, and been brought above the surface by the movements of the earth. These ruins were inhabited by sea creatures that the islanders had formed a kind of pact or relationship with. In exchange for providing some of their young people as human sacrifices, the creatures herded large amounts of fish into their waters, and provided them with jewellery. Once this relationship was established, the creatures started breeding with the islanders. These hybrid children would initially look more or less human, but take on more and more of the appearance and physiology of the sea creatures as they got older. At some point, they would transition to living permanently under water, in a state of near-immortality where they could not die of illness or old age, but only through violence or mishap.

Captain Obed learned from the islanders' chief how these creatures could be summoned, and when some years later the Innsmouth economy took a turn for the worse, he persuaded the townspeople that they should enter into the same kind of pact as the islanders. Initially his intention had only been to offer human sacrifices in exchange for fish and gold, but not go as far as to interbreed with the creatures. Predictably enough, however, this was a line it did not prove possible to hold. Although Zadok's story is far-fetched, it explains so many of the questions that have been raised, and has been so skilfully and extensively foreshadowed, that the reader is drawn into accepting it, even if the protagonist of the story cannot yet quite bring himself to do so.

The encounter ends with Zadok frantically declaring that they've been spotted, and running off in terror. Olmstead keeps his cool, but decides to hurry towards the town square to catch the 8pm bus that will take him to Arkham. Whilst the bus arrives from Newburyport without issue, however, upon boarding it he is informed that due to a mechanical problem the service will not be able to continue to Arkham that evening. Despite the Newburyport station agent's warnings, therefore, he has little choice but to check into the Gilman Hotel.

In a state of somewhat heightened anxiety, Olmstead is unable – and unwilling – to sleep, and noticing that the deadbolt has been removed from the door manages to reattach it with a handy pocket screwdriver. He hears a number of increasingly disturbing sounds in the night, which culminate in someone (or something) trying to break into his room. There then follows a tightly-paced action sequence whereby he descends from the window of an adjoining room onto the roof of a neighbouring building to make his escape just as his pursuers break through the door. The residents of the town come out in force to search for him, but with the aid of the grocery boy's map he is able to make his escape. In the course of doing so, he has the opportunity to see the human-hybrid monsters that have so far been hidden behind shuttered windows and, at the climax of the chase and from a hidden vantage point on the outskirts of the town, the horrifying sea creatures themselves. In true Lovecraftian fashion, this encounter with the full horror of reality causes him to faint. When he awakes the next day, he is able to make his way safely to the next village, and from there to Arkham and later Boston where he informs the authorities of what he has seen.

This is where a typical Lovecraft tale would end, but *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* has a kind of epilogue that separates it in an important way from the rest of Lovecraft's work. After recovering from his ordeal, Olmstead continues his genealogical research, and discovers that his own great-grandmother was the product of a union between Captain Obed Marsh and one of the sea creatures. At first this revelation is deeply horrifying and uncomfortable to Olmstead, and the dreams he has begun to have of living in great cities under the sea terrify and repulse him. However, as time passes, this horror and revulsion fade, and he resolves that he will soon return to Innsmouth and plunge into the depths to take his true place amongst the creatures of the deep.

The Shadow Over Innsmouth is extraordinarily rich in themes and symbolism that resonate strongly with Jungian theories of the mind. In this chapter I want to show how, when

viewed through the lens of these theories, this tale can be interpreted in ways that convey profound truths about the nature of the mind, of fear, and of the process of individuation.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the projection of the shadow is a fundamental part of how a person who has not completed the process of individuation will relate to the world around them, and so it should be no surprise to find it in literature. In much folklore and horror literature, and certainly in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, horror is encountered in the form of monsters which are symbols of the shadow. What makes monsters truly grotesque and terrifying is that we see in them some aspect of ourselves which we fear to acknowledge.

Lovecraft's work undoubtedly expresses archetypes of the collective unconscious in ways which many find extraordinarily compelling, but it is equally clear that we find in Lovecraft's work expressions of his own personal unconscious and his struggles with his shadow. Untangling the universal from the personal is no easy task, but even if such a task ultimately proves impossible, making some attempts to do so will I think shed light on the deep and lasting appeal of this story.

The Unconscious and the Unknown

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the idea of the unknown was central to the way in which Lovecraft explored the unknown – in symbolic and cosmic rather than psychological terms. The central place that the unknown – and the fear of the unknown – have in Lovecraft's tales means that his works lend themselves particularly well to analysis in terms of the unconscious.

If Lovecraft is right in the belief he expressed in the opening line of *Supernatural Horror in Literature* that our strongest fear is fear of the unknown, then it follows that we will also fear our own unconscious mind, and in particular our shadow. If we read Lovecraft's works symbolically then being confronted with the unknown (in the form of monsters, or some other form of nameless horror) would represent the experience of confronting the shadow. In most of Lovecraft's work, encountering the unknown directly is an overwhelmingly traumatic experience which usually results in an experience of insanity invoving a total loss of control, with the character usually either fleeing, fainting, or dying. We see an example of this in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, when Olmstead glimpses the true, non-hybrid sea creatures for the first time:

> I thought I was prepared for the worst, and I really ought to have been prepared considering what I had seen before. My other pursuers had been accursedly abnormal – so should I not have been ready to face a strengthening of the abnormal element; to look upon forms in which there was no mixture of the normal at all? I did not open my eyes until the raucous clamour came loudly from a point obviously straight ahead. […] It was the end, for whatever remains to me of life on the surface of this earth, of every vestige of mental peace and confidence in the integrity of Nature and of the human mind. Nothing that I could have imagined – nothing, even, that I could have gathered had I credited old Zadok's crazy tale in the most literal way – would be in any way comparable to the daemonic, blasphemous reality that I saw – or believe I saw. […] In another instant everything was blotted out by a merciful fit of fainting; the first I ever had. (CF 3, p.222–3)

This experience of horror can be seen as analagous to the horror felt when one begins to realise that qualities one dislikes and fears are in fact part of one's own psyche. There is a strong impulse to avoid this knowledge – to faint away from it, one might say. This in itself means that Lovecraft's works lend themselves well to a Jungian interpretation in terms of the shadow, but in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* there are elements that allow us to build a fuller and more interesting analysis – namely the fact that the horror experienced by the protagonist is mixed with attraction, and the fact of his ultimate decision to plunge into the depths.

Horror and Attraction

The two emotional responses of horror and attraction are intrinsically linked in human experience. Horror literature often makes use of this fact in more or less subtle ways (sexualised vampires being one of the most common, and less subtle examples). In the context of our discussion of the shadow above, it might now be more clear why this should be the case. If what we fear and are horrified by is a projection of those parts of our psyche that we have suppressed, then an attraction to that lost and inaccessible part of ourselves should not be surprising. The attraction can be interpreted as a longing for the wholeness that comes from integrating our shadow into our conscious mind through the process of individuation.

One important instance of conflict between attraction and revulsion is related to Devil Reef. Devil Reef serves an important practical and symbolic function in the story. It is a black

reef just off Innsmouth Harbour. On the seaward side of the reef, the ocean floor drops off precipitously, and it is in these deep waters that the city of the sea creatures lies. It is from the reef that Captain Marsh uses the implements and incantations he obtained in the South Sea islands to call the creatures forth, and here that the human sacrifices are handed over. Moreover, it is from Devil Reef that, in the story's final paragraph, Olmstead confides that he will "dive down through black abysses" (CF 3, p.230) to join his kin.

In the following passage, Olmstead describes his feelings upon seeing Devil Reef for the first time:

> And far out at sea, despite a high tide, I glimpsed a long, black line scarcely rising above the water yet carrying a suggestion of odd latent malignancy. This, I knew, must be Devil's Reef. As I looked, a subtle, curious sense of beckoning seemed superadded to the grim repulsion; and oddly enough, I found this overtone more disturbing than the primary impression. (CF 3, p.173)

Devil Reef is a powerful symbol for the unconscious and the shadow in several ways. Firstly, water – and in particular the sea – are of course the most common symbols for the unconscious. The fact that the reef is described as "scarcely rising above the water" in the passage above, and as being "well above water a good part of the time, and never much below it" (CF 3, p.162) by the Newburyport station agent suggest something not yet fully conscious, but in the process of breaking through into consciousness. It thus represents and foreshadows Olmstead's eventual conscious realisation and acceptance of his own aquatic ancestry. The station agent further comments that Captain Obed Marsh (who, it will be remembered, we later discover to be Olmstead's great-great-grandfather) landed on the reef "sometimes at night when the tide was right […] and it's just barely possible he was looking for pirate loot and maybe finding it." (CF 3, p.162) If we interpret the reef here as symbolising the shadow, then the "loot" that can be found there would of course symbolise the treasure to be found in the process of individuation.

Lovecraft uses the very image of the shadow repeatedly in his descriptions of Innsmouth. Whilst not reading too much into the coincidence of Jung's and Lovecraft's choice of this word, the fact that the shadow has such a central symbolic role in the story – even forming part of the title – nonetheless enriches our interpretation of Innsmouth and its inhabitants in terms of the Jungian shadow. The sharp-eyed reader will notice that not only is Innsmouth described as "shadowed" at regular intervals throughout the story, but that this adjective is sometimes qualified. Thus whilst Olmstead is still making his enquiries in

Newburyport, Innsmouth is simply “shadowed” (CF 3, p.161, 168), when he glimpses the town for the first time through the window of the bus, it is “rumour-shadowed” (CF 3, p. 172). Later, when he is hurrying to catch the evening bus to Arkham after speaking with Zadok Allen, it is described as “fear-shadowed” (CF 3, p.201), and upon escaping the town “evil-shadowed” (CF 3, p.223). Finally, when he describes his intention to return, it has become “marvel-shadowed” (CF 3, p.230). This progression – from neutrality to rumour to fear to evil to marvel – can be seen as encapsulating the process of engagement with the unconscious mind and the shadow as one moves from beginning to suspect that one has a shadow, to fearing one’s own unconscious drives and even regarding them as evil, to the marvel that comes with integrating them.

Degeneration and Decline

We must now turn to the question of what fears in particular the inhabitants of Innsmouth and the creatures living below Devil Reef evoke. They are not only generalised symbols of what is to be feared, but are associated in the story with a quite specific set of fears clustered around the theme of degeneration and decline.

The fear of degeneration was widespread in the nineteenth century, and was linked to pre-Darwinian ideas of heredity. As science progressed and disproved the notions that degeneration theory was based on, the fear of degeneration waned as a cultural phenomenon. By the time Lovecraft was writing *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, the potency of degeneration theory in the public imagination had already declined significantly, but for Lovecraft, whose sensibilities were always more of the eighteenth than the twentieth century, the idea clearly still had great power to horrify.

The central idea of degeneration theory was that certain populations could go into a process of decline over a number of generations, with behaviours such as addiction and sexual deviancy eventually leading to lower intelligence, increased criminal behaviour, insanity, and sterility in later generations. These theories were also linked to the idea of the undesirability of interracial marriage.

Hereditary degeneration was believed to be linked to addiction and alcoholism, and we find a number of references in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* to the alcoholism of the Innsmouth folk, for example:

> [O]ne could hardly imagine how they passed the time apart from their desultory fishing. Perhaps – judging from the quantities of bootleg liquor they consumed – they lay for most of the daylight hours in an alcoholic stupor. (CF 3, p.178)

The Newburyport station agent informs Olmstead that the degeneration of Innsmouth began in 1846, when an epidemic led to the deaths of over half of the population. (We later learn that there was in fact no epidemic, and that the deaths were the result of the sea creatures taking their revenge on the people of Innsmouth for not keeping up their end of the bargain that had been struck.) Believing that the deaths were from disease, however, the station agent comments that: “They never did figure out what the trouble was, but it was probably some foreign kind of disease brought from China or somewhere by the shipping” (CF 3, p.163) and “That plague of ’46 must have taken off the best blood in the place” (CF 3, p.165). Here we find introduced the twin themes of hereditary degeneration, and the idea that the origins of Innsmouth’s problems lay in their contact with other races.

In the earlier sections of the story, the possibility is left open that the appearance and attitudes of the Innsmouth folk are a result of disease rather than degeneration – even if it is, as the agent speculates, a “foreign disease”. When he has newly arrived in Innsmouth, Olmstead reflects:

> One wondered what became of the bulk of the older folk, and whether the “Innsmouth look” were not a strange an insidious disease phenomenon which increased its hold as years advanced. (CF 3, p.178)

Nonetheless, the focus in the story is primarily on the idea of degeneration and decay rather than disease. One of the primary aspects of this degeneration is physical. The town of Innsmouth itself is described as being in a fairly advanced state of ruin and decay. Much of this is due to the depopulation of the town and the abandonment of most of the houses and other buildings, although buildings and structures still in use such as churches and bridges are also described as being quite dilapidated.

The physical condition and appearance of the town’s inhabitants is something to which Lovecraft gives a good deal of attention. Olmstead’s first encounter with one of the Innsmouth folk is with the bus driver, of whom Lovecraft gives a long and detailed physical description. Before we are given any details, however, we are presented with Olmstead’s immediate emotional reaction to seeing the man:

> Even before I noticed any details there spread over me a wave of spontaneous aversion which could neither be checked nor explained. It suddenly struck me as very natural that the local people should not wish to ride on a bus owned and driven by this man, or to visit any oftener than possible the habitat of such a man and his kinsfolk. (CF 3, p.170)

It is worth noting here that Olmstead invokes the idea of naturalness to justify his feelings of aversion. It is not that Olmstead himself simply happens have a subjective dislike for this person – there is some objective quality about the bus driver that makes it natural and normal for any healthy person to dislike him and be repulsed by him. Olmstead goes on to enumerate physical details such as:

> odd, deep creases in the side of his neck […] expressionless face […] a narrow head, bulging watery blue eyes that never seemed to wink, a flat nose, a receding forehead and chin, and singularly undeveloped ears […] long, thick lip and coarse-pored, greyish cheeks (CF 3, p.170)

Here we can clearly see the foreshadowing of the discovery of the Innsmouth folks' fishy parentage in the gill-like creases in the neck, the shape of the head, and the unblinkingness of the eyes. There is also a racial element though, with the description of the nose, forehead, and lips evoking stereotypical African features.

The idea that the repellant appearance and manners of the Innsmouth folk may be due to interracial marriage comes up repeatedly in the story. As mentioned earlier, the Newburyport station agent is of this belief:

> But the real thing behind the way folks feel is simply race prejudice – and I don't say I'm blaming those that hold it. I hate those Innsmouth folks myself, and I wouldn't care to go to their town […] it's pretty clear that old Captain Marsh must have brought home some odd specimens when he had all three of his ships in commission back in the 'twenties and 'thirties. There certainly is a strange kind of streak in the Innsmouth folks today – I don't know how to explain it, but it sort of makes you crawl. (CF 3, p. 163)

In concluding his description of the bus driver, Olmstead wonders to himself whether the his appearance is due to heredity degeneration or his being mixed race:

> Just what foreign blood was in him I could not even guess. His oddities certainly did not look Asiatic, Polynesian, Levantine, or negroid, yet I could see why people found

> him alien. I myself would have thought of biological degeneration rather than alienage. (CF 3, p.170)

One of the most problematic aspects of this story, as of Lovecraft's work in general, is its explicit racism. The inhabitants of Innsmouth are frequently described as being animal-like, both in appearance and movement. For example, when wandering around the town, Olmstead makes reference to a group of "dirty, simian-visaged children" (CF 3, p.173). Later, when fleeing from the Gilman Hotel, Olmstead describes a group of his pursuers in the following manner:

> I could see them plainly only a block away – and was horrified by the bestial abnormality of their faces and the dog-like sub-humanness of their crouching gait. One man moved in a positively simian way, with long arms frequently touching the ground. (CF 3, p.217)

It is not only their appearance that is animal-like, however, but the smell and the sounds produced by them are repeatedly described in these terms as well. For example, the town is described as being pervaded by "the most nauseous fishy odour imaginable" (CF 3, p. 174), and Olmstead describes his pursuers as "croaking and jabbering in some hateful guttural patois I could not identify" (CF 3, p.218).

What, then, can all this tell us about the unconscious fears that the people of Innsmouth and the sea creatures represent? It is clear from the discussion above that the fears being evoked are linked to some form of decline, or falling into a lower state of being. This is represented by the theme of degeneration, where one can fall into a lower state through the effects of alcoholism being passed down through the generations. It is also represented by the racist theme of interracial marriage, and the belief that when white Europeans have children with those of other races regarded as less developed or less civilised, those children will represent a degeneration in relation to their European parent. Finally, it is represented in the theme of humans developing animalistic characteristics, devolving away from human self-consciousness into a bestial state governed by instinct.

We do not, of course, need to accept the degeneration theory or the racism and speciesism in the story as in any way valid in order to be able ask what deeper fears these things might be a projection of for Lovecraft. Indeed, if they did not represent something deeper, and if *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* really was primarily a story about the fears of

degeneration and interracial marriage, then modern readers would not find it as compelling and engaging as so many clearly still do.

I would argue that what these three themes of degeneration, race, and animalism have in common for Lovecraft is the fear of emotion, and particularly of sexual desire, overtaking reason. Degeneration is believed to be linked to both addiction and sexual deviency. Non-European races were, as Edward Said has discussed, believed by Europeans to be governed by emotion rather than reason, and to be uninhibited in their sexual appetites. And animals of course are believed to have no capacity for reason and to be driven solely by instinct.

We can therefore interpret the horror evoked by the inhabitants of Innsmouth as symbolising the fear of the strong emotions that exist in the shadow. These emotions are primarily those related to sexual desire and the desire to commit violence. The expression of these potentially dangerous and harmful emotions do of course need to be regulated in any civilised society. However, from a Jungian perspective the suppression of these emotions into the shadow is not an ultimately healthy solution. As discussed above, this suppression creates the problem that when located in the unconscious, these emotions are disconnected from, and therefore cannot be affected by, other, more wholesome parts of the psyche. The fact that they are not under conscious control can also result in them erupting in unexpected and destructive ways.

Amidst Wonder and Glory

What makes *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* particularly interesting from a Jungian point of view is the epilogue. Whilst most of Lovecraft's stories simply leave us to contemplate the horror of the unknown, Olmstead, when he realises that the horror is part of himself and something he cannot escape, undergoes a process of engagement with and eventual acceptance of it. This can be seen as symbolising the Jungian process of individuation.

Upon his escape from Innsmouth to Arkham, our true Lovecraftian hero visits the Arkham Historical Society to continue his genealogical researches. The revelation of Olmstead's ancestry has already been foreshadowed in his conversation with Zadok Allen, who informed him that Captain Obed Marsh took a second wife – one of the sea creatures – who bore him three children:

> two as disappeared young, but one gal as looked like anybody else an' was eddicated in Europe. Obed finally got her married off by a trick to an Arkham feller as didn't suspect nothin'. (CF 3, p.198)

He also comments that Olmstead has "kind o' got them sharp-reading eyes like Obed had" (CF 3, p.188). At the Arkham Historical Society, he discovers to his discomfort that his great-grandmother was a Marsh, and is further disquieted by the curator's comment that he has "the true Marsh eyes" (CF 3, p.225). He also discovers that his maternal uncle had visited the society some years before looking for the same information. A year later, he informs us, he visited his mother's relatives in Cleveland. We discover that his uncle had shot himself upon returning from his research trip to New England, and that his grandmother had disappeared shortly after. It soon becomes clear that it was the discovery of his heritage and the horror-inducing prospect of aquatic immortality that led Olmstead's uncle to suicide, and that his grandmother's disappearance was due to her going to live in the ocean depths. The familial link to the sea creatures is confirmed when Olmstead is shown the jewellery inherited by his grandmother. This style of golden jewellery, inlaid with mysterious patterns and images of aquatic monsters, has been mentioned previously in the story as being gifted to the people of Innsmouth, and indeed the South Sea islanders before them, by the sea creatures as part of their pact. Olmstead is deeply disturbed by these revelations, saying:

> From that day on my life has been a nightmare of brooding and apprehension, not do I know how much is hideous truth and how much madness. (CF 3, p.227)

He attempts to put the knowledge of his ancestry from his mind, but is prevented from doing so by his dreams. As we saw in Chapter 2, dreams play an important role in Jungian theories of the mind, as Jung believed that it was through dreams that the unconscious mind – both the personal and the collective – communicates with the conscious, and that dreams are therefore deserving of being paid attention to and reflected on.

It is through Olmstead's dreams of living under the ocean that he is able to integrate the knowledge of his true heritage into his conscious mind, and eventually embrace it. He describes the horror he feels at the creatures he encounters in these dreams, but notes that this horror only arose when he awoke.

> [D]uring the dreams they did not horrify me at all – I was one with them; wearing their unhuman trappings, treading their aqueous ways, and praying monstrously at their evil sea-bottom temples. (CF 3, p.228)

In his dreams, he meets and talks with his grandmother, and also with his eighty thousand year-old great-great grandmother, who had had three children with Captain Obed Marsh. They tell him that it is his destiny to come and live with them. As the dreams become progressively clearer and more vivid, Olmstead's health deteriorates, and he develops more and more of "the Innsmouth look" (CF 3, p.229).

Although he considers suicide, even going so far as to buy a gun, he chooses not to go the same way as his uncle, commenting:

> The tense extremes of horror are lessening, and I feel queerly drawn toward the unknown sea-depths instead of fearing them. I hear and do strange things in sleep and awake with a kind of exaltation instead of terror. (CF 3, p.230)

Eventually, he makes the decision to follow the call that is pursuing him in his dreams. He has discovered that his cousin has been shut up in an asylum because he has gone through a similar physical and mental change to Olmstead. The story concludes:

> I shall plan my cousin's escape from that Canton madhouse, and together we shall go to marvel-shadowed Innsmouth. We shall swim out to that brooding reef in the sea and dive down through black abysses to Cyclopean and many-columned Y'ha-nthlei, and in that lair of the Deep Ones we shall dwell amidst wonder and glory for ever. (CF 3, p.230)

The psychological – even spiritual – journey Olmstead describes can, as we have now seen, be interpreted in terms of the Jungian process of individuation and the integration of the shadow. It is here I disagree with Mosig in his assertion that Randolph Carter in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* is the only one of Lovecraft's hero's to attain a significant degree of progress in individuation.

At first, Olmstead attempts to maintain the split in his psyche, and even describes managing to do so for a couple of years. It is, however, in his dreams, where he has no conscious control, that the forces in his unconscious mind that demand to be heard are able to make themselves known. In his waking state, Olmstead continues to resist the desires that are making themselves increasingly manifest, a resistance that leads to physical sickness and weakness. Finally, when he accepts his desire to live at the bottom

of the ocean, the impression given is one of psychological wholeness and physical and intellectual potency. I would argue that these dreams can be read as prospective rather than compensatory. They point forwards rather than backwards, indicating a solution to Olmstead's dilemma and indicating the path towards wholeness and integration.

On the level of the personal unconscious, we often experience our suppressed desires for sex and violence in dreams – dreams which horrify us when we awaken. To grow as individuals, however, we cannot simply continue to suppress these desires, but must integrate them into consciousness. When we do so, we gain access to the energy that was suppressed along with those desires, something which is experienced as deeply energising and vivifying.

Conclusion

The Shadow Over Innsmouth remains one of Lovecraft's most powerful and evocative works, which generations of readers have found deeply compelling. I would argue that much of this appeal must be attributed to the skilful ways in which Lovecraft employs a complex web of myth, archetype, and symbolism in order to communicate deeper truths about the human condition. The Jungian interpretation I have presented here is, I would suspect, not one that Lovecraft with his deeply pessimistic philosophy of cosmicism would approve of. However, a work of fiction can communicate more than the author intended, and I feel that interpreting this story, and its ending in particular, in the more optimistic way I have done here can help to explain justify this story's place amongst the truly great works of horror literature.

6. The Shadow Out of Time

Introduction

The Shadow Out of Time was one of Lovecraft's last works, written in 1934 and 1935, and first published in 1936, the year before his death. It is also one of his longest works, being exceeded in length only by *At the Mountains of Madness*, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, and thus could almost be considered a novella rather than a short story

The protagonist and narrator is Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee, who at the beginning of the story informs us that we may already have heard his name because of the extended case of amnesia he suffered from 1908–1913 which had been written about both in newspapers and in psychological journals. (Peaslee is writing about his experiences in 1935). Previous to 1908, Peaslee had been a Professor of Political Economy at Miskatonic University, the university in the fictional Massachussetts town of Arkham which is the setting for many of Lovecraft's stories. On May 14th 1908 Peaslee experienced a series of brief, chaotic visions, and was suffering from a headache. During a lecture, he suddenly had the sensation of being somewhere else, before collapsing and losing consciousness.

He received medical attention and regained consciousness the next day, However, his personality was quite different and his speech "awkward and foreign" (CF 3, p.366). He initially attempted to conceal the fact of his amnesia, but it was quickly discovered that he could remember nothing of his life up to that point. His new personality had a great thirst for knowledge, and devoted to acquiring knowledge of history, science, art, and folklore. Some of the information he was interesting in was very specialised and abstruse, whilst some was very simple. He spent a lot of time in libraries, and travelled extensively, visiting universities in many countries (where his unusual condition made him a person of interest to psychologists) as well as fur-flung places such as the Himalayas, the Arctic, and the deserts of Arabia. He seemed to have a greatly increased intellectual capacity, including th ability to absorb the contents of a book merely by leafing through it, and an apparent familiarity with events of the past and the future which he could have had no way of knowing about – knowledge he attempted to conceal. He also reportedly had contact with a number of leaders of occult groups, and studied a number of occult texts. His wife

divorced him and cut off all contact with him, as did two of his three children, maintaining the separation even after he had recovered. His second son Wingate never gave up on his father though, and was reunited with him after his recovery.

In 1913, his enthusiasm for his studies seemed to be waning. He returned to Arkham, and constructed an instrument described as “a queer mixture of rods, wheels, and mirrors, though only about two feet tall, one foot wide, and one foot thick. The central mirror was circular and convex.” (CF 3, p.370) On the morning of September 27th 1913, an anonymous phone call to the local doctor requested that he call on Peaslee, whom he found unconscious. The apparatus that had been seen by Peaslee’s servants was no longer there, but there were scratches on the table indicating that a heavy object had been placed on it. When Peaslee begins to regain consciousness, he continues delivering the lecture which the onset of his change in personality had interrupted some five years before.

All of this information about the period from 1908 to 1913 Peaslee has to piece together after his recovery – he has no memory of any of it. Although he had recovered his previous personality, he was profoundly affected by the experience. His sense of time he reports as having become “subtly disordered; so that I formed chimerical notions about living in one age and casting one’s mind all over eternity for knowledge of past and future ages.” (CF 3, p.373). He also has a series of dreams which increase in detail and clarity as the years pass, and which he finds deeply disturbing.

The dreams are initially of an architectural nature, visions of massive stone corridors and arches below which lay black vaults covered by sealed trapdoors. As the dreams progress he begins to see gardens and vast stone cities connected by roads. He sees unfamiliar curvilinear hieroglyphs covering the walls and ancient towers made of basalt. From the constellations he deduces that he must be in the southern hemisphere, and works out that the plant life indicates the Palaeozoic or Mesozoic eras – 150 million years in the past. In common with Francis Thurston in *The Call of Cthulhu*, he initially tries to find rational, scientific explanations for these dreams, telling himself that his mind must have pieced together the imagery from a wide range of books and trivial sources that his conscious mind had encountered.

The emotional experience of the dreams, however, threatens this veneer of rationality, and he reports a growing sense that they are not dreams at all, but memories. He also

develops a sense of his memories of the period 1908 to 1913 having been suppressed or restrained in some way. He also begins to experience an inexplicable fear of looking at his own body.

As any good Lovecraftian hero would, Peaslee's response to this mysterious chain of events is to engage in systematic study and research in the hope of solving it. Having lost interest in economics, he begins to study psychology, as does his son Wingate under his father's influence. As a result of his research, Peaslee discovers a small but significant number of cases of amnesiacs that had striking similarities to his own. He also discovers a myth about a species of creatures called "The Great Race" that had died out 50 million years ago. These beings were highly intelligent, and had developed technology that allowed them to project their minds forward in time, swapping their consciousnesses with a being in the future. The member of the Great Race who had projected their mind forward in this way would then be able to gather information about the future, whilst the displaced consciousness that now inhabited the body of this member of the Great Race in what for them was the distant past could be questioned. When they had adjusted to their situation, these captives from the future were allowed to travel and to study, and even to meet other captives, in exchange for writing as much as possible about themselves and the time and place they came from.

This myth explains the particularities of Peaslee's experiences in such a way that the reader is inclined to accept it within the confines of the story as the explanation for what has happened to him, but Peaslee himself resists doing so, clinging to rationalist explanations for as long as he can.

The final memory that Peaslee recovers is that of the physical form of these ancient creatures, a form so strange that it explains his fear of looking at his own body:

> They seemed to be enormous iridescent cones, about ten feet high and ten feet wide at the base, and made up of some ridgy, scaly, semi-elastic matter. From their apexes projected four flexible, cylindrical members, each a foot thick, and of a ridgy substance like that of the cones themselves. These members were sometimes contracted almost to nothing, and sometimes extended to any distance up to about ten feet. Terminating two of them were enormous claws or nippers. At the end of a third were four red, trumpet-like appendages. The fourth terminated in an irregular yellowish globe some two feet in diameter and having three great dark eyes ranged along its central circumference. Surmounting this head were four slender grey stalks

> bearing flower-like appendages, whilst from its nether side dangled eight greenish antennae or tentacles. The great base of the central cone was fringed with a rubbery, grey substance which moved the whole entity through expansion and contraction. (CF 3, p.394)

Eventually, in one of his dreams, he works up the courage to look down at his body, and realise when he does so that he too is one of these conical beings. He relates “That was when I waked half of Arkham with my screaming as I plunged madly up from the abyss of sleep.” (CF 3, p.396)

He also dreams – or recalls – the significance of the trapdoors. Below their cities, the Great Race had trapped an even older alien species referred to as the Elder Things. The Great Race did not speak of them, but it seemed that they had been involved with an awful struggle with them in the past, and based on their knowledge of the future they anticipated that when the Elder Things eventually escaped from their imprisonment, the Great Race would be forced to migrate en masse into the future.

After many years of research, Peaslee publishes a series of articles about his dreams, and those of the other similar cases he has discovered. As a result of this, he is contacted by a Robert Mackenzie in Western Australia who has discovered giant stone blocks in the desert that are very similar to those Peaslee described in his articles. He is shocked by the photographs Mackenzie includes with his letter, as the stone blocks the depict, and the designs and hieroglyphs that cover them, are horribly familiar to him.

Peaslee secures funding from Miskatonic University for an archeological expedition to investigate the masonry Mackenzie has discovered and departs for Australia accompanied by a team from the university that includes his son, now a professor of psychology. As the dig proceeds, the team uncovers more than a thousand blocks that bear clear signs of advanced workmanship, but at equally clearly of vast antiquity. The further they proceed to the north and east of their camp, the more blocks they find. Peaslee begins to suffer from insomnia, and at night feels a strange compulsion to for long walks in the desert, always to the north or the north-east.

On one of these walks he discovers the entrance to an underground complex of tunnels and, moved by a compulsion he does not understand, descends to explore them. These tunnels form part of the complex where he had lived in the body of one of the members of the Great Race, and he is fascinated and horrified by their familiarity. Driven by an

unconscious force, he finds his way to the great central archives, and locates a particular book, the contents of which shock him profoundly. Taking this book, he begins his return to the surface. However, the trapdoors which in his dreams contained the Elder Things are now open, and there are ominous tracks in the dust covering the floor of the archives. With mounting dread he retraces his steps, but falls into a chasm and loses the book he had taken from the archives. He somehow manages to make his way back to the surface, and after returning to camp he cannot decide whether his journey under the earth really happened or whether it was a dream. In the final lines of the story he reveals what we as readers have already guessed – that what he saw that disturbed him so profoundly in the pages of the book he found in the archives was his own handwriting.

The Journey into the Mind

There are a number of ways in which one could explore this text from a Jungian perspective, but I want to focus on the last section of the story, Peaslee's descent into the earth and consider it as a symbol for the journey into the unconscious mind. This is partly inspired by observations made by Barton Levi St. Armand in relation to Lovecraft's later, longer stories, *At the Mountains of Madness* and *The Shadow Out of Time*. As a child, Lovecraft was fascinated by classical culture, and one of his earliest literary productions as a child was a reworking of Homer's *Odyssey* entitled "The Poem of Ulyses; or, The Odyssey: Written for Young People" which he produced as a little book and sold to friends and family. (Joshi 2013, p.38)

St. Armand comments:

> What Lovecraft is attempting to restore in these late works is the same epic sense of fatefulness and destiny he so loved in the Greek and Roman classics he read as a boy […] But as he grew up, Lovecraft's admiration for vanished heroism soured into what HPL considered to be the grim necessity of stoicism, so that these final Lovecraftian odysseys lead only to the knowledge – the sublime, terrific, and overwhelming knowledge – of man's futility and the vanity of all his works. It is as if Homer's saga ended in the Cave of Polyphemus with Ulysses and his whole crew being roasted and devoured by the giant, or with Ulysses permanently maddened by th Siren's song and never returning to bring order back to the chaotic kingdom of Ithaca. Lovecraft's sense of the abyss progressively overpower his sense of

> individual heroism, until for him man's last virtue is to survive with a sardonic sense of the inevitable end, of a personal and cosmic apocalypse." (St. Armand 1977, p.5)

My goal in this chapter is to expand on St. Armand's insight in this passage by drawing on the work of Joseph Campbell, one of the most well-known and influential Jungian writers who, in his classic work *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, explores the archetype of the heroic journey in a more detailed way than Jung himself did. At the same time, I want to consider Peaslee's failed heroic journey as a symbol for the journey into the mind.

Departure

Campbell identifies three parts to the mythical journey: *Departure*, *Initiation*, and *Return*, with each part being further subdivided into a number of stages. The first stage of *Departure* is the *Call to Adventure.* According to Campbell, the hero can be called to any number of different things – life, death, religious illumination, the awakening of the self, or something more mundane such as the transition to adolescence:

> Whether small or great, and no matter what the stage or grade of life, the call rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration – a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth. The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand. (Campbell 2004, p.47)

In Peaslee's case, the mystery of his amnesia, the dreams that followed it, and the ancient myth of the Great Race constitute his call. Peaslee's call is to knowledge, to bringing the unknown into the light of consciousness and discovering the truth or falsity of what has been revealed to him in his dreams. Reading Peaslee's heroic journey in symbolic terms, it is a call to delve into the depths of the psyche to discover a great truth about who he really is.

Campbell describes the hero as being called "from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown" which is "always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight." (ibid, p.53). In *The Shadow Out of Time* this unknown zone is the underground complex, and the beings that populate it are the Elder Things. These certainly fit the description of "fluid and polymorphous beings", being described by Peaslee in the following way:

> There were veiled suggestions of a monstrous *plasticity,* and of temporary *lapses of visibility,* while other fragmentary whispers referred to their control and military use of *great winds.* Singular *whistling* noises, and colossal footprints made up of five circular toe-marks, seemed also to be associated with them. (CF 3, p.407–408)

According to Campbell, the next stage in the journey is *Supernatural Aid*, an encounter with "a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass". (Campbell 2004, p.63) "What such a figure represents is the benign, protecting power of destiny." (ibid, p.66) As we might expect in this bleaker, Lovecraftian version of the heroic journey, any sense of benign destiny is absent, and so Peaslee encounters no helpful figure – although we might perhaps read his electric torch as a kind of protective amulet.

After meeting the protective figure, the hero approaches *The Crossing of the First Threshold*. According to Campbell, this involves encountering "the 'threshold guardian' at the entrance to the zone of magnified power". (ibid, p.71) Peaslee does not encounter a guardian, but he does discover an entrance to another realm. He is guided there not by any external figure, but by something within his own mind of which he is aware but not fully conscious: an "inexplicable, dread-mingled, pseudo-mnemonic urge toward the northeast" (CF 3, p.421) Peaslee is in a kind of liminal state which he describes as "awake and dreaming at the same time", a state in which his dreams "welled up into the waking world" (CF 3, p.422). As he approaches the threshold of the entrance to the underground city, so too something in his unconscious is approaching the threshold of awareness.

This almost-conscious urge brings him to a place that has an entirely different quality to the rest of the desert:

> I realised that there was some utterly unprecedented quality about these stones. Not only was the mere number of them quite without parallel, but something in the sand-worn traces of design arrested me as I scanned them under the mingled beams of the moon and my torch. Not that any one differed essentially from the earlier specimens we had found. It was something subtler than that. The impression did not come when I looked at one block alone, but only when I ran my eye over several almost simultaneously. Then, at last, the truth dawned upon me. The curvilinear patterns on many of these blocks were *closely related* – parts of one vast decorative conception. For the first time in this aeon-shaken waste I had come upon a mass of masonry in its old position – tumbled and fragmentary, it is true, but none the less existing in a very definite sense. (CF 3, p.423)

The stones that form the threshold between the desert and the underground city, which we can read as symbols for the conscious and the unconscious mind respectively, is a pattern amidst the chaos – a symbol of the wholeness promised by the integration of the unconscious and the conscious mind. Peaslee tells us that he “embarked without hesitancy”, impelled by “that lure and driving of fatality which had all along seemed to direct my course.” (CF 3, p.426) His threshold guardian is found within.

The final stage of the *Departure* is what Campbell calls *The Belly of the Whale*. Having crossed the threshold “into a sphere of rebirth […] [t]he hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died.” (Campbell 2004, p.83) What is meant by this is that the hero as he or she is must die in order for something new and greater to be reborn. Peaslee is aware, at least in retrospect, of the extreme danger of the descent into the underground city, the belly of the whale, describing it as “the utter apex of insanity” (CF 3, p.426) which, on a conscious, rational level, of course, it is. Yet there is something deeper within him that senses the possibility of rebirth and the psychic wholeness of individuation, and so compels him onwards.

Initiation

Having completed his or her *Departure*, the hero now moves on to *Initiation*, the first stage of which is *The Road of Trials* where “the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials”. (Campbell 2004, p. 89) The city underneath the desert is, for Peaslee, a dream landscape in quite a literal sense, because it he recognises it as the city he inhabits in his dreams, commenting that “the complete, intimate familiarity of every detail almost stunned my imagination” (CF 3, p. 427) and “the millennially ancient, aeon-hidden corridor in which I stood was the original of something I knew in sleep as intimately as I knew my own house in Crane Street, Arkham.” (CF 3, p.428)

The force emerging from unconsciousness into consciousness is driving him towards the central archive, the library where the Great Race stored all the knowledge they had gathered from their journeys through time. On his journey there, Peaslee encounters several obstacles. The first is a “gaping, ragged chasm […] revealing incalculable inky

depths beneath.” (CF 3, p.431) In his dream-memories, the depths below the underground city were where the Elder Things dwelt, and these depths were sealed by trapdoors. What the chasm tells us is that these depths are no longer sealed, and the threshold between depths and greater depths has been opened. In interpreting Peaslee’s journey as a journey into the mind, we can read the city where the Great Race dwelt as a symbol for the personal unconscious, and the depths where dwell the Elder Things as the collective unconscious. Peaslee tells us that ”It cost me a terrible effort to vault that yawning chasm […] but madness drove me on […] and after one frantic moment [I] reached the other side in safety.” (CF 3, p.431–432) The first trial has been passed.

The next trial is also an encounter with the abyss of the darkness beneath the city. This time he comes to one of the basalt towers that he has discovered in his research were build by the Elder Things long before the arrival of the Great Race. This tower contains “apertures leading upward and downward” (CF 3, p.433) and thus can be read as a kind of axis mundi, a symbol of the potential to move freely between the conscious, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious (the Elder Things having the power of flight, and being able to move vertically just as easily as horizontally). The aperture leading down to the depths, which in Peaslee’s dreams had been “tightly sealed and nervously guarded” (CF 3, p.433) Now though, “it lay open – black and yawning, and giving forth a current of cool, damp air. Of what limitless caverns of eternal night might brood below, I would not permit myself to think.” (CF 3, p.433) Peaslee hurries on past the opening, and thus passes the second trial.

He then encounters a passage that is almost entirely blocked by fallen masonry. He has to move enough stone out of the way to create a passage large enough for him to wriggle through, a feat not only of strength but also of courage, given the fact that dislodging the blocks could result in the passage collapsing. He succeeds, however, saying “It was sheer madness that impelled and guided me” (CF 3, p.433) and passes the third trial. he does not pass it unscathed though, as the stalactites hanging from the roof tear his back as he struggle through.

After passing this barrier, he covers the rest of the distance to the archive with little difficulty, but his trials are not yet completed. He takes one of the books from the cases and examines it, but as he does so the light from his torch – his amulet of protection –

begins to fail. Fortunately though he is able to replenish its power with a fresh battery, and passes his fourth trial.

Now “armed with the stronger radiance”, (CF 3, p.436) he continues his descent. He still has no conscious awareness of where he is going, and is being guided by “some force of evil potency pulling at my dazed will and buried recollections, so that I vaguely felt I was not running at random.” (CF 3, p.436) This force breaking through into consciousness begins to have a particular physical effect on him too:

> In my whirling brain there had begun to beat a certain rhythm which set my right hand twitching in unison. I wanted to unlock something, and felt that I knew all the intricate twists and pressures needed to do it. It would be like a modern safe with a combination lock. Dream or not, I had once known and still knew. How any dream – or scrap of unconsciously absorbed legend – could have taught me a detail so minute, so intricate, and so complex, I did not attempt to explain to myself. I was beyond all coherent thought. (CF 3, p.436–437)

The further he descends into the city, the further he descends from conscious motivation to unconscious motivation and the more he surrenders conscious will to unconscious drive.

When he reaches the deepest level, he starts to feel an urge to make as little noise as possible, saying “For some shadowy reason I tried to soften my steps, even though I lost speed thereby.” (CF 3, p.437) Here he encounters his fifth trial. This obstacle is another trapdoor leading to the depths and exuding a current of cool, damp air, but this time his terror is intensified by the discovery of tracks leading away from the trapdoor in the dust covering the floor of the archives:

> In the light of my torch it seemed as if that dust were not as even as it ought to be—there were places where it looked thinner, as if it had been disturbed not many months before. I could not be sure, for even the apparently thinner places were dusty enough; yet a certain suspicion of regularity in the fancied unevenness was highly disquieting. When I brought the torchlight close to one of the queer places I did not like what I saw—for the illusion of regularity became very great. It was as if there were regular lines of composite impressions—impressions that went in threes, each slightly over a foot square, and consisting of five nearly circular three-inch prints, one in advance of the other four. (CF 3, p.437–438)

He thus passes his fifth trial, but attributes this entirely to the unconscious force driving him onwards:

> No rational motive could have drawn me on after that hideous suspicion of prints and the creeping dream-memories it excited. Yet my right hand, even as it shook with fright, still twitched rhythmically in its eagerness to turn a lock it hoped to find. (CF 3, p.438–439)

His sixth and final trial is to climb the shelves, open a particular shelf, and recover from it a particular text. Although "shak[ing] with a pang infinitely more complex than one of mere fright", (CF 3, p.440) the unconscious memory flowing into his fingers allows him to do this successfully, and he returns safely to the ground with the treasure he has recovered.

The next stage is *The Meeting with the Goddess*, which represents the climax of *Initiation* and indeed of the heroic journey itself. Campbell says of this crucial stage:

> The ultimate adventure, when all barriers and ogres have been overcome, is commonly represented as a mystical marriage […] of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World. This is the crisis at the nadir, the zenith, or at the uttermost edge of the earth, at the central point of the cosmos, in the tabernacle of the temple, or within the darkness of the deepest chamber of the heart. (Campbell 2004, p.100)

The connection between the Goddess and Wisdom or Knowledge is found in cultures across the world, from Sophia to Prajñāpāramitā. She is the mother of a more whole and integrated psyche. In the heart of the earth, in the tabernacle of the Great Race's temple of knowledge, Peaslee encounters the Goddess in the form of a book containing knowledge of the truth of the experiences that have shattered his life and his family, and of the myths he has discovered stretching back to ancient times. It is in his encounter with this Goddess that Peaslee fails. Campbell comments that:

> Only geniuses capable of the highest realization can support the full revelation of the sublimity of the goddess. […] Fully to behold her would be a terrible accident for any person not spiritually prepared (Campbell 2004, p.106)

Peaslee is not such a genius. When he is on the cusp of discovering the truth, he desires nothing more than not to know. In taking the book, he has become fully conscious once again, but this awareness terrifies him. He says: "What tormented me most was my momentary inability to feel that my surroundings were a dream. The sense of reality was hideous—and again becomes so as I recall the scene." (CF 3, p.441) He does not simply open the book and read it, but in order to ensure that he obtains only the barest glimpse of

its contents, he turns off his torch, opens the book, and then flashes the light on again. In that moment Lovecraft's subversion of the heroic myth is fulfilled as it becomes clear that Peaslee is no heroic genius, and he has encountered the terrible accident of which Campbell warns:

> I looked for an instant, then almost collapsed. Clenching my teeth, however, I kept silence. I sank wholly to the floor and put a hand to my forehead amidst the engulfing blackness. What I dreaded and expected was there. Either I was dreaming, or time and space had become a mockery. I must be dreaming—but I would test the horror by carrying this thing back and shewing it to my son if it were indeed a reality. My head swam frightfully, even though there were no visible objects in the unbroken gloom to swirl around me. Ideas and images of the starkest terror—excited by vistas which my glimpse had opened up—began to throng in upon me and cloud my senses. (CF 3, p.442)

Peaslee's quest has failed and he does not attain the next stage of *Apotheosis*, which is the climax of the phase of *Initiation* – "the divine state to which the human hero attains who has gone beyond the last terrors of ignorance". (Campbell 2004, p.139) Far from going beyond the terrors of ignorance, he is consumed by them.

Return

The final phase of the heroic journey is the *Return*. For the true hero, this return is triumphant, but the return journey of Lovecraft's failed hero becomes a nightmarish parody. Campbell says of the *Return*:

> When the hero-quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal, personification, the adventurer still must return with his life-transmuting trophy. (Campbell 2004, p.179)

Peaslee does indeed flee the archives with his trophy, but he is only in physical, not psychic, possession of it. As he sets out on his return journey he is unable to "shake off a shadow of apprehension which I had not felt on the downward journey" (CF 3, p.442–443). This shadow of apprehension is the shadow of his failure.

The key stage of the *Return* is *The Magic Flight*. Here, according to Campbell:

> if the trophy has been attained against the opposition of its guardian, or if the hero's wish to return to the world has been resented by the gods or demons, then the last stage of the mythological round becames a lively, often comical, pursuit. This flight may be complicated by marvels of magical obstruction and evasion. (Campbell 2004, p.182)

Peaslee's flight from the underground city is no comical pursuit, but a terror-struck one that Peaslee escapes from with his life and his sanity only barely intact. It is his mounting fear that is his undoing. In clambering over the fallen masonry that had blocked his passage almost completely, he dislodges some of the blocks, which clatter down, making a terrible noise. His fear is that the noise will attract the Elder Things, and as he is scrambling down, he thinks he hears "a shrill, whistling sound, like nothing else on earth, and beyond any adequate verbal description". (CF 3, p.444) He associates this sound with the Elder Things, and this sends him into a blind panic. Because of this panic he ends up sending more stone blocks tumbling, making an even greater din.

His memories of what happened next are patchy, but he describes flashes of frenzied running, shrieks, and both the whistling sounds and the cool winds of the Elder Things growing in intensity. The wind now was "not merely a cool, damp draught, but a violent, purposeful blast belching savagely and frigidly from that abominable gulf whence the obscene whistling came". (CF 3, p.445) He says that although the wind was blowing at his back, it "had the odd effect of hindering instead of aiding my progress; as if it acted like a noose or lasso thrown around me." (CF 3, p.445)

The final obstacle is the chasm he jumps across at the beginning of his descent. Impelled forward now by "the animal impulse of flight" (CF 3, p.446) he leaps, and falls.

> This is the end of my experience, so far as I can recall. Any further impressions belong wholly to the domain of phantasmagoric delirium. Dream, madness, and memory merged wildly together in a series of fantastic, fragmentary delusions which can have no relation to anything real. There was a hideous fall through incalculable leagues of viscous, sentient darkness, and a babel of noises utterly alien to all that we know of the earth and its organic life. Dormant, rudimentary senses seemed to start into vitality within me, telling of pits and voids peopled by floating horrors and leading to sunless crags and oceans and teeming cities of windowless basalt towers upon which no light ever shone. (CF 3, p.446–447)

Unprepared as Peaslee was to encounter the truth that lay in the underground city that is the symbol of his personal unconscious, his fall into the black and nameless depths that are the symbol of the collective unconscious is utterly overwhelming. He remembers again having visions of the city as it was when it was inhabited by the Great Race, visions interspersed with:

> frightful momentary flashes of a non-visual consciousness involving desperate struggles, a writhing free from clutching tentacles of whistling wind, an insane, bat-like flight through half-solid air, a feverish burrowing through the cyclone-whipped dark, and a wild stumbling and scrambling over fallen masonry. (CF 3, p.447)

The final stage of the *Return* for Peaslee is *The Crossing of the Return Threshold*. Campbell says that the key insight of this stage is that the realm the hero has journeyed to and the realm he returns to are in truth one and the same. In terms of our symbolic reading of Peaslee's journey, we can interpret this as en expression of the fundamental Jungian insight that the conscious mind and the unconscious mind are inseparable parts of the whole psyche. Campbell comments that:

> There must always remain, however, from the standpoint of normal waking consciousness, a certain baffling inconsistency between the wisdom brought forth from the deep, and the prudence usually found to be effective in the light world. (Campbell 2004, p.201–202)

When Peaslee regains consciousness he is lying on the sand covered in bruises and scratches, his clothes in tatters, and engulfed by an unearthly wind. His flashlight is gone, as is the book in its metal case, and any trace of the entrance to the underground city. He immediately begins to doubt whether what had happened to him was real or if he had simply collapsed in the desert and dreamed the whole thing. Far from regretting or mourning the loss of the treasure he had obtained in the depths, he is relieved that there is no proof that his journey really happened. The loss of the case allows him to continue to cling to the rationalistic notion that his dreams of the Great Race are simply caused by the research he has conducted into the myths about them:

> If that abyss was real, then the Great Race was real—and its blasphemous reachings and seizures in the cosmos-wide vortex of time were no myths or nightmares, but a terrible, soul-shattering actuality. […] If that abyss and what it held were real, there is no hope. Then, all too truly, there lies upon this world of man a mocking and

> incredible shadow out of time. But mercifully, there is no proof that these things are other than fresh phases of my myth-born dreams. (CF 3, p.448–449)

In terms of our symbolic reading of the text as representing a journey into the mind, this retreat into rationalism represents a rejection of the unconscious and the possibility of bringing it into creative relationship with the conscious mind in a process of individuation. From a Jungian point of view this is a tragic loss, but I find I must agree with St. Armand in his assessment that this subversion of th symbol of the heroic journey is a fitting expression of Lovecraft's worldview of cosmicism as discussed in Chapter 4.

It is also, perhaps, a more realistic representation of how the ordinary human mind responds to a powerful encounter with the unconscious. As previously mentioned, Yōzan Dirk W. Mosig claims in his discussion of *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* that Randolph Carter is the only one of Lovecraft's protagonists to engage in a genuine process of individuation. I have argued in Chapter 5 that Robert Olmstead should be added to this category, but Mosig's point that what Lovecraft presents in his work taken as a whole is "a realistic attitude, as truly self-actualizing individuals are extremely rare". (Mosig 1997, p.41)

Conclusion

Having taken St. Armand's passing observation that Lovecraft's stories *At the Mountains of Madness* and *The Shadow Out of Time* can be read as subversions of the myth of the heroic journey and investigated it in detail in relation to the latter text, my initial positive response to St. Armand's suggestion of reading the text in this way has been confirmed.

Indeed, in applying Joseph Campbell's model to the text I was surprised at how well it fitted, and how it brought the symbols of the text so vividly to life. Of course, as a failed heroic journey, Peaslee's descent beneath the desert doesn't include every stage of the heroic journey as described by Campbell. In particular, although Peaslee manages, just barely, to cross the return threshold, his failure precludes him from experiencing the final two stages of the *Return* – becoming the *Master of Two Worlds* and obtaining the *Freedom to Live*.

As the final text to be analysed in this thesis, I think it serves as an excellent example of how Jung's analytical psychology can illuminate a literary text, and how the products of Howard Phillip Lovecraft's unique and twisted genius can bring fresh perspectives to theories of the mind, especially where dreams and the unconscious are concerned.

7. Conclusion

We have now ourselves travelled on quite a journey from Jung's theories of the mind to the Cyclopean terrors of R'lyeh, via the horrors and wonders of shadowed Innsmouth to the depths of the underground city of the ancient Great Race, and back up into the sunlight of consciousness, hopefully with our sanity more or less intact

In the course of this journey I hope I have been able to achieve the aims I set out at the beginning – to demonstrate that both Jung and Lovecraft are worthy of serious academic study, and to make some small contribution to correcting the relative neglect I believe they have suffered.

No interpretation of any literary text can be definitive, and I certainly do not claim the interpretations presented in this thesis to be so. I present them, though, in the belief that they are useful. I believe that they are useful from a psychological perspective, because dwelling with and reflecting on the symbols of the unconscious found in literary works can help us in our own process of individuation. One doesn't have to subscribe wholesale to Jung's theories of the mind to see the value in doing this, or to see that the Jungian approach to reading literature can be a doorway to new insights into one's life and one's psyche. I believe that they are useful from a literary perspective because they suggest new ways of reading the texts considered here that other theories – even other psychoanalytical theories – might not be able to provide.

I feel I can do no better than give the final word to Yōzan Dirk W. Mosig in expressing the same hope as he does for this Jungian exploration of H.P Lovecraft:

> Hopefully this paper will serve to encourage further criticism and research to help unravel the secrets of the vast and unfathomable Lovecraftian mind, and that in so doing, we will arrive at a better understanding of ourselves. (Mosig 1997, p.41)

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