

Memorandum

TO: File

FROM: Asst. Director Pickman

DATE: 12/1/93

RE: Cthulhu Cult Report

FBI

This is without exception the most miserable excuse for a Bureau case file that I have ever scene. What kind of maniacal rambling is this? What a sprawling morass of verbal chaos and excrement.

I recommend an immediate psychiatric review for agent Neville, and pending the results of such examination, his continued service to the bureau will be reevaluated.

Accordingly, this file is considered without plausible merit and is hereby closed.

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Case No. X9233-93-5

Investigator: Christopher Neville

Date: November 23, 1993

Los Angeles Bureau

CONFIDENTIAL

In this book it is spoken of...Spirits and Conjurations; of Gods, Spheres, Planes and many other things which may or may not exist. It is immaterial whether they exist or not. By doing certain things certain results follow.

--Aleister Crowley

Consumed by cancer in 1937 at the age of 46, the last scion of a faded aristocratic New England family, the horror writer Howard Phillips Lovecraft left one of America's most curious literary legacies. The bulk of his short stories appeared in *Weird Tales*, a pulp magazine devoted to the supernatural. But within these modest confines, Lovecraft brought dark fantasy screaming into the 20th century, taking the genre, almost literally, into a new dimension.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the loosely linked cycle of stories known as the Cthulhu Mythos. Named for a tentacled alien monster who waits dreaming beneath the sea in the sunken city of R'lyeh, the Mythos encompasses the cosmic career of a variety of gruesome extraterrestrial entities that include Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, and the blind idiot god Azazoth, who sprawls at the center of Ultimate Chaos, "encircled by his flopping horde of mindless and amorphous dancers, and lulled by the thin monotonous piping of a demonic flute held in nameless paws." [1] Lurking on the margins of our space-time continuum, this merry crew of Outer Gods and Great Old Ones are now attempting to invade our world through science and dream and horrid rites.

As a marginally popular writer working in the literary equivalent of the gutter, Lovecraft received no serious attention during his lifetime. But while most 1930s pulp fiction is nearly unreadable today, Lovecraft continues to attract attention. In France and Japan, his tales of cosmic fungi, degenerate cults and seriously bad dreams are recognized as works of bent genius, and the celebrated French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari praise his radical embrace of multiplicity in their magnum opus *A Thousand Plateaus*.² On Anglo-American turf, a passionate cabal of critics fill journals like *Lovecraft Studies* and *Crypt of Cthulhu* with their almost talmudic research. Meanwhile both hacks and gifted disciples continue to craft stories that elaborate the Cthulhu Mythos. There's even a Lovecraft convention--the NecronomiCon, named for the most famous of his forbidden grimoires. Like the gnostic science fiction writer Philip K. Dick, H.P. Lovecraft is the epitome of a cult author.

The word "fan" comes from fanaticus, an ancient term for a temple devotee, and Lovecraft fans exhibit the unflagging devotion, fetishism and sectarian debates that have characterized popular religious cults throughout the ages. But Lovecraft's "cult" status has a curiously literal dimension. Many magicians and occultists have taken up his Mythos as source material for their practice. Drawn from the darker regions of the esoteric counterculture--Thelema and Satanism and Chaos magic--these Lovecraftian mages actively seek to generate the terrifying and atavistic encounters that Lovecraft's protagonists stumble into compulsively, blindly or against their will.

Secondary occult sources for Lovecraftian magic include three different "fake" editions of the Necronomicon, a few rites included in Anton LaVey's The Satanic Rituals, and a number of works by the loopy British Thelemite Kenneth Grant. Besides Grant's Typhonian O.T.O. and the Temple of Set's Order of the Trapezoid, magical sects that tap the Cthulhu current have included the Esoteric Order of Dagon, the Bate Cabal, Michael Bertiaux's Lovecraftian Coven, and a Starry Wisdom group in Florida, named after the nineteenth-century sect featured in Lovecraft's "Haunter of the Dark." Solo chaos mages fill out the ranks, cobbling together Lovecraftian arcana on the Internet or freely sampling the Mythos in their chthonic, open-ended (anti-) workings.

This phenomenon is made all the more intriguing by the fact that Lovecraft himself was a "mechanistic materialist" philosophically opposed to spirituality and magic of any kind. Accounting for this discrepancy is only one of many curious problems raised by the apparent power of Lovecraftian magic. Why and how do these pulp visions "work"? What constitutes the "authentic" occult? How does magic relate to the tension between fact and fable? As I hope to show, Lovecraftian magic is not a pop hallucination but an imaginative and coherent "reading" set in motion by the dynamics of Lovecraft's own texts, a set of thematic, stylistic, and intertextual strategies which constitute what I call Lovecraft's Magick Realism.

Magical realism already denotes a strain of Latin American fiction--exemplified by Borges, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and Isabel Allende--in which a fantastic dreamlike logic melds seamlessly and delightfully with the rhythms of the everyday. Lovecraft's Magick Realism is far more dark and convulsive, as ancient and amoral forces violently puncture the realistic surface of his tales. Lovecraft constructs and then collapses a number of intense polarities--between realism and fantasy, book and dream, reason and its chaotic Other. By playing out these tensions in his writing, Lovecraft also reflects the transformations that darkside occultism has undergone as it confronts modernity in

such forms as psychology, quantum physics, and the existential groundlessness of being. And by embedding all this in an intertextual Mythos of profound depth, he draws the reader into the chaos that lies "between the worlds" of magick and reality.

Written mostly in the 1920s and '30s, Lovecraft's work builds a somewhat rickety bridge between the florid decadence of fin de si'ecle fantasy and the more "rational" demands of the new century's science fiction. His early writing is gaudy Gothic pastiche, but in his mature Chtulhu tales, Lovecraft adopts a pseudodocumentary style that utilizes the language of journalism, scholarship, and science to construct a realistic and measured prose voice which then explodes into feverish, adjectival horror. Some find Lovecraft's intensity atrocious--not everyone can enjoy a writer capable of comparing a strange light to "a gluttoned swarm of corpse-fed fireflies dancing hellish sarabands over an accursed marsh." [3]

But in terms of horror, Lovecraft delivers. His protagonist is usually a reclusive bookish type, a scholar or artist who is or is known to the first-person narrator. Stumbling onto odd coincidences or beset with strange dreams, his intellectual curiosity drives him to pore through forbidden books or local folklore, his empirical turn of mind blinding him to the nightmarish scenario that the reader can see slowly building up around him. When the Mythos finally breaks through, it often shatters him, even though the invasion is generally more cognitive than physical.

By endlessly playing out a shared collection of images and tropes, genres like weird fiction also generate a collective resonance that can seem both "archetypal" and cliched. Though Lovecraft broke with classic fantasy, he gave his Mythos density and depth by building a shared world to house his disparate tales. The Mythos stories all share a liminal map that weaves fictional places like Arkham, Dunwich, and Miskatonic University into the New England landscape; they also refer to a common body of entities and forbidden books. A relatively common feature in fantasy fiction, these metafictional techniques create the sense that Lovecraft's Mythos lies beyond each individual tales, hovering in a dimension halfway between fantasy and the real.

Lovecraft did not just tell tales--he built a world. It's no accident that one of the more successful role-playing games to follow in the heels of Dungeons & Dragons takes place in "Lovecraft Country." Most role-playing adventure games build their worlds inside highly codified "mythic" spaces of the collective imagination (heroic fantasy, cyberpunk, vampire Paris, Arthur's Britain). The game Call of Cthulhu takes place in Lovecraft's 1920s America, where players become "investigators" who track down dark rumors or heinous occult

crimes that gradually open up the reality of the monsters. Call of Cthulhu is an unusually dark game; the best investigators can do is to retain sanity and stave off the monsters' eventual apocalyptic triumph. In many ways Call of Cthulhu "works" because of the considerable density of Lovecraft's original Mythos, a density which the game itself also contributes to.

Lovecraft himself "collectivized" and deepened his Mythos by encouraging his friends to write stories that take place within it. Writers like Clark Ashton Smith, Robert Howard, and a young Robert Bloch complied. After Lovecraft's death, August Derleth carried on this tradition with great devotion, and today, dozens continue to write Lovecraftian tales.

With some notable exceptions, most of these writers mangle the Myth, often by detailing horrors the master wisely left shrouded in ambiguous gloom.[4] The exact delineations of Lovecraft's cosmic cast and timeline remain murky even after a great deal of close-reading and cross-referencing. But in the hands of the Catholic Derleth, the extraterrestrial Great Old Ones become elemental demons defeated by the "good" Elder Gods. Forcing Lovecraft's cosmic and fundamentally amoral pantheon into a traditional religious framework, Derleth committed an error at once imaginative and interpretive. For despite the diabolical aura of his creatures, Lovecraft generates much of his power by stepping beyond good and evil.

The Horror of Reason

For the most part Lovecraft abandoned the supernatural and religious underpinnings of the classic supernatural tale, turning instead looked towards science to provide frameworks for horror. Calling Lovecraft the "Copernicus of the horror tale," the fantasy writer Fritz Leiber Jr. wrote that Lovecraft was the first fantasist who "firmly attached the emotion of spectral dread to such concepts as outer space, the rim of the cosmos, alien beings, unsuspected dimensions, and the conceivable universes lying outside our own spacetime continuum." [5] As Lovecraft himself put it in a letter, "The time has come when the normal revolt against time, space, and matter must assume a form not overtly incompatible with what is known of reality--when it must be gratified by images forming supplements rather than contradictions of the visible and measurable universe." [6]

For Lovecraft, it is not the sleep of reason that breeds monsters, but reason with its eyes agog. By fusing cutting-edge science with archaic material, Lovecraft creates a twisted materialism in which scientific "progress" returns us to the atavistic abyss, and hard-nosed research revives the factual basis of forgotten and discarded myths. Hence Lovecraft's obsession with archeology; the digs which unearth

alien artifacts and bizarrely angled cities are simultaneously historical and imaginal. In 1930 story "The Whisperer in Darkness," Lovecraft identifies the planet Yuggoth (from which the fungoid Mi-Go launch their clandestine invasions of Earth) with the newly-discovered planet called Pluto. To the 1930 reader--probably the kind of person who would thrill to popular accounts of C.W. Thompson's discovery of the ninth planet that very year--this factual reference "opens up" Lovecraft's fiction into a real world that is itself opening up to the limitless cosmos.

Lovecraft's most self-conscious, if somewhat strained, fusion of occult folklore and weird science occurs in the 1932 story "The Dreams of the Witch-House." The demonic characters that the folklorist Walter Gilman first glimpses in his nightmares are stock ghoulies: the evil witch crone Keziah Mason, her familiar spirit Brown Jenkin, and a "Black Man" who is perhaps Lovecraft's most unambiguously Satanic figure. These figures eventually invade the real space of Gilman's curiously angled room. But Gilman is also a student of quantum physics, Riemann spaces and non-Euclidian mathematics, and his dreams are almost psychedelic manifestations of his abstract knowledge. Within these "abysses whose material and gravitational properties...he could not even begin to explain," an "indescribably angled" realm of "titan prisms, labyrinths, cube-and-plane clusters and quasi-buildings," Gilman keeps encountering a small polyhedron and a mass of "prolately spheroidal bubbles." By the end of the tale that he realizes that these are none other than Keziah and her familiar spirit, classic demonic cliches translated into the most alien dimension of speculative science: hyperspace.

These days, one finds the motif of hyperspace in science fiction, pop cosmology, computer interface design, channelled UFO prophecies, and the postmodern shamanism of today's high-octane psychedelic travellers--all discourses that feed contemporary chaos magic. The term itself was probably coined by the science fiction writer John W. Campbell Jr. in 1931, though its origins as a concept lie in nineteenth-century mathematical explorations of the fourth dimension.

In many ways, however, Lovecraft was the concept's first mythographer. From the perspective of hyperspace, our normal, three-dimensional spaces are exhausted and insufficient constructs. But our incapacity to vividly imagine this new dimension in humanist terms creates a crisis of representation, a crisis which for Lovecraft calls up our most ancient fears of the unknown. "All the objects...were totally beyond description or even comprehension," Lovecraft writes of Gilman's seething nightmare before paradoxically proceeding to describe these horrible objects. In his descriptions, Lovecraft emphasizes the

incommensurability of this space through almost non-sensical juxtapositions like "obscene angles" or "wrong" geometry, a rhetorical technique that one Chaos magician calls "Semiotic Angularity."

Lovecraft has a habit of labeling his horrors "indescribable," "nameless," "unseen," "unutterable," "unknown" and "formless." Though superficially weak, this move can also be seen a kind of macabre via negativa. Like the apophatic oppositions of negative theologians like Pseudo-Dionysus or St. John of the Cross, Lovecraft marks the limits of language, limits which paradoxically point to the Beyond. For the mystics, this ultimate is the ineffable One, Pseudo-Dionysus' "superluminous gloom" or the Ain Soph of the Kabbalists. But there is no unity in Lovecraft's Beyond. It is the omnivorous Outside, the screaming multiplicity of cosmic hyperspace opened up by reason.

For Lovecraft, scientific materialism is the ultimate Faustian bargain, not because it hands us Promethean technology (a man for the eighteenth century, Lovecraft had no interest in gadgetry), but because it leads us beyond the horizon of what our minds can withstand. "The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the mind to correlate all its contents," goes the famous opening line of "Call of Cthulhu." By correlating those contexts, empiricism opens up "terrifying vistas of reality"--what Lovecraft elsewhere calls "the blind cosmos [that] grinds aimlessly on from nothing to something and from something back to nothing again, neither heeding nor knowing the wishes or existence of the minds that flicker for a second now and then in the darkness".

Lovecraft gave this existentialist dread an imaginative voice, what he called "cosmic alienage". For Fritz Leiber, the "monstrous nuclear chaos" of Azazoth, Lovecraft's supreme entity, symbolizes "the purposeless, mindless, yet all-powerful universe of materialistic belief." But this symbolism isn't the whole story, for, as DMT voyagers know, hyperspace is haunted. The entities that erupt from Lovecraft's inhuman realms seem to suggest that in a blind mechanistic cosmos, the most alien thing is sentience itself. Peering outward through the cracks of domesticated "human" consciousness, a compassionless materialist like Lovecraft could only react with horror, for reason must cower before the most raw and atavistic dream-dragons of the psyche.

Modern humans usually suppress, ignore or constrain these forces lurking in our lizard brain. Mythically, these forces take the form of demons imprisoned under the angelic yokes of altruism, morality, and intellect. Yet if one does not believe in any ultimate universal purpose, then these

primal forces are the most attuned with the cosmos precisely because they are amoral and inhuman. In "The Dunwich Horror", Henry Wheeler overhears a monstrous moan from a diabolical rite and asks "from what unplumbed gulfs of extra-cosmic consciousness or obscure, long-latent heredity, were those half-articular thunder-croakings drawn?" The Outside is within.

Chaos Culture

Lovecraft's fiction expresses a "future primitivism" that finds its most intense esoteric expression in Chaos magic, an eclectic contemporary style of darkside occultism that draws from Thelema, Satanism, Austin Osman Spare, and Eastern metaphysics to construct a thoroughly postmodern magic.

For today's Chaos mages, there is no "tradition". The symbols and myths of countless sects, orders, and faiths, are constructs, useful fictions, "games." That magic works has nothing to do with its truth claims and everything to do with the will and experience of the magician. Recognizing the distinct possibility that we may be adrift in a meaningless mechanical cosmos within which human will and imagination are vaguely comic flukes (the "cosmic indifferentism" Lovecraft himself professed), the mage accepts his groundlessness, embracing the chaotic self-creating void that is himself.

As we find with Lovecraft's fictional cults and grimoires, chaos magicians refuse the hierarchical, symbolic and monotheist biases of traditional esotericism. Like most Chaos magicians, the British occultist Peter Carroll gravitates towards the Black, not because he desires a simple Satanic inversion of Christianity but because he seeks the amoral and shamanic core of magical experience--a core that Lovecraft conjures up with his orgies of drums, guttural chants, and screeching horns. At the same time, Chaos mages like Carroll also plumb the weird science of quantum physics, complexity theory and electronic Prometheanism. Some darkside magicians become consumed by the atavistic forces they unleash or addicted to the dark costume of the Satanic anti-hero. But the most sophisticated adopt a balanced mode of gnostic existentialism that calls all constructs into question while refusing the cold comforts of skeptical reason or suicidal nihilism, a pragmatic and empirical shamanism that resonates as much with Lovecraft's hard-headed materialism as with his horrors.

The first occultist to really engage these notions is Aleister Crowley, who shattered the received vessels of occult tradition while creatively extending the dark dream of magic into the twentieth century. With his outlandish image, trickster texts, and his famous Law of Thelema ("Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law"), Crowley called into

question the esoteric certainties of "true" revelation and lineage, and was the first magus to give occult antinomionism a decidedly Nietzschean twist.[7]

Unfettered, this occult will to power can easily degenerate into a heartless elitism, and the fascist and racist dimensions of both twentieth-century occultism and Lovecraft himself should not be forgotten. But this self-engendering will is more exuberantly expressed as a will to Art. In many ways, the fin de siecle occultism that exploded during Crowley's time was an essentially esthetic esotericism. A good number of the nineteenth-century magicians who inspire us today are the great poets, painters, and writers of Symbolism and decadent Romanticism, many of them dabblers or adepts in Satanism, Rosicrucianism, and hermetic societies. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was infused with artistic pretensions, and Golden Dawn member and fantasy writer Arthur Machen was one of Lovecraft's strongest influences.

But it was Austin Osman Spare who most decisively dissolved the boundary between artistic and magical life. Though working independently of the Surrealists, Spare also based his art on the dark and autonomous eruptions of "subconscious" material, though in a more overtly theurgic context.[8] Today's Chaos magicians are heavily influenced by Spare, and their Lovecraftian rites express this simultaneously creative and nihilistic dissolution. And as postmodern spawn of role-playing games, computers, and pop culture, they celebrate the fact that Lovecraft's secrets are scraped from the barrel of pulp fiction.

Proof in the Pudding

In a message cross-posted to the Internet newsgroups alt.necromicon [sic] and alt.satanism, Parker Ryan listed a wide variety of magical techniques described by Lovecraft, includingentheogens, glossalalia, and shamanic drumming. Insisting that his post was "not a satirical article," Ryan then described specific Lovecraftian rites he had developed, including this "Rite of Cthulhu":

- A) Chanting. The use of the "Cthulhu chant" to create a concentrative or meditative state of consciousness that forms the basis of much later magickal work.
- B) Dream work. Specific techniques of controlled dreaming that are used to establish contact with Cthulhu.
- C) Abandonment. Specific techniques to free oneself from culturally conditioned reality tunnels.

Ryan goes on to say that he's experimented with most of his rites "with fairly good success." In coming to terms with the "real magic" embedded in Lovecraft, one quickly encounters a fundamental irony: the cold skepticism of Lovecraft himself. In his letters, Lovecraft poked fun at his own tales, claiming he wrote them for cash and playfully naming his friends after his monsters. While such attitudes in no way diminish the imaginative power of Lovecraft's tales--which, as always, lie outside the control and intention of their author--they do pose a problem for the working occultist seeking to establish Lovecraft's magical authority. The most obvious, and least interesting, answer is to find authentic magic in Lovecraft's biography. Lovecraft's father was a traveling salesman who died in a madhouse when Lovecraft was eight, and vague rumors that he was an initiate in some Masonic order or other were exploited in the Necronomicon cobbled together by George Hay, Colin Wilson, and Robert Turner. Others have tried to track Lovecraft's occult know-how, especially his familiarity with Aleister Crowley and the Golden Dawn. In an Internet document relating the history of the "real" Necronomicon, Colin Low argues that Crowley befriended Sonia Greene in New York a few years before the woman married Lovecraft. As proof of Crowley's indirect influence on Lovecraft, Low sites this intriguing passage from "The Call of Cthulhu":

"That cult would never die until the stars came right again and the secret priests would take 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 earth would flame with a holocaust of ecstasy and freedom.

Low claims this passage is a mangled reflection of Crowley's teachings on the new Aeon and the The Book of the Law. In an article in Societé, Robert North also states that Lovecraft referred to "A.C." in a letter, and that Crowley was mentioned in Leonard Cline's The Dark Chamber, a novel Lovecraft discussed in his Supernatural Horror in Literature.

But so what? Lovecraft was a fanatical and imaginative reader, and many such folks are drawn to the semiotic exotica of esoteric lore regardless of any beliefs in or experiences of the paranormal. From The Case of Charles Dexter Ward and elsewhere, it's clear that Lovecraft knew the basic outlines of the occult. But these influences pale next to Vathek, Poe, or Lord Dunsany.

Desperate to assimilate Lovecraft into a "tradition", some occultists enter into dubious explanations of mystical influence by disincarnate beings. North gives this Invisible College idea a shamanic twist, asserting that prehistoric Atlantian tribes who survived the flood exercised telepathic influence on people like John Dee, Blavatsky, and Lovecraft. But none of these Lovecraft hierophants can match the delirious splendor of Kenneth Grant. In *The Magical Revival*, Grant points out more curious similarities between Lovecraft and Crowley: both refer to "Great Old Ones" and "Cold Wastes" (of Kadath and Hadith, respectively); the entity "Yog-Sothoth" rhymes with "Set-Thoth," and Al Azif: The Book of the Arab resembles Crowley's *Al vel Legis: The Book of the Law*. In *Nightside of Eden*, Grant maps Lovecraft's pantheon onto a darkside Tree of Life, comparing the mangled "iridescent globes" that occasionally pop up in Lovecraft's tales with the shattered sefirot known as the Qlipoth. Grant concludes that Lovecraft had "direct and conscious experience of the inner planes,"[9] the same zones Crowley prowled, and that Lovecraft "disguised" his occult experiences as fiction.

Like many latter-day Lovecraftians, Grant commits the error of literalizing a purposefully nebulous myth. A subtler and more satisfying version of this argument is the notion that Lovecraft had direct unconscious experiences of the inner planes, experiences which his quotidian mind rejected but which found their way into his writings nonetheless. For Lovecraft was blessed with a vivid and nightmarish dream life, and drew the substance of a number of his tales from beyond the wall of sleep.

In this sense Lovecraft's magickal authority is nothing more or less than the authority of dream. But what kind of dream tales are these? A Freudian could have a field day with Lovecraft's fecund, squishy sea monsters, and a Jungian analyst might recognize the liniments of the proverbial shadow. But Lovecraft's Shadow is so inky it swallows the standard archetypes of the collective unconscious like a black hole. If we see the archetypal world not as a static storehouse of timeless godforms but as a constantly mutating carnival of figures, then the seething extraterrestrial monsters that Lovecraft glimpsed in the chaos of hyperspace are not so much archaic figures of heredity than the avatars of a new psychological and mythic aeon. At the very least, it would seem that things are getting mighty out of hand beyond the magic circle of the ordered daylight mind.

In an intriguing Internet document devoted to the *Necronomicon*, Tyagi Nagasiva places Lovecraft's potent dreamtales within the terma tradition found in the Nyingma branch of Tibetan Buddhism[10]. Termas were "pre-mature"

writings hidden by Buddhist sages for centuries until the time was ripe, at which point religious visionaries would divine their physical hiding places through omens or dreams. But some termas were revealed entirely in dreams, often couched in otherworldly Dakini scripts. An old Indian revisionary tactic (the second-century Nagarjuna was said to have discovered his Mahayana masterpieces in the serpent realm of the nagas), the terma game resolves the religious problem of how to alter a tradition without disrupting traditional authority. The famous Tibetan Book of the Dead is a terma, and so, perhaps, is the Necronomicon.

Of course, for Chaos magicians, reality can coherently present itself through any number of self-sustaining but mutually contradictory symbolic paradigms (or "reality tunnels," in Robert Anton Wilson's memorable phrase). Nothing is true and everything is permitted. By emphasizing the self-fulfilling nature of all reality claims, this postmodern perspective creatively erodes the distinction between legitimate esoteric transmission and total fiction.

This bias toward the experimental is found in Anton LaVey's *Satanic Rituals*, which includes the first overtly Lovecraftian rituals to see print. In presenting "Die Elektrischen Vorspiele" (which LaVey based on a Lovecraftian tale by Frank Belknap Long), the "Ceremony of the Angles," and "The Call to Cthulhu" (the latter two penned by Michael Aquino), LaVey does claim that Lovecraft "clearly...had been influenced by very real sources." [11] But in holding that Satanic magic allows you to "objectively enter into a subjective state," LaVey more emphatically emphasizes the ritual power of fantasy--a radical subjectivity which explains his irreverence towards occult source material, whether Lovecraft or Masonry. In naming his Order of the Trapezoid after the "Shining Trapezohedron" found in Lovecraft's "The Hunter of the Dark"--a black, oddly-angled extraterrestrial crystal used to communicate with the Old Ones--LaVey emphasized that fictions can channel magical forces regardless of their historical authenticity.

In his two rituals, Michael Aquino expresses the subjective power of "meaningless" language by creating a "Yuggothic" tongue similar to that heard in Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Whisperer in the Dark." Such guttural utterances help to shut down the rational mind (try chanting "P'garn'h v'glyzz" for a couple of hours), a notion elaborated by Kenneth Grant in his notion of the Cult of Barbarous Names. After leaving the Church of Satan to form the more serious Temple of Set in 1975, Aquino eventually reformed the Order of the Trapezoid into the practical magic wing of the Setian philosophy. For Stephen R. Flowers, current Grand Master of the order, the substance of

Lovecraftian magic is precisely an overwhelming subjectivity that flies in the face of objective law. "The Old Ones are the objective manifestations...of the subjective universe which is what is trying to 'break through' the merely rational mind-set of modern humanity." [12] For Flowers, such invocations are ultimately apocalyptic, hastening a transition into a chaotic aeon in which the Old Ones reveal themselves as future reflections of the Black Magician ("There are no more Nightmares for us," he wrote me).

This desire to rebel against the tyranny of reason and its ordered objective universe is one of the underlying goals of Chaos magic. Many would applaud the sentiment expressed by Albert Wilmarth in Lovecraft's "The Whisperer in Darkness": "To shake off the maddening and wearying limitations of time and space and natural law--to be linked with the vast outside--to come close to the nighted and abysmal secrets of the infinite and ultimate--surely such a thing was worth the risk of one's life, soul, and sanity!" [13]

In his electronically circulated text "Kathulu Majik: Luvkrafting the Roles of Modern Uccultizm," Tyagi Nagasiva writes that most Western magic is ossified and dualistic, heavily weighted towards the forces of order, hierarchy, moralizing, and structured language. "Without the destabilizing force of Kaos, we would stagnate intellectually, psychologically and otherwise...Kathulu provides a necessary instability to combat the stolid and fixed methods of the structured 'Ordurs'...One may become balanced through exposure to Kathulu" (Tyagi's "mis-spellings" show the influence of Genesis P. Orridge's Temple of Psychick Youth). Haramullah criticizes black magicians who simply reverse "Ordur" with "Kaos," rather than bringing this underlying polarity into balance (a dualistic error he also finds in Lovecraft). Showing strong Taoist and Buddhist influences, Haramullah calls instead for a "Midul Path" that magically navigates between structure and disintegration, will and void. "The idea that one may progress linearly along the MP [Midul Path] is mistaken. One becomes, one does not progress. One attunes, one does not forge. One allows, one does not make."

In the Cincinatti Journal of Ceremonial Magic, the anonymous author of "Return of the Elder Gods" presents an evolutionary reason for Mythos magic. The author accepts the scenario of an approaching world crisis brought on by the invasion of the Elder Gods, Qlipothic transdimensional entities who ruled protohumanity until they were banished by "the agent of the Intelligence," a Promethean figure who set humanity on its current course of evolution. We remain connected to these Elder Gods through the "Forgotten Ones," the atavistic forces of hunger, sex, and violence that linger in the subterranean levels of our being. Only by magically "reabsorbing"

the Forgotten Ones and using the subsequent energy to bootstrap higher consciousness can we keep the portal sealed against the return of the Elder Gods. Though Lovecraft's name is never mentioned in the article, he is ever present, a skeptical materialist dreaming the dragons awake.

Writing the Dream...

Within the Mythos tales, one finds two dimensions--the normal human world and the infested Outside--and it's the ontological tension between them that powers Lovecraft's magick realism. Though Cthulhu and friends have material aspects, their reality is most horrible for what it says about the way the universe is. As the Lovecraft scholar Joshi notes, Lovecraft's narrators frequently go mad "not through any physical violence at the hands of supernatural entities but through the mere realization of the the existence of such a race of gods and beings." Faced with "realms whose mere existence stuns the brain," they experience severe cognitive dissonance--precisely the sorts of disorienting rupture sought by Chaos magicians.[14]

The role-playing game Call of Cthulhu wonderfully expresses the violence of this Lovecraftian paradigm shift. In adventure games like Dungeons & Dragons, one of your character's most significant measures is its hit points--a number which determines the amount of physical punishment your character can take before it gets injured or dies. Call of Cthulhu replaces this physical characteristic with the psychic category of Sanity. Face-to-face encounters with Yog-Sothoth or the insects from Shaggai knock points off your Sanity, but so does your discovery of more information about the Mythos--the more you find out from books or stargrams, the more likely you are to wind up in the Arkham Asylum. Magic also comes with an ironic price, one that Lovecraftian magicians might well pay heed to. If you use any of the binding spells from De Vermis Mysteriis or the Pnakotic Manuscripts, you necessarily learn more about the Mythos and thereby lose more sanity.[15]

Lovecraft's scholarly heroes also investigate the Mythos as much through reading and thinking as through movements through physical space, and this psychological exploration draws the mind of the reader directly into the loop. Usually, readers suspect the dark truth of the Mythos while the narrator still clings to a quotidian attitude--a technique that subtly forces the reader to identify with the Outside rather than with the conventional worldview of the protagonist. Magically, the blindness of Lovecraft's heroes corresponds to a crucial element of occult theory developed by Austin Osman Spare: that magic occurs over and against the conscious mind, that ordinary thinking must be silenced,

distracted, or thoroughly deranged for the chthonic will to express itself.[16]

In order to invade our plane, Lovecraft's entities need a portal, an interface between the worlds, and Lovecraft emphasizes two: books and dreams. In "Dreams of the Witch-House," "The Shadow out of Time" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth," dreams infect their hosts with a virulence that resembles the more overt psychic possessions that occur in "The Hunter in the Dark" and The Case of Charles Dexter Ward. Like the monsters themselves, Lovecraft's dreams are autonomous forces breaking through from Outside and engendering their own reality.

But these dreams also conjure up a more literal "outside": the strange dream life of Lovecraft himself, a life that (as the informed fan knows) directly inspired some of the tales[17]. By seeding his texts with his own nightmares, Lovecraft creates a autobiographical homology between himself and his protagonists. The stories themselves start to dream, which means that the reader too lies right in the path of the infection.

Lovecraft reproduces himself in his tales in a number of ways--the first-person protagonists reflect aspects of his own reclusive and bookish lifestyle; the epistolary form of the "The Whisperer in Darkness" echoes his own commitment to regular correspondence; character names are lifted from friends; and the New England landscape is his own. This psychic self-reflection partially explains why Lovecraft fans usually become fascinated with the man himself, a gaunt and solitary recluse who socialized through the mail, yearned for the eighteenth century, and adopted the crabby outlook and mannerisms of an old man. Lovecraft's life, and certainly his voluminous personal correspondence, form part of his myth.

Lovecraft thus solidifies his virtual reality by adding autobiographical elements to his shared world of creatures, books and maps. He also constructs a documentary texture by thickening his tales with manuscripts, newspaper clippings, scholarly citations, diary entries, letters, and bibliographies that list fake books alongside real classics. All this produces the sense that "outside" each individual tale lies a meta-fictional world that hovers on the edge of our own, a world that, like the monsters themselves, is constantly trying to break through and actualize itself. And thanks to Mythos storytellers, role-playing games, and dark-side magicians, it has.

...and Dreaming the Book

In "The Shadow out of Time," Lovecraft makes explicit one of the fantastic equations that drives his Magick Realism: the equivalence of dreams and books. For five years, the narrator, an economics professor named Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee, is taken over by a mysterious "secondary personality." After recovering his original identity, Peaslee is beset by powerful dreams in which he finds himself in a strange city, inhabiting a huge tentacle-sprouting conical body, writing down the history of modern Western world in a book. In the climax of the tale, Peaslee journeys to the Australian desert to explore ancient ruins buried beneath the sands. There he discovers a book written in English, in his own handwriting: the very same volume he had produced inside his monstrous dream body.

Though we learn very little of their contents, Lovecraft's diabolical grimoires are so infectious that even glancing at their ominous sigils proves dangerous. As with their dreams, these texts obsess Lovecraft's bookish protagonists to the point that the volumes, in Christopher Frayling's phrase, "vampirize the reader." Their titles alone are magic spells, the hallucinatory incantations of an eccentric antiquarian: the Pnakotic Manuscripts, the Ilarnet Papyri, the R'lyeh Text, the Seven Cryptical Books of Hsan. Lovecraft's friends contributed De Vermis Mysteriis and von Junzt's Unaussprechlichen Kulten, and Lovecraft named the author of his Cultes Des Goules, the Comte d'Erlette, after his young fan August Derleth. Hovering over all these grim tomes is the "dreaded" and "forbidden" Necronomicon, a book of blasphemous invocations to speed the return of the Old Ones. Lovecraft's supreme intertextual fetish, the Necronomicon stands as one of the few mythical books in literature that have absorbed so much imaginative attention that they've entered published reality.

If books owe their life not to their individual contents but to the larger intertextual webwork of reference and citation within which they are woven, than the dread Necronomicon clearly has a life of its own. Besides literary studies, the Necronomicon has generated numerous pseudo-scholarly analyses, including significant appendixes in the Encyclopedia Cthulhiana and Lovecraft's own "History of the Necronomicon." A number of FAQs can be found on the Internet, where a mild flame war periodically erupts between magicians, horror fans, and mythology experts over the reality of the book. The undead entity referred to in the Necronomicon's famous couplet--"That is not dead which can eternal lie,/And with strange eons even death may die"--may be nothing more or less than the text itself, always lurking in the margins as we read the real.

Lovecraft's brief "History" was apparently inspired by the first Necronomicon hoax: a review of an edition of the

dreaded tome submitted to Massachusetts' Branford Review in 1934.[18] Decades later, index cards for the book started popping up in university library catalogs.

It's perhaps the principle expression of Lovecraft's Magick Realism that all these ghostly references would finally manifest the book itself. In 1973, a small-press edition of Al Azif (the Necronomicon's Arabic name) appeared, consisting of eight pages of simulated Syrian script repeated 24 times. Four years later, the Satanists at New York's Magickal Child published a Necronomicon by Simon, a grab bag that contains far more Sumerian myth than Lovecraft (though portions were "purposely left out" for the "safety of the reader"). George Hay's Necronomicon: The Book of Dead Names, also a child of the '70s, is the most complex, intriguing, and Lovecraftian of the lot. In the spirit of the master's pseudoscholarship, Hay nests the fabulated invocations of Yog-Sothoth and Cthulhu amongst a set of analytic, literary and historical essays.

Though magicians with strong imaginations have claimed that even the Simon book works wonders, the pseudohistories of the various Necronomicons are far more compelling than the texts themselves. Lovecraft himself provided the bare bones: the text was penned in 730 A.D by a poet, the Mad Arab Abdul Alhazred, and named after the nocturnal sounds of insects. It was subsequently translated by Theodorus Philetas into Greek, by Olaus Wormius into Latin, and by John Dee into English. Lovecraft lists various libraries and private collections where fragments of the volume reside, and gives us a knowing wink by noting that the fantasy writer R.W. Chambers is said to have derived the monstrous and suppressed book found in his novel The King in Yellow from rumors of the Necronomicon (Lovecraft himself claimed to have gotten his inspiration from Chambers).

All of the Necronomicon's subsequent pseudohistories weave the book in and out of actual occult history, with John Dee playing a particularly conspicuous role. According to Colin Wilson, the version of the text published in the Hay Necronomicon was encrypted in Dee's Enochian cipher-text Liber Logoaeth . Colin Low's Necronomicon FAQ claims that Dee discovered the book at the court of King Rudolph II's court in Prague, and that it was under its influence that Dee and his scribe Edward Kelly achieved their most powerful astral encounters. Never published, Dee's translation became part of celebrated collection of Elias Ashmole housed at the British Library. Here Crowley read it, freely cobbling passages for The Book of the Law, and ultimately passing on some of its contents indirectly to Lovecraft through Sophia Greene. Crowley's role in Low's tale is appropriate, for Crowley certainly knew the magical power of hoax and history.

For the history of the occult is a confabulation, its lies wedded to its genealogies, its "timeless" truths fabricated by revisionists, madmen, and geniuses, its esoteric traditions a constantly shifting conspiracy of influences. The Necronomicon is not the first fiction to generate real magical activity within this potent twilight zone between philology and fantasy.

To take an example from an earlier era, the anonymous Rosicrucian manifestos that first appeared in the early 1600s claimed to issue from a secret brotherhood of Christian Hermeticists who finally deemed it time to come above ground. Many readers immediately wanted to join up, though it is unlikely that such a group existed at the time. But this hoax focused esoteric desire and inspired an explosion of "real" Rosicrucian groups. Though one of the two suspected authors of the manifestos, Johann Valentin Andreae, never came clean, he made veiled references to Rosicrucianism as an "ingenius game which a masked person might like to play upon the literary scene, especially in an age infatuated with everything unusual." [19] Like the Rosicrucian manifestos or Blavatsky's Book of Dzyan, Lovecraft's Necronomicon is the occult equivalent of Orson Welles' radio broadcast of the "War of the Worlds." As Lovecraft himself wrote, "No weird story can truly produce terror unless it is devised with all the care and verisimilitude of an actual hoax." [20]

In Foucault's Pendulum, Umberto Eco suggests that esoteric truth is perhaps nothing more than a semiotic conspiracy theory born of an endlessly rehashed and self-referential literature--the intertextual fabric Lovecraft understood so well. For those who need to ground their profound states of consciousness in objective correlatives, this is a damning indictment of "tradition." But as Chaos magicians remind us, magic is nothing more than subjective experience interacting with an internally consistent matrix of signs and affects. In the absence of orthodoxy, all we have is the dynamic tantra of text and perception, of reading and dream. These days the Great Work may be nothing more or less than this "ingenius game," fabricating itself without closure or rest, weaving itself out of the resplendent void where Azazoth writhes on his Mandelbrot throne.

Appendix: The Cthulhu Project

We note the following from H. P. Lovecraft's "The Call of Cthulhu":

1. There exists a conspiratorial organization of global reach;
2. It is centered around "the undying leaders of the cult in the mountains of China";

3. "Remains of Them [according to the "deathless Chinamen"] were still to be found as Cyclopean stones in islands in the Pacific";
4. "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";
5. "the center [of the organization] lay amid the pathless deserts of Arabia, where Iram, the City of Pillars, dreams hidden and untouched";
6. "It was not allied to the European witch-cult";
7. The center of the interests of the cult has moved under water;
8. Biological abnormalities are of great interest to the cult; so is non-Euclidian geometry.

We conclude that Lovecraft was misinformed --- his informants do not appear to have been the most stable individuals --- and that Cthulhu did not come from the stars, it will go to them. Cthulhu is a starship.

The "cult" is in fact the conspiracy; the links to China and Arabia are clear evidence of this. The "deathless Chinamen" are obviously successful Chinese alchemists, and in the Arabian Nights, Irem (or Iram) is reached by an alchemist with an astonishing ability to perform biological transformations. The "Cyclopean" structures in the Pacific of which Lovecraft wrote must be then ruins known as Nan Madol (also called Nan Matol), on the island of Ponape in the Carolines. These were constructed when the Islamic and Chinese branches of the Conspiracy were at their height. The non-alliance with the European witches is also explicable --- those who were not merely a local reaction against Christianity were a splinter group, isolated and thrown on its own resources during the Dark Ages, and detached from the Conspiracy as such.

We may take the identification of the Cthulhu cult and the Conspiracy as established. "Plunging from world to world" and the intense interest in the stars and non-Euclidean geometry suffice to show that the project is about interstellar travel, and at speeds greater than c at that. The link with biology is not so strange as it might seem. Evidently the Conspiracy decided against human or mechanical control; instead, it is seeking to create a living starship whose nervous system is already adapted to a wide range of non-Euclidean geometries and the intricacies of space travel, as ours is adapted to Euclidean geometry and throwing things. The "when the stars are right" formula is a misunderstanding; when it is working properly, Cthulhu will plunge from world to world, from the Earth to the stars. When they are not right, Cthulhu is quiescent, inactive, in a state of suspended animation - dead. The possible incorporation of

more conventional mechanical elements may have contributed to the notion that Cthulhu is somehow at once alive and dead.

Evidently the Cthulhu project began in Irem, but was forced, for some reason, to relocate to the east --- much further east. The Kitab al-Azif, later known in the west as the Necronomicon, is evidently a product of the research carried out at Irem. The Greek name translates as the "Book of the laws [or rules or science, etc.] of the dead." It may thus either refer to those syntheses which were not fully alive," or to unsuccessful projects.

Some hundreds of years after the relocation to Ponape, that site too was abandoned, being left to the native (or perhaps encroaching) Micronesians. We believe it unlikely that the Cthulhu project went to Easter Island or the still unexplored highlands of Papua New Guinea. Instead, it is probably that they moved under water. The sea, after all, is a free-fall environment, abundant in resources and energy, and even possesses some insulation against the seismic activity of the Pacific, as the survival of coral reefs attest.

Reports of Cthulhu indicate a tremendous size and an at least partially cephalopod nature. Octopodes are the most intelligent of the invertebrates, and in addition possess dexterous limbs. It is not implausible that the Conspiracy as altered some of them sufficiently to make them valuable graduate students, if not researchers, and may even have incorporated cephalopod elements into the starship. Under water, huge structures may be assembled, such as blue whales, giant squid, and starships, ignoring the constraints of gravity, no more relevant there than in space.

This hypothesis explains some otherwise quite puzzling data. The relationship of the Cthulhu cult to the Deep Ones and shoggoths is now plain as a pikestaff, as is their preference for remote areas, where the Conspiracy could work on them undisturbed by priests, princes and people in general. (There are other, and quite obvious, advantages to situating research facilities in the South Pacific.) The elucidation of a fact which has perplexed scholars for decades - namely, that Nan Matol means in space --- is now trivial. Further, it is in full accordance with local tradition. The common belief of the Cargo Cults that European wealth was due to the migration of their ancestral magicians to England and Holland is, in a sense, perfectly true. So, rightly viewed, are the Ponapean legends about the origin of Nan Matol:

"The story that Hambruch [A German anthropologist who visited Ponape in 1908-10] heard about the building of Nan Matol tells how two young wizards, Olo-Sipe and Olo-Sopa [or: Olo-Shipe and Olo-Shaupa], set out from Jokaz [a nearby island]

to build a great cult center to the gods, demons, and ghosts. They tried several places on the coasts of Ponape, but each time the wind and the surf destroyed their handiwork. At last they found their ideal site at Temuen. A mighty spell made the basaltic prisms on Jokaz fly through the air and settle down in the right positions to form Nan Matol....

"Until recent times Nan Matol was used as a center for the worship of the turtle god Nanusunsap. Whenever the Ponapeans caught a sea turtle, they brought it to Nan Matol and kept it in one of the buildings. When the tribe was assembled, the priests anointed the turtle with coconut oil and hung it with ornaments. The priests loaded the turtle into a boat and paddled about the canals of Nan Matol, while one priest stared at the turtle and blinked his eyes every time the turtle blinked. When they arrived at Pan Katera, where a fire had been lit, a priest killed the turtle by breaking its shell with a club. The turtle was cut up, cooked, and served to the priests and the king, with prayers and ritual.

"In the reign of the Nan-Marki Luk-En-Mueiu, about 1800, the ritual was brought to an end in a ridiculous fashion. At one a rage, howling curses, and went off to live by himself on a sand bank and eat eels. [Compare the American children's song: ``Nobody likes me, everybody hates me, guess I'll go eat worms.''] It goes on to describe the gastronomic delights of annelidophagy in detail.] The Metalanimians [i.e. natives] feared that he had so profaned the ceremony that they could no longer hold it.

"The Ponapeans also had myths about a dragon or giant lizard. In one version, the dragon lived in Jokaz and gave birth to two girls. When the girls grew up, they married the reigning Satalur and asked their husband to let their mother come to live in Nan Matol. When he assented, the dragon moved into one of the buildings, excavating the canals of Nan Matol in the process.

"Next morning, when the Satalur brought some food for his mother-in-law, he saw the dragon for the first time. In terror he burned up the house and the dragon. His wives jumped into the fire and burned themselves up too; and in his grief the Satalur did likewise. The likeliest explanation for the dragon myth is that Ponape was once visited by

the New Guinean crocodile, a large man-eating species often found swimming in the open sea, where one would never expect to see a crocodile.'

(pp. 233-235 of L. Sprague and Catherine de Camp, Ancient Ruins and Archaeology.)

The last sentence of rationalization is easily explained. L. S. de Camp was a protege of Lovecraft, Clark Ashton Smith and Howard Carter. Undoubtedly his researches into the roots of these men's ideas lead him to the Conspiracy. If he is not a member, he is at least a pawn, attempting to cover the traces of the Secret Masters of the Conspiracy. The de Camps begin their chapter on Nan Matol with the quotation

And there, in sombre splendour by the shore
Of Hali dark, an ancient city stood;
Black monolithic domes and towers loom
Stark, gigantic in the starless gloom
Like druid menhirs in a haunted wood.

from Carter. Hali is a lake associated with Hastur, full of - need it be said? --- octopodes.

(The novel The Moon Pool, by A. Merritt, is set (in part) in Nan Matol; the rest of its action takes place in a civilization of astonishing scientific sophistication beneath the Pacific. Cephalopods are specifically mentioned by one character as a plausible form of non-human intelligence. The immediate sequel, The Metal Emperor, deals with artificial intelligences and what appear to be the descendants of participants of the Balkh Conference in the inner reaches of Central Asia --- i.e., Lovecraft's Leng. The Face in the Abyss implies that there is at least one transhuman Secret Master of the Conspiracy in the Andes, while the Dwellers in the Mirage has fascinating parallels with Cthulhu. How Merritt --- an editor for the Hearst papers --- came by his astonishing knowledge of the Conspiracy --- to say nothing of his distinctive, perhaps unique prose --- is a mystery.)

The insanity of Lovecraft's informants is thus quite rational. The creation of a living starship, hardwired to make sense of quantum gravity and general relativity, would have been incomprehensible to any non-Conspirator before this century; and communication with such an entity --- especially a not-fully-debugged prototype --- as good a way as any of frying one's neurons. In fact, the testing of FTL starships appears distinctly hazardous. Things go wrong in unpleasant ways. One of them was the Krakatoa explosion - ominously, right on the Pacific. Another was the Tunguska event. It went up; it came down; it did horrible things to large parts of Siberia and spawned new religions among the aborigines. According to Lovecraft, the later test in the

1920s merely drove thousands of people insane. We may observe that the Conspiracy has been making progress. His published date does not match that of the start of the great stock market bubble, but he may have fudged matters a little. No doubt subsequent tests have been responsible for other instances of wide-spread lunacy --- the re-election of Ronald Wilson Reagan springs to mind.

Lovecraft evidently misunderstood the Conspiracy, if in fact he was not deliberately fed disinformation by its enemies. The divergence between an ancient and unspeakable alien deity and a man-made starship boggles the mind. Nonetheless, he was right about one thing: Nothing will ever be the same after Cthulhu rises.

Incidentally, based on his interest in space travel, the deep oceans and giant squid, we can confirm that A. C. Clarke is a Conspirator.

In August Derleth's thumbnail biography of Solar Pons, it was stated that he had written six monographs, two of which concern us, as they deal with the "Cthulhu Mythos." The first monograph, published in 1905, was entitled An Inquiry into the Nan-Matal Ruins of Ponape, and the second, published in 1931, was entitled An Examination of the Cthulhu Cult and Others.

In going through the adventures that were written up by Dr. Lyndon Parker, there is only one adventure which touched upon the "Cthulhu Mythos." This adventure was entitled "The Adventure of the Six Silver Spiders" upon its publication in the public press. In examining a catalogue for the sale of a private collection of twenty volumes, Parker mentioned some of the titles therein: Necronomicon, Unaussprechlichen Kulten, Cultes des Goules, De Vermis Mysteriis, and Liber Ivonis. It is obvious to the student of the "Cthulhu Mythos" that these are titles of books which are integral to the understanding of the threat from this mythology, if everything about it can be taken as absolute truth.

Pons told Parker that "All these books have a precarious existence only in the writings of certain minor authors of American origin, all apparently followers, in a remote sense, of the work of Edgar Allan Poe. The catalogue is, in short, a hoax."

There would seem to be a discrepancy here, for if Pons firmly believed that these books were spurious, then what do we make of the two monographs which he published? To rectify this discrepancy, and to give some justification for the rectification, we need to backtrack a little.

Solar Pons was born in 1880 and graduated from Oxford in 1899. His first monograph, *An Inquiry into the Nan-Matal Ruins of Ponape*, was published in 1905. He established his private inquiry practice in 1907, which was only interrupted by his service with British Intelligence during World War I. Dr. Lyndon Parker moved in with Pons at 7B Praed Street and began writing up the adventures of Solar Pons in January 1928, moving out in January 1933 when he married. "The Adventure of the Six Silver Spiders" occurred in January of 1930. And the second monograph, *An Examination of the Cthulhu Cult and Others*, was published in 1931.

In this day and age, the 1990's, the two monographs are exceedingly rare, whereas Parker's write-ups of Solar Pons's adventures are kept in print almost continuously. To give some feeling to the conclusions which will follow, we will quote from both monographs.

The following excerpts were deleted from Solar Pons's monograph *An Inquiry into the Nan-Matal Ruins of Ponape* before its publication in 1905 and were recently discovered among his notes. He is known to have commented to Dr. Lyndon Parker that he had found it necessary to omit several striking incidents because of a request from the Admiralty in one case, an obligation to protect the reputation of a certain noble family in another, and in all a fear that their outre nature would work against acceptance of his conclusions.

Of course hearsay abounds concerning strange happenings in the area, but there is one well-documented incident, the episode of the sloop *Naples* near Ponape. The account released to the press said only that the crew had been lost in a storm, but certain additional details were made known to me privately. Several shells of molluscs, pierced as though for use in jewelry, were found aboard. They were identified as belonging to a species of clam thought to exist only at great depths. There were peculiar scratches on the decks, arranged in star-shaped groups of five and suggesting nothing so much as the claw marks of some strange beast. But the most bizarre point did not appear until the ship was towed to New Zealand and placed in dry dock. There was found jammed in the rudder hinge the limb of an unknown sea creature, resembling the arm of a frog the size of a man.

I was reminded of those star-shaped scratches during the *Adventure of the Abandoned Lighthouse*, where a man went mad after following up a hint in a forbidden book. I was unable to shed any light on

the young man's death and was obliged to record the case in my files as an inconclusive failure. He had locked himself into the beacon chamber and collapsed into gibbering imbecility, leaving no testimony to his experience. On the stairs leading up to the chamber I found minute traces of scratches arranged like those on the Naples. There were also traces of a slimy substance which was definitely organic, though I could not match it with any known marine or terrestrial organism. Considering our limited knowledge of sea life and the chemistry of living things this is not surprising; but I did succeed in matching it with traces found on the outside surface of the beacon room window, a place so difficult of access that my companion professed fear of heart failure while watching me obtain the samples.

The second excerpt is as follows:

There exists in the files of Scotland Yard another case with a thread leading to Ponape. It is officially labeled "unsolved," as is the humane custom when the murderer is known to be dead. In my own files it is labeled the Adventure of the Eye of Lapis Lazuli. The murderer was the educated and widely travelled son of a highly placed family and showed no outward sign of any morbid, vicious or unbalanced qualities either before or during the period when he committed some of the most atrocious deeds in the history of crime. Indeed so wholesome did he seem that the police, convinced that the murders must be the work of a raving lunatic, never considered him suspect until I entered the case. He ultimately took his own life, leaving a handful of crushed fragments of lapis lazuli and a diary which recounted his acquisition on Ponape of a device in the form of an eye of inlaid gemstone and his gradual enslavement, through the stone, by some malignant intelligence from beyond the visible world.

And the third fragment:

I have had one other case in which a connection with Ponape appeared: the case of the Doom among the Standing Stones. The connection was indeed tenuous; my quarry had spent two years there in his youth and made a cryptic reference to it in a letter, which I contrived to inspect, to a mysterious and untraceable associate on the continent. But the case itself, or rather the end of it, was quite worthy of the reader's attention.

My client had been for some time subject to harassment, at once terrifying and yet so subtle that the police could do nothing with the object of forcing him to hand over certain books and artifacts of great antiquity which had been carefully guarded by his family for generations, even though their significance had been lost and was now unknown to him. The perpetrator was an evil man with a reputation for dabbling in black magic. At my suggestion the client had agreed to his demands in order to trap him with proof of extortion. Possibly suspecting a trap, the villain had dictated a meeting at night in a circle of megalithic tors and arches in the midst of a desolate moor.

Early on the day of the meeting I went there alone to scout out the terrain. I soon observed that the place had been very recently visited, though the indications were inadequate to deduce their purpose. There was a circular smudge from the base of a bull's eye lantern, there were colored wax drippings as from candles, and a foul smelling oil substance had been poured on the ground at four points around the central altar stone. I was able to identify this as a mixture of herbal distillates combined with unidentifiable animal material.

There was an even more peculiar trace just outside the circle. It had been completely surrounded with a series of rough stones in the shape of five-pointed stars, very evenly spaced at intervals of three feet, four inches. Upon picking one up I felt such a strong tingling sensation in my hand that I dropped it, smashing it into four parts. I reassembled the broken star as inconspicuously as possible, picked up another and placed it in my pocket for later examination and made a substitute of pebbles and clay that would keep my man from noticing any change in the arrangement.

I returned that evening, a half hour before sunset and an hour and a half before my client had agreed to meet him, approaching the circle cautiously by a devious route from the village where I was lodging. My intention was to arrive well before either of them and find a hidden vantage point but as I made my wary approach I descried the blackmailer proceeding alone along the main path. This slowed my progress considerably and I was unable to reach the circle before darkness

had fallen and a mist was rolling in from the direction of the sea. By then I could see that he was performing some sort of ritual by the light of a number of small candles, declaiming to the empty night in the harsh syllables of some alien tongue.

I have never been able to explain what happened next in terms of our normal concepts of reality, and shall leave it for the reader to form his own speculation, bearing in mind that I am a trained observer of unimaginative temperament.

The mist now formed a solid gray background across the candle-lit circle of great stones, while the circle itself appeared filled with low curls of the drifting vapor. I have had much experience with fogs of all kinds and am quite certain of the preternaturally dense blackness which began to form within the fog outside the circle and move in oily billows as the ritual proceeded. It appeared on the side opposite my position, but gradually drifted around the circle, sometimes seeming more dense and sometimes less. As it neared me I could discern minute pinpoints of light within it, like a swarm of radiant bees.

The blackmailer had completed his ritual and now stood quietly in an attitude of watchfulness, alternately looking toward the black cloud and staring blankly as though listening for some faint sound. I heard the distant crunch of a footstep on the gravelly path from the village and knew that my client was approaching. The blackmailer seemed to hear it too and smiled.

By now the black cloud had reached the point to my right and behind the man where I had smashed one star-stone and removed another, which I carried in an inside pocket of my coat. I could see the cloud bulge inward, as though purposefully probing against some unseen barrier. The man was staring intently in the direction of my client and did not see the great tendril of star-flecked blackness move toward him through the gap I had made in his carefully arranged circle of star-stones, and began screaming only when it reached and engulfed him. Before my eyes he disappeared into the thing, though I could still hear his hoarse animal cries. As the blackness withdrew from the circle and disappeared the voice receded and seemed to be coming from above, though whether this was some strange acoustical effect of the fog I cannot say.

Naturally I returned and went over the site meticulously in daylight, but I found no trace, no clue to what had happened. The man never reappeared, alive or dead, and my client and his peculiar heirlooms were never troubled again.

These excerpts were written in, or prior to, 1905. At that time, if Pons was not writing his monograph with tongue firmly lodged in cheek, he believed in what his researches had revealed concerning the "Cthulhu Mythos."

By January of 1930, Pons has seemed to have done a complete reversal concerning his knowledge of the "Cthulhu Mythos." He tells Parker that the catalogue is a hoax, meaning the books themselves are a hoax, and, in effect, that there is no basis in fact to substantiate the "Cthulhu Mythos."

Then, in 1931, Pons's second monograph was published, of which the preface is hereby appended:

In the annals of crime, cases involving magic, witchcraft and traffic with supernatural powers are by no means rare; to the connoisseur of crime one need only mention the schemes of "Count Cagliostro" or the scandalous affairs of Aleister Crowley. The great majority of these are easily explained in terms of ordinary fraud and of the unbalanced mentality naturally attracted to such things. But there remains a residue which teases the intellect and haunts the imagination.

The cases I have encountered in my own career may all be dismissed as the result of mundane human criminality except for a small number. The disturbing feature of these, however, is that they all have a common link in a body of lore known in occult and scholarly circles as the "Cthulhu Mythos."

I first became aware of these apparently outlandish ideas in the wake of the hideous case of Threadgill, the notorious necrophile, whose fiendish activities were conducted with such maniacal cunning as to elude the official police for many years. At his death the case was treated with circumspection by the press, and his crimes described only vaguely as the most repulsive results of mental aberration. But I had learned that the man had combined the sort of insanity documented by Kraft-Ebing with attempts at necromancy, guided by a collection of recherche

books. Unfortunately his library was destroyed in the fire in which he perished, save only a handful of notes which I carried out with me. They consisted of copies of lengthy inscriptions in an unknown tongue, labeled "Eltdown Shards," together with a partial translation. They purported to be the records of visitors from beyond this planet who visited the earth long eons ago. The earth had by that time a long history of contact with extraplanetary life, in particular a group of fearsome creatures referred to as the "Old Ones." Naturally I dismissed this at the time as a ludicrous imposture.

My next inkling of the "mythos" came in the affair of the murderous astrologer Hawthorne. His criminal depredations were all too real and all too human, but like many of his kind he combined blatant chicanery with a genuine belief in the supernatural. Three days before his execution he wrote a will leaving me his library. It consisted for the most part of preposterous quackery, but there were two books which did not share the hysterical gullibility of the others. They were *Cultes des Goules* by the Comte d'Erlette and *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* by the Baron von Junzt. They were obscurely written and difficult to interpret but undoubtedly shared many concepts with the "Eltdown Shards."

My next and most important exposure to the "Cthulhu Mythos" again proved nothing; but this time the documentary evidence was more impressive. I encountered it while pursuing a criminal genius whose exploits have been substantially recorded by my loyal biographer, but about whom a great deal more may be told someday, and about whom a very great deal may never be known. In the course of an unauthorized visit to his quarters during the small hours of the morning I discovered an ancient manuscript written in Arabic. I have made a special study of documents of all ages with regard to identification and authenticity, and can vouch for the age and Arabian peninsular origin of the book. This genius among criminals had translated the bulk of it into English. I was deeply impressed by this, for aside from his strange compulsive inclination toward criminality the man was a logician and scholar of the first water. From the time and effort he had expended one could safely deduce that he knew of additional facts which made the book of more importance than legend or fraud. In the brief moments at my disposal, I read of the Great Old

Ones, including great Cthulhu of the ocean deeps, Hastur of the starry void and the formidable Yog-Sothoth among others, who once ruled the earth and waited with malign patience to rule again. The treatise included rituals of magic for contacting these creatures and creating the necessary conditions for their return. Sandwiched in among the pages of translation was an apparently unrelated item, several pages of mathematical calculations, in the man's own hand, based on the existence of more than three spatial dimensions.

The translations were labelled "Necronomicon," which intrigued me because I had heard of this rare book before and believed, on seemingly good evidence, that it was a fictional invention. But this formidably ancient book was quite real, and its translator was no gull or fantasist.

It was many years before I found the leisure to follow out these threads and track down the obscure sources which detail the Cthulhu Mythos. I found with monotonous regularity that books had been stolen or destroyed, and often had to exercise the greatest ingenuity in gaining access to carefully guarded copies. This monograph is the result of that investigation, and I trust that it will stimulate interest, if not acceptance, and point the way to further research. I believe that I have demonstrated, at the very least, that subterranean groups of dangerously fanatic cultists do exist, and that enough hints exist to warrant reexamining our limited concept of the earth's vast and awesome history.

And a short quotation from the body of the monograph: It is said that the middle American town of Harkness is populated by the spawn of Othuyeg, the doom-walker who was imprisoned by the Elder Ones. It is also said that J'Cak Iggarthan, author of the Black Book of the Skull lives here, and has done so ever since Quy vanished except when he must take off for some esoteric journey.

It is obvious from the preface to his second monograph, that Pons did, indeed, believe the truth of his researches into the "Cthulhu Mythos." It is believed that the two monographs were intended for students of the "Cthulhu Mythos," whereas "The Adventure of the Six Silver Spiders" was intended for a wider audience, it was best to put forth the "truth" that the "Cthulhu Mythos" was a complete hoax, in order to protect mankind from the horrors masked by that terminology. In effect, there is no discrepancy between the monographs and the written-up adventure. Parker had been

living with Pons for at least a year when this adventure occurred. There is no doubt that Parker went along with the facade in order to protect humanity from his own bumbling naivete.

Practicality

Most importantly underlying this particular account of the Cthulhu cycle is the notion that Cthulhu is not dead, but "dreaming". It is a fundamental notion among modern occultist participating in the Cthulhu movement, that the return of Cthulhu and other Great Old Ones to power is an imminent fact. The true minions to Cthulhu will prepare for his coming and facilitate his process of "awakening". And as Cthulhu returns to enslave mankind in the yoke of ancient magick, the faithful followers of his bidding shall enjoyed an exalted status above the remainder of mankind.

It is written, in the R'lyeh Text that the passing of each solar cycle bears the potential to bring the Great Lord closer to his eruption from the sea. Cthulhu takes the minds of small groups of humans and as he holds their psyches in his thrall, he demands sacrifice from them. Those held in his sway follow his compulsion to perform self-sacrifice; sometimes in the taking of their own lives, more often in the self-destruction of a limb or member of their own body. This yielding of flesh strengthens His might. A sacrificial cycle of individuals will occur during the the lunar month preceeding the Hallowmas. Each will follow the bidding of Cthulhu, giving up, quite literally, life and limb to appease the Great Old One and to hasten his return. The cycle culminates with the sacrifice of the twelfth victim who will take his own life two days prior to the Hallowmas. The "Chosen One" will meet with other followers of Cthulhu, and in ritual circle the Chosen One will sever his or her own head as the ultimate self sacrifice to Cthulhu. The final sacrifice is essential, as it culminates the cycle and creates a psychic force which propels Cthulhu's sunken tomb in R'lyeh towards the surface. When it surfaces, his dominion shall be complete. It is writ that unto the year when the warm water shall come forth from R'lyeh and the second milenium of the false prophet is nigh, this shall be the year that Cthulhu cometh forth and darkness forever falls upon the epoch of man.

Cthulhu exerts his will upon mankind through the "call". This Call of Cthulhu, appears to be an entirely real phenomenon. Most common of its symptoms are that the afflicted individual "hears" Cthulhu. Individuals hearing the Call have little choice but to do its bidding. To the outside world they seem as mad men, but they know within whom they must serve without hesitancy or reserve. The call cannot be escaped.

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The R'lyeh text states that the Call can be broken, at least for such time as most swift action may be taken. It requires a special invocation of Cthulhu, performed before his sign. The sign being drawn, a tooth should be brought to touch it, reminding the supplicant of the Great Old One's hunger for the flesh of man. This done, the invocation of "Phnglui mgwa nafh, Cthulhu R'lyeh w'gahnagl fthagn" is thrice intonated, within the hearing of the He Who Doth Hear the Call. This done, the tooth shall become enriched with the strength to break grip of the Call. But such is to be taken only with great dread, as Cthulhu shall take notice upon those breaking his grasp upon the living and unto them, if they be unrighteous, shall he send forth his calling.

I have heard the call.

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