Doktori (Ph.D.) értekezés

CONFRONTING "THE BOUNDLESS AND HIDEOUS UNKNOWN": SCIENCE, CATEGORIZATION, AND NAMING IN H. P. LOVECRAFT'S FICTION

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Értekezés a doktori (Ph.D.) fokozat megszerzése érdekében
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Én, Matolcsy Kálmán, teljes felelősségem tudatában kijelentem, hogy a benyújtott értekezés a szerzői jog nemzetközi normáinak tiszteletbentartásával készült. Jelen értekezést korábban más intézményben nem nyújtottam be és azt nem utasították el.

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INTRODUCTION

> . . . when we cross the line to the boundless and hideous unknown—the shadow-haunted *Outside*—we must remember to leave our humanity and terrestrialism at the threshold. (Lovecraft, *Selected Letters II* 150)

The importance of Howard Phillips Lovecraft's work is today evident from the Library of America edition of his works (2005), selected by Peter Straub, and the vast body of criticism on Lovecraft, which, as S. T. Joshi points out, has "now reached titanic proportions" (*A Subtler Magick* 288). In spite of his early neglect by academe, by the 1990s Lovecraft had become something of a horror critics' favorite. Joshi and Kenneth W. Faig, Jr. declare, "It is difficult to find an author in this century . . . whose writings were so unrecognized in his lifetime, yet so widely known after his death" (1). Lovecraft has been labeled "the supreme master of the tale of horror," "one of the most sensitive and powerful writers of [his] generation," and "the greatest American author of horror tales since Poe" (Drake Douglas, J. O. Bailey, and John A. Taylor qtd. in Joshi and Faig 1), and he has been established as the sole representative of a transitory phase between the American Gothic of Charles Brockden Brown, Poe, Hawthorne, and Ambrose Bierce as well as both contemporary horror and science fiction. Lovecraft's writing has spawned a complete sub-genre called cosmic horror, and an entire generation of fantasists follow in their master's steps.[1]

Lovecraft's present championing by academics and fans alike is doubtless due both to his merits as a writer with an extraordinarily unique and consistent vision as well as to his remarkable personality. Early Lovecraft criticism, which set out to introduce to the scholarly

[1] Joshi contends that "[t]here is really no parallel in the entire history of literature for such enduring and wide-ranging attempts to imitate or develop a single writer's conceptions" (*Rise and Fall* 20).

community an author hitherto deemed "pulp" had to find a firm grip on both his literature and his character, hoping to be able to combine the two to the greatest extent possible. Fritz Leiber's, Matthew H. Onderdonk's, George T. Wetzel's, and August Derleth's early writings on, and editions of, Lovecraft—the errors and shortcomings of some of which are widely recognized today, especially in Derleth's case—managed to grant the Providence-based author some long-deserved posthumous attention. These seminal works concentrated precisely on autobiographical details in Lovecraft's fiction, poetry, essays, and correspondence, often attempting an "armchair psychoanalysis" of the author (Joshi, "Lovecraft Criticism" 25). Armchair psychoanalysis aside, it should be understood that most of the early studies on Lovecraft, such as the noteworthy fantasist L. Sprague de Camp's *Lovecraft: A Biography* (1975), had no choice but to include a plethora of biographical detail, the "safe and sane" method of literary criticism.

In Lovecraft's case, certain axiomatic contentions used to be widespread until the 1990s[2]: that the man is identical to his work; his work is identical to his dreams; and finally, his work, dreams, and personality are chiefly the product of, and an honor to, his hometown, Providence—the latter notion reflected in the romanticizing inscription on his tombstone, a contribution in part by Lovecraft critic Dirk W. Mosig, "I am Providence." Many of those critical arguments are, however, the result of an entire campaign of insightful biographical work on Lovecraft's fiction—in which both the earlier and more recent studies took their share.

Through the superabundance of literary and biographical evidence, Lovecraft looms as an exceedingly autobiographical writer. The bulk of biographical data on him derives, of course, as much from his letters as from the memoirs of his acquaintances, Paul W. Cook's,

[2] Until the arrival of such works as Donald R. Burleson, *Lovecraft: Disturbing the Universe*, Timo Airaksinen, *The Philosophy of H. P. Lovecraft*, David Ashby Oakes's "Twentieth-century American Gothic Literature as Cultural Artifact," and Bradley Alan Will's "The 'Supramundane.'"

Sonia H. (Greene) Davis's, and others' recollections.[3] Monographs and essays continue to appear on Lovecraft, a large number of which tend to be, to a lesser or greater extent, of a biographical nature.[4] These studies all stress that Lovecraft recreated his fiction in his life, and, similarly, reiterated his life through his fiction—in much the same manner as his alchemists and sorcerers survive through centuries—that Lovecraft is the prime example of an individual fully engulfed by his work, an artist nurtured by the landscape and encapsulated in his dreams and writing. Did not Lovecraft himself tell Henry Kuttner, "Each author has to write what's in him" (qtd. in Schultz, "From Microcosm to Macrocosm" 199)?

Method

Despite the vast amount of data at hand, the trappings of traditional biographical criticism must not be disregarded. Joshi suggests in *The Weird Tale* (1990) that "it may be advisable . . . momentarily to forget this body of peripheral material and read again the stories as stories. This is what they are, and this is what Lovecraft wanted them to be; it is a historical accident that all that other matter survives" (229). In this study I am directing my attention to the text, or, more precisely, what I define as "the Lovecraftian text." My specification of the Lovecraftian text runs along the lines of not stylistic but chronological considerations, as—perhaps not too extraordinarily—the periods in Lovecraft's life and thought roughly serve as a foundation for the evolution of his style and themes. His progress as a writer of the weird exhibited a gradual enrichment of his craft, which naturally came to fruition in his later tales, when his "exile" into New York and his return to his hometown, Providence, (1924 and 1926)

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[3] See Paul W. Cook, *In Memoriam: Howard Phillips Lovecraft*, and Sonia H. Davis, *The Private Life of H. P. Lovecraft*.

[4] Recent publications in the field include Eddy and Eddy, *The Gentleman from Angell Street* (2001), Lovecraft and Willis Conover, *Lovecraft at Last* (2002), William Schoell, *H. P. Lovecraft: Master of Weird Fiction* (2004), Michel Houellebecq, *H. P. Lovecraft: Against the World, Against Life* (2005), Robert H. Waugh, *The Monster in the Mirror* (2006), and Faig, *The Unknown Lovecraft* (2009).

provided him with new impetuses for writing. A summarizing argument in Jason Colavito's recent study, *Knowing Fear: Science, Knowledge and the Development of the Horror Genre* (2008), will suffice to launch my explanation of the choice of the Lovecraftian text: "Lovecraft's fiction coalesces around a dark mythology that attains its true cosmic import and grandeur only when considered as a whole" (185). While Colavito is right, his holistic view can perhaps be reduced a little. To my and other critics', such as Joshi's, eyes, Lovecraft's most productive phase started around 1924 and lasted until his death, from the "Novanglicization of his fictional work" (Joshi, *Subtler Magick* 102) to the tales that he is most remembered by, where the mature author finally fuses with unequaled force his philosophical views (his cosmic pessimism and the idea of a mechanistic universe), the image of alien races from beyond the known universe, and a type of language that tries to define, name, and categorize the confrontation with a fantastic anomaly but must ultimately fail in doing so. These later tales both introduce and elaborate on central elements of the Lovecraftian *novum*.[5] In accordance with these considerations, the Lovecrafian text in my reading contains the tales, both short fiction and novellas, written in the period between, roughly, 1920 and 1936, termed "regional horror"[6] and "major fiction" by Joshi (*Subtler Magick* 3).[7] Stories from this long period more or less uniformly display what I hold to be the trademark Lovecraftian props, devices, and specificities: regionalism coupled with cosmicism, a scientific worldview comprising empiricism and experientialism, a quasi-mythos, a style

[5] I use *novum* in a slightly different sense here than does prolific science-fiction critic Darko Suvin. In Lovecraft's case *novum* is not the main plausible innovation in a science fiction work (which would be the supramundane in the Lovecraftian text, were we to analyze his work as science fiction—see chapter 2), but the novelties of his work in contrast to oeuvres of writers in the same "genre."

[6] One of the earliest tales in this period, "The Outsider," "has frequently been taken to be emblematic of Lovecraft's early work, and perhaps his work as a whole," suggests Joshi (*Subtler Magick* 85).

[7] The products of this latter period are most commonly termed the "Mythos" stories. See Joshi, *The Rise and Fall of the Cthulhu Mythos*.

wrought with both flowery and dryly scientific language.[8] These aspects of the Lovecraftian text buttress my main arguments in the dissertation, the dynamics of which are analyzed in "The Lurking Fear" (1922), "The Festival" (1923), "The Shunned House" (1924), "He" (1925), "The Horror at Red Hook" (1925), "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926), "Cool Air" (1926), "Pickman's Model" (1926), *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1927), "The Colour Out of Space" (1927), "The Dunwich Horror" (1928), "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930), *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931), "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" (1931), "The Dreams in the Witch House" (1932), "The Thing on the Doorstep" (1933), "The Shadow Out of Time" (1934), and "The Haunter of the Dark" (1935). Other texts, such as "Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family" (1920), "From Beyond" (1920), "The Outsider" (1921), "The Music of Erich Zann" (1921), "Herbert West—Reanimator" (1922), "The Hound" (1922), "Hypnos" (1922), "The Unnamable" (1923), "The Rats in the Walls" (1923), also contain some, if not all, of the devices of the later tales, often—owing to their seminal use or conception—even in a purer form (such as the question of categorization in "Arthur Jermyn," "The Outsider," or "The Unnamable"; organicism and Darwinism in "Arthur Jermyn," "Herbert West," and "Rats"; topography in "Erich Zann"; Descartian versus experiential philosophy in "From Beyond" and "Hypnos"). My principles of selection guide the inclusion of some of the later period's collaborations such as, for instance, "In the Walls of Eryx" (1936), although this science-fiction tale only slightly conforms to the greater bulk of Lovecraft's mythic-fantastic horror or "weird" fiction.

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[8] For instance, an early tale from the New York period, "The Shunned House" (1924), contains "one of the most critical passages in Lovecraft's early tales; for it embodies virtually all the conceptions we will find in letters of the 1930s enunciating his later aesthetic of the weird . . . " (Joshi, *Subtler Magick* 102). Also, the story exhibits the first serious "attempt to account for the anomalous creature in terms of advanced science rather than primitive myth" (102).

Important as they may be, I attempt not to include analyses of what Joshi terms "early fiction" (1905-21) and "Dunsanian tales"[9] (*Subtler Magick* 3), and whenever I do so it is only to establish by reference a parallel or contrast. Although Lovecraft's juvenilia, his early Poe tales, and his mythic-oneiric "Dunsanian" stories are necessary for an integrated picture of the author, these all embody different attitudes to fantasy/the fantastic, gothic, and the weird, and thus are not used as evidence for my main arguments. Furthermore, due to the uniformity of the Lovecraftian text as defined in this study, no chronological order of the tales is observed in the chapters. Thematics and the linguistic tools with which the author equips his narrator-protagonists comprise the main foci of scrutiny. Although, as Donald R. Burleson argues, Lovecraft was "a writer of the idée fixe" ("On Lovecraft's Themes" 135), no critic would or should imagine that any one writer's oeuvre constitutes an integrant whole from any critical purpose that may arise. Accordingly, the Lovecraftian text itself has its discrepancies: a wide range of thematic and stylistic differences; fluctuation in seriousness, structural consistency, and language; a constant vacillation in terms of poetic, mythic, and scientific input. Nonetheless, the similarities and overarching consistency of subject matter and mythopoetics outnumber the differences, and, further, what substantiates more than anything else the view of the Lovecraftian text as a totality is the consistency to which the differences and fluctuations are emergent within each individual tale.

Although not part of the Lovecraftian text in any way, Lovecraft's voluminous correspondence provides some additional information on the author's views and his work method. The epistles—which, Joshi argues, "are, quite frankly, some of the most remarkable literary documents of the century" (*Weird Tale* 5)—are not used directly as proof of my arguments about the fiction, but by way of association. Lovecraft was an ardent letter-writer;

[9] Joshi provides the time frame of 1919-21 for Dunsanian fantasy.

out of the estimated 100,000 epistles only 10,000 have survived.[10] I do not heavily rely on these, even though it would seem an obvious critical ploy. Timo Airaksinen, one of the more recent Lovecraft critics, for example, bridges the critical abyss of the intentional fallacy by interpreting Lovecraft's letters as a part of his fiction, pointing out that there is a general discrepancy between the content of Lovecraft's letters, on the one hand, and the major facts of his life, on the other. One of the primary assumptions of Airaksinen's radical monograph *The Philosophy of H. P. Lovecraft: The Route to Horror* (1999) is that Lovecraft in his correspondence created a persona just as he did in his fiction, and that the former is largely identical to the latter, the "secondary author" (18). This secondary author, Airaksinen contends, "need not have much to do with the real H. P. Lovecraft. To argue that by reading the letters we learn about the man behind them is unwarranted. On the contrary, the letters can be understood as his fictional autobiography" (18).[11] I do not choose to delve into such psychologizing over Lovecraft's letters but rather avoid exploiting them as premises or evidence for my thesis and only make use of them to supplement my arguments: I sample

[10] See Joshi, *A Subtler Magick*, 236. Joshi speculates that "every 100 letters of Lovecraft would fill an average . . . volume. The 10,000 surviving letters would then fill 100 volumes! And the putative 100,000 letters, if they survived, would fill 1000 volumes!" (237). He concludes with the "image of hundreds of bound volumes of letters, dwarfing to insignificance the dozen or so volumes of what would be his collected fiction, poetry, and essays, [which] will make us comprehend the full literary and personal achievement of H. P. Lovecraft, the man who lived to write and wrote to live" (249).

[11] To support his case, Airaksinen cites the example of Lovecraft's lamentable, and critically much-discussed, racialism:

> As his wife, Sonia Greene (Davis) relates, Lovecraft used to rave about the "mongrel" immigrants to her, so much so that he seemed to be on the verge of madness. Here we can say that by doing so, Lovecraft was recreating himself as the secondary author, making himself "his own most fantastic creation," not by being the person he was, a man married to a Jew. (19)

them for the author's consenting or dissenting views on various points of his own fiction. Lovecraft's essays and periodical contributions are handled in the same way.

My analysis involves a twofold investigation of Lovecraftian thematics and language, in which I call to my aid four major bodies of criticism and theory: 1) the theories, notions, or "philosophies" of the literary modes of the Gothic (or gothic[12]), the fantastic, horror, and (tangentially) science fiction; 2) Lovecraft studies, a fully evolved and still developing discipline involving the biographical and critical study of Lovecraft and his writings (with hundreds of monographs, essays, and articles); 3) the philosophy of science, including notions on empiricism, induction, paradigm shifts, and scientific language; and, finally, 4) the philosophy of language, including various ideas on the creation and operation of concepts and categories, the cognitive-linguistic tools of analogy and metaphor, and so forth. Other areas consulted include the philosophy of the sublime, phenomenology, experientialism and Romantic thought—some as evidence, others merely as heuristics.

I consult all secondary material not having to do directly with literary theory—such as the various writings on the philosophy of science and the philosophy of language—in accordance with the idea of discourse as used by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things* (1966), propounded later in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), and summarized in "The Discourse on Language" (1971). My underlying assumption throughout this study is that discourse ("body of knowledge" or "discipline"), or, rather, the representation of primarily the discourse of science and epistemology (the philosophical works simultaneously reflecting on and constituting, creating and produced by, this discourse) finds its way into the texts under survey. Along these lines, I take the Lovecraftian text to reflect the discourse of knowledge of its time (representations of different established bodies of knowledge, disciplines, and paradigms,[13] as well as the discourse of earlier times reflected or reformulated in those

[12] See my distinction in chapter 1.

[13] See my analysis of Kuhnian paradigms in chapter 2.

representations) exactly as a form of representation itself. "Reflect" might prove a misleading term here, indicating a sort of system of "signification" where the Lovecraftian text would operate as a myth of science or cognition.[14] An appropriate alternative expression would be "parallel," to designate an activity of the Lovecraftian text which exists alongside, or within, the discourse of natural science and epistemology. It is thus infused with the ideas carried in those bodies, formulations, and legacies of knowledge, and it also, to a much lesser extent, influences them. In this sense, the assumption that the Lovecraftian text is embedded in a specific context (the discourse of science, cognition, and language in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) need not involve various axioms of traditional literary criticism, such as an author that pours his ideas into his writings. I would point out, however, that I exploit Foucauldian discourse theory implicitly: it is not subjected to an analysis (at least not until the conclusion) but becomes the basis on which I can legitimately correlate ideas, theories, and assumptions of the Lovecraftian text and its discursive contexts, without having recourse to the author as a historical personality in his biographical totality. (As I have explained earlier, I only use biographies and autobiographies as intriguing additions to my argument.)

Procedure

In the chapters that follow I outline my major argument concerning the Lovecraftian text, namely, that Lovecraft's fiction is utterly ambiguous, exhibiting on both thematic and linguistic levels the coexistence of, and vacillation between, the topoi of production and discovery, mapmaking and map-reading, the planting of edifices and the excavation of hidden structures. This ambiguity, first observed as a paradoxical dialectic, manifests itself in the Lovecraftian text's dealings in the fantastic and horror, science and art, conceptualization and categorization, analogy and metaphor, and is scanned throughout four separate chapters which,

[14] See Barthes, *Mythologies*.

to a certain extent, divide my analysis along the lines of the auxiliary "philosophies" outlined above.

As the Lovecraftian choice of genre, setting, and the special confrontation with the "unknown" demands, in chapter 1 I benefit greatly from, and point out the contrasts and similarities between, major theories on the nature of the fantastic, the gothic, and horror fiction, such as those of Tzvetan Todorov, Eric S. Rabkin, Kathryn Hume, Rosemary Jackson, Roger B. Solomon, Kelly Hurley, Noël Carroll, Dani Cavallaro, and other cogent theories—keeping in mind that the Lovecraftian "weird tale" is a category capable of condensing the major genre-specifics of horror, the gothic, the fantastic, and even those of science fiction. I establish the relationship between Lovecraftian gothicity and cosmicism as well as regionalism and organicism; then I analyze the motif of confrontation between the protagonist and the unknown, that is, a scientific anomaly, which serves as the site of the fantastic, manifested in three interconnected loci of the Lovecraftian text.

Chapter 2 starts out by offering an overview of the scientific dimension of the Lovecraftian text, including the establishment of the protagonist as a scientist on the basis of a weak definition of what science is, adopted from Peter Medawar. The confrontation motif is analyzed with respect to the Lovecraftian scientific paradigm as a set of the protagonist's tools for interpreting unknown phenomena of the universe, a uniform—empiricist, materialist, and, to a certain extent, rationalist—vision of reality. The confrontation motif involves the scientific paradigm and its radical refutation and disintegration. At this point I introduce Thomas S. Kuhn's idea of paradigm change, which opposes the view of science as a gradual accretion of knowledge. I point out the central ambiguous attitude of the Lovecraftian text to science and empiricism, which implies that the dominant paradigm is suitable for detecting the unknown phenomenon but not for meaningfully interpreting the anomaly on its own grounds, and in this failure it subverts its own premise. This results in all of Lovecraft's tales

in an incomplete paradigm shift. The chapter also makes use of Kuhn's critics, such as Margaret Masterman, Paul Feyerabend, and Karl Popper.

The confrontation motif and the incomplete paradigm shift have reverberations in language as well, therefore, chapter 3 is built on the premise that language not only reflects but also fabricates the protagonists's empiricist-materialist paradigm and even controls the processes of confrontation, perception, and interpretation up to the point where the flaws in the system of human conceptual and linguistic processes show. The linguistic network is flawed as it cannot account for or define the anomaly. I demonstrate the implosion of the notion of a privileged "expert" or "specialist" language and show that any attempt at a conceptual-linguistic representation of the supramundane anomaly (from classical to prototype categorization, from scientific or linguistic precision to vagueness) necessarily ends in failure due to the interstitial nature of the Lovecraftian text—that is, the urge to deal with things beyond and between the boundaries of categories. My arguments are assisted by the ideas of Ludwig Wittgenstein, Mary Hesse, Eleanor Rosch, George Lakoff, Hilary Putnam, Saul Kripke, John R. Taylor, George W. Grace, Richard Boyd, and Kuhn himself.

The Lovecraftian protagonist's experience of the anomaly and his gestures of naming, categorization, and analogy all flow back into the paradigm that conditions the perception of the anomaly. The Lovecraftian disruption of this circular process is pointed out in chapter 4, where I deal in greater detail with the central Lovecraftian ambiguity which is precipitated by the dynamics of various conceptual-linguistic processes converging on a Lovecraftian rhetoric or "style." Relying on George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's, and Lakoff and Mark Turner's, ideas on conceptual metaphor and experientialism, I detect the relationship of quasi-scientific categorization and analogy to poetic metaphor and metonymy. Tracing the ambiguous metaphor—which, I argue, is a constituent of the Lovecraftian fantastic—I turn to Paul Ricoeur's notion of the living metaphor as the embodiment of tension. The livingness—the referentiality and ontological nature—of metaphor ensures a definition of the scientific

anomaly in an indirect way. By referring to what is interstitial, void-like, and monstrous, this metaphorically active, indirect, and "negative" Lovecraftian text becomes a "monster" in its own right. Lovecraft's "adjectivitis" (Burleson, "Lovecraft and Adjectivitis")—that is, his urge to overuse and misuse adjectives, a central part of his "purple prose" (Mariconda 44)—may also be traced back to metaphor. Furthermore, a sort of disintegration is detected in the linguistic processes where the indescribable and unnamable overflow into the world of representation via the confrontation motif. The conceptual impact of estrangement of human categories brings about a strange "death in life" of language and epistemology. The chapter also makes use of the idea that mapping and representation are kindred activities (based on an idea of J. Hillis Miller) and connects the mapping activity of the text to Lovecraft's regionalism and gothic-cosmic locales.

All four chapters make ample use of the virtually inexhaustible inventory of Lovecraft criticism, represented here chiefly by the work of S. T. Joshi, Donald R. Burleson, Kieran Setiya, Timo Airaksinen, Peter Cannon, Maurice Lévy, Fritz Lieber, Dirk W. Mosig, David Ashby Oakies, Peter Penzoldt, Robert H. Waugh, and Bradley Alan Will. I use mainly the idea of "cosmicism" alongside other arguments of no smaller import. In spite of the extensive scope of Lovecraft studies, some aspects of Lovecraft's fiction have not yet been fully investigated, and I challenge Joshi's reproach of Lovecraft that "he failed to probe, or even to perceive the importance of, the realms of epistemology and language analysis that were revolutionizing the philosophical thought of his day" (*Decline* 6). Even if we have no evidence of Lovecraft's reading or studying Wittgenstein and other philosophers, his fiction incorporated problems of a similar kind. As Airaksinen declares, Lovecraft "penetrates into areas which challenge the limits of the literary realm" (1). My reading of Lovecraft's stories discloses the ways the Lovecraftian text itself may be considered as the locus of a philosophical paradigm shift in the world of popular literature.

This idea is carried over to the conclusion, where I sum up the major points concerning my study of the Lovecraftian text, while also correlating these findings with the idea of an evolution, or, rather, genealogy, of scientific discourse as discussed by Foucault. I show the major relevance of the operations of the Lovecraftian text to Lovecraft's entire oeuvre and, taking a broader perspective, to the nature of twentieth-century horror literature.

"Horror has reached prime time," argues American critic Mark Edmundson, "and it has stayed there. . . . horror plays a central role in American culture" (3). The reasons for this cultural imperialism of horror—some of which my dissertation outlines—may be best detected in Lovecraft's writings. Analyzing the gothic sentiment prior to World War I, Martin Tropp maintains that "the heritage of horror taught a society undergoing a frightening metamorphosis to face its fears, give them form, and, perhaps, to live with them in uneasy peace" (9). Nonetheless, in seeking the American transition from the "protagonists" of Leslie Fiedler's seminal and more general study, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), such as Charles Brockden Brown, Poe, and Hawthorne, to today's masters (Anne Rice, Clive Barker, Stephen King, Thomas Ligotti, Ramsey Campbell, Neil Gaiman, and many others) or the more general gothic sentiment identified by Edmundson, the "roots of horror" go back to Lovecraft, as "[t]here is simply no dominant weird writer in America between H. P. Lovecraft and Stephen King" (Joshi, *The Modern Weird Tale* 4).

But Lovecraft studies do not only teach us to look for the roots of horror. Donald R. Burleson is right when he observes:

> In an age when the human race should question its own position in the world—when our awareness of the vastness of space should give us a certain humility, and when our continuing arrogance threatens to render the planet incapable of supporting life—one could do worse than to ponder the bleak but somehow darkly fascinating world-view put forward in the fiction of H. P. Lovecraft. Our very tissues may be made of star-

stuff, but in Lovecraft's world, we are still orphans in this universe of stars. ("Lovecraft's Humankind" 44)

I.

CONFRONTING THE VOID

Landscape and Gothicity

His love of the New England landscape is a fairly commonplace fact about Howard Phillips Lovecraft. An anglophile, Lovecraft paradoxically proved as firmly attached to his local Rhode Island birthplace as his character Charles Dexter Ward, who indulges in long midnight walks in Providence, plunging headlong into the whirlpool of "the clustered spires, domes, roofs and sky-scraper summits of the lower town" and "the purple hills of the countryside beyond" (*The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* 95).[15] One of Lovecraft's earliest critics, Barton Levi St. Armand, contends that "Lovecraft would never have been Lovecraft without Providence—its history, its atmosphere, its legends, its peculiar and individual character" ("Facts in the Case" 173). "There was," he asserts, "an almost symbiotic relationship between the author and his environment" (173). Lovecraft himself asserts in one of his letters: "I am Providence, and Providence is myself" (*Selected Letters II* 51).

The year 1926, when Lovecraft finally returned to his hometown after the painful and humiliating "period of exile" in New York (Burleson, *H. P. Lovecraft: A Critical Study* 97), retains a special significance in Lovecraft's biography:[16] his writing started to develop a

[15] Barton Levi St. Armand labels Lovecraft "a great local color writer" and goes as far as to rank him with "his Southern contemporary William Faulkner" ("Facts in the Case of H. P. Lovecraft" 173). Ward is one of the most successful of all potential Lovecraft personas. Donald R. Burleson even speculates on "Ward" being a shortened version of "Howard" (*H. P. Lovecraft: A Critical Study* 127).

[16] He writes ecstatically of his return:

> Well—the train sped on, and I experienced silent convulsions of joy in returning step by step to a waking and tri-dimensional life. New Haven—New London—and then quaint Mystic . . . . Then at last a subtler magick fill'd the air—nobler roofs and steeples, with the train rushing airily above them on its

hitherto unseen masterly quality, both the scope and quantity of his cosmic fiction expanded, resulting, as S. T. Joshi remarks, in "the most remarkable outburst of fiction-writing in Lovecraft's entire career" (*A Dreamer and a Visionary* 242).[17] As Stefan Dziemianowicz observes in "Outsiders and Aliens: The Uses of Isolation in Lovecraft's Fiction," "[a]s Lovecraft grew intellectually in the years following his return to Providence, so did the sweep of his cosmic fiction" (187). The shift towards all-encompassing cosmicism, heralded by the seminal Lovecraft Mythos text "The Call of Cthulhu," went hand in hand with the blooming of Lovecraft's regionalism.[18] 1926 saw the perfection of the use of New England settings in stories such as *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* and, most importantly, *The Case of*

> lofty viaduct—*Westerly*—in His Majesty's Province of RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE-PLANTATIONS! GOD SAVE THE KING!! Intoxication follow'd . . . THEN—a delirious marble dome outside the window—a hissing o fair brakes—a slackening of speed—surges of ecstasyand dropping of clouds from my eyes and mind—HOME—UNION STATION—*Providence!!!!* (*Selected Letters* 2 46-47)

[17] Lovecraft's relative slowness in and "distaste" for reading and writing in New York led to "two short novels, two novelettes, and three short stories, totaling some 15,000 words . . . along with a handful of poems and essays" in Providence (Joshi, *Dreamer* 242).

[18] Terminology for the pantheon of Lovecraft's monstrous creations started with August Derleth's contrivance, the "Cthulhu Mythos." Unfortunately, as Joshi explains, "Derleth's unwillingness or inability to understand the Lovecraft works caused him to conceive and disseminate a highly distorted impression of Lovecraft" ("Lovecraft Criticism: A Study" 24). Thus, his title for Lovecraft's mythology is also somewhat inconsequential, considering that in the Lovecraftian pantheon, even though he is important, Cthulhu is neither the main character nor an avatar of a Satan-like arch-evil, which was Derleth's justification. Dirk W. Mosig proposes an alternative name for the mythos, the "Yog-Sothoth Cycle of Myth," after the mythical monstrosity that most frequently appears in the tales ("H. P. Lovecraft: Myth-Maker" 106). Thus, Mosig makes a distinction based on quantity, rather than quality; a premise that is close to the ideas of the materialistic Lovecraft. In the essay, though, I will employ Joshi and Burleson's preferred and most inclusive term "Lovecraft Mythos."

Charles Dexter Ward and "The Colour Out of Space," both completed in March 1927.[19] In *Charles Dexter Ward*, through extensive descriptions originating in an architectural and antiquarian interest, Lovecraft successfully recreates the Providence atmosphere. Jason C. Eckhardt praises the story in "The Cosmic Yankee" as "a victory cry of New England; the apex of its expression in Lovecraft's work; a poem in prose and history of all that was dear to him" (94). The protagonist Ward is "an antiquarian from infancy, no doubt gaining his taste from the venerable town around him, and from the relics of the past which filled every corner of his parents' old mansion in Prospect Street on the crest of the hill" (*Charles Dexter Ward* 92). In spite of the ideal locale, or, rather, due to the architectural survival of the colonial past, horror intrudes upon Providence when the place of the Faust-like Ward is taken by his double, the "astonishing, enigmatic, and obscurely horrible" wizard Joseph Curwen (99), Ward's abominable ancestor revived from the dead.[20] The Lovecraftian text devotes a great amount of attention to the theme that Donald R. Burleson labels "unwholesome survival,"

> the theme that some things, and some beings, outlive what would be from the ordinary human viewpoint their rightful existence, producing circumstances in which it must be concluded that the present is no place where we can hide from an encroaching past that can reach forward to find us. ("On Lovecraft's Themes" 136)

The Lovecraftian text teems with the unwholesome survivals of individuals ("The Picture in the House" [1920], "The Outsider" [1921], "The Thing on the Doorstep" [1933]) and the revealed existence of degenerate, hybrid, or alien races ("The Lurking Fear" [1922], "The Call of Cthulhu," "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" [1931]). In *Charles Dexter Ward*—

[19] For a list of Lovecraft's references to real sites, contemporary events, and historical figures embedded in these narratives, see Joshi, "Topical References in Lovecraft," *Primal Sources: Essays on H. P. Lovecraft*, 129, and Jason C. Eckhardt's "The Cosmic Yankee," Schultz and Joshi, eds., *An Epicure in the Terrible*.

[20] My comparison of Ward to Faust is taken from Burleson *A Critical Study*, 129.

similarly to in “Dagon” (1917), “The Temple” (1920), or *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931)—the concept of unwholesome survival is inherent also in the landscape.

Robert H. Waugh in “Landscapes, Selves, and Others in Lovecraft” offers a Jungian categorization of the Lovecraftian locale: he distinguishes between the personal, the ideal, the shadow, and the double landscapes (221). The personal or experiential landscape is extended into infinity and transcended by the ideal one (221-22). The shadow, the opposite of the ideal landscape, in its turn “reverses the values” of the personal landscape: “What is there fertile is barren here or disordered: the wood has sickened or petrified; the wall is a prison or, more often, a labyrinth; and the river has become a stagnant canal” (224). “The double landscape,” argues Waugh, “combines the ideal and the shadow, but through the form of the personal landscape” (225). Waugh lists, beside Providence, other double landscapes in Lovecraft, such as Arkham, Kingsport-Innsmouth, and the two-faced Leng (225-26). While I doubt the full validity of Waugh’s contention that “Providence in . . . ‘The Case of Charles Dexter Ward’ . . . is a double, divided into the old, ordered, colonial world of the Anglo-Saxon and the new, formless, pullulating world of the immigrant” (225)—since, in this case Curwen would be the representative of an immigrant group, which he, being infinitely closer to colonial origins than Ward, is not[21]—I certainly find that the practices of the evil Curwen highlight a shadow Providence, a malignant, gothic potential in the city’s ancient heritage.[22] “Gothic atmospheres,” asserts Fred Botting, “have repeatedly signaled the disturbing return of pasts upon presents” (1). The gothic reawakening in *Charles Dexter Ward* palls over the ideal Providence, an extension of Lovecraft’s personal, experiential region. In “The Dunwich

[21] The role of the “formless immigrant” group—turning up graves—appears almost insignificant in the tale as compared to Curwen’s unwholesome survival from colonial times.

[22] Throughout this essay, I will use the term Gothic—adhering to a long tradition—with a capital letter to specify a certain genre or type of story conceived in the eighteenth century. The term gothic and gothicity, however, will appear in lowercase, signifying attributes derived from the Gothic.

Horror" (1928),[23] the Lovecraftian text launches its special gothic tone by an eloquent description of the gradual opening up of a double landscape:

> When a traveller in north central Massachusetts takes the wrong fork at the junction of the Aylesbury pike just beyond Dean's Corners he comes upon a lonely and curious country. The ground gets higher, and the brier-bordered stone walls press closer and closer against the ruts of the dusty, curving road. The trees of the frequent forest belts seem too large, and the wild weeds, brambles, and grasses attain a luxuriance not often found in settled regions. At the same time the planted fields appear singularly few and barren; while the sparsely scattered houses wear a surprisingly uniform aspect of age, squalor, and dilapidation. . . . When a rise in the road brings the mountains in view above the deep woods, the feeling of strange uneasiness is increased. (206)

The Dunwich region seems too unhuman, but only after a traveler—much like Lovecraft on one of his road trips—hiking the well-known roads of the Massachusetts personal-ideal landscape, "takes the wrong fork."[24] What arises is a shadow landscape of "age, squalor, and dilapidation": the vista of the hills and forests is bleak, gray, and not at all comforting, while the vegetation appears to subdue and expel human habitations. The shadow region is where the workings of Lovecraftian gothicity are initiated.

Unwholesome gothic survivals delineated along the double axes of time and space, premised on what Timothy H. Evans identifies as Lovecraft's topographical or "cultural landscape" knowledge (187), appear in Lovecraft's earlier stories, too, such as "The Picture in

[23] The story forms an exception in the body of Lovecraft's tales, with respect to its quasi-comic handling of the main characters and its action-crammed plot. See Burleson, *A Critical Study*, 140-49, and *Lovecraft: Disturbing the Universe*, 118-32.

[24] The image of the protagonist moving onto unexplored terrain perhaps also signifies, allegorically, the respectable gentleman-author Lovecraft's delving into his macabre material.

the House" (1920) and "The Festival" (1923). These incipient tales, not the least surprisingly, already contain elements reminiscent of travelogues "with protagonists who, conducting Lovecraft style walking tours, literally walk into the past, or into ghostly survivals of the past in the present" (Evans 187). In Dunwich, too, the past still lingers on, like the "faint, malign odour about the village street, as of the massed mould and decay of centuries" ("Dunwich" 207). Everything reeks of "a certain season of horror," after which "all the signboards pointing toward [the settlement] have been taken down" (207). The gothic survival usually connects to abysses of space and time. Maurice Lévy asserts in his seminal *Lovecraft: A Study in the Fantastic*: "The descent to ultradeep sites coincides always with a regression to an anterior stage of chronology" (67). In "The Temple," "The Festival," "The Rats in the Walls" (1923), *Charles Dexter Ward*, "The Lurking Fear," *Mountains of Madness,* and partially in "Dagon," "Cthulhu" (where the ocean bottom rises to the surface), and "Dunwich" (a potential descent into rocky crevasses comes into view), protagonists open up the gothic rift in the past while descending to the depths.

In Lovecraft, shadow landscapes are also open for *exploration* through the device of sleep. Lévy contends that "space is most profoundly altered by his [Lovecraft's] oneiric vision" (46). The regions of the double landscape of Leng, for instance, among many other sites, are satisfactorily explored in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, where, according to Burleson, the dreamer Randolph Carter roams the oneiric landscape not only symbolically but literally, the text positing a statement on the psychic nature of dream (*A Critical Study* 123).[25] Burleson calls this recurring theme of Lovecraft's "oneiric objectivism," "the theme that there is at best an ambiguous distinction between dreaming and reality" ("On Lovecraft's Themes" 136). The rest of the Kadath cycle stories, "The Silver Key" (1926) and "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" (1933), but also other tales such as "The White Ship" (1919), "Celephaïs" (1920), and "Hypnos" (1922), or the rather gruesome "The Dreams in the Witch

[25] On the paradoxes and illogic in *Kadath* see Joshi, "The Dream World."

House" (1932), overflow with dream images of alien dimensions, weird sounds and colors, and journeys into the human psyche and the Jungian collective unconscious.[26]

Although his oneiric stories are mostly ranked among Dunsany-style Fantasy,[27] Lovecraft is widely considered a writer of horror fiction on account of his cosmic mythos tales. Horror, Lovecraftian cosmicism, and gothic survival coincide on various levels. First, horror writing is regarded as a direct successor to the Gothic novel. Noël Carroll in *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (1990) contends that "horror . . . begins to appear in the eighteenth century. The immediate source of the horror genre was the English Gothic novel" (4). Clive Bloom, in his introduction to *Gothic Horror: A Reader's Guide from Poe to King and Beyond*, similarly asserts: "It was gothicism, with its formality, codification, ritualistic elements and artifice . . . that transformed the old folk tale of terror into the modern horror story" (2). Further, both the Gothic and horror operate with fearful imagery to differing degrees and deliver to the reader a feeling terror or horror.[28] Bloom points out that "most

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[26] Dreams and writing, in actuality, are almost inseparable in Lovecraft's life: as Maurice Lévy writes, "Lovecraft tells us in his letters . . . how some tales were written immediately upon waking, from the still vivid memories of a dream" (*Lovecraft: A Study* 97).

[27] Lovecraft read Lord Dunsany's stories in 1919 and confessed in a letter that he "became a Dunsany devotee for life" (*Selected Letters II* 328). He wrote in 1923: "My first encounter with him . . . gave an immense impetus to my writing; perhaps the greatest it has ever had" (qtd. in Hyles 212). He became affected to an extent, that later he tried consciously to get rid of the influence—second only to Poe's—which, he felt, was slowly gaining control over his original style. "There are my 'Poe' pieces and my 'Dunsany' pieces—but alas—where are any Lovecraft pieces . . . ?" he grieves in another letter (*Selected Letters II* 315). His self-criticism is somewhat unjust, since, as Vernon Hyles claims, "these slightly decadent gods of the Irish writer simply do not have the odious and fascinating presence of those invented by Lovecraft" (213). Mosig also argues, discussing Lovecraft's "The White Ship," that "while the tale shows similarity to Dunsany's 'Wonderful Window' . . . there is little doubt that the message, the inner meaning, is truly Lovecraftian" ("A Psychological Odyssey" 187).

[28] I will not burden my study with the various contradictory and ambivalent distinctions between horror and terror. For a detailed discussion of this see Botting, *Gothic*, 9-10; Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*; Dani

popular gothic fiction is determined in its plotting by the need for horror and sensation" (2), which element serves as the focus of Carroll's psychological study, who devotes his entire book to the, mainly reception-aesthetic, study of the "horror affect" (14), something that causes the emotion of "art-horror" (8), as distinguished from "natural horror" (13).

Both the historical and the affective aspects are satisfactorily represented by Lovecraft's beloved literary form, the "weird tale." Although far from being a coinage of Lovecraft himself,[29] his theoretical writings—such as "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction," the "In Defense of Dagon" series, and, most of all, his unparalleled essay "Supernatural Horror in Literature" (1927)—greatly facilitated the enduring use and broad acknowledgement of the label. "Supernatural Horror" is Lovecraft's attempt at establishing "the genuineness and dignity of the weirdly horrible tale as a literary form" (423). Therein, he defines "the typical weird tale of standard literature" historically as "a child of the eighteenth century" (432). Considering the affective nature of the weird tale, Lovecraft concludes: "The one test of the really weird is simply this—whether or not there be excited in the reader a profound sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers" (427). Nevertheless, the reliance on fear and fright, the "horror affect," is only a necessary but not a sufficient condition of the weird. In "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction," Lovecraft unmistakably links Gothic roots, horror, and fear to an impulse towards cosmicism:

> I choose weird stories because they suit my inclination best—one of my strongest and most persistent wishes being to achieve, momentarily, the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law . . . These stories frequently emphasise the element of horror because fear is our deepest

Cavallaro, *The Gothic Vision*, 2-5; King, *Danse Macabre*, 22-23; and Peter Penzoldt, *The Supernatural in Fiction*, 9.

[29] The term probably derives from the magazine of the same title, *Weird Tales*, the major publisher of Lovecraft's tales.

> and strongest emotion, and the one which best lends itself to the creation of Nature-defying illusions. Horror and the unknown or the strange are always closely connected, so that it is hard to create a convincing picture of shattered natural law or cosmic alienage or "outsideness" without laying stress on the emotion of fear. (113)

Lovecraft does not claim, however, that cosmicism is his own invention. As he writes, "the literature of cosmic fear . . . has always existed, and will always exist; and no better evidence of its tenacious vigour can be cited than the impulse which now and then drives writers of totally opposite leanings to try their hands at it in isolated tales" ("Supernatural Horror" 425-26).[30]

The Lovecraftian notion of the weird may succeed in encompassing cosmicism and the horror affect, yet, as a genre, the weird tale escapes definition. As Lovecraft in "Supernatural Horror" summarizes, "we cannot expect all weird tales to conform absolutely to any theoretical model" (426). Joshi similarly warns that

> it should not be assumed that I have now come to regard the weird tale as a genre with various subgenres. My final point is this: weird writers utilize the schemas I have outlined [of fantasy, supernatural horror, nonsupernatural horror, and quasi science fiction] . . . *precisely in accordance with their philosophical predispositions*. (*The Weird Tale* 10)

Joshi's book, for that matter, manages to unite in the same study a diverse array of authors including Lord Dunsany, Ambrose Bierce, Lovecraft, and M. R. James. Since the form is only

[30] A thorough description of cosmic horror, tracing the network of connections to Lovecraft, the sublime, Romanticism, the Gothic, the Decadents, science fiction, with a brief but substantial bibliography, is found in Joshi, ed., *Icons of Horror and the Supernatural*, 65-96.

partly defined by its conceptual characteristics and, at the same time, employs a wide spectrum of concepts, all that can be concluded is "the weird tale is an inherently philosophical mode in that it frequently compels us to address directly such fundamental issues as the nature of the universe and our place in it" (11). What we can come away with is that certain authors write texts utilizing their various philosophical insights, and "the result is what we (in retrospect) call weird fiction" (11).[31]

The search for the weird as a genre may prove ultimately unsuccessful. Nonetheless, another way to grasp the most significant aspect of the Lovecraftian weird tale—while retaining its kinship to horror, fear, and the cosmic—is to judge it by the manner, degree, and nature of the gothic contact between alternative worlds represented in the Lovecraftian text. Roger B. Salomon in *Mazes of the Serpent: An Anatomy of Horror Narrative* (2002) asserts about horror: "Horror narrative involves thresholds—a narrative in which worlds, settings, environments impinge, where crossing . . . is the basic action" (9). Thresholds, boundaries, and frontiers between the ideal and shadow regions of space and time; between our homelands and the depths of the cosmos; between the here-and-now of textual reality (when reading Lovecraft, these are commonly held to be valid also extra-textually)[32] and the alternative reality; between waking and the Jungian types inscribed in myth and sleep; appear, precisely, as the loci of gothicity in the Lovecraftian text. In the introduction to *Frontier*

[31] In his sequel to *The Weird Tale*, Joshi comments on the connection between the weird and horror:

> My own term "weird fiction" (which is really Lovecraft's) seems to be gaining some currency among critics, but I do not expect it to be used in the bookstores that have segregated what is believed to be weird fiction into a separate "horror" section. I myself fall into the habit of using the two terms synonymously, but strictly speaking I regard "horror" to be a subset of the weird, since fantasy of the Dunsany or Tolkien type is just as much a branch of weird fiction as any other; and "horror" itself must be subdivided into supernatural and nonsupernatural horror. (*The Modern Weird Tale* 3)

[32] See chapter 2 for a discussion of the problem of reality in the Lovecraftian text.

Gothic: Terror and Wonder at the Frontier in American Literature, David Mogen, Scott P. Sanders, and Joanne B. Karpinski point out that "gothicism results when the epic moment [a culture reaching its zenith and producing its definitive epic] passes, and a peculiar rift in history develops and widens into a dark chasm that separates what is now from what has been" (16). When such breaks occur, "[t]he history of the other speaks, not from the history books, but from the landscape, which is no longer a locale, which opens itself as an unmediated text of the other filled with dark ruins and shadowy presences whose experience is queasy, uncertain, chaotic, and unknown" (16).

The Lovecraftian text goes a step further in opening up a gothic crevasse from a mere crevice in the landscape to mold regional settings into its cosmic imagery. As Eckhardt concludes in his "Cosmic Yankee," "Lovecraft was able to take their common foundation—New England, its physical state, its history and mind-set—and extend it beyond the everyday," through "cosmic exaggeration" he "transcended his heritage . . . and steered a course for the stars" (99). In the chronological development of the Lovecraftian text, the traditional eighteenth-century Gothic props of decaying buildings ("The Picture in the House"), castles on moors ("The Moon-Bog" [1921], "The Outsider," "The Rats in the Walls"), and cemeteries ("The Tomb" [1917], "The Statement of Randolph Carter" [1919], "The Unnamable" [1923]) gradually give way to more cosmic or external—even extra-terrestrial—actions and settings ("The Colour Out of Space" [1927], *Mountains of Madness*, "The Dreams in the Witch House," "Through the Gates of the Silver Key," "The Shadow Out of Time" [1934]), which, however, retain their gothic quality.

"The Colour Out of Space" opens with the narrator's description of the well-known New England landscape revealing its gothic qualities: "West of Arkham the hills rise wild, and there are valleys with deep woods that no axe has ever cut" (170). Similarly to "Dunwich," the entry into the shunned region is signaled by a "bad" road: "There was once a road over the hills and through the valleys . . . but people ceased to use it and a new road was

laid curving far toward the south. Traces of the old one can still be found amidst the weeds of a returning wilderness" (170). The cosmic quality in the story appears with the advent of a strange meteor:

> Then there had come that white noontide cloud, that string of explosions in the air, and that pillar of smoke from the valley far in the wood. And by night all Arkham had heard of the great rock that fell out of the sky and bedded itself in the ground beside the well at the Nahum Gardner place. (173)

The next sentence opens up the common New England locale of the Gardner farmhouse and makes it a playground of the void: "That was the house which had stood where the blasted heath was to come—the trim white Nahum Gardner house amidst its fertile gardens and orchards" (173-74). After this introduction the landscape remains broken up, defenseless against the rage of an irrupting alien power, and the cosmic quality is maintained up to the tale's end:

> It was just a colour out of space—a frightful messenger from unformed realms of infinity beyond all Nature as we know it; from realms whose mere existence stuns the brain and numbs us with the black extra-cosmic gulfs it throws open before our frenzied eyes. (199)

Thus the "extra-cosmic gulfs" in the story develop while their metonymical extension, the Lovecraftian text, opens up its gaping crevasses of cosmic thematics.

Viewed in the light of Lovecraft's cosmicism, the gothic signals a *threshold moment* of the Lovecraftian text where it takes the shadow versions of historical or imagined New England sites, and elegantly extends them towards, opens them up for, the void. Thus the

Lovecraftian text strives to gothicize the entire universe until it becomes a haunted house[33]—Eliot's Waste Land elevated to a cosmic scale.

It is perhaps clear by now that I am using terms such as "the gothic" and "gothicity" to refer, in discussion of Lovecraft, to something broader than a distinct eighteenth-century genre. I concentrate on the major motifs behind the genre of the Gothic which elevate it to the value of a cultural impulse—in Dani Cavallaro's terms, "a cultural discourse that utilizes images of disorder, obsession, psychological disarray and physical distortion for the purposes of both entertainment and ideological speculation" (vii). Bloom asserts that "the nature of the gothic is so disparate that it can include . . . works of fiction that contain neither supernatural nor horror elements but which do contain similar attitudes to setting, atmosphere or style" ("Introduction" 1-2). Thus, the gothic; an impulse that had spawned the genres of the Gothic Romance, the *conte cruel*, the *Märchen*, most of the fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm, the ghost story, the postmodern horror story, the science-fiction story, and had even acted as midwife at the birth of the detective story[34]; evidently has not died out with the last of the great nineteenth-century Gothic novels. Donald A. Ringe identifies the peak of the American Gothic in the works of Poe and Hawthorne: "After their passing, it ceased to play a significant role in major American fiction" (189). I cannot picture a more myopic view, although it is, perhaps, due to the fact that the "mass-gothicity" of American fiction may have not appeared so evident to the author in the early 1980s (since, apart from the gothic obsession of 1950s monster cinema, American horror writing sallied forth from the trenches of fandom only after the boom of the horror video culture, and even such author criticisms as on Lovecraft did not

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[33] I have taken this idea directly from the title of a song by Coil ("The Universe is a Haunted House," *Live One*).

[34] Since its early inception, the detective story has been conceptually attached to writers of the Gothic, horror, and fantasy, from Poe to Arthur Conan Doyle. In its later form as mystery or "whodunnit," the detective story remains linked to grisly horror and suspense elements deriving, also undoubtedly, from the Gothic.

appear until the late 1970s).[35] Furthermore, although Ringe understands the Gothic as a mode, he adheres to calling such fiction Gothic Romances, forms of writing that indeed disappeared with the nineteenth century or were to become radically reformulated by William Faulkner, Joyce Carol Oates, and the numerous writers of modern and postmodern horror. Of the afterlife of the Gothic in such fictions, Ringe, again, is dismissive: "The mode has become a minor one, . . . suited to only a narrow range of subjects" (189). While Fred Botting also adheres to a narrow view of the end of the Gothic, collating it with Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula* (1992) and conceding that "[d]ying . . . might just be the prelude to other spectral returns" (180), Mark Edmundson in *Nightmare on Main Street: Angels, Sadomasochism, and the Culture of Gothic* (1999) asserts: "American culture at large has become suffused with Gothic assumptions, with Gothic characters and plots" (xii). Edmundson understands the Gothic—"my" gothic—as a cultural drive, manifested in fiction, the cinema, television, clothing, musical subcultures, the body arts, or even in postmodern criminology. He maintains that "our [American] culture remains in many ways divided between Gothic and visionary impulses. And of the two, Gothic is surely ascendant" (179). Similarly, Carroll asserts that horror—the gothic successor[36]—"may even be the most long-lived, widely disseminated, and persistent genre of the post-Vietnam era" and "a major source of aesthetic stimulation" (1), suggesting a tradeoff of the American Dream for the "American Nightmare" (214).

Just as the American Dream is the vital metaphor nineteenth-century progressivism developed, the American Nightmare suggests an identical set of cultural icons turned into their binary opposites, their shadow doubles—beliefs, traditions, and images that, in their failure or absence, emboss and reveal their own underlying shadow regions. Horror is, as

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[35] Such work did not appear, apart from Lévy's ground-breaking 1969 Ph.D. thesis at the Sorbonne, which was to become *Lovecraft: A Study in the Fantastic*, translated in 1988 by S. T. Joshi and earning its author worldwide recognition.

[36] "The immediate source of the horror genre was the English Gothic novel," claims Carroll rather matter-of-factly (4).

Carroll asserts, "in certain historical circumstances . . . capable of incorporating or assimilating general social anxieties into its iconography of fear and distress" (207). Cavallaro in *The Gothic Vision*, likewise, sees "the tropes of mental, bodily and ethical disintegration fostered by the Gothic . . . inextricably linked to specific ideological, historical, and political circumstances" (vii), while Louis S. Gross in *Redefining the American Gothic: From* Wieland *to* Day of the Dead (1989) reads Gothic narratives as "a kind of demonic history text, an alternative vision of American experience" (2). Mogen, Sanders, and Karpinski in the introduction to *Frontier Gothic* also identify the gothicity of "the other" as that of marginalized cultural groups (16). Although this view would certainly prove informative in Lovecraft's case,[37] I will restrict the scope of my study—in line with the Lovecraftian macro-theme of cosmicism—to the epistemology of various cognitive shadow areas, mainly of scientific knowledge and the intellect's confrontation with an unknowable cosmos. Gross asserts that gothic writing "is concerned with the acquisition and internalizing of kinds of knowledge" (1), an impulse that becomes most distinct in the Lovecraftian text's obsession with knowledge, science, and the problems of rationality. Even though the Lovecraftian text is basically of an epistemological nature, its relation to knowledge is complex and fraught with paradoxes, as I will show in the second chapter.

The Gothic Crevasse and the Cosmic Interstice

The shadow regions staked out by narratives of a gothic impulse highlight latent anxieties which remain to hold fast the cultural imagination. Cavallaro argues:

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[37] In Lovecraft, images of women and of racial minorities more often than not converge with images of alienation and monstrosity. On the topic of women in Lovecraft see Mollie L. Burleson, "The Outsider: A Woman?"; Donald R. Burleson, "Lovecraft and Gender"; and my "The Innsmouth 'Thing.'" On Lovecraft's racialist ideas see Joshi, *H. P. Lovecraft: The Decline of the West*; Mitch Frye, "The Refinement of 'Crude Allegory'"; and Joel Pace, "Queer Tales?"

> The enduring hold of Gothicity may be attributed, to a considerable extent, to its inclination to draw us into tabooed universes . . . It exposes areas of otherwise inhibited expression, the *non-things* that insistently fill up the interstices between one accepted cultural compartment and the next. (12)

The Lovecraftian text, "a mating of Gothic horror and cosmic terror" (St. Armand, *Roots* 4), equally insists on the dark interstices between the illuminated niches of solidified knowledge. The *Necronomicon*, Lovecraft's infamous grimoire,[38] expounds the mysteries of the alien monster-gods thus: "The Old Ones were, the Old Ones are, and the Old Ones shall be. Not in the spaces we know, but *between* them. They walk serene and primal, undimensioned and to us unseen" ("Dunwich" 219). The "spaces we know" come to us as comfortable pigeonholes, while the nefarious "*between*" is yet unexplored.[39] Although the Arkham streets in "The Dreams in the Witch House," for instance, appear worn down and ugly, they hold more or less human habitations. The witch house of the title, however, provides strange revelations for Walter Gilman, the young student of mathematics, as a peculiar spot in the attic opens into other dimensions where the Salem witch Keziah Mason, her familiar Brown Jenkin, and the Black Man roam free. After Gilman discovers the way to travel in that uninhabitable region, he is contaminated by the "between":

> Whether the dreams brought on the fever or the fever brought on the dreams Walter Gilman did not know. . . . Gilman's dreams consisted largely in plunges through limitless abysses of inexplicably colored twilight and bafflingly disordered sound;

[38] The *Necronomicon* has had a curious afterlife following Lovecraft's death. Many fans considered it an existing document, ignoring the tongue-in-cheek quality of Lovecraft's own "History of the *Necronomicon*" (1927).

[39] Ironically, in the *Necronomicon*, descriptions of the Old Ones are given with a dogmatic authority. The case of descriptions and the possibilities of Lovecraftian naming will be discussed in chapter 4.

> abysses whose material and gravitational properties, and whose relation to his own entity, he could not even begin to explain. (300)

This cosmic and interdimensional between is what occupies Burleson when in "Lovecraft and Interstitiality" he revisits his schema of Lovecraftian thematics to show that interstitiality—the aesthetics of the between, the abyss—is an overarching motif and device in Lovecraft's fiction. Burleson argues that the significant power of Lovecraft's work derives from its representation of the interstices that open up between human categories formed about the universe. "[T]o the extent that monstrousness springs from interstitiality," he speculates,

> Lovecraft may well then have created the ultimate monster of all: his universe, a universe neither simply caring, certainly, nor simply one in which humankind . . . can ever see the cosmos as one in which the lost hope for compassion is beyond all imaginable recall. Lovecraft places us in an unthinkable position—from most monsters in horror literature, we can flee; but when we are, in our very tissues, woven into a monstrous universe, then so long as we live and breathe and think, there is nowhere we can run. (33)

Lovecraft's cosmic landscape—derived from his "prima materia," Providence and Rhode Island, and "transmut[ed] through the alchemy of his art into a rarefied and golden product" (St. Armand, "Facts in the Case" 173)—comprises the loci of gothic confrontation between powers of the known and the unknown, the possible and the impossible. These loci open up the blind spots of experience, animated by the will of the intellect (not the author's), to mold the universe into graspable forms. To the degree this cosmic gothicity operates subversively, the text outlines topographies of Lovecraft's beloved sites and extends them into the uncaring,

cold cosmos (Eckhardt 99). The confrontation necessarily opens up interstices, and, at the same time, entails the horrors of a gothic crossing, overflowing, transgression.

Fred Botting identifies transgression as one of the major concerns of, or drives behind, Gothic fiction (6). In transgression,

> Gothic terrors activate a sense of the unknown and project an uncontrollable and overwhelming power which threatens not only the loss of sanity, honour, property or social standing but the very order which supports and is regulated by the coherence of those terms. (7)

Mogen, Sanders, and Karpinski define the gothic breach of cultural spaces in similar terms: "The gothic reality, in its otherness, is irreconcilable with the received reality of the conventional world, but it is nevertheless immanent and present, and it impinges significantly upon the conventional world" ("Introduction" 26). In the act of impinging or irrupting, "like a terrible disease or malignant growth (a key metaphor), horror intrudes, encompasses, overwhelms" (Salomon 10). Lovecraftian horror is also partly connected to a sense of physical threat or illness: "Loathsomeness waits and dreams in the deep, and decay spreads over the tottering cities of men," warns the narrator of "Cthulhu" (169). In Jack Morgan's organic theory (put forward in "Toward an Organic Theory of the Gothic: Conceptualizing Horror"[40]) the Gothic is seen as the quality that suggests "dying," "the body's vulnerability," and "physical peril" (64). Morgan's central argument purports to be that the Gothic and the comic are twin and opposing concepts at the same time. As he contends, "horror—in a way entirely distinct from tragedy—represents the other side of the Comic coin" (60), in that "the spunky elan of living things celebrated by comedy . . . is displayed in the context of an

[40] Morgan later published his theory as a separate volume, *The Biology of Horror: Gothic Literature and Film* (2002).

'essentially dreadful universe'" (63). Therefore, "[a]s opposed to the comic sense of life or tragedy's dignified sense of death, horror embodies a sense of anti-life or unlife" (65), it celebrates the "dieingness [sic]" of the human condition (64).[41] Morgan's insistence on the physical and his idea of horror as equal to death, as providing a backdrop for life's vigor, comprise his organic theory.

As opposed to Morgan, I find that the gothic impulse—informing the weird, the macabre, the horrifying, the grotesque, as well as countless other texts and cultural discourses—comprises a system much more complex than could be reduced to a rudimentary "sense of unlife." One well-known mechanism of the gothic is that it renders a heightened articulation of the special human feeling that the boundaries between life and death, self and other, normal and abnormal are threateningly permeable. In gothic narratives, it is not "dyingness," but, conversely, the "livingness" of unearthly, otherworldly, or dead dimensions that holds the reader or viewer captive (64). The horror monster is a creature that moves freely between worlds; it is primarily and highly transgressive, the very symbol of transgression. Far from being the simple representative of death, it is peculiar owing to its frightening "aliveness": it functions although it is biologically non-functional, it moves although it should be inert, and it is, in a puzzling way, ultimately articulate even though it is made of the language of shadow. It is the dead encroaching upon the world of the living that is horrifying

[41] Morgan goes on to account for the horrific effect through the theory of catharsis: "As readers, we are willing participants in the tale's reenactment and can, if we choose, close the book on the terrors of the Gothic world" (78). He means, I believe, that the horror story's effect lies in the double move of *immersion and surfacing*; that is, the reader or viewer engages in the quasi-experience of death only to emerge back into life as a winner at all times, molded by the horrific experience but unhurt, unhindered, and essentially liberated. As Morgan quotes Stephen King, "We have taken horror in hand and used it to destroy itself" (78). Horror stories, in a way, cancel horror itself as a quality of the world. Carroll, however, expresses a definite aversion towards such an explanation in his *The Philosophy of Horror*, 18 (see also note 57, page 246).

in a tale of horror—the fluidity and vigor of all that is normally stale and rigid.[42] In *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981), Rosemary Jackson, relying on Robert D. Hume's comparison between the Romantic and Gothic ideals, asserts that "the vision informing Gothic fiction is one lacking in faith in organic notions of wholeness" (101). Although gothic images of disruption press against the holistic Romantic ideal, I see the gothic crevasse of time and space as the unveiling of a parallel underlying organicism. The double move of "fission" and "fusion" in horror texts (Carroll 43-46) implies both the tearing apart of unities and the linkage of unrelated parts. In the concentration upon rifts, as well as in the act of linking, what is revealed is precisely a frightening, organic wholeness, the perception of things existing in a continuous flux, after all. As Salomon points out in connection to the alternative worlds of horror fiction, "[m]ovement . . . can be in either direction in these mirror worlds" (9). Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein—heavily and jocundly parodied in Lovecraft's mad physician in "Herbert West—Reanimator"—succeeds in his attempts to connect fragments of different human beings that do not belong to each other. He manages to elevate the state of disjunction to the state of unity, and, through connecting the healthy compartment of life to the surrounding forbidden and threatening field of unlife, he introduces an unwholesome version of organicism. The negative focus on disjointed realities in *Frankenstein* and "Herbert West" highlights their positive and complementary counterpart, the organic flux. The organic ideal of holism is *reanimated*—albeit in a macabre way—through the concentration upon disruption and multiplicity. While holism yields the mirror image of Life in a quiet lake surface, Lovecraftian gothic organicism is the same image seen in a mirror maze.

[42] Bloom explains the effect of horror with the psychology of contact: "Thus, contact confuses the animate and the inanimate, the human and the non-human, the living and the dead. It brings about that which must not be" ("Horror Fiction" 160).

Lovecraft also saw his traditional New England, serving for his landscapes, as organic: "Habitations of men should never be *made*—they should be sown, water'd, weeded, tended, and allotted to *grow*" (*Selected Letters I* 287-88). A character in "Pickman's Model," as if echoing Lovecraft, exclaims about Boston's North End: "God, man! Don't you realise that places like these weren't merely *made*, but actually *grew*? Generation after generation lived and felt and died there, and in days when people weren't afraid to live and feel and die!" (81). I hold that the Lovecraftian gothicity of cosmic landscapes also "evolves" from such an organic view of locale. As long as the cosmic landscape is a shadow version of the ideal one, as I have already demonstrated, the fascination with the history of a settlement becomes the obsession with the dark chasm opened up by this history. The Lovecraftian text's obsession with forbidden texts, rituals, and places should be seen as taking an interest in the regulation of organic disorder.[43] Prohibition in Lovecraft is to be breached, and the locus of the breach reveals the gothic, "ultimate" organicism of things, "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" ("Supernatural Horror" 426).[44] The Lovecraftian text, like a child, peeks behind the appearances of order and lets loose the budding, morphing, and proliferating chaos of "ultimate organicism." The narrator of "Arthur Jermyn" opens his story announcing that "[l]ife is a hideous thing, and from the background behind what we know of it peer daemoniacal hints of truth which make it sometimes a thousandfold more hideous" (14). The text, shunning its own act of curiosity, presents this shadow, or, "more real," reality as peeking out through the torn seams (regardless of whether the act of tearing is conducted

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[43] See Burleson's "On Lovecraft's Themes" and Darryl Jones, *Horror*, 127-32.

[44] Although it should appear that Lovecraft's contention identifies "laws of Nature" with everything organic, in the next chapter I will show that the opposite is also tenable. That is, the laws of nature are merely human and scientific prescriptions for nature to act in a certain way, and when they fail, Nature shows herself as "chaos and the deamons of unplumbed space" (Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horror" 426).

by the human intellect or by the universe itself). Cavallaro, in an introductory discussion of the Gothic and fear, asserts:

> Fear is not disturbing because it intimates that the fabric of our lives, an apparently orderly weave, is being disrupted or about to be disrupted, but because it shows us that the fabric has always been laddered and frayed. What is aberrant is not the disconcerting sensation of dread but rather the fantasies of order superimposed upon life to make it look seamless and safe. (vii)

Morgan's argument that "[horror] takes note of the demarcation between the wholesome and the unwholesome, the healthy and the monstrous" is to the point (65). It is the dynamics of this gothic threshold that enhances the transgression of boundaries. Morgan, when analyzing "organicism," means "life," and it is not at all clear why his argument then falls back onto "death." An organic theory of horror should be, in a way, obsessed with the pulsating and fluid dialogue between categories, since organicism involves both life and death clasped together in a cosmic transition and endless gothic return. Revisiting the "dreaded" *Necronomicon*, we may now appropriately interpret the Old Ones walking not in our spaces "but *between* them" ("Dunwich" 219): the interstice of the "between" appears on the threshold of life and death, among others: the Old Ones, as interstitial monsters, are simultaneously alive and dead; they are not only, as the *Necronomicon* insists, "undimensional" (219), but also *interdimensional*, they are of the very stuff of transgression: "*Yog-Sothoth* knows the gate. *Yog-Sothoth* is the gate. *Yog-Sothoth* is the key and guardian of the gate" (219). Similarly, Cthulhu holds the arcanum of life and death: "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming" (Lovecraft, "Cthulhu" 150), implying, of course, that human notions of life and death are a far cry from the reality of the gothic threshold; Cthulhu and other Lovecraftian monster-gods, in Carroll's terminology, "breach the norms of

ontological propriety" (16). Furthermore, the most famous couplet of the *Necronomicon* reads: "*That is not dead which can eternal lie / And with strange aeons even death may die*" (156). Residing in and also encompassing the threshold regions of ontology, the monsters of Lovecraft, and of horror, are frontier creatures.[45]

Although the essays in Mogen, Sanders, and Karpinski's *Frontier Gothic* investigate works of frontier fiction in the more or less narrowly understood genre of the Gothic, other meanings appear in the vacuum of critical interpretation. Thus the frontier becomes a more general concept—ultimately encompassing both the American geographical-cultural idea of the once-receding and diminished Western frontier as well as other cultural frontiers created by the multiplicity of American social and cultural groups—designating the sites where the Lovecraftian "phobic pressure points" are most emphatic (King, *Danse Macabre* 4). These sites delineate the thresholds where cultural anxieties are released as a result of the clash of two alternative worlds, which in Lovecraft's case exist "in a parallel space, both prodigiously faraway and dangerously close" (Lévy 48). However, Lovecraft's frontier is also entirely American. Lévy, for instance, regards Lovecraft's New England locales as the perfect sites for the transgression and infiltration of the fantastic: "No other place in the United States could better lend itself to the irruption of the bizarre. By its very nature the fantastic is manifested most efficaciously where a historic profundity is embedded under the surface of everyday life" (35).[46] This is echoed by Gross: "There is a more central position for the Gothic in American fiction than in any other national literature" (2).

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[45] The borderline character of monsters is enhanced by the act of narrative monster creation. According to Carroll, both "fusion" and "fission" (43, 46) reveal the underlying logic of the threshold, the frontier, either in its interpenetrable state (fusion) or its logic of the boundary (fission).

[46] Salomon, contrary to Lévy, argues for "Americans' affinity for horror narrative" as "apparently related to our continuing and living relation to wilderness" (103), which is more in consonance with the ideas of Mogen, Sanders, and Karpinski.

The Confrontation Motif and the Fantastic

It is not by mistake that Lévy's seminal work insists on the fantastic (35), a fact already made clear by the subtitle, *A Study in the Fantastic*.[47] As a boundary between alternative worlds, the Lovecraftian between, interstice, threshold, or frontier—an inherent problematic of the historical genres of Gothic and horror—is inscribed in, and most successfully represented by, the fantastic. Generically, the fantastic, as Carroll asserts, "is distinct from horror" (145), yet, when viewed as impulses or modes, the fantastic and horror have much in common. "Often, horror plots unfold as if they were exercises in the fantastic" (145), argues Carroll, and whereas "the horror affect" or "art-horror" is an emotion—the horror impulse informing narratives that want to invoke fear or dread—and the fantastic is an interplay of alternative worlds, the horror affect emerges partly because it is facilitated by the dynamics of the fantastic.[48] In his genre theory of horror, Carroll views the fantastic basically as a rigid mechanism which has certain generic attributes. He utilizes Todorov's seminal, and somewhat reductionist, concept, where the fantastic signals a hesitation between the supernatural and realistic explanations of an apparently impossible phenomenon (145).[49] T. E. Apter also postulates a "hesitation" approach, although from the viewpoint of Freudian theory. She asserts: "The impact of fantasy rests upon the fact that the world presented seems to be

[47] As does a much more recent study, Berndt Steiner's electronically published *H. P. Lovecraft and the Literature of the Fantastic: Explorations in a Literary Genre* (2007), which is, unfortunately, a rather simplistic look at both Lovecraft's fiction and the fantastic. The question remains why this university thesis had to be circulated so widely in the first place.

[48] Bloom notes that "horror fiction deals in the inexplicable whether from the realms of the supernatural or the scientific; horror is the product of a *demonization* in either the material or non-material realms" (11).

[49] See Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic: A Structuralist Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970), whose ideas have helped a lot to define the fantastic while his theory of genres spawned much criticism. His critics often point out that although literature and other sites of cultural imagination teem with works of the fantastic, Todorov's theory is only able to pinpoint a handful of what it observes as "truly" fantastic narratives. For criticism of Todorov, see Brooke-Rose, Armitt, Hume, and Cornwell.

unquestionably ours, yet, at the same time as in a dream, ordinary meanings are suspended. Everything proliferates with potential meanings and becomes a potential danger" (2-3). Therefore, fantasy is the fiction of uncertainty "as to which world the tale belongs" (2). W. R. Irwin's *The Game of the Impossible: A Rhetoric of Fantasy*, published a year after the English translation of Todorov's study, defines as the main characteristic of fantasy "an overt violation of what is generically accepted as possibility" (4). In "On the Nature of Fantasy," an extensive checklist striving for the status of a definition, C. N. Manlove points out that fantasy is "fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of the impossible or supernatural worlds" (16).[50] Manlove's concentration on genres, unfortunately, delimits his analysis. He insists: what "distinguishes fantasy from the ghost and horror story" is that in "the latter the supernatural is left entirely alien" (24). In addition to the apparent fact that Manlove regards the ghost story and the horror story as the other pole of an imagined binary opposite with "fantasy" at one end, he does not recognize that, unlike ghost stories, a substantial body of horror stories does not at all include any element of the supernatural.[51]

As in the case of the Gothic and horror, I wish to unshackle my discussion of the fantastic from the limitations of genre criticism offered by Manlove and others, such as Ann Swinfen in her *In Defence of Fantasy*. I hold that the fantastic, along with horror, the Gothic, and Lovecraft's weird, are subversive categories transgressing—in a necessarily metaleptic move—the boundaries of genres and are thus capable of pointing beyond their scope to new revelations, of infusing elements into entire worlds of fiction, poetry, drama, graphic art, or film. Joshi asserts in connection with Lovecraft's self-chosen type of horror story, "the weird tale must include the following broad divisions: fantasy, supernatural horror, nonsupernatural horror, and quasi science fiction. All these categories should be regarded as loose and

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[50] Lovecraft himself includes a discussion of the weird tale and the impossible in one of his letters: "the crux of a *weird* tale is something which *could not possibly happen*" (*Selected Letters III* 434).

[51] In Lovecraft's case the supernatural also receives an entirely distinct treatment. See chapter 2.

nonexclusive, and there are some other subtypes that are probably amalgams or offshoots of those just mentioned" (*Weird Tale* 6-7). More or less similar views on the limitations of genre theory are expressed by Dani Cavallaro, Rosemary Jackson, Neil Cornwell, Brian Attebery, Lucie Armitt, Christine Brooke-Rose, Kathryn Hume, and Eric S. Rabkin. Cornwell in *The Literary Fantastic: From Gothic to Postmodernism* (1990) distinguishes between Fantasy and the fantastic: "'Fantasy,' then, denotes a wider concept—be it called a 'mode,' an 'impulse' . . . or a trans-generic literary quality" (31), while the fantastic denotes a genre, basically in line with Todorov's definitions (34-41). Cornwell, causing some minor confusion, deliberately uses "Fantasy," a term usually applied, as by Manlove, respectively for a.) the worlds of high fantasy or fantasy proper, usually of a transcendental or fairy-tale import, as in Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Ursula K. Le Guin, Dunsany, or L. Frank Baum; b.) logical fantasy as in the Alice books by Lewis Carroll and in the Borges's stories; or c.) pseudo-medieval, heroic, and Sword and Sorcery fantasy, as in T. H. White, Robert E. Howard, and Marion Zimmer Bradley.[52] Cornwell, furthermore, admits that in the distinction the extra meaning of oneirism carried by fantasy—denoting "day-dream, pipe dreams, dreams, nightmares, reveries, hallucinations—down to wishful thinking, dreads or mere musings"—is lost (32). Attebery's *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992) helps to cut a clear path between labels and definitions. Attebery distinguishes between fantasy as a formula that is needed to produce a genre, on the one hand, and, on the other, a mode that "always seems larger than any theory that tries to encompass it" (5). Therefore, he wisely chooses not to employ a too inclusive method but puts forth a genre-theory which rests on George Lakoff's "fuzzy sets": thus works in the genre of fantasy are "defined not by boundaries but by center" (12). In the rest of the book Attebery studies high fantasy, as he did in the case of American works in his earlier, highly informative *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature: From Irving to Le Guin* (1980). Cavallaro in *The*

[52] For a discussion and listing of such genres or types of story, see Kenneth J. Zahorski and Robert H. Boyer's "The Secondary Worlds of High Fantasy."

Gothic Vision: Three Centuries of Horror, Terror and Fear (2002) similarly sees genres as not entirely distinct but developing and morphing into each other in a historical fluctuation (16). Therefore, to escape genre theory, she labels such fictions (of the Gothic, horror, and the fantastic) collectively "narratives of darkness" or "dark fiction" (16). It is an intrinsic quality of such narratives to be "dark" and thus to escape categorization:

> What I seek to emphasize is that fictions concerned, in disparate fashions, with the realm of the Beyond are likely to be disrespectful of conceptual cages . . . In other words, tales of horror, terror and fear resist categorization by cultivating an eerie dialectic between anxiety and desire that often manifests itself as a commitment to "the unsaid and the unseen . . ." (16)

Cavallaro's theory is right on the mark. The darkness of the narrative becomes its epistemological strength: certain types of darkness can be ultimately revealing, since in their undefined, homogeneous state they point to the contents they conceal or which are concealed in them. This is Lovecraft's between, the void region between here and that other place over the threshold from where latent gothic horror arises and overflows.

Jackson also highlights these secreted subtexts of the fantastic and holds that these are prone, by way of their latent disruptive potential, to destabilize the existing cultural order. She defines the fantastic in "a more widely based cultural study" (7), where what is fantastic exists in the "hinterland between 'real' and 'imaginary,' shifting the relations between them through its indeterminacy" (35). These shifting relations then thrust the fantastic "towards a realm of non-signification, towards a zero-point of non-meaning" (42), something similar to Cavallaro's "darkness." Unfortunately, Jackson's study depends too much on the narrow Todorovian understanding of the fantastic as anxiety, defined by Todorov as a structural property for identifying the genre. Armitt, likewise, starts out from a discussion on genres:

> It is not so much that our generically bound expectations are erroneous. After all, genre is one of the founding principles of fantasy forms. What does, however, remain problematic about so much fantasy criticism is its complete inability to see beyond these parameters. (*Theorising* 18)

She ultimately does not do away with generic conceptions altogether, but warns of their shortcomings: "Far more useful, then, is an approach that accepts genre as a necessary evil: a problem to negotiate, a limit to surpass and a structure to overreach" (19). In her updated *Fantasy Fiction: An Introduction* (2005), Armitt is much bolder. She starts out with the question "What is fantasy writing?" and first replies "Utopia, allegory, fable, myth, science fiction, the ghost story, space opera, travelogue, the Gothic, cyberpunk, magic realism; the list is not exhaustive" (1), then extrapolates to a daring conclusion: ". . . all fiction is fantasy, insofar as narrative scenarios comprise an interiorised image . . . projected outwards onto a blank page. . . . Fantasy, then, is the basis upon which all reading and writing is founded" (2).[53] Brooke-Rose, far from surpassing genre theory, nonetheless postulates the possibility of theoretical genres. As opposed to Todorov's historical genres, this would facilitate, on the one hand, the finding of an abstract "'pure' type" in the genre of the fantastic, and would, on the other, make it easier to "predict, on those criteria, all possible developments" of future genres (66). Brooke-Rose, in due course of her criticism, interrogates even this theory of genres: "Is not the very condition that defines the pure genre . . . merely a particular (historical) manifestation of a more general feature . . . which can and perhaps should be found in all sophisticated (complex) narrative . . . ?" (71). Although she is "never happy with a definition

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[53] In this she echoes Theodor Adorno's idea of fantasy in *Aesthetic Theory*, which is closer to "imagination": "fantasy shifts whatever artworks absorb of the existing into constellations through which they become the other of the existing, if only through its determinate negation" (227).

of a genre, however 'theoretical,' which appears to exclude all notion of contamination or . . . flexibility," she agrees to use Todorov's "basic division . . . and his criteria . . . as an extremely useful working hypothesis" (71).

More instructive are Hume's and Rabkin's theories. Hume's widely accepted, traditional yet liberating look at the fantastic does not endure generic distinctions: "*Fantasy is any departure from consensus reality*, an impulse native to literature and manifested in innumerable variations, from monster to metaphor" (21). The fantastic is the opposite of whatever the reader empirically comprehends in his everyday world; it is an element in a literary work that does not remind us of our natural environment. An event, a creature that alienates us from our reality is fantastic. Thus the fantastic impulse—as its counterpart, the mimetic—informs a vast array of literary works, from antiquity to the postmodern. Rabkin in *The Fantastic in Literature* maintains a view different from Hume's. He bases his theory on "[t]he ability of art to create its own interior set of ground rules" (4). These ground rules instruct the reader into the mode of reality in the work. Therefore, not everything that Hume finds fantastic—that is, different from our historical view of consensus reality—would Rabkin define as fantastic in a narrative. "The perspectives that the fantastic contradicts are perspectives legitimized by these internal ground rules" (4-5). In other words, the fantastic denies a set of basic rules laid down by the text itself, so the estimation of what is fantastic derives from the incongruity between two passages of text within the same textual universe—one defining "the real" of the text; the other a serious deviance from it, although perhaps not always a "diametric reconfiguration," as Rabkin contends (8).

These last (eight) theories of the fantastic stress something analogous and vital to my present study: that the fantastic is a mode or an impulse that is not exclusively represented by one distinct genre called "Fantasy" or "fantasy," but enters and alters a vast array of texts to various degrees in various ways. Many of these theories converge in dealing with the Lovecraftian text. For instance, Rabkinian ground rules set in the Lovecraftian text involve

almost exclusively Humean consensus reality. The initial settings of his tales are the places we know from our own reality: exotic yet real—or realistic—sites such as a normal New England town like Providence; a city like New York; the countryside or a forest; or even the Antarctic. The constituents of Lovecraft's self-created imaginary locale, Arkham and the Miskatonic University, are also modeled after realistic sites of his contemporary or colonial New England milieu. Further, the Lovecraftian ground rules involve fictional time that is the equivalent of the twentieth century and a protagonist who is a scholar or a gentleman narrator exhibiting scholarly rigor. These settings—basically the environs that Lovecraft knew—provide the realism of the ground rules which are then contradicted by the penetration of an alternative world, where space, time, or form is altered in some peculiar way.[54]

The contradiction of the ground rules is always indicated in the text: "Something, whether the reactions of a character within a literary work or some other device, must signal to us that we are to take certain elements as fantastic" (Landow 107). Rabkin similarly identifies this signaling motif as the other major touchstone of the fantastic: "When the anti-expected happens, we are in the presence of the fantastic" (10). Most often, the characters' bewilderment gives away the altered situation, such as, for instance, Alice's astonishment at talking plants (Rabkin 3-4). In the Lovecraftian text it is mostly scientist-protagonists—whose temperament reminds us of the actual author's[55]—that confront the alternative world. These geographers, archeologists, men of letters (always scientifically-minded, irrespective of their occupation) mostly feature in the Lovecraftian text as narrators,[56] their testimonies both enhancing the reader's suspension of disbelief and at the same time increasing the level of doubt concerning the alternative world. These protagonists are not only astonished, but find

[54] This alteration is, of course, not a unique feature of Lovecraft, far from it. The bulk of fantastic works establish their reversals or surprises upon realistic settings, or, at least—through their obsession with negative categories such as the unreal, the impossible, the irrational—presuppose reality, possibility, or reason.

[55] See chapter 2 for further discussion of Lovecraft and his protagonist-narrators.

[56] On narrator strategies in Lovecraft, see Wheeler and Clore.

that the penetrating and overwhelming "supernatural"[57] rends apart their world, opens their existence up to encompass various transgressive possibilities. David Ashby Oakes maintains in his dissertation, "Twentieth-century American Gothic Literature as Cultural Artifact" (1998), that "[f]irst-person narration allows Lovecraft to present disturbing visions directly to readers from the point-of-view of the person who often has immediate experience with the fantastic" (63). This "immediate experience," this gothic crevasse in the text—brought about by the dynamics of the fantastic and signaled by the protagonist's astonishment—develops into the cosmic interstice. Nevertheless, the "informing distortion" (Rabkin 107-08), which transforms our perception of the actual fictional reality, loses some of its power throughout the story. Lovecraft's tales are essentially climactic: as Fritz Leiber points out, in Lovecraft "the high point and the final sentence coincide" ("A Literary Copernicus" 56). Therefore, by the tale's end the ground rules are re-established, while, strangely but purposefully, their contradiction remains valid, so that the reader feels the fantastic is broken up but not dissolved. In *Mountains of Madness* the monster is a creature from outer space that traveled to Earth by floating on solar winds in an early period of Earth's history; whilst in "Witch House" space is altered because Gilman, the young mathematician, steps out into the fifth dimension (Leiber, "Through Hyperspace with Brown Jenkin" 143). "Supernatural" events are explained in terms of reality, or hypothetical reality, and the essential truth of the ground rules is retained while also keeping a sort of distorted aspect that derives from the maintenance of fantastic content. The gothic crevasse has to be certain, substantial, and positive; in accordance with the Lovecraftian ground rules. As Peter Penzoldt points out when comparing

[57] The quotation marks are needed to indicate that Lovecraft's "supernatural" is far from being supernatural in the theological or mythological sense. See chapter 2, especially the discussion on the "supramundane."

Lovecraft to M. R. James, Lovecraft "would never have begun a climax with 'It seems as if'" (69).[58]

The fantastic, a vital and central ingredient of the Lovecraftian text, becomes a criterion for the development of the tale: the horror affect, the Lovecraftian theme of gothic survival, and the opening of the cosmic interstice are all spun together by the impulse of the fantastic and are concentrated in the confrontation motif. As Armitt argues, "precisely because the fantastic comes to the fore at the point of interaction between two conflicting worlds / zones / modes, the resulting narrative is always to a greater or lesser extent on the edge between the two, simultaneously acknowledging both," or "simultaneously cutting across both" (*Theorising* 32). Lovecraft's stories, therefore, are fantastic to the degree that they delineate a confrontation of the protagonist—a cogent yet puny individual—with what is interpreted by this protagonist as primarily impossible, unreal, or frightfully unknown, experienced on the gothic-cosmic threshold of two alternative worlds or realities.

Lovecraft's fantastic is what Farah Mendlesohn in her recent study termed "intrusion fantasy": "The trajectory of the intrusion fantasy is straightforward: the world is ruptured by the intrusion, which disrupts normality and has to be negotiated with or defeated, sent back where it came, or controlled" (115). Mendlesohn discusses horror as if delegating it to a subcategory under intrusion fantasy, indicating that it is the power of the fantastic threshold that primarily informs horror narratives: "In intrusion fantasy the fantastic is the bringer of chaos. . . . It is horror and amazement" (xxi).[59]

The realm of the fantastic is the diametric opposite of the protagonist's reality; yet it is in every way real. In "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," the narrator-protagonist takes a "tour of New England," a sort of coming-of-age present to himself in an ultimately Lovecraftian

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[58] In this move, the Lovecraftian text is closer to the uncanny in Todorov's schema. The fantastic hesitation is tilted towards scientific explanation.

[59] Indeed, Mendlesohn mentions Lovecraft as one of the major American representatives of intrusion fantasy (see 134-37).

manner.[60] The exhausting and horrifying day in "ill-rumoured and evilly shadowed" Innsmouth and a night spent listening to "apparent hoarse barkings and loose-syllabled croakings [that] bore so little resemblance to recognised human speech" in the "morbid and horror-infested fabric of the Gilman House" hotel (312, 316)[61] opens up the reality of the fantastic. The narrator chronicles: "Nothing I could have imagined . . . would be in any way comparable to the daemoniac, blasphemous reality that I saw—or believe I saw" (327-28). Until the final confirmation, this diametrical realm remains truly fantastic in the Todorovian sense, since the protagonist continues: "Can it be that this planet has actually spawned such things; that human eyes have truly seen, as objective flesh, what man has hitherto known only in febrile phantasy and tenuous legend?" (328). The phrases "can it be," "phantasy," and "legend" stress bewilderment and hesitation, but in actuality they are preparing the text for the powerful confirmation, when the narrator learns that the strange beings and their malicious intent are real.

Lovecraft's threshold—which comprises, most importantly, the locus where the ideal and the shadow give birth to the double landscape—is the site of this fantastic confrontation. These loci are the sites for the clashing together of alternative realities, suggested in the text by the gothic rift and signaled by cosmic distancing. These invariably evoke the unplumbed depths of outer space and other unknown, uninhabitable, and non-interpretable otherworldly or cosmic dimensions; in short, the region of the Lovecraftian interstice or between. In "Witch House," Gilman experiences a strange fifth dimension, while in the New York tale, "He" (1925), the anonymous narrator regresses into primordial time and observes the way dimensions of space and time are layered upon each other as well as how distinct fragments

[60] Lovecraft was himself an antiquarian, taking self-organized tours of the Goethean kind in New England to visit friends and correspondents, during which he admired the architecture and colonial culture and later worked his experiences into manuscripts such as "Vermont—A First Impression" (1927), "Observations on Several Parts of America" (1928), "Some Dutch Footprints in New England" (1933), or "Homes and Shrines of Poe" (1934).

[61] Note the irony in the old Innsmouth family name Gilman as pertaining to the fish-like Deep Ones (Gill-man).

may still be disclosed by means of pseudo-magical practices. This kind of arcane knowledge of dimensions in "He" clearly parallels the idea of non-Eucledian geometry in "Witch House." All of Lovecraft's tales operate with such a locus of confrontation, usually disseminated throughout the texts in the form of a series of confrontations. In "The Call of Cthulhu," the monster in the title had arrived from the stars (cosmic distancing) and has also existed on Earth for countless millennia (gothic crevasse in time). Similarly, although the creatures in "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930)—distant progenitors of the hybrid Deep Ones in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth"—or the uncanny meteor in "The Colour Out of Space" are alien entities from the outer reaches of space, these cosmic loci are only implied by the narrative as part of an inhuman history. One exception is *Mountains of Madness*, where the cosmic scales are presented through gothic archeology or, rather, paleontology.[62]

Confrontations at loci are also directly experienced by the protagonists or narrators of the Lovecraftian text. The locus is signaled by the cracking up of double landscapes, where the gothic shadow palls over the ideal locale. In "Cthulhu," the cosmic locus of confrontation is further stratified by the ocean, a mundane reflection of the double abysses of outer space and geological time: thus, while the first two threshold loci are implied and not experienced directly by the narrators, in the third one experiential knowledge of Cthulhu comes to one of the narrators when he sees Cthulhu as a great, putrid blob on the ocean surface where he rises from "that chasm of stone which has shielded him since the sun was young" (169). While in "Cthulhu" it is the ordinary surface of the implacable ocean that reveals hidden phenomena, in "Whisperer" Albert Wilmarth encounters the Mi-Go from the planet Yuggoth at Henry Wentworth Akeley's farmhouse in the Vermont hills, and in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" the reef conceals the hideous, hybrid Deep Ones, descendants of humans and alien monster-

[62] *Mountains of Madness* forces the reader to contemplate human existence and evolution in the vast framework of geological time. There, some of the alien entities, the Old Ones, appear as pseudo-paleontological findings (the frozen specimens later come to life), while their abode, Leng, is a singular archeological mystery.

gods. The loci of confrontation may also be further classified into three principal categories:

1) *The double city*

Lévy finds the city in Lovecraft "the fantastic site par excellence" (46). I have already demonstrated the way the ideal city of Providence opens up to reveal the shadow landscape in *Charles Dexter Ward*. "The desire to refigure the landscape, to make it other," proposes Mendlesohn, "runs through the relationship between intruder [the fantastic phenomena] and intrusion [the act of the fantastic eroding consensus reality] in Gothic and its successors" (125). Double cities are deployed in "The Music of Erich Zann" (1921), "The Festival," "Pickman's Model," "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," "Witch House," "The Shadow Out of Time," "The Haunter of the Dark" (1935), but the most haunting are the New York stories such as "The Shunned House" (1924), "He," "The Horror at Red Hook" (1925), and "Cool Air" (1926). *Mountains of Madness* is an intriguing case in this respect. In the short novel a group of explorers of Antarctica discover an ancient city half buried under ice which proves to be Leng, which housed the Old Ones millions of years ago. The description of a "vast dead megalopolis that yawned around us" properly represents the shadow landscape (306). The narrator Dyer's account of the place as "that cavernous, aeon-dead honeycomb of primal masonry; that monstrous lair of elder secrets which now echoed for the first time, after uncounted epochs, to the tread of human feet" (293) suggests an archeological version of the Gothic's favorite catacombs, bifurcating and zigzagging endlessly under crumbling medieval castles. Later, considering the lost race of the Old Ones after having traversed their passages and contemplated their bas-reliefs and carvings, the narrator makes a surprising statement: ". . . poor Old Ones! Scientists to the last—what had they done that we would not have done in their place? God, what intelligence and persistence! . . . Radiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star-spawn—whatever they had been, they were men!" (330). With this move the Lovecraftian protagonist establishes Leng as the first center of accumulated knowledge on the Earth. The story reverses the dynamics of the Lovecraftian double landscape, although, far

from subverting it, the tale highlights all the more the portent of the confrontation motif itself. As Waugh contends, "although obviously a shadow landscape, the eternal sun idealizes [Leng], and in that delicate balance the important recognition [of the city as a seminal place of learning] becomes possible" ("Landscapes" 226). Thus, the shadow side of the city, introduced at the beginning of the underground trip, is gradually transformed into something like the ideal landscape, a land of primal knowledge, and the Old Ones become representatives of the foremost Lovecraftian value—the desire to expand knowledge.

2) *The nether regions*. Lovecraftian unquenched thirst for knowledge necessarily entails a confrontation with the unknown. Scientific knowledge of nature in the Lovecraftian text will be discussed fully in chapter 2. Here, however, it is important to note that the power of Lovecraftian gothicity, with its overarching structure of the cosmic insterstice, rests to a great extent on the unknown as its latent content. Nature's unknown is represented vertically in Lovecraft. "The irrational in Lovecraft's tales seems indissociable from the images of depths. The abnormal, the disquieting, and the unclean are on the vertical axis of imagination" (Lévy 64). Similarly, as St. Armand points out, "in Lovecraft there are always cellars beneath cellars beneath cellars and depths below depths" (181). The Lovecraftian underworld is virtually endless, a chaotic vortex exerting suction upon the protagonist: the underworld trip offers a dive into the void of the interstice.

Underground sites are found everywhere in Lovecraft; they are too numerous to cite, ranging from entire underground cities of ancient ruins, catacombs, crypts, vaults, and tombs to caves, canals, tunnels, grottoes, chasms, caverns, and all sorts of underground passages. The nether regions are sometimes cast as seas, oceans, or underground waters. In "Dagon," "The Temple," and "Cthulhu," the gothic content of the ocean floor arises and comes to life,[63]

[63] As well as in "The White Ship" (1919) and "The Dream-Quest," but these—one being a "psychological Odyssey" (Mosig 186), the other an entirely oneiric journey (see Joshi, "The Dream World and the Real World in Lovecraft" and Burleson, *A Critical Study*, 123)—fall largely outside the scope of my investigation.

while "Red Hook" features endless underground passages and waters below Brooklyn. As Waugh argues, Lovecraft's underground locales are "simply versions of those underwater. . . . [T]hey lie at the other end of the world, and oceans must be crossed to explore them" ("Landscapes" 223). While this contention loses some of its force when considering that the actual number of works focusing on underground waters or aquatic abysses is rather small in Lovecraft, the ghastly atmosphere of those few provide some of the most memorable moments in the Lovecraftian text. At the end of "Red Hook," we see Robert Suydam, the blasphemous, life-prolonged sorcerer literally falling apart. The decomposing Suydam, wishing to sit on the throne of Lilith[64] as a sign of his power over the underground caves, accidentally pushes the pedestal into the dark, dense fluid: "as the pusher collapsed to a muddy blotch of corruption the pedestal he had pushed tottered, tipped, and finally careened from its onyx base into the thick waters below, sending up a parting gleam of carven gold as it sank heavily to undreamable gulfs of lower Tartarus" (134). In many Lovecraft stories, the upsurge of similar Styxes from the bowels of the earth, as in the case of the elevated sea-floor in "Dagon" or "Cthulhu," signifies the upsurge of chaos from the deep, the irruption of the void.

One major traditional and natural locus of the fantastic, the dark forest, has an expressively low frequency in the Lovecraftian text. This may be owing to the fact that the image of the horrific forest in America, in keeping with and yet different from the Brothers Grimm-type fairy tales and werewolf legends, takes its source mainly in the Puritan obsession with evil, witchery, and the stigmatization of Indian tribes. Hawthorne offers this particularly conventional treatment of the woods as the site of devil worship to transmute it for his own specific purposes in *The Scarlet Letter* and "Young Goodman Brown." Although Lovecraft

[64] Burleson deems this story "distressingly conventional" in scope of the Lovecraft mythos due to its insistence on pseudo-Biblical references (*A Critical Study* 103).

was an admirer of Hawthorne,[65] he was wary of any substantial discussion of Biblical or Calvinist material in his work (some of those rare instances, in "Dunwich" or "Red Hook," show the amateur side of the semi-professional Lovecraft, as these hinder the development of the Mythos themes).[66] The major example of the few stories with a forest locale is "Whisperer." There, however, the primary locus of confrontation—the distant dimensions between Yuggoth, "a strange dark orb at the very rim of our solar system" corresponding to the newly discovered Pluto (248, 267), and the Earth (the protagonist was potentially abducted and transported there by the alien mind-snatchers)—is of much more importance than the gothicity of the Vermont woods, which provide the locale. Similarly, although "Colour" is set in the New England hills, the cosmic origin of the mysterious color and meteor surpasses the localist role of the forests surrounding the farmhouse. As the narrator informs us, "These were not haunted woods, and their fantastic dusk was never terrible till the strange days" (173). The "blasted heath" area, "like a great spot eaten by acid in the woods and fields" (170), is entirely the result of the workings of the cosmic "color" and in its immensity overshadows the woods around it. It is no longer the traditional image of the forest that is dreadful but its absence, the void region, itself an extension of the cosmic interstice.

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[65] See, for instance, his discussion of Hawthorne in section VIII of *Supernatural Horror* (469-74). On the possible influences of Hawthorne on Lovecraft, see Vernon J. Shea, "On the Literary Influences Which Shaped Lovecraft's Works," Joshi, ed., *Four Decades*, 113-39; and Peter Cannon's short but informative "H. P. Lovecraft in a Hawthornian Perspective," Joshi, ed., *Four Decades*, 161-65.

[66] Lovecraft usually abstained from any mention of the devil, but when he occasionally did so, he always tried to connect it to supposed pre-Christian, or even pre-mythological, lore. In "Colour," the narrator explains (also denying the mystical power of the woods), "there had been no wild legends at all since the witch trials, and even then these western woods were not feared half so much as the small island in the Miskatonic where *the devil held court beside a curious stone altar older than the Indians*" (emphasis added, 173). His earliest biographer August Derleth made a simplistic error when he interpreted Lovecraft's Mythos tales within the framework of a Manichean universe. Derleth tried to lay the foundations for a sort of permanent dignity of Lovecraft's personality and work through applying pseudo-Christian hermeneutics to his stories.

3) *The double protagonist*. Extrapolating from Waugh's model of double cities, confrontations resulting in a rift between the ideal and the shadow can also take place within the protagonist himself. The conflict appears between the character's far from stable, primary human self and his emerging cosmic self (in the Lovecraftian sense of cosmically distanced and disquieting), usually through the discovery of a hybrid genealogy or alien ancestry. The motif of the double in *Charles Dexter Ward*, prefigured to some extent in "The Horror at Red Hook," is a strongly modified version. *Charles Dexter Ward* employs the *Doppelgänger* design so familiar from all of Western literature, especially in the Gothic and the *Märchen*, where the protagonist has a shadow side or a physical counterpart in the form of physical duplication. As opposed to this, the usual Lovecraftian double protagonist "proper" encompasses his ideal and shadow self in the same physicality. Tales that deal with the locus of the double protagonist include "Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family" (1920), "The Outsider," "The Rats in the Walls," "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," and—to a slight degree—*Mountains of Madness*. In *Mountains of Madness* the explorers of the Antarctic discover gruesome truths about the evolutionary origin of the human race—an experiment of the monster-gods, "a shambling primitive mammal, used sometimes for food and sometimes as an amusing buffoon" (303)—therefore, the double is activated in all of the human characters through the gothic paleontology of the human species. "The Thing on the Doorstep" and "The Shadow Out of Time"[67] present a variation on this confrontation theme. There, the protagonists are not descendants of alien races, but their minds have been transferred into the shadow selves. "Doorstep," a story unlike any other Lovecraft tale partly because it presents the marriage of heavily gendered characters in shocking and repellent relationships,[68] displays an extremely intricate scheme in which the young Edward Derby's mind is regularly expelled from his body by the wizard Ephraim's mind, who, in turn, had

[67] Most of the stories' titles in this section further proliferate the motif of the shadow in some way.

[68] See Burleson, "Lovecraft and Gender"; Joel Pace, "Queer Tales?"; and my "The Innsmouth 'Thing.'"

previously possessed the body of Edward's wife, Asenath Waite. Thus Edward and Asenath's marriage bears a tragic seed: not long before Edward, "who [goes] to pieces rapidly" (359), is confined to the Arkham Sanatorium, he murders Asenath and buries her body in "the farther cellar storeroom under some old boxes" (364). Her body is hidden in the basement, but Ephraim's mind escapes the carcass and changes places with Edward's in the asylum. In one final heroic effort, Edward's consciousness somehow manages to animate his wife's corpse and to personally deliver a written message to the narrator's door—at that time, however, only as a "thing on the doorstep." In "The Shadow Out of Time," likewise, the body of Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee, a professor of political economy at Miskatonic University in Arkham, is possessed by the mind of a representative of the alien Great Race. In a period of "amnesia" that is finally revealed for the mind-exchange that it is, Peaslee's real psyche and personality is entrapped in the body of a Great Race being that had existed 150 millions of years ago in a gigantic, ghastly "library" miles under the Western Australian desert. After his pseudo-amnesia,

> the dreams began so unfailingly to have the aspect of *memories*, and . . . my mind began to link them with my growing abstract disturbances—the feeling of mnemonic restraint, the curious impressions regarding *time*, the sense of a loathsome exchange with my secondary personality of 1908-13, and, considerably later, the inexplicable loathing of my own person. (348)

While also complying with Burleson's schema of "denied primacy"—"the theme that as human beings on this planet we were not the first" sentient creatures ("On Lovecraft's Themes" 136)—these stories present with unequaled force the theme of the chaotic body. Kelly Hurley in *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism, and Degeneration at the* fin de siècle (1996) maintains: "The human body, at least potentially, is utterly chaotic, unable to

maintain its distinctions from a whole world of animal possibilities" (94). Thus the body is disorderly in an evolutionary sense; it is a "palimpsest," a "compendium, on and within which the whole history of the species is inscribed" (91). Edward, thus, is entrapped in the "palimpsestic" body of Asenath, who is a descendant of the Innsmouth Waites, a family of the atavistic Innsmouth community that is the product of interbreeding with "a race of fish-frog-like beings," the Deep Ones (Burleson, *Lovecraft: Disturbing the Universe* 134). In "The Shadow Out of Time," Peaslee's full recognition begins when he feels a "morbid temptation to look down at myself": "Retracting this neck and gazing down very sharply, I saw the scaly, rugose, iridescent bulk of a vast cone ten feet tall and ten feet wide at the base. That was when I waked half of Arkham with my screaming as I plunged madly up from the abyss of sleep" (358).

The confrontation within the double is the most intricate aspect of Lovecraftian gothic psychology.[69] In conflating the primary locus of confrontation with the secondary locus of the double protagonist, Lovecraft manages to blend the two "myths of the modern fantastic" as outlined by Jackson: "In the first, the source of otherness, of threat, is in the *self*. . . . In the second kind of myth, fear originates in a source external to the subject: the self suffers an attack of some sort which makes it part of the other" (58). The result is the loss of form, blending with the other, the "non-things" that arise from the interstice. As Timo Airaksinen asserts in *The Philosophy of H. P. Lovecraft: The Route to Horror* (1999), "the ultimate horror is connected to the loss of self. This happens to . . . [Lovecraft's] heroes" (31). In the Lovecraftian confrontation no two opposing entities remain intact, they finally morph into each other, and lose their individual shapes.

[69] I would reject less complex views of Lovecraftian horrific space, such as James Kneale's insistence on "the beyond," which appeals to the geographer's eye as empty and unexplored areas on a map. In the final chapter I will delineate my version of Lovecraftian mapping, and a preliminary statement will suffice here: the Lovecraftian text, instead of merely disclosing the unmapped, proceeds by transferring the alien within the framework of the familiar, which to me appears the most viable form of horror.

This partly explains why in the Lovecraftian text the need to analyze the fantastic as a direct opposition of two alternative worlds does not emerge. Although it may seem that rigid binary opposites rule any discussion of Lovecraft—such as regional/cosmic, human/alien, presence/absence, or in theory about Lovecraft, real/unreal, the fantastic/the mimetic—these apparent opposites are unified in the fantastic confrontation. Jackson contends: "One of the central thrusts of the fantastic is an attempt to . . . resist separation and difference, to re-discover a unity of self and other" (52). While the Lovecraftian threshold may disrupt, it does not dissever. "Horror is the literature of disjunction," asserts Bloom ("Horror Fiction" 165). Yet, in disjunction there always appear the traces of conjunction—overflowing, excess, transgression, and contamination—as enabling conditions of the disruption in the first place, however the poles of the binary opposition might shun their kinship. Burleson also pinpoints the major mechanism of Lovecraftian horror in the double move of the inter-category crevice (the interstice) and category confusion ("Lovecraft and Interstitiality" 28-29).[70] It is the vast distance between man-made categories that, paradoxically, makes the gothic permeability of boundaries and thresholds so chillingly straightforward in narratives of horror.

Dale J. Nelson in "Lovecraft and the Burkean Sublime" argues that Lovecraft makes his monsters convey dread through turning them into sublime objects, through substantially distancing them from the reader (3). In a similar vein, Bradley Alan Will identifies the sublimity of the Lovecraftian monster with the help of Kant's conception of the sublime. There, the Lovecraftian monster, "in its magnitude, is 'an outrage on the imagination'" (Kant qtd. in Will 25). Lovecraft himself, likewise, writes of the "personal limitation regarding the *sense of outsideness*" with the terminology typically associated with the sublime: "I refer to the aesthetic crystallization of that burning & inextinguishable feeling of *mixed wonder & oppression* which the sensitive imagination experiences upon scaling itself and its restrictions

[70] This logic basically corresponds to the one creating Carroll's double definition of "fission" and "fusion" (43-46).

against the *vast & provocative* abyss of the unknown" (emphasis added, *Selected Letters III* 295-6). Nevertheless, it is not so much the distancing, but *the distancing and the approximation together* that impresses, since Lovecraftian twentieth-century cosmicism, undeniably, rewrites the sublime: object and subject disappear in a violent fusion taking place at the locus of confrontation, and, contrary to Burke, the element of enjoyment ("wonder") is minimized in the face of horror ("oppression"). The Lovecraftian text takes dualities and radically reworks them, for instance, through opening up the gothic crevasse—the paradoxical distancing-approximating tool—between colonial tradition and cosmic awe.[71] While being torn apart and carried further to the extremes, towards the distancing of the human from the cosmic, the awe-filled contemplator and the "awe-ful" contemplated merge, too, through the dynamics of contagion. Now the awfulness of the contemplated object beckons from inside, from the self, which in the process has become a non-self. Estrangement and familiarization are parallel processes in the Lovecraftian text. In an analysis of the motif of bridges in "Dunwich," Burleson contends: "Symbolically the bridges both draw sympathetic attention to humankind against alienage and connect humankind with alien encroachments to subvert this tendency" (*Disturbing* 123). The fact that Wilbur Whateley, one of the alien entities in the

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[71] The traditional in Lovecraft also has to be understood as the eighteenth-century or Georgian ideal and the cosmic as a facet of the Romantic concept. Burleson speculates that the degree of paradox in Lovecraft partly depends on the tension between, and fusion of, his admiration for Neoclassical ideals and his latent Romanticism. Burleson devotes "Lovecraft and Romanticism" to the identification of such Romantic trends in Lovecraft, "a Neoclassically bred Romantic" (31), such as "the freedom from the rigidity of mundane law" (28), "the expressive concern" (29), and the "sense of *wonder*" (29)—to the latter one could also coin the idea of the sublime. He hypothesizes:

> Perhaps in a perverse kind of way Lovecraft is a sort of Romantic, though doubtless he would have cringed at the epithet. He may be viewed, paradoxically, as a Romantic in whom the Romantic quest is one led ever on by ultimate futility, led on to a dark acquisition of vision that mocks the very notion and spirit of an acquisition of vision. (31)

text, is a man-monster hybrid—his monstrous ontology revealed in a gruesome scene where a watchdog tears him into pieces in the library yard—makes him “a link, a nexus, a bridge ‘of dubious safety’” (Lovecraft qtd. in Burleson, *Disturbing* 124). Such Lovecraftian interstitial creatures occupy “the crevices between the categories,” the middle ground between the traditionally human and the cosmically distanced, while their *modus vivendi*—of gothic survival through the fantastic confrontation—facilitates fusion, the “invasion of one category by the supposed occupants of another” (“Lovecraft and Interstitiality” 28). As Burleson conjectures in the study of “Dunwich,” “The real ‘Dunwich horror’ may then well be this impossibility of separating the cause-horror from the effect-horror; or of separating ourselves from what we fear” (*Disturbing* 132).

Not only does the Lovecraftian text represent category-fusion, but Lovecraft’s person was also a bridge between opposites. Eckhardt contends:

> Lovecraft *was* New England; and New England, physically and psychologically, is midway between two ends of the spectrum, England and California. . . . Lovecraft comes between these two types; for as New England is not as sedate as Old England but far more set in its ways the West Coast, so are Lovecraft’s horrors more physical than those of [M. R.] James and less so than those of Bierce. Lovecraft’s entities often have a historical depth comparable to those of James; but the noxious shoggoth of *At the Mountains of Madness* has far more potential than, say, the hideous sheet-faced ghost of “Oh, Whistle, and I’ll Come to You, My Lad.” (97)

There exists, as Evans argues, a tension in Lovecraft’s work “between the antiquarian and the cosmic, between the continuity of cultural traditions and the insignificance of those traditions on a cosmic scale,” which “is the source of Lovecraft’s worldview, the unique power of his fiction” (176). Since in the Lovecraftian text the concentration of this tension occurs in the

focal point of the confrontation motif, the strain is also lessened, the tension paradoxically comes to a release. It remains to be seen in what way that paradox works in the Lovecraftian text, where the opening up of gothic crevasses and cosmic interstices between opposing entities and qualities also unifies those binaries. By looking at scientific anomalies and their connection to the confrontation motif I will disclose the workings of the alternative world—the interstitial content—of the Lovecraftian text.

II.

SCIENCE AND THE VOID

Quasi-science, Science, and the Supramundane

Robert Silverberg relates how reading "The Shadow Out of Time," "this stunning tale," changed his life (12). At the age of twelve, Silverberg, like the decent teenage devotee to the peculiar and the wondrous he was, diligently worked his way through the first omnibus collection of science fiction, Donald A. Wollheim's *The Viking Portable Novels of Science* (1945).[72] He describes his climactic experience with

> [t]he Wollheim book [that] contained four short novels . . . Each, in its way, contributed to the shaping of the imagination of the not quite adolescent young man who was going to grow up to write hundreds of science fiction and fantasy stories of his own . . . But it was the Lovecraft that had the most powerful impact on my developing vision of my own intentions as a creator of science fiction. (9)

The Lovecraft novella outrivaled even the writings of science-fiction icons featured in the book such as H. G. Wells and Olaf Stapledon, and it did so because to Silverberg it was "wonderful science fiction" (12).

The Lovecraftian text is an inter-generic form, capable of retaining in itself the major elements of the gothic crevasse, the horror affect, the fantastic confrontation, and the cosmic interstice. Therefore, it is not in the least surprising that stories such as "The Shadow Out of Time," "The Whisperer," *Mountains of Madness*, or "Colour" seem robustly science-fictional.

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[72] Wollheim himself was a science fiction writer and had a huge influence on the science-fiction movement and its fandom in the US. He edited, among other things, the first mass-marketed science-fiction anthology, *The Pocket Book of Science Fiction* (1943).

As J. Vernon Shea maintains, "surely the basic themes of science-fiction, the reachings out into time and space, had very much to do with the body of [Lovecraft's] work" (138). The abundance of science-fictional content in his work, not too strangely, coincides with Lovecraft's life-long amateurism as far as the natural sciences go.[73] Kenneth Sterling, a collaborator and friend, recalled: "A most important side of Lovecraft's intellect was his familiarity with and high regard for the natural sciences—an attitude which pervaded his philosophical outlook" (424).[74] As Lovecraft himself writes about his pre-teenage years, "My predilection for natural science, fostered by my Aunt Lillian, took form in a love of chemistry. . . . [B]efore many months had elapsed, I was deep in experimental research, having a well-equipped laboratory in the cellar" (*Lord of a Visible World* 13). Following this preoccupation in 1899, Lovecraft was not content to remain a quiet neophyte in scientific lore. Peter Cannon chronicles:

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[73] Lovecraft considered himself an amateur in almost everything he did. To do him justice we need to acknowledge his definition of "amateur," provided in a letter delineating the history of the *United Amateur Press Association*: "In considering the adjective 'amateur' . . . we must adhere to the more basic interpretation, regarding the word as indicating the non-mercenary nature of the membership. Our amateurs write purely for love of their art, without the stultifying influence of commercialism. Many of them are prominent professional authors in the outside world . . ." (*Lord of a Visible World* 40).

[74] Sterling relates the occasion when,

> [i]n one of our more frivolous discussions, I posed a hypothetical question presupposing a division of all knowledge into the humanities on the one hand, and the natural sciences on the other. Assuming that a fairly sharp division could be made, the question was which field one would prefer, provided he could know all of one but none of the other. Lovecraft's preference was the natural sciences, although the decision was naturally a difficult one. The vast bulk of literary men would, I am sure, have selected the humanities. (425)

> As an older child Lovecraft produced with the aid of a hectograph a large quantity of scientific writing, including two impressively titled periodicals, the *Scientific Gazette* and the *Rhode Island Journal of Astronomy* . . . In 1906, soon after his first published piece—a brief critique of astrology—appeared in the *Providence Sunday Journal*, he commenced a monthly astronomy column in the *Providence Tribune*. That same year *Scientific American* printed a letter of his, speculating on the existence of a trans-Neptunian planet. (4)

Much as we might admire this zeal, Lovecraft never developed into a professional scientist. T. R. Livesey, in his recent study, "Dispatches from the Providence Observatory: Astronomical Motifs and Sources in the Writings of H. P. Lovecraft" (2008), lists at length various facts that Lovecraft confused, information he gathered erroneously, and outdated theories he adhered to, which went hand in hand with his acute interest in the new sciences and the occasional brilliant flashes of insight—the latter a rare but not entirely uncommon feature of the amateur.

In spite of Lovecraft's functional acquaintance with chemistry, physics, and astronomy, his tales contain a considerable number of elements that may be termed quasi-scientific. Notwithstanding the derogatory sense of the term, I do not wish to disparage Lovecraft's achievement in fusing scientific thought with literature, or, further, to criticize the ideas he infused into his stories as entirely invalid. Livesey, after all, praises Lovecraft for his meticulous use of astronomical detail in his fiction: although he "integrate[d] the sciences within his fiction as elements of the setting and atmosphere," "Lovecraft's astronomical flourishes are remarkably consistent with observed astronomical phenomena: he never describes obvious contradictions to observational reality" (30, 31).[75] In addition to astronomy,

[75] Lovecraft's sources were his own observations made with a telescope as well as the published data of astronomers and almanacs.

"Lovecraft uses a variety of branches of science to add realistic detail to his fiction, including biology, psychology, archeology, anthropology, and quantum physics" (30), and we may rightly assume that such additions to his fiction are founded on a similar demand for truthfulness. For instance, in "Whisperer," the then recently discovered Pluto is the origin of malignant alien entities, and most of the stunningly realistic setting of *Mountains of Madness* (1931) rests on actual accounts of Antarctic exploration, including, for instance, Admiral Byrd's (1928-30).

What is the nature, then, of the quasi-scientific in the Lovecraftian text? It is easy to list normative features of Lovecraft's science-fictional stories, as Fritz Leiber has done in his "Through Hyperspace with Brown Jenkin: Lovecraft's Contribution to Speculative Fiction"; these include "hibernating races and travel through space, hyperspace, and time" (140). Robert Weinberg in "H. P. Lovecraft and Pseudomathematics"—reading "Witch House"—similarly identifies various points of "made-up science which had very little or no relation to the real work of the period" (113), references to non-existent fields and phenomena such as non-Euclidean calculus and a space-warp:

> Unfortunately, while [Lovecraft's] grasp of science and mathematics might have been greater than the average layman [sic], it was not strong enough to present a convincing picture to the careful reader. Further, Lovecraft made the cardinal mistake of speculation of the impossible. While to the non-scientist, this may not sound like much of a sin, it is the cardinal mistake of the uninformed. (117)

Weinberg is a pitiless critic and quite wrong: Lovecraft was certainly erudite and knowledgeable enough to use his quasi-scientific concepts as either tongue-in-cheek references to science fiction proper or, as many of his critics and biographers emphasize, to create a particular atmosphere rather than attempting to teach the natural sciences through

literary works.[76] Moreover, Weinberg calls such elements "sheer nonsense" (114), but nonsense indeed lies in reproaching Lovecraft for not having used the right terminology with the proper denotations. This misses the mark not primarily because in fiction the status of extra-textual referentiality is itself rather problematic, but because the axis of scientific thought in Lovecraft's fiction is not the casual or sensational use of Einsteinian physics or other theories but rather a preference for rationalizing the supernatural.[77] Lovecraft, through his confrontation motif—far from making a "mistake of the uninformed"—deals with "a speculation of the impossible" (Weinberg 117), but by introducing it via the possible. S. T. Joshi, more cogently than most, explains:

> Lovecraft has, by 1931, renounced pure supernaturalism as a viable outlet for weird writing: the majority of his pre-1926 stories are more or less conventionally supernatural, and this vein reached its apotheosis in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. But from 1926 on, Lovecraft's work can only be called quasi science fiction—not merely the few stories . . . generally regarded as such, but nearly the whole of his later work. (*Weird Tale* 179)

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[76] Also, many of the points dealt with in Weinberg's conservative critique have received severe revisionist treatment in recent physics: for instance, the speed of light (condensed-matter physics), or the existence of other dimensions outside Einsteinian space-time (infinite dimensional quantum theory and higher dimensional string theory).

[77] In spite of this, Joshi, for instance, appreciates "Lovecraft's really admirable reconciliation of Einstein and materialism" and asserts that "the vigour of his writing argues for a reasoned synthesis that is surely his own" (*Decline* 18). Specific references to Einstein and the theories of relativity are easily found in many stories, such as "The Shunned House" (106), "The Whisperer in Darkness" (213), Mountains of Madness (31), or "Witch House" (307).

Joshi's *Weird Tale* disconnects Lovecraft's "quasi science fiction stories" from science fiction proper and defines them simply as a subgenre of the weird tale—based on the Lovecraftian realist method of handling the central element of Lovecraftian intrusion fantasy, the confrontation motif: "*Quasi science fiction* is a development of supernatural horror in that the real world is . . . presupposed as the norm, but the impossible intrusions are rationalized in some way" (*The Weird Tale* 7). The Lovecraftian text is configured by Rabkin's ground rules in the realist tradition, but, even more importantly, intrusion fantasy à la Mendlesohn—the very heart of the fantastic in Lovecraft—is also treated in a manner akin to realism. Joshi, who believes that "most of the later Lovecraft fall[s] into this category," also designates him as the sole producer of quasi science fiction: "I cannot think of anyone but Lovecraft who exhaustively worked in this subclass; perhaps he did it so well as to deter others from competing with him" (7).[78]

Joshi, furthermore, argues that Lovecraft's quasi science fiction "is a more advanced form because it implies that the 'supernatural' is not *ontological* but *epistemological*: it is only our ignorance of certain 'natural laws' that creates the illusion of supernaturalism" (7). This refinement of the supernatural element is a signature trait of Lovecraft's stories and is especially crucial in its bearing on the problems of human knowledge. In his 1998 dissertation, Will identifies as a distinctive feature of Lovecraft's work "the supramundane": it is that phenomenon "which exceeds human understanding but is not supernatural" (19). "The presence of the supramundane," Will maintains, "indicates the inadequacy of the human faculty of understanding rather than, as with the supernatural, the intrusion of elements from outside the natural world" (19). While Will does not pay tribute to Matthew H. Onderdonk's "The Lord of R'lyeh," the notion of the supramundane in Lovecraft is clearly as old as Onderdonk's essay, which was published in 1945. Onderdonk calls the effect the

[78] Elsewhere Joshi maintains that Lovecraft, "virtually singlehandedly, created an amalgam of horror fiction and what we would now term science fiction" (*Decline* 54).

"supernormal," and his view proves not a far cry from Lovecraft's, who interpreted supramundane phenomena in his fiction as "*supplements* rather than *contradictions* of the visible and mensurable universe" (*Selected Letters III* 295-96). The most important aspect of supramundane phenomena in Lovecraft is that they are a *rationalized* variation on the "supernatural" and are in turn the gist of Lovecraftian intrusion fantasy.

In "Whisperer," the extraterrestrials leave footprints, emit buzzing sounds in the night, but their existence remains doubtful throughout the first part of the text. In the final scene Wilmarth escapes from the farmhouse, where the potential influence of the Outer Ones becomes inexplicably excruciating. His flight is due to his unnerving conversation with his host, Akeley—the first one after a long correspondence—who tells him about the extraterrestrials in a strangely acquiescent manner and tone, quite opposite to his previous suspicious attitude in his letters. His paean about the Outer Ones also highlights the scientific streak in the story, its degree identifying the aliens as supramundane, their existence and knowledge "*supplements* rather than *contradictions*" to our knowledge:

> Do you know that Einstein is wrong, and that certain objects and forces *can* move with a velocity greater than that of light? With proper aid I expect to go backward and forward in time . . . You can't imagine the degree to which those beings have carried science. There is nothing they can't do with the mind and body of living organisms. (248)

The *whispering* Akeley in the darkened room exhibits a "strained, rigid, immobile expression and unwinking glassy stare" and Wilmarth identifies "the touch of the pitiful in the limp, lifeless way his lean hands rested in his lap" (247). Also, Akeley is "swathed around the head and high around the neck with a vivid yellow scarf or hood" (247). After his escape, effected by a series of macabre events, such as the weird metal tanks with resuscitated human brains in

them (the aliens' tools for mind-exchange—a theme fairly recurrent in Lovecraft) and the threatening dialog of various mechanical and alien buzzing voices from downstairs, the narrator cannot fail to connect the clues. The major horror derives from the contents of the host's chair:

> I let my flashlight return to the vacant easy-chair after its circuit of the room; then noticing for the first time the presence of certain objects in the seat, made inconspicuous by the adjacent loose folds of the empty dressing-gown. . . . The three things were damnably clever constructions of their kind, and were furnished with ingenious metallic clamps to attach them to organic developments of which I dare not form any conjecture. I hope—devoutly hope—that they were the waxen products of a master artist, despite what my inmost fears tell me. (267)

Naturally, the reader is led to the grandiose conclusion that Akeley has long been murdered by the alien entities raiding his farmhouse—the change in tone begins in the later letters, actually—and that the presence conversing with Wilmarth in the darkened room is indeed an alien Outer One in the guise of Akeley. The ultimate evidence—adhering to Lovecraftian realism—arrives at the very end: "For the things in the chair, perfect to the last, subtle detail of microscopic resemblance—or identity—were the face and hands of Henry Wentworth Akeley" (267). As Burleson argues, "The power of this ending lies in the fact that it is both conformational and revelational; the reader has long known what the rather obtuse Wilmarth has seemed unable to guess, but the (probable) use of the *actual* face as a mask is a grotesque twist" (*H. P. Lovecraft: A Critical Study* 165).

As a competent horror writer, Lovecraft settles the fantastic Outer One in Akeley's real and material (albeit fragmentary) body. In his search for an uncanny effect,[79] around the paradoxical, the unimaginable, and the "supernatural" he fashions a web out of the conventional, the normal, the real, the homely. Through the supramundane, the schema of fantastic confrontation is rationalized[80] and realistically modeled. "Modeled," since Lovecraft, who himself regarded his work as realistic, could only do so much to design a fantastic confirmation that would be "*supplements* . . . of the visible and mensurable universe." As he emphasized in "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction," "Inconceivable events and conditions have a special handicap to overcome, and this can be accomplished only through the maintenance of a careful realism in every phase of the story *except* that touching on the given marvel" (115). In a symposium on Lovecraft, Leiber contends:

> [Lovecraft] invented an alternate world superficially like our world but different in that there was evidence, available to certain scholars, that there were other forces, other beings, operating in the world by various secret methods, that this proved that

[79] Here I use the term in the Freudian sense, dissociating it from Todorov's meaning where the uncanny basically equals "explaining away." For further discrepancies between Lovecraft and Todorov, see the next footnote.

[80] Although Todorov in his seminal *The Fantastic* provides ample explication of the fantastic turning into the fantastic-uncanny or the uncanny, I feel that Lovecraft's tales do not fit his schema entirely. In Lovecraft we usually find an anomaly that first seems fantastic and is later explained, but not simply explained away. Lovecraft's special method resembles a mixture of the uncanny and the marvellous, to use Todorov's terms. The unearthly phenomena, the texts suggest, should be representable and explicable by an altered, elevated, or more sophisticated version of human science, and is, theoretically, far from totally unattainable—hence uncanny. It remains, however, alien to our world and maybe explained only by that hypothetical future science—hence marvellous. The supernormal phenomenon itself brings about the shift in the scientific view to a moderate extent, but the new science is never actualized for the better part of humanity. (It is also observable here that Todorov's genre-theory becomes problematic when being tested against the wide spectrum of fantastic fiction. This generic rigidity has been pointed out by many critics, including Armitt and Brooke-Rose.)

> witchcraft had a real material background and so on. I don't think that any one but a seriously realistic writer would have made such a point of inventing this alternate [sic] world. ("Symposium on H. P. Lovecraft" 83)

It is fairly commonplace that writers of the fantastic need a basic external reality to start out from on their forays into the fantastic. Attebery, for instance, argues: "Fantasy . . . presupposes a view of exterior reality which it goes on to contradict" (*The Fantasy Tradition* 1). More relevantly, Mendlesohn insists that "intrusion fantasies maintain stylistic realism and rely heavily on explanation" (xxii). Lovecraft, instead of merely presupposing reality as a basis for its subversion by the fantastic, treats his setting and characters with "unsparing *realism*" (*Selected Letters II* 150) both to emphasize the weirdness of the supramundane and to establish its scientific nature.

Joshi crucially observes:

> Science and philosophy, far from being antagonistic to the creation of literature, were for Lovecraft direct stimuli for it; and his untiring delvings into the strange worlds revealed by astrophysicists, biologists, and philosophers proved to be a central—perhaps even a necessary—inspiration for some of the greatest weird tales of the twentieth century. ("The Sources for 'From Beyond'" 171)

Even Edmund Wilson, one of Lovecraft's earliest and most vitriolic critics, in a 1945 article commends Lovecraft's scientific thought while condemning the majority of his work as "tales of the marvellous and the ridiculous" (47): "He had a scientific imagination rather similar, though much inferior, to that of the early Wells" (49). The flaws in Wilson's overall approach unfortunately also permeate his view of Lovecraft's scientific side, as he is convinced that, for example, "'The Colour out of Space' [sic] more or less predicts the effects of the atomic

bomb" (49). Wilson, followed by Weinberg and many others, simply gets it wrong, since it is not the representation of certain achievements of science that makes Lovecraft's fiction scientific—that would only vindicate claims for story-level quasi science. Although the Lovecraftian text does not always promise or deliver the precise representation of extra-textual science which critics like Weinberg demand of it, on the metaphorical level it contributes greatly to the knowledge about twentieth-century science, mainly through its use of the supramundane as a major distinction. Similarly to most science fiction, the Lovecraftian text does not wish to explicate or demonstrate the actual sciences of Einsteinian physics, molecular chemistry, or early-twentieth-century astronomy—however cleverly and accurately these may be woven into the fabric of many tales—but uses these props to create a cultural ambience where it can develop a general philosophical position on the growth, scope, and aim of the natural sciences. By applying the supramundane, a fundamentally epistemological device, and by placing the human intellect in the center, Lovecraft makes his protagonists both the receptacles of scientific thought as well as the subjects of an experiment to test the workings of science. When all is in place, Lovecraft's fiction works as a special textual laboratory to produce results and contribute to our knowledge of scientific inquiry.

The Insurmountable Anomaly

When attempting to stake out the actual scientific territory the Lovecraftian text occupies, a problem is encountered at the outset: the Lovecraftian text appears not to concentrate exclusively on natural science as such. This observation may be further divided into two remarks: 1) Many of Lovecraft's narrator-protagonists are artists, dreamers, and the like; 2) although the plot frequently discloses scientific research, rarely do we encounter a *detailed* description of such research or experiment comprising the greater part of the tales (with the possible exception of, perhaps, "Colour" and *Mountains of Madness*). Peter Medawar in *The Limits of Science* defines science:

> [T]he word "science" itself is used as a general name for, on the one hand, the procedures of science—adventures of thought and stratagems of inquiry that go into the advancement of learning—and on the other hand, the substantive body of knowledge that is the outcome of this complex endeavor . . . (3)

Almost all of the Lovecraftian text can be designated as belonging to the realm of the scientific according to Medawar's definition. In the Medawarian sense, it is unnecessary to discriminate between the natural sciences as such, the life sciences, and the social sciences, or even other different modes of intellectual inquiry. For instance, "Herbert West" toys, as it were, with the possibilities of biology; *Mountains of Madness* mixes the social sciences with life sciences by invoking the spirit of biology and geology while the protagonists wonder at the artistic expression and social stratification of alien beings; and in "Cthulhu," where peculiar mental states, a strange cult, and an alien being are simultaneously looked into, features psychology, anthropology, and various natural sciences together. Walter Gilman's calculus in "Witch House" and the strange meteorite in "Colour" both mix astronomy with mathematics, not to mention the important streak of antiquarian research in the former and the study of social and familial disintegration in the latter. The Lovecraftian text most significantly deals with the modes and results of acquiring knowledge and the problems encountered during the process; therefore, the tales are all topical of science. In an attempt to arrest the endless Lovecraftian game of combinatorics based on aspects of science, I propose four categories for Lovecraft's tales as far as the scientific if concerned: 1) *tales about science and scientists—Mountains of Madness*, "Witch House," or "Herbert West"; 2) *tales about a general inquiry*, for example, genealogical or antiquarian—*Charles Dexter Ward* or "Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family"; 2) *stories of detection and*

investigation—"Cthulhu," "Red Hook";[81] and 3) *stories of scholars outside the field of natural science proper*—"Dunwich." Nevertheless, to be able to outline clearly what dimension of science the Lovecraftian text enters, I wish to establish certain Lovecraftian ground rules.

The Lovecraftian text views natural science as, first and foremost, materialistic. Even the anomalous entities in Lovecraft are basically of a material nature.[82] This premise, which the Lovecraftian story never fails to generate, ultimately serves the purpose of establishing the supramundane facet of the cosmic effect. To be supramundane, however, these entities or phenomena have to be "composed of"—as the narrator of *Mountains of Madness* speculates—"matter more widely different from that which we know" (305). Akeley in "Whisperer" writes early in his correspondence with Wilmarth:

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[81] The connection between detection and science, as in the case of detection and the Gothic novel, needs no further explanation. The kinship, commencing with Poe's Dupin and culminating in Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes, prevails (consider the multitude of popular television drama series such as *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* [created by Anthony E. Zuiker, 2000] or *Bones* [by Hart Hanson, 2005]). For connections with Lovecraft, see Deborah D'Agati, "The Problem with Solving: Implications for Sherlock Holmes and Lovecraft Narrators."

[82] These may be "forces" or "gods," according to which stance we assume, the reader-critic's or that of some of the lower-order characters. Robert M. Price explains that

> there is a direct continuity between Lovecraft's scientism and his mythology . . . Lovecraft's Great Old Ones, on the narrative level, appear to be gods and/or extraterrestrials, neither of which Lovecraft accepted as real. But on a deeper level it is fairly clear that Lovecraft uses his titans Yog-Sothoth, Cthulhu, and others to symbolize the indifferent, inexorable forces of the cosmos which blindly produced *Homo sapiens* and will finally unknowingly destroy them again. (27)

> I tried to photograph [the monster] . . . , but when I developed the film *there wasn't anything visible except the woodshed*. What can the thing have been made of? I saw it and felt it, and they all leave footprints. It was surely made of matter—but what kind of matter? (229)[83]

In Joshi's view, "the quasi-materiality of [Lovecraft's] entities was for him a philosophical necessity, and he in fact had some admirable success in depicting monsters which, while harmonising with a modified materialism, nevertheless expand it to its very limits" (*Decline* 85). It is precisely the contradiction between classical materialism and the nature of alien matter in the Lovecraftian text that supports our understanding of the monsters as scientific anomalies.

Will defines the supramundane as "a depiction of an anomaly of the highest order—an anomaly which cannot be resolved" (42). One of the first theorists of science to deal with anomalies was Thomas S. Kuhn, who in his groundbreaking work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* integrates the concept of scientific anomalies into his theory of paradigm shifts: "Discovery commences with the awareness of anomaly, i.e., with the recognition that nature has somehow violated the paradigm-induced expectations that govern normal science" (52-53). In the Lovecraftian text, the anomaly, as a rule, conforms to the characters' confrontation with the supramundane. In "Cthulhu" the alien entity is hit and is halved by the steamboat *Alert* but its body does not become dysfunctional, rather its remnants are gathered together again:

> 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 . . . For an instant the ship was

[83] In "Whisperer" the explanation—in an essentially Lovecraftian fashion—is quasi-scientific: "a form of matter totally alien to our part of space—with electrons having a wholly different vibration-rate" (234).

> befouled by an acrid and blinding green cloud, and 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 . . . (168)

"Cthulhu" parades other instances of anomaly, and the unnatural behavior of Cthulhu's "body" appears rather belated in the sequence of events.[84] In Lovecraft's tales there appears a gradual build-up of anomalous events that ultimately provides a heightened sense of the full contradiction of natural law. The meteor that ruins the life of a backwoods farmer and his family in "Colour" is the origin of the anomaly series. First, the meteor's texture is wholly unknown: the rock emits a certain glow, it refuses to cool, it is peculiarly soft—can only be "gouged rather than chipped" (174), and the specimen little by little shrinks and finally disappears from the laboratory desk, the glass beaker with it.[85] Then, the scientists at Miskatonic University discover a small globe of nebulous substance in the meteor, which, after bursting like a bubble, disappears, too. Meanwhile the strange color permeates all around it, animate or inanimate: the farmhouse faintly glows by night, the animals mutate in a certain unnerving fashion, the vegetation acquires a disturbing radiance, and the trees sway even when there is no wind. Finally the Gardner family slowly diminishes; they go mad one by one and those who do not disappear bodily disintegrate—they crumble and turn into gray powder. Nahum Gardner, the father, is the last to go:

[84] The main anomaly in "Cthulhu"—and the most portentous one considering the story itself—the monster's existence and its extraterrestrial origin, is, however, not dealt with in a quasi-scientific manner in the text but only mentioned in various myths and legends of the Cthulhu cult.

[85] The idea of the anomalous meteor appears to originate in "Cthulhu," written in 1926. There the material of the curious statuette is similarly wholly alien: "Totally separate and apart, its very material was a mystery; for the soapy, greenish-black stone with its golden or iridescent flecks and striations resembled nothing familiar to geology or mineralogy" (148-49).

> There was a horrible brittleness, and dry fragments were scaling off. Ammi could not touch it, but looked horrifiedly into the distorted parody that had been a face . . . But that was all. That which spoke could speak no more because it had completely caved in. Ammi laid a red checked tablecloth over what was left . . . (188-89)

Soon the farm itself falls apart, but the bleak, gray "blasted heath" area in its place continues to grow in diameter each day, adhering to the story's cosmic quality.

These comprise only the major anomalous points in the story, and there are countless others, such as inexplicable thunderbolts crashing into the farm, long descriptions of mutated animals and vegetables, and a constant subliminal noise that the family falls into the habit of listening to. In the Lovecraftian text the central anomaly is not concentrated. It is rather scattered throughout the text, and, most importantly, the various elements are built up gradually towards a climax, establishing what Will calls a feeling of "unfathomable anomaly" (7). It is important that the anomalous phenomena—fragments or facets of the central anomaly—ultimately reach the stage where some fundamental natural law or scientific theory is contradicted to the point of intolerance (usually earlier for the reader than for the narrator-protagonist).[86] Such fundamental natural laws and theories contribute to what Kuhn calls "normal science" (10). Normal science is mainly distinguished by a ruling paradigm and some minor puzzles that scientists can solve. The notion of "paradigm" is crucial to Kuhn's theory and I will expand on it later. At the moment, however, suffice it to say that a paradigm emerges as a set of scientific theories, methods, modes—or even a *Weltanschaung*—that dominate the scientific field and governs scientific inquiry at any given time (Kuhn, *Structure* 175). Examples are easy to find: Ptolemaic cosmology, Newtonian mechanics, or Einstein's

[86] This seemingly contradicts Rabkin's axiom that the fantastic is signaled by a character, but the Lovecraftian text does not deny but only delays the effect.

physics each was a quasi-exclusive paradigm of its age.[87] As Kuhn asserts, "Normal science consists in . . . extending the knowledge of those facts that the paradigm displays as particularly revealing, by increasing the extent of the match between those facts and the paradigm's predictions, and by further articulation of the paradigm itself" (*Structure* 24).

Yet there remain puzzles, a definitive feature of normal science, as John Watkins contends: "There will always be apparent discrepancies or anomalies. Normal Research largely consists of resolving these anomalies by making suitable adjustments which leave the paradigm intact" (27). In Kuhn's view there is, once in a while, a radical leap from normal science to "extraordinary science,"[88] and it occurs in the field of puzzles. At one point the overwhelming number of anomalies presented to any paradigm tilts the balance towards another bundle of scientific explanations and an alternative vision: "the emergence of new theories is generally preceded by a period of pronounced professional insecurity. As one might expect, that insecurity is generated by the persistent failure of the puzzles of normal science to come out as they should" (*Structure* 67-68). When a number of anomalies or a major anomaly necessitates a leap from normal science, there commences a state of crisis:

> . . . if an anomaly is to evoke crisis, it must usually be more than just an anomaly . . . Sometimes an anomaly will clearly call into question explicit and fundamental generalizations of the paradigm . . . Or . . . the development of normal science may transform an anomaly that has previously been only a vexation into a source of crisis . . . When, for these reasons or others like them, an anomaly comes to seem more

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[87] Quasi-exclusive, since there occurred transitive periods—occasionally literally hundreds of years—during which the various paradigms and world-views co-existed or engaged in constant struggle. For instance, various axioms of Newton's and Einstein's physics still dominate much of natural science, and do so simultaneously.

[88] On the relationship of the two levels, there remain differing views. Karl Popper, for instance inserts "many gradations" between Kuhn's normal scientists and extraordinary scientists ("Normal Science" 54).

> than just another puzzle of normal science, the transition to crisis and to extraordinary science has begun. (82)

The Lovecraftian text displays a wealth of instances of both normal and extraordinary science, and the tension between the two brings about the supramundane effect. In "Dunwich" the strange rumbling and other noises appearing in the hills "still form a puzzle to geologists and physiographers" (208), a puzzle which, to Professor Armitage, looms as an anomaly. Also, in "Colour" the scientists from Miskatonic University are of a kind that "fumble away" in the field of normal science, devoting their time to smaller puzzles. They see the meteor and its behavior, therefore, as a pressing anomaly, one that would radically change their normal science. Curiously, but not without an explanation, when the shrinking rock specimen finally disappears, they abandon further investigation of the abnormally altered farm and its inhabitants, denying even having observed anything anomalous in the first place: "There was really nothing for serious men to do in cases of wild gossip, for superstitious rustics will say and believe anything. And so all through the strange days the professors stayed away in contempt" (179).

Kuhn provides an explanation for this kind of evasive behavior, where,

> [t]hough they may begin to lose faith and then to consider alternatives, [scientists] do not renounce the paradigm that has led them into crisis. They do not, that is, treat anomalies as counter-instances, though in the vocabulary of philosophy of science that is what they are. . . . These hint what our later examination of paradigm rejection will disclose more fully: once it has achieved the status of a paradigm, a scientific theory is

declared invalid only if an alternate candidate is available to take its place. (*Structure* 77)[89]

Important as normal science may be,[90] the high-energy state of extraordinary science, however, is what accounts for the emergence of new theories: “crisis loosens the rules of normal puzzle-solving in ways that ultimately permit a new paradigm to emerge” (80). The novel paradigm will normally be able to explain the anomalies on their own grounds, while also explaining most of the earlier, non-anomalous, phenomena (a case also analyzable as the “reduction of a past theory to a current one” [Jardine 60]).

A major crisis, where rigid paradigms open up to multiple questionings, leads the way to a “scientific revolution” as Kuhn understands it: “the successive transition from one paradigm to another via revolution is the usual developmental pattern of mature science” (*Structure* 12). In the revolution—the analogy taken from the social sciences—the whole of the preceding paradigm is “burned up.” Even though an exceptionally thoroughgoing student of scientific revolutions, Kuhn seems uniformly unspecific about the sense of “paradigm”: “In its established usage, a paradigm is an accepted model or pattern, and that aspect of its meaning has enabled me, lacking a better word, to appropriate ‘paradigm’ here” (23). Kuhn himself observes his failure at a definition in the 1962 book and provides a double definition in his 1969 postscript (a paradigm, in the latter, is a world-view or a more-or-less material element of that [175]). In reality, while having in mind a “model or pattern,” Kuhn uses

[89] The practice of holding onto the paradigm and attempting to view the anomaly with the help of it is oftentimes called “tenacity.” See Paul Feyerabend’s “Consolations for the Specialist,” especially 205.

[90] Critics of Kuhn either see him as praising or reproaching normal science. See Lakatos and Musgrave, eds, *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*. The representative of still another view—and a renowned one at that—Popper, believes that science is and should be a state of constant struggle between opposing worldviews. He concludes, “Kuhn is mistaken when he suggests that what he calls ‘normal’ science is normal” (“Normal Science” 53).

paradigm, as Margaret Masterman demonstrates, in as many as twenty-one different senses in *Scientific Revolutions* ("The Nature of a Paradigm" 61-65). These twenty-one Masterman subsumes under three classes: 1) *metaphysical paradigm* or *metaparadigm*—"a metaphysical notion or entity, rather than a scientific one"; 2) *sociological paradigm*—"a universally recognized scientific achievement"; and 3) *artefact paradigm* or *construct paradigm*—"an actual textbook or classic work," "supplying tools," "an analogy," or "a grammatical paradigm" (65). Masterman argues that *metaparadigms* are the only kind of paradigm to which "Kuhn's philosophical critics have referred," taking the sense of the expression for granted and overlooking the other two components (65). In the present study of the Lovecraftian text, I am going to utilize not only the concept of a *metaparadigm* but also that of a *sociological paradigm*.

Lovecraft was an ardent mechanistic materialist. He also inclined to call himself, somewhat erroneously, a pessimistic materialist, as Joshi in his *Decline of the West* powerfully demonstrates.[91] The stance of Lovecraft's fictional characters is, in the greater part of the stories, analogous to that of their creator. As Maurice Lévy argues, "it is manifest that many of [the protagonists] are projections of the author [Lovecraft] himself, who through the illusion of literature thus enters his own imaginary world" (42). This is not solely because Lovecraft must have found it fascinating to let his characters enter his life or vice versa (although Joshi, Burleson, Timo Airaksinen, and many others are skeptic about that),[92] but also because Lovecraft, as R. Boerem contends, was consciously working in the tradition of

[91] Joshi points out that, in spite of what Lovecraft must have thought or felt, pessimism is far from being a necessary attribute of the materialist worldview (*Decline* 1-2).

[92] Joshi contends, "In terms of the fiction, I am very aware that the attribution of a given statement or sentiment to Lovecraft is at times highly problematical: no creative artist is so naive as to make any of his characters simple mouthpieces for his views" (*Decline* v). A similar sentiment leads Burleson to abstain from traditional criticism and attempt a deconstructive study of Lovecraft (see Burleson, *Disturbing the Universe*) and Airaksinen to assert that all of Lovecraft's writing can be subsumed under the category of fiction, even his letters.

the "gentleman narrator." (The "gentleman narrator" was invented by Poe, Sheridan LeFanu, Arthur Machen, and several others—writers whose work Lovecraft not only admired but theorized upon in his "Supernatural Horror.") As Boerem stresses, some of a "gentleman's" major characteristics around the *fin de siècle* were education, occupation, and income (258). Out of these "virtues," as they were then observed, Lovecraft hewed his protagonists (many of whom are the narrators of the stories, as well), partly in conformity with his own image.[93] "By far, the great number of Lovecraftian narrators are scholars," Boerem observes. "Most of these are scholars by temperament and inclination. . . . In later stories, the students become teachers or professors" (266-67). As gentlemanly students, professors, and scholars, the mindsets of Lovecraftian protagonists involve, to differing degrees and in diverse combinations, the materialistic, the logical, the rational, and the empirical.[94] For example, Thurston, the narrator of "Cthulhu," keeps referring to his "callous rationalism" (146), "the ingrained skepticism then forming my philosophy" (144-45), or his attitude of "absolute materialism" (159).[95] Professor Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee also introduces himself in "The Shadow Out of Time" thus:

> After my graduation I studied economics at Harvard, and came back to Miskatonic as instructor of Political Economy in 1895. For thirteen years more my life ran smoothly

[93] "To some degree, Lovecraft's description of his narrators reflects his self-evaluation" (Boerem 269). Also: "Lovecraft's narrators, then, resemble him because he was his own best source for them. If their natures shifted with the years, it is because, in part, his own character developed over time" (270).

[94] In *The Rise and Fall of the Cthulhu Mythos*, Joshi emphasizes the presence of "the scholarly narrator or protagonist," a device that "is by no means restricted to Lovecraft's mythos tales" (18).

[95] Up to this point, the concepts "protagonist" and "narrator" have been used somewhat interchangeably, not because I deny a distinction between them, but because in Lovecraft they usually have the same function—the deliverance of the metaparadigm. The distinction, moreover, is blurred in almost all critical studies of Lovecraft; for the same reason, I would suppose. Yet, in my discussion of the various tales, I attempt to use the concepts "narrator" and "protagonist" referentially.

> and happily. I married Alice Keezar of Haverhill in 1896, and my three children, Robert K., Wingate, and Hannah, were born in 1898, 1900, and 1903, respectively. In 1898 I became an associate professor, and in 1902 a full professor. At no time had I the least interest in either occultism or abnormal psychology. (336-37)

The supposed sanity of the character is thus fully established, with the help of a scholarly bent—and a rather prosaic kind at that—and a happy family life. The narrator of "The Shunned House," despite being a sort of shady "vampire-hunter" character, describes his method as inherently scientific: "I was disposed to take the whole subject with profound seriousness, and began at once not only to review the evidence, but to accumulate as much more as I could" (101). Even his "dreamers"—Randolph Carter, Kuranes from "Celephaïs," the narrator of "Polaris," and many others—usually discuss a materialist or rational worldview, even if they do not completely adhere to it (although when the horror arrives, they react similarly to other rational characters). Against this materialistic-rationalistic metaparadigm, the Lovecraftian text sets the failure of cognition, the disintegration of human intelligence.[96]

The Lovecraftian paradigm is not only a metaparadigm—a set of theories or a worldview that provides working methods for any one scientist—but it is also a *sociological*

[96] Franco Moretti similarly argues for the cognitive nature of horror:

> *Frankenstein* . . . does not want to *scare* readers, but to *convince* them. It appeals to their reason. It wants them to reflect on a number of important problems (the development of science, the ethic of the family, respect for tradition) and agree—rationally—that these are threatened by powerful and hidden forces. In other words it wants to get the readers' assent to the 'philosophical' arguments expounded in black and white by the author in the course of the narration. Fear is made subordinate to this design: it is one of the means to convince, but not the only one, nor the main one. The person who is frightened is not the *reader*, but the *protagonist*. ("Dialectic of Fear" 106)

paradigm. Although I concur with Will's contention that "Lovecraft, Clarke, Gibson and other authors of the supramundane do not share Kuhn's confidence in the human capacity for understanding" (42), I see the Lovecraftian protagonist's failure to make something of the anomaly as a result not so much of a lack of cognitive prowess, but rather a lack of a sympathetic community of scientific minds. Although several paradigms bear the names of their most distinguished scientist-thinker-philosophers, in Kuhn's view the route to and the establishment of the new scientific paradigm is a social process, not the work of one extraordinary genius:

> The anomaly itself now comes to be more generally recognized as such by the profession. More and more attention is devoted to it and more and more of the field's eminent men. If it still continues to resist, as it usually does not, many of them come to view its resolution as *the* subject matter of their discipline. (*Structure* 83)

The Kuhnian paradigm, provided it ultimately arises out of an acute scientific debate, is, therefore, a sociological paradigm.

Lovecraft's protagonist, the gentleman narrator, is, as a rule, secluded from the greater part of humanity: in "Dunwich," for instance, Professor Armitage and his two fellow-academics are able to defeat the Whateley monster due only to their concerted efforts. Similarly, in *Charles Dexter Ward* it takes a lynch mob to wipe out the danger lurking in the Pawtuxet woods. Carroll defines what he calls the "complex discovery plot" as the distinctive pattern for horror plots. He observes: "After the hesitations of confirmation, the complex discovery plot culminates in confrontation. Humanity marches out to meet the monster" (102). There appear tellingly few stories in the Lovecraftian text that correspond to Carroll's "complex discovery plot" pattern. In Lovecraft the "marching out," apart from a few exceptions, does not take place (the few exceptions being perhaps "Dunwich" and *Charles*

Dexter Ward). His narrator-protagonists surrender their human form ("Innsmouth," "The Thing on the Doorstep," "The Shadow Out of Time"), go raving mad (*Mountains of Madness*—although madness is usually a "privilege" only of the lesser characters), or simply die before they could ultimately confront the monster and defeat it ("Witch House," "Doorstep," *Charles Dexter Ward*). Their status as failures necessarily stems from their hopeless solitude. Moreover, the horrors—although confirming the "unfathomable," hereafter "insurmountable," anomaly—usually remain hidden from the rest of humanity. Lovecraftian horror emphasizes not simply an all-shattering revelation, but a constant menace: it paradoxically insists on the severity of the peril through delineating its marginality. In *Mountains of Madness*, for instance, both the isolation of the research site—the farthest, unexplored regions of the Antarctic—and that of two members of the scientific society—only Danforth and Dyer fly beyond the "mountains of madness" to explore the cyclopean city—are emphasized. As Stefan Dziemianowicz contends, Lovecraft "acknowledged one of the unwritten rules of supernatural fiction: horror is most effective when it comes to a solitary character in a solitary place" (159). The hidden menace and the decentralized role of the Lovecraftian anti-hero are both causes and consequences of the fact that the sociological paradigm remains incomplete in the Lovecraftian text. If there exists a scientific community, it soon disintegrates, as seen in "The Colour," and the solitary protagonist is not capable of establishing a new paradigm on his own.[97] The perilous anomaly will not be fully discovered, fully comprehended or fathomed, let alone incorporated into a new paradigm. As Joshi reminds us, these anomalies are "events which, although 'supplements' to natural law and science, can nevertheless not be integrated into science as currently understood" (*Decline* 83).

[97] Far from using a gender-exclusive form here, "his" reflects that Lovecraft's narrator-protagonists are, almost invariably, all men.

This insurmountable anomaly, as such, appears as a radical disturbance in the order of things as they are observed and interpreted by the solitary scholar in the given science. Still, as Masterman argues, the anomaly has also to be seen as a product of the paradigm itself:

> [Kuhn's] essential point is that an anomaly is an untruth, or a should-be-soluble-but-is-insoluble problem, or a germane but unwelcome result, or a contradiction, or an absurdity, *which is thrown up by the paradigm itself being pushed too far* . . . The anomaly, to be a true anomaly, has got to be produced from within the paradigm. (82-83)

In Kuhn's words, "Anomaly appears only against the background provided by the paradigm. The more precise and far-reaching that paradigm is, the more sensitive an indicator it provides of anomaly and hence of an occasion for paradigm change" (*Structure* 65).

The Lovecraftian central anomaly, similarly, has to arise from within the Lovecraftian materialistic paradigm itself in order to comply with the requirements of the supramundane phenomenon. As I have demonstrated, there prevails a necessary contrast between the materialist paradigm and the "supra-materialistic" supramundane; yet, and the Lovecraftian text is precise on this point, the anomaly had existed before its having moved into scientific view. Cthulhu, for instance, is an entity that had set foot on the Earth before the time of man; and has been lurking ever since in his "nightmare corpse-city of R'lyeh, that was built in measureless aeons behind history by the vast, loathsome shapes that seeped down from the dark stars" ("Cthulhu" 165). Also, in *Mountains of Madness* the strange, extraterrestrial, barrel-shaped creatures landed on Earth "not long after the matter forming the moon was wrenched from the neighbouring South Pacific" (303). Thus, Cthulhu and the Old Ones do not appear unknown because they are novel to the human world at the time of confrontation, but rather since they are phenomena that had existed but were ignored by, and became

marginal to, human science. It is the human race's ignorance that rendered them invisible. These phenomena have only been recognized by such counter-cultural and non-scientific trends as represented by Abdul Alhazred's *Necronomicon* and the ghastly couplet: "*That is not dead which can eternal lie, / And with strange aeons even death may die*" ("Cthulhu" 156). The concern here with the barrier between death and life can also be interpreted in terms of the marginalized anomalous: the text speaks about the different reality of the extraterrestrials (things "which can eternal lie") as having been effaced ("dead") but finally unveiled ("not dead"). The final paradox "death may die" may also be seen as an attempt to describe the relationship of this revelatory knowledge to the unknowable, since it is impossible for humans to imagine death dying. The degree of "unknowability" inscribed in the couplet corroborates the supramundane effect, as—strangely out of range of its genre (the grimoire should be not only descriptive but also prescriptive concerning magical techniques)—it is not the least certain what Cthulhu is and how we may know and represent his properties. Left to future inquiry to investigate into the matter, Cthulhu and the Old Ones seem purely supernatural for readers of the *Necronomicon*.

Moreover, the anomalous phenomena, such as Cthulhu, R'lyeh, or the color out of space are concealed from human inquiry not only because they are cryptic in their own way—unseen, incomprehensible, or mostly imperceptible—but because in Lovecraft human science ultimately operates imperfectly. Although constructed as a major guideline for scientific inquiry, the existence of any dominant paradigm inexorably entails the imperfection of science through the imperfection of that same paradigm. As Masterman emphasizes, "since the effect of these paradigms is drastically to restrict their fields, [they] collapse, when extended too far, by their own make-up; without any necessary accentuating irritation from nature at all" (84). Similarly, Watkins hypothesizes that "a scientific crisis may have theoretical rather than empirical causes" and provides a different explanation from Masterman's: "a dominant theory may come to be replaced, not because of growing empirical

pressure . . . , but because a new and incompatible theory has been freely elaborated" (31). In the wake of Watkins, then, it is the constant fluctuation of various incompatible paradigms that is one of the major flaws of natural science.

The Incomplete Paradigm Shift

The incompatibility of any two paradigms, in Kuhn's rendition, is a necessary condition of scientific revolutions.[98] The idea of a scientific revolution is today deeply engraved in the public mind: we talk about the Copernican revolution or the revolutionary breakthrough in genetics. As Alexander Bird summarizes, "Kuhn draws a political parallel with institutions which generate political problems for which those institutions are unable to find an agreed resolution. Under such circumstances, dissatisfaction with institutional failure may lead to its being replaced—a revolution" (277). According to Kuhn, in revolutions, or "paradigm shifts," "[p]aradigms gain their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute" (23). Being more successful, however, is not equivalent to having greater prowess in finding "truths." As Bird observes, "That theories from different paradigms are incommensurable is the reason why Kuhn's picture of science is often called *relativist*, as standards of rationality are relative to a paradigm, not absolute" (277).

"For positivists the natural sciences have a prerogative as vehicles of positive knowledge, by virtue of their special relationship to the experiential foundations of knowledge," observes Nicholas Jardine, and goes on to assert, "For scientific realists the natural sciences have a prerogative as potential bearers of objective truth by virtue of their having as their manifest subject-matter 'the world,' the ultimate arbiter of truth" (11). What is

[98] That is the reason why the Lovecraftian text cannot envision the evolution of paradigms, only a revolution of them. On evolutionary epistemology (interpreted mainly through Popper's work) see Peter Munz's *Our Knowledge of the Growth of Knowledge*.

cast as the cross-section of the positivist and realist worldviews is where the Lovecraftian protagonist roughly stands at the outset of the story. If we term the Lovecraftian protagonist's initial paradigm the "outset paradigm," the new one becomes the "superparadigm" (the latter named after its conjunction with the supramundane). Truth for the Lovecraftian protagonist, then, according to the outset paradigm, consists in the belief that the world comprises matter (materialism), and that knowledge is gained through a mixture of experiential contact with the world and the use of human reason (empiricism and rationalism),[99] as the already quoted "absolute materialism" and "callous rationalism" of the narrator of "Cthulhu" (159, 146). Still, it is almost a commonplace by now that the protagonist at the end of the story turns towards another kind of worldview—not a paradigm yet, for obvious reasons—than the one he embraced in the outset paradigm. Oakes notes that

> [t]he evolution of the character's beliefs allows Lovecraft to present the devastating emotional and psychological consequences of the discoveries the narrators make in their search for knowledge, and helps to make the revelations uncovered serve as sources of destabilization. (63)

The narrator, Thurston, while recounting the vastly anomalous story of Cthulhu, admits towards the end that, "[m]y attitude was still one of absolute materialism, *as I wish it still were*" (159). The narrator's attitude towards the new superparadigm is highly informative. His wish that "it still were" as before is ultimately misplaced. Given that the superparadigm takes account of the cosmic interstice, it foreshadows its own paradoxical incompleteness. It never will be as before, since the previous stage of knowledge has crumbled in sight of the new

[99] Although at first the empirical and rational views appear far apart, to emphasize their utter contrast is an oversimplification. The greatest philosophers of rationalism, for instance, also subscribed, so to speak, to the empirical science of their time. Further, the initially incongruous, ragged edges of the two philosophical trends smoothed out by Lovecraft's time were both engulfed by emerging twentieth-century science.

paradigm, and also since the empty cosmic spaces eventually—to use a paradox—prove infinite, immeasurable, and unknowable. It further exacerbates the problem that a scientific situation is plausible in which more than two paradigms struggle for their own recognition. Masterman, in fact, distinguishes three "states of affairs": "dual-paradigm science," "multiple-paradigm science," and even "non-paradigm science"—the latter a setting where no paradigm prevails, observable especially at the commencement of scientific development (71). Based on the dualistic nature of Lovecraftian intrusion fantasy and the clash of two alternative worlds, we may take a state of dual-paradigm science for granted.

The paradigm shift proves to be a result of the tension revealed in the apparent incommensurability of paradigms. Kuhn characterizes the turn in a paradigm shift using the analogy of a Gestalt switch (*Structure* 111-14), a kind of double vision that has bearings on the problem of observation. The narrator of "Cthulhu" attests to the sudden change in perspective. When he has read Johansen's manuscript about the discovery of Cthulhu, he "places it in the tin box beside the bas-relief and the papers of Professor Angell":

> With [the document] shall go this record of mine—this test of my own sanity, wherein is pieced together that which I hope may never be pieced together again. I have looked upon all that the universe has to hold of horror, and even the skies of spring and the flowers of summer must ever afterward be poison to me. (169)

Those Lovecraft stories that do not involve such a dramatic description of the Gestalt switch are all the more problematic for it, delivering the Lovecraftian cosmic sensation rather imperfectly. "The Shunned House," for instance, contains a treasure trove of references to science and materialism, such as the equipment installed by the intrepid vigil-keepers in the moldy cellar where the anomaly is supposedly observable (107). It is, however, not the scientific mood that here evaporates successful Lovecraftian horror, but a kind of knowing

anticipation of the narrator and his uncle with which they wait on the thing, at a time when their meager evidence only consists of strange descriptions and unexplained deaths. This in itself ruins the characteristic *mood* of the weird (idealized by Lovecraft in "Supernatural Horror" [especially 22-23]), which the constant reference to the anomalous, interestingly, further exacerbates:

> What baffled us was our utter ignorance of the aspect in which we might encounter the thing. No sane person had ever seen it and few had ever felt it definitely. It might be pure energy—a form ethereal and outside the realm of substance—or it might be partly material; some unknown and equivocal mass of plasticity, capable of changing at will to nebulous approximations of the solid, liquid, gaseous, or tenuously unparticled states. (107-08).

Here, the outset paradigm has long dissolved, and the narrator's stance has taken a fantastic bend towards the superparadigm, with a full acceptance of the supramundane: "Such a thing was surely not a physical or biochemical impossibility in light of a newer science which includes the theories of relativity and intra-atomic action" (106). This is also the reason why the "ending is in a sense a little weak; there is nothing left to dread, but only a horrible memory," as Burleson argues, "[i]n comparison with some of Lovecraft's later work in which the horror lingers at the story's closing" (*H. P. Lovecraft: A Critical Study* 100). What a huge difference the description in "The Shunned House" makes from, say, the carefully constructed and gradually disclosed, shocking series of anomalies in *Mountains of Madness*.[100]

[100] I would also add that we have here the least successful integration of "the new physics" of Einstein and Planck into the Lovecraftian universe, compared to, for instance, "Witch House," where Gilman's pursuits are initially seen as part of a curious academic interest.

The Gestalt switch makes the narrator of "Cthulhu" see the world in dull colors, every flower is a frightening reminder of the cosmic interstice that poisons potential human interaction with the cosmos. Nevertheless, this evolving new vision also projects the necessary unknowability of what it observes. Bird, in the propositional tradition of logical positivism, argues that for a scientific statement to be truth-evaluable "it must be such that its truth can be determined by observation" (126). He implies that the truth condition of scientific propositions, the warp and woof of theories, depends upon a proper method of observation (126).[101] Bird draws a distinction between such statements ("O-statements") and statements that cannot be corroborated by factual data deriving from observation ("T-statements" 126). Both the observable and the unobservable play a considerable role in the Lovecraftian text. As K. Setiya contends, "Lovecraft's philosophy and fiction were deeply enmeshed . . . in his speculations on the human perceptual apparatus" (21).[102]

In "Dunwich," the macabre power of the two major anomalies, the Whateley twins, resides in the principles of the perceivable and unperceivable, in hiding and showing: the monstrous parts of Wilbur are, essentially, hidden under his clothes, revealed only by the watchdog that manages to tear him apart, and the other twin is itself the ultimate unobservable, an invisible monstrosity, first in its total isolation on the boarded upper storey of the Whateley building, later in that human eyes cannot indeed see it. The unobservable can, furthermore, appear in less extreme examples than "Dunwich": for instance, as a phenomenon that is unknowable or cannot be accounted for, not even with the help of various instruments, such as the mysterious color from the meteor in "Colour" or the anomalous means of transport of the

[101] Although not a logical positivist, Popper also rests his method of deductive falsification on the idea of science as inescapably propositional: "A SCIENTIST, whether theorist or experimental, puts forward statements, or systems of statements, and tests them step by step" (*Scientific Discovery* 27).

[102] In one of his essays, Joshi closely examines Lovecraft's utilization of the problems of sense-perception, taken from his readings of the modern empiricists (see "The Sources for 'From Beyond'").

Outer Ones, or Mi-Go, (using their membranous wings, propelled by solar winds) in "Whisperer."

As Bird summarizes Kuhn's and Paul Feyerabend's concession of the incommensurability thesis, "In their view there is no theory-independent observation language that can be used to express the observational consequences of competing theories in a way that is neutral between the theories" (278). He also calls our attention to the fact that observation itself is relative and non-absolute; "there is nothing objective about observation" (132). Even the logical empiricist A. J. Ayer concedes in his *The Foundations of Empirical Knowledge* that "material things may present different appearances to different observers, or to the same observer in different conditions" (3). Observation with the help of instruments precipitates further problems, chiefly the fact that being a part of the observable world, instruments distort the supposed objectivity of observation. "All observations are made by means which are themselves an integral part of what is to be observed" (Munz 9). What is more, taking human reason to be a special instrument, the argument from "theory-ladenness" states something along the same lines.[103] Thus, if the Lovecraftian superparadigm (the would-be, all-inclusive paradigm) seems to incorporate different standards of observation from the outset paradigm, the two cannot be leveled. Still, the inherent materiality of the monster or anomaly (argued for earlier) should provide a link between the two paradigms. Bird distinguishes between "observation" and "detection" (134). In this manner, it may be possible for the outset paradigm to detect the anomaly, while it cannot actually observe it. For example, the unseen Whateley "brother" smashes through farms and woods in "Dunwich," and while the tracks and devastation are clearly observable, the cause of it is only detectable. Even so, Bird concludes: "Whatever the difference between the concepts detection and observation,

[103] As Richard J. Connell argues, "To maintain that observation is theory-laden in the sense that observations, particularly those necessary for science, contain within them something from the theories they are intended to confirm or disconfirm amounts to maintaining that there are no observations which are 'uncontaminated' by the intelligence, and the observations themselves are . . . a priori" (100-01).

they are clearly linked, and one of the features that links them is the fact that they are both success words" (134). Whereas the Lovecraftian text claims the radical novelty of the anomaly, that anomaly's structure or nature is somehow already accounted for in the outset paradigm, (and not only in the form of a lack, a premonition): the outset paradigm seems capable of observing and, thus, defining the anomaly. This remains markedly in consonance with the fundamental paradoxical nature of Lovecraftian epistemology. The observable slides into the unobservable; in "Dunwich" the pursuing professors manage to make the invisible monster visible for a moment. Even here, however, in spite of the telescope, the local Curtis Whateley's attempts to relate what he has seen seem a far cry from observational precision: "Bigger'n a barn . . . all made o' squirmin' ropes . . . hull thing sort o' shaped like a hen's egg bigger'n anything, with dozens o' legs . . . all like jelly, an' made o' sep'rit wrigglin' ropes pushed clost together . . . great bulgin' eyes all over it . . ." (241).

Thus it appears that the Lovecraftian text appropriates a radical paradox concerning empiricism itself, and the paradox lies at the heart of the supramundane. The protagonist—endowed with the methods of, and usually working as a practicing scholar in, the outset paradigm—is able to observe the anomaly. Nevertheless, when hypotheses and conjectures start to form about that anomaly, the outset paradigm fails, and it is time to replace it with another one, the superparadigm. Bird asserts that one of the major methods of empiricism is induction; that is, inference from the observed to the unobserved (169). The problems with induction are numerous: from Hume to Karl Popper, many thinkers strove to demonstrate that induction can never be the basis of a reliable scientific method, in spite of the fact that natural science seems quite successful in employing it.[104] It is indeed impossible to gain *a priori* knowledge (to draw inferences from past experiences to future ones), since 1) it is not feasible to believe that the observer accounted for every natural phenomena concerning the scientific

[104] See David Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, especially sections four and five, and Popper's *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*.

problem and, what is more, 2) there is absolutely no guarantee that the phenomena of the past will continue to appear and behave in the same way in the future as well. In Lovecraft, besides the obvious lack of community support to complete the superparadigm, other problems prevail, touching upon or resembling the fallacy of induction: In the cases where the anomaly is in reality unobservable, there is no initial knowledge on which to build later knowledge. The disappearance of evidence is another well-known Lovecraftian effect, as, for example the sublimation of rock and beaker in "Colour." Similarly, in the finale to "Whisperer," there are the objects in the chair "which the investigators did not find when they came later on" (267). In "Cthulhu," the fate of the sealed tin box with the Cthulhu statuette and vital documents is foreshadowed, together with the probable assassination of the narrator: "Let me pray that, if I do not survive this manuscript, my executors may put caution before audacity and see that it meets no other eye" (169). Where the evidence disappears, the process of observation is incomplete and experiments are not repeatable; therefore, the possibility of scientific confirmation and testing of hypotheses vanishes. With similar flaws in mind, Kuhn notes "the immense difficulties often encountered in developing points of contact between a theory and nature" (*Structure* 30). Popper also articulates the problem:

> The empirical basis of objective science has thus nothing "absolute" in it. Science does not rest upon solid bedrock. The bold structure of its theories rises, as it were, above a swamp. It is like a building erected on piles. The piles are driven down from above into the swamp, but not to any natural or "given" base; and if we stop driving the piles deeper, it is not because we have reached firm ground. We simply stop when we are satisfied that the piles are firm enough to carry the structure, at least for the time being. (*The Logic of Scientific Discovery* 111)[105]

[105] It is for similar reasons that Paul Feyerabend argues against the reality of a unified scientific method in his study *Against Method*.

Although most comfortable with materialism, Lovecraft writes about his strongest wish to provide in his stories "the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law which forever imprison us and frustrate our curiosity about the infinite cosmic spaces beyond the radius of our sight and analysis" ("Notes on Writing Weird Fiction" 113). Since Lovecraft himself embraced the outset paradigm of his protagonists, he envisioned the greatest cause for fear in the unreliability of science in representing and explaining novel natural phenomena. Lovecraftian epistemology is one of brooding peril, since his protagonist disintegrates on the verge of the impending superparadigm. Nevertheless, it is not only the void between one science and the other that engenders the sublime, but also the match between the superparadigm and the anomaly. As Joshi asserts, "Lovecraft expressed serious reservations on the ability of the human mind to endure certain kinds of knowledge" (*Decline* 107). The source of danger in science, then, seems to have turned here from the unreliability argument to the hypothetical success of a superparadigm. As Burleson argues, Lovecraft's macro-theme is "*the ruinous nature of self-understanding*, . . . the crisis of coming to knowledge of one's place on the cosmic canvas" ("Lovecraft and Interstitiality" 33). In a similar vein, Oakes asserts that "[Lovecraft's] fiction focuses on the possibility that the search for knowledge will lead to revelations that will forever change humanity's view of the universe and its place in it" (55). This is perhaps best explicated in the opening passage of "Cthulhu":

> 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. (139)

Kieran Setiya in "Lovecraft on Human Knowledge: An Exchange" interprets this statement as an example of "Lovecraft's ambivalence to knowledge" (23). In a discussion with Joshi on the connections and contradictions between "Cthulhu" and the biographical data about Lovecraft, he quotes from Lovecraft's letters where he finds the two major ingredients of the apparent ambivalence:

> 1) "the joy of pursuing truth" and
> 2) "the depressing revelations of truth" (as materialism may in some way be taken to be a pessimistic philosophy—despite Lovecraft's Epicureanism). (qtd. in Setiya and Joshi, "Lovecraft on Human Knowledge" 23)

In contrast to (or, rather, in addition to) Setiya, I believe that in Lovecraft we can highlight something more than the simple ambivalence of the author. The paradoxical nature of the Lovecraftian text has been pointed out by many critics, and has been also studied throughout this study from various angles (see, for instance, the paradox of tension and release within the cosmic interstice, the idea of simultaneous fusion and fission conveyed by horrific imagery, tension and dissolution of the binary opposition of traditionalism and cosmicism, and so forth).

Setiya bases his argument of ambivalence on the framed structure of "Cthulhu." The story closes with the narrator's chiasmus "What has risen may sink, and what has sunk may rise" (169), meaning the interplay of surface and depth symbolized by the monstrous sea and the restless ancient city underneath. Burleson in "Lovecraft and Chiasmus/Chiasmus and Lovecraft" maintains that "as a habit of mind in Lovecraft the pattern seems to range from the phonemic level through the level of syntax all the way up to the most global level that a story

may encompass" (80). Thus, perhaps not only the syntax of "Cthulhu" is plagued with the chiasmic structure, but its thematic level also presents us with "Lovecraft's conscious or unconscious inclination toward the ABBA pattern" (75). The plunge into the investigation of Cthulhu—symbolized in the frame structure by the opening up of ever deeper layers of narration: "what has sunk may rise"—leads Thurston to renounce his materialism, his outset paradigm. Therefore, the outset structure of *AB* (investigator entering the area of the investigated—"the piecing together of dissociated knowledge" ["Cthulhu" 139]) turns into *BA* (the area investigated assailing or infecting the investigator—"such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein," "the deadly light" [139]). The *ABBA* pattern may be interpreted as the magical formula of science in Lovecraft. When science is limited, knowledge fails. However, when science—effected by a plunge into the unknown—develops knowledge, that knowledge entails horror, which spreads forth from the cosmic interstice, a region already traversed and a depth plumbed, a field not meant to be trespassed but a journey the protagonist nonetheless embarks upon (hence Lovecraft's forbidden texts that lure the reader into studying them). Indeed, "what has risen may sink": the elevated primate, the erudite human learner may take the plunge; and "what has sunk may rise": knowledge may rise from the explored and exposed depths; but the gothic underside of the proposition is also true: we "flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age" upon taking in the "terrifying vistas of reality," the horrible and bleak view science shows us.

What the opening and closing passages from "Cthulhu" tell us, I think, is that the central Lovecraftian paradox appears to prevail in suspension between the limitations of science and the success of science. If the superparadigm should be accepted, then humanity would perish from the knowledge. But if it should be otherwise, the blind, gaping maw of the unknown universe would most certainly swallow us—science in its limitation detecting but not explaining the peril. As Burleson argues, Lovecraft's "supertheme" stresses that "[h]umans, alone among earth's acknowledged tenants, are just sufficiently well developed

mentally and emotionally to ponder the tragedy of their own vanishingly small dash of color on the universal canvas" (*Disturbing* 158).

Fred Botting contends that "[i]n the twentieth century, in diverse and ambiguous ways, Gothic figures have continued to shadow the progress of modernity with counter-narratives displaying the underside of enlightenment and humanist values" (2). Lovecraft's *gothic survival* on the thematic level points towards *the revival of the gothic* on a superthematic level: rationality and the will to knowledge become subverted by their epistemological necessity in Lovecraft. In the next chapter I will provide some guidelines by which to interpret the above disposition, chiefly through an analysis of the Lovecraftian method of categorization—the formation and failure of concepts, classes, categories, and names used in representing the anomaly of the unobservable.

Lovecraft himself could not envision an actual paradigm shift taking place. A conservative most of his life, he went on defending materialism, and was only able to incorporate the theories of Einstein and Planck by way of Russellian ideals of knowledge. Yet, he was able to intuit the inevitability of one such route out of a worn-out science, as his fiction displays. He himself was a paradigm shifter in his literary field, drawing attention to the importance and relevance of the cosmic—the absurdity of "a notion of purpose in the utter absence of evidence" ("In Defence of Dagon" 154). "Lovecraft's major contribution to speculative fiction is his recognition that the emerging sciences would transform the universe into something far more unearthly than anyone could have seriously imagined at the start of the twentieth century" (Lovesey 56). He was, after all, to use Fritz Leiber's term, a "Literary Copernicus" (50).

III.

CLASSIFYING THE VOID

Obsessive Categorization

The Lovecraftian paradox, or, rather, system of paradoxes, is inherent to science: the increasing demand for a superparadigm may be necessitated not exclusively by nature, by the inevitability of changes in the environment, but also by the workings of the outset paradigm. What initially appears as a successful method for approximating representational matrices to the system of natural phenomena gradually develops inexorable mismatches between the paradigm and the natural world, which ultimately reveals the defects of the paradigm and results in the final disruption of the given conceptual system. This apocalyptic clock is a given of all scientific theories, and has to do, apart from the problems of observation and induction, with the representational wiring of paradigms.

Two of the most readily observable, interlocking systems of representations with respect to scientific paradigms, the language of science—as such language frames scientific operations from description to conjecturing to testing[106]—and the system of categories in the realm of concepts, are not free from the apocalyptic "perfection" (that is, limitedness) of the paradigm. The later Wittgenstein created the analogy of the "language-game" in order to describe regulated and self-contained linguistic mini-systems. It could be claimed that the language of a given paradigm is its language-game, or even that a paradigm is indeed a language-game unto itself. It is precisely due to its clear-cut boundaries that the linguistic system of a paradigm—the statements of observation, theorizing, and testing as well as the underlying definitions and categories—is functional at all. As Max Black argues in relation to

[106] Popper goes further than simply highlighting the link between natural science and language: "A scientist . . . puts forward statements, or systems of statements, and tests them step by step" (*Logic* 27). In his theory of the "deductive method of testing" (30), he establishes the primacy of language, the predominance of statements about reality, in defining what is objectively real.

Wittgenstein's idea, "Ordinary games *are* autonomous because they are intended to be self-contained and artificially bounded" ("Wittgenstein's Language-games" 79). It appears, for the time being, that there is no language outside the language-game, just as the primary paradigm confronted with the anomaly is doomed to failure and has to surrender to a new, similarly self-contained, paradigm constructed in accordance with the naturalized anomaly. Yet, if the outset paradigm is suitable for detecting, if not for explaining, the anomaly, the paradigm appears open-ended, or at least it appears open to incoming information from outside its limits. In any case, it is not unusual for new paradigms to feed upon, to utilize the elements of, foregoing paradigms. Also, the paradigm exists in a totality of language that includes all language-games. There is *langue* beyond *parole*.[107]

The linguistic representation of objects and phenomena in the natural world may be conceived as names and the causal relations between those objects as predicates, which in turn are both mounted upon an underlying, primary representational system of classes and categories. Mary Hesse asserts, "Every 'observation statement' describing empirical data has to be expressed in some language or other, and every language contains general descriptive predicates. Every set of predicates in a descriptive language implies a *classification* of the contents of the world" ("Models, Metaphors" 353). This implicit classification is basic not only to scientific language, but also to the greater realm of natural descriptive language. Early essentialist views of the methods of classification, partly originating in Aristotle's analysis of naming, presupposed an internal mechanism for intuiting the essences of things as they exist in the world. Karl Popper describes the "methodological" essentialism of Aristotle as based on Plato's:

> It was Plato's peculiar belief that the essence of sensible things can be found in . . . primogenitors of Forms. Many of the later methodological essentialists, for instance

[107] For a description of *langue* and *parole*, see Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*.

> Aristotle, did not altogether follow him in this; but they all agreed with him in determining the task of pure knowledge as the discovery of the hidden nature of Form or essence of things. All these methodological essentialists also agreed with Plato in holding that these essences may be discovered and discerned with the help of intellectual intuition. (*Open Society* 31)

Presumably, intuition is made possible by the parallel planes of the intellect and the world of essences, which dovetail into each other perfectly. George Lakoff in *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (1987) labels the successor of this position "nativist objectivist cognition." The nativist view takes for granted that

> [o]ur conceptual systems . . . are innate and are made meaningful via their capacity to correspond correctly to entities and categories in the world. In other words, our inborn mental representations are "semantically valuable," that is, capable of being true or false and of referring correctly to entities and categories in the world. (164)

Only after the original nativist view became untenable with the progress of philosophy and science has the theory of nominal essences replaced the view of such an Adamic language.[108] Locke's idea of "nominal essences" and the general terms assigned to them arose as an alternative to naming by intuition. For Locke, it is the "ideas of reflection," provided by the reflection of the mind on the sensory data received about objects, which in turn are *arbitrarily* named by signs (14). Lakoff's term for the basis of this nominalist position is "empiricist objectivist cognition": "We acquire our concepts . . . through accurate sense perceptions in

[108] Taylor observes: "The belief that categories *are* definable in terms of what their members have in common is deeply engrained," partly accruing from the story of the Genesis, where "the creatures were created 'after their kind,' and the kinds were given names by Adam" (75).

such a way that they correspond systematically to entities and categories in the world" (164). In Locke's view, the terms matching the ideas are provided by *a convention of definition*, supported by *empirical verification*, flying in the face of the theory that the delineation of things by their hidden essences is possible.[109] Empiricist views by way of Locke and Hume thus "cut the world at its joints" on the basis of empirically tested and verified categories wedded to arbitrary definitions, rather than by virtue of the inherent properties of things.

In the outset paradigm delineated in the Lovecraftian text, such an empirical objectivism is crucial in the sense that it makes possible the subsequent paradigm shift. In *Mountains of Madness*, the group of scientists unearth a number of frozen creatures by boring through the ice shield in a cave on the Antarctic.[110] Lake, a member of the group sending wireless "reports from the short-wave transmitters on the planes" (255), continuously speaks of the bodies as "fossils" or "specimens":

> [F]ound monstrous barrel-shaped fossil of wholly unknown nature; probably vegetable unless overgrown specimen of marine radiate. Tissue evidently preserved in mineral salts. Tough as leather, but astonishing flexibility retained in places. Marks of broken-

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[109] Although the basis of such an empiricism still owes much to the early essentialist view:

> In this kind of universe, knowledge came to be thought of as something like energy transfer. A body emitted light; the light hit the retina; the retina sent a message to the mind; and so, the mind ended up by having knowledge of the source of the light. The quality and veracity of knowledge was considered to be proportional to the energy transfer. In essence, knowledge was considered to be the effect the known object had on the mind of the knower. (Munz 21-22)

[110] This instance of horror literature is so strikingly well-wrought that even half a century later horror director John Carpenter reworked it in *The Thing* from a less successful 1951 adaptation, *The Thing from Another World*. Although the films do not credit Lovecraft's story as the originator of the idea, the titles in both cases retain special Lovecraftian terminology.

> off parts at ends and around sides. Six feet to end, 3.5 feet central diameter, tapering to 1 foot at each end. (261)

Confronted with the unknown, the Lovecraftian text falls back on empiricism and the exclusive reporting of observables in dry, objectivist scientific language. This is aided by the employment of measurements: the observer's mathematical eye almost literally "cuts" the natural anomaly "at its joints," foreshadowing the dissection of the specimens which takes place later:

> Wing framework tubular or glandular, of lighter grey, with orifices at wing tips. . . . Around equator, one at central apex of each of the five vertical, stave-like ridges, are the five systems of light grey flexible arms or tentacles found tightly folded to torso but expansible to maximum length over 3 feet. Like arms of primitive crinoid. Single stalks 3 inches diameter branch after 6 inches into five sub-stalks, each of which branches after 8 inches into five small, tapering tentacles or tendrils, giving each stalk a total of 25 tentacles. (262)

Here the celebrated, presumably "scientific," technique of the Lovecraftian text reproduces a sort of folk belief about the objectivism of the language of science; notably, that scientific language is highly empirical, descriptive, and, first and foremost, technical. The technicality of scientific reference is attributed by Lakoff to the folk conception that "[t]here is some body of people in society who have the right to stipulate what words should designate, relative to some domain of expertise" (123). George W. Grace's distinction stresses the authority of such a body: "Scientific discourse is a way of talking which has achieved a high level of what has been called 'consensibility,' i.e. it embodies agreed-upon criteria for reaching agreement" (103). Consensibly created definitions are meant to provide expert categories, which, in turn,

supposedly cut the world at its exact joints by supplying "necessary and sufficient conditions for category membership" (Taylor 73), making possible a sort of "division of linguistic labor (Putnam 15), where individuals can easily base their naming processes on the findings of scientists and experts. Through the consensibility argument, we are apparently forced to revert to the idea of rule-governed language-games.

Since a consensible description of the anomalous ice creatures according to "agreed-upon criteria" appears possible, Lake is able to point at different parts of the fossils and say "apex," "arm," "ridge," "tentacle," "stalk," "sub-stalk," and so on, denoting certain objects of empirically verifiable existence. This way of denotation, however, fails to provide a sufficient amount of clues to delineate the specimens in their totality, since no known category in scientific taxonomy exhibits these *pieces of empirical evidence concomitantly in the same specimen*. If not for possible extended inquiry into the nature of the ice-creatures—which can and will never take place in the Lovecraftian text, as I intend to demonstrate later on—the assumed precision of scientific language may be imperfect, if not illusory. Collating the Lovecraftian view of naming with that of the early Wittgenstein of *Tractatus*, Setiya argues,

> the whole idea of clear definition as a criterion of reality . . . is precisely that of the propositions of both Wittgenstein and Lovecraft . . . the point being that, without this clarity, our sense of "reality" will become threatened. Naturally the narrators do not realize that their own linguistic expressive abilities are based on their own world view; they assume . . . that they are based in objective reality. ("Lovecraft's Semantics" 28)

The examination of the creatures was supposed to yield positive results, but nothing definite ensued of it: "Far from helping to place the strange entity, this provisional dissection merely deepened its mystery" (265).

In fact, as Grace himself goes on to elaborate, "[consensibility] is only a difference in degree, not a difference in kind, from other ways of talking about things" (103), it is posited in a "'public understanding' of the universe . . . as a sum of our ways of talking about things" (104). Thus Grace's account of the language of science is relevant to the greater scope of natural language, blurring the heavily-drawn objectivist borderline between different discourses. Expert categories are the product of a scientific methodology based on observation and testing, and are therefore not *in themselves* inconsistent with the production of folk categories which similarly rely "on our knowledge of perceptual and interactional attributes of prototypical instances" (73). On the categorical level, paradigms and language-games are informed by the totality of units in natural language.

Folk categorization hinges primarily on the intuitive knowledge of natural kinds, which in turn belies an essentialist-objectivist discourse. Lakoff describes the "doctrine of natural kinds" in the following way: "There are natural kinds of entities in the world, each *kind* being a category based on shared essential properties, that is, properties that things have by virtue of their very nature" (161) The essentialist view of shared properties is, of course, a vestige of Aristotelian categorization, which is perceptible in folk categories. According to Scott Atran, the name "natural kind" itself suggests that language users "attribute . . . behavior and morphology to intrinsic, causal processes that they *presume* to be lawful even when hidden" (136-37). The ingrained, psychological categorizing processes driven by the contemplation of natural kinds is so determinant across cultures that, especially in the life sciences, as Atran argues, folk taxonomies often hold sway: "many philosophers and scientists continue to discuss species taxa as if they were enduring natural kinds. Indeed, some take the notion of the species as a natural kind as a scientific given . . ." (164).

Throughout the history of science, where scientific taxonomy occupied the place of folk categories, in several cases it went on to confirm, rather than rewrite, the boundaries of natural kind terms. As John R. Taylor stresses, "[t]he very notion of natural kind implies a

scientific (or folk-scientific), taxonomic division of certain naturally occurring phenomena—plants, birds, minerals, etc.—into discrete categories" (64). Lakoff describes a similar process when analyzing a passage by Stephen Jay Gould. In a scientific debate on the taxonomy of coelacanths[111] Gould's choice is "based on what he calls 'subjective' criteria—what a coelacanth looks like and tastes like to a human being" (Lakoff 121). "Of course," Lakoff adds, "there is a long tradition of trusting such human-based criteria in taxonomic biology" (121). The reliance on folk taxonomies, essences, and natural kinds—even among experts—may derive from a desire to find the ultimate taxonomy. As Lakoff emphasizes, "[e]ven though Gould recognizes the scientific validity of the cladists' views, he cannot simply say that there are two, or even three, different taxonomies, equally correct for different reasons" (121). The significance of naming conventions in science and natural language is similarly highlighted by Kuhn in a discussion on paradigm-driven science, where he describes the close connection between natural kinds or "families" and established scientific theories: "A natural family you already know as an observed cluster of like objects, sufficiently important and sufficiently discrete to command a generic name" ("Logic of Discovery" 16-17). The expression "you already know" signals the paradigmatic, text-book nature of categories, which are acquired through both social institutions, such as education, and folk transmission of knowledge, such as that taking place in the family. Paradigms can be learned and unlearned, Kuhn emphasizes, and from this aspect natural kind terms retain their definitional-conventional origins, as in their modern form they indeed originate in the Lockean-Humean discourse. Hesse argues that essentialism describes natural kinds as inherently related to the scientific method: "Modern versions of essentialism . . . tend to rely on science itself for the discovery of natural kinds: natural kinds are those that conform to the best scientific classification and the best system of laws and theories" ("Models, Metaphors" 353). Similarly,

[111] An order of prehistoric fish that was believed to be extinct until its rediscovery in South Africa in 1938.

Bird stresses that "there are objective natural kinds, the existence of which rests on the possibilities of explanation, and so on the existence of laws of nature" (111).

"My guess," Lakoff suggests, "is that we have a folk category of categorization itself. It says that things come in well-defined kinds, that the kinds are characterized by shared properties, and that there is one right taxonomy of the kinds" (121). This folk belief is what is implied by the obsessive inventory of Lovecraftian explorers in *Mountains of Madness*. The ice creatures continue to excite the mind's categorizing urge. In the teleological desire of (folk) science or (scientific) folk categorization to determine "objective natural kinds," two options exist for the Lovecraftian taxonomist, who has conjectured that the anomaly is "representative rather than idiosyncratic" (Ritvo 6)—that is, it belongs to a group on the basis of the specimens' common features: either to find an existing niche in the system of representations to fit the anomaly in, or to start categorizing by first providing a name and then proceeding upward in the taxonomy. Both cases, however, have the same repercussions in the realm of categories, since it is the conceptual atlas that has to be redrawn. Scientific revolutions, according to Kuhn, bring about a "necessarily holistic" change in the given taxonomy: "such redistribution always involves more than one category, . . . since those categories are interdefined" ("What Are Scientific Revolutions?" 30). As Dyer emphasizes, "[e]xisting biology would have to be wholly revised" (265). In scientific taxonomies Bird concedes "nested kinds" or "subkinds"—arguing that "[t]he hierarchy of groups of organisms into kingdom / phylum or division / class / order / family / genus / species / subspecies already displays this" (108)—but Dyer in *Mountains of Madness* encounters something that by observation and elementary examination (dissection with basic instruments) proves a new kind among the already existing kinds, resembling nothing, having no predetermined place nested in the foliage of the taxonomic tree. Whereas it is the homogeneity across specimens that defines any (traditionally viewed) natural kind, the homogeneity of Dyer's ice creature as a species, provided that it is a newly discovered but yet unplaced natural kind, rests on its

radical heterogeneity, its composition of parts wholly alien to one another such as the tentacles, the wings, the respiratory organs, and so forth. Dyer's difficulty, apart from the hardships involved in the cognitive compromise he has to make, consists of finding a new category to enclose the specimens in, which in turn will possibly entail the entire revision of existing disciplines. Summarizing the restructuring of category systems, Boyd asserts:

> when it first becomes evident that it is necessary to draw a distinction between kinds where none has been drawn before, it is often the case that nothing in previous linguistic usage or intellectual practice dictates which of the newly marked kinds, if any, should be referred to by whatever the relevant previously agreed general term is, and which should be referred to by newly introduced terminology. (514)

This aporia is intrinsic to Kuhnian paradigms, which link—and therefore also conceal the rifts between—blocks of solid knowledge: "scientific research [depends] upon concrete examples that bridge what would otherwise be gaps in the specification of the content and application of scientific theories" ("Logic of Discovery" 16).[112] Yet, paradigms fail to provide points of departure or rule-driven naming games in view of radically anomalous phenomena. And how could they not fail? The inductive method—which in the early twentieth century still prides itself on operating the bulk of scientific practice—cannot account for radically new phenomena (as it requires the compilation of recurrent evidence to start conjecturing), and paradigms are basically of such an inductive nature. The failure of outset paradigms to point out future research, which I have identified in the previous chapter as motivating the central Lovecraftian ambivalence regarding science, has significant repercussions for naming. Dyer

[112] Some philosophers, on the contrary, find that inductive reference itself is justified by the existence of natural kinds, which, in turn are manifestations of the underlying laws of nature. See Howard Sankey, "Induction and Natural Kinds."

attests to such difficulties when collating new observations with his text-book knowledge of biology:

> [T]o give it a name at this stage was mere folly. It looked like a radiate, but was clearly something more. It was partially vegetable, but had three-fourths of the essentials of animal structure. That it was marine in origin, its symmetrical contour and certain other attributes clearly indicated; yet no one could be exact as to the limit of its later adaptations. The wings, after all, held a persistent suggestion of the aërial. (*Mountains of Madness* 266)

A genuine paradigm shift normally takes place alongside massive research as well as theoretical work. Boyd finds that it is only "after the relevant discoveries have been made" that "relevant changes in linguistic usage are made," and thus "[t]hese refinements of usage represent the paradigm case of the accommodation of language to the causal structure of the world" (515). Gradual accommodation or refinement, of course, is out of the question in the Lovecraftian text. In *Mountains of Madness*, even before some conclusions could be drawn, the camp warehousing the specimens is destroyed, with only Dyer and Danforth miles away to discover finally the similarly baffling city of the Old Ones. The Lovecraftian interstitiality of the unknown bears on the classification of Lake's specimens, and indicates not only that 1) the definitional-conventional delegation of a new phenomenon to a particular category does not yield real knowledge, but also that 2) in spite of the "diligent reporting of data, proper control of experimental variables, precision in measurement" defined by Boyd as the crux of methodology (Boyd 521), and which Lake undertakes in his wireless reports, it may be altogether impossible to categorize the creature without further tests. The ice specimens "presented anomalies beyond immediate solution" and no definite answers "at this stage" may be provided (*Mountains of Madness* 265, 266); however, this possibility is altogether denied

by the Lovecraftian text, and, as I am about to demonstrate, no "relevant discoveries" can be made without learning about the real properties of the phenomenon (Boyd 515).

Precision and Vagueness

Unknown properties of an object or phenomenon primarily consist of the "essential" causal aspects of its workings. As Boyd observes, twentieth-century philosophy of science brought about an intellectual shift, in opposition to the strong empiricist tradition, "towards the 'scientific realist' position that knowledge of 'unobservables' and of causal powers is indeed possible" (490-91). Hilary Putnam and Saul Kripke elaborated on the view of logical positivists, proposing that "the reference of natural-kind terms . . . , and of theoretical terms in science, might be fixed 'causally' or ostensively rather than by definitional convention" (491).[113] Ostention refers to the act of fixing names "by association with examples of the relevant sensory qualities" (491). In "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" (1975), Putnam sought to provide the process of naming, and thus meaning itself, with a certain rigidity: "when I give the ostensive definition 'this (liquid) is water,' the demonstrative 'this' is rigid" (17). Putnam's "naming ceremonies" and Kripke's "dubbing" consist of assigning names to "stereotypical samples" or "exemplary causal effects" (492); ostention or dubbing does not claim to have access to the real essences of things, yet these naming processes may provide an explanation of how "accommodation of linguistic usage to as yet undiscovered causal structures" works (Boyd 492). Taxonomic change by way of vocabulary extension may be performed through ostention. In Boyd's view,

[113] In the light of Boyd's and Grace's views of the unclear boundary between scientific and natural language, the decision whether to use technical terms or less-than-technical terms, that is, expert or folk categories, is clearly not a difference of discourses, but of context, as Boyd's example of "fish" and "jade" shows (Boyd 514-15).

> [in] ostensive reference fixing . . . we introduce terminology for substances and fundamental magnitudes by appealing to situations in which we believe they are exemplified, prior to our discovery of their fundamental or essential features (that is, prior to the discovery of those properties which would have to be mentioned in an extensionally correct explicit definition). (492)

Ostention is thus a method of renunciation, a sort of withdrawal from exact definitions, all-or-nothing characterizations, and binary attributes. In its puritanical self-restraint, however, it promises the ultimate totality of knowledge. Still, when examined more closely, the ostensive technique has grave disadvantages. When by reference to a sample of the given kind a natural-kind term is fixed ostentively, the name thereby continues to define the specific object in question and thus necessary truths are attached to it *a posteriori*. The method proposes, therefore, that whatever is discovered about the specific kind in the future should not alter the name itself. As Kripke suggests in his example about gold, "we use 'gold' as a term for a certain *kind* of thing. Others have discovered this kind of thing and we have heard of it. . . . The kind of thing is thought to have certain identifying marks. Some of these marks may not really be true of gold" (118-19). But Kripke attributes to scientific theory the privilege of finding out the essential nature of gold: "present scientific theory is such that it is part of the nature of gold as we have it to be an element with atomic number 79. It will therefore be necessary and not contingent that gold be an element with atomic number 79" (125). Let us suppose, now, that a new scientific discovery is made about "a new type of particle lurking in and around the nucleus of the atom," as Edward Averill invites us to imagine in his critique of Kripke (254). These "zits," as they are called, "in the case of gold" make it "theoretically possible for there to be variations on its basic zit structure which do not have the atomic number 79, but some other atomic number, say 283" (254). In such a case, we are confronted with a problem different from Kripke's: here distinct variations of gold would exist in light of

the new discovery, which, nevertheless, would still be called "gold" erroneously, based on the Kripkean necessity of naming. This has a grave result for the Lovecraftian world where confrontations with anomalies are the order of the day: after the meteor falls from the heavens in "Colour," animate/inanimate ceases to be animate/inanimate (the glowing trees sway and stretch by themselves as if in some hidden, unearthly wind) and the human ceases to be human ("That which spoke could speak no more because it had completely caved in" [189]). Ostention cannot assist the splitting of categories or the complex taxonomical changes and shifts involved in a discovery, not to mention a major scientific revolution. Kuhn emphasizes in "What Are Scientific Revolutions?" that paradigm shifts involve a "change in several of the taxonomic categories prerequisite to scientific descriptions and generalizations," which furthermore "is an adjustment not only of criteria relevant to categorization, but also the way in which objects and situations are distributed among preexisting [sic] categories" (30). To name the findings in *Mountains of Madness*, say, "Dyer's fossil," will fail to provide *a priori* knowledge in two ways: 1) such ostention will not provide knowledge of its relationship to other kinds and 2) the name is not a safeguard against further evidence which may invalidate "Dyer's fossil" as a distinct kind.

However useful ostention is in the rigid fixing of a name to yet unknown phenomena—or, conversely, however defective it is in fixing categories for an indefinite period of time against scientific discovery and paradigm shifts—in the Lovecraftian text it fails, and does so for a different reason. In *Mountains of Madness* Lake is separated from Danforth and Dyer, other explorers to be briefed on the events, and in the absence of his companions Lake cannot rely on ostention in communicating what he has found. First, the ostensive "this" will not work, for, as seen from the extensive passages quoted earlier, the scientist falls back on endless descriptions of the parts of the dissected specimen, but cannot name the totality of the specimen itself. Second, the seclusion of the scholar or scientist is a constant factor in the problematic of Lovecraftian paradigm shifts: secluded protagonists try

desperately to communicate their discoveries and the horrors revealed, but, due to vast distances, they must relate their findings by frequently falling back on writing, with the possible technological extension in *Mountains of Madness*, where the transmitter—a necessary apparatus of an Antarctic expedition—serves this purpose (although the reports are themselves handled in the form of a text). As Cannon claims, "in Lovecraft the written word is always the preferred means of communication, no matter how awkward the act" ("Letters, Diaries, Manuscripts" 155). "Cthulhu" is delivered through interlocking diaries and reports of a Chinese box design; in "Whisperer," the two protagonists Akeley and Wilmarth produce a long correspondence; in "Doorstep," the message containing the ultimate recognition is delivered by the corpse that has trapped poor Edward. Other examples abound, in "Temple," "The Rats in the Walls," "Cool Air," "Dagon," *Charles Dexter Ward*, "The Mound" (1929-30), "Through the Gates of the Silver Key," "The Haunter of the Dark," "The Shadow Out of Time," as well as in two ghost-written tales, "Winged Death" (1934) and "The Diary of Alonzo Typer" (1935), and in a collaboration, "In the Walls of Eryx" (1936). As Cannon asserts, "[a] chronological survey shows just how pervasive is the handwritten word in his fiction—notably in the shape of letters, diaries, and manuscripts" (149). In all of these cases, the reporting of anomalous phenomena is restricted to dark intuitions, suggestions, or imperfect empirical observations *without the possibility of conducting further proper scientific tests*. Ostention, which relies on a demonstrator and an audience, proves an unnecessary oddity among the methods of categorization, considering that neither is the audience present, nor can the demonstrator adequately articulate the problem.

In "Whisperer," the Lovecraftian text sets up and carries out an experiment which we may also take as directed at the falsifiability of ostention in long-distance communication. Akeley, after corresponding with Wilmarth for some time about the strange occurrences and alien presence in the woods, sends "a number of kodak views of scenes and objects illustrating what he had to tell" (213). Wilmarth confesses to the "vagueness of most of them"

in spite of the "curious sense of fright and nearness to forbidden things" so characteristic of the Lovecraftian text (213). Wilmarth's inclination to the objectivist-empiricist view is manifested in his hope of receiving some evidence that would prove or disprove the existence of the alien beings: he believes the attachments are "genuine photographs—actual optical links with what they portrayed, and the product of an impersonal transmitting process without prejudice, fallibility, or mendacity" (213). Nevertheless, as in the case of the observation apparatus in "Dunwich" (the local village bumpkin fails to observe the Whateley monster), the photographs show little more than a few curious tracks, footprints, and trampled grass. There is no question about the fact that the photos display some objects, but as to what they are, Wilmarth is puzzled (although he intuits extremely dark things, for the sake of the horror effect),[114] and the passage abounds in such expressions as "hideously crab-*like*," "*seemed* to be some *ambiguity* about its direction," "*seemed* to be *about* the size of an *average* man's foot," "quite *baffling* as to function," "one could *just* discern," "the grass was very much beaten down and worn away, though I could not detect any footprints *even with the glass*" (emphases added, 213-14). Akeley also attaches a phonograph record of strange voices and sounds to his letters, but their obscurity is identical to that of the photos, despite Akeley's providing a "transcript of what he *believed* the spoken words to be" to aid interpretation due to the "*remote* and *muffled* nature" of the proof recorded (emphases added, 218). In writing, even with the deep Lovecraftian belief in this method of communication and aided by observation apparatus substituting for the human senses, the Lovecraftian protagonist fails to employ naming by ostention, which is, in Kripke's definition, the method "to point to some things and thus determine the references of certain names" (28). In the failure to point, naming by ostention becomes defective reference fixing.

[114] Consequently, vagueness as metatechnique has an impact on the internal logic of the horror tale itself, which does not directly tell but only suggest, never revealing the horrific object until the final moment.

Scientific measurement and observation is flawed in *Mountains of Madness*. Returning briefly to the wireless reports about the ice creatures, we may list the signs of vagueness in Lake's description: "*lighter* grey with *gill-like suggestions* holds *yellowish* five-pointed starfish-*shaped apparent* head," "*probably* breathing aperture," "*evidently* an eye," "*sac-like* swellings," "*tooth-like* projections," "[f]lexibility surprising despite vast toughness," "pseudo-foot," pseudo-neck" (emphases added, 262-63). Now what are Danforth and Dyer to make of these descriptions? Are there really head, eyes, mouth, teeth; is the creature's skin flexible or tough and is it "skin" at all? When the subsequent autopsy of one of the creatures yields similarly enigmatic results, Dyer, despite his professional excitement, attests to the puzzlement: "Results, quickly reported over the wireless, were baffling and provocative indeed. Nothing like delicacy or accuracy was possible with instruments hardly able to cut the anomalous tissue, but the little that was achieved left us all awed and bewildered" (265).

Bertrand Russell's influential essay "Vagueness" (1923) defined a complete tradition of philosophical and mathematical discourse. Russell, a weak materialist, emphasized the representational aspect of vagueness: "Vagueness and precision alike are characteristics which can only belong to a representation, of which language is an example. They have to do with the relation between a representation and that which it represents" (62).[115] Russell finds that such vagueness is always already a part of our language, without hope of total clarification: "We can see an ideal of precision, to which we can approximate indefinitely; but we cannot attain this ideal" (65). Richard Boyd, when considering the scientific method, goes one step further and rules out the possibility of precision in scientific language altogether. He first differentiates between "two distinct kinds of precision in scientific practice" (521): "One the one hand, there is the view of precision in the use of scientific language . . . achieved to

[115] Lovecraft did not fail to include in his readings the works of modern materialists Russell and George Santanaya. As Joshi asserts, after his initial and grave misinterpretation of the theories or relativity and quantum theory, he sought to incorporate their modified versions into his materialism partly by way of the above philosophers (*Decline* 19-21).

the extent to which general terms are associated with fixed, conventional, and explicit definitions of their extensions or referents" (521). This is the definitional method of reference fixing with regard to empirical data. Nevertheless, according to Boyd, precision may also be viewed as "methodological precision: precision in reasoning, careful experimental design, diligent reporting of data, proper control of experimental variables, precision in measurement, and so forth" (521). The second view has nothing to do with language, in actuality; it is "a matter of care in treating epistemological issues" (521). Thus, after reversing the relation of language and empiricism, Boyd concludes, "precision in the use of scientific language is merely one feature, and one consequence, of this methodological precision. There is no purely *linguistic* precision, no mere following of *linguistic* rules, which accounts for the precision in the use of theoretical terms" (521).

Russell places vagueness right within descriptive language; Ladislav Tondl, however, asserts in *Problems of Semantics: A Contribution to the Analysis of the Language of Science*:

> Vagueness may occur in the case of empirical data based on quantification, as in the case of measuring. . . . it is well known that any quantitatively defined result of measurement invariably depends on certain relations between the object measured and the metrical apparatus, or on interaction between them. Any measure or measuring equipment has only a limited discriminatory capacity. (231)

Tondl's view, which elaborates on the Russellian definition of representational vagueness and transfers it to a more intimate level of epistemology, subverts even Boyd's view, who believes in an ideal of precision, similarly removed from the realm of language and transferred to the scientific method (521). Tondl goes on to elaborate on the relation between vagueness in methodology and language: "It follows from this that even the expressions of language which express the results of measuring therefore relate to objects, properties, relations or whatever

other kind of entities that have been determined quantitatively, may also be vague" (231-32). Vagueness of descriptions, which accrues from methodological imperfections and the theory- and instrument-ladenness of measurements, reinforce the Lovecraftian position that although initial discovery is able to confirm the existence of the anomaly, the superparadigm can never be formulated.

Both scientific representation and ostensive naming remain defective methods in the Lovecraftian text. The depiction of some flaw in the observation of the anomaly is corroborated in most cases by the ultimate disappearance of objective evidence confirming the existence of the phenomenon in the first place. In "Whisperer," the photographs, record, and letters disappear ("There was not even a sign that a guest had been there, or that those horrible cylinders and machines had been stored in the study" [200]);[116] in "Colour," the meteor-piece sublimates and only its overarching effects in the environment remain observable; in "The Music of Erich Zann," the pages where the mad violist Zann "had begun to write out his horrible secret" are sucked out through the window (51), while in "Dunwich" and *Mountains of Madness* even Wilbur's body and the specimens themselves vanish. Wilmarth's confession in the opening passage of "Whisperer" summarizes the Lovecraftian withdrawal of the concrete, as it were: "Bear in mind closely that I did not actually see any actual visual horror at the end" (200). Even before the recovery of evidence may happen, in order to provide some sort of subsequent and more coherent study, the protagonists have to confront their doom. This is strikingly reflected by one of Lovecraft's most famous statements, which most critics take to be about his cosmic-pessimist position, although it merely reflects his scientific realism and atheism: "If we cannot prove that the universe means *nothing*, how can we prove that it means *anything*—what right have we to invent a notion of purpose in the utter absence of evidence?" ("In Defence of Dagon" 154).

[116] While the fact that the evidence disappears, as if by itself, only serves to further corroborate the fact of "violence," "violation," or "alien-handedness" and thus negatively confirm the reality of Wilmarth's experience.

Classical and Prototype Categories

The shortcomings of scientific representation, and the fact that the privilege of language to cut the world at its joints has been ruled out irreversibly, are powerfully demonstrated at the end of *Mountains of Madness*, where Dyer attests to his total bafflement at the possible category of the ice specimens: "[r]adiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star-spawn—whatever they had been" (330), he cries out in mixed admiration and puzzlement. The Lake specimens appear to belong to a new category between such categories as vegetables, radiates,[117] *and perhaps even humans,* since Dyer at one point exclaims: "God, what *intelligence and persistence*! . . . whatever they had been, *they were men*!" (emphasis added 330).[118] As Dyer relates, "one could hardly hesitate to call the thing animal; but internal inspection brought up so many vegetable evidences that Lake was left hopelessly at sea" (265).

In Lovecraft, the defective methods of observation, measurement, and treatment of evidence are the primary sources of vagueness, which result in a category disaster. Carroll argues that "beings or creatures that specialize in formlessness, incompleteness, categorical interstitality, and categorical contradictoriness" are "objects [that] can raise categorical misgivings by virtue of their being incomplete representatives of their class" (32). Objects of novel perception can be "incomplete" or "contradictory" in the framework of the classical view of categories, which, Taylor argues, is defined in terms of necessary and sufficient features (23). The influence of Aristotle's essentialism on such a view cannot be

[117] "Radiata" are a group of invertebrates displaying radial symmetry, including sea anemones, corals, sponges, jellyfish, hydrozoans, and so forth.

[118] Dyer's term is, of course, highly metaphorical here, implying that the alien race established a civilization akin to humankind's, especially characterized by the adherence to progress by way of knowledge. Nevertheless, such a metaphor, as I will show in the next chapter, relies on inherent representational schemas, and therefore, in an epistemological sense, reveals profound truths about Dyer's view and categorization.

overestimated. As Taylor observes, "[f]or Aristotle, both the concept MAN and the meaning of the word *man* are defined by 'a formula of the essence'" (22). The meaning of a classical category is thus the essence of a category, which is, in turn, defined by binary features. The presence or absence of some features or others in the essence of a category, thus, "divides the universe into two sets of entities—those that are members of the category, and those that are not. There are no ambiguous cases . . ." (23).[119] It is exactly this idea of categorization that is parodied by the fantastic, as a fantastically transformed and uncategorizable Alice's case with the Pigeon suggests:

> "Well! *What* are you?" said the Pigeon. "I can see you're trying to invent something!"
>
> "I—I'm a little girl," said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she remembered the number of changes she had gone through, that day.
>
> "A likely story indeed!" said the Pigeon, in a tone of the deepest contempt. "I've seen a good many little girls in my time, but never *one* with such a neck as that! No, no! You're a serpent; and there's no use denying it. I'll suppose you'll be telling me next that you never tasted an egg!"
>
> "I *have* tasted eggs, certainly," said Alice, who was a very truthful child; "but little girls eat eggs quite as much as serpents do, you know."
>
> "I don't believe it," said the Pigeon; "but if they do, why, then they're a kind of serpent: that's all I can say." (Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* 63)

[119] George Lakoff describes the view of classical categorization as related to essential objects in similar terms: "All the entities that have a given property or collection of properties in common form a category. Such properties are necessary and sufficient to define the category. All categories are of this kind. . . . The entities in the world form objectively existing categories based on their shared objective properties" (161).

The view of categorization in terms of clear-cut boundaries is opposed to by the later Wittgenstein. When defining the meaning of game, Wittgenstein is confronted by the question of categories. He finds that the system of categories is continually constructed by "a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing" and names such similarities "family resemblances" (*Philosophical Investigations* 66, 67). Thus, family resemblances define categories quite differently from the criterial features of the classical view. Wittgenstein's ideas were further developed and confirmed by the prototype theories of William Labov and Eleanor Rosch. Labov's study of the categorization of household receptacles demonstrated that "there was no clear dividing line" between categories, rather, "one category merged gradually into the other" (Taylor 41). The attributes that defined such a fuzzy category were of functional origin, organizing each category around a prototype, a more or less clear example (42). Rosch's similar study of natural categories revealed prototype effects in both natural and nominal kind terms. Rosch bases her study on two principles: "cognitive economy" and "perceived world structure" (28-29). The first principle is interpreted by Rosch as the basic task of categorization, that is, "to provide maximum information with the least cognitive effort," while the second is a precondition for the existence of attributes, namely, that "the perceived world comes as structured information rather than as arbitrary or unpredictable attributes" (28). The structure-versus-continuum debate has a long history.[120] Suffice it to assert here that too heavy arguments for the structuredness of experience pose the threat of relapsing into the most rudimentary of essentialist views on natural kinds, which pictures the conceptual-categorial system as a fine mesh fitting all the major aspects and objects of the perceptible world. In Kuhn's description of this position, "[i]n the perceptual spaces between these categories there are believed to be no objects at all" ("Logic of Scientific Discovery" 17). Rosch is nonetheless wary of relapsing into nominal essentialism: "To argue that basic object categories follow clusters of perceived

[120] See the discussion of the color spectrum below, note 21.

attributes is not to say that such attribute clusters are necessarily discontinuous" (35). It is the concession of continuity between attribute clusters that provides the main body of prototype theory, even though "prototypes appear to be just those members of a category that most reflect the redundancy structure of the category as a whole"; that is, they "maximize . . . clusters . . . still further within the category" (37), thus drawing increasingly sharper boundaries and assisting conformation to the principle of cognitive economy.

The Lovecraftian paradigm shift registers the transition between the classical view and the prototype view in the form of a cultural shudder at the possible vagueness or impermeability of boundaries, the threat of category violation by the external. As Carroll asserts, "what horrifies us is that which lies outside cultural categories and is, perforce, unknown" (35). Carroll intentionally uses the term "cultural categories" to show that the classical essentialist view dominates most cultural discourse today, as it did the cultural discourse of the Lovecraftian text. Since the Lovecraftian protagonist's realist-empiricist stance—underlying the outset paradigm—involves the classical view, a case of all-or-nothing categorization, or, more precisely, its failure, appears to hold sway in the Lovecraftian text. In "The Lurking Fear," "the scared and witless shanty-dwellers" describe the anomalous monster contradictorily, confusing the essential attributes of different creatures: "In the same breath they called it a snake and a giant, a thunder-devil and a bat, a vulture and a walking tree" (68). Similarly, in "Cthulhu," "in the wooded swamps south of New Orleans during a raid on a supposed voodoo meeting" Inspector Legrasse confiscates a strange statuette of "unplaceable stone" (147, 148). The account of the ancient stone idol of Cthulhu, presented at the annual gathering of the American Archeological Society in 1908, needs quoting in its entirety:

> It represented a monster of vaguely anthropoid outline, but with an octopus-like head whose face was a mass of feelers, a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long, narrow wings behind. This thing, which seemed instinct

> with a fearsome and unnatural malignancy, was of a somewhat bloated corpulence, and squatted evilly on a rectangular block or pedestal covered with undecipherable characters. . . . Its vast, awesome, and incalculable age was unmistakable; yet no one link did it shew with any known type of art belonging to civilisation's youth—or indeed to any other time. Totally separate and apart, its very material was a mystery; for the soapy, greenish-black stone with its golden or iridescent flecks and striations resembled nothing familiar to geology or mineralogy. The characters along the base were equally baffling; and no member present, despite the presentation of half the world's expert learning in this field, could form the least notion of even the remotest linguistic kinship. (148-49)

The passage, despite its overarching extravagance, is significant in three respects: 1/a) the "assembled men of science" represent the expert view of categorization (148), and 1/b) they, despite the aegis of the Archeological Society, apparently also represent vastly distinct fields such as art history, geology, linguistics, archeology; thus the object will be inconsistent with the near totality of science; while 2) both the thing represented and the ways of representation—sculpture and language—are alien[121] and are posited between categories, such as animal/not animal (including interstitiality among the taxonomical groups reptilian/avian/cephalopod), stone/not stone, man-made/not man-made, perhaps even terrestrial/extraterrestrial; further, 3) the statuette, due to its unclassifiable nature, excites the specialists to the brink of repulsion ("fearsome," "unnatural malignancy," "squatted evilly").

The entirety of the statuette is unknown to classical categorization, it is "totally separate and apart," since it does not yield to the binary features defining classical categories.

[121] The object is unknown, even though the tale's logic necessitates that a certain Professor Webb compares it and the language to the idol of a remote "Esquimaux" tribe of "nameless rites and human sacrifices" and "queer hereditary rituals addressed to a supreme elder devil" ("Cthulhu" 149).

It represents a creature with wings but with no beak or fur (thus it is no known flying animal), with tentacles but with other limbs as well (thus the tentacles suggest other functions than movement, although octopi change their places with their tentacles only) and so forth. Prototype categories, on the contrary, as Taylor argues, possess a certain "flexibility, unknown to Aristotelian categories, in being able to accommodate new, hitherto unfamiliar data" (53). This bears on scientific knowledge, since, as Jardine maintains, "the well-posedness of some questions, perhaps in certain domains of inquiry all questions, is irreducibly relative to categorical framework" (125). In Taylor's analysis, "[w]ith only Aristotelian categories at our disposal, new data would often demand, for their categorization, the creation of new categories, or a redefinition of existing categories" (53). Such a total redefinition in actuality takes place in the Lovecraftian paradigm shift. The commonsense view of binary categories, the cultural shudder felt at the resistance of objects to categorization is accurately represented by the horror text, which Carroll observes thus: "monsters are not only physically threatening: they are cognitively threatening" (34). By insisting on the paradigm shift involving the horror of category disintegration and restructuring, the Lovecraftian text, partly in opposition to its own premises (and in contrast to Lovecraft's own agenda, let me add), conducts a test to invalidate the myopic view of classical essentialism and empiricism. As in the case of the assembled scholars for whom the statuette "hinted so potently at unopened and archaic vistas" ("Cthulhu" 148), the cognitive threat signals the Lovecraftian glimpse of an underlying and emergent structure.[122]

"Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family" also bears witness to this emergent structure by presenting a germinal understanding of prototypical categorization based on resemblances. "Arthur Jermyn" tells the story of a peculiar family of aristocrats who

[122] This hidden agenda in "Cthulhu" is foreshadowed by an ironical intentionality of its plot: according to the story, Cthulhu is an extraterrestrial demon-God dwelling in the ocean, waiting only to emerge to the surface again to take over the Earth.

are haunted by the strange findings of their ancestor, Sir Wade Jermyn, "one of the earliest explorers of the Congo region" (14). All of Sir Wade's successors are stricken by strange bodily deformities and eccentric behaviors: "the Jermyns never seemed to look quite right—something was amiss, though Arthur was the worst, and old family portraits in Jermyn house shewed fine faces enough before Sir Wade's time" (15). What is "amiss" is exactly the attributes that provide a clear recognition of the Jermyns as human beings. As it later turns out, Sir Wade had indeed discovered a hidden city in the heart of Africa peopled by hybrid creatures, a "prehistoric white Congolese civilisation," which discovery was "earning him much ridicule" and "this fearless explorer had been placed in a madhouse" (14). But Sir Wade's "collection of trophies and specimens, which were not such as a normal man would accumulate and preserve" curiously paralleled "the Oriental seclusion in which he kept his wife" (15). When the last of the Jermyns, Arthur, receives a box containing "a mummified white ape of some unknown species, less hairy than any of the recorded variety," with a golden locket around her neck displaying the Jermyn arms, he soaks himself in oil and torches his clothes (22-23).[123]

In "Arthur Jermyn," the enigma of categorization is maintained throughout the text. Due to the anomalous white-ape great-great-great-grandmother, and the secret of alien miscegenation which haunts the Jermyns throughout the centuries, Arthur is not entirely human, which is demonstrated by the text: "It is hard to say what he resembled, but his expression, his facial angle, and the length of his arms gave a thrill of repulsion to those who met him for the first time" (18-19). Prototypes attract less-prototypical members of the

[123] Lovecraft's unfortunate bent for racialism and eugenics is frequently emphasized in connection to his stories of racial degeneration, such as "Arthur Jermyn," "Rats in the Walls," or "The Lurking Fear" (see Bennett Lovett-Graff, "'Life is a Hideous Thing'"). In an objective tone, Joshi asserts that for Lovecraft the racial aspect probably provided a last resort of his dream of aristocracy: "Racialism for him was a bulwark against acknowledging that his ideal of a purely Anglo-Saxon America no longer had any relevance and could never be recaptured" (*Decline* 80).

category on the basis of attributes, or family resemblances. As Kuhn asserts, "a natural family is a class whose members resemble each other more closely than they resemble the members of other natural families" ("Logic of Discovery" 17). The Jermyns, however, resemble each other on the basis of resembling something that is otherwise utterly alien even to biological taxonomy as it came to be established by evolutionary theory.[124] In this, the Jermyns constitute a distinct category, which, is, paradoxically, ruled out of the normal taxonomy of beings. The mystery of "Arthur Jermyn and His Family" bears on Arthur's genealogy, that is, his categorical *family*. No *family resemblances* exist that would render the family of Arthur to any one family among the categories.

The categorization of humans as positioned superior to other creatures is most precious to human beings. Stephen Jay Gould's *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* describes the same bedrock beliefs of civilization. He regards thinking of evolution as progress toward perfection "the human arrogance" (17): "When we tackle the greatest of all evolutionary questions about human existence . . . our prejudices often

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[124] As Lovett-Graff suggests, much of Lovecraft's evolutionary thinking may have been determined by Huxleyan rather than strictly Darwinian theories (375), since the former was more sensitive to the non-theoretical ramifications of evolution. In the following passage, where the box containing the ancestor is being prepared for shipment to Arthur, the problem of resemblance powerfully converges with the poignant evolutionary irony:

> In June, 1913, a letter arrived from M. Verhaeren, telling of the finding of the stuffed goddess [an object that the inhabitants of the forgotten city worshipped]. It was, the Belgian averred, a most extraordinary object; an object quite beyond the power of a layman to classify. Whether it was human or simian only a scientist could determine, and the process of determination would be greatly hampered by its imperfect condition. . . . In commenting on the contour of the mummy's face, M. Verhaeren suggested a whimsical comparison; or rather, expressed a humorous wonder just how it would strike his correspondent, but was too much interested scientifically to waste many words in levity. ("Arthur Jermyn" 21-22)

overwhelm our limited information," he asserts (8). For human beings, who view their existence as the most successful episode in the story of life, there can exist no such taxonomy as would systemize the attributes of the category "human-ape" outside paleontology—except, of course, in those discourses that seek to subvert the existing rigid categories: the fancies and nightmares or horror, science fiction, and fantasy.[125] Thus, inter-category niches such as Arthur's are banished from human thought and consistently deleted from the register of human society, not unlike half-monster and half-human Wilbur Whateley in "Dunwich": "There was a hideous screaming which echoed above even the hill noises and the dogs' barking on the night Wilbur was born, but no known doctor or midwife presided at his coming" (210). Wilbur, as well as Arthur, is a jilted individual from birth, a monstrous being unpleasantly reminding us humans of the diffuse nature of reality behind our distinctly partitioning categories.

The problem of category boundaries is especially evident in the difficulties posed by the representation of the color spectrum, underlying the totality of "Colour" or displayed in *Mountains of Madness* by the Lovecraftian attributes "lighter grey," "yellowish," "greenish" (263); where the attempt at categorization runs up against reality as "a diffuse continuum," as Taylor suggests in discussing conventional naming (2).[126] In "Dunwich," Wilbur's death by a

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[125] As Donna J. Haraway, a former simian biologist-taxonomist contends, "[b]iology's epistemological and technical task has been to produce a historically specific kind of human unity: namely, membership in a single species, the human race, *Homo sapiens*. Biology discursively establishes and performs what will count as human in powerful domains of knowledge and technique" (323).

[126] Nevertheless, it does not follow that the categorization of colors is ultimately impossible, as the argument from arbitrariness would have it. The arbitrariness of the linguistic sign is a presupposition taken up by Saussure in *Course in General Linguistics*, where he identified the sign as arbitrarily and conventionally associated to any one meaning and where he also maintains that meanings are arbitrary, non-existent outside the system of language. Berlin and Kay's and Rosch's studies, however, revealed the similarities of categorization of basic color terms or focal colors across a great number of languages (see Taylor 8-15), which appears to validate Ernst Haeckel's seminal empiricist-realist stance: "We are incompetent, it is true, to penetrate into the innermost

watchdog reveals his anomalous origin by exposing his grotesque body, wherein a multitude of colors are represented in a disturbing variety and through a lack of integrity:

> When the thing breathed, its tail and tentacles rhythmically changed colour, as if from some circulatory cause normal to the non-human side of its ancestry. In the tentacles this was observable as a deepening of the greenish tinge, whilst in the tail it was manifest as a yellowish appearance which alternated with a sickly grayish-white in the spaces between the purple rings. Of genuine blood there was none; only the foetid greenish-yellow ichor which trickled along the painted floor beyond the radius of the stickiness, and left a curious discoloration behind it. (224)

Much like the meteor in "Colour," the anomalous colors—"sickly grayish-white," "greenish-yellow"—displayed by Wilbur's semi-extraterrestrial physique violate even the immediate environment to the point of "discoloring" the painted floor. Wilbur continuously violates our ordered human universe: in his attempt to steal the *Necronomicon* from the library, in

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nature of this world—the 'thing in itself'—but impartial critical observation and comparison informs us that in the normal action of the brain and the organs of sense the impressions received by them from the outer world are the same in all rational men . . ." (Haeckel 239).

Furthermore, interestingly, as Michel Foucault delineates in *The Order of Things*, the seminal efforts of scientific taxonomy in the 18th century required the nature-as-a-continuum view as a positive postulate for their practices of naming, especially in natural history:

> [A]ll nature forms one great fabric in which beings resemble one another from one to the next, in which adjacent individuals are infinitely similar to each other; so that any dividing-line that indicates, not the minute difference of the individual, but broader categories, is always unreal. There is a continuity produced by fusion in which all generality is nominal. (145)

breaking through gates and locks imposed by human society,[127] in probing beyond the gates of the human universe with the help of spells in an effort to connect with his inhuman father. Lovecraftian anomalies are disturbing precisely for the reason that they assault the boundaries we impose. And such boundaries appear a necessary evil in human epistemology. As Taylor asserts, "[i]f unrestricted, a category could eventually encompass the whole universe of entities, since it is possible to establish some kind of tenuous similarity between virtually any pair of objects" (63). Taylor considers the relation between the categories "dog" and "cat." Dogs and cats have fairly obvious similarities; however "we do not want to say that cats are members, not even highly marginal members, of the category DOG" (63). However concessive, even prototype categories require restriction through imposed boundaries. In this, prototype categorization falls back on the same methods as employed by classical categories. Nevertheless, "the existence of a clear boundary to a category" does not "preclude prototype categorization," but it "is often typical of natural kind categories" (64).

In a discussion of the growth of knowledge, which presumably comments on changes in perception also underlying Kuhnian paradigm shifts, Rosch argues that prototype categories yield new knowledge by a mere redistribution of their attributes. Such an evolution of linguistic description parallels the evolution of knowledge about the real world:

> Actually, in the evolution of meaning of terms in languages, probably both the constraint of real-world factors and the construction or reconstruction of attributes are continually present. Thus, given a particular category system, attributes are defined such as to make the system appear as logical and economical as possible. However, if such a system becomes markedly out of phase with real-world constraints, it will

[127] See "Lovecraft: Textual Keys," where Burleson brilliantly unravels the thematics of keys, locks, and ciphers in "Dunwich."

probably tend to evolve to be more in line with those constraints—with redefinition of attributes ensuing if necessary. (42)

The Lovecraftian evolution of knowledge, however, proceeds in "Gouldian jumps,"[128] where the redefinition of attributes fails to provide meaning. As I have suggested previously, such taxonomic shifts in the framework of the Kuhnian paradigm change require the remapping of the whole of the given epistemic field. The Lovecraftian anomaly proves to be a supramundane phenomenon, an "unnatural kind," perceived at the far margin of a prototype category, gradually receding until it "falls right between" the given category and the next one, dissolving on the artificially-imposed boundary, this ever-morphing blind spot located on the margin. Arthur's interstitiality, for example, is in fact doubly construed from the viewpoint of science: due to his alienness, he "slides off" the category of the human, but since his ancestor is an ape-thing as yet unknown to biology, zoology, or evolutionary theory—an interstitial being—he is ruled out of the category of the animal, as well.[129] Arthur is a doubly interstitial being, who in the process of categorization cannot or can barely be attached to any prototype whatsoever. The closure of categorization, the scientific explication of Arthur's origin, fails to take place, and Arthur falls victim to his interstitial nature.[130] "Arthur Jermyn" demonstrates

[128] I use evolution here as a metaphor for the processes of knowledge, on the analogy of Niles Eldredge and Gould's theory of biological evolution, which describes the process of evolution in opposition to the gradualist view as consisting of drastic and episodic jumps. Their view is supported by the incompleteness of the fossil record. See Eldredge and Gould, "Punctuated Equilibria."

[129] The white ape-beings are an "unsuspected race of jungle hybrids" (19), "which even a Pliny might describe with skepticism" (15).This reference to the weird creatures described in *Naturalis historia* by Pliny the Elder is reminiscent of Jorge Luis Borges's fantastically tongue-in-cheek *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, a probing into the heart of the problem of categorization.

[130] Of utmost relevance is the fact that almost all Jermyns possess an intellect drawn to various scientific fields, the most important of them being anthropology. As Taylor argues, reading Edmund Leach, "a major driving force for anthropology over the centuries has been precisely the question whether or not human beings fall into a

that prototype categorization proves self-defective amidst the Lovecraftian paradigm shift. The Lovecraftian text represents a view of the anomaly that is, similarly to the ape-civilization in Africa in the eyes of a Victorian society,[131] *a white spot of unknowing in the heart of darkness*. As Taylor contends, "the clear boundary of a natural kind category is dependent both on the way the world happens to be, and on what we happen to know about it" (65). Human categories reflect both the world as it is and as we see it. Any "true" accommodation of linguistic and conceptual structures to the world, if ever such an approximation may indeed be achieved, is not a prerequisite of our interpretation of it. Through the supramundane effect the Lovecraftian text registers a rupture in normal epistemology, an instant where the gothic interstice opens up between the way we know the world and another dormant structure—arising out of our nightmares of discrepancy between categories and the world—which presents the world as it *really* is.

"Arthur Jermyn" and "Dunwich" disrupt the most precious of human categories, that of the human being. All tales of the double protagonist—stories with the Lovecraftian internal *Doppelgänger* motif, such as "The Outsider," "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," and "Doorstep"—exhibit a similar design, the process whereby the gothic interstice, the locus of confrontation appears within the protagonist himself.[132] Similarly, in "Doorstep," Edward Derby's body is occupied by a fish-like being up to the point where his mind is expelled to the doubly interstitial (alien and alive-in-dead) body of that fish-like being. The fish-man is a favorite with Lovecraftian taxonomy. "Innsmouth" features a "sightseeing, antiquarian, and

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discrete category" (65). The lives of the Jermyns are, in fact, spent with explicating the scientific problem of their own genealogy.

[131] Incidentally, in his admiration for a supposed classical Georgian harmony, Lovecraft despised Victorian society in spite of partly being a product of it.

[132] Although "The Lurking Fear" is sometimes regarded a part of the presumed trilogy of hereditary monstrosity (the other two being "Arthur Jermyn" and "The Rats in the Walls"), it is different in the sense that it does not involve the motif of the double protagonist.

genealogical" trip (emphasis added, 269-70). The expedition proves fatally genealogical indeed, as the protagonist recognizes that his lineage originates in the fish- or frog-like Deep Ones:

> It was then that I began to study the mirror with mounting alarm. The slow ravages of disease are not pleasant to watch . . . What was taking place in me? Could it be that I was coming to resemble my grandmother and uncle Douglas? . . . So far I have not shot myself as my uncle Douglas did. I bought an automatic and almost took the step, but certain dreams deterred me. The tense extremes of horror are lessening, and I feel queerly drawn toward the unknown sea-deeps instead of fearing them. (334-35)

When going on the innocent sightseeing tour in Innsmouth, the protagonist takes a mental note of the inhabitants and the difficulty of assigning their type to any one category (which later develops into the main project of the text): "Somehow these people seemed more disquieting than the dismal buildings, for almost every one had certain peculiarities of face and motions which I instinctively disliked without being able to define or comprehend them" (282). Similarly to the white ape in "Arthur Jermyn," the "Innsmouth look" is produced by certain features that could be distinctly assigned to different species of animals (mainly fish), but never together in their hybrid form (285): "deep creases in the side of [the] neck," "a narrow head, bulging, watery blue eyes that seemed never to wink," "receding forehead and chin, and singularly undeveloped ears," "the surface [of the skin] seemed queerly irregular, as if peeling from some cutaneous disease," the "shambling gait" (279). The deep creases are, of course, gills, and the shambling feet indicate atavistic fins (the protagonist notices that the "feet were inordinately immense. The more I studied them the more I wondered how he could buy any shoes to fit them" [279]). The transformation in body and inclination derives from a genetic memory the protagonist calls "pseudo-recollection" (282), which erupts from the

depths and expels the protagonist from his category, gradually receding from the prototypical center toward the boundary and beyond. The de-categorizing tendency is highly spatiotemporal in the Lovecraftian text. In another double-protagonist tale, “The Rats in the Walls,” Walter Delapore progresses downwards on the “vertical axis of imagination” into tunnels below his inherited family castle (Lévy 64), while at the same time he regresses horizontally on the timeline into the realm of hideous origins, becoming initiated into the terrifying truths of his own heredity. In these instances, the Lovecraftian gothic crevasse is capable of displaying the depth of paleontological time. As Lévy asserts, in Lovecraft “[t]he descent to ultradeep sites coincides always with a regression to an anterior stage of chronology” (67).

In *Mountains of Madness*, when the explorers interpret the representations along the bas-relieved corridors in the hidden city, it would be folly not to acknowledge a troubling stage of Old One history laid out before their eyes (since their outset paradigm assists them to do so): they do not fail to recognize a heretofore unknown phase of the history of *Homo sapiens*, a genealogy that strips the human of its privileged position in the animal world:

> These vertebrates . . . were the products of unguided evolution acting on life-cells made by the Old Ones but escaping beyond their radius of attention. They had been suffered to develop unchecked because they had not come in conflict with the dominant beings. Bothersome forms, of course, were mechanically exterminated. It interested us to see in some of the very last and most decadent sculptures a shambling primitive mammal, used sometimes for food and sometimes as an amusing buffoon by the land dwellers, whose vaguely simian and human foreshadowings were unmistakable. (303)

Through opening up deep time, the relatively stable category of the human is "paleontologized" or, as in "Innsmouth" or "Arthur Jermyn," split open to yield an infinite number of possible deviant species. From this aspect, the main program of the tales, which reveal the apocalypse of the human, is in actuality the creation of new categories by category-splitting. Gualtiero Piccinini and Sam Scott assert: "Kind splitting occurs when different, largely independent aspects of what, pre-theoretically, appeared to be one phenomenon . . . are explained by at least two clusters of internal properties" (393). In the light of the prototype theory detailed above, we may modify this essentialist proposition by asserting that it is not internal properties that change, but attribute clusters are liable to doubling (and then to endless proliferation), in a highly similar way to the doubling of the nucleus of a cell on the way to binary splitting. When in the Lovecraftian category of the human the central prototype is split into two, the category also undergoes radical disruption. The result of splitting the kind human into many different taxa, however, may not only be that the new kind—the white ape or the Deep One that deny final categorization—is "deleted" from the map of representable entities, but also that in its negative ontology the new kind may affect the way we see the original category of the human itself. It may well be that the category of the human is eliminated, very much like the kind "jade" was eliminated from scientific taxonomy after the discovery in jade of "two different microphysical structures—each with its own cluster of microphysical properties and formation process" and the subsequent splitting of the folk category of jade into two scientifically defined expert categories (Piccinini and Scott par. 6).[133] Why else do the Deep Ones, with their petty tottering, appear as threatening other than the fact that in their heterogeneity they foreshadow the possibility of fission and diffusion of the human?

[133] Processes similar to the hypothetical splitting of the kind gold or the actual splitting of the kind jade discussed above.

IV.

NAMING THE VOID

Defective Categories, Defective Names

A certain "*horror categoriae*" infests the Lovecraftian text: it is the shiver running through the tales, shaking categories out of their well-deserved nests, producing "cognitively improper" things, things that "slide off" the scale of representable entities into the void of non-language. In this, too, the Lovecraftian text reveals its primary negativity. "Negativity," as such, is nonetheless indispensable to make possible an escape from the hard-set positivism of the outset paradigm.[134] In chapter 1 I strove to demonstrate the way the stories open up to reveal the gothic crevasse and how the loci of confrontation serve to focus a sort of strange "negative" knowledge, whether through the disruption of a locale (the double landscape) or the psyche/body of a character (the double protagonist). By way of revisiting the gothic rift in the locale, consider the following account from "The Lurking Fear":

> The country bore an aspect more than usually sinister as we viewed it by night and without the accustomed crowds of investigators . . . . It was not a wholesome landscape after dark, and I believe I would have noticed its morbidity even had I been

[134] Here I use "negativity" as a possible opposite of positivism, even though I am fully aware that "negativism" *per se* may not and cannot be interpreted as a philosophical drive, hence the quotation marks. Still, I think that there can be a strong sense in which the Lovecraftian text is philosophically negative: on the one hand, in its negation of transcendence and the supernatural—mainly in the outset paradigm—and, on the other, in the surprising turn where it suddenly negates its own ground rules of cognition and language in the refutation and rejection of the outset paradigm, the declaration of the interstice. The reason why the two cases of negation, which run in contradiction with each other, are simultaneously viable is not so much due to a paradox but rather an ambiguity in the Lovecraftian text: while the supramundane is contrary to established scientific knowledge, it—as I have shown—retains its basic naturalistic, if not empirical, nature.

ignorant to the terror that stalked there. Of wild creatures there were none—they are wise when death leers close. The ancient lightning-scarred trees seemed unnaturally large and twisted, and the other vegetation unnaturally thick and feverish, while curious mounds and hummocks in the weedy, fulgurite-pitted earth reminded me of snakes and dead men's skulls swelled to gigantic proportions. (62-63)

Later, the tale revels in describing how the earth itself moves in consonance with the burrowing alien things and the lightning, where the double landscape spews forth the central anomaly of "the lurking fear:" "In the chaos of sliding, shifting earth I clawed and floundered helplessly . . . . Recurrent sheet lightnings illumed the tumbled ground . . . , but there was nothing in the chaos to shew my place of egress from the lethal catacomb. My brain was as great a chaos as the earth . . ." (76). The last sentence of the passage also discloses the protagonist's intimate link—if not outright identification—with the gothic landscape, such a connection as we may discern in the tale of the student Gilman, who cannot tear himself away, either physically or cognitively, from Keziah Brown's witch house, which constitutes a gateway to another world: "the curious angles of Gilman's room had been having a strange, almost hypnotic effect on him; and as the bleak winter advanced he had found himself staring more and more intently at the corner where the down-slanting ceiling met the inward-slanting wall" ("Witch House" 303). As soon as the gothic locale opens up to provide an entrance to cosmic dimensions, Gilman falls "through limitless abysses of inexplicably coloured twilight and bafflingly disordered sound; abysses whose material and gravitational properties, and whose relation to his own entity, he could not even begin to explain" (304).

The mechanism by which the text extends the gothic landscape into the cosmic interstice ensures that the anomaly touches not only upon the problematics of perception and language ("*inexplicably* coloured *twilight* and bafflingly disordered *sound*" [emphases added]), but also the anxieties of space and time ("limitless abysses" with abnormal "material and

gravitational properties").[135] Epistemology in Lovecraft is always both conceptual and spatiotemporal, and the quest for new categories may be understood as a dynamic, conceptual-linguistic matrix fitted to the dialectic of scientific investigation: it is a kind of continuous mapping, a drastic redrawing of the atlas of categories. Exploring the Dutch landscape of the atavistic Martense progeny in "Lurking Fear" leads to a new vision of taxonomy and the aporia of naming, just as the streets of Arkham, mottled with historic Puritan monuments, are gothicized to ultimately necessitate a redrawing of existing notions and categories of space and time.

In *Topographies* (1995), J. Hillis Miller contends that "topographical considerations, the contours of places, cannot be separated from toponymical considerations, the naming of places" (1). He observes that "place names seem to be intrinsic to the places they name. . . . The place is carried into the name and becomes available to us there" (4). The "contours" of Lovecraftian locales indeed appear to be focused in the memorable names of Arkham, Innsmouth, Miskatonic University, Dunwich, and "the blasted heath." Even a superfluous knowledge of Lovecraft will bring to mind an instant list of these invented locales, just as Yoknapatawpha County will probably sound familiar to those who have not read anything by Faulkner. The names retain the gothic content of the Lovecraftian text and absorb the intricacies of plot. The fantastic locales and the historical settings equally excel in this, not incidentally due to Lovecraft's realistic bent. In *Charles Dexter Ward*, that "paean to Providence" (Joshi, *Subtler Magick* 121), the reader is invited to follow the characters along the network of the Providence streets, in the same way that, for instance, the two basic houses—in both senses of the noun—of *Wuthering Heights* determine the novel's internal

[135] Lovecraft expressed his main concern for spatiotemporal problems with regard to the weird tale on several occasions: he wrote of "one of my strongest and most persistent wishes . . . to achieve, momentarily, the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law . . ." ("Notes on Writing Weird Fiction" 113).

structure and the relationships between the characters. Lovecraft takes great pleasure in describing his beloved Providence:

> [Charles's] home was a Georgian mansion atop the well-nigh precipitous hill that rises just east of the river; and from the rear windows of its rambling wings he could look dizzily out over all the clustered spires, domes, roofs, and skyscraper summits of the lower town to the purple hills of the countryside beyond. Here he was born, and from the lovely classic porch of the double-bayed brick facade his nurse had first wheeled him in his carriage; past the little farmhouse . . . and on toward the stately colleges along the shady, sumptuous street . . . . He had been wheeled, too, along sleepy Congdon Street . . . with all its eastern homes on high terraces. . . . The nurse used to stop and sit on the perches of Prospect Terrace to chat with policemen . . . . The vast marble dome of the State House stood out in massive silhouette, its crowning statue haloed fantastically by a break in one of the tinted stratus clouds that barred the flaming sky. (95)

It is no surprise that Charles's story is available to the reader through the locale of Providence: he was virtually raised from the soil of Providence, as later Ward-Curwen and his monstrous creations are raised from the "essential Saltes" (Borellus qtd. in *Charles Dexter Ward* 90): the double protagonist and the double city appear as of the same essence. As the story unfolds, the text cannot refrain from calling the names of countless places, streets, and houses, from the home of Ward's ancestor and runaway Salem warlock, Joseph Curwen, "on Stamper's Hill west of the Town Street, in what later became Olney Court" to his farm "on the Pawtuxet Road" to "the Curwen warehouse on Doubloon Street" to "Dr. Waite's private hospital on Conanicut Island" (99, 100, 103, 202). However historical, landscape in *Charles Dexter Ward*, in addition to determining the plot, gets transformed by the fantastic, and in this it is not so

much different from invented places. Providence in *Charles Dexter Ward* is not the Providence, RI "out there," not even the Providence of Lovecraft's time, but a fictional and also fantastically transformed Providence, where portraits preserve the essence of a man and where revived alchemists roam the night. To use Miller's idiom, the gothicized Providence of *Charles Dexter Ward* makes perceptible the "contours" of the fantastic, condensed indexically in the representation of the town.[136]

Another locale, the fictitious Paris street Rue d'Auseil in "Erich Zann," focuses Lovecraftian negativity with similar success. A proper label for the void, Rue d'Auseil simply does not exist, either extra- or intratextually. At the story's beginning the narrator asserts: "I have examined the maps of the city with the greatest care, yet have never again found the Rue d'Auseil" (45). Burleson suggests that Auseil originates in "*le seuil*, 'threshold,' both in the architectural and the metaphoric sense":

> A threshold is a celebration of absence: when it is a stage of expectation or promise, that is, a stage at which one is on the verge of an advance, it suggests the absence of that toward which one has not yet advanced. And when *threshold* connotes doorway, blockage, barrier, it is the agent of absence and denial. (*Disturbing* 75)

Absence or denial is locked up not only in the name of the place, but it is also personified by the characters. Zann the viol-player is mute, denied the capacity of language, and has no means of representation other than the music—at least this is Airaksinen's contention, who connects Zann to the protagonist, because at one point of the story the hapless student's "descriptive resources fail him so that he becomes as mute as Zann" (12). This could all very

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[136] Joshi and Schultz chronicle that a couple of months prior to setting down *Charles Dexter Ward*, Lovecraft "read Gertrude Selwyin Kimball's *Providence in Colonial Times* (1912) at the New York Public Library, and this rather dry historical work fired his imagination. . . . Perhaps the Kimball book . . . led to the uniting of the Salem idea with a work about his hometown" (33).

well point in the direction of Lovecraftian negativity outlined earlier, were it not for the fact that writing is of primary importance in Lovecraft's world and that the mute Zann is able to communicate; "he wrote many words with a pencil in the laboured French of a foreigner" (48). It is thus necessary to modify, or at least qualify, Airaksinen's argument: representational capacities, such as writing and music, are available to Zann, but these do not sufficiently convey his message. Zann sits down to prepare "a full account in German of all the marvels and terrors which beset him," but when the wind breaks in the glass, the "sudden gust caught up the manuscript and bore it toward the window. . . . the flying sheets . . . were gone before I reached the demolished panes" (51). We are back in the realm of the missing evidence typical of Lovecraft; the Rue d'Auseil will not unveil its secrets. Concerning the music, the chaotic, fractured, schizophrenic viol-playing is significantly not Zann's own. The protagonist peers out of the window, but

> when I looked from that highest of all gable windows, looked while the candles sputtered and the insane viol howled with the night-wind, I saw no city spread below, and no friendly lights gleaming from remembered streets, but only the blackness of space illimitable; unimagined space alive with motion and music, and having no semblance to anything on earth. (51)

At the end of the story Zann is dead, "ice-cold, stiffened, unbreathing," while the "ghoulish howling of that accursed viol" does not stop (52). The garret window, *le seuil*, threshold to unknown mysteries, directs attention to the void, to absence; an absence which is made present by the possibility of representation, however imperfect: the Rue d'Auseil is negativity represented on the Lovecraftian map. Airaksinen argues that "Erich Zann" "is about a travel into nothingness in the world of unnamables" (7). He is right, but it needs to be added that the story makes an attempt to name the unnamable—there is the place-name, after all. The task at

hand, therefore, is not to assert a sort of absolute negativity of the Lovecraftian text, but to see how it utilizes that negativity.

Adjectivitis, Perverted Hedges, Unnaming, Non-language

The tales and the cognitive enterprise outlined in them may be thought of as an epistemological chart. This view should highlight the ambiguity in Miller's claim that "place names *seem* to be intrinsic to the places they name" (emphasis added, 4). The topos[137] of the unknown appears only to become available to the knower as concentrated in the name, the disclosure of which is the prominent desire of the Lovecraftian text. In the manner of spells from that grimoire of grimoires, the *Necronomicon*, the names are expected to ultimately open up the region of the unknown to interpretation. But to "open up" by naming also means to break up—sectionalize, segregate, differentiate: the labels and legends on the map produce as well as induce[138] meanings; they can only tease out whatever they have hidden there. The word "topography," Miller stresses, "contains the alternation between 'create' and 'reveal'" (6).[139] As I have demonstrated earlier, the protagonist cannot shun the consequences of using

[137] Both in the sense of "recurrent thematic" and in the original sense of "place."

[138] Induce as in the logic of "induction."

[139] To depart for a moment from the more general argument on names and return to the problem of locale in Miller's original meaning, I should point out that in Lovecraftian mythopoeia, the use of extratextual places such as Providence adds another level of problematic to the matter of mapping. Concerning real-life locales, Miller stresses:

> Causer and caused, first and second, change places in a perpetually reversing metalepsis. If the landscape is not prior to the novel and outside it, then it cannot be an extratextual ground giving the novel referential reality. If it is not part of the novel, in some way inside it as well as outside, then it is irrelevant to it. But if the landscape is inside the novel, then it is determined by it and so cannot constitute its ground. (Miller 20)

a scientific method of observation or detection, or those of indulging in descriptive language. Both observation and description will become flawed by the very nature of the inquiry. There are no measurements that can avoid theory-ladenness and no methodologies that produce perfect descriptions. Neither the inquiry into the ice specimens nor the observation of the Dunwich monster can avoid the force of the ruling (outset) paradigm wielded by the explorer/researcher and exerted upon the process of investigation. The distinction between influencing and producing the findings is only a matter of degree. The Lovecraftian protagonist, by naming, explores (however imperfectly) the landscape of the unknown insofar as he designs that map, and discovers the anomaly insofar as he specifies it.

The language of such mapping is atypical and irregular, a result of flawed categorization. Lovecraft the author has often been accused of wielding a style either adolescent or plainly obscure, characterized by "prolix" and "purple" prose.[140] Lovecraft's first critic, Edmund Wilson, in 1945 described Lovecraftian language as "verbose and undistinguished" (47)—quite contradictorily, for what presumably distinguished Lovecraft's writing was its verbosity. Wilson derides the language of the weird: "One of Lovecraft's worst faults is his incessant effort to work up the expectations of the reader by sprinkling his stories with such adjectives as 'horrible,' 'terrible,' 'frightful,' 'awesome,' 'eerie,' 'weird,' 'forbidden,' 'unhallowed,' 'unholy,' 'blasphemous,' hellish' and 'infernal'" (48). Brian Aldiss, prolific science-fiction writer and scholar, similarly commemorated Lovecraft's unforgettable style in his scathing, nonetheless nostalgic, "The Adjectives of Eric Zann: A Tale of Horror": "Funny too, we thought in our perverted way, was the fate that overcame the old deaf wistful shabby grotesque strange satyrlike distorted nearly bald—with what youthful zeal I shouted out the adjectives—viol-player!" (130). Calling Lovecraft's style "hokum," this far from unserious thinker describes how, when reaching to reread "Erich Zann," "fear was

[140] See Mariconda, 44.

welling up inside me in a cascade of adjectives" (128). The story itself, when read back at the age of seven, "made us scream," "broke us up" (129).[141]

In contrast to this, Leiber, for instance, strives to praise Lovecraft's verbosity as yielding "a sonorous and poetic prose with an almost Byzantine use of adjectives" which later develops into "a scientifically realistic prose" ("Literary Copernicus" 55, 61). Peter Penzoldt also emphasizes the doubly-wrought style:

> Though he sometimes speaks of 'unnamable' horrors, he always does his best, and perhaps even too much, to describe them. Even if he sometimes overshoots the mark, one may at least say that no author combined so much stark realism of detail, and preternatural atmosphere, in one tale. (68)

Whatever the judgment, one thing is for certain: "Lovecraftian adjectives are his *principium individuationis* or the thing that make Lovecraft's style what it is," as Airaksinen phrases it (93).

Burleson takes a more constructive view in "Lovecraft and Adjectivitis," where he rejects Wilson's, or Lin Carter's, criticisms, focusing on a Lovecraftian phrase, "unwholesome antiquity," scorned as meaningless by Carter (22). First, Burleson argues that "the adjective 'unwholesome' is not merely a descriptor but an eloquent indicator of perception and feeling on the part of the first-person narrator" ("Lovecraft and Adjectivitis" 22). To see this, we have only to look at the Lovecraftian description of the concealed double landscape from "The Lurking Fear": "It was a peaceful Arcadian scene, but knowing what it hid I hated it. I hated the *mocking moon*, the *hypocritical plain*, the *festering mountain*, and those *sinister mounds*" (emphases added, 78). But Burleson goes even further and suggests

[141] It somewhat alleviates the comic seriousness of the critique that Aldiss starts with a confession: "In my lifetime, I have read only one story by H. P. Lovecraft" (128).

that the use of the adjective "brings with it the potential for producing meaning beyond that which the noun alone could produce" (22). Thus, Lovecraftian "adjectivitis" is not an infantile disease, but a method for supplying extra meaning, ultimately for mapping the unmappable, describing the indescribable, a "universe [that] means *nothing*" (Lovecraft, "In Defence of Dagon" 154).

Of course, Carter's and Wilson's emphases on just those certain adjectives—ripped out of their context—generate a belittling laughter. In fact, these are neither Lovecraft's most characteristic adjectives, nor the weirdest ones, for that matter. Consider, for instance, the following string of phrases from "The Shunned House": "fungous loathsomeness," "abhorrent plasticity," "bubbling evil," "ancient and unwholesome wonder," "unthinkable abnormality," "hellish thing" (111-13). In a syntactic analysis of Lovecraftian adjectives, Burleson eulogizes the weirdness of the adjectives in their inability to "produce any meaning beyond" after all: "These adjectives are powerfully effective because they do not literally apply to the nouns that they modify. They are striking because they are creatively misapplied; because they are 'wrong,' they are eminently right" ("Lovecraft and Adjectivitis" 24). The ill-fitting link between the adjective and the noun, the descriptive and the name, is exacerbated precisely by the fact that Lovecraftian entities (such as the white ape, the ice specimens, or the Dunwich monsters) fail to fit human categories, not even prototypical ones. Therefore, the adjectives of the weird tale—always striving to point to some "meaning beyond that which the noun alone could produce," but always characteristically failing to connect to names that cannot form—become "weird" themselves. As a result of referring to nonexistent names of non-entities and non-categories, the adjectives themselves emerge as non-descriptive.

In normal linguistic meaning-making, during the approximation of linguistic descriptions to the world described, the boundaries of prototype categories may be rendered sharper by utilizing hedges. Lakoff was the first to describe hedges such as *loosely speaking, strictly speaking,* and *technically speaking* (122-23). These devices function to clarify the

given term, to "express degree of category membership" (Taylor 76). I wish to propose here that for Lovecraftian non-categories, the Lovecraftian adjectives function as "perverted hedges," *hedges* that characteristically break up the landscape of Lovecraftian knowledge in an erroneous and unnecessary way and thus assist in the mapmaking activity of the Lovecraftian text. Always skirting the "not-quite" of epistemology, these hedges provide no new knowledge apart from directing our attention to the vacant white spots of knowledge and thus, by failing to assist in supplying technical definitions or staking out territories, they are logically and epistemologically negative. Studying Lovecraftian adjectivitis, or, "abjectivitis," we may see that negativity is not off the mark here. The nouns, in tandem with their monstrous adjectives (where no names are supplied, the "abjectives" alone produce meaning), refer "directly" to the object of the fantastic, the insurmountable and indescribable anomaly. Furthermore, through the tendency of these adjectives also to personify the horror, such as "the mocking moon, the hypocritical plain, the festering mountain, and those sinister mounds" ("The Lurking Fear" 78), they serve as attractors that assist in concentrating the unknown through the names into the epistemological framework of human perception and description. If not for these fungally proliferating efforts, the Lovecraftian text would be only capable of such, or even less explanatory, descriptions as the following passage from "The Shunned House":

> It was of this world, and yet not of it—a shadowy geometrical confusion in which could be seen elements of familiar things in most unfamiliar and perturbing combinations. There was a suggestion of queerly disordered pictures superimposed one upon another; an arrangement in which the essentials of time as well as of space seemed dissolved and mixed in the most illogical fashion. In this kaleidoscopic vortex

> of phantasmal images were occasional snapshots, if one might use the term, of singular clearness but unaccountable heterogeneity. (109)[142]

The passage remains vague in its directness. Negativity abounds in terms such as "unfamiliar," "disordered," "dissolved," "illogical," and "unaccountable." Passages such as these propel Burleson to qualify the Lovecraftian language as "plurally indeterminate, unstable, shifting, disseminated, forever unsettled, energetically resistant to being reduced to fixity of interpretation" (*Disturbing* 160). In describing the horror through ill-fitting adjectives skirting, and nouns piercing the source of, the horror, Lovecraftian language remains largely non-descriptive.

Linguistic eeriness, however, does not end here. In a discussion of Lovecraftian style, Penzoldt classifies the "descriptives" of horror fiction into four groups: "(A) will consist of all descriptions containing words which, taken separately, have no especially terrible significance" (70); "(B) . . . phrases describing horror but containing only words which would not suggest it when taken separately" (71); and "while (A) actually describes something horrible, (C) only suggests it" (71). The fourth group (D), as Penzoldt argues, "is almost exclusively found in Lovecraft's tales" (72). These descriptives, as he suggests, "are really no longer words at all, but are rather the phonetic transcriptions of hideous idiotic cries" (72). Such a famous "Necronomiconical" passage may be found in "Dunwich," where the monster utters "acoustic perversions," "half-articulate *words*": "'*Ygnaaih* . . . *ygnaiih* . . . *thflthkh'ngha* . . . *Yog-Sothoth* . . .' rang the hideous croaking out of space" (243). As Mendlesohn writes in her chapter also discussing Lovecraft, "I am increasingly convinced that the intrusion fantasy is a fantasy of the aural" (117). In another Lovecraft story, "The Rats in

[142] The descriptive passage could be shifted out of focus here by a skeptical reference to the fact that it is indeed a dream scene, were we to forget that the dream that Elihu Whipple is experiencing is controlled or influenced by the alien entity in the cellar, and thus it is directly connected to the anomaly.

the Walls," Walter Delapore descends into the caves below his mansion and in the meantime regresses horizontally on the timeline into the realm of his hideous origins. Delapore opens up as a double protagonist, the terrifying truth of his heredity tears a gothic rift into his character, and the nature of the anomaly is manifested through him and his mental and linguistic operations:

> Curse you, Thornton, I'll teach you to faint at what my family do! . . . 'Sblood, thou stinkard, I'll learn ye how to gust . . . wolde ye swynke me thilke wys? . . . *Magna Mater! Magna Mater! . . . Atys . . . Dia ad aghaidh 's ad aodann . . . agus bas dunach ort! Dhonas 's dholas ort, agus leat-sa! . . . Ungl . . . ungl . . . rrrlh . . . chchch . . .* (108)[143]

In the explanatory notes to "Rats," Joshi observes, "the succession of languages—archaic English . . . Middle English . . . Latin . . . Gaelic . . . and primitive grunts—is intended to convey the narrator's sudden descent upon the evolutionary scale" (384). And the exact end of that scale of Lovecraftian imagination is the bottom of the bottomless paleontological abyss, the fully unnamable, framed and unframed by the disruption of language. With respect to such atavism of the double protagonists, Airaksinen similarly asserts that "both language and the self can be corrupted in the sense that language does not name and thus the self becomes a non-entity" (7).[144] In "Dunwich" the ultimate non-entity, the bigger Whateley twin characteristically hides itself in a gorge, between two hills: "It was as though a house, launched by an avalanche, had slid down through the tangled growths of the almost vertical

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[143] Lovecraft lifted the Scots Gaelic part from William Sharp's (Fiona Macleod) "The Sin-Eater" (1895). The sentences translate thus: "God against thee and in thy face . . . and may a death of woe be yours. . . . Evil and sorrow to thee and thine!" (46).

[144] Airaksinen, taking a somewhat less viable position, also claims that Lovecraft himself has become such a non-character of his own life, unwritten by the text itself (17-37).

slope. From below no sound came, but only a distant, undefinable foetor" (229). The Whateley monster's fusion with the Dunwich landscape symbolizes its interstitial condition: it resides in the abyss of the indescribable—silent for the denial of language—which swallows and at the same time ejects this abomination and repeatedly turns it loose on Dunwich Village. In "Lurking Fear," the categorial interstice is similarly pictured as shadow and silence. The degraded family of Martense spawns cannibalistic, dwarfish creatures, one of which appears to the protagonist as a menacing shadow on the wall:

> The shadow I had seen, I hardly dared to analyse or identify. Something had lain between me and the window that night, but I shuddered whenever I could not cast off the instinct to classify it. *If it had only snarled, or bayed, or laughed titteringly—even that would have relieved the abysmal hideousness. But it was so silent.*" (emphasis added, 67)

The anomaly, which appears in an interstitial position ("between me and the window"), incites the obsessive urge to classification. It also carries with it the silence of the abyss, and looms large in its denial to be named, it is "a nameless, shapeless abomination which no mind could fully grasp and no pen even partly describe" (66-67).[145]

There appears, therefore, a scale of unnaming in the Lovecraftian text which runs from proper names through "abjectives" and inarticulate cries to total silence. In the previous

[145] Even with subsequent and more precise descriptions at the very end of the tale—"a filthy whitish gorilla thing with sharp yellow fangs and matted fur . . . the ultimate product of mammalian degeneration; the frightful outcome of isolated spawning, multiplication, and cannibal nutrition above and below the ground; the embodiment of all the snarling chaos and grinning fear that lurk behind life" (81)—the creature still remains a highly interstitial figure, between a monstrous dwarfed ape and a human: "I knew in one inundating cataclysm of voiceless horror what had become of that vanished family; the terrible and thunder-crazed house of Martense" (81).

chapter I demonstrated how the central information of “Arthur Jermyn” connects the concepts of the void, whiteness, and a place on the map that is filled with horror from the viewpoint of the Lovecraftian text. The void, the interstice, the gothic rift all specify places on the Lovecraftian map that cannot, should not, and yet *will* exist. The void between the categories is filled up with the silence of unnaming, or at best the noise of atavism and the indifferent non-noise of outer space—“only the blackness of space illimitable; unimagined space alive with motion and music,” to reconsider “Erich Zann” (51).

“The Unnamable,” a sort of literary counterpart to “In Defence of Dagon,” is epitomized by Joshi in the notes supplied to the tale as “less a story than a fictionalized treatise on supernatural horror” (414). In “Unnamable,” the narrator and his skeptical friend Joel Manton, who maintains that “even the most morbid perversion of Nature need not be *unnamable* or scientifically indescribable” (85), are conversing about the unnamable, when suddenly a creature appears in the darkness, attacks them, whereby Manton is finally forced to revise his own theories and become a believer in the impossible. Manton’s outset paradigm tells him that “all things and feelings had fixed dimensions, properties, causes, and effects” (83), so he undertakes the task of providing dividing lines and barriers to reality: “he believed himself justified in drawing an arbitrary line and ruling out of court all that cannot be experienced and understood by the average citizen” (83). After the horrifying experience, Manton makes an attempt to describe the creature but fails: “It was everywhere—a gelatin—a slime—yet it had shapes, a thousand shapes of horror beyond all memory. There were eyes—and a blemish. It was the pit—the maelstrom—the ultimate abomination. Carter, *it was the unnamable!*” (89). Manton’s paradigm shift takes the leap away from arbitrary categories, but without reaching the other side: the leap proves a plunge, a descent headfirst into the “the pit—the maelstrom,” the interstice situated between one paradigm and the next.

The abyss the protagonist of “Erich Zann” observes from the window in Rue d’Auseil is the void situated in whatever comes after the outset paradigm, evoked by the anomaly,

which—apart from being insurmountable, that is, denying the leap from one paradigm to the other—also remains silent and unknown, converging on non-being. Lovecraftian insurmountable anomalies, in Carroll's terminology, "breach the norms of ontological propriety" (16). According to the *Necronomicon*, "*[t]hat is not dead which can eternal lie*" ("Cthulhu" 156). Cthulhu indeed lies eternally, though not dead, meaning perhaps that the unknown in the center of the void—negative, uncategorizable, ontologically improper, dead—manages to excite the mind, and hence become active: the Great Cthulhu awakens, and with it arise the contents of the unknown having hitherto lain dormant in the silence of the abyss. Conversely, the interstice between the categories live/dead is also created by the very act of the intellect perceiving that interstitiality. The fantastic confrontation itself brings to life the anomaly and perceives it as threatening. Cavallaro's term "narratives of darkness" (16) reminds us of the fact that narratives of horror—especially the Lovecraftian weird—are dark exactly for their attempt to describe the indescribable, for delving into the dark corners of the unknowing knowing. Jackson also identifies this "transgressive function in bringing to light things which should remain obscure" (69-70). In her words, "[t]he fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over, and made 'absent'" (4).[146] The absent is indeed traced, but never named. As Susan Stewart asserts,

> [t]he horror story threatens us with a situation where our assumed patterns of significance and insignificance are skewed, or where the sign appears only as form. The sign's referent is clouded in an ambiguity which we cannot decipher, and interpretation is deferred until the narrative's resolution. (37)

[146] Cavallaro and Jackson, of course, discuss absence and the subversive power of texts with relation to the political.

Through the de-categorizing tendencies of the Lovecraftian text, the new landscapes of the unknown are improperly but successfully mapped. Names become unhinged, categories become non-categories, quasi-linguistic items form and dissolve in the morass of the interstice, and are sucked into the vacuum of non-meaning. Yet, the Lovecraftian universe is never transcendental, nor is it naively metaphysical. Non-meaning should not be seen as a distinct entity in itself; it is much more elusive than that, something that flickers in the emerging anomaly as well as in investigating intellect, something that connects these two.

James Kneale argues that "Lovecraft's stories are centrally concerned with the paradox of representing entities, things and places that are *beyond* representation" (emphasis added, 106). I firmly believe that one of the main programs of the Lovecraftian text is the continuous mapping of the beyond and that it is such—abnormal, abject, weird, Lovecraftian—representation that offers a *fantastic concentration of the unknown into the known*. It will suffice to think of the case of Lovecraftian adjectives as strange attractors, which in some mysterious "negative" manner navigate around the interstice, or those inarticulate wails and that deafening silence which are the primal instances of non-language. Lovecraft himself confesses, in a somewhat Blakean passage:

> Pleasure to me is wonder—the unexplored, the unexpected, the thing that is hidden and the changeless thing that lurks behind superficial mutability. To trace the *remote in the immediate; the eternal in the ephemeral; the past in the present; the infinite in the finite*; these are to me the springs of delight and beauty. (emphasis added; "In Defence of Dagon" 155)

This epistemology is inherent to the Lovecraftian universe: the text not only names the "beyond" but also projects it into itself, exposes its own representational techniques to the unknown, makes us see that it was our will to representation that made possible the discourse

of the unknown in the first place. Kneale maintains: "Claims to representational truth become haunted by the impossibility of mimesis, and in tracing the limits of representation, we may also be able to imagine what lies beyond them" (106). The question, nonetheless, remains how we are able to imagine what lies beyond, in the void, for to discern a total negation of language in a literary text would be an obvious error.

The "beyond" is only partly the territory of the anomaly itself, or, to be more precise, the beyond is not simply an emergent phenomenon. In the disruption of the outset paradigm, in the moment where the plunge into the abyss is exercised, we may glimpse an underlying structure that is first and foremost man-made: a fundamental conceptual layer, a network produced by perception, measurement, methodology, representation, and categorization. The glimpse is only the matter of a moment, and it is ultimately the disruption of this underlying structure which enables our observation or detection of it—we may catch a fleeting sight of it as it shifts from integrity toward diffusion. This is the moment where we may learn about a system inherent to the basic paradigm, inherent to our primary knowledge of nature, and—as such—inherent to nature as well. Cavallaro's previously quoted description of fear becomes relevant here: "Fear is not disturbing because it intimates that the fabric of our lives, an apparently orderly weave, is being disrupted or about to be disrupted, but because it shows us that the fabric has always been laddered and frayed" (vii). In addition, the Lovecraftian paradigm shift reveals the arresting fact that nature is as much a product of the searching intellect as a manifestation of natural laws. To reveal and to create together comprise the great Lovecraftian game of representation.

Analogy and Metaphor

Grace—in part to harmonize the Fregean and Saussurean theories of referentiality and signification—distinguishes within the linguistic sign between the signans and signatum, on

the one hand, and between sense and characterization, on the other (76).[147] Concentrating on the signans, the "form" or "expression" of the sign, Grace delineates "a kind of situation where it is the signans that we lack . . . [W]e may have in mind a kind of thing . . . which is not recognized in a conventional sign of the language (that is, there is no word for it)" (83). "Thing" being either the concept or the object the concept is based on, finding the right expression may be carried out, among other methods, by vocabulary extension, and it is a ritual performed either by the ordinary language user or the specialist:

> First, there is the kind of situation where the speaker sets out to solve the problem once and for all by adding a word . . . to the language. In one case it might be an advertising agent naming a new product . . . Or in another it might be a scientist introducing a new concept which is intended to aid in discussing the phenomena he/she studies. (83)

[147] Grace asserts a semiotic distinction of signans and signatum, "meaning" or "content" (76), which roughly corresponds to the Saussurean view of signifier and signified. Fregean theory is added, however, through the "sense" which is one of the "two kinds of meanings in the signata of linguistic signs," the other being "characterization" (76). A "conventional sign" has only sense, where "the association of the signatum with the signans is arbitrary," while a "motivated sign" is furnished with a characterization, which selects the "component signs" which make up the motivated sign (76). Since Grace's view of reality-construction is based on the reality of conceptual structures—"a particular constructed reality," the "conceptual worlds" (31)—and claims not to rely on heavy objective reference from the external world, his theory does not incorporate the referential component of the Fregean system. In effect, however, in discussion of vocabulary extension, for instance, Grace relapses to talk about objects and phenomena in the real world, thus his conceptual view becomes rather strained. For further details on the originals, see: Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference," and Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*.

The question arises where the language user acquires this new name or concept.[148]

A fundamental feature of both natural and scientific language that is able to perform this move of vocabulary extension is language's basic analogical quality, and further, its inclination to metaphor. Boyd argues for "a class of metaphors which play a role in the development and articulation of theories in relatively mature science . . . their function is a sort of *catachresis*—that is, they are used to introduce theoretical terminology where none previously existed" (482). In *Mental Leaps: Analogy in Creative Thought* (1995) Keith J. Holyoak and Paul Thagard assert: "There is something inherently pleasurable about finding a mesh between two superficially unrelated situations. Some basic human joy is triggered by the discovery of unexpected connections" (9). Scientific language is, likewise, inherently analogical; it adheres to a special—both conventional and intuitive—system of cognition. Holyoak and Thagard provide a sufficient number of examples for analogy in science, such as the two-thousand-year-old "idea that sound is propagated in the form of waves" by Roman architect and engineer Vitruvius, also providing the bases for the newer analogy between the nature of sound and light (the wave theory of light); Kekulé's "visual analog of a snake biting its own tale," which contributed to the "insight that the molecular structure of benzene is circular"; or the recent analogy between the computer and the human mind (11, 13, 237-65). Dedre Gentner and Michael Jeziorski claim that "a faculty for analogical reasoning is an innate part of human cognition" and is "central to scientific thought" (447). Analogy is as old

[148] Throughout this chapter it might appear that I use the terms "expression," "name," "concept," and "category" as interchangeable. While I accept that these are highly loaded terms, I do not recognize any supposed barrier between the conceptual and the linguistic, which is a vestige of both rationalist and empirical philosophies. To Wittgenstein, for instance, concept and word are indistinguishable. As Roy Harris explains, for Wittgenstein, "[t]hinking is no longer an autonomous, self-sustaining activity of the human mind, and speech merely its externalization. On the contrary, speech and thought are interdependent, neither occurring without the other, and both made possible by language" (29). Later I also rely heavily on the idea of conceptual metaphor, as defined by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who specify the mind as already linguistic, what is more, poetic.

as thought itself, and the Lovecraftian text relies heavily on analogies constructed and—as I will continue to stress—perceived by both scientists and laypeople. In "From Beyond," in the course of a scientific experiment carried out by his friend, the scientist Tillinghast, the narrator hears a certain "sound," feels "something like a cold draught," and gives account of "sensations like those one feels when accidentally scratching glass. . . . both sound and wind were increasing; the effect being to give me an odd notion of myself as tied to a pair of rails in the path of a gigantic approaching locomotive" (26). This passage admirably exemplifies Holyoak and Thagard's claim that "a fundamental purpose of analogy is to gain understanding that goes beyond the information we receive from our senses" (9), as Tillinghast's experiment is indeed directed toward the "beyond" of sense experience. To cite an extremely unscientific example as well, according to Curtis Whateley, a rather unintelligent country bumpkin in "Dunwich Horror," the monster is ". . . all made o' squirmin' ropes . . . hull thing sort o' like a hen's egg . . . legs like hogsheads that haff shut up when they step . . . maouths or trunks . . . big as stovepipes" ("Dunwich Horror" 241). Curtis is a lesser character in the tale and has nothing to do with science as such, but his cognitive processes equal those of Lovecraft's gentleman narrators.

In "The Lurking Fear," analogical thought occurs when the protagonist first takes in the view of Tempest Mountain: "curious mounds and hummocks in the weedy, fulgurite-pitted earth reminded me of snakes and dead men's skulls swelled to gigantic proportions" (63). In the course of the story, another analogy is produced as pertaining to the strange mountain-top and its mounds, "where prehistoric glaciation had doubtless found feebler opposition to its striking and fantastic caprices" (78).

> Presently, as I gazed abstractedly at the moonlit panorama, my eye became attracted by something singular in the nature and arrangement of a certain topographical element. . . . it struck me forcibly that the various points and lines of the mound

> system had a peculiar relation to the summit of Tempest Mountain. That summit was undeniably a centre from which the lines or rows of points radiated indefinitely and irregularly, as if the unwholesome Martense mansion had thrown visible tentacles of terror. (78-79)

The Poe-esque narrator, with a "love of the grotesque and the terrible which has made my career a series of quests for strange horrors in literature and life" (62), in his surprise uses the quasi-poetic image of "tentacles of terror," by analogy with the elongated traces of earthen burrows with octopus-like arms. This image does not occur in isolation, as the next passage delivers a further analogy:

> The idea of such tentacles gave me an unexplained thrill, and I stopped to analyse my reason for believing these mounds glacial phenomena.
>
> The more I analysed the less I believed, and against my newly opened mind there began to beat grotesque and horrible analogies based on superficial aspects . . . . Before I knew it I was uttering frenzied and disjointed words to myself: "My God! . . . Molehills . . . the damned place must be honeycombed . . . (79)

The passage is not intriguing primarily because the protagonist uses the word "analogies," but at least for three other reasons:

1) These analogies come suddenly to the perceiving intellect, as if produced by the act of perception itself, signified by such expressions in the first passage as "my eye became attracted to something singular," "struck me forcibly," and, in the second, "[b]efore I knew it, I was uttering frenzied and disjointed words."[149] Holyoak and Thagard maintain: "Novelty

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[149] The intuitive nature of analogy is similar to Locke's definition of intuitive knowledge: "The mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two ideas *immediately by themselves*" ("An Essay Concerning Human

can signal danger, a new problem that demands a solution before it is too late. . . . action cannot wait for the gradual accumulation of knowledge over hundreds of similar occurrences. In such situations we want a rapid understanding . . ." (1). W. H. Leatherdale in *The Role of Analogy, Model and Metaphor in Science* (1974), similarly suggests that "the best way of indicating the nature of an analogical act [an initial noticing or perception] is by comparing it . . . to an act of recognition" (14). "Frenzied and disjointed words" indicate the perceptual immediacy as well as the peculiarity of the analogy.

A second and a third substantial observation may be made: together with more eccentric analogies from the text, which I will examine later on, 2) these images all refer to the main anomaly, the Martense monsters and their abode, and, finally, 3) analogizing progresses alongside a series of approximations, more or less successful, and involves great jumps: in the beginning the burrows and mounds look like "snakes and dead men's skulls," then tentacles, and finally molehills. Non-analogical categorizing of the anomaly similarly follows a fluctuating pattern of belief and disbelief: it is first seen as "a living organism highly susceptible to electrical storms" (68), then as "the ghost . . . of Jan Martense" (73), and is ultimately perceived for what they are: "dwarfed, deformed hairy devils or apes—monstrous and diabolic caricatures of the monkey tribe" (81).

Leatherdale differentiates between "manifest" and "imported" analogy and originates the first in Francis Bacon, whose concept was later utilized by John Stuart Mill (4): manifest analogy, in effect, is an operation "based upon properties given in immediate sense experience or in ordinary perception," while imported analogy is "based upon the formulation of novel or more esoteric relations between . . . properties" (4). It is perhaps the distinction between the two that should be termed esoteric, or it may be that Leatherdale discriminates on the basis of

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Understanding" 78). Such immediate analogy is so much so devoid of rational cognitive operations that, for instance, according to Kekulé, the image of the snake biting his own tale came to him in a kind of "reverie" (Holyoak and Thagard 188).

what one could call explicit or implicit attributes. “Perhaps the nearest one gets to the use of manifest analogy is in taxonomy and classification, rather than in the discovery of ‘natures’ or ‘forms,’” he explains (9). By looking at the case of Lovecraft’s “molehills” and “tentacles,” we immediately see that the text does not decide matter-of-factly upon one or the other: there are explicit as well as implicit elements involved, the former mainly morphological in nature (the shape of the mounds and the shape of skulls or molehills), the latter chiefly psychological and affective (such as the implications of menace in “tentacle” or the sense of darkness connected to the *modus vivendi* of moles, implied in “molehill”). This latter component of analogizing involves a special vision, termed by Arthur Koestler “bisociation,” which is “the interlocking of two domains of knowledge previously seen as unrelated or even incompatible” (Holyoak and Thagard 13). In Leatherdale’s view, “[t]he course of scientific history has made it obvious that methods such as Bacon’s and Mill’s which depend on manifest analogy are not sufficient to lead to scientific progress” (12), whereas an imported analogy is capable of looking beyond similarities or “obvious resemblances” (26). By a rule of the thumb, in “Lurking Fear,” the immediate perception of the geographical shapes appears inferior to the conceptual power obtained in seeing the burrows as menacing tentacles and the hummocks as dark molehills, as this latter ensures real, initial knowledge about the quasi-cosmic risk. According to Daniel Rothbart, “analogies display an ‘open texture’ which suggests to scientists *possible*, but hitherto unknown, properties of the subject matter” (8). But the Lovecraftian text does not allow even the slightest chance that development will be possible in science, either punctuated or incremental; knowledge only exists here as a possibility of itself—which is to say, a negative image, an imprint, the presence of absence—in much the same way as that window in Rue d’Auseil, “Threshold Street,” gives evidence of the void. As Holyoak and Thagard stress, “It turns out there are often advantages to indirectness. . . . it may be easier to express an idea in a familiar source domain before trying to use it to build understanding of the target” (8). At the time of the Lovecraftian epistemological crisis,

imported analogy proves a special means of pre-conceptual conjecturing about the unobservable and the unknown.

As far as *a priori* cognition goes, a much more fruitful method than ostention or induction, the "analogical act . . . is like an act of novel recognition or identification—novel not only for the individual but in the history of thought" (Leatherdale 15). The parallel with the idea of scientific revolutions should be evident.[150] For a scientist to achieve a major approximation of a theory to a novel phenomenon, imported analogy provides a useful, and exceptional, shortcut, "a necessary prelude to abstraction" (27). As Popper emphasizes, "every discovery contains 'an irrational element,' or 'a creative intuition' . . ." (*Logic* 32). Discoveries have never been primarily propelled by inferences of the inductive kind, due necessarily to the inherent epistemological flaw of induction; on the contrary, analogical acts "provide something more than a limited inference . . . . They provide a new perspective, new possibilities of description, new horizons to explore to, novel inferences to be followed up" (Leatherdale 23).

The explanation of the workings of analogy, the sudden recognition of similarities, or—more precisely—relations, between two apparently unrelated domains, was greatly assisted by the development of metaphor studies. The history of this field of study is as old as

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[150] Rothbart proposes the replacement of the term "prototype model" for Kuhn's "paradigm." "Every prototype," Rothbart asserts, "is an iconic model which has analogical relations to some non-prototype target model(s). A prototype is, by definition, an iconic model which is used for 'projecting' its conceptual elements to another (non-prototypical) model" (108). Thus re-conceptualized by way of analogy, paradigm shifts reveal their intimate relations to new prototypes that "[resonate] throughout the range of possible conceptions of the unknown" (110). In accordance with Kuhn's reasoning, Rothbart concentrates on problems of convergence between theoretical models and the perceived anomaly: "A prototype shift functions as a reasonable response to severe obstacles in modelling" (123), thus "intractable scientific problems within modelling" (110) instigate paradigm shifts; yet, in these evidently inter-theoretic situations, falling back on "inter-theoretic" prototypes becomes inexorable. As Rothbart stresses, "[a]n inter-theoretic prototype potentially becomes a catalyst for theoretical transformation" (115). This inter-theoretic stage is where Lovecraftian development falters and fails.

philosophy itself, and I will only mention some significant stages here. A current work which summarizes the relation between the scientific activity and metaphor, Theodore L. Brown's *Making Truth: Metaphor in Science* (2003), suggests that

> metaphorical reasoning is at the very core of what scientists do when they design experiments, make discoveries, formulate theories and models, and describe their results to others—in short, when they do science and communicate about it. Metaphor is a tool of great conceptual power. It enables the scientist to interpret the natural world in wonderful and productive ways. (14)

Brown is puzzled by what he sees as a lack of interest in metaphor: "if metaphor is so essential to scientific reasoning, why hasn't it received more attention? Part of the answer is that philosophers have for the most part minimized the importance of metaphor in their theories of the nature of scientific activity" (Brown 14). The mistrust of metaphor probably still holds its entrenched position—a view on which empiricist, analytic, and continental philosophers alike (such as Locke, Searle, and Heidegger, respectively) more or less based their arguments concerning tropes.[151] This deeply embedded view rests upon the distinction, put forth by classical philosophy, of literal and figurative meanings, maintaining, basically, that figurative meanings can always be converted to, or paraphrased in, literal terms, while figurative usages are distortions of, or deviations from, normal language use and therefore gloss over the truth. This view was inherited mainly by the logicians, such as H. Paul Grice, who believes that metaphors violate the conditions of truthfulness and may be made

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[151] See Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. 3, Searle, "Expression and Meaning." Paul de Man, in *Allegories of Reading*, also takes as his premise the above distinction. Heidegger's novel terminology itself equaled an attempt to return to that stratum of non-figurative language where Being, the world, may be grasped in its fullness.

intelligible only in the realm of pragmatics.[152] The foregoing theories all see metaphor and other tropes as either inferior or, at least, alternative to the natural and literal use of language. Mark Johnson in *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (1987) argues that "[c]lassical logic can treat metaphor . . . only as expressing literal propositional meaning," rather like having "the form of a similarity statement" (11).

I. A. Richards was the first to intuit a bolder, more constructive view. In *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1936) the New Critic Richards establishes the "interaction" theory, where he proposes that metaphor involves "thoughts" that are equally "active" or "co-present" (39), doing away with the classical idea of metaphor as the transfer or substitution of words. Max Black follows close on his heels, maintaining that metaphors are valuable because they provide new, extended, meaning, something not originally contained in the proposition. In his interactionalism, which he sets against what he calls the "substitution" and "comparison" views (31, 44),[153] Black takes a detour from the narrow literal/figurative debate. Although his analysis, too, touches mainly upon the "logical grammar" of metaphor (25) and he expresses the same well-known mistrust of metaphor exercised by philosophy—"No doubt metaphors are dangerous—and perhaps especially so in philosophy" (47)—he warns against their suppression: "a prohibition against their use would be a willful and harmful restriction upon our powers of inquiry" (47). The other significant element Black introduces is the idea of "associated commonplaces," which ensure that the metaphor is viewed as the interaction of entire systems: the two distinct actors of the metaphor (the "principal subject" and "subsidiary subject") "are often best regarded as 'systems of things,' rather than 'things'" (44).

Mountains of Madness features several striking analogies. Nearing the novella's conclusion, the fleeing and somewhat crazed scientists pass through a tunnel:

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[152] See and Grice, "Logic of Conversation."

[153] Black sums up the first as "[a]ny view which holds that a metaphorical expression is used in place of some equivalent *literal* expression" (31), while the second "holds that a metaphor consists in the *presentation* of the underlying analogy or similarity" (35).

> "South Station Under—Washington Under—Park Street Under—Kendall—Central—Harvard . . ." The poor fellow was chanting the familiar stations of the Boston-Cambridge tunnel that burrowed through our peaceful native soil thousands of miles away in New England, yet to me the ritual had neither irrelevance nor home-feeling. . . . We had expected, upon looking back, to see a terrible and incredibly moving entity . . . . What we did see . . . was something altogether different . . . and its nearest comprehensible analogue is a vast, onrushing subway train as one sees from a station platform—the great black front looming colossally out of infinite subterraneous distance, constellated with strangely coloured lights and filling the prodigious burrow as a piston fills a cylinder. (334-35)[154]

Black's "associated commonplaces" are clearly observable in the structure of the complex analogy as the various cultural and empirical aspects of the two subjects "underground train" and "underground monster." Still, a Black-type analysis would not view this passage as a single extended metaphor, as it does not include metaphorical propositions (with a "focus" and a "frame" [28][155]) such as "a fleeing man is a passenger on an underground train," "chanting the names of subway stations is a ritual," or "an entity rushing along an underground tunnel is a piston in a cylinder." This Lovecraftian master metaphor cannot be

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[154] In the tale, the shoggoths—described by the analogy—are perceived as more dangerous and less humanistic than the Old Ones; this is why up to this hysterical point of confrontation with the greater horror the narration progresses along the lines of scientific descriptions.

[155] In this Lovecraftian metaphor it is not the vehicle and tenor that call attention the presence of the metaphorical, but rather the focus ("underground train") and the frame (the protagonists are not in an underground station, but in Antarctica). The frame ensures that the focus is viewed in a peculiar way. Looked at from the traditional perspective, most metaphors of Lovecraft have such hidden tenors or grounds (mostly the anomaly), and it is the vehicle or figure that emphasizes the "weirdness."

cut up into other, smaller metaphors, and the totality and poetic force of the image is lost in a possible logical analysis.

The interrelation of analogy and metaphor has been explicated through various complex systems; each has been subordinated to the other and they have even been fully separated from one another. If we want to explain metaphor in terms of the appealing idea of analogy as "a mesh between two superficially unrelated situations" (Holyoak and Thagard 9), we have to have recourse to the conceptual view. There is a straight line leading from the interaction theories of Richards and Black to the theory of conceptual metaphor, which supplements the deficiencies of the analytic method with the findings of neuropsychology, on the one hand, and the achievements of phenomenological philosophy, on the other. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson on the first page of their seminal *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) declare: "We have found . . . that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action" (3). This is a rather big leap from the philosophical tradition Black is based in, a tradition that has contempt for the dangerous metaphor. Lakoff and Johnson's view is conceptual:

> Our ordinary conceptual system . . . is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.
>
> The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. (3)[156]

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[156] Lakoff and Johnson are often charged with reductionist cognitivism. While their theory is indeed assisted by cognitive linguistics, it nevertheless stresses the importance of the body, both as the originator or thought and the tool with which to manipulate, and function in, the world. For more on the cognitivists' debate on metaphor, see Raymond Gibbs, "Conceptual Metaphor Comment."

This theory, revolutionary at its time, drives home various significant conclusions about metaphor such as the existence of structural/orientational/ontological metaphors (14-21), the relevance of a cultural basis ("fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts" [22]), the natural relation between, rather than antinomy of, metonymy and metaphor (35-40), and the breakdown of the literal/figurative distinction (53). Out of the many notions, I will chiefly make use of three: 1) the solution to the live/dead metaphor problem (139); 2) "metaphorical systematicity," the idea that the metaphor highlights some aspects of the concept and hides others (10-13); and 3) the experiential basis of metaphorical mapping (19-21).

The following passage from "From Beyond" is rife with metaphors. I will highlight some expressions which rely heavily on conceptual metaphors but do not readily appear to us metaphorical (and leave the highlighting of certain apparent metaphors to the subsequent sampling):

> I tell you, I have *struck depths* that your little brain can't *picture*! I have *seen beyond the bounds* of infinity and drawn down daemons from the stars. . . . I have harnessed the shadows that stride from world to world to sow death and madness. . . . Space belongs to me, do you hear? Things are hunting me now—the things that devour and dissolve—but I know how to *elude* them. (emphases added, 29)

We can more or less easily determine the conceptual metaphorical basis of these expressions:

- to strike a depth—DIRECTION IS SUBSTANCE (which our bodies can make physical contact with)
- to picture an idea—THE MIND IS A CONTAINER, THOUGHTS ARE OBJECTS (which are visible to us); therefore, THINKING IS SEEING

- to see beyond the bounds—SPACE IS A CONTAINER (with visible borders)
- to elude a danger—DANGER IS A SUBSTANCE (this last case is perhaps the most intriguing, as the metaphor is seen in its totality: the hidden, conceptual content is highlighted by a—for want of a better term—literal or surface sense, which serves as a basis for the conceptual)[157]

It will immediately become apparent that the quoted passage contains many more metaphors which I, however, did not highlight. This will be remedied shortly. For now, I wish to emphasize that these highlighted expressions do not by themselves make the Lovecraftian text what it is: they are integrative parts of any text, the basic building blocks of natural, scientific, and poetic language alike. Conversely, novel and imaginative metaphors are striking and directly noticeable:

> I tell you, I have struck depths that your little brain can't picture! *I have seen beyond the bounds of infinity* and *drawn down daemons from the stars*. . . . I have *harnessed the shadows that stride from world to world* to *sow death and madness*. . . . *Space belongs to me*, do you hear? *Things are hunting me* now—the *things that devour* and dissolve—but I know how to elude them. (emphases added, 29)

We could call these metaphors *surface metaphors*, as they are glimpsed in the process of becoming. Yet their novelty and poetic value partly depends on their basic conceptual structure: they are produced by extending the conceptual associations and the further connecting of domains:

[157] My analysis, of course, does not differentiate between ontological, orientational, and structural metaphors, but it is nonetheless based on Lakoff and Johnson's first identification of such primal metaphors, which I have used here in a more or less updated form in small capitals.

- to see beyond the bounds of infinity—SPACE IS A CONTAINER (with visible borders); TIME IS SPACE; therefore, TIME IS A CONTAINER; therefore, infinity as well will have visible boundaries
- to draw down daemons from the stars—SPACE IS A CONTAINER; therefore, outer space (metonymically referred to as "stars"; STARS FOR OUTER SPACE[158]) is a container which can contain physical objects; our bodies can make physical contact with these objects; UNKNOWN PHENOMENA ARE OBJECTS, which we can pull down to us, on the basis of THOUGHTS ARE OBJECTS and THE MIND IS A CONTAINER and, furthermore, on the basis of a metonymical relationship between the target of our thinking and our thoughts (THOUGHT FOR UNKNOWN PHENOMENA); also: UNKNOWN PHENOMENA ARE DAEMONS on the basis of a complex metonymical-metaphorical relationship between thoughts and emotions based in various cultural and religious assumptions on fear and the demonic; also: UNKNOWN IS DISTANT, for example, in outer space
- to harness shadows that stride from world to world—LUMINOUS PHENOMENA ARE SUBSTANCES; therefore, shadows can make physical contact; INANIMATE IS ANIMATE; therefore, a shadow-substance can be thought of as an animal, for instance, a horse; therefore, SHADOWS ARE HORSES and can be handled like horses, they can stride (the image also gains its power from the metonymical sense of stride as "sit on a horse"), and so on; also: it is based on UNKNOWN PHENOMENA ARE OBJECTS, as seen above, and DIMENSIONS ARE LOCATIONS

[158] Lakoff and Johnson stress that "metonymy serves some of the same purposes that metaphor does, and in somewhat the same way, but it allows us to focus more specifically on certain aspects of what is being referred to" (*Metaphors* 37). Grounding in the case of metonymy involves direct physical or causal relations (39). Metonymy should not be viewed as inferior to metaphor or vice versa; they are both basic conceptual processes.

- to sow the seeds of death and madness—DEATH IS AN OBJECT; MADNESS IS AN OBJECT which we can make physical contact with; UNKNOWN PHENOMENA ARE OBJECTS and INANIMATE IS ANIMATE as above; UNKNOWN PHENOMENA ARE AGENTS
- to own space—SPACE IS AN OBJECT (which can be possessed)
- things are hunting me—UNKNOWN PHENOMENA ARE OBJECTS, INANIMATE IS ANIMATE, and UNKNOWN PHENOMENA ARE AGENTS as above; also: HUMAN BEINGS ARE ANIMALS; therefore, they can be hunted[159]
- things that devour—based on the same complex mapping as above[160]

Most of these metaphors, of course, coincide with the major programs of the Lovecraftian text: to extend and confuse categories such as space and time, life and death, human and non-human, animate and inanimate, known and unknown.

Two conceptual fields are involved in making a metaphor, and these are, most functionally, called source and target domains, in contrast to the more traditional terms "tenor" and "vehicle" (Richards), "ground" and "figure," or even primary and subsidiary subject. The domains, and their attributes, are, moreover, linked through mapping.[161] As

[159] As per Ricoeur's "semic" analysis of metaphor, we might reveal in this Lovecraftian metaphor the conceptual metonym THINGS FOR UNKNOWN PHENOMENA, where "thing" does not stake out a source domain but is the most extreme genus of the species. This extreme synecdoche leads to asemy, the loss of sense. Ricoeur maintains that in such an analysis all metaphors may be decomposed into two synecdoches, via the search for an intermediary term in the "semic intersection of the two classes" (192).

[160] I have used common conceptual metaphors here as well as more inventive ones. The main idea behind this list is not to differentiate between types of metaphor, or to define distinct conceptual levels or stages of metaphorization, but to show the underlying complexity of a given image.

[161] Mapping, a term widely used today, already appears in Black's theory in a germinal form: "A fairly obvious objection to . . . the 'interaction view' is that it has to hold that some of the 'associated commonplaces' themselves suffer metaphorical change of meaning in the process of transfer from the subsidiary to the principal

Zoltán Kövecses explains, "there is a set of systematic correspondences between the source and the target in the sense that constituent conceptual elements of B correspond to constituent elements of A [A and B, of course, are the two domains]. Technically, these conceptual correspondences are often referred to as mappings" (6). Two conceptual domains that enter in a metaphorical relationship with one another will, therefore, bring with themselves whole sets of attributes, properties, and associations, a kind of "halo," and these two halos will be linked in the process. This "halo" is close to what Lakoff and Johnson call "an experiential gestalt": it is "a cluster" of components which nonetheless need to be viewed integrally; it "forms a gestalt—a whole that we human beings find more basic than the parts" (*Metaphors* 70).[162] The process of mapping, however, is strongly selective: "I have *harnessed the shadows that stride from world to world* to *sow death and madness*," foe instance, selects only those attributes of the gestalt of HORSE[163] that are conveniently mapped onto the conceptual domain of the anomaly. Holyoak and Thagard also argue that "the heart of analogical thinking . . . involves establishing a mapping, or systematic set of correspondences, between the elements of the source and the target analog" (4).

"Shunned House" presents the reader with a scene where the narrator attempts to describe the anomaly: "all eyes—wolfish and mocking—and [a] rugose insect-like head . . . At the time it was to me only a seething, dimly phosphorescent cloud of fungous loathsomeness, . . . an abhorrent plasticity" (111). The mappings and primary conceptual metaphors behind this metaphorical perversity include, without a structurally adequate or non-exhaustive list, UNKNOWN PHENOMENA ARE OBJECTS; INANIMATE IS ANIMATE; UNKNOWN PHENOMENA ARE HUMAN BEINGS (head), ANIMALS ARE HUMAN BEINGS (wolfish, mocking eyes),

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subject. . . . This might be met by denying that *all* changes of meaning in the 'associated commonplaces' must be counted as metaphorical shifts. Many of them are best described as extensions of meaning . . ." (42).

[162] Leatherdale likewise stresses that analogy is "a multi-dimensional gestalt-like insight into new ways of looking at phenomena" (22).

[163] It is in this sense that some scientists and linguists talk about a "gestalt prototype." See Uttal, 188.

TIME IS A CONTAINER. It should also be clear from this hasty and heuristic analysis that, as Lakoff and Johnson stress, during the mapping "the metaphor highlights certain features while suppressing others" (*Metaphors* 141). The metaphor UNKNOWN PHENOMENA ARE HUMAN BEINGS is not based on the totality of the concept of human, but only concentrates on certain parts of the human body (converging on synecdoche), as seen on the alien entity (head and eyes). The metaphor ANIMALS ARE HUMAN BEINGS is, similarly, based only in a tiny portion of what this mapping could include; namely, the aspects of thought and sentience in a human being (wolfish, mocking eyes). Finally, "at that time" suggests TIME IS A CONTAINER, involving a special relationship between a moment (the protagonist catching sight of the monster) and the totality of time—conceptualized as MOMENTS ARE DISTINCT ENTITIES, based on our perception of time through measurement. This metaphor, in this formulation, takes no notice of other important aspects of time, such as tenses or, the similarly metaphorized, direction of time.

The grounding of metaphor in the conceptual process of mapping also does away with another traditional distinction, that between "dead" and "live" metaphors. Paul Ricoeur in *The Rule of Metaphor* (1975) defines his notion of "dead metaphor," which "is not declared but hidden in the 'elevation' of the concept that is expressed as such" (305). As Lakoff and Johnson assert, however, metaphors "are 'alive' in the most fundamental sense: they are metaphors we live by. The fact that they are conventionally fixed within the lexicon of English makes them no less alive" (*Metaphors* 55). "The 'dead metaphor' account misses an important point; namely, that what is deeply entrenched, hardly noticed, and thus effortlessly used is most active in our thought" (Kövecses ix). Poetic or imaginative metaphors exist alongside more conventional[164] ones (which, at various points in their histories, must have exhibited a higher degree of novelty) and are often created by way of extending already established conceptual mappings. Imaginative metaphors feed upon our conceptual system,

[164] Conventional and imaginative are Lakoff and Johnson's terms (139).

which is originally—phenomenologically, or experientially—metaphorical.[165] As Lakoff and Mark Turner maintain in *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (1989), "[p]oetic thought uses the mechanisms of everyday thought, but it extends them, elaborates them, and combines them in ways that go beyond the ordinary" (67). Therefore, it is rather in this manner that we should understand Ricoeur's contention that throughout "the long history of metaphor, we may say that it passes from the state of novelty to that of faded or dead metaphor" ("Word, Polysemy, Metaphor" 83). In this sense, "dead" is only a misapplication of the term, Ricoeur's means to highlight what he calls *la métaphore vive*, the living metaphor: not some kind of contempt for the conceptual, but an attempt at providing an ontological justification for *la métaphore vive*, the epistemologically active metaphor.[166]

While I agree that the living, poetic metaphor is constituted by its novelty, a perspective must be adopted where we see beyond the limits of the language of literature. For all its inventiveness and mythopoetic power, poetic metaphor is not restricted to rhetoric in literature. In extraordinary science (as per Kuhn), for instance, highly inventive, poetic metaphors operate as heuristic, intuitive analogies.

Inventive metaphors are never too eccentric, extreme, or delirious for Lovecraft: whether "a wolf-fanged ghost that rode the midnight lightning" ("Lurking Fear" 73); the Martense monsters that appeared from their lair, "bubbling like serpents' slime"[167] (80); or

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[165] Metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson assert, have "entailments, which may include other metaphors and literal statements as well," and that "[e]ach of these entailments may itself have further entailments. The result is a large and coherent network of entailments" (*Metaphors* 139, 140).

[166] Lakoff and Turner regard as real dead metaphors those "expressions that were once metaphoric and now no longer are," expressions for which the conceptual mapping is not visible any more, such as "pedigree" (from French *pied de grue*, meaning "foot of a crane," on the basis of an image metaphor that links the forking family tree with the bird's foot) (129).

[167] This second image could be regarded a simple instance of simile were it not for the fact that "bubbling" maps the movement of the monsters. Conceptually, furthermore, "serpents' slime" qualifies as a metaphorical

“one of those nuclei of all dreamable hideousness which the cosmos saves to blast an accursed and unhappy few” (“Shunned House” 111). Should we revisit those monstrous Lovecraftian adjectives, the perverted hedges that direct attention to the insurmountable anomaly, we will find that they, too, are involved in the work of conceptual mapping exercised in the metaphor,[168] such as in “dark and goatish gargoyle” from “Dunwich Horror” (219), where the conceptual domains of the adjectives are added to and reinforce the picture of the half-human Wilbur Whateley provided by the noun “gargoyle” (UNOBSERVABLE PHENOMENA ARE DARK and HUMAN BEINGS ARE ANIMALS are added to ANIMATE IS INANIMATE and HUMAN BEINGS ARE OBJECTS, as well as, perhaps, the metonym FEARFUL OBJECT FOR FEAR, suggesting with tripled force that Wilbur is something other/more than a human being and that this fearful truth is concealed, which will be justified later on in the story). I will, however, not pursue the task of charting the metastatically proliferating conceptual backgrounds of adjectives here. Suffice it to say that the later tales (such as *Mountains of Madness* and “Shadow Out of Time”) cut down on adjectivitis—which is not at all disorganized but results in a carefully “*orchestrated prose*—sentences that are repeated with a constant addition of more potent adjectives, adverbs, and phrases, just as in a symphony a melody introduced by a single woodwind is at last thundered by the whole orchestra” (Leiber, “Literary Copernicus” 57)—and rationalist or realist techniques prevail. “Abjectives,” however, do not disappear altogether, and as a result of their scarcity they acquire greater focus and strength. The change is only one of quantity, not of quality. Finally, in an ultimate analysis of mimetic versus anti-mimetic, scientific

embellishment upon the basic metaphor of bubbling. For a further reduction of the simile/metaphor division, see Ricoeur, *Rule of Metaphor*, 294, and Lakoff and Turner, *More than Cool Reason*, 123.

[168] In a footnote, Black calls attention to the fact that “[a]ny part of speech can be used metaphorically . . . ; any form of verbal expression may contain a metaphorical focus” (28).

versus poetic, realist versus "para-realist," techniques,[169] a graded scrutiny of metaphors in Lovecraft will yield a range from those metaphors based on association and similarity to those based on more extravagant relations, where one may well find that the difference in the manner and power of metaphors (from conventional to imaginative, "dead" to "alive") does not change the fact that they are all directed to the central anomaly and that they provide new, preliminary knowledge about the phenomenon at or around the moment of the fantastic confrontation.

The Embodied-disembodied Protagonist

The third, perhaps most important, aspect of the Lakoff-Johnsonian conceptual metaphor from the perspective of this study is its "experiential basis" (Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors* 19). Nearly twenty years after *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson extended and fused their various views on conceptual metaphor, categorization, and experientialism and applied those to the major pressure points of philosophy, such as epistemology, ontology, and ethics. In *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (1999), they argue that "reason uses and grows out of . . . bodily capacities. . . . [O]ur bodies, brains, and interactions with our environment provide the mostly unconscious basis for our everyday metaphysics, that is, our sense of what is real" (17). This view takes its origin in phenomenological philosophy of the early twentieth century, of such philosophers as Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. What these thinkers emphasize is basically the idea, or rather, the powerful recognition, that our perception and knowledge about the world (in Heidegger's case, Being itself) is only possible through and by

[169] I am using "realist" heuristically rather than matter-of-factly here, being fully aware of the problems involved in "reinventing" such a poetically, rhetorically, and theoretically sedimentary concept. The understanding of para-reality involves the expansion of the category of reality, somewhat along the lines of the supramundane.

our embodied selves,[170] which is a basic refutation of both traditional rationalism (Descartes) and empiricism (Locke and Hume), as, inclining mostly towards objectivism,[171] these thought systems already presuppose the separation of the mind from the body. Charles Taylor asserts that "the dominant rationalist view has screened out . . . engagement, has given us a model of ourselves as disengaged thinkers," "an outlook that has to some extent colonized the common sense of our civilization" (319). Lakoff and Johnson, conversely, emphasize the "embodied mind" and its "embodied concepts": "human concepts are not just reflections of an external reality, but . . . they are crucially shaped by our bodies and brains, especially by our sensorimotor system" (*Philosophy* 22). Declared as early as *Metaphors*, this view is what they understand by the term "experientialism."

Lovecraft's conceptual metaphors, such as UNKNOWN PHENOMENA ARE OBJECTS, SPACE IS A CONTAINER, MOMENTS ARE OBJECTS, or HUMAN BEINGS ARE ANIMALS, are based in and define the protagonist's perception of space and time, life and death, animate and inanimate, and do so from the perspective of the human body and its embodied mind. To raise an objection by saying that most of his protagonists are solitary recluses or eccentrics and therefore do not comply with this schema is to commit a category error. For it is in his social life that the Lovecraftian narrator-protagonist is a misfit; his fitting in the world is perfectly normal: "I pushed on through the shallow, new-fallen snow along the road," relates the narrator of "The Festival" (109); "I unbarred and opened the crude door," says the narrator of "Lurking Fear" (71); "[h]aving filled my pockets with the flashlight's aid, I put on my hat and tiptoed to the window," chronicles the protagonist of "Innsmouth" (312); "I am growing

[170] A new hermeneutic model is thus proposed through and by Dasein or "being-in-the-world," "the anchoring of the active body in an object, the situation of the body in face of its tasks" (Merleau-Ponty xiv, 115). See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, and Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*.

[171] In *Metaphors* Lakoff and Johnson distinguish between objectivist thinking (most of Western philosophy, including rationalism) and subjectivist ideas, which they identify as originating in Romanticism and misinterpreted phenomenology. See *Metaphors*, 185-225.

numb and cannot write much more," confesses the space-traveler of "In the Walls of Eryx" (294); and "I can recall the scene now—the desolate, pitch-black garret studio under the eaves with the rain beating down," reminisces the sculptor-narrator of "Hypnos" (59). These excerpts might appear banal, but they demonstrate that Lovecraft's narrator-protagonists are engaged with the world, wade through the thick of experience, and encounter the "handiness" of the world (Heidegger 77). Also, these experiences are reported by travelers and artists, people who are defined by the ground under their feet and the air on their skin, agents that endure as well as shape and manipulate the world, not unlike Lovecraft himself, a tremendously active individual, who, in his antiquarian travels and in his writing, through his friends and his thought, engaged in meaningful dialog with his environment. As Joshi contends, seeing him as an "'eccentric recluse' . . . may be a serious misconstrual of Lovecraft the man and thinker" (*Subtler Magick* 85).[172]

Yet, such descriptions of sensorimotor activity as I have listed are surprisingly scarce in the Lovecraftian text, not because accounts of bodily functions in fiction are boring (Hemingway founded an entire oeuvre on the adventures of the masculine body), but rather owing to the texts' major, primal obsession with the "beyond," with whatever may lie outside bodily experience. In "From Beyond," the scientist Tillinghast seems to echo Locke's concern about perception:

> What do we know . . . of the world and the universe about us? Our means of receiving sense impressions are absurdly few, and our notions of surrounding objects infinitely

[172] Perhaps we can once and for all do away with the misconception of Lovecraft as a recluse, a literary hermit. Hermits privately scribble, but Lovecraft publicly published in nationwide popular magazines as well as local journals. The view of Lovecraft as an engaged and integral personality, moreover, might just finally secure a place for him in the great American genealogy of experientialists as a writer not only influenced by Poe and Hawthorne but also indirectly utilizing the life experience of, for instance, Henry David Thoreau, with whose manuscripts he now shares the archives of the John Hay Library at Brown.

> narrow. We see things only as we are constructed to see them, and can gain no idea of their absolute nature. With five feeble senses we pretend to comprehend the boundlessly complex cosmos, yet other beings with a wider, stronger, or different range of senses might not only see very differently the things we see, but might see and study whole worlds of matter, energy, and life which lie close at hand yet can never be detected with the senses we have. (24)

Tillinghast only *seems* to echo Locke, as it will become apparent that the scientist is perfectly aware of his bodily constitution in the world: "[w]e see things only as *we are constructed* to see them"; "[w]ith five feeble senses we *pretend to* comprehend . . . matter, energy, and life which lies *close at hand*" (emphases added). The epistemological issue "at hand," therefore, does not equal a desire to leave the body behind, but a desire to extend the body, in much the same way as the supramundane extends the natural world into new, fantastic, but nevertheless material dimensions. The conceptually based metaphors—both conventional and poetic—that I have examined bear evidence of this metaphysical project, this struggle to understand that which lies beyond the body and its experience of the world.

Still, this quest is coupled with an anxiety of disembodiedness which plays a crucial role in the Lovecraftian text as the central tragedy of the protagonist: the main character, who is "digging frantically into the mound which had stretched nearest me" ("Lurking Fear" 79), who is embedded in a historical landscape of "*profound towns*, rooted in the homogeneous tradition of Puritanism" (Lévy 36),[173] is torn out of his environment and his bodily basis by the central anomaly. Such disengagement from the environment and the body is presented through the double protagonist. "Doorstep" and "Shadow Out of Time," for instance, appear

[173] L. Sprague de Camp observes, "Lovecraft became more than ever insistent upon a writer's need for tradition, roots, and identification with one locale" (323). As Lovecraft himself writes, "I am Providence, and Providence is myself" (*Selected Letters* II 51).

to test the possibilities of the Cartesian *cogito*, but only at a superficial scrutiny: in fact, rather than enjoying their torn-out state, the disembodied minds of Edward Derby and Professor Peaslee experience terrible suffering and humiliation. Even though the usual rationalist premises of “Doorstep” enable Derby’s mind to function without its body and animate his wife’s corpse into which it was exiled, in the end it must perish altogether in the rotting cadaver, and even Peaslee, who is a scholar by profession, finds the experience of the mind exchange “a terrible, soul-shattering actuality” (394). This is why cognitive fear—as outlined by Carroll (34)—always mingles in Lovecraft with the anxiety of the disintegration of the self: “the ultimate horror is connected to the loss of self” (Airaksinen 31). Along the same lines, the alien consciousnesses that travel through outer space in metal containers in “Whisperer,”[174] in addition to being materially based, ensure that the major anomaly will bear attributes contrary to whatever it means to be human. I must stress, therefore, that any Cartesian division pictured in the Lovecraftian text is poised as going against normal and secure human experience, while other, non-Cartesian, stories of the double protagonist, such as “Innsmouth,” “Rats in the Walls,” or “The Outsider,” exhibit the breakdown of the embodied, integrated self with terrifying conclusions. “It must be remembered,” warns Lovecraft, “that any violation of what we know as natural law is in itself a far more tremendous thing than any other event or feeling which could possibly affect a human being” (“Some Notes on Interplanetary Fiction” 118). Yet, this primeval threat is paradoxically also made possible by the embodied self, for, to reiterate Hurley’s main argument in *The Gothic Body*, “[t]he human body, at least potentially, is utterly chaotic” (94).

Throughout the foregoing chapters I presented the character’s cognitive powers in the face of the supramundane anomaly as the activity of “the intellect.” Now the term “cognitive”

[174] The skeptics could object that Lovecraft might have regretted our conventional way of embodiment and that his idea of mind projection in “Whisperer” was wish fulfillment in fiction, but they would forget that the Mi-Go are the horrific anomaly in the story, and that the manipulation with Akeley’s skin and hands by the alien consciousness creates an unparalleled terror effect.

must be supplemented with both "embodied" and "embedded," in order to make possible a perspective where the Lovecraftian protagonist is embodied and embedded in his world. Oakes stresses that "[f]irst-person narration allows Lovecraft to present disturbing visions directly to readers from the point-of-view of the person who often has immediate experience with the fantastic" (63). What better way to experience the "me-first orientation" of the human being (Cooper and Ross qtd. in Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors* 132)? Whereas, due to an intimate link with the Poe tradition, this type of narration is most prevalent in Lovecraft's tales[175]—which also reinforces the, naturally unprovable, suspicion that "many of [the protagonists] are projections of the author himself" (Lévy 42)—it is not exclusively employed. In some of the most successfully cosmic stories, such as "Colour," "Witch House," *Charles Dexter Ward*, or "Dunwich," the myth of realism and objectivism rules out first-person narration. Here, however, attention to the missing category which by a semantic thread is tied to the anomaly, the non-entity lurking in the void, is ensured through fear. It is in this respect that I see attention and fear as basic elements of the Lovecraftian text, in the "impossibility of separating the cause-horror from the effect-horror; or of separating ourselves from what we fear" (Burleson, *Disturbing* 132). Therefore, while the text focuses on the fantastic confrontation, the focal distance is always determined by the embodied self of the terrified protagonist. Lovecraft is mistaken, or at least projects an ideal of objectivist realism, when he writes in "Some Notes on a Nonentity" that "*phenomena* rather than *persons* are the logical 'heroes' [of weird writing]" (562).

Perverted organicism as a category transgression affecting life and death, human and animal, and even animate and inanimate (as in "Colour," for instance) nurses the fear of the disembodied, gothicized, and cosmicized self, a Lovecraftian rendition of the sublime. The

[175] See *Mountains of Madness*, "Outsider," "The Statement of Randolph Carter," "Festival," "He," "Whisperer," "Innsmouth," "The Hound," "Rats in the Walls," "Cthulhu," "Shadow Out of Time," "From Beyond," "Lurking Fear," "Unnamable," "Erich Zann," "Doorstep," and many others.

philosophy and aesthetics of the sublime in Edmund Burke and Kant mark the transition from Classicism to Romanticism with their emphasis on terror and the awful. In the *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Kant views the sublime as a sort of antithesis to beauty, which "is to be bound in an object even devoid of form, so far as it immediately involves . . . a representation of *limitlessness*" (75). The Burkean and Kantian sublime is not entirely a fearful but rather an "awe-ful" thing, which in Kant is subjected to the power of the transcendental reason.[176] As long as the pre-Romantic and Romantic sublime involves an "experiential turn" in which the transcendental is brought in view (Sandner 51), this is not a feasible program for the scientifically bent Lovecraft, but "sublime horror that appears to be akin to religious dread or fear" is a viable alternative (Nelson 2).[177] It is in this sense that "Colour," "From Beyond," or *Mountains of Madness* take a plunge into "limitlessness." As Vijay Mishra emphasizes, the gothic sublime "is always an overglutted sign, an excess/abscess, that produces an atmosphere

[176] According to Kant, "we may look upon an object as *fearful* and yet not be afraid of it" (91). For Burke's sublime, see *Philosophical Inquiry*.

[177] We may find testimony of this in Lovecraft's famous first paragraphs in "Supernatural Horror," where he makes this "psychological pattern or tradition . . . coeval with the religious feeling and closely related to many aspects of it" (21), anticipating Rudolf Otto's idea of the "numinous" (Otto 9-11). Otto himself acknowledged the similarity of his notion to the theory of the sublime:

> A thing does not become sublime merely by being great. The concept itself remains unexplicated; it has in it something mysterious, and in this it is like the numinous. A second point of resemblance is that the sublime exhibits the same peculiar dual character as the numinous; it is at once daunting, and yet again singularly attracting in its impress upon the mind. It humbles and at the same time exalts us, circumscribes and extends us beyond ourselves, on the one hand releasing in us a feeling analogous to fear, and on the other rejoicing us. (41-42)

For the sublime in Lovecraft, see Will, "The Supramundane," and Nelson, "Lovecraft and the Burkean Sublime."

of toxic breathlessness" (19). Even if Lovecraft's agenda includes cosmic terror, "breathlessness" as such is not only caused by the primordial fear or quasi-religious awe, but also by what appears as the contemplating subject literally pressed into the gothic object and the gothic object evilly manifesting itself through the helpless subject. By hypothesizing subject and object as distinct entities, however, one is missing the point. In the Lovecraftian text the fantastic produces a simultaneous cession and fission (of categories), a continuous overspilling and overflowing. Formulating the argument in another way, the Romantic one-ness with nature in Lovecraft turns into a gothic *sameness with an extended and cosmicized nature*. In the fusion of categories and entities the Lovecraftian text professes a sort of open-ended, abject Romanticism. Burleson in "Lovecraft and Romanticism" argues: "[Lovecraft] may be viewed, paradoxically, as a Romantic in whom the Romantic quest is one led ever on by ultimate futility, led on to a dark acquisition of vision that mocks the very notion and spirit of an acquisition of vision" ("Lovecraft and Romanticism" 31).

The double protagonist performs a Romantic fusion with his environment: in the cosmic confrontation, the double landscape stages a monstrous interplay of categories, entities, and inclusive definitions, up to the point where the self is fully opened to the grandeur and terror of the anomaly and the protagonist and the landscape start exhibiting the same values. In "Innsmouth," for instance, following the encounter with the hideous Deep Ones—which finally suggests the main character's dubious genealogy—an intimate connection is established between the protagonist and the ocean depths:

> I feel queerly drawn toward the unknown sea-deeps instead of fearing them. I hear and do strange things in sleep, and awake with a kind of exaltation instead of terror. I do not believe I need to wait for the full change as most have waited. . . . Stupendous and unheard-of splendours await me below, and I shall seek them soon. (333)

Following the cognitive plunge, the protagonist must also take the embodied plunge into the deeps, assisted by the sublime sentiment.

Metaphor and Referentiality

Franco Moretti in "Dialectic of Fear" outlines his understanding of metaphor in gothic horror:

> The central characters of this literature—the monster, the vampire—are *metaphors*, rhetorical figures built on the analogy of *different semantic fields*. Wishing to incarnate Fear as such, they must of necessity combine fears *that have different causes*: economic, ideological, psychical, sexual (and others should be added, beginning with religious fear). (105)

In Moretti's rendition, Dracula, for instance, is a metaphor of capital (93), a "*formal model capable of filtering*" perverse desire, the repressed, and fear (103). While I have argued that the anomaly is metaphorized by the protagonist, Moretti's monster is a metaphor on the level of rhetoric. Yet, "Dialectic of Fear" may be used as a heuristic tool to continue our exploration of the unknown as charted by the Lovecraftian text. Moretti maintains:

> Now generally, in literature, metaphors are constructed (by the author) and perceived (by the reader) precisely as metaphors. But in the literature of terror this rule no longer applies. The metaphor is no longer a metaphor: it is a character as real as the others. "The supernatural," Todorov has written, "often appears because we take a figurative sense literally." Taking the figurative sense literally means considering the metaphor as an *element of reality*. It means, in other words, that a particular intellectual construction—the metaphor and the ideology expressed within it—really has become a

> "material force," an independent entity, that escapes the rational control of its user. The intellectual no longer builds the cultural universe; rather, this universe speaks through the intellectual's mouth. (105-06)

Were we to lift Moretti's materialist argument from the plane of rhetoric, we could make it span the gaping but unobservable void between author's primary and protagonist's secondary representation, an invisible world of signification within the readily detectable materiality of the text. Then, Moretti's Fregean referentiality could more willingly lend itself to be transformed into a more feasible referentiality predicated on the fantastic and based on what Ricoeur calls the "ontological conception," the "quasi-corporeality" of metaphor (*Rule of Metaphor* 170).

In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur differentiates between sign and discourse as the respective subject matters of semiotics and semantics, subordinating the former to the latter: "the sign owes its very meaning as sign to its usage in discourse," which therefore lays bare referentiality itself, it "is about things . . . [, it] refers to the world" (256). Steering clear of the intentional fallacy, Ricoeur demands that at least he have "the right to pass from the structure . . . to the world of the work" and proposes the validity of a "second-level denotation" which is brought to life by the suspension of "the first-level denotation of discourse" (260, 261). It is exactly in these rhetorical environs that the literary metaphor can be treated as a corporeal thing. By amending Roman Jakobson's poetic function, where the ontology of the poetic itself rules out any reference to the world, he establishes "a referential conception of poetic language" right within the theory of metaphor and conceives of the dual nature of metaphor as a token of referentiality for poetic language (271). Ricoeur in part grounds his theory of the split reference in the literal/figurative division, in metaphor as a deviation from ordinary usage. He asks: "Must not the expressivity of things . . . find in language itself, and specifically in its power of deviation in relation to its ordinary usage, a

power of designation that escapes the alternative of denotative and connotative?" (269). As seen in the discussion on Lakoff and Johnson, the literal/figurative division ceases to make sense in the all-inclusive myth of the conceptual metaphor; yet, despite the common conceptual roots that provide grounding for the whole of language, the opacity and self-referentiality of literary language must not be of necessity effaced in the generic rhetoric of the conceptual metaphor: a sort of "surface tension" might be argued for, a tension not unlike the world-making and subversive urge manifested in the fantastic.

Whereas previously, to show the primal embodiedness-embeddedness of the protagonist, there was a need to disclose the conceptual basis of poetic language ("A metaphor is not merely a linguistic expression . . . used for artistic or rhetorical purposes; instead, it is a process of human understanding" [Johnson 15]), now a reverse route must be taken. In "From Beyond," during the experiment in which the existence of another dimension will be confirmed, Tillinghast exclaims: "I have harnessed the shadows that stride from world to world to sow death and madness. . . . Things are hunting me now . . ." (29). There is a primary tension perceived in the metaphor, which cannot be resolved into the endorsement of the idea, after Jackson, that fantasy exhibits a resistance to metaphor because "it takes metaphorical constructions literally" (41). The image "I have harnessed the shadows that stride from world to world to sow death and madness" can answer to two distinct interpretations: it is, on the one hand, metaphorical—in that it both effaces and reveals its own ordinary-conceptual layers by a sort of flowery, inventive, and monstrous reworking of that conceptual basis. In its weird poetic manner, the metaphor can be understood as the scientist's lament for his plight, resulting from craving forbidden knowledge. As the narrator insists, "[t]hat Crawford Tillinghast should ever have studied science and philosophy was a mistake. These things should be left to the frigid and impersonal investigator, for they offer two equally tragic alternatives to the man of feeling and action; despair if he fail in his quest, and terrors unutterable and imaginable if he succeed" (23). But the metaphor also has a "literal"

interpretation—it can be taken as a direct reference to an intratextual reality of invisible but substantive singularities circling around the protagonist's head, which are conceptually represented as "shadows" and "things" that "sow death and madness" for want of a better description. It appears that this tension between the two interpretations is, in the first place, salvaged by both the poetic nature of the metaphor and the conceptual basis of that poetic metaphor. The metaphor is, I think, the more subversive and also the more fantastic for that duplicity, even more than if it had been constructed to positively disclose some literal truth.

Could Lovecraft's poetic metaphorization be understood in terms of Todorov's fantastic, or, more precisely, a slight modification of his seminal and highly restrictive idea? Todorov maintains that the hesitation may be "resolved so that the event is acknowledged as reality, or so that the event is identified as the fruit of imagination or the result of an illusion; in other words, we may decide that the event *is* or *is not*" (157). The ambiguity of Todorov's fantastic is based on the literalness of language; the evidence is there, and it can be interpreted as being internal (as in illusion, pipe dreams) or external to the protagonist. Still, does not the uncertainty developed by the Lovecraftian text on the level of the conceptual metaphor offer a choice between two alternative readings? A slight modification of the definition of uncertainty is necessary here, as in Todorov's notion the fantastic is perceived as a hesitation on the reader's part, while in Lovecraft it is entirely an attribute of the protagonist. It is also not a hesitation between real and psychological interpretations as such (for Lovecraftian narrators are scientifically cognizant and monstrously conscious), but a double vision informing the protagonist's system of representation which, although describing a (supramundane) reality, makes use of conceptual metaphorical mappings, some rather inventive and poetic at that. At the end of "Cthulhu," one of the sub-protagonists' state of mind[178] is described in the following manner:

[178] "Cthulhu" works with a nested narrative, where the primary narrator renders for the reader the narratives of the sub-protagonists.

> There is a sense of spectral whirling through liquid gulfs of infinity, of dizzying rides through reeling universes on a comet's tail, and of hysterical plunges from the pit to the moon and from the moon back again to the pit, all livened by a cachinnating chorus of the distorted, hilarious, elder gods and the green, bat-winged mocking imps of Tartarus. (169)

The passage opens up the possibility of a double vision where we may take two different readings which, if not for the conceptual basis of metaphor, could be called "literal" and "figurative." Were we, however, to choose between one reading and another, the Lovecraftian text would immediately mock our choice, as however metaphorical the expressions may prove, they sum up the main points of the story: "liquid gulfs," "infinity," "reeling universes," "the pit to the moon and from the moon back again to the pit" talk about the ocean where Cthulhu lives and outer space where it has arrived from, while "distorted, hilarious, elder gods" and "green, bat-winged" describe Cthulhu itself. In an utterly Lovecraftian fashion, the two interpretations melt into one, the poles slide together and provide a permanent tension.

The narrator of "Lurking Fear," frightened out of his wits, recourses to a sublime and baroque orgy of metaphor in describing what cannot be described:

> Shrieking, slithering, torrential shadows of red viscous madness chasing one another through endless, ensanguined corridors of purple fulgurous sky . . . formless phantasms and kaleidoscopic mutations of a ghoulish, remembered scene; forests of monstrous overnourished oaks with serpent roots twisting and sucking unnamable juices from an earth verminous with millions of cannibal devils; mound-like tentacles groping from underground nuclei of polypous perversion . . . insane lightning over

malignant ivied walls and daemon arcades choked with fungous vegetation . . . (80-81)

In the Lovecraftian text, the same poetic tension cannot be said to be produced by another trope, metonymy, which, according to Jackson, is the basic structuring element of the fantastic. In a Jakobsonian understanding of metonymy, she argues that metonymy, mainly in its form of synecdoche, ensures that one object "becomes that other, slides into it, metamorphosing from one shape to another in a permanent flux and instability" (42). The Lovecraftian text stresses the approximation and fusion of distant domains, such as the cosmic and the domestic, the human and the animal—this is all performed by metaphor. "Shrieking, slithering, torrential shadows of red viscous madness" signifies the mapping of the domains of the human and/or the animal (shriek, slither) with that of meteorological and luminous phenomena (torrential, shadows) as well as synaesthesia (red, viscous) and the psychological (madness). Apart from metonymical operations on the conceptual level, metonymy always remains an element of Lovecraftian thematics, and does not cross over from that thematic level to the protagonist's network of signification: the five major Lovecraftian themes as identified by Burleson—"denied primacy," "forbidden knowledge," "illusory surface appearances," "unwholesome survival," and "oneiric objectivism" ("On Lovecraft's Themes" 136)—are supported by metonymy. All of these are predicated on a species-genus, part-whole, or cause-effect reference which takes various anomalous monsters and makes them the originators of the human, as in "Arthur Jermyn" or *Mountains of Madness*, or takes the human and makes it the locus of the anomaly, as in any tale involving a double protagonist, or, conversely, takes the locale and makes it an expression of the anomaly, the double landscape itself the ground and agent of the confrontation, or, yet again, makes the psychology of the protagonist the landscape of his ramblings. Yet, in these moves I see a certain determinacy; the slip between categories stops when the transfer has been made: when the landscape, for

instance, proves at once the setting and the origin of the anomaly, there is nothing to instigate another move, the trope stalls and freezes. Nowhere is the continuous "sliding" of categories into one another present that Jackson calls our attention to in relation to metonymy. In contrast, metaphor provides that "permanent flux"; if not contiguity, it at least supplies the unending combinatorics of the void. As Boyd contends in connection to scientific theories, "the utility of . . . metaphors in theory change crucially depends upon . . . open-endedness" (482). While the Lovecraftian interstice thematically strives towards metonymy (the fantastic involves a "radical shift of vision from units, objects, and fixities, to the intervals between them, attempting to see things as the spaces between things" [Jackson 48]), Lovecraftian language can only represent this interstitial void metaphorically, by replacing the non-things with things from various domains. In this, too, the perverted Lovecraftian Romantic text tends towards the contiguous nature of the modern fantastic, but derives its expressive power from Romantic metaphor. In uniting contrasting poles of dualisms which are perceived as binary oppositions, Lovecraft's stories carry through both of the Romantic poets' methods by not only estranging the familiar but, in turn, also familiarizing the strange: while poetically elevated, the fantastic also becomes horrifyingly true, the cosmically distant comes horrifyingly near.

The surprising in Lovecraft works through the innate tension of metaphor, which, according to Ricoeur, is focused in "the referential relationship of the metaphorical statement to reality" (*Rule* 292). This referential tension has three constituents:

> (a) tension within the statement: between tenor and vehicle . . .
>
> (b) tension between two interpretations: between a literal interpretation . . . and a metaphorical interpretation whose sense emerges through nonsense;
>
> (c) tension in the relational function of the copula: between identity and difference in the interplay of resemblance. (292)

Ricoeur's idea of metaphor, then, culminates in the tension between the syntactic, semantic, and ontological extensions of the copula "is," which tension in metaphor defines a kind of truth that proves itself by starting out from the untruth of itself. Whereas the first two constituents are incompatible with the conceptual theory of metaphor, and must, therefore, be laid aside, the third constituent—with its "is"—remains a basic marker of the conceptual metaphor, as in SHADOWS ARE HORSES or MADNESS IS AN OBJECT.

In "Cthulhu," the following account is given of the encounter with the anomalous monster, where the narrator's analogies are predicated in the form of resemblances: "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" (168). We might think that the description is based in simple analogy as opposed to real metaphorical extensions, but Ricoeur establishes that "it is not just the compared terms that are affected by this process, nor even the copula in its referential function, but the existential function of the verb *to be*. The same must be said of the 'to be like (or as)' of explicit metaphor or simile . . . [which] must be treated as a metaphorical modality of the copula itself; the 'like/as' is not just the comparative term among all the terms, but is included in the verb *to be*, whose force it alters" (*Rule* 293). The innate tension of metaphor obliterates the difference between analogy, similarity, simile, and the traditional propositional metaphor. With his argument Ricoeur returns to the Aristotelian tradition, where "metaphor is not an abbreviated simile, but simile is a weakened metaphor" (293).

Likewise, Lakoff and Johnson concede similarity, but "similarities do not exist independently of the metaphor" (*Metaphors* 148).[179] The contention that similarity is "induced by the metaphor" (150) clears the path for an understanding of why the metaphor can be "living" (Ricoeur) and how we can "live by" it (Lakoff and Johnson). The creation of

[179] Black also insists: "It would be more illuminating . . . to say that that the metaphor creates the similarity than to say that it formulates some similarity antecedently existing" (37).

new meaning and similarity follows in the wake of the creation of metaphor as a "figured" trope, an autonomous, corporeal metaphor, and the "figurativeness" is based upon the tension in the mapping, the extreme identification of two non-identical domains, the unique strain maintained in the copula. Lakoff and Johnson claim that metaphors "can have the power to define reality" (157); the power of metaphor for Ricoeur lies in its redescriptive function, which makes possible a new kind of referentiality, a secondary referentiality embedded in the "redescriptive power of poetic language" (292). As Ricoeur argues, "the enigma of metaphorical discourse is that it 'invents' in both senses of the word: what it creates, it discovers; and what it finds, it invents" (*Rule* 283).

The twin obsessions of creation and revelation, inscription and discovery parade through the Lovecraftian text and connect several levels: the dialectic weaves through and weaves together, first, the text's scientific bent, where observation/detection is established on, and its results determined by, first and foremost, the scientific method; and, secondly, mythopoetic mapmaking, where the will to representation, the incessant murmur of language produces as well as describes the beyond. Thirdly, metaphors also create what they discover, and what they find they invent, as "the similarity is itself the fruit of metaphor" (Ricoeur, "Word, Polysemy, Metaphor" 79). Lakoff and Johnson maintain:

> New metaphors have the power to create new reality. This can begin to happen when we start to comprehend our experience in terms of metaphor, and it becomes a deeper reality when we begin to act in terms of it. If a metaphor enters the conceptual system that we base our actions on, it will alter that conceptual system and the perceptions and actions. (*Metaphors* 145)

The same is also true of a more generic understanding of analogy: "the similarity-dissimilarity relation . . . founds analogies and can be used where there is no cause-effect relation between

the unobservable and the observable" (Connell 40). Lovecraft's tales all cast meaning-making capacities beyond the observable and beyond representation. Not only language, but scientific, mathematical, musical, and visual representations, respectively: "*I have found a way to break down the barriers*" ("From Beyond" 24); "The dreams were wholly beyond the pale of sanity, and Gilman felt that they must be a result, jointly, of his studies in mathematics and folklore" ("Witch House" 303); "it was not that the sounds were hideous, for they were not; but that they held vibrations suggesting nothing on this globe of earth" ("Erich Zann"); "it takes profound art and profound insight into Nature to turn out stuff like Pickman's" ("Pickman's Model" 79).

An attempt has been made by Setiya to categorize the "hierarchy of naming" processes in Lovecraft ("Lovecraft's Semantics" 29). He distinguishes between 1) "scientific" naming, 2) "English" names for more respectable alien entities, 3) the interpretation of alien language, "a *phonetic* translation into our own alphabet" of alien names (28), 4) "merciful naming": invented names such as Azathoth, Cthulhu, and Nyarlathotep, "to avoid reflection on the concept" (28), and 5) silence: "those horrors never named are at the very apex of the cosmic disorder" (29). The effort invested in setting up the hierarchy is respectable, but the system is problematic in specific points: 1) falters when we assert that the entirety of naming processes in the Lovecraftian text may be subsumed under the aegis of science in the weak sense. Also, "the scientific method" includes elements or tendencies of folk categorization. 2) is similarly problematic, as English names such as Old Ones, Elder Things, and so on are built upon spatial-temporal metaphors, and may, therefore, be subordinated to scientific naming. Moreover, the shambling and frog-like Deep Ones of dilapidated and atavistic Innsmouth, for instance, cannot be at all termed respectable creatures. In 4) Setiya deals with invented names, which Jackson calls Lovecraft's thingless names, "words which are apprehended as empty signs, without meaning" (40). She argues that

> Lovecraft's Cthulhu, Azathoth, Nyarlathotep, are all mere signifiers without an object. . . . The signifier is not secured by the weight of the signified: it begins to float free. Whereas the gap between signifier and signified is closed in 'realistic' narrative . . . , in fantastic literature it is left open. The relation of sign to meaning is hollowed out, anticipating that kind of semiotic excess which is found in modernist texts. (40)

In this she echoes Setiya's idea of "merciful naming," where the name itself shields us from the concept. The problem with Setiya's fourth category is that the name itself provides a sort of corporeality to the monster, whereby it appears in the name itself, more menacing than ever. Also, it is, for instance, Nyarlathotep that is most efficiently described in the Lovecraftian text, both through metaphors (as in the prose poem "Nyarlathotep," which is a single huge, extended chain metaphor) and more conventional prose using the basic tools of realism (as in "Witch House"). Furthermore, Setiya's fourth category appears to be a subcategory of the third one. The fifth category is problematic because namelessness, silence, and void appear to be basic attributes of all the Lovecraftian anomalies. Finally, the entire hierarchy is faulty from an epistemological perspective, where there are no degrees in the threat these anomalies pose: they all threaten our cognition, such as a scientific anomaly would be considered dangerous to scientists working in the older paradigm.

Metaphor and Chiasmus

George Landow acknowledges that Lovecraft's great gift was to communicate terror (138). We should not dismiss, therefore, his horrifying creatures as lifeless puppets, saying that "once they have served Lovecraft's primary purpose of giving us a thrill of horror or disgust, they must be hauled offstage or, equally characteristic of Lovecraft, the story must end" (Wolfe 9). In contrast to this argument, the story must end because it has reached its

peak, a place where it is fully saturated with emotion: an emotional state containing the fear, terror, horror, and loathing of the narrator or double protagonist. Insofar as the protagonist cannot differentiate himself from what he fears (and in this lies the metonymy of the *Doppelgänger*),[180] he will become a real entity (or non-entity) for the purposes of the reader. Donald Wesling stresses that "literary authors and readers are constantly willing the re-occuring of emotion states in imaginary persons" (195), which "are relations, lines of linkage between ourselves and reality" (198).

The creative force of metaphor produces a fearful object, a non-entity which is an entity. Moretti warns us that in gothic horror "a metaphor gets up and walks. From now on the metaphor of the monster will lead an autonomous existence: it will no longer be a product, a consequence, but the very origin of the literature of terror" (106). The corporeality of this autonomous non-entity is as real as the fear-effect of cognitive horror. Colavito argues that "horror records humanity's uneasy relationship with its own ability to reason, to understand, and to know; and that horror stories are a way of understanding and ultimately transcending the limits of mind, knowledge, and science through fear" (3). In Lovecraft this cognitive-affective move towards the beyond is also facilitated by the text's metaphoricity: "The creation of a concrete object—the poem itself—cuts language off from the didactic function of the sign, but at the same time opens up access to reality in the mode of fiction and feeling" (Ricoeur, *Rule* 271).[181] "We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity," so the narrator of "Cthulhu" begins his tale, "and it was not meant that we should voyage far" (139). But we always do, and when we do, as readers we may also become what we fear, we may give shape to our horror through a synecdochical identification with that which we read about.

[180] See Burleson, *Disturbing*, 132.

[181] Quoting Nelson Goodman, Ricoeur contends that "[i]n aesthetic experience the *emotions function cognitively*" (*Rule* 273).

Metaphor and metonymy perform their fantastic transformations in the Lovecraftian text: metaphor on the linguistic and metonymy on the thematic and metalinguistic levels. Metonymy provides a way for the protagonist to become what he fears and for us to face what we fear through becoming one with what we read, but it is metaphor where the unknown is opened up for investigation. Several theorists of metaphor argue for the "unidirectionality" of this trope (Kövecses 6). Yet, on the basis of Ricoeur's tensive copula, we may hypothesize bidirectional metaphor,[182] where the same two conceptual fields can build up two surface metaphors with two different emphases depending on the focus of attention. "Death is life" and "life is death" do not have the same sense, although they involve the same domains, and neither do "walking is flying" and "flying is walking" suggest an identical meaning. Still, they can be made interchangeable into each other by throwing the spotlight into a different conceptual corner of the complex fields of metaphorical extension and association.

It is via this bidirectional conduit—very much like the suspension bridge in "Dunwich," the "threshold" window in "Erich Zann," or the well in "Colour"—that the anomaly of the Lovecraftian text can enter the world of human cognition as an embodied reality. The metaphorical copula links two concepts to each other, which thus become equivalent: seeing the void in terms of some safe human category (such as a color, a sound, an animal, a human being, or other entities) makes it possible for that void to perform its transgressive move and become an element of our world. The purpose of science is to familiarize the "out there." "Metaphor provides "*epistemic access* to a particular sort of thing or natural phenomenon" (Boyd 483). The knower can only know what he or she has involved in the network of knowledge, which necessitates supplying the unformed with a form, supplying the unnamed with a name. This act of creation, however, also exposes the world of human categories to the risk of being contaminated by the unknown. In the transfer of the unknown to the realm of the known, the known becomes polluted by this epistemic "other."

[182] For bidirectional analogy, see Holyoak and Thagard, 196.

Burleson has proposed the inherent chiasmic quality of the Lovecraftian text.[183] The chiasmus is also present in the sublime fusion of the human and the cosmos. The cosmic becomes human; the human becomes cosmic: not only is the anomaly granted an interpretation, but the double protagonist/the double landscape is also reborn/reformulated as the embodiment/locale of cosmic processes. The Romantic metaphor performs much more than what we ask of it: human indeed becomes inhuman, animate in fact becomes inanimate, sleep in reality becomes death, and "even death may die" ("Cthulhu" 156). A single metaphorical glimpse—"the single glimpse of forbidden aeons which chills me when I think of it and maddens me when I dream of it" (139-40)—is enough for the chiasmus to take place. After saying with the protagonist that a "mountain walked or stumbled" (167), we will never look upon mountains again without thinking of Cthulhu.

"To state 'that is'—such is the moment of *belief*, of *ontological commitment*," holds Ricoeur. He maintains that metaphor constitutes the "*ecstatic* moment of language—language going beyond itself" (*Rule* 294). This Ricoeurian thesis makes possible referentiality in gothic horror and the fantastic—in sum, dark narratives—which are able to refer to the unknown and make it palpable. In this shift, the sublime again appears as the conduit that makes possible for the unknown to cross over to the human realm. In *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), Jean-François Lyotard assigns to the sublime the power "to present the fact that the unpresentable exists" (78). Such a postmodern version of sublime, he argues, instead of exhibiting the modernist "nostalgia for the unattainable," "puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself" (81). Thus the Lovecraftian metaphor, which exercises the ecstasy of the void—transgressing its own limits—appears to pave the way for a paradigm change. Like its protagonist, the Lovecraftian text appears capable of spanning the void between another pair of paradigms: the early modern view of language as a register of what exists, on the one hand, and, on the other, the yet unborn paradigmatic vision of the postmodern, which is comfortable

[183] See "Lovecraft and Chiasmus."

with having the flawed effort of description in the same place as the unknown interstice that is so described.

While Marxist and poststructuralist conceptions of fantasy presuppose the non-metaphoricity of fantasy and attribute the power of subversion to the metaphor taking shape in the monster, Lovecraft's poetic metaphors based on embodied conceptualizations not only grant referentiality to the fantastic as an alternative, albeit no less material, world—the premises of the supramundane—but also help adapt our sight to a sort of double vision where the poetic function of the text, too, is salvaged for its own sake. In this, the Lovecraftian text is doubly subversive: while allowing the loss of symbol or allegory (a conventional technique of the fantastic), it preserves a highly elated self-referentiality. Furthermore, the complex Lovecraftian trope can carry another alternative identity which derives from its figurativeness: via a metonymical shift, the figure, by taking on the corporeality of the metaphorical vehicle, the conceptual source domain (monster), can become a concrete and distinct entity in itself, a ponderous, substantive being per se, Lovecraft's "thing." These "things" are concrete as well as abstract and they are conceptual insofar as they are phenomenological. Monsters and metaphors, the two ends of the fantastic spectrum as conceptualized by Kathryn Hume (21), are fused in the Lovecraftian text. Additionally, by extension of the trope presenting itself as a monster, the figure also becomes the text: it is the text that speaks through the figure, declaring its reality as both literature and extra-textual reality.

Either thematically, through metonymy, or linguistically, primarily through metaphor, the Lovecraftian text is consistent in its being unstable. It delves into investigating the cosmos, but seeking "space illimitable, unimagined space" is not a safe practice ("Erich Zann" 51), as the fate of the Lovecraftian protagonist tells us. The shifting dimensions of whatever is the diametrical opposite (or the supramundane extension) of reality are attached to the text and trickle down to the human world through the conduit of metaphor—the major epistemic tool of science in its broadest sense. It is this move of inquiry that sets into motion the endless

transformations, dissemination, and dissociation that makes the Lovecraftian text what it is: an ode to the interstice.

CONCLUSION

The Lovecraftian game presupposes certain rules. In the foregoing chapters I examined the environs of the Lovecraftian protagonist, first from the perspective of the fantastic encounter, or, confrontation, then by way of the theory of scientific paradigms, turning, finally, to a discussion of categorization and conceptual-linguistic processes. These areas of investigation disclosed specific rules based on fantastic transgression and horrific interstitiality; observation, measurement, and representation; vagueness, ostention, prototype categorization, and naming; conceptual metaphor and the corporeality of the poetic figure. Nonetheless, whatever the ground rules, the game itself subverts any hope of resolution, disclosure, repose, or winning: in the depth of the Lovecraftian conflict there unpleasantly glows the futility of ending the epistemological game. The Lovecraftian text is, accordingly, hesitant, advocating an absurd stance where knowledge is both successful and dysfunctional, and its representational mechanisms comply with this basic ambiguity.

Jackson's statement that "H. P. Lovecraft's horror fantasies are particularly self-conscious in the stress on the impossibility of naming this unnameable presence, the 'thing' which can be registered in the text only as absence and shadow" (39) is only tangentially true: no one wins in the Lovecraftian game, but it is so precisely because the text succeeds in amassing the unknown and the unnamable, thus putting an insurmountable obstacle in the protagonist's way. The anomaly, the interstice, is perceived by a special vision that traces the edges of conceptual structures. Language can say the unsayable, or, in Lovecraft's case, write the unwritable, by applying indirect linguistic processes: negation, silence, perverted hedges, metaphor and metonymy. The "unknown" manifests itself through this matrix of negative representation at the threshold of words and negative philosophy at the edges of things; it manages to acquire form and mass; it becomes a word, a thing—a thing "From Beyond," "The Thing on the Doorstep," "The Shadow Out of Time," "The Unnamable." As Roger B.

Solomon argues, in horror, "[a]bsence becomes the categorical subject of discourse, becoming itself a total presence and subverting all alternatives" (5).

Gaston Bachelard in *The Philosophy of No* suggests that new knowledge is gained by a scientific community through polemics and criticism, which provide a negative of the intuitive image subject to criticism, a non-image (119). As Maire Jaanus Kurrik summarizes Bachelard's argument: "Negation thus becomes the mode or method underpinning the constitution and creation of new objects in modern science" (185). Knowledge is not gained bit by bit, but by grappling with the *novum* negatively: "new experience says *no* to old experience, otherwise we are quite evidently not up against a new experience at all" (Bachelard 9). Bachelard theorizes the possibility of dealing with such new experience, the unknown, via theoretically precise questions, by turning the unknown into a "precise unknown" (30), which should result in newly emerging paradigms. The Lovecraftian protagonist constructs such a language of inquiry, where existing knowledge is negated, broken up, and monstrously reconstructed to represent the anomaly.

Faced with the unknown, science and literature appear as kindred disciplines. The indirect specification of the unknown involves a poetic recreation of language. Metaphor is as common in scientific reasoning as in literature, which is even more prevalent when we consider its conceptual basis. The Lovecraftian text makes use of both conceptual and surface metaphor and does so simultaneously: the at once descriptive and creative figure hones in on the unknown, absorbs it and is absorbed in it, becomes identical to it, and projects it onto its surface. Thus it also defines itself as a "figure," a character of horror, the primary monster of the Lovecraftian text. Quandaries about categorial knowledge, linguistic vagueness and indirectness, the language of absence and transgression are all focused in the monstrous trope; the figure lends presence to absence and life to death. This activity of Lovecraftian poetics and the negative program of natural science are linked through the texture of horror fiction, of "narratives of darkness" (Cavallaro 16). Colavito argues that "the story of science and the

story of horror are conjoined twins, one full of humanity's highest aspirations and the other its darkest nightmares. Though science may survive without horror, horror cannot survive without the anxieties created by the changing role of human knowledge and science in our society" (4).

Colavito's term "story" emphasizes that narratives of darkness can be aligned with the philosophical content of science chiefly on the level of discourse. In "The Discourse on Language," Michel Foucault takes a diachronic metaview of the history of science "as the appearance of new forms of the will to truth" (151). In sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, he maintains, there emerged "a will to knowledge . . . which . . . sketched out a schema of possible, observable, measurable and classifiable objects; a will to knowledge which imposed upon the knowing subject—in some ways taking precedence over all experience—a certain position, a certain viewpoint and a certain function" (151). This discourse of knowledge encompasses "the manner in which knowledge is employed in a society, the way in which it is exploited, divided, and, in some ways, attributed" (151). The discourse of horror[184] similarly has a kind of genealogy, and modern horror—which has probably existed since the inception of the larger Age of Reason and the birth of modern science with Francis Bacon, or at least since the more narrowly understood Enlightenment—is something utterly different from the horror of the *Odyssey* or the Bible, and takes as its pivotal figure the character of Faust.[185]

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[184] The discursive view of science and horror, as well as their common conceptual basis, also calls into question the notion of science as something entirely distinct and superior to other disciplines. As Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers argue in *Order out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature* (1984), science has to break away from the early modernist objectivist view and take into account its cultural basis. The division between sciences and humanities, they maintain, was produced by the special mechanistic vision of classical dynamics, describing and dealing with only reversible processes. Now, however, "we can see ourselves as part of the universe we describe" (300).

[185] For Faust and horror, see Colavito, especially 18-21.

Lovecraft's writings provide a fictional impression of the discourse of knowledge, concentrating on "discontinuity, rupture, threshold, limit, series, and transformation" (Foucault, *Archaeology* 23) in terms of the discourse and the tumultuous clashes involved in transgressing boundaries—that is, the Lovecraftian text is concerned with the monstrous interstice in the history of the sciences, as disclosed by the philosophy of paradigm shifts. Paradigm changes were, of course, not a subject of speculation in Lovecraft's time, but his overall philosophy of decline[186] surely focused his attention on the void between the death and birth of established traditions of scientific knowledge.[187] If we take one aspect of the sciences, the classification of beings, we can see that the Lovecraftian text makes mention of various and somewhat contradictory phases in the history of that discipline. The obsession with anomalous beings, the organic but supramundane alien entities, ranges from pre-scientific thought (grimoires such as the *Necronomicon* with mythical beings, Joseph Curwen's and Whateley's alchemical-magical practices in *Charles Dexter Ward* and "Dunwich," and witch lore in "Witch House" and "Doorstep") to the clashes and fusions of taxonomy and evolutionism that took place in the eighteenth century and the appearance of hereditary and cellular biology as well as paleontology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (the dynamics of taxonomy, evolutionary thought, biology, and paleontology are detectable, among many other stories, in *Mountains of Madness*, "Innsmouth," "Arthur Jermyn," and "Lurking Fear"). The Lovecraftian text gives us a sectional view of the full development of the discourse of nature from pre-Baconian thought to natural history to modern biology, all through the spectacles of the confrontation motif, but—through the double move of horror, fission and fusion (Carroll 43-46)—also confuses

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[186] Joshi's *Decline* takes as its premise the fact that Lovecraft read Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, which had a great impact on him and helped formulate his ideas on contemporary Western thought and civilization.

[187] Also, the impact of new theories in physics and discoveries in astronomy on Lovecraft's thought cannot be underestimated.

the thresholds of these.[188] The narrator of *Mountains of Madness* tries to explain the specimens through biology, geology, and paleontology, but cannot fail to connect the findings to older grimoire lore. Even more disturbingly, witch Keziah of "Witch House" deals in sacrificing babies as well as in quantum physics.

Due to its preoccupation with fissions and fusions, the Lovecraftian text presents an "organic" view of the underside of disciplines such as, primarily, biology, physics (the insistence on the distortions of space and time), and astronomy (the account of the alien and yet unknown universe, such as speculations on the then newly discovered planet, Pluto). According to Foucault, the discourse of knowledge is subject to "control and delimitation" ("Discourse" 153), hence it is ordered into disciplines. It is the delimitation of disciplines that provides their resistance to new knowledge as well as presupposes the incommensurability of paradigms, but Lovecraft's tales show that categories exist in fusion as well as fission, and disciplines are incessantly violated. As Foucault asserts, no undisciplined knowledge may enter the realm of a discipline (153). The Lovecraftian text fictionalizes exactly this moment of a new paradigm emerging in contrast to an old one and attacking it with an infectious hunger. Mendel's idea of vegetable sexuality, Foucault argues, constituted the unknown, the unnamable, and the unimaginable for the scientists of Mendel's time: "Here was a new object, calling for new conceptual tools, and for fresh theoretical foundations. Mendel spoke the truth, but he was not dans le vrai (within the true) of contemporary biological discourse: it simply was not along such lines that objects and biological concepts were formed" (155). This explains to a certain degree the solitude of the Lovecraftian protagonist, such as the narrator of "Lurking Fear," who starts out with companions but remains on his own (in his own discourse), and the explorers of *Mountains of Madness*, who are trapped in the vast Antarctic whiteness of the unknown, unable to communicate their message to the world in the language

[188] See Foucault, *The Order of Things*, for an account of the historicity of the discourse of beings, with attention to the overarching epistemic structures.

of the unknown—for the rest of the world, the anomaly remains anomalous. Foucault describes the intellect that sees something out of the ordinary, the paradigm-changer who wishes to create a new language, a new paradigm, as “a true monster”: “science could not even properly speak of” Mendel, he suggests (154). For a long time, people did not understand Einstein. We have now grasped and incorporated the theories of relativity, but Einstein’s macrosystems are still considered a horrifying violation of Newtonian microsystems, and since Einstein there has emerged chaos theory and string theory, too. Scientists dealing with anomalies—with monstrous objects partly created by them—themselves become objectified in an extreme sublime fusion, like Tillinghast or Herbert West, but even more like the double protagonists Charles Dexter Ward, the narrator of “Innsmouth,” or Peaslee in “Shadow Out of Time.”[189]

Lovecraftian horror, the weird tale, is a crucial experiment in the history of dark narratives. If we are to agree with Colavito that all of horror is enmeshed in the problems of knowledge, what can we identify as constituting the uniqueness of the Lovecraftian text? Colavito stresses that “Lovecraft’s writings are the cynosure into which previous horror pours and out of which subsequent horror emerges” (185). I think that both aesthetic and historical reasons may be deployed to explain this symbolic place in the history of horror. Extra-textual reasons include the processing of epistemological problems of both British and American Gothic horror, fantasy, and “scientifiction.” Joshi argues that Lovecraft deserves a special place among the major writers of the weird tale, because “he took some of their best features and made them his own. . . . Lovecraft does culminate certain trends in weird writing of the

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[189] It remains to be seen which problematics of which disciplines defined by the empiricist/rationalist/scientific discourse—such as education, economics and exchange, medicine and sexuality, legislation and jurisdiction, and the arts—are responded to by the weird horror of Lovecraft. Although this inquiry would demand a distinct study, one cannot resist the urge to list some basic texts to examine with regard to the various disciplines: for gender and sexuality, “Doorstep,” for art, “Pickman’s Model,” for policing and jurisdiction, “Red Hook” and the many tales that concern the Salem witch trials.

previous fifty years: most important, the shift from supernaturalism to quasi science fiction" (*Weird Tale* 228). Furthermore, after Lovecraft, there was no ignoring Lovecraft any more: writers came to him and took all or some of his ideas and techniques. Those that took only the philosophy are the ones we read today, the rest proved to be epigones.

Aesthetic reasons for his significance would include the fusion of near-Romantic poetics with materialist-empiricist premises as well as the daring and at the same time critical use of the new sciences of Einstein and Planck, a move that after Lovecraft became widespread in science fiction. Leiber argues that "[t]he universe of modern science engendered a profounder horror in Lovecraft's writings than that stemming solely from its tremendous distances and its highly probably alien and powerful non-human inhabitants" ("A Literary Copernicus" 53). Lieber is both right and wrong, for it is the fusion of the two views of the universe, old and new, that makes Lovecraft unique: the myth of the abyss is projected into the age of science. The Lovecraftian text is, as any worthwhile horror should be, obsessed with the negative outcome of science, but stresses that negativity is the very mould of science. This universe and the human efforts to explain it together constitute the double locus of the void, the dialectic that diverts our attention from human affairs to the gaping silence of the interstice—or, more precisely, the cosmic organism which feeds on the interstice, the inexorable lacunar texture of human affairs. It is important to stress, as does Foucault, that mutations in knowledge are not, or not only, brought about by the new phenomena investigated by science, for these phenomena are not new at all—in Lovecraft, the alien races and their dominion on Earth indeed predate humankind. The new vision is based in the novelty of the episteme, which is "the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems . . ." (Foucault, *Archaeology* 211).

The Lovecraftian text, "[a] dense, richly textured style" (Joshi, "Introduction" 33), applies conscious linguistic mechanisms to represent the void-nature of both the cosmos and

the futile scientific quest, to make the interstitial life-form of discourse simultaneously explicit and implicit. Here the linguistic and conceptual structures of Classicism, Romanticism, and Modernism coexist, providing a cultural mini-genealogy of horror. Burleson argues:

> A text is unreadable to the extent that it leads one ever onward into the eerie pleasures of uncertainty. In this regard, the unsettled and unsettling Lovecraftian profile has its contours pressed deeply into the fabric of textuality and language, for that profile is open and undecidable, and invites endless speculation. Lovecraft the avowed Neoclassicist may well be the ultimate Romantic, because the ultimate Romantic quest leads . . . into the undying ecstasies of the Abyss. ("Lovecraft and Romanticism" 31)

According to Solomon, "[i]f modernism invokes the metaphysics of absence, a metaphysics operating on many complex levels, then Gothic is the earlier and most explicit genre in which absence intrudes on the presence of reality and destroys it" (5). To Solomon modernist literature and modern horror is prefigured in the literature of terror of the eighteenth century. In Lovecraft one may trace the discursive development from fears engendered by early modern empiricism and classical rationalism to horrors of modernist indeterminacy, mediated by an extreme version of the Romantic sublime, where the subject is extended into, and finally fuses with, the cosmos. Also, the mostly homogeneous Lovecraftian text has a certain history and presents "a kind of forced change, from a comforting *Tractatus*-style philosophy to the uncertain and subjective ignorance of the *Investigations*" (Setiya, "Lovecraft and Semantics" 29).

In a final analysis, the Lovecraftian text is highly philosophical. It is a dark narrative which may not primarily prove dark for its obsession with dark secrets. It may, on the contrary, prove a dark agent that keeps on projecting words down into the abyss and that

continuously takes back, feeds on, and integrates into itself those words which have been infused with the void. Colavito contends that "things that fade before the light do not stay dead, and knowledge itself is often a source of its own, more exacting terrors" (5). Yet, Lovecraft was not a philosopher; nor was he a scientist. As Setiya contends, comparing him to Wittgenstein, Lovecraft "intuited the premises but never drew the conclusions, and yet his thought had within it the inchoate seeds of brilliance" ("Lovecraft's Semantics" 30). The Lovecraftian universe is one of brooding horror, portraying in its properly twentieth-century sentiment the emergence of reality in all its horrifying underlying structures; but, more significantly, it is also a text furnishing our human understanding and representation of cosmic indifference with words and mechanisms beyond words. Lovecraftian language is active, and in its obsession it manages to "cross the line to the boundless and hideous unknown—the shadow-haunted *Outside*" (Lovecraft, *Selected Letters II* 150), it succeeds in waking the great Cthulhu from his death-sleep.

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