

H. P. LOVECRAFT: A SHADOW OUT OF MODERNISM

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: H. P. LOVECRAFT IN THE CONTEXT OF MODERNISM

Howard Phillips Lovecraft's collected fiction dates from 1919 to 1937, the period of late Modernism. This correlation and Norman R. Gayford's observations in "The Artist as Antaeus: Lovecraft and Modernism" and "Lovecraft and Joyce" have led me to speculate on Lovecraft's position in relation to the Modernists. Although Lovecraft did not directly participate in the Modernist dialogue, and although he did not call himself a Modernist, Gayford asserts that Lovecraft was "an astute observer of literary trends" of his day ("Lovecraft and Joyce" 3). I would argue that his work and philosophy develop in a similar manner as Modernist thought, both as a movement and as that movement is represented in Modernist fiction. After offering a broad explication of Modernism, I divide the study into five chapters, each detailing a step in the process of Modernist thought as presented by Ricardo J. Quinones with a model developed in his Mapping Literary Modernism: Time and Development. In each chapter I examine Lovecraft's philosophy as it is relevant to the step presented and proceed how Modernist patterns parallel the patterns of Lovecraft's thought. I then proceed to show how these philosophical ideas and parallel patterns develop in Lovecraft's fiction, namely "The Call of Cthulhu," At the Mountains of Madness, and The Case of Charles Dexter Ward.

Finally, I demonstrate how these patterns, Lovecraft's which parallel those of Modernism, develop elaborately in Lovecraft's story "The Shadow out of Time."

H. P. Lovecraft is considered by many to be a premiere American horror writer second only to Edgar Allan Poe. He wrote fiction, poetry, essays, and produced a copious amount of correspondence, some ten of thousands of letters (Joshi, The Weird Tale 170). Born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1890, he spent his entire life there, except for a brief stay in Boston as a child and a two year residence in New York (Lovecraft at Last 202). Lovecraft was a person of solitary habits, forced into seclusion by what S. T. Joshi calls "chronic ill health," a problem that interrupted his formal education (The Weird Tale 168). Lovecraft began reading early, moving from Arabian Nights to Greek mythology to Poe, his lifelong literary hero (Lovecraft at Last 205,207). Admiring the style of such writers as Pope, Johnson, and Addison, he styled himself, both in terms of his literary habits and self-image in the mold of the eighteenth century (SL III.283).¹ He studied several sciences on his own, and his voluminous correspondence began with scientific articles and essays sent to local papers ("Some Notes on a Nonentity" 560). At 24, he entered the ranks of amateur journalism, an occupation where he filled many prominent roles and that gave him a forum for his writing ("The Brief Autobiography of an Inconsequential Scribbler" 528). It was through amateur journalism that he formed many of his lifelong friendships and where he found a means of employment revising poetry and prose for other members ("What Amateurdome and I Have Done for Each Other" 451-452). Even when his participation in amateur journalism waned, Lovecraft remained willing to correspond with anyone, it seems, who wrote to him.

Lovecraft did not just sit in a room and write letters. His avid interest in antiquarian architecture led him on extensive rambles throughout his native Providence and on excursions around the New England countryside. He would visit his correspondent friends when he could afford it (“Some Notes on a Nonentity” 561). In 1924 he married Sonia Greene, one of his correspondents and revision clients, and moved with her to New York for two years. This was the only time in his adult life when he would live outside of Providence, and he returned to his native city, without Sonia, in April 1926 (Joshi, The Weird Tale 169). Lovecraft cited both differences in temperament and financial strain as the reasons for the split, filing for divorce in 1928 (SL III. 8, 261-262). His income came primarily from revising work and the scant pay from magazines where his works were published. Faig and Joshi explain that Lovecraft failed to publish more work due to his “nonprofessional attitude,” and “considered writing for money both morally repugnant and aesthetically suicidal” (10). Lovecraft was his own harshest critic, as is the case with most artists (“Some Notes on a Nonentity” 562). When he was published, the readers were enthusiastic. His correspondents usually responded favorably and were encouraging about the work that he sent to them. Lovecraft continued this literary lifestyle until he died in 1937 of intestinal cancer (Faig & Joshi 11).

Lovecraft wrote a curious blend of horror, fantasy, and science fiction that he called the weird tale. Though he is considered a master of horror fiction, Lovecraft’s horror is not the stock scare created by some traditional monster leaping out at a protagonist. Although many of his early works could be considered straightforward horror tales, the element of horror in his later works stems not as much from the appearance of the creatures, as from the sheer existence of the creatures and what they

represent. The protagonist finds evidence of and sometimes actually encounters entities that exist according to laws that operate outside humankind's understanding. Their very existence is horrifying because it implies humankind's insignificance in the workings of the cosmos. The protagonist must come to terms with a cosmic perspective that places him in an entirely new and devalued position. In some cases, the laws violated are those of time, sometimes of space, sometimes both. But it is the violation that is more horrifying than the creatures themselves. Owing to the nature of these entities and encounters, Lovecraft's tales are blends of three different genres. Many of his tales occur in the world of dreams. Though these may contain some elements of horror, they seem more like fantasy. In terms of his cosmic tales, Lovecraft's creatures are aliens, not ghosts or demons. They come from the depths of space and time, from other dimensions, and use advanced sciences unknown to humans. Though their presence has horrific implications, these are creatures of science fiction. Fritz Leiber, in his seminal article "A Literary Copernicus," calls Lovecraft the "Copernicus of the horror story" because of Lovecraft's innovative use of the cosmic perspective (51). This blending of genres through the incorporation of a cosmic philosophy creates, in effect, Lovecraft's weird tale, truly a unique innovation that grants him a place in American letters.

The stories examined in this study all express this cosmic philosophy to some degree. This development of the cosmic perspective is the element of these stories that parallels the Modernist process. In "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926) a man named Francis Wayland Thurston pieces together random bits of information and discovers the existence of cosmic entities surviving in a prehistoric city beneath the Earth's oceans. The Case of Charles Dexter Ward (1927) chronicles the unfortunate adventures of a young

antiquarian, Charles Ward, who resurrects a dangerous ancestor, Joseph Curwen. Ward's friend, Dr. Marinus Bucknell Willett, delves into the case, eventually thwarting Curwen's cosmic plans. At the Mountains of Madness (1931) is an account of an Antarctic expedition related by a geologist, Professor William Dyer. Eventually he and a student, Danforth, discover an ancient city beyond the mountains and learn its cosmic history. And "The Shadow out of Time" (1934-1935) is an account written by a political economy professor, Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee, describing his process of discovering how he may have exchanged minds with an entity who existed millions of years in the Earth's past.

Before examining the relationship of Lovecraft's thought and work in relation to Modernism, we must establish some defining characteristics of the movement itself. To ask for one definition of Modernism is to ask for too much or too little. One may get an answer that is too broad to amply explain the details of the movement. However, to offer one definition that focuses on more specific details might result in a definition that excludes some important aspects of Modernism. But in attempting to conceive of a definition, we can see the quintessential tension that fueled Modernism as a movement: its constant fluctuations between competing ideas, influences, and results. Was it cosmopolitan or provincial in nature? Did it rely on the individual or the influence of tradition? In terms of aesthetics, how far could non-representation go before it lost all relational value? Which contributed more to a sense of identity, a linear perspective of history or the cyclical relevance of myth?

Modernism was, in effect, not an answer to these questions, but the dynamic created by the questions themselves. The Modern artist could have no definite answers to

these questions because he or she was attempting to develop a means of expression with which to accurately and honestly portray reality. As the juxtaposition of such polemical questions demonstrates, the Modern concern was dealing with multiple levels of reality as opposed to choosing one perspective over another. The artist could not only attempt to observe all the fragments of reality, he or she had to attempt to understand them, both in terms of their individual existence and their relation to one another. This process itself, moving between individual and relational values, reflects the Modernist tension of assimilating competing ideas. The Modernist was not looking to reconcile these ideas. To do so would be to compromise the value of each, thereby restricting the value of each. As the Modernist movement developed, it refused to attach absolute labels, but instead drew energy from the dynamic interaction of these seemingly opposite ideas (McFarlane 88). As Quinones puts it, dealing with the fragments of reality meant both “the denial of absolute reality” and “the need to uphold the sense of individual truth in a complex of truths” (115).

Such a complex of truths can create a chaotic collage of meanings. For an individual truth to have relevance in the scheme of history, it must be instilled with some fundamental value. In order to preserve the dynamic of opposites, the Moderns were “intent on discovering and sensing those larger patterns and designs whose perception enhances the individual life” (Quinones 166). The cycles of mythical events and archetypes are eternal rather than linear. A mythical action is validated by its continuing significance in different situations, including situations that might appear as opposite contexts. This significance breathes value into archetypal incidents in any fragment of reality. As Quinones explains, myth “historicizes the eternal and brings permanence as

well as texture to history and immediate events” (208). Mythical value can spring from within the individual, from tradition, from a cosmopolitan setting, from a rural situation. Any of these scenarios, despite their opposite or conflicting character, can be empowered by mythic significance without compromising them. Myth deals with pauper and king, hero and villain, and it is these roles that gain value regardless of the time and place. So any individual situation can potentially carry a mythic quality.

With this infusion of mythical value, these fragments of reality become significant in their scheme of interaction, not separate or together, but separate and together (Quinones 116-117). What good is a value, or a meaning, if left outside of the scope of human history? Art cannot exist in a vacuum. It requires interaction with an audience. The eternal significance of the mythic offers nothing if there is no actual event or person or thing into which it can imbue vitality. It then remains abstract, inaccessible to any human perspective or appreciation. If an artist is to portray the truthful reality, then he or she must portray it within the context of history. The Modernist must find a means whereby he or she can, as James McFarlane says, “superintegrate” these multiple perspectives charged now with vitality (92). The artists must make them real for themselves and for others through expression. The Modernist dilemma is this struggle for significance and the subsequent struggle for expression.

Metaphorically, this Modernist tendency can be seen as a quest. To reach the Modernist city, one has either to navigate a river, climb the sheer rock face down, or negotiate the narrow path that leads downward. The river runs quickly, and at some point there are falls. It could easily take a boat forcefully downstream, either over the falls or past the city. Climbing down the sheer face is exciting and dangerous, but a wrong step

could send one falling into oblivion. The narrow path criss-crosses, sometimes above the river, sometimes along the sheer face. The artist must avoid being swept powerlessly down the stream of tradition and also avoid a drop into the oblivion of no connection to tradition whatsoever. Modernism is the negotiation of this criss-crossing path.

That Lovecraft sought to undertake such a journey is evident in his perspective on Modernism itself. In a 1928 letter to Zealia Brown Reed, Lovecraft defines

stream-of-consciousness writing literature as mere prosaic *science* or *philosophy* rather than genuine aesthetic creation. I myself think that the extreme methods of Joyce, Eliot, and their congeners (E. E. Cummings, Hart Crane, Aldous Huxley, Wyndham Lewis, Dorothy Richardson, The Sitwells, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Kenneth Burke, Ezra Pound, Marcel Proust, etc., etc.) do indeed transcend the limits of real art; though they are destined to exert a strong influence on art itself. Literary art, I think, must continue to adhere to the practice of recording outward happenings in consecutive order; but it must from now onward realise the complex and irrational motivation of all these happenings.

(SL II.248-50)

Works by the Modernists had “theoretical significance rather than actual aesthetic value” for Lovecraft, but if he could not appreciate them aesthetically, he could comprehend their importance (SL IV.14). Lovecraft felt that art must “express all the overtones of our feelings” and be “unconscious and spontaneous” and not the product of theorists who “sat down and deliberately mapped out a technique” (“Heritage or Modernism” 16). With a

“high respect for these Moderns as philosophers and intellectuals,” Lovecraft asserted that “T. S. Eliot is an acute thinker-but I do not believe he is an artist” (SL I.230). He could still say about Joyce that “there is no more powerful or penetrant writer living than Joyce when he is not pursuing his theory to these ultimate extremes” (SL IV. 15).

Lovecraft also gave high praise to O’Neill’s The Emperor Jones (SL I.173) and called Thomas Mann’s Buddenbrooks and The Magic Mountain “landmarks” (“Suggestions for a Reading List” 41). Just like his Modernist contemporaries, Lovecraft deplored the Victorian “irrelevance and insincerity” but saw the more radical Modernistic trends as losing touch with the artistic tradition that gives art value (“Heritage or Modernism” 15).

To be sure, Lovecraft understood that a static artistic tradition would grow stagnant:

“Popular authors do not and apparently cannot appreciate the fact that true art is obtainable only by rejecting normality and conventionality...” (Uncollected Letters 8).

But he also knew that “any new conception is, in our emotions, almost absolutely meaningless to us unless it can be associated with the chance background behind our individual lives” (“Heritage or Modernism” 13). In his approach to aesthetics, Lovecraft is engaged in the Modernist negotiation between innovation and tradition: “What benefits mankind is not constant change, but satisfactory adjustment” (SL V.50).

CHAPTER II

THE MECHANISTIC HISTORY OF LOVECRAFT AND MODERNISM

In a 1932 letter to E. Hoffmann Price, Lovecraft provides the following explanation of his aesthetic philosophy, and the philosophy necessary to write weird literature:

The things to write of seriously are the things which seem to you of such haunting and persistent interest...that you cannot feel easy until you have them down on paper in one way or another. When you've decided what those things are, you will be inwardly compelled to write of them with artistic truth, regardless of demands--truth that is, to the images and conceptions as they stand in your mind...Serious weird art is distinctly possible....The genuine artist in the weird is trying to crystallise in at least semi-tangible form one of several typical and indefinite moods...moods involving the habitual lure and terror and imagination-stirring qualities of the unknown or half-known, the burning curiosity of the active mind concerning the fathomless abysses of inaccessible space which press in on us from every side, and the instinctive revolt of the restless ego against the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law. (SL IV.112-13)

In his “Notes on Writing Weird Fiction” Lovecraft states that the weird effect “can be accomplished only through the maintenance of a careful realism in every phase of the story except that touching on the one given marvel” (115). Realism for Lovecraft has several meanings, the first of which is the conventional idea of realism, or that which adheres to empirical evidence and follows rational lines of development. But as can be seen from the quotation above, realism could also include the depiction of intangible impulses. With his careful realism the artist must not only accurately depict mundane physical details, but also any impressions that these physical details inspire. As long as the sensations, however subjective, are honestly portrayed, then the artist is maintaining a careful realism. The reverse implication is that to exclude such intangibles as mood means to fail in the endeavor to accurately depict reality. The one given marvel is the only element of the story that intentionally defies careful realism. However, as I shall discuss later, even the marvel is treated as realistically as possible to more effectively convey its cosmic implications.

Here we can already see a Modernist tendency: the urge to redefine reality in terms of individual perception. For Lovecraft, to limit expression to the depiction of tangible things is to portray an incomplete reality. Mood exists for the individual, and cannot be ignored. To ignore subjective reality is to ignore individual value. The central conflict that fuels Lovecraft’s philosophy and fiction is the individual’s position in the real world. As explained in his philosophy and as portrayed in his literature, Lovecraft believed that an individual must negotiate between the dangers of losing his identity in tradition and of being swallowed by cosmic history while attempting to maintain a sense of individual self-worth. This process of negotiation in Lovecraft parallels the Modernist

negotiation of the individual between tradition and formlessness. Joshi succinctly explains this negotiation of perspectives when he says that “Lovecraft’s ideal is a sort of amalgamation of past and present – the aesthetic standards of classical antiquity or the eighteenth century; the scientific advances of the nineteenth century; the honesty and forthrightness of the twentieth century” (Decline of the West 136). However, in Lovecraft’s work as in Modernism, less of an amalgamation than a coexistence is effected. Unlike concepts or perspectives exist together, competing perhaps, but each retains its individual value despite its proximity to often contradictory ideas.

Lovecraft found antiquarian studies aesthetically stimulating, and this interest, in turn, was an influence upon his artistic aesthetics. He was very interested in historical architecture and with tracing lineage, as well as the historical background of places, particularly in the New England area. Historical buildings were precious to him, and he spoke in rapturous tones of towns such as Salem, Marblehead, and especially Portsmouth where much colonial architecture stood intact. He called Portsmouth “a lyric of sensuous colour and plastic form, moulded and tinted with a thousand subtleties of grace and feeling” (SL I.245). Lovecraft loved long rambles, whether to discover new places, be they in his native Providence, in a city, or in the countryside, or to revisit favorite locales. Often in his letters he tells of taking visitors on tours around Providence, for example the tour he gave his wife-to-be on her first visit to see him (SL I.153). He also describes in detail his excursions at the places where he visits. He pursued these studies in the spirit of his eighteenth century teachers, with thoroughness and rational efficiency. In his references to places and histories, Lovecraft is clearly very knowledgeable, as in a brief description of Providence to Clark Ashton Smith (SL I.285-286). His enthusiasm when

the locales met with his aesthetic satisfaction would run unchecked. Marblehead to him was “the most marvelous region I had ever dream’d of, and furnish’d with the most powerful single aesthetick impression I have receiv’d in years...It *is* the 18th century” (SL I.204-205).

If there was a rift in Lovecraft’s rational tendencies, it might have been his adoption of an eighteenth-century identity. Lovecraft often remarked that he felt a closer connection to that time period than with the present, which can account for the avidity of his antiquarian interests. With an extensive knowledge of his own family history, Lovecraft assumed the demeanor and attitude of a country gentleman (SL I.242). Though his perspective and personal identity were shaped by his predisposition for the eighteenth century, we should not conclude from his behavior that he was hopelessly eccentric. Instead, we must recognize that Lovecraft was well aware of the anachronistic nature of this pose. While many of his letters do portray an earnestness about his old gentleman attitudes, he often jokes about this attitude, such as when he signed letters “Grandpa Theobald” (SL I.225). The adoption of such mannerisms and attitudes was a matter of aesthetic choice rather than an eccentric whim.

But if Lovecraft’s eighteenth-century influences led him to admire the past, they also reinforced the rationalistic inclinations that would lead to a devoted pursuit of science. As with his eighteenth-century studies, his scientific studies began at an early age. He was fascinated by many branches, but his favorite was astronomy. By the time he was sixteen, Lovecraft was contributing astronomical articles to the local papers (SL I.4). Lovecraft’s perspective on the universe was developed early in his life, and was directly influenced by these delvings into astronomy. From his observations of the skies

and his astronomical studies, Lovecraft concluded that human existence was insignificant in the grand scheme of the universe (Lovecraft at Last 207). This discovery led to his lifelong mechanist materialist philosophy. According to this perspective, the universe moves forward mechanically, with no preordained purpose and according to no pre-devised plan, other than that which can be extrapolated and predicted from the known laws of science. As Lovecraft explains to James F. Morton in 1929, “I am...an indifferentist...I do not make the mistake of thinking that the resultant of the natural forces surrounding and governing organic life will have any connexion with the wishes or tastes of any part of that organic life process” (SL III.39). The cosmos is indifferent to man, affected only as much as his presence provides its tiny contribution to the cosmic processes.

We then must ask what standards Lovecraft proposed for a life that has no intrinsic value or meaning, other than as a miniscule mechanism fulfilling this role in the cosmic machine. Lovecraft answered this dilemma with an ethical system based upon aesthetic principles (Joshi, Decline of the West 36). One should govern himself or herself according to the dictates of good taste. As Lovecraft explains in 1924 to Edwin Baird, then editor of Weird Tales, “to me life is a fine art, ...I consider it most artistic to take into account the emotional heritage of our civilization and follow the patterns which produce the least pain to delicate sensibilities” (Lovecraft at Last 204). For Lovecraft, this good taste had an aristocratic flavor, stemming from his heritage as a member of the impoverished gentry. His attitudes were elitist, both in terms of life and in creative arts. Though Lovecraft conceived of human existence as inherently valueless, he felt that one could still involve oneself in activities that one found stimulating and that would relieve

the oppressive uselessness of this life. Such interests as his antiquarian studies, the accumulation of scientific knowledge, and writing provided Lovecraft with pleasure. He combined all three of these pursuits into his aesthetic philosophy. Lovecraft's notion of tradition then provided a means to preserve and perpetuate aesthetic standards and development.

Gayford asserts that Lovecraft's and T.S. Eliot's ideas of the necessity of tradition for aesthetic development were very similar ("The Artist as Antaeus" 282). A stable society engenders cultural continuity which promotes the production of art. People, in Lovecraft's view, have a "need for personal anchorage" (SL III.244). The "anchor is tradition, the potent emotional legacy, [that] means nothing cosmically, but...everything locally" (SL II.356-357). The determination to develop and maintain a tradition has a basis in aesthetics for Lovecraft. He asserts that "Art without tradition is only a crippled and impoverished remnant--& I hope that no freakish social overturn will ever be allowed to wreck Western Europe's mainstream" (SL IV.410). To maintain society, to maintain continuity, is to maintain an environment where aesthetic standards can evolve. Any form of disruption that threatens to destroy this continuity, this cultural development, is destructive for Lovecraft. Two factors involved in the development of Modernism that threatened to compromise the cultural mainstream were cosmopolitanism and industrialization. Lovecraft observes in a 1927 letter to Clark Ashton Smith that "New York is too far removed from the main stream of any one civilization to be the home of any genuine art...such places --like all cosmopolitanism -- may breed the critical spirit, but never art" (SL II.103). In another 1927 letter, this one to Bernard Austin Dwyer, Lovecraft notes that "more and more the progress of mechanical invention" leads

to “an almost unmitigated loss to artistic life” (SL II.131-132). Eric Cahm discusses how the modern city, in this article’s case, Paris, embodied the Modernist struggle between tradition and artistic innovation (164). In the large urban centers are generally concentrated the greatest traditions as well as the new artistic generation seeking its own expression. The problems of mechanization were not strictly those involving new machines, but the mechanization of human existence. In Lovecraft’s terms, industrialization fostered the “standardisation of life and thought” (SL II.105). Though Lovecraft saw the dangers in both of these Modern trends, Gayford argues that Lovecraft understood that change in art forms is inevitable, and often desirable, but it must be gradual. Lovecraft “anticipates a conciliatory moderation in Modernist literary experimentation” (“The Artist as Antaeus” 293). In other words, Lovecraft recognizes the Modernist negotiation of aesthetics.

Lovecraft shares with the Modernists the problem of the constraint of linear history. In Lovecraft’s case, it might be called mechanist history. As Quinones describes it, linear history is the humanist idea that personal value and identity are derived from one’s place in, or relation to, history (30). During the Victorian period, such values had ceased to be affirmed on the individual level. All value was derived from a group, or majority standard (Quinones 31). History proceeded repetitively, disregarding the value of an individual except as a contribution to history. In other words, the late-nineteenth century Europe and America saw not only the growth of physical mechanization, but became subject to the mechanization of historical thought and value. Just as a worker had become a cog in the factory machine, the individual had become a cog in the historical machine (Quinones 57). If individuals were only fulfilling a role, then each

successive generation simply repeated the same roles over and over. Instead of deriving meaning and identity from history, history began to obliterate these very things. The struggle of the Modern artist was essentially to recapture a vital personal identity and then express that identity.

At first glance, it might appear that Lovecraft would oppose, or at least disagree with, the goal of this Modernist struggle. As we have seen, Lovecraft placed much value in the preservation of ancestral history. According to his mechanist perspective, biological history was a matter of course. We have evolved according to natural laws, and we are the results of those natural laws. We are collections of atoms and we are reflections of our ancestral past. Such an outlook does not seem to leave much room for individuality. However, despite their flaws, his aesthetic principles and his desire to maintain an evolving culture do allow for personal reaffirmation. Upheaval would destroy the train of cultural development, but the stifling of creativity would inhibit this development. If Lovecraft's universe works according to indifferent, mechanistic laws, his personal standards did not. Though he advocated the models of tradition, merely copying those models would not provide the vitality required in art. For example, he considered himself a master at poetic forms, but admitted that his poetry lacked the emotional charge that good poetry required (SL I.3-4). We must not forget that one of Lovecraft's primary interests was the progress of science. Perhaps it is a tradition of rationalism, but it is a forward-looking attitude. And though he praises the literature of the past, he praised and encouraged the artists working in his circle. Good art both represents and perpetuates culture, and if he saw art that he felt was worthy of the name, he applauded its contribution. Some Modern works even met with his approval, though

his inclination was more toward literature that portrayed the weird and the cosmic. The point is that, like the Moderns, Lovecraft saw a need for expression in an effort to revitalize art and the life of the individual. We might be tempted to suspect that Lovecraft's goal was too preservational to be considered Modern, but he felt that preserving values facilitated aesthetic and cultural progression.

The product of the Modernist ideas was the revitalization of art. Achieving this revitalization required a reaffirmation of the individual self, of the individual's identity in the face of the cultural stagnation of the late nineteenth century. In discussing his concept of linear history, Quinones distinguishes between predictive time and innovative time and asserts that the two must be balanced. Predictive is equated with mechanistic while innovative is the same as intuitive (7). By the late nineteenth century, predictive time far outweighed innovative and the self becomes caught in a "changeless extension" (86). In other words, people were defined relative to the chronology of names and events without recourse to any personal sense of self. This self during this period had come to be defined by external sources rather than internal.

In Lovecraft's three stories, The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, At the Mountains of Madness, and "The Call of Cthulhu," characters shaped by external sources in terms of surroundings and their immediate situations must come to terms with their personal identity. All of the main characters are men of academia or of science, shaped by a concrete and rational environment. Charles Ward is a student antiquarian, and Willett, who pieces together Charles' case, is a doctor. The Antarctic expedition in At the Mountains of Madness is composed of members of university departments, including engineering, physics, and biology; Dyer, the main character, is a geologist. We are not

told the exact nature of Thurston's occupation in "The Call of Cthulhu," but he admits his "callous rationalism" (DH 132).² In all three of the stories, rational men must confront what seems to them an irrational reality. Not only does Lovecraft use rational characters, but these characters operate in a world cleverly integrated into reality. The Case of Charles Dexter Ward is set in Providence and refers to actual people, places, and historical events. Lovecraft mentions Benefit Street, Olney Court, and most notably, has Dr. Willett and Charles' father conduct research in the John Hay Library of Brown University. Included in the historical party that raided Curwen's farm were the Brown brothers themselves. Barton L. St. Armand, in his article "Facts in the Case of H. P. Lovecraft," takes notice of an article about grave-robbing that correlates with the grave-robbing activities in the story (176-177). At the Mountains of Madness is written by Dyer as a document to dissuade the historical Starkweather-Moore Expedition (MM 19).³ Approximate geographical coordinates are given for the fictional mountains themselves, Latitude 76 15', Longitude 113, 10'E (13). When the frozen bodies of the Old Ones are discovered, Lake's report over the radio is one of minute biological scrutiny (MM 21). Steven J. Mariconda explains how one of the influences for "The Call of Cthulhu" was an actual earthquake that occurred Feb. 1925 ("On the Emergence of Cthulhu" 55). Lovecraft correlates this event with the rising of the fictional city of R'lyeh. This city, like the mountains, is given actual coordinates: S. Latitude 47,9', W. Longitude 126, 43' (DH 150). From these few examples, we can see Lovecraft's rational mind at work even while creating a weird aesthetic. By having the characters included in the rational world, he is able to more closely link their experiences, however irrational they may seem according to natural laws, to those of everyday reality. Such close association fragments

reality and brings the truth of man's miniscule cosmic identity closer to his consciousness.

Donald R. Burleson remarks that a pervading theme in Lovecraft is "the nature of self-knowledge, the effects of learning one's own nature and one's place in the scheme of things" (135). As in Modernist literature, Lovecraft's characters discover the dangers of losing their identity in linear history. In ancestral terms, a person is just a member of the family. Both are merely fulfilling a role. As I have mentioned before, individuals had become subject to the mechanization of identity, cogs in the historical machinery. In Lovecraft's mechanist terms, they are collections of atoms converging, reacting, and moving toward eventual recombination, regardless of personality or will. For Lovecraft the production of art occurs apart from and regardless of this mechanist scheme. The Modernists also decided that art must be produced outside a mechanist framework, so they sought to destroy the one confining them. And they would do this through the fragmentation of reality. Lovecraft's stories, undeniably infused with his philosophy, show the dangers of historical regression and stagnation. In so many stories, we see an interest in the past degenerate, sometimes literally, into a struggle with destructive forces of the past. Stefan Dziemianowicz remarks how Lovecraft was "intrigued by the possibility that the present could collapse back into the past, destroying all sense of linear progression" ("Outsiders and Aliens" 171).

Lovecraft's novelette, The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, demonstrates the dangers of linear history and shows his antiquarian love of his native Providence. In this story, we are presented with the psychological case of a young antiquarian, Charles Dexter Ward. In the course of his researches, Charles discovers his relation to a

“very astonishing, enigmatic, and obscurely horrible individual” named Joseph Curwen (MM 117). This discovery leads Charles, with all his antiquarian zeal, to uncover all the information that he can regarding his notorious ancestor. Charles learns that Curwen had been involved in mysterious dealings that aroused the suspicions of the Providence inhabitants. These suspicions culminated in a raid on Curwen’s farm organized by prominent Providence citizens on April 12th, 1771. Horrible things were experienced by these men during the raid; they had “seen or heard or felt something which was not for human creatures...” (143). As Charles pursues these studies, his behavior begins to change. His focus changes from antiquarianism to the occult, and he engages in experiments that are reminiscent of those practiced by his ancestor. Dr. Willett, the lifelong physician of the Wards, takes it upon himself to investigate the case. He and Charles’ father, through the piecing together of articles of evidence, and the exploration of Curwen’s old laboratories, discover that Curwen knows how to raise the dead. As the investigation continues, Willett discovers that Charles had learned Curwen’s secret and had raised him. The climax occurs when Willett, after concluding that Curwen has killed Charles, destroys the alchemist with Curwen’s own formula (MM 234).

In this work, we see the struggle of individual identity and the past. Charles has actively pursued his ancestral history, having to overcome “the deliberate effacement of every memory of the dead man from Providence life and annals” to find information about Curwen (MM 147). Undaunted by the obviously dangerous nature of this information, Charles appears to have consciously wrought his own doom. However, as the case unfolds, it becomes apparent that Charles is trapped by the past. When a portrait of Curwen is discovered, Charles confronts “his own living features in the countenance of

his horrible great-great-great-grandfather” (MM 155). It is worth noticing that the only artist in this story is the one hired to restore this painting. Nothing of beauty or originality is being created; even the artist is involved solely with the past. In addition to the uncanny semblance between Curwen, Dr. Willett finds disturbing evidence that Charles’ role in Curwen’s resurrection has been preordained. In one of Curwen’s letters, he explains how “in ye Seede of Olde shal One be borne who shal looke Backe, tho’ know’g not what he seekes” and this person shall “use what Saltes or Stuff for Saltes you shal leave him” (MM 151-152). Dr. Willett also finds that Charles had in his possession a document addressed “To Him Who Shal Come After, & How He May Gett Beyonde Time & ye Spheres” (MM 156). Clearly, Charles is destined to pursue his ancestral past to an extreme degree, literally resurrecting his ancestor. He is then literally destroyed by the past when Curwen dispatches him.

The encroachment of the past not only affects the hapless antiquarian, but all of the main characters of the novel. Curwen knows how to derive from “even the most antique remains certain ‘Essential Saltes’ from which the shade of a long dead living thing might be raised up” (MM 199). Curwen, by “tapping the consciousness of the dead,” seeks to find “a power and a wisdom beyond anything which the cosmos had ever seen concentrated in one man or group” (MM 199). Through this resurrection process, Curwen himself is trying to control the past. But even for those well practiced in these methods, like Curwen and his circle, calling up the past is dangerous. One of Curwen’s associates warns him in a letter “doe not call up Any that you can not put downe” (MM 138). Eventually Curwen is destroyed by Dr. Willett, who has obtained the means with the help of one of Curwen’s resurrected creatures. Curwen has apparently mastered the

past, through both his own resurrection and the resurrections of others, but cannot escape its eventual grasp. Dr. Willett, and for that matter Charles' father, are caught in the grasp of encroaching time simply through their association with the case. Their expedition to the Curwen farm is reminiscent of the raid that had occurred in 1771. They must deal with the same man that their predecessors had; they are caught in a cycle of time, fulfilling the roles of the original raiders. Only accident saves them when Dr. Willett unintentionally calls up a spirit who happens to share their goal of destroying Curwen. If humans remain caught viewing existence from a linear perspective, they can be rendered powerless to resist the encroaching past and its tendency to obliterate personal identity.

This potential obliteration was of great concern to Lovecraft. Dziemianowicz notes that the idea of "Transpositions of identity" appears throughout the notes in Lovecraft's *Commonplace Book* ("Outsiders and Aliens" 187). Until their discovery of Curwen's return, Dr. Willett and the senior Ward believe that the sudden changes in Charles' behavior are attributable to mental imbalance. Dr. Willett decides that "all the massed antiquarianism of his youth had welled up from some profound subconsciousness to engulf the contemporary and the individual" (MM 188). What Willett does not know at this point, but uncovers later, is that Charles has lost his whole identity: his very life. But even before this tragedy, Charles undergoes a transformation in habits as he pursues his studies of Curwen; his family notes his "growing secrecy and absorption in strange pursuits" (MM 158). After Curwen has killed Charles and is masquerading as the youth, Dr. Willett and others wonder what "blasphemous and abominable fusion had two ages and two persons become involved?" (MM 225). When Willett does discover the truth about the whole situation, he realizes that "something came out of those years to engulf

[Charles]” (MM 230). In the same manner as the Modernists, Lovecraft’s protagonists must contend with the problem of linear time. To involve oneself too deeply in the linear past is to risk losing one’s individual self in the present. In the following chapters I will show how Lovecraft and the Modernists fragment linear time, and how this fragmentation leads to the realization of the cosmic. The dangers that immersion in linear time poses for the self become intensified when the self must cope with the more expansive notions of cosmic time that are found in “The Call of Cthulhu,” At the Mountains of Madness, and “The Shadow out of Time.”

CHAPTER III

LOVECRAFT FRAGMENTING MODERN REALITY

At the beginning of Chapter II, I presented a passage wherein Lovecraft remarks that the ego revolts against the limitations of mechanistic existence. Writing to August Derleth in 1930, Lovecraft explains that the “compensation to atone for [existence’s] dominantly burthensome quality” that helps him “refrain from suicide” is the expansive potential afforded by the imagination (SL III.243). Here we learn two important details about mechanistic existence from Lovecraft’s perspective. First, the oppressive nature of the realization of such an existence can lead to personal annihilation, not just a loss of self in time, but the total and willful eradication of the self. Second, the alternative to the loss of self becomes “some ethereal quality of indefinite expansion and mobility, and of a heightened perception which shall make all forms and combinations of beauty simultaneously visible...” (SL III.243). Though Lovecraft defined the empirical world in strict, rational terms, he could fragment this mechanistic reality through the employment of his vivid and speculative imagination. The patterns these imaginative impulses take in his fiction are derived from his aesthetic response to scenery. As Lovecraft continues in the letter to Derleth, the “reasons [for refraining from suicide] are strongly linked with architecture, scenery, and lighting and atmospheric effects” (SL III.243). As I have shown in the last chapter, Lovecraft was an avid antiquarian, and few scenes pleased him

more than those that included colonial architecture. More specifically, Lovecraft enjoyed views of towns such as Salem, Marblehead, and Portsmouth, whose architecture was well preserved. He loved scenes of colonial architecture out of historical interest, but such scenes were also the source of certain moods that could incite him to fantastic imaginative creation. These scenes inspired “impressions of adventurous expectancy coupled with elusive memory – impressions that certain vistas, particularly those associated with sunsets, are avenues of approach to spheres or conditions of wholly undefined delights and freedoms...” (SL III.243). Through the agency of the speculative imagination, Lovecraft fragments physical details into impressions that elude the confines of mundane existence. Elaborate and poetic descriptions of scenery demonstrating this expansive quality abound in Lovecraft’s letters and stories. Certain locales, such as graveyards, old houses, or antique-neighborhoods would suggest moods of horror to Lovecraft. He describes St. Michaels’ churchyard in Marblehead where “at twilight hideous shadows lurk amongst the dense willows... and caper a ghoulish danse macabre on the tops of the old slate slabs” (SL I.235-236). Natural effects, such as sunsets, enhanced these scenes for him. In a passage from The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, Lovecraft describes how “the slanting sunlight touches the Market House and the ancient hill roof and belfries with gold, and throws magic on the dreaming wharves” (MM 115). When viewing the antique towns or areas, they would at times inspire him to contribute imaginative details. Caught up in the antiquarian spell of Marblehead, Lovecraft wonders in a 1923 letter to his friend Frank Belknap Long “was it in a dream that I saw an old man with buckled shoes and tie-wig?” (SL1.235). When we look at how Lovecraft viewed these vistas and landscapes, we see that for him they were scenes that held potential for

his fertile imagination. In a mechanistic cosmos that highlighted the limitations of mankind, Lovecraft found expansive possibilities in such scenery. Within the confines of the material world, he was able to find a place for his imagination to roam.

If Lovecraft's waking world could be so creatively enhanced by his imagination, it was probably because he was such a vivid dreamer. In both his stories and his letters, Lovecraft portrays his dreams as exceedingly vivid. For example, his story "The Statement of Randolph Carter" is an almost literal transcription of a 1919 dream (SL I.94-97,100). He undoubtedly found his dreams to be a wonderful means of escape from the rational world. Randolph Carter appears again in a novel length story that takes place almost completely in the realm of dream called The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath. Often his dreams contained elements of horror, but many had a more fantastic feel to them, while some combined this feel of strange vision and horror. Lovecraft relates a dream to Bernard Austin Dwyer in a 1927 letter wherein he is a Roman civil official who must confront the mysterious "Dark Folk" (SL II.188-197). The lifelike details of the dream connect it to Roman history. Yet these details are part of Lovecraft's personal dream experience, products of his personal speculative, though subconscious, faculties. As the Romans, including Lovecraft's dream persona, go to meet the Dark Folk, imaginative history and the fantastic meet. The dream itself has fragmented into history and fantasy.

We see Lovecraft divided between the rational and the imaginative, or at least the speculative, a conflict well demonstrated by his perspective on religion. He was distinctly empirical when it came to matters of fact, a reason why religion did not appeal to him. Religion presented as fact was indefensible since it could not be proved. In a

1934 letter to Helen Sully, Lovecraft explains that religion's "disadvantage is that it demands an *intellectual* belief in the impossible, whereas fantastic art does not" (SL IV.418). However, Lovecraft maintained, at least later in life, that he was only dismissing religion on empirical grounds. If he could be shown the existence of deity that would satisfy his rational demands for proof, he would admit its validity. One might wonder, with Lovecraft's capability for imagining that which did not exist empirically, why he was not more susceptible to religion. The answer lies in the way religion is presented as truth, not speculation. Truth for Lovecraft had to be proven. Lovecraft's attitude towards religion underscores the assertion that he is not some delusional dreamer; his perspective on religion demonstrates that he made a sharp distinction between hypothesis grounded in fact and speculation grounded in imagination. The former explains the real world; the latter gives the world some character or excitement, but left unproven, contributes nothing to the understanding of its actual processes.

We can compare Lovecraft's split between the rational and the imaginative to the Modernist need to understand reality in terms of its multiple layers and multiple perspectives. Even time, a foundation of human reality, is itself fragmented into the dual conceptions of mechanism and intuition, echoing the competing paradigms of Lovecraft's aesthetic philosophy. If predictive or mechanistic history is linear, then the Moderns felt they needed to "disrupt the temporal linearity" by using "leaps of experience, juxtapositions, the inclusion of all aspects of life" (Quinones 88-89). Only through such disruptions could the prescriptive external authority be defied.

For such expression the artist looked inward; Modern expression became validated through an authority that came from the individual. In the process external

standards of tradition were not heeded, often deliberately ignored, and often denounced by the avant-garde movements of early Modernism. Such movements included the Imagism of Pound, dadism, surrealism, and futurism. Such movements strove to sever any connection with tradition. Neither the past nor the future are involved in this process; both the work itself and the motivation behind it are distinctly unconnected from any influence other than individual perception. What is sought is a picture of objective reality. Objective reality occurs in countless numbers of these pictures. To accurately capture reality, one must strive to express all of these moments, objects, feelings, as essential, not merely those falling within the narrow parameters of linear history. In this sense, Modernism was expansive, seeking to participate in and express what was beyond the scope of mechanism, as Lovecraft did through his imagination and dreams. Like Lovecraft, the Modernists relied on individual faculties to accomplish this expansion. In a way, the expansive quality of the imagination becomes a way to create history. In fiction such creation is the invention of new possibilities. In life such creation is the cultivation of new perspectives for the same scene. If Lovecraft's potentialities are considered fabricated or fantastic in contrast to what would generally be called realistic possibilities, the result is still that one is able to perceive an instant in time in terms of multiple layers.

Mariconda discusses the use of Lovecraft's kaleidoscopic imagery, explaining how this method serves to expand Lovecraft's perspectives from the local to the cosmic through a "technique of showing a rapidly shifting panorama of images" ("Lovecraft's Cosmic Imagery" 189). He makes use of this method in describing the everyday scenery of Providence in The Case of Charles Dexter Ward. Charles explores the "maelstrom of

tottering houses, broken transoms, tumbling steps, twisted balustrades swarthy faces and nameless odours” (MM 115). In At the Mountains of Madness we have an alien city described in kaleidoscopic fashion, as Dyer and Danforth see “strange, beetling table-like constructions suggesting piles of multitudinous rectangular slabs or circular plates or five-pointed stars...” (MM 30). In “The Call of Cthulhu,” instead of a kaleidoscope of concrete images, we see a cluster of more abstract fragments. Viewing the alien city of R’lyeh, Johansen describes “broad impressions of vast angles and stone surfaces... impious with horrible images and hieroglyphs... abnormal, non-Euclidean, and loathesomely redolent of spheres and dimensions apart from ours” (DH 151). These images, presented to the character and reader in rapid succession, are too numerous and are perceived too quickly to allow any definite focus. Without such a focus, the mood created overshadows any picture constructed of concrete physical details. Mariconda notes how the “boundless kaleidoscopic excursions take place largely within the human consciousness itself” (“Lovecraft’s Cosmic Imagery” 190-191). The imagery changes from the mundane to the cosmic, but both aspects are presented in a similar fashion. By presenting three different but parallel levels of reality, Lovecraft provides a link between the everyday city and the city fashioned according to cosmic designs that is an unavoidable reality. The collection of perspectives follows the Modernist practice of fragmenting reality. “This approach represents the defeat of those sensory limitations that Lovecraft the dreamer found so repressive” because they are perceived through the brain or some other intuitive device rather than through the normal sense organs (“Lovecraft’s Cosmic Imagery” 191).

Lovecraft often has his characters piece together fragments of reality as a means to approach a better understanding of that reality. In The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, both Charles and Dr. Willett use such varied sources as letters, diary accounts, newspaper clippings, and Willett's discoveries in Curwen's vault to reach the truth. As Dyer and Danforth, in At the Mountains of Madness, explore the strange city, they find that they can partially decipher hieroglyphs on the building walls. Through the fragmentary assimilation of these documents, the two piece together the history of the strange organisms, the Old Ones, and their role in the creation of mankind. The entire process of information exchange is fragmented. Dyer first receives accounts of the discovery of the Old Ones via radio transmission. Only later does he actually see the creatures at the camp. In both cases, Dyer tells how he censors the reports going to the outside world, so that there are multiple levels of reality working here. In "The Call of Cthulhu," Thurston pieces together the truth about Cthulhu from various sources. These include the notes made by his uncle, interviews with Legrasse and Wilcox, the miniature statue of Cthulhu, a newspaper clipping, and the written testimony of Johansen describing his encounter with Cthulhu. Lovecraft's protagonists receive their picture of reality through fragments: varying sources of information.

In his fiction, Lovecraft utilizes this expansive quality of both imagination and dream in creating new perspectives for reality. He populates fictive scenes with potential denizens, backgrounds, and moods just as he populates actual vistas using his imagination. In so doing, he initiates the process within our imagination. With both Lovecraft and with the Moderns, the process is most important. The Moderns were purposefully indiscriminate in choosing their subjects. The subject itself does not matter

except that it is any possible constituent of reality. What matters is that the observer's imagination is open to any of these constituents. To be exclusionary for the Modern is to ignore the truth, to forsake objectivity, and to leave reality incomplete. Remaining open to the potential multiple levels of significance of a scene or a moment is the key to the expansive goals of Lovecraft and Modernism.

Dreams are not a factor in The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, but there is an expansion of perspective through impressions inspired by the scenery. Charles' researches into the history of Curwen "opened up black vistas whose end was deeper than the pit" (MM 117). When Charles returns to his native Providence from his occult researches overseas, he revels in the "mysterious forces of its long, continuous history...which had drawn him back toward marvels and secrets whose boundaries no prophet might fix" (MM 165). The characters in At the Mountains of Madness do not experience actual dreams, but the impressions created in the mind of Dyer by the Antarctic landscape are imaginatively expansive. As Dyer and Danforth approach the mountains in their plane, Dyer feels a "curious sense of phantasy which they inspired" (MM 29). The mountains are a "frightful gateway into forbidden spheres of dream, and complex gulfs of remote time, space, and ultra-dimensionality. I could not help feeling...a vague, ethereal beyondness" (MM 29). Dreams directly play a role in "The Call of Cthulhu." One of the artifacts that Thurston finds in his uncle's office is a bizarre bas-relief sculpted some years earlier by Wilcox, who had been inspired by "an unprecedented dream of great Cyclopean cities" (DH 129). As Thurston continues his research, he finds that not long after Wilcox had created the strange design, he had fallen into a fever, and dreamed of "the nameless monstrosity he had sought to depict in his

dream-sculpture” (DH 130). Only later does Thurston correlate Wilcox’s fevered dreaming to the rising of R’lyeh, the city of Cthulhu, as documented in Johansen’s testimony. Cthulhu speaks to sensitive humans in dreams, not with a human voice, but in “enigmatical sense-impacts” (DH 129). In all three stories, we see an expansion involving Lovecraft’s trademark imaginative landscapes, whether they are actual scenes or speculative vistas.

Dziemianowicz notes that Lovecraft’s characters evolve as his fiction matures. In the more straightforward horror tales, the protagonists are horror hunters, and those who make accidental discoveries. In later fiction, Lovecraft reaches more of a negotiation with his protagonists; horror hunters evolve into those seeking knowledge and those making accidental discoveries become more like visionaries (“Outsiders and Aliens” 163). In both cases, these narrators discover much more than they bargain for. And they discover that what they have found through effort could impose itself on humanity at any given moment. The places of strange occurrence are in some sense “isolated at a point between two worlds” (Dziemianowicz, “Outsiders and Aliens” 168). This isolation itself evolves from psychological isolation to physical isolation in distant locations. In any case, an individual is left to experience cosmic expansion by himself. This parallels Modernist development in the sense that in order to break tradition, the Modernist looked to individual standards by which to validate himself and for inspiration for his art. The immediate step is psychological, looking inward. This is the great risk of Modernism, that following purely individual standards dissociates one too far from the cultural stream, thereby invalidating oneself and one’s art from any historical reference. To negotiate between tradition and individuality is, from a Modernist perspective, to isolate

oneself at this point between two worlds. One can never commit completely to either, and can never belong exclusively to either. To do so would be to drown in personal and artistic anonymity.

CHAPTER IV

LOVECRAFT AND QUINONES' COMPLEX CENTRAL CONSCIOUSNESS

When resubmitting “The Call of Cthulhu” to Weird Tales magazine in 1927, Lovecraft included a letter to the editor, Farnsworth Wright, that contained the following passage. I note it here because it vividly explains the development of Lovecraft’s literary aesthetic and philosophy:

All my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large. To me there is nothing but puerility in a tale in which the human form - and the local human passions and conditions and standards – are depicted as native to other worlds and universes. To achieve the essence of real externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all. Only the human scenes and characters must have human qualities. These must be handled with unsparing *realism*. . .but 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.

(Uncollected Letters 10)

Chapter III discusses Lovecraft's fascination with scenery and the tendency of these scenic fragments to prompt imaginative expansion. But as the passage quoted above explains, at this point in Lovecraft's literary development, expansion involves moving from the world of unsparing realism through the personal imagination into the realms of cosmic speculation. Joshi notes "Lovecraft's inability to be emotionally satisfied with the truths of science for purposes of aesthetic expression. It is analogous to his respect for literary realism but his disinclination to be only a realist" (Decline of the West 88). If one is to truly expand imaginatively and aesthetically, then one must move beyond the familiar human sphere. It is worth noticing that Lovecraft includes abstract ideas, such as good and evil, among terrestrial concerns. The mundane for Lovecraft is not exclusively the concrete, but anything taken for granted by human reason and experience. To expand, to achieve the weird, one must achieve externality; one must plunge into the unknown. Yet this movement from the mundane to the cosmic is a process in and of itself. In "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction," Lovecraft states that he writes to give himself "the satisfaction of visualising more clearly and detailedly and stably the vague, elusive, fragmentary impressions of wonder, beauty, and adventurous expectancy which are conveyed to me by certain sights (scenic, architectural, atmospheric, etc), ideas, occurrences, and images encountered in art and literature" (113). For Lovecraft, achieving externality involves the processing of reality in its details, including the impressions it creates, and following the speculations to which these

impressions lead. In creating the weird tale, Lovecraft is working to bring these tendencies for expansion from reality into expression.

In Modernist fashion, Lovecraft does not resolve a conflict between these two seemingly contradictory ideas. He struggles between curiosity of the unknown and fear of what the unknown may bring. These attitudes coexist, their opposition fueling the dynamic of his literary aesthetic. This is the Modernist aesthetic dynamic that occurs in what Quinones calls the “complex central consciousness.” As I interpret this concept, the Modern consciousness collects the various fragments of reality and must encompass these fragments so that they may be utilized to expand the picture of reality. If the Modernist seeks expansion, then no fragment will be excluded. The contents of the consciousness become a complex mix, many of the fragments opposing one another. The task of the “complex central consciousness” is to contain this collage of impressions (Quinones 91). But to maintain the most complete picture of reality, none of these varied fragments can be excluded or compromised through amalgamation. Recognition of each new fragment fuels further speculations and creative impulses. As further speculation or creation takes place, the “complex central consciousness” can perceive more fragments to collect. The cycle continues, and eventually one string of speculation leads to concerns beyond the mundane (Quinones 168). For the Modern, this is the mythical; for Lovecraft it is the cosmic.

As the rational Lovecraft uses his imagination and delves into dreams, he must contend with working with two ideas in the Modern conflicting dynamic. How far can the imagination, the individual capacity of expansiveness, take one while operating within the confines of the mechanistic universe? Can these confines be overcome?

Should they be overcome? Lovecraft states in “Notes for Writing Weird Fiction” that he wishes to “achieve, momentarily, the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law which... frustrate our curiosity...” (113). To fragment reality disrupts mechanistic time. For Lovecraft, the expansive perspective afforded by dreams did offer a more complete view of reality; he had to look both with the rational and with the imaginative to get a more fulfilling picture. The dream/imaginative expansion alone could enhance mechanistic existence, and could give it more aesthetic value, but could not actually adjust its parameters. It was, however, a necessary step. The dream world is innovative and complex, but it is a domain shared by humans and therefore has parameters. In “The Call of Cthulhu,” the bas-relief sculpted by Wilcox is similar to the statue found by Lagrasse and the one discovered by Johansen. As a member of the Cthulhu cult explains, the race of Cthulhu “spoke to the sensitive among [men] by moulding their dreams” (DH 140). In this story dreams that hint of the cosmic all revolve around one common source. At the Mountains of Madness shows how dreams, though imaginatively expansive, lead back to terrestrial evidence. Dyer and Danforth discover that beyond the mountains they have crossed lies an even more gigantic chain, and they even give possible coordinates. Dyer speculates that these distant mountains might be a legendary place called Kadath in the Cold Waste (MM 71). In an earlier tale, The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath, Kadath is the ultimate destination of Randolph Carter, a character who can navigate the world of dreams. So Lovecraft has fused the worlds of reality and dream. Scientists and dreamers can both arrive at Kadath; dream and reality form a curious mix that is not the end of speculation, but instead prompts it.

Any manifestation of mechanistic time and space becomes constrictive to Lovecraft, and he makes this clear when he writes that “[time] looms up in my mind as the most profoundly dramatic and grimly terrible thing in the universe” (“Notes on Writing Weird Fiction” 113). Reality itself is cumbersome: “a highly organised man can’t durably exist without mental expansions beyond objective reality” (SL III.140). As we have seen, to escape these restrictions he finds recourse in the pursuit of knowledge and the workings of the imagination. But such pursuits have a deeper, more abstract purpose. In a letter to Clark Ashton Smith (17 Oct 1930), Lovecraft says that the true function of phantasy is to give the imagination a ground for limitless expansion, and to satisfy aesthetically the sincere and burning curiosity and sense of awe which a sensitive minority of mankind feel toward the alluring and provocative abysses of unplumbed space and unguessed entity which press in upon the known world from unknown infinities and in unknown relationships of time, space, matter, force, dimensionality, and consciousness. I know that my most poignant emotional experiences are those which concern the lure of unplumbed space, the terror of the encroaching outer void, and the struggle to transcend the known and established order. (cited in Leiber, “Through Hyperspace with Brown Jenkin” 143)

This is not indulging in curiosity for the sake of distraction; this is a drive, a burning curiosity. The unknown is not just interesting, but alluring for Lovecraft. He desires to fathom the cosmos as far as both speculation and rational thought will allow. For him,

aesthetic satisfaction can only be achieved through the expression of such explorations, rather than the expression of that which is ordinary and already known. For Lovecraft, aesthetic satisfaction demands the satisfaction of his expansive tendency. To fathom the cosmos requires a combination of science and imagination, because each is limited on its own. The use of this combination takes this pursuit beyond science and beyond human dream, into the consideration of the cosmic. Kadath, the dream/reality city in At the Mountains of Madness, is limited by its objective reality, but this very reality opens up all kinds of cosmic implications. Where Lovecraft the rational man sees limitations, Lovecraft the artist sees a source of inspiration.

Despite his yearning for cosmic exploration, Lovecraft's rational tendencies still seem to balk at the notion of experiencing a cosmos that operates beyond human comprehension and considerations without the anchor of human tradition. In "The Call of Cthulhu," Thurston shows this fear of what may be discovered if the human mind plunges into the unknown when he says, "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 of a new dark age" (DH 125). Here we see the use of "phantasy," as Lovecraft explains to Smith, to negotiate between the fear of that which might exist beyond the familiar, and the inability to suppress the craving for glimpses into the provocative abysses; the negotiation creates a significant aesthetic expression. As I pointed out in Chapter II, in The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, Charles pursues his researches of Curwen despite the obvious efforts of Providence residents to wipe Curwen's memory from history. Dyer explains that despite the horror that he and Danforth face in the

mountains of madness, “there was nevertheless...a blazing flame of awe and curiosity which triumphed in the end” (MM 83). After interviewing Wilcox and members of the Louisiana cult, Thurston suspects that his uncle may have been murdered by Cthulhu cult members. However, when fresh evidence regarding the Cthulhu mystery comes to his attention, he continues to pursue his interest in the Cthulhu cult (DH 144-145).

The human world shrinks when one views it within a cosmic context; the cosmos itself takes on an immeasurable vastness. As Dziemianowicz points out, commonplace areas are “on the surface of unfathomable spaces and distances” (*Outsiders and Aliens* 170). This vastness, this abyss, poses two questions, true to Modern character, that must be negotiated. On the one hand, the cosmic opens up possibilities; on the other, it reveals the horrible limitations of humankind. Lovecraft’s interpretation of Modernism, or at least radical Modernism, was that its proponents were only concerned with delving into this abyss. To Lovecraft, the Modern artist failed because he merely recorded this process and did not create anything using his discoveries. As he explains in a 1927 letter to August Derleth, Lovecraft sees Modernism as “the resolving of our cerebral contents into its actual chaotic components” and he “cannot see that it forms any sort of art at all. It may be good science – but art deals with beauty rather than fact...” (SL II.96). Though he himself could not resist delving after scientific facts, to construct art upon the principles of science, the means of this delving, was to ignore all aesthetic value. The chaos of Quinones’ “complex central consciousness” is not art itself, but must create a “symbolic aesthetic outlet” to express these “freedoms and expansions and comprehensions and adventurous expectancies” (letter to Frank Belknap Long, cited in Mosig, 106-107). To curtail the process of expansion, or to express only the activity of

Quinones' "complex central consciousness," is to present only a limited reality that falls short of aesthetic expression. Gayford, in comparing Lovecraft and the Moderns, explains how fragmentation can lead to the dissolution of the self, and "it is the artist's soul, outside of the collapsing and restructuring universe, that re-visions the world" ("Lovecraft and Joyce" 5). If expansion leads to the cosmic, then aesthetic integrity demands that the artist follow. Lawrence B. Gamache, in his "Toward a Definition of 'Modernism,'" offers a concise description of this need for a new means of expression in terms of the Modernists:

The culmination for many Modernists is the rejection of the present in favor of the values of the past (Eliot), a singular vision of the future (Lawrence), a substitute reality (Yeats), or the diminishing conviction that there is any stable external reality to which that inward search relates (Joyce). For a writer to be a Modernist, each of these constituent elements should to a noticeable degree be not just arguable but evident preoccupations....(33)

All of these Modern writers seek a new form of expression, though each one has developed an individual method and philosophy. Quinones' "complex central consciousness" leads to different perceptions, speculations, and conclusions about reality, but provokes the need to express whatever is discovered. As Lovecraft asserts, art "is not what one resolves to say, but what insists on saying itself through one (SL V.19).

The danger of these cosmic pursuits, like the danger of tradition, is the loss of the self. We have already looked at how linear time can alter or even eradicate the identity of a person who delves too deeply into the traditional past. To combine speculative thought with concepts of time leads to the even more vast idea of cosmic time. Rationally

speaking, if man is insignificant in the universe, then his time scale is likewise insignificant. So where the speculative faculty has led to the consideration of the possibilities within traditional history, the cosmic perspective leads to speculation of time before and after the span of the human race. The rational has led the speculative to another level that is in itself beyond the rational, at least the rational capacity of human beings. Since humankind exists only within human history, to fathom beyond this historical span requires speculative thought. Such speculation develops from an extrapolation of known rational processes. In cosmic terms, the rational equates with the human, since from a human perspective, the rational is only that which our limited capacities can understand. Anything beyond human scope, which is therefore incomprehensible, becomes speculative. Certain things cannot possibly happen according to the laws and principles of the universe as *humans* understand them. This is the cosmic – that entities can exist and events can occur that defy the laws formulated by limited human rationality. Yet these creatures and events do conform to cosmic law.

Although The Case of Charles Dexter Ward does not deal explicitly with cosmic time, Charles warns that Curwen's attempts to master time have cosmic implications; such attempts threaten "all civilisation, all natural law, perhaps even the fate of the solar system and the universe" (MM 182). In "The Call of Cthulhu" and At the Mountains of Madness, the past that is ultimately encountered is the cosmic past, extending far beyond the scope of human history. Cthulhu "lived ages before there were any men, and... came to the young world out of the sky" (DH 139). The hieroglyphics in the city of the Old Ones depict a history of the planet in which humans play a small part. In fact, the Old Ones, if Dyer has interpreted the hieroglyphics correctly, created creatures whose

“human foreshadowings were unmistakable” (MM 65). The pre-human specimen was “used sometimes for food, sometimes as an amusing buffoon” (MM 65). Thus, the Old Ones not only superseded human history but were responsible for it. The Old Ones even preceded the Cthulhu spawn on the Earth (MM 66). Cosmic history is fascinating for both of these narrators, yet it is horrifying as well. They find survivals of the cosmic past that are immediately threatening. A living shoggoth pursues Dyer and Danforth through the mountains while Cthulhu has briefly risen from R’lyeh, as the account of Johansen testifies.

In all these cases, in terms of identity, the results of pursuing the expansion through the “complex central consciousness” can be dangerous. The importance of human history becomes inconsequential. Instead of becoming repetitions of our ancestors, caught in linear time, our entire human history, and hence identity, becomes reduced to an instant in cosmic time. If the past is equated with tradition, then succumbing too readily to tradition can lead to a loss of self through the repetition of the destructive paths of our ancestors. Yet to have time completely devalued in terms of cosmic history is devastating, leaving no relative reference for our existence. Lovecraft, like the Moderns, must negotiate with the “complex central consciousness” his need for expansion and his fear of what such expansion may bring.

CHAPTER V

LOVECRAFT'S ARTIFICIAL MYTHOLOGY

Modernist expansion could lead to a connection or identification with the mythic. Such a connection would provide a source of vitality or rejuvenation for the individual. Myth moves in cycles and therefore might be construed as being just as devoid of vitality as linear history. We have seen how linear history can repeat, devaluing the individual because only his place in relation to this history is important. The difference with myth is that these cycles function outside and independent from any historical identity. The self is reaffirmed as a recurring force in eternity rather than as a particular name moving through mundane functions. Rejuvenation itself is a common mythic motif, demonstrating the inextricable role of myth in the Modernist process. Quinones quotes Thomas Mann who tells how mythic pattern can “materialize apparently without act of will into the event which was from all time bound up with and one with the individual” (204). These patterns exist and occur not as a result of history but rather despite history. To use the case of rejuvenation or rebirth, in such instances, the individual defies the normal rules of life and death in linear time. Since these patterns exist and recur independently of linear rules, recognition is the key; to recognize one's mythic role, in a figurative sense is to recognize one's eternal significance for the Modern. Quinones posits that this identification with myth is involuntary, simply a result of the cycles of

perception and speculation that occur in the “complex central consciousness.” It comes in the form of a revelation, and “the revelation’s authenticity is its involuntariness” (Quinones 177).

Instead of connecting with the Modernist mythic, Lovecraft’s “complex central consciousness” leads him to the cosmic:

...I try to utilise as many as possible of the elements which have, under earlier mental and emotional conditions, given man a symbolic feeling of the unreal, the ethereal, & the mystical...Darkness-sunset-dreams-mists-fever-madness-the tomb-the hills-the sea-the sky-the wind-all these, & and many other things have seemed to me to retain a certain imaginative potency despite our actual scientific analyses of them...Accordingly I have tried to weave them into a kind of shadowy phantasmagoria which may have the same sort of vague coherence as a cycle of traditional myth or legend...an artificial mythology can become subtler & more plausible than a natural one, because it can recognise & adapt itself to the information and moods of the present...(SL IV.70-71)

The fragments in this passage are both concrete and abstract. As he says, they are elements that still provoke imaginative expansion. These fragments within the “complex central consciousness” are woven into an artificial mythology, Lovecraft’s representation of the cosmic in aesthetic form. Lovecraft’s artificial mythology is an expression of his cosmic indifferentism. As Dirk W. Mosig points out, this pseudomythology “was not a reaction against his...materialist philosophy, but instead formed the natural outgrowth

from the same” (106). The entities of the artificial mythology are embodiments of what humans do not know about the universe and how that universe functions without any concern for them. These creatures exist outside the limited human capabilities of detection and comprehension. They are not antagonistic toward humans, at least, humans are not their enemy; there is no struggle here between good and evil. For Lovecraft “good and evil...are...without counterparts in the sphere of actual entity” (SL III.207). Such notions are constructs relative to human perception and mean nothing in the cosmic scheme. The entities, representing the cosmos, are not motivated by the concerns of such an insignificant species as humans. Curwen and his associates, in The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, talk of summoning “Those Outside” (MM 197) and Yog-Sothoth is part of the chant Charles uses to resurrect Curwen (MM 171). Yog-Sothoth’s name is also a part of the chant Willett discovers and uses to destroy Curwen (MM 205, 234). The letter Charles writes to warn Dr. Willett describes Curwen’s actions as potentially harmful, and we know Curwen has spoken with Yog-Sothoth (MM 181-182). One of Curwen’s associates warns that there is “ever a Mortall Peril” (MM 197) involved in such communications, but this might not be due to strict malevolence. Obviously, the invocation of Yog-Sothoth involves great powers, and danger may lie simply in a human being unable to control such power. In the context of the story, Curwen summons this entity, so the destructive motivation is Curwen’s and therefore human. When Cthulhu emerges from his watery temple in “The Call of Cthulhu,” he does chase Johansen and his men, killing three of them (DH 152). Though his purpose is without question insidious, his actions are not explained in terms of attacking an enemy. Great Cthulhu has been “ravening for delight” for eons of time (DH 152). Such delight is “beyond good

and evil, with laws and morals thrown aside” and he will “teach [men] to shout and kill and revel” (DH 141). Like Yog-Sothoth, Cthulhu is sheer cosmic power, compared to which humans are helpless. When Dyer and Danforth find the decapitated Old Ones in At the Mountains of Madness, they realize that these creatures “were not evil things of their kind” (MM 95). Recalling that the Old Ones had killed the people at the camp, Dyer can still ask “what had they done that we would not have done in their place?” (MM 96). As Dyer understands it, the Old Ones have no hatred toward human beings. They were merely protecting themselves and then trying to return home. The shoggoth that chases Danforth and Dyer does seem malicious, but it kills anything in its path: penguins, humans, Old Ones. It is not particularly malicious toward our race.

Lovecraft’s artificial mythology has been given many names. August Derleth dubbed the pantheon the Cthulhu Mythos, while others have argued that it should be called the Lovecraft Mythos (Schultz, “Who Needs the ‘Cthulhu Mythos?’” 45, 52). The debate still continues as to which stories should fall within the Mythos category. For the purposes of this study, when I refer to the mythos, I will be speaking of the actual collection of entities that appear in the tales. From the stories given specific attention here, we have already seen Yog-Sothoth, Cthulhu, and the Old Ones. In a later section I will discuss “The Shadow out of Time,” which features the Great Race. Other Lovecraftian entities include Azathoth, Nyarlathotep, Shub-Niggurath, the Deep Ones, and the Mi-Go, also known as the Fungi from Yuggoth. Lovecraft also utilizes entities created by others, such as when he mentions an invention of Clark Ashton Smith’s called Tsathoggua in a revision of a Zealia Bishop story called “The Mound” (Price 253). David E. Schultz points out that Lovecraft encouraged others to contribute to his Mythos,

and did not mind others using his creations (“Who Needs the ‘Cthulhu Mythos’?” 45). He makes jokes about his entities, such as in exchanges with Willis Conover where the two discuss Yog-Sothoth’s merits as a house pet (Lovecraft at Last 91-93). Lovecraft’s willingness to treat the notion of his entities playfully and to freely swap them with others suggests that the true artistic value of these creations rests more in the concepts they represent than in their individual attributes and authorship.

The implications of the very existence of these entities provoke an immediate crisis of personal identity. When a character experiences an encounter with one of these entities, his entire perspective of the universe is altered. He must attempt to restructure his whole conception of the cosmos and his place in it. Suddenly mankind is not the only intelligent life; suddenly more powerful, more advanced, far older lifeforms exist out there. If these creatures are older than man, and have existed on his planet longer than he has, and his planet is only one of nine planets in the solar system, etc., man’s place in the universe diminishes to almost complete insignificance. The possibilities of cosmic history become manifest as does humankind’s small place in that history. Burleson notes that “any such look outward into the chaos of the abyss is also a look inward” (140). For Mosig, the creatures not only exist outside of physical human perception, but also outside the human consciousness, in “the nightmare depths of the unconscious” (107). Dziemianowicz calls this an invasion of the interior from the exterior (“Outsiders and Aliens” 177). The creatures are both objective realities and subjective realizations. Lovecraft’s cosmic encounters shape the individual’s notions of personal identity in terms of both cosmic and local history.

Lovecraft's creatures, as representations of cosmic indifferentism, cause crises of identity because they redefine mythology itself. I propose that such redefinition was deliberate on Lovecraft's part, at least in the later works. Lovecraft is effecting the systematic demystification of myth, unmaking myth by providing cosmic origins. In the realm of his fictional world, his creatures are what primitive people encountered and then conveyed through their various mythologies, religions, and superstitions. All of the entities predate mankind. We have already seen that Cthulhu predates humans, and Dyer discovers that the arrival of the Old Ones on Earth predated the arrival of the ancient Cthulhu spawn. We are not told the age of Yog-Sothoth, but if Curwen was conversing with him 200 years in the past, and that art was passed down to him by others who could prolong their life, we can surmise that Yog-Sothoth has existed a very long time. As we saw in the last chapter, Dyer discovers that not only did the Old Ones predate humans, but may have created them. This possibility completely undermines any creation myth, and after Dyer calls the Old Ones scientists, it becomes a scientific explanation. In The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, Lovecraft comes close to using the superstition of witchcraft. But Yog-Sothoth is never referred to as a demon or devil, but just as something from Outside. So in that case, witchcraft is not a spell, but an art learned from other spheres. This story also undermines the vampire tradition. Curious cases of vampirism occur after Curwen is resurrected. Yet we know Curwen is not a traditional vampire, but rather a man who possesses special knowledge. We are never told why he needs blood, but we can assume it is necessary for his art, which has a connection with Yog-Sothoth. We have already seen how in "The Call of Cthulhu" Cthulhu and his spawn speak to the sensitive in dreams, prompting Wilcox to mould his statue. Cthulhu

is a direct, psychic influence on people, mainly artistically sensitive people most likely to attempt to represent him in some form. Also, Thurston correlates an increase in cult activity with the rising of R'lyeh. The captured cult members explain that Cthulhu has always communicated with humans, and "...those first men formed the cult around small idols which the Great Ones shewed them..." (DH 140). We must notice that these are the *first* men. By describing the Cthulhu cult in terms of its primal nature, Lovecraft leaves room for the development of rituals and customs of other cultures. The Cthulhu cult, by implication, was the root of all ritual, at least the more "savage" rituals, that evolved as they spread around the globe. Lovecraft also deals with issues of astrology. Cthulhu's release would occur "when the stars had come round again to their right positions" (DH 140). This at first might seem to suggest some mystical power of the conjunction of stars. But knowing Lovecraft's predilection for science and astronomy, one can surmise that such a conjunction will have a physical effect which man cannot comprehend or that affects Cthulhu's underwater abode. In any case, Lovecraft is using the stars in the role as harbingers of apocalypse. If Cthulhu does rise again, the world will never be the same, and the knowledge of this possibility has already changed Thurston's life. So here we have the origin of astrology, grounded in the details of the Lovecraft mythos. The return motif is present in mythologies and religions the world over: either a return from death or a return to earth, and such returns usually indicate the coming of a new age. Curwen returns through the agency of Yog-Sothoth, Cthulhu rises again, and the Old Ones revive after ages of being frozen. These entities, in preceding humankind, have been the source for his history, both mythologically and, in the case of the Old Ones, literally.

The mythos is a logical aesthetic solution for Lovecraft's conflicting impulses toward curiosity and his fear of uncertainty. These creatures do represent the cosmic by existing according to laws that are beyond normal human perception. Yog-Sothoth is summoned by particular formula. Johansen and his crew see Cthulhu accidentally, and he could rise only when "the stars came right again" (DH 141). The Old Ones are discovered in the remotest part of Antarctica, after an accidental cave-in. Cthulhu does have a corporeal form, but when Johansen's ship punctures his head, it begins "recombining in its hateful original form" (DH 153). Lake's crew examines the corpse of the Old One minutely, but because it is so unlike anything in human conception, they can only make guesses about its anatomy. The entities are beyond the scope of scientific knowledge because they are of a cosmic nature. However, they are actual entities that have, or at least seem to have, evidence corroborating their existence. If these entities undermine myth as I propose they do, then we see here a break with tradition.

Lovecraft's artificial mythology essentially rewrites mythical history. But as we have seen, Lovecraft does have apprehensions about the "devastating sense of 'lostness' in endless time and space" (SL III.357). Mariconda observes that Lovecraft felt that "a craving for symmetry was inbred in the human race" ("Lovecraft's Cosmic Imagery" 193). Even if we move beyond linear time, we can still only hope to understand that which falls in some small portion within the scope of what we can perceive. Human capacity can only expand as far as our senses will allow. So any cosmic art "must be gratified by images forming supplements rather than contradictions of the visible and measurable universe" (SL III.295-296). This limited pattern is the only means of perception we have, and is completely inadequate for viewing the cosmos. This pattern

cannot be imposed upon the universe. From a human perspective, the pattern breaks down the further one ventures into the cosmic in terms of visual impression, sound, and eventually form.

In this sense, the entities, though representative of the vastness of the cosmos in themselves, are still more effective in reinforcing this vastness *because we can, though with difficulty, comprehend them*. We can comprehend them with our limited terrestrial capacities; therefore, the odds are that they are still in the foreground of what might exist. According to our perceptive abilities, Lovecraft's entities can only exist in layers. In Dziemianowicz's terms, superstition is the foreground, distanced from the cosmic background that works according to abstract science ("Outsiders and Aliens" 183). Human perception is caught somewhere in between. With the proof of science, we can quickly dismiss superstition. Yet, our science cannot fathom the universal laws that allow Cthulhu to recombine his molecules or the Old Ones to revive after millions of years of being frozen. The biological and physical laws that allow such supernormalities are comprehensible only when their effects are actually witnessed; even after such empirical evidence, the knowledge of such laws and concepts is almost beyond human capacity to accept and endure.

The "complex central consciousness," whether Modern or Lovecraftian, allows for a more expansive perspective in its goal of providing a more accurate picture of reality. As a more capable means of perceiving and expressing reality, it is valuable, as are the ideas and expressions that it helps to discover. However, the fragments that is has incorporated are still those of mechanistic history or existence. So the value or the meaning of those results can ultimately only be derived from this history. What is needed

is a source of meaning or value that exists beyond this history, that is accessible, but that has meaning that is both independent of mechanistic history and that is more significant.

What is interesting here is that these revelations in Lovecraft are actually willed against in the end, or at least resisted. But the stories bear out how this Modern mythic revelation can take place. In “The Call of Cthulhu,” Thurston’s revelation seems like the fruit of a purposeful goal. After all, he has pursued the scraps of information at his disposal towards the particular end of gaining knowledge. As the product of voluntary effort, his revelation would seem inauthentic if we follow Quinones’ prescription that involuntariness is a criterion for authenticity. Yet a closer look reveals that what Thurston sought and what he learned are two very different things. He explains that the discovery of some of the information was accidental. He also describes the different corroborations as being almost too coincidental, almost accidental. One piece of evidence is a statue created by the artist Wilcox from a dream, providing a glimpse of the outside through Wilcox’s expansive consciousness. The other evidence comes from the facts in the testimony of a police officer, LeGrasse. Finally, Thurston reads the report of the sailor who actually saw Cthulhu. Thurston’s mind is the “complex central consciousness” at work, processing varied perspectives in order to realize a new perception of reality. This reality is the existence of Cthulhu. Thurston was not expecting this verification, nor its cosmic implications, and resists its truth to the last. If we say that Cthulhu is one of the models for myth, then Thurston has had his Lovecraftian mythic encounter.

Dyer’s revelations concerning the Old Ones are more deliberate. The initial discovery of the frozen aliens is purely accidental. Scientific study literally leads to the

first revelation, which is resisted, that the Old Ones that have been found are still alive. In pursuit of answers to these questions, Dyer and Danforth discover the city of the Old Ones. As they explore the city, they must speculate until they find the hieroglyphs. Even though these apparently depict an elaborate history of this civilization, Dyer must still expend some conjectural energy in deciphering them. The age of the Old Ones is revealed, and then their possible role in the inception of human life comes to light. All of these are unsettling revelations, and in some sense bring an involuntary connection to the cosmic by virtue of the fact that Dyer can have no idea what the hieroglyphics will reveal to him. But the final revelation is completely involuntary: the discovery of the dead Old One who has been killed by a living shoggoth. Learning that the vast history of these creatures can reach into our present, and then conceivably into our future, is a devastating cosmic revelation. But the Modernist negotiation calls for a balance, in Lovecraft's case, a balance between devastation and awe: "There must always be a sense of...soaring outward toward the discovery of stupendous cosmic inconceivable things..." (SL II.127). The connection to the cosmic, as Robert H. Waugh points out, can only come in the delicate balance between the different types of landscape (226). This is the correlation to the Modernist connection with the mythic that can be discovered using the fragments collected in the "complex central consciousness." As Waugh shows in At the Mountains of Madness, the city is "obviously a shadow landscape, the eternal sunset idealizes it, and in that delicate balance the important recognition becomes possible: 'Radiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star-spawn – whatever they had been, they were men!'" (MM 96). In this case, we see the balance necessary to follow the path of Modernism. To achieve the cosmic, or mythic connection, one must balance landscapes, selves,

fragments uncombined or diluted and find what is between them. In Waugh's words these are the "dynamic relations of person, ideal, shadow and double in landscape and character" (242), the dynamics of several forces of reality that contribute to revelation: the Lovecraftian cosmic awareness that parallels the Modernist mythic association.

CHAPTER VI

THE RETURN TO LINEAR REALITY FROM COSMIC REVELATION

Lovecraft's creative process follows the Modernist process outlined by Quinones. In the rational world, existence has a fragmentary nature. Beyond these fragments lies the cosmic, and the guide to the cosmic is curiosity. Science can take us only so far, and then the imagination must take over. After glimpsing the cosmic, the artist must return to the world of rational history. This passage Lovecraft wrote in a 1931 letter to Frank Belknap Long outlines this parallel.

Reason as we may, we cannot destroy a normal perception of the highly limited and fragmentary nature of our visible world of perception & experience as scaled against the outside abyss of unthinkable galaxies & unplumbed dimensions...& this perception cannot fail to act potently upon the natural instinct of pure curiosity...In types where this urge cannot be gratified by actual research in pure science, or by the actual exploration of unknown parts of the earth, it is inevitable that a symbolic aesthetic outlet will be demanded. (SL III. 294-95)

Because the cosmic lies outside normal perception, the artist must use symbols to express his revelation, because his means of expression, and the audience's means of perception,

are limited. But for symbols to be understood, they must refer to recognizable objects or ideas. Lovecraft expresses this aesthetic link between cosmic and linear history when he says in a 1930 letter to August Derleth “I...seek a corresponding mystical identification with the only immediate tangible external reality which my perceptions acknowledge— i.e., the continuous stream of folkways around me” (SL III.244). After a cosmic connection has been established, the artist must return to the world of traditional history.

Lovecraft manifests this attempt at cohesion in his writing by creating a linear history with his cosmic stories. When we look at Lovecraft’s work, we see that in successive tales he makes references to events, people, places, and entities that have appeared or at least have been mentioned in earlier works. Some of these references are the fictional settings of the tales, for instance, the city of Arkham and Miskatonic University. The artificial mythology follows the structure of an actual mythology. If each entity appeared in only one story, isolated from the others, we probably would not refer to them as a pantheon or a mythos. But through continuous references, they become joined into a mythological structure in the tales. The Case of Charles Dexter Ward (1927) mentions Yog-Sothoth who figures more prominently in a later tale, “The Dunwich Horror” (1928). “The Call of Cthulhu” (1926) introduces Cthulhu, but he and his spawn are referred to in the histories of the Old Ones in At the Mountains of Madness (1931) and the Great Race in “The Shadow out of Time” (1934-35). Also in At the Mountains of Madness are references to creatures called the Mi-Go and to a professor named Wilmarth, who figure into a previous story called “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1930). The hieroglyphics of the Old Ones also mention Kadath, which is the destination of the character Randolph Carter in a previous work, The Dream-Quest of Unknown

Kadath (1926-27). Finally, Peaslee speaks with the captive minds of some of the Old Ones while he is a captive mind, and Dyer, from At the Mountains of Madness, is a member of Peaslee's expedition to Australia in "The Shadow out of Time." Critics tend to concur with my observation of this linkage; Will Murray points out that all Lovecraft's stories, "almost without exception, reverberate and reflect elements from his other fiction...virtually all Lovecraft is interconnected by ideas and elements" (30-31). George T. Wetzel calls the corpus of Lovecraft's fiction, at least those stories involving the artificial mythology, one lengthy novel because they share similar themes (79). Mosig notes that "all of Lovecraft's stories are loosely connected by common themes, locales, legendry, and philosophical undercurrents" (110). From a human perspective, history must be expanded to a more cosmic scale in order to obtain a more accurate picture of reality. The discovery of creatures and events that reveal cosmic reality are not random shocks, but revelations in a cohesive world where such creatures and events are unthinkable, yet unthinkably possible. As I have shown, histories and events, including the cosmic, corroborate one another throughout Lovecraft's work. Like the Modernist process, the fragments of cosmic history from each tale, when taken together, merge to form the macrocosmic cosmic history. When we notice that these connections are generally made in retrospect in terms of the chronology of the works, we see that indeed cosmic history is integral to this development of this complete picture of the universe. The revelation of connections is progressive, that is, we as readers learn about new aspects of the cosmos in steps; "what may have been perceived one way in our history because of ignorance must now be perceived differently with our new insight" (Schultz,

“From Microcosm to Macrocosm” 213). So, in effect, we have returned to a historical pattern, even if it is one with a cosmic significance.

The return to history was the final, vital step for the Modernists. They had stepped out of linear time into mythic time to gain a revitalized identity. However, as children of linear time, in order to understand reality completely, and express it completely, they had to return to linear time. The significance of this need to return, in terms of my interpretation of Quinones, is that without the historical context from which they came, they lost both a sense of identity and of meaning. The mythic revelation reassures and revitalizes, but as something abstract and eternal, it could not be the final conclusion for a finite consciousness. This finite consciousness, no matter how complex, could only grasp and retain a limited amount of meaning from the abstract. Now they had a renewed sense of self, and had to understand how this self now fit into the linear scheme. With their newfound knowledge and sense of significance, the Modernists could take more than a linear perspective, a more complete and objective view. Quinones’ idea of the “complex central consciousness” explains how Modernists could view multiple layers of reality, but could only realize them, and thence express them in terms of chronology, or only as they came into view along the course of time. With the mythic perspective, now they had a scope that could potentially grasp past, present, and future, though these are still linear. If before the individual could see these things, it was without a sense of his own significance in these motions of time. After mythic revelation he or she could speak of individual difference (Quinones 223-224). Modernist characters, in the same manner as Lovecraft’s, have returned to society with the secrets and can share these with the masses.

Lovecraft felt that what “lies ultimately beyond the deepest gulf of infinity is the very spot on which we stand” (SL III.388). Lovecraft’s protagonists undergo the same cyclical return process. Gayford explains this return in the following terms: “Science displaces tradition so much that tradition must be given a chance to reintegrate, renew, and reorient itself within the new reality” (“The Artist as Antaeus” 289). For the Modernist, the new reality that emerged after an encounter with the mythic is revitalized with significance. Lovecraft’s protagonists express their cosmic experience in the form of a warning. Just as the histories develop, so do the nature of the warnings. No character offers an explicit warning in The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, but Dr. Willett intimates to Charles’ father that Curwen and his secrets “came out of those years to engulf [Charles]” (MM 230). Thurston warns “that it was not meant that we should voyage far” across “the black seas of infinity” (DH 125). Thurston is warning the reader against following in his footsteps, against what Dziemianowicz calls “the all too natural means by which human beings assimilate truths to understand the world around them” (“On ‘The Call of Cthulhu’” 31). Collecting the multiple fragments of reality may mean discovering a cosmic reality that humans cannot face. Dyer’s account is a warning against further Antarctic expeditions, specifically to the Starkweather-Moore expedition (MM 19). Thurston’s warning seems essentially against the process itself, whereas Dyer’s warnings are based upon empirical evidence. In all of these cases, protagonists return from cosmic encounters to traditional history with a new perspective of reality, but all seem negative in character.

This recalls Lovecraft’s conflict between curiosity and the dread of cosmic uncertainty. In so many cases, knowledge in Lovecraft’s stories brings only negative

reactions such as horror, madness, and isolation. However, as St. Armand points out, for all the harm that certain pieces of knowledge cause, certain types are useful (181). Mosig explains that “Lovecraft is not deploring knowledge, but rather man’s inability to cope with it” (105). Characters are driven by the pursuit of knowledge, but regret this pursuit after a cosmic revelation. I have shown that Lovecraft himself craved expansion, but it was gaining knowledge of the cosmos through reading, through science, that confirmed the mechanistic conclusions that made human life so valueless to him. Two main questions to ask are what drives the individual to pursue knowledge and what will it mean to him or her? The Moderns sought a more complete picture of reality in order to re-establish the significance of individual identity. Burleson argues that protagonist negativity is due to a Lovecraftian effect he calls “ironic impressionism” which is the “effect of making human consciousness the conduit for experiencing the reality of the cosmic scheme while showing that that consciousness is uniquely capable of reduction to suffering in its self-understood insignificance” (146). In other words, “humans subvert themselves” because they concoct the belief that they have significance, then that synthetic belief is destroyed when they experience cosmic revelation (Burleson 147).

What we tend to see is that approaching reality strictly from a scientific perspective is destructive for the individual because it will only lead to the knowledge of humanity’s ultimate futility. As Gayford succinctly states, if “art tries to place a human framework on the universe, it is not art” (“The Artist as Antaeus” 280). The problem Lovecraft had with such Modernist works as Eliot’s The Waste Land was that they were good science, but not good art. For Lovecraft, aesthetics are the primary concern, and art must go beyond science into some symbolic aesthetic outlet. In Lovecraft’s estimation,

the purpose of art is to express beauty, feeling, and mood. Lovecraft's use of the fantastic becomes in this sense a defining aspect of his Modernism. Gayford explains that the "fantastic can be the common ground between the extremes of hollow, dead reality and functional, chaotic Modernistic poetry" (280). Gayford's analysis parallels what I have explained as one of the defining characteristics of Modernism: the tension created when the artist must negotiate between two polarities. This tension is at the heart of Lovecraft's portrayal of knowledge. Pursuing knowledge that is strictly scientific or historical in nature is detrimental to the individual. Astronomy will reveal a huge cosmos indifferent to our insignificant race. The pursuance of human history reveals our linear ancestry and the miniscule span of our existence in cosmic history. On the other hand, pursuing knowledge that involves the aesthetic is not immediately destructive. Certainly the statue of Cthulhu, the portrait of Curwen, and the art of the Old Ones hint at horrific cosmic implications. But Mariconda points out that Lovecraft emphasizes the positive potential of this art.

Mariconda observes that while human art is a positive means of approaching reality, the non-human art of Lovecraft's tales emphasizes our insignificance by giving the viewer insights into the truth of the cosmos ("Art, Artifact, and Reality" 3). I cannot argue with Mariconda's observation, but would point out that as Lovecraft's work progresses, non-human art evolves from being merely a source for the implications of cosmic horror and becomes a link between man and the cosmic. The statue of Cthulhu is unsettling through its suggestion of the cosmic. In At the Mountains of Mountains, the connection is voluntary and is precipitated by Dyer's empathy with the art of the Old Ones. In Mariconda's words "the narrator's remark that the murals possessed 'an artistic

force that moved us profoundly' (MM 56) foreshadows the sympathy of his later exclamation: 'whatever they had been, they were men!'" (96). What else can be said but that humankind has made progress toward coping with the cosmic, and such progress is the result of artistic appreciation? The art of the Old Ones, while containing ideas "beyond the reach of our perceptions," does move the narrator. "Certain touches here and there gave vague hints of latent symbols and stimuli which another mental and emotional background, and a fuller or different sensory equipment, might have made of profound and poignant significance to us" (MM 57). The art of the Old Ones is not alien to our sympathies and emotions; it instead encompasses our limited range of human capabilities and extends beyond them. Humans have discovered an aesthetic connection to the cosmic and have related it to themselves. Dyer can intuit enough about the art of the Old Ones to detect the presence of references he cannot himself conceive. However, the fact that he can at least detect these references, that the art of the Old Ones can provoke within him enough of a connection for him to realize the advanced nature of their culture, shows that humans are capable of expansion within the cosmic framework. The art of the shoggoths, in contrast, has "some subtly but profoundly alien element" (MM 92). Levels of cosmic truth exist which humans cannot fathom. The interesting distinction here is that humans can connect with a higher alien culture, one that itself has absorbed and can express notions of the cosmic. The art of the shoggoths is less advanced, more primal, representing the cosmos in a form "wholly lacking in delicacy and detail" (MM 92). Art has become the medium of making the cosmos easier to cope with. Art cannot and should not place a framework on the cosmic, but by steps of insight and intimation, shaped with beauty and authenticity, art brings us into more contact with

the cosmic. The connection made with the cosmic through art can lead to other, practical connections. Just as the Modernists returned from their mythic revelations with helpful insights for the Modern man, Lovecraft's protagonists return from their encounter with the cosmic with new insights. Thurston discourages any connection with the cosmic, and such discouragement is supported by the purely alien nature of the art. But the connection is unavoidable; the image comes from a dream and Wilcox the artist cannot resist the compulsion to sculpt his strange figures (DH 143). Dyer, in At the Mountains of Madness, gains information about the Old Ones through murals, through art itself. Historical knowledge is made more acceptable through a use of aesthetics. Both Joshi ("Lovecraft's Alien Civilizations" 17) and James Turner (xvi) explain that the civilization of the Old Ones was a form of utopia based upon Lovecraft's own political views. If we admit their assumptions, then we have a utopic civilization revealed, quite literally, through art. This civilization is by no means perfect, but much more advanced than that of humans. If humans can comprehend, at least in some measure the abstract aesthetics, then one can assume that they could aspire to the civilization that brought about these cultural influences. In other words, if humans can connect, however slightly, to this culture through art, it is logical to assume that they can, through such an appreciation over time, expand their cosmic connection and awareness.

CHAPTER VII

HOW “THE SHADOW OUT OF TIME” EXEMPLIFIES QUINONES' MODERNIST
PROCESS

Lovecraft's works, specifically At the Mountains of Madness, The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, and “The Call of Cthulhu,” exemplify the Modernist process as outlined by Quinones. Linear reality becomes fragmented, or recognized as fragmented, creating the expansion of consciousness which leads to a connection with the cosmic, that eventually must be translated back into terms understandable in the context of linear reality. In a story like The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, the cycle is completed more by implication, with the cosmic manifesting itself more through its effects on history. In “The Call of Cthulhu” and At the Mountains of Madness, cosmic history becomes actual, and humans must face the knowledge that their linear history comprises only a small part in the structure of cosmic history. In all three cases, experiencing cosmic history precipitates a crisis of personal identity. As he or she experiences the cosmic aspect of the Modernist cycle, the individual must redefine himself or herself in relation to cosmic reality. St. Armand describes Lovecraft's movement from the “complex central consciousness” into depths that exist beyond the personal: “Lovecraft and others like him moved further and further away from [Modern immersion in the ego] into the dark, immense, and unknown regions which exist beyond, behind, or below the ego” (171). St.

Armand describes Lovecraft's Modernist journey in terms of two major themes that involve the Jungian notion of the Triumph of the Shadow: outside forces beyond the self invade the consciousness, and the archetypal collective unconscious overwhelms the conscious self from the inside (171). Although the stories already analyzed demonstrate the Modernist process, "The Shadow out of Time" most acutely explores this crisis of identity in terms of an individual overwhelmed by forces from the outside that literally displace and alter his entire personality, an occurrence that shapes his identity.

"The Shadow out of Time" documents the experiences of Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee, an economics professor at Miskatonic University. After collapsing one day in class, Peaslee awakes without his memory. He has forgotten everything including how to walk, how to talk, and most significantly, he has forgotten his identity. Most peculiar among Peaslee's new habits is an interest in occult matters that he did not have before his strange trauma, an interest that takes him all over the world in pursuit of this knowledge. Then one day, just as suddenly as he lost it, Peaslee regains his memory, continuing the lecture he had been giving when he fainted. At first, Peaslee seems fine. Then he begins to have bizarre dreams wherein he visits a strange city. Inhabiting the city are alien creatures known as the Great Race. As these dreams grow increasingly vivid, Peaslee converses with the creatures and learns their vast, cosmic history. He also discovers that the Great Race has mastered time travel, having developed a means of casting their minds through time and space. A disembodied Great Race mind displaces the mind of the target being, and the displaced mind resides for the interim in the body of the Great Race member. Apparently this is what has happened in Peaslee's case, and a Great Race member has used his body to gather information about Peaslee's time period. While

Peaslee's mind is in a Great Race member's body, he is asked to record everything he knows about his time. He has been chosen because he is a rational, well-educated representative that can supply thorough, objective information. In a pivotal dream, Peaslee looks down at himself and instead of seeing his familiar human form, sees the alien body in which his mind is residing. Several months later Peaslee joins an expedition going to Australia to investigate an archeological find. This find consists of remnants of a city whose architecture is unparalleled. Wandering from the team one night, Peaslee descends into the underground city. The ruins resemble the city from his dreams, and eventually he finds the vault where the written histories are stored. He finds a familiar looking parchment and discovers that it is in his handwriting. He flees madly to the surface, but loses his evidence in the course of his flight.

Peaslee's life is a model of realistic, linear existence. He is a professor, which leads us to assume his intelligence and rational tendencies. That he is a professor of a subject like political economy, itself quite mundane, further emphasizes his rational perspective. In cosmic terms, from the perspective of the Great Race, he is a rational specimen. There is nothing specific about Peaslee that separates him from other people, at least not until after his sojourn among the Great Race. As in the other tales, Lovecraft is careful to maintain the semblance of a reality to which the reader can easily relate. Though Peaslee is a fictional character, Lovecraft provides a historically linear structure for his life, providing specific dates for the beginning of his tenure, his marriage, and the birthdates of his three children (DH 370). As in the other stories, Lovecraft also provides specific locations. Arkham and Miskatonic University are fictional, but Lovecraft does give coordinates for the ruins of the Great Race city and provides specific Australian

place names (DH 406). Also, Peaslee has photographs of the ruins, which give them an “incontrovertible realism” (DH 403). According to Peaslee, his case has been documented in “the letters and psychological journals of six or seven years ago” (DH 369). When he returns to his own body after the mind transference has occurred, Peaslee continues his lecture exactly where he had been interrupted. His own thought pattern has remained linear, even though he has experienced the cosmic.

But Peaslee’s reality, which appears to have been a linear progression, becomes more and more fragmented as he learns, in pieces, about what has occurred during his so-called amnesia. After regaining his personality, Peaslee explains that he had to “glean all the outward essentials” of his life from “files of old newspapers and scientific journals” (DH 373). His life must be reconstructed from written fragments. As in At the Mountains of Madness and “The Call of Cthulhu,” fragmentation begins the process of expansion through the agency of dreams. Peaslee interprets the development of his dreams from “unrelated scraps of daily life, pictures, and reading, and arranged in fantastically novel forms” (DH 383). At this point in the narrative, Peaslee expresses his belief that his dreams about the Great Race are influenced by the studies of his secondary personality. These dreams are “disjointed fragments seemingly without clear motivation” (DH 391). The disjointed quality of the dreams and some aspects of the dreams follow the kaleidoscopic pattern noted by Mariconda. Peaslee recalls discussions with a bewildering myriad of entities that have also undergone mind transference, such as people from Earth’s history, entities that live before and after humans, and entities from other planets (DH 395-396). The whole fragmentation of Peaslee’s reality is based upon the single schism caused by his exchange of personality with the Great Race member.

However, from his perspective the fragmentation becomes more complicated as each discovery through his limited human perception leads to more fragments. Lovecraft displays this metaphorically when Peaslee is exploring the ruins, literally seeking the truth about his experience; he encounters “debris and fragments of every sort” (DH 428). At one point, Peaslee’s path is obstructed and he wonders how he can “disturb the tightly packed fragments” when to do so could cause a cave-in (DH 421). To discover the truth about his reality, Peaslee, like Willett, Thurston, and Dyer, must risk disturbing the fragments.

As Peaslee learns more about his reality through the fragments of written reports, dreams, and physical exploration, he must, like the protagonists before him, reconcile the conflicting sensations of fear and fascination. The conflict between these two sensations is more acute in Peaslee than in the protagonists of the other tales because Peaslee’s crisis is more intimately involved with his identity. As Peaslee’s visions become more vivid, he experiences “an inexplicable loathing” towards himself, occasioned by the memory-like quality of his dreams (DH 383). Yet his solution to combat these impressions is to undertake “an intensive study of other cases of amnesia and visions” which eventually leads to systematic studies in the medical, anthropological, and historical fields (DH 383-384). Despite the dread surrounding the possibilities of his condition, Peaslee must pursue the truth, though his aim is to disprove the veracity of his experience. Eventually, Peaslee’s “reading and research caught up and passed the dreams” and often “dream-fragments were explained in advance” (DH 398). Here Peaslee’s “complex central consciousness” attempts to reconcile rational pursuit and the speculation of dreams, but the issue of Peaslee’s identity during the five years of displacement remains unsolved.

He remains “unwilling to vouch for the truth,” not merely because he is uncertain of the truth but because he hopes that the “experience was wholly or partially an hallucination” (DH 368). If everything that Peaslee has undergone is real, then he has indeed lost his personality during the space of his displacement. Like Dyer and Thurston, Peaslee must pursue the truth, and he is driven to explore the Great Race ruins. Once again, Lovecraft speaks metaphorically, this time in terms reminiscent of the “complex central consciousness.” As Peaslee approaches the ruins on the night of his solitary exploration, a subconscious force is “fumbling and rattling at the latch” of his recollection while “another unknown force sought to keep the portal barred” (DH 412). This metaphor has a parallel in the actual course that Peaslee follows as he explores the ruins. In order to reach the vault with the history that he had written, Peaslee is compelled to pass trapdoors “yawning unguarded down to abysses past imagination” (DH 425). If the portals beyond human imagination are inaccessible while Peaslee is still in the linear world of the surface, as he reaches “profounder depths” (DH 423) of the “complex central consciousness,” those portals lie open, offering implications of the cosmic.

Peaslee’s connection with the cosmic begins when he delves into the occult lore that he had studied when controlled by his secondary personality. He discovers “certain marginal notations and ostensible *corrections* of the hideous text” that the librarians confirm had been made by him (DH 384). The expansion occasioned by Peaslee’s dreams connects him with the cosmic when he recognizes that certain hieroglyphs that he wrote are those that he has seen in his dreams. He has a cosmic revelation in his dreams when he overcomes the conflict of curiosity and fear and succumbs to his “morbid temptation” to look at himself (DH 394). His body is that of a member of the Great Race,

the final entities of Lovecraft's artificial mythology. Though this experience shocks him, Peaslee continues to explain his dreams through "rational psychological explanations" gleaned from his researches (DH 403). Through the combination of his dreams and researches, Peaslee learns about the mind-transference process, but cannot acknowledge its reality. Even after Peaslee sees the photographs of the ruins sent by Mackenzie, he still remains "unprepared for anything like a tangible survival from a lost world remote beyond imagination" (DH 403). In order for Peaslee to acknowledge his cosmic connection, he must visit the ruins in person, and when he does a "driving fatality tugged insistently" at his brain, leading him to a cosmic revelation in actual life rather than in dream (DH 418). While descending through the depths of the ruins, or the metaphorical "complex central consciousness," he is led by the combination of memory and dream. His true cosmic revelation occurs when he opens the alien book and discovers "words of the English language in [his] own handwriting" (DH 433). This is his confirmation that he did inhabit the body of a Great Race member. He has not only contributed to the written history of the cosmos, but has actually participated in the history of beings whose history far exceeds both the past and present of humankind.

Because he does not arrive at the surface with the book, Peaslee is able to hope that his experience was only a hallucination. Like Dyer, Willett, and Thurston, Peaslee has difficulty accepting his cosmic revelation because of the identity crisis that it causes. With his knowledge of cosmic history, Peaslee must, like the other protagonists, reorient himself in terms of his place in the scheme of existence. Yet Peaslee's cosmic encounter is more intense than those of his predecessors. Thurston has only learned secondhand about Cthulhu. Willett and Dyer have learned about cosmic history, or hints of it,

through their own experiences. Peaslee's experience surpasses these because he has participated in the cosmic. During the five year disruption of his linear history, his identity was altered. His consciousness remained that of Peaslee, but he lived in an utterly alien form. Before he realizes that he has become housed in a Great Race body, Peaslee remarks while watching them that it was "not wholesome to watch monstrous objects doing what one had known only human beings to do" (DH 392). After his dream identification with the creatures, he "waked half of Arkham with his screaming" (DH 394). To identify so closely with the utterly alien representatives of the cosmic is too much for Peaslee to bear. The device used for the mind-transference is described as "a queer mixture of rods, wheels, and mirrors" (DH 374). That a mirror, a means of self-identification, is a primary piece of this device emphasizes its effect on identity.

As in the other tales discussed in this study, the creatures of Lovecraft's artificial mythology undermine traditional mythology. Peaslee learns about the Great Race through such sources as primal myth and "cloudy legends of the pre-human world, especially those Hindu tales involving stupefying gulfs of time and forming part of the lore of modern theosophists" (DH 385). Since the Great Race "had learned all things that ever were known or ever would be known on the earth," any humans that could recall their sojourn among the Great Race or any Great Race members residing in human bodies would have unaccountable knowledge. This circumstance accounts for "all the legends of prophets, including those in human mythology" (DH 386). The depths of the ruins contain a "primal, inconceivable source of age-old myth-cycles and haunting nightmares" (DH 414). All of these references deal with aspects of myth, but Lovecraft allows the Great Race to undermine the human science that comes to displace myth. The accounts

that Peaslee studies to understand his so-called amnesia case include “all records of split personalities from the days of daemoniac-possession legends to the medically realistic present” (DH 377). Cases matching Peaslee’s mind-transference are rare, but come from within the whole range of this historical spectrum. Lovecraft’s concept of the cosmic provides both a source for and a culmination of the speculative and the rational. This parallels how human history becomes encapsulated by the cosmic revelation. As he recalls more details, Peaslee becomes able to relate the history of the Great Race as it has been related to him. The history of the Great Race extends for eons, both before and after the history of the human race. In fact, when Peaslee’s mind transference occurs, he is projected back into time, a time predating humankind. He has not only learned about cosmic history, he has become part of cosmic history, at least from a human perspective. Not only is he participating in history with the Great Race, but he is literally part of the body of a species that was independent of the Great Race before the Race migrated into their bodies. Peaslee is already part of the human history, and now he is part of Great Race history. His body has been used to acquire information for them. Thus, while he was just a cog in the machinery of human rational time, now he is a cog in the machinery of cosmic time. Even expansion in the cosmos is still subject to mechanistic laws. From a cosmic perspective, Peaslee has value in that he does contribute as an individual to the historical library, and his account is based on his individual knowledge. However, he is still just one book in a library that contains knowledge acquired over eons of time. He is one sample out of a countless number, not just on Earth, but throughout time and the cosmos. Yet, from a human perspective, Peaslee does become a more distinct individual because of his rare encounter with the Great Race, with the cosmic.

In making this correlation, it is also significant that only the mind travels through time. The minds do displace one another, but only the mind, not the body, disrupts the linear history. In terms of Modernism, the struggle is in the mind also. Physical history cannot be changed in terms of rearrangement; the past cannot be altered. The only way to disrupt linear history is to alter one's perspective, or by altering the way in which one experiences history. Integral aspects of this new process of experience are the new methods of expression. The Moderns sought to affirm personal identity. If one is changing history, it is by changing one's role in it in terms of personal value. One can rewrite history only in the present moment, and to do so requires an evaluation of the past, not in terms of predictive history, but in terms of innovative history. So how is Peaslee's historical manuscript, his contribution to the Great Race's library, to be classified? This becomes difficult because Peaslee wrote this within the scope of his personal history, in a moment of his own chronology, which is tied to human history. At the same time, he has written the document from the perspective of humans while mentally existing in the prehistoric past. And in a cosmic chronology, when he penned his chronicle, he was writing of the future. From this perspective, Peaslee is actually writing from outside linear history. This document brings together personal, human, and cosmic history within its pages. The Modernist process does the same. Here we have the energies of conflicting times fueling the Modernist dynamic. But all three of these times remain integral identifying aspects of this document, of this making of history. In the making of history in this sense, Peaslee does write the future. He is writing history and the future at the same time, and the account we read is one of the present. But is important to note that this history is objective, not revisionist. That is the Modernist key.

The Modernist can gain meaning from the past and present, and then write the past, present, and/or future, infusing what he or she has learned. In a sense, a new past opens up before the individual, as it has done for Peaslee, based upon a new understanding of identity. We can see this infusion of multiple times within Peaslee during his descent among the ruins. “Out of unknown gulfs of time the intricate, secret motions” of the lock manifest themselves in his hand; all of the different times that Peaslee’s identity comprises meet in this unconscious knowledge of how to open the lock to the historical document, the truth of the cosmos (DH 426).

According to the Modernist process, Peaslee must eventually return to linear history after his cosmic encounter. He does this on several levels. First, as I have discussed, he returns to himself after his strange case of amnesia. But at this point he is still without any understanding of his cosmic experience. Second, he has his dream revelation, and from this he “plunged madly up from the abyss of sleep” (DH 394). Even after this experience, he can still deny his involvement in the cosmic by dismissing the revelation as merely a dream. Because Peaslee’s connection to the cosmic would have such profound implications for his personal identity, he must have incontrovertible proof that the connection exists. Peaslee’s connection draws him down into the ruins, down to the precise location of his historical document, and he must carry this document to the surface. To resurface with cosmic knowledge, Peaslee must leap a chasm “going uphill, and hampered by fright, exhaustion, the weight of the metal case, and the anomalous backward tug” of the strange wind (DH 430). The cosmic itself, in the form of the case and the wind, are restraining him, preventing his return to the world he knows. Leaping to emerge from the cosmic, Peaslee is “instantly engulfed in a pandaemoniac vortex”

where he passes back through the “flashes of a non-visual consciousness” before finding himself back on the desert surface (DH 431). With his personal identity so immersed in his cosmic experience, Peaslee cannot simply relinquish the cosmic, but must pass back through the “complex central consciousness” to regain any sense of the mundane.

Both Modernists and Lovecraft believed that human consciousness must return from cosmic time to linear time to retain reference points for personal values, specifically identity. Thus both are left with a universe working according to mechanistic laws that cannot be overturned. Any quest for meaning and validation must and will remain within the parameters of this mechanism. If there is a difference between Modernists and Lovecraft, it is in the way they approached these limits. Both understood the limitations, but the Modernists retained a hint of hope in the possibilities of mythic rejuvenation. We have already seen that Lovecraft’s mythos itself imposes limits, demystifying classical mythology. In this process he gives these myths origins of a much more antique nature, but also removes any mystical quality by implying that the mythic figures are creatures acting according to rational laws, albeit ones that humans cannot understand. However, as I have shown in At the Mountains of Madness, despite the limits, humans are given some positive potential through an appreciation of aesthetics. By seeking identity for the individual, the Modernists offered a means of personal empowerment. Lovecraft reinforced personal validity with his philosophy of aesthetic conduct and standards. The cosmic becomes both a diminishing force toward humans, but at the same time, becomes a means of identity expansion. In a story like “The Shadow out of Time” human history is reduced severely in scope by the history of the Great Race, which is not even the entire

history of the cosmos. Yet we see that a human can contribute to this history regardless of how small that contribution may be.

In “The Shadow out of Time,” historical knowledge is the primary source of aesthetics for the Great Race. Peaslee remarks that “art was a vital part of life” but we are told little else about artistic expression (DH 399). The chief pursuit of the Great Race is the maintenance of their library wherein “reposed the whole history, past and future, of the cosmic space-time continuum” (418). Unlike humans, the Great Race can cope with cosmic truth and are so fascinated with it that collecting this information is their primary activity. For them, history and aesthetics share a Modernist coexistence based upon exploratory processes involving time and identity. Peaslee connects with the cosmic not only through his residence among the Great Race, but also because he has shared in their aesthetic process. He has undergone the processes involving time and identity that all time-travelling members have undergone. He has collected and contributed historical, and therefore, aesthetic details. Whereas Dyer could relate to the art of the Old Ones, Peaslee has made the ultimate Lovecraftian connection: he has participated in the aesthetics of the Great Race. In an almost limitless cosmos, so much will be alien to humans. In terms of probability, however, at least some races or entities should exist that humans can relate to, and the Old Ones and Great Race are accessible. While positive possibilities do exist in the cosmos, humans should be wary about pursuing certain avenues of knowledge. Pure science and history will follow an indiscriminate course, and because of their objective nature, will identify the cosmos precisely in their own, cold terms: as a mechanical void subject only to the laws of cause and effect. The safer, and indeed more profitable avenues for expansion are those where an aesthetic connection

can be made, even if it is an indefinable connection such as that made with the Old Ones and Great Race. The cosmos can hold wonders as well as terrors; it just depends upon the lens through which humans decide to look. If, like Peaslee and Dyer, humans can make aesthetic connections through the Modernist process of negotiation, they can discover a potential for improvement.

Joshi points out that the Great Race civilization is the pinnacle of Lovecraft's utopic civilizations, surpassing even that of the Old Ones ("Lovecraft's Alien Civilizations" 17). Turner also interprets the Great Race civilization in terms of utopia when he explains that by the time Lovecraft wrote "The Shadow out of Time" he was "re-forming the mythos creatures in terms of his developing criteria for human excellence, his own idealized conception of man at his most humane and profound" (xvii). As Peaslee has learned, the Great Race will perpetuate its civilization for amounts of time that humans cannot, at this point in their development, imagine. However, as I have explained, Peaslee has directly participated in this civilization, most importantly in its primary aesthetic pursuit. If the Great Race does indeed represent the Lovecraftian utopia, and Lovecraft allows a human to function within those expanded parameters, then logic would suggest that humans can hope to develop and improve their limited capacities. Of course, such an assertion needs qualification. Even after an aesthetic connection, Peaslee still cannot cope with his knowledge while he still views the cosmos from his limited human perspective. And members of the Great Race can perish, thereby reinforcing the fact that even the most cosmically oriented creatures are still subject to the mechanistic limitations of the universe. Humans cannot affect or escape from the mechanisms of the universe, and any improvements of their capacities will remain

insignificant in the scheme of the universe. But from a human perspective, and a personal perspective, these improvements can serve as positive potentialities. The Modernists turned to myth for this aesthetic connection with their past and with the basic cyclical connections of all human experience. For them and for Lovecraft linear history by itself would only produce a meaningless existence. Linear history colored with the aesthetic understanding of myth could reveal the beauty and meaning of human existence. Myth can be tragic, just as Lovecraft's mythos could be frightening, but even tragic myths can be beneficial; humans can learn from them lessons that have cosmic, rather than merely mundane significance. Humans can at least get warnings from those who have experienced the cosmic, and in this sense connections with the cosmic can be beneficial. Whether they experience the mythic or cosmic, the parties involved may and do suffer, but in the overall scheme there may be benefits. By negotiating with the imagination, "which groups isolated impressions into gorgeous patterns," one may navigate among the "objects of visible and invisible Nature" (In Defence of Dagon 11).

Joseph Wood Krutch, as cited in Joshi, states that if "the end of the nineteenth century found thinkers doing their best to confine man within the framework of a mechanistically conceived nature, the first quarter of the twentieth century found them eagerly seeking the same way, either scientific or metaphysical, by which he may escape from it" (Decline of the West 29). As I have shown using Quinones' model, the restrictive quality of this framework was the result of an imbalance of time; predictive time far outweighed innovative time. To regain this sense of innovation one must negotiate through the fragments of reality using the "complex central consciousness," connect with the cosmic and return with any newfound knowledge or truths. Mere

acquisition is not innovation; something must be done with this knowledge. Lovecraft and the Modernists understood that the ultimate innovation was the fulfillment of aesthetic values, based upon the truths gleaned from the Modernist process. The artist must create a symbolic outlet so that others will understand these truths, so that others can participate in the innovative aspect of time. If participation in the innovative increases, the balance of innovative and predictive time can be restored. This balance is the Modernist negotiation of time, and creates a wider, more stable path towards the discovery of personal identity and meaning. The Great Race is “the greatest race of all because it alone had conquered the secret of time” (DH 385). By being innovative with time, the Great Race can discover cosmic meanings through the use of various identities, and yet never lose track of their own history and identities. Through aesthetic participation, humans like Peaslee can glimpse this process. For Peaslee “there lies upon this world of man a mocking and incredible shadow out of time” (DH 433). This shadow is described as constraining but also as something expansive. Lovecraft states that this means “*taking reality just as it is*-accepting all the limitations of the most orthodox science-and then permitting my symbolising faculty to *build outward* from the existing facts; rearing a structure of *infinite promise and possibility...*” (quoted in Turner xv). Lovecraft and the Modernists both sought expansion, the Modernists through mythic association and Lovecraft through cosmic awareness. Both utilized aesthetic philosophies to negotiate between the restraints placed upon the self by mechanistic history and the detachment of the self from relative existence caused by immersion in the abstract. Through aesthetic connections to tradition and to the cosmic, Lovecraft and the Modernists created artistic depictions of the negotiation between time and personal

identity. If one understands this process, one has a comprehension of the aesthetics of both Lovecraft and Modernism.

NOTES

¹ Throughout the text SL will refer to the Arkham House volumes of Lovecraft's Selected Letters. The Roman numerals indicate the volume number and the Arabic numerals indicate the page number of the letter cited.

² Throughout the text DH will refer to the Arkham House volume The Dunwich Horror and Others.

³ Throughout the text, MM will refer to the Arkham House volume At the Mountains of Madness.

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