

Lovecraft Rising:  
Tracing the Growth of Scholarship on Howard Phillips Lovecraft, 1990-2004

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Howard Phillips Lovecraft is probably the most influential yet least known writer of weird fiction. Contemporary authors, including Joyce Carol Oates, Stephen King, Ramsey Campbell, Clive Barker, and Michael Chabon, hail him as a master of the weird, four decades of scholarship have mapped the themes he laid out in his fiction and elsewhere and their influence on the evolution of the horror and science fiction genres, and thousands of derivative works have been composed as part of the cult following often labeled the “Cthulhu Mythos.” Yet despite his far-reaching influence, few readers outside the circle of horror enthusiasts know much about him beyond a vague recognition of his name, and serious scholarship on his life and work is frustratingly difficult to locate. Of course, in many ways, the plight of Lovecraft scholarship is the plight of genre fiction scholarship in general. Only recently, and always slowly, have literary scholars given serious consideration to genre fiction. However, with the release of Lovecraft’s fiction in more reputable editions over the last few years—including Penguin Classics, Modern Library, and the Library of America’s 2005 release of *H. P. Lovecraft: Tales*, edited by Peter Straub<sup>1</sup>—there is hope that Lovecraft and his contributions to literature—which are not confined

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1 Daniel Handler, who also writes under the pseudonym Lemony Snicket, reviewed this edition in the *New York Times Review of Books*. (Handler, Daniel. "H. P. Lovecraft': Unnatural Selection." Book Review. *The New York Times Sunday Book Review* 17 April 2005, Late Edition ed., sec. 7: 7.)  
Lovecraft, H. P. *At the Mountains of Madness*. Definitive Edition. New York: Modern Library, 2005.  
Lovecraft, H. P. *The Call of Cthulhu and Other Weird Stories*. S. T. Joshi, ed. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.  
Lovecraft, H. P. *The Dreams in the Witch House and Other Weird Stories*. S. T. Joshi, ed. New York: Penguin Books, 2004.  
Lovecraft, H. P. *Tales*. Peter Straub, ed. Library of America. New York: Penguin Putnam, 2005.  
Lovecraft, H. P. *The Thing on the Doorstep and Other Weird Stories*. S. T. Joshi, ed. New York: Penguin Books, 2001.

to genre fiction—will finally attain more widespread recognition, and that scholarship on Lovecraft will find its way into more reputable scholarly journals.

This survey will focus on scholarship surrounding Lovecraft's fiction from 1990 to 2004 and will only discuss major works or important articles from established journals<sup>2</sup> in the development of Lovecraft scholarship, though other works and articles may earn mention for the sake of establishing context. One reason for beginning with the year 1990 relates to a significant source of scholarship that *will not* be considered here: *Lovecraft Studies*. This journal—originally a quarterly publication of Necronomicon press begun in 1979—contains a large number of excellent scholarly articles, many of which served as seeds for later major works discussed in this survey. In fact, during the 1980s, nearly all Lovecraft scholarship of merit was published in *Lovecraft Studies*.<sup>3</sup> However, as noted by Peter Cannon, one of Lovecraft's major scholars and a regular contributor to *Lovecraft Studies*, the journal's audience and academic status is severely limited. During the H. P. Lovecraft Centennial Conference held at Brown University in 1990, Cannon deplored the state of Lovecraft studies within the larger academic community. In his words: "We have attracted little notice in the academy, apart from Brown University. The audience of *Lovecraft Studies* consists almost entirely of horror fiction fans; only a handful of college libraries carry the premier journal in the field. Serious Lovecraft criticism has rarely appeared in print outside the science-fiction horror-fantasy realm" ("Some Thoughts" 1). Therefore, while the journal is an essential component of Lovecraft scholarship, its contents

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2 By "established," I mean two things: journals that are not devoted exclusively to genre fiction, or journals that, though they focus on genre fiction, have attained a high level of recognition within the larger academic community.

3 Copies of *Lovecraft Studies*, as well as many other primary sources related to the study of Lovecraft, can be found as part of the H. P. Lovecraft Collection at Brown University—a collection of over 1,000 books and magazines in over 20 languages, as well as a collection of over 2,000 original letters.

do not bear on the focus of *this* survey, which is the growth of Lovecraft scholarship in the larger academic community. As a result, articles from *Lovecraft Studies* will only be referenced to further establish the context of other works, trends, or debates.

In addition, this survey will not address scholarship related to Lovecraft's verse (of which most is considered inferior), nor of his extensive range of articles written for amateur journalism publications. Neither will this survey discuss biographical work—that is to say, those works related directly to the study of Lovecraft's life. Though many of the works considered here do draw heavily on Lovecraft's voluminous body of personal letters in order to shed light on his fiction, they do not have Lovecraft's life as their central focus. Finally, this survey will disregard entirely the vast and growing body of derivative works<sup>4</sup> as well as discussions of Lovecraft's influence on other writers.

Of the trends in scholarship over the last fifteen years, the one that defines the focus for this study is the growth of Lovecraft scholarship outside the small circle of devotees, and this will serve as the study's method of organization. Another significant trend includes the long-running debate over the identification and naming of what has been variously called the Cthulhu mythos, the Lovecraft mythos, the Arkham cycle, and the Yog-Sothoth cycle, among others, which also involves a consideration of Lovecraft's philosophy and worldview. Other trends of note include the importance of place and tradition in Lovecraft's work and the shifts in critical perspectives applied to his fiction—from traditional and formal approaches to psychoanalysis to structuralism and post-structuralism.

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4 For one thing, these derivatives, often referred to collectively as “mythos works” after the controversial label “Cthulhu mythos,” would be difficult to define. How much must a work pull from Lovecraft's work, and which aspects, in order to be considered “of the mythos?” In 1999, Armitage House released *A Cthulhu Mythos Bibliography & Concordance* that attempts to make these distinctions, citing more than 2,600 works, but as we will discuss later in this survey, the concept of the “Cthulhu mythos” is highly problematic and one of the major areas of debate in Lovecraft scholarship.

In many ways, W. Paul Cook predicted the course of Lovecraft scholarship in an article originally published in 1945. In the article, entitled “A Plea for Lovecraft,” Cook warns:

Irreparable harm is being done to Lovecraft by indiscriminate and even unintelligent praise, by lack of unbiased and intelligent criticism, and by a warped sense of what is due him in the way of publication of his works. . . . So wide a circulation of even his worst stuff, and his worst was pretty bad, coupled with the assurance that it is the work of a master, is certain to have a definite reaction, and a very unfavorable one, as he comes to the notice of those whose knowledge of literary values is not blinded or stultified by personal friendship and unquestioning worship. (26)

Cook was not concerned that the uncritical attention from his fans would prevent Lovecraft from receiving the recognition he deserved from the larger academic community, but rather that it would seriously delay that recognition by cluttering his study with *everything* he wrote—good and bad—rather than focusing on the small but significant body of work that demonstrates his mastery and contributions to the field. Cook continued, “Indeed, he may eventually come to be considered one of the supreme masters, but it will be in spite of all the present over-praise, and when his work is boiled down to one well-chosen volume of no great size” (26). It is still too early to know whether *H. P. Lovecraft: Tales* will serve as that “well-chosen volume,” but it has taken at least sixty years for a serious attempt at following Cook’s advice—sixty years of slow movement from the small circle of devotees, to the larger circle of serious scholars, to the hoped-for recognition and acceptance by the larger academic community.

In the same year as Cook’s “Plea,” Edmund Wilson reviewed Lovecraft for *The New Yorker* in an article entitled “Tales of the Marvellous and Ridiculous”—characteristically

showing Wilson's disdain for genre fiction, but also proving Cook's point that mainstream criticism would not abide indiscriminate devotion. Wilson's criticism is searing: "The only real horror in most of these fictions is the horror of bad taste and bad art. Lovecraft was not a good writer. ... The Lovecraft cult, I fear, is on even a more infantile level than the Baker Street Irregulars and the cult of Sherlock Holmes" (49). A few years later, in 1949, Fritz Leiber published "A Literary Copernicus," considered by contemporary scholars to be the finest general critical essay on Lovecraft. In the article, Leiber asserts: "Howard Phillips Lovecraft was the Copernicus of the horror story. He shifted the focus of the supernatural dread from man and his little world and his gods, to the stars and the black and unplumbed gulfs of intergalactic space. To do this effectively, he created a new kind of horror story and new methods for telling it" (50). However, the article appeared not in *The New Yorker* or a publication of similar stature, but in *The Acolyte*—a 1940s fanzine with a total run of fourteen issues. These two early critical responses, true to Cook's warning, form the pattern of Lovecraft scholarship until at least 1990: dismissal by mainstream academia, with the significant and insightful criticism (accompanied, of course, with a larger portion of fannish drivel) produced by small-circulation, genre-centered journals and small presses.

From the 1940s until the late 1970s, significant work outside of the fan publications either focused on his life through a series of biographies, the early formulation of the "Cthulhu Mythos" under the pen of August Derleth (of which more later), or occurred in France or Spain.<sup>5</sup> It wasn't until the 1980s, with the formation of Necronomicon press in 1979 and the publication of *Lovecraft Studies* (and to a lesser degree *Crypt of Cthulhu*), that Lovecraft scholarship began

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5 Lévy, Maurice. *Lovecraft, Ou Du Fantastique*. Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1972. Later translated by S. T. Joshi, and still considered the most insightful single volume of Lovecraft criticism. France and Spain have generally considered Lovecraft a "neglected genius of American letters" (Wohleber, 82).

to expand in scope and increase in scholarly merit. Even then, as discussed earlier, *Lovecraft Studies* was confined to a small audience of fans and scholars who were already convinced of Lovecraft's literary value.

At the same time that *Lovecraft Studies* began its run, the journal's editor, S. T. Joshi, started building what is now his considerable reputation as a Lovecraft scholar. His first major contribution to the field was *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism*, a collection of essays that tracked the trends and highlights of Lovecraft scholarship from 1940 to 1980. He followed this collection a year later with *H. P. Lovecraft and Lovecraft Criticism: An Annotated Bibliography* and the year after that published a general introduction to Lovecraft as part of the Starmont Reader's Guide series. With these three works, Joshi almost single-handedly set the stage for Lovecraft scholarship over the next ten years. True to the pattern, though, the majority of this scholarship happened within the pages of *Lovecraft Studies* and outside the attention of the rest of the academic community.<sup>6</sup> Joshi recognized this problem, and in 1985 declared that his goal was "to take Lovecraft away from the world of fantasy fandom and to establish him definitively in the broader world of scholarly literary criticism" (Mariconda, "Expect" 25). While the merits of the first half of that goal are arguable—a point this survey will return to later—Lovecraft scholarship is still trying to accomplish the second half of that goal.

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6 Of the few articles during the 1980s that did not appear in *Lovecraft Studies*, those with any larger significance rely on a discussion of Lovecraft's influences or comparisons to other, more popular, writers.

Burleson, Donald R. "Lovecraft: The Hawthorne Influence." *Extrapolation* 22.3 (1981): 262-64.

Cannon, Peter. "The Return of Sherlock Holmes and H. P. Lovecraft." *Baker Street Journal* 34 (1984): 217-20.

Price, Robert M. "Stephen King and the Lovecraft Mythos." *Discovering Stephen King*. Darrell Schweitzer, ed. Vol. 8. Starmont Studies in Literary Criticism. Mercer Island: Starmont, 1985. 109-22.

A number of works were released in and around 1990 that took major steps toward Joshi's goal. Steven J. Mariconda provides an overview of these works and their bearing on the field in his article "‘Expect Great Revelations’: Lovecraft Criticism in His Centennial Year." The article, however, appeared in *Lovecraft Studies* and is therefore not easily attainable, so a summary of its contents will be helpful. Mariconda reviews the contributions of the field's major scholars through 1991, beginning with Peter Cannon's *H. P. Lovecraft* entry in the Twayne's United States Authors Series (1989). Cannon understands the problem facing Lovecraft scholarship, and addresses the problem directly in his preface. "I have written this study with two audiences in mind," he says, "the believers and the skeptics" (xi). He continues, "Into the second category I put the nonfans—including most English professors ... I hope this study will persuade them that Lovecraft is more than a mere horror writer ..." (xi). The work is intended to be (as all Twayne USAS guides) a concise critical introduction to Lovecraft. Lovecraft scholars, however, seemed to expect something else and reacted negatively to Cannon's efforts,<sup>7</sup> to which Cannon responded, defending his work as a general introduction, and stating "Cautious understatement, in my opinion, will serve the cause of promoting Lovecraft better than otherwise" ("In Defense" 25)—an approach with which W. Paul Cook would agree. In any case, Mariconda found it a helpful contribution, but admitted it "brought an era to a close with ... the last in a series of general books about Lovecraft" ("Expect" 24). An observation that is still correct—there have been no new general Lovecraft introductions to date (Joshi's *A Subtler Magick* in 1996 is a revision of his 1982 *H. P. Lovecraft*).

Mariconda next addresses Joshi's *H. P. Lovecraft: The Decline of the West* (1990), the first full-length philosophical study of Lovecraft—a work for which Mariconda finds Joshi

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<sup>7</sup> Reviews can be found in *Lovecraft Studies* issue 19/20 (Fall 1989).

particularly suitable. Mariconda explains that, to prepare for the work, Joshi read all of Machen, Dunsany, Blackwood, and Bierce, and reviewed the writings of Haeckel, Hugh Elliot, Santayana, Joseph Wood Krutch, and Nietzsche—writers and philosophers to whom Lovecraft often refers in his letters (“Expect” 24). Mariconda also addresses Joshi’s *The Weird Tale* (1990), a survey of the weird fiction of Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany, Algernon Blackwood, M. R. James, Ambrose Bierce, and H. P. Lovecraft (whose section is titled “The Decline of the West”). It is not an exhaustive study, nor does Joshi intend it to be, but rather a “preliminary to more theoretical treatments” (Joshi, *Weird* 231).

Mariconda moves on to Donald R. Burleson’s *Lovecraft: Disturbing the Universe*. This is an important work for a number of reasons. Not only is Burleson’s analysis insightful and well-received by other Lovecraft scholars, but this is the first work that approaches the stories from a post-structuralist school of criticism and without relying on Lovecraft’s life and other writings for analysis. Burleson built up to this work through deconstructionist articles published in the 1980s (in *Lovecraft Studies* and *Crypt of Cthulhu*),<sup>8</sup> but many of these articles were poorly received. Nevertheless, this work, while not in the main stream of Lovecraft scholarship, is considered a successful addition. Most importantly, it begins to do exactly what Lovecraft scholarship needed (and still needs, for the most part)—approach Lovecraft’s literature on its own terms (rather than relying on the pseudo-mythology that has built up around Lovecraft as a “weird figure”) and examine his works from other established schools of criticism (rather than relying only on traditional and formal approaches).

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8 See the Selected List of Works Consulted



Mariconda next addresses a number of works and articles by Robert M. Price. Price led the way through the 1980s in deconstructing the conception of the “Cthulhu Mythos” that August Derleth created after Lovecraft’s death.<sup>9</sup> While his contribution to that aspect of Lovecraft studies was substantial during the 1980s, he does not receive much praise from Mariconda for his recent publications. Both collections Mariconda reviews—*The Horror of It All: Encrusted Gems from the “Crypt of Cthulhu* and *H. P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos*—are deemed inconsistent in their level of insight and scholarship, which is unfortunate given some of the excellent articles Price has contributed to the field. We’ll return to Price’s contribution to the *Books at Brown* symposium on Lovecraft, as it demonstrates the quality of which he is capable.

Mariconda’s last review is *An Epicure in the Terrible: A Centennial Anthology of Essays in Honor of H. P. Lovecraft*. The collection was edited by David E. Schultz and S. T. Joshi, and like Joshi’s earlier *Four Decades of Criticism*, it serves as a marker for Lovecraft scholars at the turn of the century, collecting essays from the 1980s written by the leading scholars in the field: Burleson, Peter Cannon, Stefan Dziemianowicz, Kenneth Faig, Robert Price, Barton Levi St. Armand, Robert Waugh, and Mariconda himself.

Another helpful source for assessing the state of Lovecraft scholarship at the beginning of the 1990s is the *Books at Brown* issue devoted to Lovecraft, which collects expanded versions of selected papers given by participants in the H. P. Lovecraft Centennial Conference in 1990. As mentioned earlier, Peter Cannon opened the conference with “Some Thoughts on the Current State of Lovecraft Studies,” followed by Burleson’s paper “Lovecraft: Dreams and Reality.” Burleson’s contribution was somewhat atypical for his work, in that he revived scholarship that

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9 See the transcription of the panel discussion “What is the Cthulhu Mythos?” held on October 31, 1986 at the World Fantasy Convention in Providence, R.I.

Joshi, S. T., et al. "What Is the Cthulhu Mythos? A Panel Discussion." *Lovecraft Studies* 14 (1987): 3-30.

focused on what has been called Lovecraft's "dream cycle" of stories. Will Murray, in "Lovecraft's Arkham Country," discusses Lovecraft's creation of the fictional town of Arkham, analyzing how it corresponds to real-world locations, and explaining why the town seems to shift over the course of Lovecraft's fiction. Robert Price's addition, "Lovecraft's Mythology of the Old Ones," challenges the anti-Derleth interpretation of Lovecraft's mythos. He does not entirely defend Derleth, but he also does not condemn his take on Lovecraft, as Mosig, Tierney, and Joshi have elsewhere. Instead, he suggests that there may still be room for religion in the remote levels of Lovecraft's fiction. This entry is frustrating, however, because in the very next year, Price will be publishing "The Last Vestige of the Derleth Mythos" in *Lovecraft Studies*, in which he ends: "Old Ones there are, to be sure, but let us not share the delusion of their human dupes, like old Castro the Mestizo sailor, that they are gods" (21). This is, I think, the inconsistency with which Mariconda takes issue in his review of Price's contributions to the field.

Moving forward in the 1990s, and looking for more substantial texts published and read beyond the Lovecraft circle of scholars, we move to Joshi's *The Weird Tale*. This was one of four other surveys of horror or weird fiction published in the 1990s that devote a chapter to Lovecraft, and in it Joshi raises, in condensed form, the same points he raised in *H. P. Lovecraft: The Decline of the West*. The others include Howard Bloom's *Modern Horror Writers* (1994), *American Horror Fiction: From Brockden Brown to Stephen King* (1990) edited by Brian Docherty, and *American Supernatural Fiction: From Edith Wharton to the Weird Tales Writers* (1996) edited by Douglas Robillard and Benjamin F. Fisher. Bloom's *Modern Horror Writers* provides only brief critical extracts from W. Paul Cook, Lovecraft, Fritz Leiber, Maurice Levy, Barton L. St. Armand, Donald R. Burleson, Peter Cannon, S. T. Joshi, Stefan Dziemianowicz, and Steven Mariconda. While this selection does represent the most noteworthy Lovecraft

scholars (except for Price's Cthulhu mythos discussion), it provides nothing approaching completeness or thoroughness, and will not likely be useful for any but the most novice Lovecraft readers.

Clive Bloom's chapter in *American Horror Fiction*, entitled "This Revolting Graveyard of the Universe: The Horror Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft," is unfortunately typical of the popular perception of Lovecraft. Bloom approaches Lovecraft through a Freudian lens, attributing most of Lovecraft's "neuroses" to the troubled relationship with his father. He is also rather dismissive of Lovecraft, calling him a "strange and stranded personality" whose "output was small, consisting of two novellas (one published after his death) and some short stories" (59). While it's true that most scholars agree his *best* work consists of one novella (*At the Mountains of Madness*) and a small number of stories, his total output was voluminous (four volumes, plus miscellaneous writings, according to Arkham House), his letters number in the thousands, and his contributions to amateur journalism in the hundreds, not to mention his work as editor and ghostwriter. Bloom also bases the bulk of his analysis on Lovecraft's earlier tales, and clearly has not read the works of Price, Joshi, and Cannon as he misrepresents Lovecraft's beliefs. The most telling example: "Lovecraft ... turned to his hobby of astronomy in order to create stories about *astrology* and black magic bringing *real* monsters from the stars as star-spawn" (author's emphasis) (70). Bloom's discussion of the petit-bourgeoisie and its role in shaping Lovecraft's worldview and fiction is interesting, but ultimately must prove unhelpful given the misreading and misunderstanding from which Bloom is working.

*American Supernatural Fiction*, in contrast, contains two chapters on Lovecraft (which is surprising, given the work only contains six chapters in all), the first from S. T. Joshi and the second from James Campbell. Joshi begins his "H. P. Lovecraft: The Fiction of Materialism" by

emphasizing the importance of Lovecraft's philosophy in understanding the significance of his fiction. "Lovecraft is remarkable in having articulated a highly complex, detailed, and carefully considered world view that structured his entire work" (141). Joshi continues by outlining that world view and showing its development through Lovecraft's letters, fiction, and other writings. Campbell's first sentence in his "Cosmic Indifferentism in the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft" seems almost tailored to Clive Bloom's piece: "Until recently the intellectual power of H. P. Lovecraft's fiction has not been sufficiently appreciated by the general reading public or by academic critics" (167). Campbell then goes on to analyze the philosophical system contained within Lovecraft's fiction, which he terms "cosmic indifferentism." This is covering similar ground as Joshi's contribution, but instead of working from the outside in (Joshi grounds his analysis in Lovecraft's life and applies it to the fiction), Campbell is working from the inside out—he examines the fiction directly and deduces from it the philosophical systems at work. Campbell's analysis includes a lengthy consideration of *At the Mountains of Madness*, exploring not only the philosophical themes in the work, but also the conception of the "Old Ones"—Lovecraft's great beings from beyond. Campbell provides a thorough and insightful addition to Lovecraft scholarship.

By 1996, Lovecraft scholarship seemed to have reached a new stage. Joshi released *A Subtler Magick: The Writings and Philosophy of H. P. Lovecraft*, a revision of his 1982 Starbuck Reader's Guide to *H. P. Lovecraft*. In the introduction, Joshi asserts: "we have now reached the stage where many of the basic facts needed for a sound analysis of Lovecraft are available, and it is now the responsibility of scholars to make use of these facts in order to produce ever more subtle and profound studies of the man and his work" (5). As should be expected from Joshi, this is a comprehensive introduction, meticulously researched, with helpful annotated primary and

secondary bibliographies. Joshi begins with a brief overview of his life (a task no doubt made easier by his release of *H. P. Lovecraft: A Life* that same year) and then addresses the stages of Lovecraft's fiction, which he divides into early, Dunsanian, regional, major fiction: first stage, and major fiction: second stage. He then addresses Lovecraft's revisions and collaborations, his essays, poetry, and letters.

The final major work of scholarship in the 1990s is Timo Airaksinen's *The Philosophy of H. P. Lovecraft: The Route to Horror* (1999). Airaksinen calls the work "an extended exercise in the philosophical reading of literature and authorship" (viii). The majority of the text is a story-by-story analysis, identifying major philosophical positions supported by each. Airaksinen's overall claim is that Lovecraft's work was, for Lovecraft at least, always about their aesthetic effect, and any ideas Lovecraft pursues, he pursues them "not philosophically but artistically" (163). In other words, for Lovecraft, the aesthetics of the piece came first, in every story, and any ideas contained in them were secondary. By extension, Airaksinen argues that Lovecraft was not building a philosophical body of work through his stories. While his study provides helpful insights, and adds a new perspective and voice to a body of scholarship in danger of becoming stagnant for lack of new scholars, Airaksinen's style is sometimes disjointed and difficult to follow.

A number of articles appeared during the 1990s in publications that reached an audience beyond the circle of Lovecraft scholars and fans. Perhaps the most article that provided the greatest boost to Lovecraft's reputation in the larger literary world was Joyce Carol Oates's 1996 Halloween review of Joshi's Lovecraft biography, Arkham House editions of Lovecraft's writings, and the five-volume *Selected Letters*. The title of the review hails Lovecraft as "The King of Weird." She goes on to say: "... more systematically than Poe, Lovecraft set forth an

aesthetics of the art [of the gothic tradition]” (46). She continues the comparison to Poe, again giving Lovecraft the upper-hand: “both writers have had an incalculable influence on succeeding generations of writers of horror fiction, and Lovecraft is arguably the more beloved by contemporary gothic aficionados” (48). She also offers sharp insights, expressed succinctly and scattered throughout the review, the best of which is a concise analysis of the blend of gothic and science fiction sentiments in Lovecraft’s work: “A hybrid of the traditional gothic and ‘science fiction,’ Lovecraft is clearly gothic in temperament; his ‘science’ has its own fictional logic, yet it is never future-oriented, but directed obsessively into the distant past” (51).

A year later, *Extrapolation* published Bennett Lovett-Graff’s “Shadows over Lovecraft: Reactionary Fantasy and Immigrant Eugenics.” This article returns to the issue of Lovecraft’s xenophobia and racial prejudices, discussing the general racial climate of the time, including a discussion of the eugenics movement in terms of the recent scientific findings of August Weismann and his germ-plasm theory. Lovett-Graff uses this theory to analyze “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” showing how Lovecraft’s disdain for other races and fear of mixed breeding shows through his fiction. Certainly not a flattering side to Lovecraft’s work, but a valid component nonetheless, and Lovett-Graff provides a helpful discussion that, rather than merely attacking Lovecraft, seeks to explain both the times in which he was writing and the effect those times had on his thinking and his fiction.

The first major article after the year 2000 is Bradley A. Will’s “H. P. Lovecraft and the Semiotic Kantian Sublime” in the Spring edition of *Extrapolation*. Will is concerned here with connecting Lovecraft’s “mechanistic materialist” world view with the greater scheme of Western philosophy. In particular, Will connects Lovecraft’s engagement of the sublime to Emmanuel Kant’s philosophy, connecting “the ‘soul-shattering’ sense of awe and wonder” Lovecraft’s

characters encounter in his fiction with “the Kantian model of the sublime, which is predicated on a failure of the faculty of understanding” (7). Will then goes on to explain Kant’s understanding of the sublime and how it functions within a mechanistic world view, connecting that understanding with Lovecraft’s fiction, particularly “The Colour Out of Space” and “Call of Cthulhu.” Of the articles that address Lovecraft in terms of his philosophy, I found this one to be the most helpful, as well as the article that goes furthest in extending Lovecraft’s importance beyond his circle of fans and scholars.

In 2004, *Extrapolation* also published Timothy H. Evans’s “Tradition and Illusion: Antiquarianism, Tourism and Horror in H. P. Lovecraft.” Evans revisits a common trend in scholarship—the importance of place and tradition in Lovecraft’s fiction—but offers new insights by connecting those concerns with Lovecraft’s cosmology. In Evans’s words: “The tension between the antiquarian and the cosmic ... is the source of Lovecraft’s worldview and of the unique power of his fiction” (176). Evans details Lovecraft’s interests in travel, architecture, the Colonial period, and the importance of place, showing how these concerns are reflected in his fiction and contrasting them with the cosmic other-worldliness of his horrors.

Two articles published in 2004 confirm that the argument over what constitutes the “Cthulhu mythos” is far from over: Mark Lowell’s “Lovecraft’s Cthulhu Mythos” in the *The Explicator* and Massimo Berruti’s “H. P. Lovecraft and the Anatomy of the Nothingness: The Cthulhu Mythos” in *Semiotica*. In Lowell’s analysis—perhaps building on Joshi’s assertion that the mythos is, at bottom, an anti-mythology—he compares Lovecraft’s mythos with Joseph Campbell’s conception of the hero’s mythic cycle. Lowell asserts that what qualifies a work as belonging to the mythos, more than anything else, is “how a story evokes horror”—that it relies on an “expansive and devastating confrontation with the unknown” (47). Instead of returning

from the heroic myth cycle victorious, bearing a boon for civilization as in Campbell's construction, character's in Lovecraft encounter truth and are shattered by it.

Berutti's provides a more complex and comprehensive analysis. The article focuses predominantly on "The Call of Cthulhu" and begins with an analysis of the styles and techniques Lovecraft employs in the work. Specifically, Berutti highlights the constant "doubling" in the narrative and the participatory role the reader is obliged to take. One example of doubling is the "cosmic" and "terror" hints that the reader must piece together—cosmic hints being those that "allude to realities and truths 'ulterior' if compared with those that the phenomenal, visible world presents on its surface" (364). Terror hints are those that allude to threats in the "phenomenal, visible" world. Doubling also refers to the "both personal tragedy awaiting the narrator and a greater horror awaiting the world" (367). Berutti also examines the narrative structure of the story, and agrees with Joshi that it is Lovecraft's most complex piece (369). Berutti next moves into a discussion of knowledge and ignorance, and the dangers knowledge brings in Lovecraft's world—full knowledge of the reality of our existence would lead to psychological destruction. This concept is connected to the failure of language to convey meaning throughout the tale, from the strange guttural chants of Cthulhu's worshippers to the strange carved figure and its unidentifiable substance to the indecipherable ideograms carved on the figure's base (378). The last half of the work traces the development of the Cthulhu mythos, ending with *At the Mountains of Madness* and the conclusion that, however Lovecraft may have originally conceived the mythos, the final assessment is not grounded in spirituality but in science: the Great Old Ones are extraterrestrials, not gods. And the debate continues.

Through these works—book-length texts and articles—Lovecraft scholarship has begun its rise to visibility in the larger academic community, moving from the relatively closed circle of



scholarship in the 1980s to more book-length treatments in 1990. Also, scholarship appeared in journals with larger audiences, and the type of criticism applied to Lovecraft's work moved from the traditional and formal schools into those of psychoanalysis and post-structuralism. After 2000, scholarship was advanced by articles that, though few in number to date, received wider recognition and contributed substantially to the field rather than merely recapitulating previous work, connecting Lovecraft to larger trends in Western intellectual history and new schools of analysis. Along with the release of Lovecraft's fiction by more reputable publishing houses, these trends, if they continue, are hopeful signs for Lovecraft's continued study and appreciation.

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