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## BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

The Entity Cthulhu in H. P. Lovecraft's Fiction

Entita Cthulhu ve fikci H. P. Lovecrafta

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Praha, 18. 4. 2019

Děkuji vedoucímu své práce, Mgr. Jakubu Ženíškovi, Phd., za důsledné a nápomocné vedení mé práce, dále děkuji svým přátelům za morální podporu a v neposlední řadě své rodině za podporu jak finanční tak morální.

## **ABSTRAKT**

Práce mapuje výskyt entity Cthulhu ve fikčním světě H. P. Lovecrafta. Analýza se zaměřuje na jednotlivé povídky a způsob, jakým se v nich entita objevuje, a tyto izolované případy poté zařazuje do kontextu celého Lovecraftova mikrokosmu. Premisou práce je, že Lovecraft pracuje s Cthulhu podobně jako s mýtem, ale zároveň jako se současnou pověstí, tedy se snaží ve vybraných povídkách aspekty obou najít. V závěru se tato hypotéza potvrzuje, prvky mýtu i současné legendy jsou v povídkách užity a je jim dána prakticky faktická hodnota. Tato faktická hodnota je ale snížena výběrem nespolehlivých vypravěčů, kteří často slouží i jako protagonisté povídek.

Práce také zkoumá Cthulhu v populární kultuře a jeho užití v ní. V uvedených příkladech zkoumá aluze a odkazy na Cthulhu a množství aspektů popsanych v Lovecraftově fikčním světě, které autor nového média přejal. Ve stolních a počítačových hrách je zachován primárně vzhled entity. Ve filmu a televizi často bývá přejato více stránek entity a bývá v nich užita nejen jako prostředek hororu, ale i jako prostředek humoru. V japonském anime a manze, ale i v komiksu je Cthulhu užíván poměrně často a objevují se adaptace originálu věrně i adaptace užívající jen pár hledisek entity. Cthulhu se objevuje i ve fikci dalších autorů beletrie. U některých autorů proto, aby vzdali poctu H. P. Lovecraftovi, u jiných jako prostředek parodie.

## **KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA**

Lovecraft, Cthulhu, Mýtus, Arkham, Populární kultura.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis maps the occurrences of the entity Cthulhu in the body of fiction written by H. P. Lovecraft. The thesis then analyses singular cases and contextualizes them in the body of analyzed fiction with the aim to summarize the manner of these incidences.

We conclude that the occurrences have the manner of both myth and urban legend and are presented as facts. This is undermined by the use of unreliable narrators who usually go insane throughout the stories.

This thesis also seeks to describe Cthulhu as portrayed in popular culture. This is exemplified with reference to several pieces of fiction and analyzed on how much these singular examples stray from the original material. These occurrences differ in different forms of media, though it usually acts as an antagonist. Usually in video and board games only the look of the entity is used with minor elements of Lovecraft's lore, which provide immersiveness and background to the entity, while in movies it is used both as a device of horror and as a device of comedy. Cthulhu is quite popular in comic, manga and anime, in which Cthulhu is both referenced and used as the protagonist and antagonist. Cthulhu is used even in literary fiction not produced by Lovecraft, in which it is used both in parodic manner and as homage to Lovecraft.

## **KEYWORDS**

Lovecraft, Cthulhu, Mythos, Popular culture, Old Ones

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# **1 Introduction**

Howard Phillips Lovecraft is one of the most influential horror authors of all time. Probably his most famous creation is the entity Cthulhu. Cthulhu appears in more than one of Lovecraft's stories, as well as works of other authors, various movies and even video and tabletop games.

Lovecraft himself works with the godlike entity in a unique way. This bachelor thesis explores the way Lovecraft incorporates it into his short stories.

As the anthology of stories released after Lovecraft's death, "The Cthulhu Mythos", suggests, Lovecraft creates mythology around the entity. This thesis should find support of this phenomenon by its characteristics in the stories picked from Lovecraft's body of fiction.

Though Lovecraft creates mythology, his stories are often written in a style similar to urban legend or at least features some of its elements. The elements of urban legends are explored in this thesis as well and applied to the lore surrounding Cthulhu and the style in which the author provides information about the entity in his fiction.

This thesis will also explore the reliability of information provided in the stories, meaning the way the stories are told and the sources for knowledge about the entity and the plot of the stories.

This thesis also aims to explore Cthulhu's appearances in popular culture and the level of faithfulness to the source material by analysis of singular references in different works of art.

## **1.1 H. P. Lovecraft**

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was an American writer and journalist, who, in spite of his mental and physical illnesses, became an icon among horror and science fiction fans. His work has never been published as a book during his life (except "The Shadow over Innsmouth", though it was not very successful). His work was primarily published in journals and magazines.

This chapter maps the life of the author as well as influences on his life, and his writing itself to provide background to the analyzed fiction below.

### **1.1.1 Succinct biography of H. P. Lovecraft**

The life of Howard Phillips Lovecraft can be briefly summed up as one of misfortune.

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born in 1890 in Providence, Rhode Island. He was able to recite poetry at the age of two, to read at age of three and to write at the age of seven. His father Winfield Scott Lovecraft, a traveling salesman, suffered from mental illness caused by syphilis. After five years of hospitalization he died in 1898. (S. T. Joshi)

After his father's death, Lovecraft and his mother moved to his maternal grandfather, a prominent industrialist Whipple Van Buren Phillips, and his two aunts.

Lovecraft, not having a strong health both physical and mental, often spent time at home instead of going to school, reading Edgar Allan Poe and studying astronomy, which later influenced his work (Dziemianowicz). His grandfather largely influenced on Lovecraft's work, since he taught him about Greek mythology and classic literature.

In 1904 Whipple Van Buren Phillips passed away. Because of the mismanagement of his estate Lovecraft and his mother were forced to move from the ancestral house of his grandfather into a small apartment. (S. T. Joshi)

At high school Lovecraft suffered a mental breakdown before he could earn his diploma in 1908. Subsequently he failed entrance exams to the University. In reaction to this event, Lovecraft stated: "... In 1908 I should have entered Brown University, but the broken state of my health rendered the idea absurd. I was and am a prey to intense headaches, insomnia, and general weakness." (S. T. Joshi 64). Up to this year he had produced the first of his short stories.

Until 1913 Lovecraft lived in relative isolation, studying astronomy and reading poetry. He and his mother developed nearly unhealthy codependent relationship (S. T. Joshi).

In 1913 he ended his hermitry. He sent a letter written in verse to The Argosy magazine, in which he criticized work of Fred Jackson, an American playwright and screenwriter. The letter was published in the magazine, raising a wave of protest from Jackson's admirers

(S. T. Joshi). Lovecraft caught attention got noticed by Edward F. Daas, the president of the United Amateur Press Association (UAPA), and organization of amateur writers which published their own magazines. Daas invited Lovecraft to join, which Lovecraft did in 1914. Lovecraft published 13 issues of his magazine, *The Conservative* (1915-1923), as well as contributing to other journals. Later he became the official president of UAPA and briefly were the president of NAPA (National Amateur Press Association).

In this environment Lovecraft started to produce his fiction and in the year 1917 he wrote two of his most famous stories (“Dagon”, “The Tomb”). Lovecraft continued to produce short stories steadily, though his work consisted mainly of essays and poetry. He also engaged in correspondence with other authors, for example J. C. Henneberger, Clark Ashton Smith, Alfred Galpin or Maurice W. Moe (S. T. Joshi).

In 1919 Lovecraft’s mother was admitted to the Butler Hospital due to her deteriorating physical and mental condition. She died there in May of 1921 as a result of “a bungled gallbladder operation” (S. T. Joshi). Lovecraft was shattered by his mother’s death. Eventually, he recovered and attended an amateur journalist convention in Boston where he met his future wife, Sonia Haft Greene.

Sonia Haft Greene was seven years older than Lovecraft. After few years of mutual congeniality, they married in 1924 (S. T. Joshi). Sonia Haft Greene owned a successful hat shop and Lovecraft gained foothold as a professional writer in the *Weird Tales* magazine.

The hat shop went bankrupt and Lovecraft, who was offered a position as a chief editor to a companion magazine to *Weird Tales*, turned the offer down. Lovecraft’s wife then fell ill and was hospitalized in the New Jersey Sanatorium. When she got better in January 1st, 1924, she moved to Cleveland because of a lucrative job offer. Lovecraft wanted to move back to Providence, Rhode Island, despite having many friends in New York, which he did in 1926. This resulted in him and his wife to drift apart which culminated in a divorce in 1929. (S. T. Joshi)

Living in relative solitude, he became keen on writing. He produced stories such as “At the Mountains of Madness” and “The Call of Cthulhu”. With the Great Depression and other economic issues in the United States he became a moderate socialist and a Roosevelt

supporter. As he was always interested in many different fields, he self-studied philosophy, architecture, literature, history and other subjects (S. T. Joshi).

In 1932 his aunt, Mrs. Clark, died, he moved in with his other aunt Mrs. Gamwell in 1933. He was forced to support himself by ghost-writing. (S. T. Joshi)

Lovecraft fell ill with cancer of lower intestine. Because of increasing pain in the years 1936-1937 he got admitted to the Jane Memorial Hospital, where he died on March 18th, 1937. He is buried on Swan Point Cemetery. (S. T. Joshi)

### **1.1.2 Influences on Lovecraft's writing**

Lovecraft was primarily influenced by Edgar Allan Poe, as seen in his style of writing. Other influences can be seen in ancient mythologies, since he works with his characters and beings in a very similar way.

In his childhood he read the Arabian Nights, allegedly when he was only five. Arabian nights inspired a pseudonym he used for writing poetry - Abdul Alhazred. Later he explored the Greek mythology. He read children's version of "Iliad and Odyssey" and "Age of Fable" by Thomas Bulfinch (S. T. Joshi).

Though Lovecraft did not obtain any university or scholarly degree, he was quite knowledgeable due to him being often sick and living in solitude, which provided him with the time to read and study.

His interest in various fields of science strongly influenced his writings. One of the first was chemistry and astronomy followed shortly. Later in his life he studied history, architecture and philosophy.

Lovecraft suffered from "parasomnia", a condition which affects around 3% of adult people. Parasomnia causes a person to move violently and scream in his or her sleep because of terrible nightmares. Lovecraft said he saw creatures he called "nightgaunts", he later incorporated into his work. The motif of dreams or nightmares appears in his other fiction (Cian).

The iconic look of his monsters is influenced by underwater life which may be because of his alleged hatred of seafood. Donald Wandrei, Lovecraft's friend and colleague, recollected in

his publication “The Dweller in Darkness: Lovecraft, 1927” a story about him and Lovecraft going to a restaurant, where Wandrei ordered a swordfish steak to which disgusted Lovecraft reacted:

"I can not tolerate seafood in any form ... the very sight and smell of it nauseate me.... But one mouthful would manke me actually and violently ill..."

"I have hated fish and feared the sea and everything connected with it since I was two years old ... but I can not recall what earlier experience gave me such a profound and lasting aversion to the sea and seafood." (Wandrei 364)

Combination of his supposed mental instability, his hatred of seafood, his knowledge of astronomy, among other sciences, and love of Edgar Allan Poe is a logical combination not only for the content of his stories but also for the form and style of writing since many of these subjects appear in his fiction quite prominently.

### **1.1.3 Popularity of Lovecraft’s fiction**

During his life, Lovecraft’s work was not widely popular or known, due to the fact that he mostly published his belletristic work in magazines, which were primarily created for his friends. (S. T. Joshi)

After his death, however, his work was published several times, especially due to the activity of Lovecraft’s friends August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, who founded the publishing firm Arkham house, with the aim to preserve Lovecraft’s fiction. August Derleth and more notably Donald Wandrei both published some of their own fiction in “Weird Tales” and both expanded upon Lovecraft’s fictional universe (S. T. Joshi).

The look is so iconic that artists such as Neil Gaiman and Guillermo del Toro were inspired in some of their production by it. His fans and other people familiar with Lovecraft work easily recognize Lovecraftian work or a work influenced by him, especially regarding visual arts. Renditions of Lovecraft’s work appear in many different forms of popular culture and many of his stories were adapted into movies (“The Call of Cthulhu”, “Reanimator”, “The Dunwich Horror” and other.) (Best H. P. Lovecraft Inspired Films).

#### **1.1.4 Range of literary work**

Lovecraft is most known for his short stories, but the main part of his literary body is composed of poetry and literary essays.

The first piece of writing he produced was a poem called “The Poem of Ulysses”, an 88-line epic poem inspired by Iliad and Odyssey. He wrote poem around the age of seven (S. T. Joshi).

Up until the year 1908 he wrote several short stories, namely “The Beast in the Cave” and “The Alchemist” but stopped for a short period of time.

After joining the UAPA he produced several other stories, among other “The Tomb” and “Dagon”. He produced short stories steadily until 1922 (S. T. Joshi).

He managed to publish several of his stories in *Weird tales*, a literary magazine.

When living in New York and after his mother’s death, his stories turned nostalgic for a period of time, this can be seen in stories such as “The Shunned House”, “The Horror of the Red Hook” and “He” (S. T. Joshi).

After secluding himself in the house of his birth city of Providence, Rhode Island, he produced his most famous works, such as “The Call of Cthulhu” and “At the Mountains of Madness”.

After his death, friendships he forged through correspondence paid off and all his work was published, at least paperback, and even translated into other languages (S. T. Joshi).

Lovecraft’s work inspired a genre, that is referred to as Lovecraftian horror, inspired by the unique way he writes. In the present, Lovecraft’s fiction is under public domain, meaning that most of his work is publicly available and can be used in other fiction freely.

## **1.2 Definition of Weird fiction and gothic tales**

This thesis also seeks to contextualize Lovecraft’s work within the larger framework of American fiction. That is why we find it important to include a brief characterization of Gothic fiction, with a particular emphasis on American authors.

Lovecraft himself defined his work as “Weird fiction”, which could be considered a subgenre of Gothic fiction and we feel the need to provide definition of it as well as distinguishing traits.

### **1.2.1 American Gothic Fiction**

Gothic fiction is a subgenre of Romantic literature and it can be generally defined as a piece of writing (novel, short story) that employs dark, picturesque scenery, and startling, melodramatic narrative devices. Overall atmosphere of gothic stories is one of exoticism, mystery, fear and dread. Often, a Gothic novel would revolve around a large, old house with a terrible secret or serving as a home to a frightening, threatening character. Gothic stories can also feature supernatural elements, romance or even well-known historical characters (Kennedy).

American Gothic fiction generally takes place in a distinctly American setting and tends to be concerned with typically American topics.

Main distinction between European and American Gothic fiction, despite geographical realia, is marked by Edgar Allan Poe, who started to include in his stories topics of psychological trauma, mental illness and morality to extend the degree of horror in his work.

Today, many detective stories are influenced by the gothic genre. In contemporary literature Stephen King can be seen as a gothic writer (Kennedy).

### **1.2.2 Weird Fiction**

A “weird tale”, as defined by H.P. Lovecraft, is a story that has a supernatural element, but does not fall into the category of traditional ghost story or Gothic tale. According to Lovecraft the weird tale represents the pursuit of some indefinable and perhaps maddeningly breathless and unexplainable dread or a certain atmosphere of fixed laws of nature through fiction that comes from more unsettling, shadowy side of the fantastical tradition (Vander)

Weird fiction strives for understanding something that cannot be understood and acknowledges it as a symbol of our limitations. In Lovecraft's “Notes on Writing Weird Fiction” he states: “My reason for writing stories is to give myself 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.” Lovecraft proclaims in the very same essay that he chooses to write weird stories, because “(the weird stories) suit (Lovecraft’s) inclinations best.” (Lovecraft, Notes on Writing Weird Fiction)

Characters in such tales usually enter an unfamiliar place or are set on a path to something unknown yet interesting with what they get obsessed with. Whether the thing they become obsessed with exists or not, they get involved with it. Though able to pull back or even to forget, they cannot unsee what they saw. This creates a special kind of terror, yet do not always rely upon horror or a twist ending, but from the uncertainty so strong that it actually makes the reader question reality (Vander).

Primarily a genre of 20th and 21st century, the weird fiction tries to contaminate or disestablish the traditional fiction and to distance itself from it. To differentiate from other fiction of similar kind (gothic fiction, ghost story etc.), weird fiction goes by the motto “I know it when I feel it”.

Weird story primarily relies on what the character sense or what they subjectively perceive than on what they are sure to see or to know.

Because the weird fiction goes against tradition of the supernatural, its authors often ashew from archetypical monsters (e.g. vampires, zombies, etc.) and tropes these creatures bring with them (vampires as man in position of power etc.) (Vander).

This strife for originality and separation from tradition caused that in the early years the primary motif is the tentacle, used by the group of writers around the magazine “Weird Tales”, with H.P. Lovecraft in its center (Vander).

## **2 Practical part**

### **2.1 The entity of Cthulhu as rendered in Lovecraft’s fiction**

Cthulhu is perhaps Lovecraft’s most famous creation. It is undoubtedly one of Lovecraft’s creatures (a sea-creature-like monster) and it is present in multiple Lovecraft’s stories. As said in the introduction, Lovecraft works with his fictional universe in a very specific

way, which he himself defined as weird fiction, also described above. That is why we have singled Cthulhu out as an iconic character that can to some degree epitomize Lovecraft's renditions of mythology and urban legendry. Prior to exploring the character as such, we need to define the basic terminology.

### **2.1.1 Folklore genres and typologies applicable to Cthulhu-related lore**

This chapter defines the folklore genres of urban legends and myth, with emphasis on specific kinds of myth relevant to this thesis so they can be used in further analysis of the entity of Cthulhu and manner of its occurrences within Lovecraft's fiction.

#### **Urban legend**

Urban legend, contemporary legend, urban myth or urban tale is a modern genre of folklore. Having either ghastly and grim or amusing character, it is based in popular culture, and connected with a specific location.

Urban legends are usually spread orally, but also through modern media, such as social media, e-mail, press or television (Brunvard) (Emery, What Exactly Are Urban Legends?). This causes minor changes in different versions usually in different locations. Topics of urban legends can be chosen to reflect on the contemporary world.

Subjects of urban legends include criminal activity, usually blown out of proportion, medical hoaxes, for example that eating watermelon seeds can result in watermelon growing in one's stomach or the dark ambulance tale (a person is kidnapped into a darkly coloured van only to be found with organs surgically removed), different kinds of cyber threats, such as fake viruses and malware, and chain letters, which usually tell the recipient to send the letters to certain amount of other people because if the person does not, repercussions occur (a ghost or some other creatures will kill the person or some similar scenario) (Emery, What Exactly Are Urban Legends?).

Usually, urban legends are spread by untrustworthy means. Sometimes there is a moral message implied.

Though sometimes urban legends are true (e.g. “The Body in the Bed<sup>1</sup>”), often the legends are false, based on a little piece of real factual information (Emery, What Exactly Are Urban Legends?).

An urban legend differs from hoax, though they are similar, by its specific location but the main distinction is that an urban legend has a plot and it is spread as a story. The location of urban legends can change, so some have appeared in connection with multiple.

### **Myth and some of its forms**

Myth is usually a folklore tale, that has fundamental role in a society. Myths feature gods, demigods and supernatural humans as its characters as well as other supernatural creatures.

Often myths of one culture are interconnected, creating a mythology. Myths surrounding one character are then called mythos (“Herculean Mythos”). (Mark)

Myths differ in their subjects and plots. To this thesis the myth of origin and milleniaristic myth are important, so their brief definition is provided.

Many mythologies include “a myth of origin”. “Myth of origin”, also called cosmogony or creation myth are used synonymously, though cosmogony is a preferred term. Creation implies something created by creator and origin puts to focal point of myth the first cause of things, which is usually not the case. Cosmogonic myths are concerned with origins in the sense of foundation and validity (Bolle).

In Asia and North America water has a special role. The creator (often an animal) is assisted by another, who dives into the primordial ocean (Bolle).

Cosmogony sets the pattern for everything else in most traditions and other myths usually derive from it or are somewhat related to it (Bolle). All cosmogonic accounts have certain formal features in common: usually irreconcilable opposites (e.g., heaven and earth, darkness and light) and, at the same time, events or things totally outside the common range of perception and reason (e.g., an age in which darkness and light were intermingled). These

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<sup>1</sup> „The Body in the Bed“ is an urban legend. The plot involves a guest in a hotel or another establishment providing accommodation who finds a body hidden in the mattress of the guest’s bed. Usually the guest does so after sensing an intense rotting stench and finds a body often of a sex worker (Emery, Body Under the Bed).

narratives can arrive at such reconstitution only by transcending the limits of ordinary perception and reason.

The origin of humans is usually linked to the cosmogony. Humans can be placed on the earth by a god. Sometimes, Humans are said to have ascended from the depths of the earth or a certain rock or tree of cultic significance.

The cosmological traditions usually culminate in the creation of human beings. The cosmos prior to humanity's arrival is viewed as separate and distinct from the one altered by the beginning of the human cultural world.

The process of creation is divided to three stages: The first describes the world in primordial stage or as the world of gods, the second describes the world of human ancestors and the last stage the world of humanity itself. Sometimes it may happen that the gods are at the same time the humanity's ancestors. In some the ancestors undergo a transformation into the human beings (Bolle).

One of the most common types of tales of origin is related to the origin of institutions. These claim that certain ceremonies and ritualistic acts have originated in the beginning, meaning in the mythical time.

In 20th century a wave of messianic or millenarian (also chiliastic) myths occurred, though they existed before (Bolle). This type of myths is connected to the anticipation of something changing and creation of a new world. Usually followed by a cult with features similar to the ones of Christianity, these cults usually centre about a prophetic leader. Many of these prophesize a destructive end to the old world and a verge of a new one or a destructive end of the present world and renewal of the old. In many a hero or a new leader is expected to lead humanity in battle against evil. In Christianity and Judaism after the battle heaven on earth comes.

### **2.1.2 Short story summaries**

To provide complete background to the entity of Cthulhu, the context in Lovecraft fiction is needed. Following summaries of short stories and their plot should help to define Cthulhu in the framework of Lovecraft's fictional universe and should provide background to the godlike entity.

## **The Call of Cthulhu**

The novelette is pieced from three different stories, provided by Francis Wayland Thurston (the narrator of the novelette), as suggested in the beginning of the story. All three stories show an encounter with the being Cthulhu.

The first two stories are, as the narrator suggests, adopted from notes of his late grand uncle, professor George Gammell Angell, professor of Semitic Languages at the Brown University, Rhode Island, Providence, who died in mysterious circumstances, so the doctors concluded, that he died of a lesion.

Among his possessions the narrator finds a file entitled “The Cult of Cthulhu”, which describes professor Angell’s research and dealings with the titular entity. Professor Angell was contacted by a young artist Henry Anthony Wilcox who brought him a bas-relief, created by himself after experiencing a weird nightmare. The bas-relief is supposed to depict a being that the artist has not seen in the dream himself, despite being sure he has heard the being and felt the being’s presence and is able to describe it. Later Wilcox starts manifesting fever and states of delirium, which suddenly cease not knowing what happened.

The narrator at this point in the story deems the young artist immature and weak of will, which makes him distrustful towards him: “... so much, in fact, that only the ingrained skepticism then forming my philosophy can account for my continued distrust of the artist...”

Angell is also able to piece together other occurrences, which later in the story are connected to Cthulhu.

The second story deals with a case of detective Legrasse which occurred near New Orleans, provided third hand to the reader since the story is transcribed as told by inspector on a meeting among several academics. The inspector’s claim is confirmed by a scholar, professor Webb, present at this get-together, who observed something similar at Greenland. Detective Legrasse brought a statuette (described as “grotesque and repulsive”) to annual meeting of American Archeological Society. He obtained the idol “during a raid on a supposed voodoo meeting”, also described as: “... a dark cult totally unknown to them, and infinitely more diabolic than even the blackest of the African voodoo circles...”. The cult

behaved extremely violently when approached by the police and the few captured members that are described as "...men of a very low, mixed-blooded, and mentally aberrant type. Most were seamen, and a sprinkling of negroes and mulattoes, largely West Indians or Brava Portuguese from the Cape Verde Islands, gave a colouring of voodooism to the heterogeneous cult...". The cult chanted the phrase "Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn."

The New Orleans cult is accompanied by sightings of winged beasts, though the sightings are considered only a rumor.

Professor William Channing Webb, Professor of Anthropology in Princeton University, who attended the conference describes a similar cult on his travels to Iceland and Greenland. He described the cult as "... a singular tribe or cult of degenerate Esquimaux whose religion, a curious form of devil-worship, chilled him with its deliberate bloodthirstiness and repulsiveness..." The professor also receives a chant from one of the tribesmen "Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn.", the tribesman translates for the professor as "In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming."

The third story describes an investigation by the narrator himself. The narrator is acquainted with a story of a Norwegian sailor, Gustaf Johansen, who is rescued from a ghost ship in Southern Pacific. The narrator learns about what happened to the sailor after visiting Oslo, where the sailor moved after the incident with his wife. The narrator is provided with a journal confession, describing his story and encounter with the horrific Cthulhu in the sunken city R'lyeh.

Physically, the being is described in the same way (squid-like head, dragon-like body, wings). Cthulhu is not presented as a physical entity in the first two stories it is presented as such only in the third one. In the first two stories it is present only through dreams and through representations of him, specifically bas-relief and an idol, which was retrieved from a cult. The idol is said to have been made from a strange mineral, which was not from the Earth.

According to all the stories Cthulhu is connected with several phenomena throughout the world. These events take place between March 22nd and April 2nd, specifically weird

behavior in communities described as “voodoo communities”, among racial minorities, sailors and earthquake, in the story described as minor tectonic activity. Cthulhu is believed to be able in this period above to communicate through dreams, in which he can drive people to insanity to the point of physical manifestation, such as sicknesses, whitening hair and even death (Wilcox, who spent part of the story in delirium, Johansen and Angell, who both die mysteriously, the narrator, who presumes the end for himself).

From testimonies in the second part of the story (“The Tale of Inspector Legrasse”), provided by inspector Legrasse and professor Webb, Cthulhu is one of the Great Old Ones, who, as said later in the story, came from the stars, in other stories this is expanded upon, namely talking about that all the Ancient Ones come from another dimension, even more weirdly they come from portals usually placed on mountains.

In the second part are mentioned several different cults, mainly the One near the New Orleans and the one in Greenland (the inhabitants of Greenland being referred to as Eskimos), which worship Cthulhu as a deity. Both bare similarities to paganism as said in the story. Rituals with drums and barbarian like dancing is implied as well as sacrificial murder. All cults named mainly comprise of racial minorities and “degenerates”. Despite the geographic difference both agree upon the same concept, they claim that Cthulhu resides in the city R'lyeh, which, not unlike legendary cities such as Atlantis, is hidden under water, as suggested in the end of the story and furthermore both cults chant the same chant. Cthulhu’s followers associate the being with adjective such as the great, the dread, the dead.

### **The History of Necronomicon**

The synopsis of “The History of Necronomicon” should be perceived by a caveat, given that this is in fact not a story but an essay explaining the history of Necronomicon. It features even a list of different data and links to other works.

Lovecraft does not pretend that it was written by some fictitious scholar but claims the authorship himself. By that he manages to create an illusion of reliability and realness.

Cthulhu is only mentioned as one of two deities the author of the book Necronomicon - Abdul Alhazred - worshiped. The creation itself was supposed to happen “... in the great southern desert of Arabia (...) “Dahna” or “Crimson” desert of the modern Arabs .”.

The place is suggested to be protected by “evil spirits and monsters of death”. In the desert, there should be the Nameless city placed. Though Cthulhu is not described as to the physical appearance, many features of the being are kept the same. Abdul Alhazred is told to be mad and claiming to have found “... secrets of a race older than mankind ...”. A nameless city is mentioned, but in this case, it is located somewhere in a desert, which distinguishes it from R'lyeh. More information is provided in the story “Nameless city” mentioned below. The story admits that all information given might be rumors but does not refrain from giving specific information about both the writer and other real historical figures (for example Olaus Wormius - a 16th century scholar, Pope Gregory XI - 12th century etc.), as well as some fictitious ones (for example Theodorus Philetas of Constantinople - a 10th century Greek Philosopher etc.). Lovecraft includes his contemporary, a British writer and literary scholar Raymond Wilson Chambers, whose novel “Yellow Prince” is supposed to be inspired by Necronomicon (Lovecraft, History of Necronomicon).

Partially the form and style of essay creates an illusion that the Necronomicon exists as described by Lovecraft.

### **The Dunwich Horror**

The “Dunwich Horror” mainly takes place in the fictitious village Dunwich. In the centre of the story is the family of Whateleys. They are described as deformed and the other villagers claim that they perform strange rituals among the stones on a nearby Sentinel Hill. The old Zebulon Whateley is said to be a wizard. He has an albino daughter, who gets pregnant with an unknown father and has a boy with him. The boy, Wilbur Whateley, is strange and grows in an unnatural speed. He is described as tall, with dark yellowish skin, later in life always fully dressed, having a goat-like face with dark eyes. Dogs in his presence start to get aggressive and bark. The family lives on a farm, they always buy livestock, which mysteriously disappears, and study strange books. Also, a prophecy is included, that a son will scream his father’s name on top of the Sentinel mountain. Throughout the story the family continuously transforms the farmhouse (boards the windows and apparently removes the inner walls so to create a bigger room inside).

As the plot progresses the Old Whateley and his daughter die naturally, leaving the young Whateley alone. He travels to the Miskatonic University in Arkham to study

the Necronomicon, specifically the page 751 (a number, which is among other, connected with the biblical apocalypse). There he meets dr. Armitage, who is librarian at the University. The doctor is terrified of what Wilbur Whateley wants to know, but Wilbur Whateley insists on borrowing the book, doctor Armitage refuses it.

One night, Wilbur Whateley is killed by a dog, while attempting to steal the Necronomicon. It is revealed that from the waist down he is a scaly tentacled monster with goat-like hoofs and legs. After deciphering Wilbur's journal, the doctor is terrified. Meanwhile in Dunwich strange occurrences of livestock being killed by an unseen culprit occur. It is suggested that the culprit can easily break through barn walls. When Dr. Armitage finds out he gathers two of his colleagues in order to hunt the culprit down. They are able to kill the monster using magic, revealing it to be Wilbur's twin brother, who is much more monstrous and bigger than his brother ("... It was a octopus, centipede, spider kind o' thing, but they was a haff-shaped man's face on top of it, an' it looked like Wizard Whateley's, only it was yards an' yards acrost."). The father of the twins is revealed to be Yog-Sothoth.

Cthulhu appears in connection with Necronomicon. Again, the entity called Yog-Sothoth is shown as connected closely to Cthulhu, a blood relation is suggested. It is said that as one of the Old Ones, or The Ancient Ones, races present in Lovecraft's cosmos. To previous description of Cthulhu's appearance, a specific stench is added, as well as to every other Ancient One. As a family tree created by the author himself, Cthulhu is one of Yog-Sothoth's descendants. Even though having an all-knowing narrator, most information are said to be provided by someone else (Dr. Armitage, the townsfolk of Dunwich), for example when the scholars from the Arkham University are fighting with the creature it is described from the perspective of Earl Sawyer:"....Earl Sawyer now took the telescope and reported the three figures as standing on the topmost ridge, virtually level with the altar-stone but at a considerable distance from it. One figure, he said, seemed to be raising its hands above its head at rhythmic intervals..." Cyclopean towns are mentioned, as well as several other mythical and fictitious places are included - most notably Arkham and the Miskatonic University, where the dreaded Necronomicon is held. Cthulhu is again connected with the adjective great. All of his family members share a resemblance - usually part of their body is covered with scales, they have tentacles, very often they resemble sea creatures.

Wilbur Whateley is no exception, since he has tentacles and goat-like hoofs from the waist down. It is claimed for the first time, that Cthulhu and other members of his family must be let into this world through portal from Necronomicon by summoning Yog-Sothoth. Again, the story suggests strong connection to witchcraft or wizardry (“...an aged and half-insane father about whom the most frightful tales of wizardry had been whispered in his youth....”), the occult and satanism (“....It was here that the Whateleys used to build their hellish fires and chant their hellish rituals by the table-like stone on May-Eve and Hallowmass....”). Dr. Armitage gets mad and insomniac while deciphering the diaries to the point he needs medical help. Dr. Armitage also has trouble sleeping but it is hinted that his nightmares might be caused by the diary he is deciphering. There is an altar present on top of a hill - the Sentinel hill - from stone, of non-specified kind or origin, that the Whateley family is rumored to do rituals. Zebulon Whateley (called mainly The Old in the story) prophesizes one of his grandchildren ascending the hill and calling its father’s name - which comes true. The story explicitly tells, that it is written in a book that the beings come from another reality which has different properties than ours. The sight of the children causes people to be at least startled or to straight up faint, similarly to Cthulhu, who causes anybody who sees it to go mad.

### **The Whisperer in the Darkness**

The story is basically comprised of the narrator’s journal entries and correspondence. The narrator is Albert Wilmarth, a folklorist who works at the Miskatonic University in Arkham. After floods appear near Vermont, several stories of strange crab-like beings with bat-like wings are reported in the area. As a folklorist, the narrator believes that these beings are nothing more than urban legends, but he is proven wrong by a man called Henry Akeley, who lives in a farmhouse in the area. He sends the narrator different pieces of evidence proving the existence of these creatures. First it is a recording of strange voices and some photos of strange footprints in mud. Akeley claims to have a strange black stone with hieroglyphics on it. Wilmarth obviously does not believe Mr. Akeley’s claims, but after a series of letters, in which Akeley describes attacks on his home, Wilmarth is convinced. After a while Akeley writes the narrator that everything is alright and that he found out the friendly intentions of the creatures and invites Wilmarth to visit him, which Wilmarth

happily accepts. Wilmarth is taken to the farm by Akeley's friend Noyes, who claims that Akeley suffers from asthma, therefore is unable to drive to pick him up at the train station.

At the farmhouse the claim about Akeley's sickness is confirmed. Akeley, who lives alone in an abandoned farmhouse, shows Wilmarth a device, that can remove a brain from a person. Placing the brain inside this device keeps the brain still sentient and with help of other two devices the brain can communicate and experience the world around it. It is still possible to put the brain inside the body of its owner. The cylinder can be then carried through universe to other worlds. Akeley presents Wilmarth with the possibility to talk to such a brain, which Wilmarth does.

The same night Wilmarth comes to the farmhouse, he is awakened by strange argument of sorts, apparently between two of the creatures, Akeley and one of the brains in the cylinders. In horror, Wilmarth tries to escape, attempting to save Akeley in the process but he finds an empty chair, only with Akeley's clothing and the three machines used for containment and transport of brains. He escapes to Brattleboro, a village nearby. He then confirms, that Akeley existed, as well as his supposed fights with these creatures happened (Akeley bought dogs and ammunition). Several evidence of shooting on the farm house was found as well, but no evidence of the creatures. Noyes was also not to be found ever again. The narrator remembers, that when he was in the same room with Akeley, he sensed a strange smell and that Akeley's voice sounded somewhat buzzing as the voice from the recording and the voice from the argument.

In this story is explicitly said that the Ancient Ones, here called the Outer Ones or even the nameless outsiders, come from planet Yuggoth beyond the planet Neptune (later claimed to be found by Astronomers and called Pluto). These Outer Ones can fly through the space with their wings, but not everybody of their kind possess this ability. They cultivate a secret colony on the Earth and possess the most advanced technologies in every department imaginable.

The story is not afraid to use addresses near to reality, as well as setting the farmhouse near real village near Vermont called Brattleboro.

The story also suggests the Ancient Ones to be worshipped by the Five Native American Nations, or at least that these nations had some contact with it. Again druid-like circles of stones on hill are mentioned as well as a great black stone, not from this Earth, on the Round Hill.

Cthulhu is mentioned at first as something heard in the woods. Secondly it is mentioned by a talking brain. The brain describes what it saw on the planet Yuggoth, again with mighty Cyclopean cities with fungoid gardens. The beings visited earth before “the fabulous Epoch of Cthulhu was over and remember all about the sunken R’lyeh when it was above water”. The story also suggests that more places like R’lyeh are all over the planet hidden under the Earth. When Cthulhu first came, not properly mentioned where and when, the great stars known at the time flared. The brain was acknowledged with many folklore things mentioned in the Necronomicon and explained them to the narrator, who did not reproduce them in the story.

A secret society is suggested when Akeley and Noyes talk about their connection to the Outer Ones.

### **At the Mountains of Madness**

The story is mainly set in Antarctica, where the narrator (not mentioned by name in the story) sets with his colleagues from the Miskatonic University in Arkham, most notably doctor Lake, a biologist. They set there to find new prehistoric creatures. Their expedition is quite sizable and has a lot of equipment, including five planes and wireless radio receiver.

After creating a base camp upon their arrival to the Antarctica, Lake decides to make a side expedition to the West, completely in the opposite direction to what is intended. The whole time he was in radio contact with the narrator.

Lake finds a strange mountain range, higher than the Himalayas. He later discovers pieces of green soapstone with strange spots, created to patterns, on them, suggesting them to be made. One of the stones is even created to five-point star. Later Lake manages to find strange creatures, who appear to be dead or hibernating. He aimed to dissect them.

After an explosion occurs the narrator is unable to connect with Lake’s party. He decides to take a plane to investigate, only to find Lake’s camp in ruins, with all the members of

the expedition either dead or missing. The creatures found disappeared too, except few who were buried in the snow.

He also finds human and dog remains in one of the tents, the one in which Lake performed his dissections. The remains seemed surgically separated.

Afterwards in order to explore the mountain range, they fly around it. There they confirm that the Cyclopean city exists and decide to explore it. The buildings in the town are deserted and free of any furniture. The only thing that seem as remains of a civilization are bas-reliefs and murals on the walls. Most of these buildings are either five-star shaped, or cube shaped. The buildings and corridors are labyrinth like, to the point that the scientist need to mark their way through it.

In following part of the story, the narrator analyzes the wall bas reliefs and murals, finding out about the civilization of the race which is called the Old Ones in the story. Many of the buildings and plazas in the city are either star-shaped or cube-shaped. Except wall murals and statues, the scientists find a special albino species of prehistoric penguins, who apparently sought refuge in the city to avoid some cataclysmic event. The scientists then come to contact with the remaining Old Ones, who are found decapitated, supposedly by a shoggoth - an artificial creature, developed by the Old Ones as builders and workers.

Shortly after the scientist manage to escape, but the narrator confesses that his colleague after their return to Arkham suffered from night terrors, screaming words from his sleep.

While flying to investigate the narrator claims to have seen a Cyclopean city where the mountain range is supposed to be, but immediately admits that it could have been a mirage. Lake's sanity is also questioned, as the narrator suggests in the beginning that Lake likes ghost stories.

The creatures are immediately labeled as the Old Ones, without any doubt.

All scholars present on the expedition read the Necronomicon and the narrator claims to be acquainted with the folklorist Wilmarth and his studies about the Cult of Cthulhu.

The narrator, as any scientist would be, is critical to his own senses and reports, he has returned.

Cthulhu is mentioned several times in connection with Necronomicon and the Cult of Cthulhu, as all of the scientists are familiar with it. Cthulhu is also mentioned in connection with the bas-reliefs and murals. On them is said that Cthulhu was of a different race than the Old Ones, which can reconstitute their bodies in any shape they want. Cthulhu was according these stories a ruler of a civilization, consisting of his spawn, located on a land in the South Pacific, which submerged several million years ago, with its capital R'Lyeh.

### **The Shadow over Innsmouth**

The story starts by the narrator describing what is publicly known about the happening in the town of Innsmouth from media (namely newspaper) and promising to fill in the gaps.

In the beginning of the story we find the narrator in a neighboring village Ipswich, the narrator travels through on his trip around the United States. By the locals the city is described as once prosperous, especially because of gold and fish export, but lately the city changed.

Rumors of devil worship and people being deformed are reproduced to the narrator. Further proof of something strange happening in the city is provided with a tiara-like piece of jewelry supposedly made from gold mined in Innsmouth, but visibly being from a strange alloy of several different materials. The tiara's shape wouldn't fit a human and the alloy looks like from a different planet (...It clearly belonged to some settled technique of infinite maturity and perfection, yet that technique was utterly remote from any—Eastern or Western, ancient or modern—which I had ever heard of or seen exemplified...).

In the morning he sets off to Innsmouth. He does not feel welcome in the town. According to a boy, who works in a store and is from outside of Innsmouth, the tiara was part of priest mantle for the local strange religion. The narrator notices that not many people walk the streets, especially not elderly.

He finds out about a drunkard named Zadok Allen, who, unlike the rest of the town, would after few drinks tell the narrator what he wants. The narrator buys bootleg liquor and bribes the drunkard.

The drunkard tells him about a sea captain, Obed Marsh, who set to the south sea and encountered a tribe, which has contact with some kind of amphibian race, among other

referred to as the Old Ones. Apparently, the tribe crossbreeds with this race to prolong their lives and to be able to live under water.

This tribe is despised by other tribes in the area (learning on other islands), so after few years of trading with the tribe, he finds the tribe annihilated. The sea captain started to do business with the sea creatures. The population of Innsmouth started turning hybrid between human, having round fish-like eyes and browsing gills. He converts local church to a different weird one and the local mason hall to the church of Dagon.

The drunkard mentions Cthulhu, but the description is fairly cryptic and nonspecific about its involvement in the whole situation. The drunkard is afraid of what is going to be happening after dark. Then they see several figures swimming towards the Devil's reef, after the navigator sets to go for the bus to Arkham, he hears the drunkard screaming for help.

When the narrator comes back to the station, he finds out, that the coach is broken, forcing the narrator stay in Innsmouth overnight in spite of his plans.

He pays for a room in local inn named the Gilman. In the night he is woken up by strange sounds. He decides to run away, which is quite thoroughly described. When he manages to get to Arkham University, the narrator consults the university's historian, Mr. E. Lapham Peabody.

He finds out that he actually is from a family line originally from Innsmouth and some of his relatives actually are those fish hybrids. His grandmother, Eliza Orne of Arkham, got missing, his uncle shot himself and his cousin was submitted to a sanatorium for mentally ill.

Soon after the narrator starts turning to the fish hybrid himself and starts having weird dreams about Cyclopean cities, fish hybrids and an all-powerful entity. The story ends with the narrator confessing that he wants to free his cousin and go live under water with the all-powerful Cthulhu, to a city his followers constructed in the water near Innsmouth named "Y'ha-nthlei".

### **Other stories, featuring hints of Cthulhu's presence**

Though Cthulhu is featured in many Lovecraft's stories explicitly, there are stories that hint Cthulhu's presence or influence in some form, but the name Cthulhu is not mentioned.

Following stories contain instances of such. Cthulhu's powers, statues or idols, creatures similar Cthulhu or cults with deities reminiscent of Cthulhu can be featured.

The stories are included so to expand what is in the stories above and to help the final assessment of Cthulhu and provide even more detailed links inside the Lovecraft's fictional universe.

### **The Dreams in the Witch's house**

Story does not include Cthulhu explicitly, but some features of it are present. The narrator, who is at the same time the main character, experiences strange dreams and, as a student of the Miskatonic University, he studies strange geometry of the house, devices used to describe Cyclopean cities in the other stories.

### **Dagon**

In Dagon the narrator is confronted with a giant sea creature, very vaguely described. Dehydration and an altered state of mind is suggested, undermining the narrator's integrity as well as his reliability. An underwater city is included, although its location differs from the one of R'lyeh.

### **The Hound**

The story is about two men, who collect strange and occult artifacts. One day they find a jade amulet. After that one of the men is killed by a winged creature and the second man moves in panic to London, where the same fate meets him.

The story features an onyx idol of a "winged demon", which could suggest that it is a larger version of Cthulhu idols from "The Call of Cthulhu". Necronomicon is mentioned.

### **The Festival**

The story is about a man who takes part in a strange pagan ritual. Some winged beasts are mentioned.

There is a possibility to link the cult to the cult of Cthulhu, but it is not explicitly described nor implied.

### **The Nameless City**

The story is about a painter, who, while travelling through a desert, stumbles upon the Nameless City, the place, where the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred, wrote the Necronomicon. The hero then explores and describes the city.

### **2.1.3 Cthulhu as described in Lovecraft's fiction and accompanying elements**

Since Cthulhu appears in many different stories this chapter summarize all basic information which are provided in Lovecraft's fiction, from its appearance to the lore surrounding it so to provide template for its further analysis and the manner of its presence in Lovecraft's microcosmos.

Cthulhu has a squid-like head, dragon's body and wings (according the description of idol and bas-relief in "The Call of Cthulhu"). It is quite tall, as described in the third part of "The Call of Cthulhu": "The awful squid-head with writhing feelers came nearly up to the bowsprit of the sturdy yacht, but Johansen drove on relentlessly.". Cthulhu's appearance does not change in other stories, it is only said that it can reconstitute his body according his needs (Lovecraft, At the Mounatians of Madness).

Cthulhu is said to be from the city of R'lyeh, which is located in the South Pacific, given its latitude and longitude ("...in S. Latitude 47° 9', W. Longitude 126° 43' come upon a coast-line of...Cyclopean masonry which can be nothing less than...—the nightmare corpse-city of R'lyeh..."), and it is submerged in water ("The Call of Cthulhu", "At the Mountains of Madness", "Whisperer in Dark"), though in a short period of time it emerges above the ocean surface (Lovecraft, The Call of Cthulhu). Cthulhu is said to be an Old One or Ancient One - terms used synonymously in "The Call of Cthulhu" - but in "At the Mountains of Madness" it is said that he is actually of a much older alien race. Furthermore, in the "The Shadow over Innsmouth" the race is called the Deep Ones but is distinguished from the other races and in the "The Whisperer in the Darkness" the Outer Ones, distinction between these races is in following chapter "Races". In the "The Shadow over Innsmouth" is also used the name Dagon and Hydra almost synonymously to Cthulhu, which would suggest that Cthulhu is known in different cultures by different names or it may also suggest the existence of a pantheon with Cthulhu in its centre.

In Lovecraft's stories Cthulhu is usually mentioned in connection with the Necronomicon, Cyclopean cities, some kind of worship or witchcraft (voodoo) or a secret society (Lovecraft,

The Whisperer in the Darkness). The cults in the cosmos are more thoroughly explored in following chapter “Cults”.

Cthulhu can enter one’s dreams and influence what the person should do, usually bringing them up to the point of insanity. In the dreams Cthulhu is usually not seen but sensed, but still can be described or, as in “The Call of Cthulhu”, adapted to a piece of art (bas-relief created by Wilcox).

The name Cthulhu is hard to pronounce, as suggested in some of the stories. In all of them is suggested that the characters of the narrator write it down so to be as close to the phonetic system of English. Lovecraft himself wrote on the subject:

...” The name of the hellish entity was invented by beings whose vocal organs were not like man’s, hence it has no relation to the human speech equipment. The syllables were determined by a physiological equipment wholly unlike ours, hence could never be uttered perfectly by human throats... The actual sound – as nearly as any human organs could imitate it or human letters record it – may be taken as something like Khlûl’-hloo, with the first syllable pronounced gutturally and very thickly. The u is about like that in full; and the first syllable is not unlike klul in sound, hence the h represents the guttural thickness.” (Lovecraft, The New Annotated H. P. Lovecraft)

Though Lovecraft writes how to pronounce the word, the pronunciation varies despite Lovecraft’s own descriptions and phonetic transcription, which was agreed upon after his death. Narrators describe, that whenever they write the name down, it is the closest transcription according the English phoneme-grapheme correspondence, therefore the transcription into international phonetic alphabet could look similarly to /kə'θulʔlʊ/, from that the characters approximated the graphic form of the name, Cthulhu.

#### **2.1.4 Appearances of Cthulhu within Lovecraft’s lore as depicted in his short stories**

This chapter aims to analyze the manner of appearances in the stories so to analyze singular occurrences in the stories and illustrate them on the background of the whole plot of the story and then to connect them into a greater literary world.

## **The Call of Cthulhu**

In the first and second part most of the information is given through journal entries of the narrator's uncle, professor Angell. In both parts it is usually somebody else talking about their experiences with Cthulhu, in the first the young artist Wilcox and in the second part professor Webb and detective Legrasse. Professor Angell describes the idol of Cthulhu, brought by detective Legrasse and the narrator describes the bas-relief, he finds among his uncle's possessions.

In the third part the information given is mainly retrieved from the journal of the insane sailor Johansen. The third part, because of the fact that it is described through eyes of a sailor, has character of a sailor story, not unlike medieval sailor stories.

The story has some aspect of a detective or a mysterious story since the narrator tries to piece together information.

The cults in the story are strongly reminiscent of those that believe in millenarianism, since they believe that Cthulhu will rise from the city of R'lyeh to establish a new world under its rule. In support of mythological character of the entity of Cthulhu also speak the two cults in the story, who worship it as god, though their existence is more similar to urban legend.

Yet, the story has a strong aspects of urban legends. Many of the stories are such that, if spread, would turn into a rumor and after into an urban legend. The fact that that there is a cult near New Orleans has the character of urban legend, similarly the "Esquimau" tribe, who worship it. The most similar to urban legend is the story about the young artist, who suddenly creates a bas-relief from what he sensed in his dreams. The story is similar to those urban legends in which a person (often a child) suddenly gets to know for example a foreign language without ever learning it or being in contact with it. But in the story, these are perceived as reliable testimonies.

The story ends on hint of uncertainty, because it is not said that Cthulhu actually is not on its way to take over the world.

In the first two parts of the story the information is provided via the narrator reading his uncle's recollections of stories professor Angell heard as told by other people.

All characters in the story, including the narrator, are of doubtful mental state, in the story assessed by themselves or other characters, undermining the probability of the events in the story happening.

### **The History of Necronomicon**

Necronomicon should provide, according to this essay, evidence of historical worship of Cthulhu and its kind. The Necronomicon has a character of a founding myth of a religion and even its creation resembles one.

One difference is that unlike mythological book such as Bible or Koran, Necronomicon actually includes working rituals for summoning the Old Ones and spells, for example used by the old Whateley in “Dunwich Horror” which gives it value of a grimoire.

Furthermore, Lovecraft submits the whole genesis of the book and explores the whole journey through translations from Arabic to English.

### **The Dunwich horror**

The Cthulhu is mentioned when Dr. Armitage reads out loud from the Necronomicon. The Necronomicon could be treated here as a myth or a grimoire, like mentioned previously, but here it is treated as a book, which provides real knowledge to the characters in the story.

The whole story resembles an urban legend. It is based on rumors in one village, the villainous monster is not seen directly, but it is described by one of the villagers.

The Whateley family is said to worship some occult force and about the head of the family (the old Zebulon Whateley) to be a wizard, which could also suggest a high priest. This could also be attributed to the superstitious villagers, as many of the other things.

In this story Necronomicon does possess the quality of both scientific work and an occult mythology. It is heavily suggested that the Whateleys are cultists and what they do is a form of worship. They possess an incomplete copy Necronomicon, but they believe that what it says is true. The story in its conclusion suggests that information and rituals from the book are actually working pieces of evidence of the existence of the Old Ones as well as existence of magic since Dr. Armitage and his colleagues vanquish Wilbur Whateley’s twin brother using techniques from it.

### **The Whisperer in the Darkness**

Great Cthulhu is mentioned firstly in a letter, then in a recording of a voice. The narrator, being a folklorist from Miskatonic University, connects this information to the Necronomicon, but at the same time he gives it value of a mere urban legend. Cthulhu is again mentioned by the brain in the metal cylinder, with him the information is treated as facts. Some form of worship is also suggested.

On one hand there is the folklore point of view; the narrator treats it as such from the beginning. On the other hand, the story features futuristic scientific inventions, namely the cylindrical machine containing brain, which, with the help of other devices, can communicate and experience the world around it. Other scientific breakthroughs are mentioned as achieved by the Outer Ones (“...There is nothing they can’t do with the mind and body of living organisms. I expect to visit other planets, and even other stars and galaxies...”). This gives the story a science-fiction feature.

There can be seen a hint of a milleniaristic cult, or a secret society, in the character of Noyes and Akeley, who both suggest that there are many others in league with the Outer Ones.

Every information related to Cthulhu or the Necronomicon is second hand information, even more doubtful because it is provided via letters or recordings, which can be easily forged. Akeley also sees the creatures at night and he lives alone.

The story begins with the narrator following an urban legend, he describes events that could be qualified as such. Later it turns into a science fiction, describing fantastical technological devices.

### **At the Mountains of Madness**

In this short-story, the characters, being scientists from the Miskatonic University, refer to the Necronomicon as a valid source of information on Cthulhu. The information is treated as scientific facts, which proves the origin of human race.

Though specific findings are made, no scientific method to support these is described, undermining the reliability of the research described by the narrator (“We soon realised from what the carvings revealed that this monstrous city was many million years old.”).

The murals and bas-reliefs found on the walls of the city could be considered visual or written evidence, but their nature is similar to, for example, Egyptian wall paintings. The murals and bas-reliefs resemble depiction of creation or rather origin myths, since the origin of the races is given.

Though the story features monsters, that present themselves by a sound, which, given the location as well as the fact that they are in the darkness, may suggest that the well-educated scientists might have just connected a strangely sounding sound with a phenomenon not present. The fact that the monsters are unseen is further lowering the reliability of the information. The existence of the Ancient Ones or the monsters may be proven only the strange bodies found in the story, which could provide the only piece of reliable evidence.

### **The Shadow over Innsmouth**

In this story Cthulhu is referred to as the god of the Deep Ones.

The narrator sees enough things, that could be considered evidence (visage of the bus driver, the strange jewelry etc.). Though this evidence may seem solid, it is undermined by the narrator's own madness, which could be the reason for his strange dreams and the impression of his physique altering (in the story these changes are not noted by anyone else but himself). On the other much information is provided by Zadok Allen, who tells the story of the town and where the Deep Ones come from.

The existence of the strange metal, from which the jewelry is created, and the fact that the Deep Ones are created by crossbreeding between human and some other race give the story science fiction elements.

The story provides information similar to an urban legend, the story the hero experiences himself (meaning everything but the tales provided by the drunkard, Zadok Allen) is spread orally, it is more or less believable.

As opposite to narrator's part of the story similar to an urban legend, the drunkard's tale bears resemblance to both myth of origin and milleniaristic myth. It tells where the creatures are from and how the people of Innsmouth became part of the cult and what the cult's goal is. The only difference is that there is no suggested fight between the cult and other world

and it is not lead by a hero but by its deity, Cthulhu. The new world should be underwater, yet it should be a paradise ruled by Cthulhu.

It is mentioned second hand by the drunkard and first hand by the narrator, though the story never suggests he meets Cthulhu, but the narrator communicates with the entity through dreams.

### **Summary**

Cthulhu is usually mentioned second or third hand. Mostly it is referenced via a quotation, a direct link to the Necronomicon. Physically it is described only in “The Call of Cthulhu”, but in the whole Lovecraft’s literary body the protagonists never meet Cthulhu face to face, the information is shared with the reader either via other piece of writing (the journal of the crazy Swedish sailor) or by description by Cthulhu’s likeness (the bass-relief and the idol in “The Call of Cthulhu”). If the protagonist meets Cthulhu, it happens usually in a dream, not seeing Cthulhu but sensing something evil and malevolent yet most are sure that they are able to describe it and its name.

Some hints of a being similar to Cthulhu appear in other stories, meaning there is a presence having some of Cthulhu’s abilities (people going crazy at the sight of it, manipulation through dream) or feature similar lore (has a cult of followers, lives in an underwater city, comes from outer space), however in none of them it is confirmed that the entity is Cthulhu.

Names of different races are featured in every story. That poses question, whether these are in reality different races, or whether all of them are the same race, comprised perhaps of different nations scattered not only all over the globe but all over the universe.

It is explicitly said, that information not only about Cthulhu is in the Necronomicon. The Necronomicon has its own lore surrounding its origins. Necronomicon is treated in some of the stories as a source for scientific discovery and information on the Old Ones but has nature of a founding book of some mythology or religion.

#### **2.1.5 Recurrent features in the relevant stories**

Cthulhu himself appears in the stories described above, but it is usually accompanied by other realia that connect it to the larger scale Lovecraftian universe, which we find necessary to describe in the following chapter. These realia prove that Lovecraft’s universe is

an interconnected self-sustaining cosmos and that a single occurrence is of much larger importance than it seems within one story without the application to the whole body of literature summarized above.

### **Races**

The microcosmos of Lovecraft's stories is populated by the Outer Ones, the Ancient Ones, the Old Ones and the Deep Ones. Usually, multiple races do not appear in a story together, except in “At the Mountains of Madness”, where the Old Ones and the Ancient Ones are distinguished via information gathered from bas-reliefs and murals on the walls of the city.

Though a distinction between the races can be seen in their description, the description often is not detailed, instead singles out few details about their appearance to give the reader a jist.

The description is always focused on a different part of their body, so while in one story, the narrator is focused on their torso, in other the narrator is focused for example on their heads. This raises the question whether the creatures are illustrated objectively or whether he is focused on a feature that is the most interesting to storyteller, which could mean that all the creatures are of the same race.

All of the races resemble sea creatures, and the description is usually comprised of names of different sea creatures as approximated to the body parts of the creatures. Many of them have membranous wings, using which they can fly through vacuum. Majority of them are said to come from the outer space.

What makes an exception are the Deep Ones, who actually originated on the Earth, since they were created from breeding of a human and a member of one of the other races as described by Zadok Allen: “... Seems they hankered arter mixin’ with the folks, an’ havin’ j’int ceremonies on the big days—May-Eve an’ Hallowe’en. Ye see, they was able to live both in an’ aout o’ water—what they call amphibians, I guess.” (Lovecraft, *The Shadow over Innsmouth*)

Some races are said to have originated in the Universe but came long ago to the Earth, not only to start their civilization, which lead to the construction of hidden Cyclopean cities, but eventually to start the human kind.

There is even a conflict suggested in “At the Mountains of Madness” between the Old Ones and the Ancient Ones.

“At the Mountains of Madness” is also said, that Cthulhu is of different race than the Old Ones, from one much older, that can reconstitute their bodies. In other stories these are referred to as the “Spawn of Cthulhu”. The Old Ones and the Ancient Ones are terms used synonymously in majority of the stories, but “At the Mountains of Madness” in fact creates a difference, saying that the Ancient Ones are in fact “Spawn of Cthulhu” and the Old Ones are so to say everything else. Among “Spawn of Cthulhu” also the Deep Ones could be included.

In every story, some sort of religious or cultic activity is suggested. Cultists usually worship some higher member of one of the races.

The cults differ. In “The Call of Cthulhu” the cults are barbaric and uncivilized, having pagan-like rituals and ceremonies. “The Whisperer in the Darkness” features a secret society working towards a semi-scientific, semi-religious goal. “The Shadow over Innsmouth” presents a highly organized, Christian-like cult and a society resembling the Free Masons.

In the “Dunwich Horror” some sort of worship is suggested. Pagan features are also suggested along with wizardry and magic.

Direct worship of Cthulhu can be found in “The Call of Cthulhu” and “The Shadow over Innsmouth”. Though the cults could not be more different, the object of worship is the same.

Most of these cults have the milleniaristic belief that Cthulhu will rise from the city R’lyeh and establish his rule over the world.

### **Necronomicon**

In many of the stories, Necronomicon is at least mentioned or even quoted.

In “The History of Necronomicon,” it is perceived as a founding mythological book but, in the “Dunwich Horror”, it is suggested that there are actually functional spells in it, which gives it quality of an instructional book (a grimoire).

“The History of Necronomicon” provides factual background of the book and the unscrupulous seriousness of the essay create the illusion of its existence that is enforced

by the author, H. P. Lovecraft, claiming its authorship instead manufacturing a fictional scholar.

In the other stories the book is quoted by scientists from the Arkham University. That suggests that scholars from the Miskatonic University are at least acquainted with its contents and consider it of at least some scientific value.

### **2.1.6 Summary of appearances of Cthulhu in summarized stories**

This chapter provides different aspects of Cthulhu in the used body of literature and from links exploited in previous chapters creates complex view on the entity in the microcosmos of Lovecraft literature.

Our first presumption was that Lovecraft will work with the entity as a part of gossip, orally spread rumor, not very well described or the appearance would change.

Cthulhu appears in the manner of urban legend. The basis of the lore more or less match, sometimes the name is changed as well as some information, such as the race of Cthulhu and its spawn, yet somehow the stories give the impression of them being based on the truth. Information about Cthulhu is scattered throughout the stories, in some more complete facts are provided, in some only shards are shown.

The quality of urban legend is helped by providing the information second - or even third - handedly. The main character, usually at the same time the narrator, acquires through investigation the information from other people, or even from press or in “The Whisperer in the Darkness” recordings. Even the only story with omniscient narrator, “Dunwich Horror”, describes most of the information from perspective of bystanders and witnesses, very similarly to journalistic style or a chronicle.

Large amount of the information about Cthulhu resembles a myth. Its mythological character is supported by the existence of cults. Many information of mythical character and even the existence of Necronomicon supports the being of Cthulhu, at least within Lovecraft’s fictional universe, and gives it a cosmic importance. Origin to the entity is attributed in several stories, but it differs slightly. Complete origin of the entity is provided in “At the Mountains of Madness”, where it is read from murals. But partial information appears in other stories.

The fact that often the main character acquires partial Cthulhu lore, as said before, from other characters etc. actually renders the mythological information about Cthulhu partially similar to the form of urban legend. In “The Call of Cthulhu”, both the narrator, via the notes left by his uncle, and his uncle, who gathered testimonies and his own research, are trying to make a body of information about the entity in question, using sources and stories which have making of urban legends.

The Necronomicon is also used as a reliable source of scientific data. Often, when heroes do feel the need, the Necronomicon is quoted, not exclusively by facts about Cthulhu. The factual side of the stories is helped by the provision of specific times, dates and places, most of them real and those fictional are set in a specific location and are depicted very faithfully.

The stories are often told in first person narration (With the exception of “The History of Necronomicon” and “Dunwich Horror”). That in itself provides more unreliability and the fact that the sanity of the narrators is questioned lowers the unreliability even more.

The protagonists and in most at the same time narrators are usually people traditionally deemed trustworthy. That is defined even by their profession, since most of them are either scientists or scholars, usually from Miskatonic University, or lawyers and such (usually they follow the straight white male stereotype typical for the period). Throughout the stories, as they encounter either Cthulhu or one of the races mentioned above they question their sanity or question sanity of their colleagues (Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*), though usually they are naturally skeptical at the beginning. Madness can occur even if the character is encountered with data about Cthulhu, since both the narrator and his uncle as well as the young artist in “The Call of Cthulhu” do not see the entity directly yet all of them question their sanity or go insane. That creates a paradox, which in the conclusion of the stories the factual evidence and information renders doubtful or even false.

The scientists often take the existence of Cthulhu and the Ancient Ones nearly as a fact. Though a visual and reliable evidence is provided in some (Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness*) (Lovecraft, *The Dunwich Horror*), in other the evidence is less than circumstantial (the idol in “The Call of Cthulhu”, the appearance of the villagers and the strange jewelry in “The Shadow over Innsmouth”). Despite the low reliability of the evidence, the scientists

are prone to believe in whatever is presented. Doubt is expressed only in “The Whisperer in the Darkness”, in which the protagonist expresses his concerns about the existence of the monsters, yet in the end he believes as well, to the point that he runs in terror from the house of his host.

Most of the protagonists, as well as several other characters, are able to casually quote the Necronomicon if the occasion arises.

Despite the fictional character of the stories, underlined by the character of myth and urban legend, Lovecraft does not refrain from using real places and sometimes specific dates. That on one hand supports the reliability of his narrators, in the sense, that they are aware of these facts, on the other hand he supports both the mythological part and the character of urban legend, since often both are set or at least connected to a real location in the world.

## **2.2 Renditions of Cthulhu in popular culture and their relation to Lovecraft’s fiction**

Cthulhu, as well as other Lovecraftian monsters, appear in other fiction and other forms of entertainment (film, television, games etc.). Though not always completely the same as in Lovecraft's work, usually iconic resemblance to the original is kept as well as names of the creations. Cthulhu inspired other science fiction and fantasy authors and fan fiction.

In the visual arts, next to official drawings and paintings fanart exists. Cthulhu appeared in stand-alone movies as well as television series and even cartoons.

This chapter maps these renditions throughout popular culture and in doing that should prove that Cthulhu is an iconic entity which influenced big part of popular culture often accompanied by the unique interconnected cosmos of Lovecraftian fiction.

### **2.2.1 Literary fiction featuring Cthulhu produced by other authors**

#### **Neil Gaiman - I, Cthulhu**

The story is narrated from the perspective of Cthulhu itself. It is placed on Neil Gaiman’s webpage. Cthulhu dictates to Whateley (Character from “Dunwich horror”) its life story from the beginning to its present. Cthulhu acts like it is superior to humanity to the point that

humanity seems insignificant from Cthulhu's point of view and therefore can act with disregard to it.

Gaiman pays homage to Lovecraftian work by using not one Lovecraft's creation but two. He manages to connect two stories, which are vaguely connected by Lovecraft himself, but Gaiman provides stronger connection between Lovecraft's short stories by creating this connection.

Gaiman fills in some blanks to Lovecraft's work, for example specific age of Cthulhu and members of his family.

What Gaiman keeps from Lovecraft's lore is that the names of his monsters are very complicated for humans to write, so he suggests to Whateley, to whom it dictates the story, to write them as close to what he hears as possible.

Cthulhu is also provided with character trait, of him feeling superior to humans, which was not said explicitly in Lovecraft's work (Lovecraft only shows Cthulhu as a being of worship), but that does not provide large stray from the original material. (Gaiman)

### **Serra Elinsen - Awoken**

Story follows an ordinary girl, Andromeda Slate. In her high school new mysterious boy, Railey, arrives, who appeared previously in her dream. Railey and Andromeda develop a mutually dependent relationship. Railey is very directive to other people, driving them insane and then eating them, because he is Cthulhu. (Kress)

The book is a parody of fantasy teen romance novels such as Twilight. She used Cthulhu because of Cthulhu's being a monster from the weird fiction, which creates a strange literary contrast to vampires, which appear in Twilight and are one of the classic monsters used not exclusively in gothic fiction.

In Awoken, Cthulhu, among his usual powers, also possesses the power to turn human, which is probably used for convenience, since it would be hard to provide a realistic depiction of romance only via dreams, though the power can be seen as reference to "At the Mountains of Madness", where it is said that Cthulhu can reconstitute his body at will.

Otherwise the depiction is relatively faithful to the original. Cthulhu looks very similar, it resides in R'lyeh and has its minions.

### **Adam Lance Garcia - Green Lama: Unbound**

The pulp novel follows its heroes, among which is the superpowered Buddhist Green Lama, as they try to stop the Nazis from raising Cthulhu. The book features elements from the Cthulhu Mythos. The book is one from a series, all of them set in 1940' (Reese).

The look of Cthulhu is pretty much similar to the one in Lovecraft's stories, but does not possess the power to turn somebody mad when seen directly. The power is not used for convenience of the story, so the characters would not go mad when battling the creature.

## **2.2.2 Cthulhu as used in Tabletop games**

### **Pen and paper RPG**

#### **Dungeons and dragons**

In "Dungeons and Dragons" Cthulhu appears as one of the Gargantuan aberrations, or the great Old Ones. Brought to the "Dungeons and Dragons: 5th edition" by Sandy Peters (Zambrano). This provided a unique combination of high fantasy and Lovecraftian horror. With Cthulhu new monsters and creatures inspired by the mythos were introduced (Winters)

#### **The Call of Cthulhu**

First released in 1981 by Chaosium (Riggs), "The Call of Cthulhu" is based on "Dungeons and Dragons" system. Unlike "Dungeons and Dragons", the game does not focus on combat and adventure but on horror and mysterious investigation. The story is based on the combination of "The Call of Cthulhu", "Dunwich Horror" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth".

To provide the feature of madness, the game introduced a complex madness system.

There were several editions and additional campaigns released for the game.

Though the game tries to be faithful to the original, it often strays from the original material for the sake of gameplay (Peterson).

## **Board games**

Most board games with Lovecraftian theme or featuring Cthulhu usually used it to make the game more attractive to their target audience. The games usually feature the iconic look but lack or tone down any other features for the sake of gameplay.

Some lore is usually implemented but is redundant to the game and is present only to either contextualize the game or to make the game more immersive by providing the backstories.

In the case of “Pandemic: The Reign of Cthulhu”, Cthulhu was included to sell more of the games, since it is only a spinoff of the original, so instead the players dealing with an epidemic, the players deal with the Old Ones coming through portals (Anderson).

“Cthulhu Wars” is a game, in which many different Lovecraftian races fight for the earth domination. If the game featured different races, created solely for the purposes of the game or adapted from different fiction, it would not influence the gameplay, so the choice of Lovecraftian monsters was probably an economic one, so the authors could use already existing relatively known creatures for free, since major part of Lovecraft's work is presently in public domain (Kalajian).

The more faithful to the source material are “Arkham Horror”, a semi cooperative game, in which players play as investigators in stories adapted to gameplay from Lovecraft’s body of literature, and “Eldritch Horror”, with very similar premise as “Arkham Horror”. These games represent more or less direct adaptation of Lovecraft’s cosmos to the medium of board game with minor adaptations in favor of the gameplay.

## **Card games – Cthulhu Tales**

Founded on Kickstarter by 2016, “Cthulhu Tales” is storytelling card game. Its goal is to prove to the staff of an insane asylum that the player is sane, by telling a story proving that the players are sane (Girdwood).

The game uses Cthulhu as part of the gameplay.

Quite obviously, the game cannot adopt a story from Lovecraft’s work, since the setting and gameplay does not allow it, but Cthulhu is depicted more or less as in Lovecraft’s fiction.

Cthulhu is used in the name of the game to provide connection to the source material. The name is similarly used to advertise the game, since the target audience is familiar with it (Girdwood).

### **2.2.3 Computer games**

#### **The Call of Cthulhu**

Video game is based on the Chaosium pen and paper RPG of the same name and was published in the 2014 and it follows private investigator Edward Pierce as he investigates a strange case, which eventually leads him towards Cthulhu (Horti).

The game is faithful to the story of “The Shadow over Innsmouth”, so in the story the protagonist deals with problems such as the cult.

The game focuses on exploration and investigation as well as lore and tries to be as close to the original material as possible.

A madness system is included in the game, so when the protagonist sees something disturbing it affects the gameplay.

The game changes the cult of Cthulhu a little, so to create a more dynamic story and engage the player with visuals.

The game is a faithful rendition of Lovecraft’s fiction, but employs features of other stories, with obvious changes created so to engage the player.

#### **The Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth**

The game is first person shooter retelling of the story “The Shadow over Innsmouth”. The game follows detective Jack Walters, who investigates a strange cult, which leads him to Innsmouth and Devil’s reef, and features other details from the story, such as the Esoteric order of Dagon and Dagon itself. (Kasavin)

The fact that the game is a first-person shooter changes the story quite a bit, it lowers the overall horror and adds enemies not included in any Lovecraftian fiction. Cthulhu, being the last enemy to kill, does not have the same features as in the book except the iconic look.

The depiction tries to pretend to be faithful to the original, but ultimately strays from the tone and the message of the source material, since the message of the game is that you can defeat the Old Ones by shooting them in the face.

### **Massive multiplayer online role-playing games and Role-playing games**

Many MMORPGs (Massive multiplayer online role-playing games) feature Cthulhu, or at least a hint the influence of Lovecraftian monster by the visual appearance of some creatures in the game.

Usually only the appearance of it is kept the same or very similar to the original, but the name is changed. Many of them follow the story of “The Shadow over Innsmouth”, since it is the best adaptable Lovecraft’s story, sometimes with the name of the village or town changed into one reminiscent of the one in the original story. The Cthulhu-like monstrosity usually has minions, similar to the Deep Ones as in the story mentioned above.

The motivation for using Cthulhu in this type of games is probably that the creators of such games need to provide an extensive amount of content, so the long-term players stay engaged. Cthulhu is relatively recognizable creature with extensive lore provided by its author, so there is not a big need for invention and it is currently in public domain, so the creators of the game can use it freely without intellectual property concerns.

Cthulhu’s powers are usually toned down. The sight of Cthulhu usually does not cause the characters to go crazy, its size and appearance is kept so it can fly since it has wings and, in some games, Cthulhu can communicate through dreams.

The faithfulness to its source material is as big as can be based on the medium it is provided through, since gameplay of MMORPGs is quite simple at the same time it needs to have a story engaging enough so the players keep playing.

The best example of such a game is “Secret World”, a game set in modern days, where all of conspiracy theories and hoaxes are true. (Cobbett)

The game is filled with supernatural beings and all beings featured in conspiracy theories, including Cthulhu and the Esoteric order of Dagon. In Kingsmouth, a fictional city very similar to Lovecraft’s Innsmouth, strange beings called the Draug come from the sea and are

ruled by Ur-Draug, a being resembling Cthulhu. The game also features “Innsmouth Academy”, a fictional university, where the “occult arts” are taught (Cobbett).

Though not being a MMORPG, Skyrim features a fan made mod, which follows the story of “The Shadow over Innsmouth”. The story does not exclude itself only to one area of the game but has extent to other parts of the in-game world. That makes it more faithful to the source material, namely to the story “The Call of Cthulhu” and its parts about specific periods of time, when cults and tectonic activity occur.

The mod is called “Here there be monsters - Call of the Cthulhu”. Though created by fans, it is fully voiced. It creates a new location, a bucolic village with a strange monument in the middle. It features barbaric cults all over the fictional world. (Bolding)

Even a MMORPG classic like “World of Warcraft” features Cthulhu. It features villains called the Old gods. These Old gods feature lots of resemblances to Lovecraftian monsters, both the way they look and their names. There is a creature called C’thun, which not only resembles Cthulhu, but also its powers. In “World of Warcraft”, there are four of the old gods, all the names of these gods are similar to Lovecraft’s creations (Winkie).

#### **2.2.4 Comics**

Cthulhu as well as many other Lovecraftian monsters and subjects were adopted into various comic books. In very similar fashion several Lovecraft’s stories were faithfully adopted into graphic novels.

Comics inspired by Cthulhu are numerous. They vary from serious adaptations of the entity to parodical or cartoonish depictions.

One of the most faithful depictions of Cthulhu are “Cthulhu Tales”, which are comprised of 12 issues. The series was created by the author of “30 Days of Night” Steve Niles and author of “Fall of Cthulhu” Michael Allen Nelson, last issue was released in 2009 (Bodden).

Very similarly the comic book series “Fall of Cthulhu”, created by Michael Nelson, though only inspired by Lovecraft, it is faithful to the source material’s mythology (Sewell).

The look was included in an issue of Batman, “Batman: The Doom That Came to Gotham”, by Mike Mignola. The comic creates an alternative universe, in which Batman returns to

Gotham only to battle creatures from Lovecraft's fiction, among others Cthulhu (Cronin). Though the depiction strays slightly from Lovecraft, it adopts the look of Lovecraftian monstrosities to the point.

Disney also released some comics, in which Cthulhu appears. The first one is "Donald the Duck, Call of C'russo". The story follows Donald the Duck, who is used by a cult to raise C'russo by his terrible singing. The story adapts Cthulhu so to make him accessible to children, so it is one of more comical adaptations (Shaw).

The second Disney adaptation is "Darkwing Duck, Duckthulhu". The comic book has more serious tone than "Call of C'russo". In the story, Cthulhu is called Duckthulhu. It turns people into tentacle monsters. It is released by the organization F.O.W.L. to conquer humanity under their rule, but Duckthulhu breaks from the control of F.O.W.L. Though the overall tone of the book is a serious one, it is still primarily focused on children.

Both Disney adaptations are focused on children, so the horror and the topic of insanity are avoided.

Comics such as the internet comic by J. M. DeSantis, "Gentleman Cthulhu", depict Cthulhu in humorous way, as a comical character, often reacting to current cultural, social and political happening (de Santis).

These examples best illustrate how Cthulhu is used in comic books. Either the rendition is relatively faithful both to the original story and to the entity's characteristics as described in Lovecraft's fiction. Another faithful option is that Cthulhu is rendered very similarly as in the fiction, but the characters are different.

In other works, only the look is captured, and it is used either for purposes of horror or for purposes of humor. Other comic books use it because of Cthulhu being familiar to their audience.

### **2.2.5 Renditions of Cthulhu in film and television**

Cthulhu as well as other Lovecraftian creations are quite promising, when it comes to visual arts, so it is no mystery, that many filmmakers as well as television show creators sometimes get inspired by Lovecraft's fiction. Following are examples of such.

### **The Call of Cthulhu (2005)**

The movie “The Call of Cthulhu” is an independent 45 minutes long movie and basically follows the plot of the short story of the same name with minute change (the narrator is telling the story to a doctor in psychiatric institute). To appear more authentic, the movie is shot in black and white and it is silent. Even more authenticity is provided by usage of visual effect contemporary to the author’s life and the time the story was written (stop-motion animation, models etc.) (Leman).

The movie is a faithful adaptation of the story of the same name and the movie follows the story to the minute details.

### **Cthulhu (2007)**

This horror movie follows a gay professor, who returns to his home town to his mother’s funeral. He is forced to reunite with his estranged family, with which he has a strange relationship, especially with his father, who leads a strange cult worshipping the Old Ones. Strange things occur, series of disappearances is suggested. Some information is provided by a drunk. Psychedelic low budget movie is not afraid to throw around names from Lovecraft’s work, such as Dagon or Cthulhu. Though some other stories could be seen as the inspiration, the plot of the movie follows prominently the story of “The Shadow over Innsmouth” and the name Cthulhu is used explicitly (Gildark).

The movie provides a faithful depiction of the Cult of Cthulhu, as described in “The Shadow over Innsmouth” and even some of the Cthulhu’s powers are omnipresent throughout the movie, though more similarly to the way for example the young artist was tortured in “The Call of Cthulhu”. Similarly, to Lovecraft’s fiction, the titular entity is never seen on screen, it is only present through dialog and imagery connected with it, such as bas-relief on a sewer cover as well as an altar.

### **Cameos in television shows**

Cthulhu is sometimes featured in television shows as a villain, who shares resemblance or powers with Cthulhu. Usually it is used to diversify the universe of the show.

More evident one is for example episode of “Warehouse 13” “Evil Within” (season 4, episode 2), in which the main characters encounter and artifact belonging to Lovecraft, that

makes people appear as Lovecraftian creatures. The sight of these people makes other people go to berserker like rage and attack them. The show refers to Lovecraft and it pays homage to him and his work (Olson).

Another of these cameos is in “The Librarians” in the episode “... And the Cost of Education” (season 2, episode 4). The episode is set in a fictitious university, not unlike the Miskatonic University, where a strange monster from another dimension appear and kidnaps students. Though not explicit it alludes Lovecraft’s work quite masterfully (Wiedel).

Cthulhu was also featured in one of the “Treehouse of Horror” episodes of “The Simpsons” as a humorous cameo, in which Cthulhu competes with Homer in an eating contest. Though this is a two-minute cameo, it is very faithful to its source material, having a set up reminiscent to “The Shadow over Innsmouth”. Cthulhu also appeared in one of the “couch gags” inspired by work of Guillermo del Toro (Arty).

The animated show “The Real Ghostbusters” features an episode called “Collect The Call of Cthulhu” (Browlee). The cameo was very similar to the one in “Warehouse 13” and “The Librarians”. It is not important for the whole show, it is used only in one episode to diversify the show’s universe.

“The Grim Adventures of Billy and Mandy” feature two episodes with Cthulhu. The show features them as part of its comedic charm in sort of parodic manner (Calabrese).

Other television shows depict Cthulhu and Lovecraftian monsters. Usually the appearances are in similar fashion as described above, meaning that the creature either appears for short period of time for comical purposes, or appears for a whole episode either as a villain or as a tool of comedy.

### **Other Movies**

The horror comedy “Last Lovecraft: Relic of Cthulhu” (2009) follows Jeff, a guy with a dead-end job, who is given an ancient relic and said that he is the last Lovecraft. The relic has the power to let Cthulhu back into the world, so he must protect it from Starspawn (Saine).

The plot of “Call Girl of Cthulhu” (2014) follows young artist, who falls in love with a call girl. The call girl is apparently chosen bride for Cthulhu and an ancient cult is after her to let Cthulhu into the world (Wixson).

“Last Lovecraft: Relic of Cthulhu” (2009) and “The Call Girl of Cthulhu” (2014) represent a parodic take on Lovecraft's fiction. Cthulhu, if shown, is more or less the same as in the short stories, but usually the tentacles are emphasized both for comical and horror purposes. Both depict Cthulhu with the same look and the same power as in Lovecraft's fiction but avoid insanity and mental illness for convenience sake.

Other Lovecraft’s stories were adapted as movies, but since they are not primarily focused on Cthulhu, it is irrelevant to analyze them.

### **2.2.6 Manga and Anime**

The appearance of Cthulhu, as well as other Lovecraftian monsters in Japanese manga is caused by the censorship laws (Thompson). Since end of 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, law forbade to depict penises, which resulted in their replacement with tentacles (de Silva). Lovecraft’s work originally started appearing in Japan in the 1940’, via translations of his short stories. Lovecraft’s popularity grew in the 1980’ due to a roleplaying game “The Call of Cthulhu” by Chaosium (Thompson).

Cthulhu-themed manga and stories appeared in Hobby Japan publications such as RPG Magazine and Comic Master (Thompson). The popularity of Lovecraft in Japan is also influenced by Lovecraft’s names and the fact, that Japanese is able to phonetize them.

Mostly is Lovecraft’s work hinted through names, both of characters and places (android Armitage III, from anime of the same name; Hypnos, Shaggai, from Digimon; R’lyeh, appears in several, Hastur, appears in several.). (Thompson)

The anime series “Fate/Zero” features a character, who can summon creature by chanting “Cthulhu fhtagn”, a part of chant from “The Call of Cthulhu”. The anime Digimon feature episode called “The Call of Dagomon” which very loosely is based on “The Call of Cthulhu”.

“Nyaruko: Crawling with Love” centers about a formless god of chaos, who takes form of a beautiful girl, who comes to earth to protect a boy. She is due to her looks and resourcefulness quite successful and has friends called Cthugha and Hastur, not unlike

Lovecraft's creatures. The Old Ones are featured as an alien race, which wants to overtake the world (Allen).

### **3 Conclusion**

This thesis contends that Lovecraft provides Cthulhu with a strong backstory which amounts to a self-sustaining universe. This self-sustaining universe is vibrant enough to inspire other authors and artists to produce literary fiction, movies and even games not only inspired by Cthulhu but also by other Lovecraft's creations and short stories. Notably Lovecraft inspired by the unique other-worldly look of his monsters many pieces of visual arts: Comic books, films, but also cameo appearances in television series and fan art.

Cthulhu is surrounded by strong mythology, which is introduced in "The Call of Cthulhu" and then expanded upon in "At the Mountains of Madness". Mythology around the entity does not change and is consistent throughout the stories. Mythological character of the entity is helped by the existence of cults which worship it and the existence of Necronomicon. The myth of origin of the entity is provided directly, and incidentally subsequent creation of humanity is suggested.

The worship of Cthulhu often suggests a milleniaristic belief, that Cthulhu will rise from the depths of ocean and will take over the world. In "The Shadow over Innsmouth" is suggested that Dagon and Hydra are linked to Cthulhu, that would suggest that Cthulhu is a central god of a polytheistic deity.

Though having mythical character, no fundamental or archetypal facts about the earth are presented, except for fear of water or darkness. Whole mysterious lore surrounding the entity is presented: Existence of several Cyclopean hidden cities throughout the earth and even colonies of alien beings are implied.

Lovecraft also employs some narrative devices of urban legend, so even cults suggest existence of some sort of mythology, they are also being subjects of some urban legends. Very similar to some American urban legends are reports of "winged beasts", which appear both in "The Call of Cthulhu" and in "The Whisperer in the Darkness". Usually the reader receives information about Cthulhu second or third hand, meaning that the narrator reads the information from an article in periodic or he gets acquainted with the information via

testimony of others. The aspect of urban legend is supported even more by choosing real places as stage for his stories.

Necronomicon is used so it has dual nature in the fiction. Firstly “The History of Necronomicon” Lovecraft himself creates illusion of its existence not only by writing it in his name, also by mapping precisely its history with specific dates and names, which are specifically chosen from real historical figures and Lovecraft’s contemporaries as well as fictional scholars invented for the purposes of the essay. As described in “The History of Necronomicon”, Necronomicon’s first nature is the of a mythological book, that of founding a religion similarly to “Koran” or “Bible”, since its genesis resembles it. The second nature of Necronomicon is a scientific book, which on one side presents the history of the Old Ones and on the other contains rituals, or spells, which are presented as functioning (Lovecraft, *The Dunwich Horror*). These can be understood both as part of religious worship, thereby being part of the founding myth, if they work then these rituals are maybe a science humanity does not understand. Interesting is that most of the characters are able to casually quote the Necronomicon.

While Lovecraft creates a mythological world, which is carefully interconnected, he undermines it with the choice of unreliable narrators. Usually the narrators start out as reliable characters, having a profession deemed trustworthy (lawyer, doctors etc.) usually being scientists from the fictional Miskatonic University in Arkham, but in contact even with only facts about Cthulhu or the Old Ones, their mental health is compromised, which usually starts with strange dreams and in some cases has more severe consequences. (Lovecraft, *The Call of Cthulhu*) (Lovecraft, *The Shadow over Innsmouth*)

The reliability of the narrators is supported by them documenting the encounter with specific dates and places. These narrators create a paradox within the world, since the reader is forced to doubt everything that was presented in the story as facts, so even though Lovecraft fabricates the illusion of interconnected mythology, immediately he breaks it down by questioning the sanity of his narrators.

Cthulhu is present in many other fiction and entertainment, as exemplified and analyzed in chapter 2.2. Though Cthulhu is surrounded by strong lore, hardly ever the whole of it is used in other popular culture. It is usually used because of the iconic look, which is easily

recognizable not only among Lovecraft's fans. That is why Cthulhu as well as other Lovecraft-inspired monsters have been used in fantasy movies and games, both tabletop and video. Several authors used this Lovecraftian monstrosity both to pay homage to its author and to use it to parody other fiction. In many of the forms of entertainment Cthulhu functions as the antagonist, who has an army of its spawn. In some the name of the entity is used only to attract the target audience of the product, so only the name is kept, sometimes without even using the entity in the medium.

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## **List of Acronyms**

RPG – role-playing game

MMORPG – Massive-multiplayer online role-playing game

UAPA – United Amateur Press Association (Lovecraft, The Dunwich Horror) (Lovecraft, History of Necronomicon) (Lovecraft, The Nameless City)

NAPA – National Amateur Press Association