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Explaining the Unexplainable: A New Cultural Outlook on H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos

Erika Mutter

Welcome to Lovecraft's Madness

Once upon a time, there resided a king over Providence Plantations, who believed that his beloved city should never change or adapt to the newcomers infiltrating his land. As he looked over College Hill towards Federal Hill and beyond, he noticed that this change was not something that could be avoided. At first, Howard Phillips Lovecraft regarded the permeation of his town as an otherness, closer to a disease, and something to be removed as such. These sentiments are wholly expressed within his immense epistolary efforts over the course of his life and hidden within the folds of his magnificent cosmic horror mythos. These changes do not merely reside with the influx of immigrants from Europe, but extend to the industrialization of the country as well as the increase in political power. The old, simple times were something to be prized and aspired towards, but yet the ever-growing rate of destruction of the antiquarian beliefs became something Lovecraft could no longer stand. This anti-government, anti-immigration attitude is present within the lines of his stories and it begs to be examined to not only truly understand the meaning behind his writing, but also gather a point of view from someone who sincerely loved his city during this era.

The compilation of Lovecraft's work, termed the Cthulhu Mythos, incorporates these alien-like beings living with the human race. Scholars have come to a consensus that the actual mythos contains 15 to 16 short stories and incorporates the pantheon of gods that Lovecraft has created. George Wetzell goes into detail about the main premise of those tales that fall under the category, "The underlying theme in his work. . . is the struggle of supernatural entities to regain their mastery over the world and Man from which they were once ousted. . . . the Mythos stories should actually be considered not as separate works but rather the different chapters of a very lengthy novel" (Wetzell 79). Along with this power struggle, there is an emphasis upon

answering the unanswerable question: how did the universe begin and why are we here? It is through this lens that majority of scholars focus, as well as delving into the world of the unknown.

Nihilistic philosophy runs rampant through majority of the scholarly work involving Lovecraft and his mythos in an attempt to capture the essence of Lovecraft as well as provide a rational answer to the ultimate question. Given the constant theme of all-powerful outer beings coming to Earth, scholars saw this as a window into an insignificant and meaningless life. While evaluating the mythos as a whole, many come to understand Lovecraft as quite a depressed man, who did not find any value within life and who translated this mentality into his texts. Dirk Mosig is one such scholar, who attempts to make a rational claim to Lovecraft's irrational writing, "Lovecraft is *not* deploring knowledge, but rather, *man's inability to cope with it*" (105). Since majority of the narrators of the stories are learned men, Mosig draws a conclusion that humans are not only meaningless to the grander scheme of life, but that they are also unable to handle the truth. It is upon this foundation that nihilistic believers will scrutinize the mythos. Yet, this theory remains too broad and obvious for the convoluted intricacies of Lovecraft's world. There seems to be too much detail and thought within his work for the significance to be defined as meaningless. The true explanation of the mythos still remains unsolved and unsatisfied by this blanket philosophy and oversimplified answer.

Enlightenment was not reached until Maurice Levy's exploration of the fantastic shed light on Lovecraft's work. Levy examines the fantastical qualities of the mythos as well as determining the meaning behind it all. Unfortunately, his research led him to side with the nihilistic scholars, but before he went off course he provided a new, fresh insight into the work, "The question we then ask is whether this organized, structured, hierarchical system is a

gratuitous fable, a jeu d'esprit, a 'cosmic epic' conceived by an idle paranoiac, or whether it involves, at a deep level of consciousness, the most fundamental realities" (109). Of course Levy is referring to the meaningless of life as the conscious foundation, but what if it is something else. As Lovecraft said himself, "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" ("Supernatural Horror in Literature"). To complicate Levy's argument, the fear of the unknown can allude to more than questioning what is in the universe, but rather this fear which resides in this world as it is seen every day. Humans are creatures of habit and when this homeostasis is disrupted, it elicits some sort of fear mixed with curiosity. Now, maybe the question posed is not specific enough, but rather it should be focused on the subjects within the stories themselves. These creatures are responsible for these scholars believing in nihilism, yet it is possible to posit that these "others" are representative of a larger idea that resides closer to home than within the black folds of the universe. So the questions change instead, what do these creatures symbolize and how do they affect the meaning of the mythos?

The social and cultural climate changed drastically through the course of Lovecraft's life. With this disruption to the norm, a parallel can be drawn between the symbolic nature of these invading alien others and this new immigrant population flooding into the streets of Providence. With the addition of new dominating institutions, involving industrialization, and the influx of immigrants, the beloved ideals of antiquarianism were destroyed and forgotten. With this in mind, the cultural atmosphere during Lovecraft's time is important in understanding and analyzing his work properly. During the early 1900s, the economy was slowly falling into what would be known as the Great Depression and the invasion of industrialization affected many capital cities, such as Providence. There was an increase in immigrants, especially Italians and

fleeing Jews from Europe, who some of which found salvation within the city limits of Providence. Through this massive change over the course of 30 to 40 years, an overall feeling of xenophobia and nationalism arose from those who wanted to keep America the same. Yet, Lovecraft not only knew that this would be impossible, but sought a way to preserve the Providence that he loved. These common sentiments about immigrants are easily transferable to the disgust and unpleasantness felt towards the aliens within the short stories.

In retaliation to the changing of the racial environment, Lovecraft shared his radical beliefs through his immense epistolary works and painted an unfavorable picture of the change. Racist statements riddle his letters and make it nearly impossible to clear his name of this slander. Not only does he constantly rebuke the settling of foreigners into his town, but the ignorance in which he discusses these people as “others” within his letters is plainly disgusting. Instead of dealing with the change in his society as a rational grown adult, he decided to blame those that could not defend themselves. S. T. Joshi, a renowned Lovecraft scholar comments on Lovecraft’s overarching racism:

Throughout his life, Lovecraft tended to scapegoat ‘foreigners’ for the broader social changes-increasing urbanization and industrialization; increasing commercial success on the part of immigrants who thereby challenged the social supremacy of WASPs-that were transforming the nation into a much more cosmopolitan place. And in terms of his prejudice against African Americans, Lovecraft believed he has science on his side on deeming them an ‘inferior’ race: many reference works of the period made similar claims. (Joshi 41)

He blamed others for the changes that were just naturally happening to his city. Writing was such an outlet for Lovecraft, especially within his letters that it begs to ask the question whether art

imitates life in this situation. Majority of Lovecraft's stories discuss this alien race residing on Earth, which seems to be awfully similar to the social situation in the 1900s.

Again, it is within the stories that one is able to find this apparent parallel between his work and the social climate of the time. Over the course of his writing career, Lovecraft's style progresses as well as the role of the narrator within the story. Majority of his work is written as if it is a journal entry or a discourse between friends. In this sense, the reader is either supposed to identify with the narrator or is supposed to feel the emotions a person would hold for a close friend. With this in mind, the stories progresses from having the narrator change from a mere observer to an actual other themselves. With this drastic change in the view of the "other", it becomes circumspect that the writer is attempting to make this "otherness" personally closer to the reader.

While investigating this apparent parallel between his work and the social climate, there is a progression stylistically as well. Within the three stories "The Nameless City", "The Whisperer in Darkness", and "Shadow over Innsmouth", there is quite a difference spanning Lovecraft's writing career. As previously mentioned, the closeness of the narrator to understanding and becoming the "other" increases as well as providing an insight into what defines these alien beings. This shift over the course of his work can be juxtaposed with the changes happening during the society at that time. While the narrators of the stories are coming to terms with the invasion of this new race, Lovecraft is predicting this new world that is forming. The key to these aliens is by looking through the lens during the early 1900s. While keeping the historical, socio-economic status of the time period in mind, the others become real, tangible fears represented by the masses. These stories are reflecting the fears of the people of the early 20th century and representing the invasion of these unknown entities. Lovecraft is

chronicling his own conversion from an American into a nationalist, who eventually comes to terms with the new America—the new Providence.

Can Change Really Stop?

“The Nameless City” is one of the first stories of the mythos and was written in 1921. The tale is set in an exotic location so it is already enmeshed within the “other”. The reader is transported into an unknown land where there is a dreadful fear of something forgotten seeping through the lines of the story. As previously discussed, the reader is to identify with the narrator, who is detailing the events as if he is telling a close friend of his encounter with the “other”. The narrator is an explorer with this fantastic mind and superior intellect on a mission to find this lost city. After his descent into the temple below, the narrator discovers the depiction of the gods of this forsaken city, “They were of the reptile kind, with body lines suggesting sometimes the crocodile, sometimes the seal. . . fore legs bore delicate and evidently flexible feet. . . their heads, which presented a contour violating all known biological principles” (146). These creatures were revered as gods and were treated as a superior race by the humans that they came upon.

As the narrator attempts to retreat out of the cavern, he is followed by these half man-half reptile creatures. The fear that consumes him is not only because he is being chased by these damned creatures, but that they were once humans. The idea that these disgusting, contorted beings were once human is the most frightening aspect of the story because it could happen there is a chance it could happen again. As the narrator distinguishes, “Monstrous, unnatural, colossal, was the thing—too far beyond all the ideas of man to be believed except in the silent damnable small hours when one cannot sleep” (150). The idea of humans regressing into a beast-like form is beyond the infinite horrors of humans. Yet, how did these people become sub-human? Since these people worshipped an unnatural race—full of corruption and immorality—they literally

regressed into the vile thing that they idolized. In accepting these others as gods or something to be understood, they turned into the animals and false idols they revered. There is a blatant connection between the general disgust that was felt during the immersion of the immigrant population into the cities and a prediction of what could befall the human population if they adapt to these “foreigner’s” ideals and principles. The reader could become animals and backtrack evolutionarily if they attempt to understand these new vile “others” and allow them to change the American lifestyle. This is an overarching example of Lovecraft’s nationalism. If foreigners, “others”, want to live in this country, Americans are not to bend to their ways, but rather the aliens are to conform to the American customs.

Antiquarianism, especially a reverence for the old is a common theme throughout the myths. This explorer is seeking some sort of truth and once he is fully immersed in ancient society, he misses the comforts of the modern world, “The antiquity of the spot was unwholesome, and I longed to encounter some sign or device to prove that the city was indeed fashioned by mankind” (142). He was searching for something familiar and concrete—industrious even. The proportions and angles were all wrong and he desired to have his fear alleviated, but of course his curiosity overpowered that fear. This is the stark opposite of Lovecraft’s principles, which Joshi explains, “But he also believed that contemporary America, with its reliance on speed, machinery, and continual novelty, represented a more intellectually and imaginatively impoverished culture than the eighteenth-century world that he loved” (108). Lovecraft believed that industrialization was destroying the country rather than helping it in any way. This story is a prediction of what shall come if humans stop worshiping the old way of life and fully conforming to the new. If technology or industrial advances are worshipped as false idols then the country and its inhabitants will all turn into these animals, inferior to human

intelligence. Lovecraft utilizes the opposite of his own ideals to showcase the absurdity and grotesqueness of these changes especially concerning the rise of industry and the allowance of immigrants to settle in the country.

This retaliation to the changes occurring within Providence does not end there. The first mentioning of the Necronomicon occurs within this story, including the unexplainable couplet of the mad poet Abdul Alhazred, “That is not dead which can eternal lie/And with strange aeons even death may die” (141). At an attempt to explain the unexplainable and this couplet, it is imperative to discover what can never die and will outlive the world after the end. In this sense, the explanation could range from the universe, power, fear, curiosity, knowledge, misunderstanding, etc. While analyzing the rest of the story, antiquarianism is frowned upon whereas a manmade, technologically advanced item is desired. This draws a parallel between technology and the couplet, since it can never die and industry will outlive us all. The nihilistic scholars prefer to see it as an ode to the unanswerable question concerning the birth of the universe; it can also allude to the idea of change or even industry. Change is a constant, yet is one of the most feared among human beings. Creatures of habit rarely enjoy a monumental change within their environment that causes them to adapt to new scenery. Humans are a stubborn race, especially when it comes to accepting others of their own kind with a few physical differences.

It is important to note before delving into the other stories that the narrator’s place in “The Nameless City” is merely an observer. He is a learned man, who seems to worship industry but holds a fascination for the past. This curiosity to regain some sort of power by harnessing the knowledge that the past holds is a common theme among Lovecraft’s writing. Yet, in his earliest writings, the narrator serves as a gateway to witness the horror of these “others” and it feels as if

there is no possible way to feel anything for them except fear. It is from this point that the role of the narrator is manipulated and changed towards having some sort of understanding and comprehension of these aliens as keys to the future as well as a tool for the human race's progression. It is merely hinted upon in this story, "the shape of the roof was too regular to be natural, and I wondered what the prehistoric cutters of stone had first worked upon. Their engineering skill must have been vast" (144). Although the narrator falls into the downward spiral of insanity, he still retains the concept that these beings are not only capable of great things, but they hold far more knowledge than any human could possibly think about possessing. It is with a mixture of awe and fear in which these narrators regard these creatures. Although their power is immense, there is also a desire to understand these aliens so that humans can use this knowledge for productivity and for technological advancement. So there might be something humanistic about these "others" and just maybe this change could improve society regardless of its destruction of the antiquarianism that Lovecraft adored so much.

Understanding is the Path to Enlightenment

"The Whisperer of Darkness" appears towards the middle of Lovecraft's mythos. It was worked on from 1927 to 1930, which would span the time Lovecraft's moved to New York for his wife. Both monumental life changes did not last long and Lovecraft found himself back in Providence and alone by the end of his writing process. While in New York, Lovecraft not only became disgusted with the city but also the inhabitants. Imagine—a writer with the sensibilities of an 18th century gentleman, who finds himself in the heart of the melting pot of the United States. Nationalism floods Lovecraft's letters during this time and it becomes, again, on the verge of racism. He, a struggling writer, becomes reliant on his wife's business. This old-time gentleman seemed to be unable to even write a decent story while in New York, "He had never

become used to the ethnic diversity of the city, and he perhaps resented the fact that so many of these immigrants were succeeding in their work whereas he, an Anglo-Saxon of good stock, was in the depths of poverty” (91). Yet while reading the story, the perspective changes and it reads as if two different authors had written it. It begins as a normal Lovecraftian story with overt racist overtones, but ends with a sort of resolution or understanding of the “other”.

Again, this story is narrated in the first person and contains quite a portion dedicated to epistolary conversations between two scholars, Akeley and Wilmarth. It details an account of a sighting in Vermont of these “pinkish things about five feet long; with crustaceous bodies bearing vast pairs of dorsal fins or membraneous wings and several sets of articulated limbs, and with a sort of convoluted ellipsoid, covered with multitudes of very short antennae, where a head would ordinarily be” (669). This catches the eye of Wilmarth, who is an instructor of literature and an amateur student of New England folklore. At first, he disregards these sightings as folks living in the woods, who believe too much in the old stories of the area. This sparks a debate among educated people as to the authenticity of the stories, which produces the initial correspondence between Henry Wentworth Akeley, who is a scholar “of mathematics, astronomy, biology, anthropology, and folklore” and the narrator (673). This is a different type of alien and now there are two scholars involved with attempting to uncover the secrets behind these mysterious beings.

Within this letter, Akeley tells the narrator the facts about these creatures that he has stumbled upon. The letter not only has the tone of fear, but also curiosity as to the creatures existence and reasoning for being on the Earth, “It is true—terribly true—that there are *non-human creatures watching us all the time*; with spies among us gathering information. It was from a wretched man, who if he was sane (as I think he was), *was one of those spies*. . . He later

killed himself, but I have reason to think there are others now” (676). Akeley continues to explain how these creatures come from space to get metals from the mines and that they would rather be left alone. It seems as if the people of the town have lived with these creatures for some time now. The aliens also have an interesting way of dealing with the people, “They could easily conquer the earth, but have not tried so far because they have not needed to. They would rather leave things as they are to save bother” (676). The creatures are not interested in the humans really unless they interfere with their work. The humans are mostly used for information and rarely anything else, which would prove the idea that humans are insignificant and worthless. Yet, the story continues and takes a turn for the peculiar.

Throughout the course of the correspondence, the others move closer and closer to Akeley and it appears as if they are making threats towards him. As the ‘threat’ moves closer, Akeley becomes more paranoid until he can no longer be reached. This is when Wilmarth ventures to Vermont after he receives a particularly interesting letter, “What I had thought morbid and shameful and ignominious is in reality awesome and mind-expanding and even *glorious*—my previous estimate being merely a phase of man’s tendency to hate and fear and shrink from the *utterly different*” (694). It is discovered that the aliens have actually offered Akeley an interesting deal. When describing the creatures, Cannon comments on how the aliens are not described as that frightening or dangerous, “That Lovecraft did not intend the fungi to appear as entirely ‘evil’ is reflected in the range of Wilmarth’s responses throughout his ordeal” (91). Upon Wilmarth’s arrival, he is offered a deal, which Akeley has already taken. The deal states if he leaves his mortal body behind, the elder gods have the ability to detach his mind and place it in a metal container. This is an easily transportable device that these creatures can carry with them to various other planets and galaxies. In exchange, these minds will be privy to the

most secret and mind-altering truths of the universe. Wilmarth refused and managed to escape the house unscathed.

These “others” differ significantly from those described in “The Nameless City”. Not only are they not meant to be frightening or threatening in any way, but they are communicating with the humans within the story. They are offering these people the chance to expand their knowledge and understanding of the world exponentially. The “others” are creatures of intellect and merely require humans for their insight into the modern world. The reader can now understand and attempt to connect with this otherness in a way that has not been possible before. Instead of seeing them as mere creatures of curiosity and mystery, their intense desire for knowledge allows them to be identified and related to. It is through this connection that these “others” can begin to morph into something tangible or worth understanding. If this is juxtaposed with the social climate during the time of this story, the immigrants contain some other knowledge that Americans do not have already. Their different perspective of the world could be just the trick to push America farther technologically and industrially. It is through an attempt of understanding that a person can break through their fear of change and accept what is to come to pass.

Although there is a sense of understanding or an attempt at that, there is the inclusion of industry and the bizarre, immoral consequences that it brings. A human being can only attain more knowledge if they leave their body behind and succumb to having their brain trapped in a metal cylinder. These “others” are bringing the humans into change and convincing them that it is better this way, “There is nothing to fear. All transitions are painless, and there is much to enjoy in a wholly mechanised state of sensation” (713). It sounds as if they are just working for a political agenda or encouraging the change of the normal human environment. They are only

asking for a person's brain and to leave the body behind. This is why it is so interesting to have Akeley and Wilmarth's decisions conflict. Akeley represents this desire and insatiable thirst for knowledge. He is willing to go through any extreme to satiate his desire, even leaving his body on Earth while aliens carry his brain to far-reaching universes. He has formed this trust with the "others" so that they can expand his mind to new dimensions.

On the other hand, Wilmarth loses his sanity at the mere mention of trading knowledge for his body. This provides a separate commentary on the desire for knowledge and technological change. Wilmarth does not want to explain what he had learned during the meeting with the others, "My scientific zeal had vanished amidst fear and loathing, and I felt nothing now but a wish to escape from this net of morbidity and unnatural revelation. I knew enough now. It must indeed be true that cosmic linkages do exist—but such things are surely not meant for normal human beings to meddle with" (714). Instead of encouraging intellectual growth, these "others" have in an indirect way destroyed the desire for innovation within Wilmarth. So although there is progress in terms of accepting the "others", there is still a stigma and an "us against them" mentality.

Be Wary of the Deep Ones

"The Shadow over Innsmouth" was written towards the latter end of Lovecraft's career around 1931, which is after Lovecraft has fully reinstated himself back in Providence. This tale is set in a typical New England landscape fully representative of the antiquarian beliefs of Lovecraft. The story is told from a first person point of view and this particular man is travelling through New England to rediscover his roots. Upon venturing to Innsmouth, somewhere in Massachusetts, this man finds himself surrounded by bizarre looking people and this odor of fish pervading the whole town. A stigma is attached to not only the town but those that inhabit it.

There is an overt racism towards the town, which is the cause for it being shunned from the rest of Massachusetts, “But the real thing behind the way folks feel is simply race prejudice—and I don’t say I’m blaming those that hold it. I hate those Innsmouth folks myself, and I wouldn’t care to go to their town. . . . You’ve probably heard about the Salem man that came home with a Chinese wife, and maybe you know there’s still a bunch of Fiji Islanders somewhere” (810). Even at the start of the story, there is already an atmosphere of racism and malcontent towards this one group of people. There is a definite “us versus them” mentality, which already creates racial tensions within the story.

Upon visiting Innsmouth, it can be gathered that the members of the town are actually representative of the “others”. They appear different and have this sea monster quality to them: a narrow head, bulging, watery blue eyes that seemed never to wink, a flat nose, a receding forehead and chin, and singularly undeveloped ears. . . His hands were large and heavily veined, and had a very unusual greyish-blue tinge. . . his oddities certainly did not look Asiatic, Polynesian, Levantine, or negroid, yet I could see why the people found him alien. I myself would have thought of biological degeneration rather than alienage. (815-816)

Again the narrator implies a racial element to the story. At first the Innsmouth people are described as looking like fish, but it digresses into racial comments in which connections are made to actual races of people. Lovecraft has set the stage for a community where not only the tone has a connotation of “otherness”, but the people are otherworldly as well as possessing characteristics typical of immigrants coming into America.

As the grand mystery unfolds, the narrator listens to a drunkard, who tells him the story of Innsmouth. The tale is that Captain Marsh made a deal with the creatures under the sea (the

Deep Ones), in which they provide human sacrifices in exchange for jewelry and riches. The sea creatures will also walk onto land and mate with humans in order to conceive mixed race children. Also, when an Innsmouth inhabitant becomes old, they return to the sea to live forever. The old man's, Zadok's, face details the brevity of the situation, "The hideous suddenness and inhuman frightfulness of the old man's shriek almost made me faint. His eyes, looking past me toward the malodorous sea, were positively starting from his head; while his face was a mask of fear worthy of Greek tragedy" (836). This should have been a forewarning to the narrator, but of course he continues to think no truth of the story. While drawing a parallel to reality, this is a direct reference to mixed race relationships and the children that would come of that union. There is a disgust attached to these children that could even overpower the hatred for those "others". At this point in the story, it is safe to say that the content focuses primarily around mixed relationships and overt racism towards the taboo of that union.

The next course of events unfolds rather quickly for the narrator. The people of Innsmouth gather around the narrator and attempt to capture him, but for some reason he is able to escape the town unnoticed during a ritual. After his escape the narrator appears to be feeling the same emotions as the narrators before him, "Where does madness leave off and reality begin? Is it possible that even my last fear is sheer delusion?" (852). His sanity is shaken and he can scarcely recall what he has experienced. At this point, it seems as if Lovecraft has written another one of his stories, in which the narrator is merely an observer and falls into insanity after witnessing the "other" up close and personal. At the height of the story, it usually ends with gibberish and warnings from the narrator as to why a person should never act on curiosity again.

Yet, the story takes a turn to the weird when the narrator starts to recognize the "Innsmouth look" within himself. It comes to light that his lineage harkens back to Captain

Marsh, who created this alliance with the “Deep Ones” in the first place. The narrator begins to recognize the comparison between his own face and his horrid family members, “I gazed at their pictured faces with a measurably heightened feeling of repulsion and alienation. I could not at first understand the change, but gradually a horrible sort of *comparison* began to obtrude itself on my unconscious mind despite the steady refusal of my consciousness to admit even the least suspicion of it” (856). As the change progresses, the narrator begins to feel this desire to dive under water “out of the sane world of wholesome life into unnamable abysses of blackness and alienage” (857). The initial reaction to this discovery is one of self-hatred and disgust. He now realizes that he was created by one of these unholy unions and that he must be immoral himself. The narrator becomes accepting of his fate and embraces his destiny to return back to the sea.

This story is set apart from the others because the narrator is closest to the aliens in that he is one of them. He is not only able to understand them, but he is one of them. He is able to feel the draw the ocean, understand and even rationalize the method behind the “others”. He is the future of the nation. If America continues to allow immigrants into the country, Lovecraft knew that there would be a high risk of interracial relationships and children created from them. This was a true fear of those living during the 1920s. As Buhle discusses, “Extrapolating Lovecraft’s implications from his limited narrative forms, one can suggest a perception that the human recognition of forces outside the Western heritage would provoke a shock of (self-) awareness: the result would be either madness or the course toward a new existence” (206). In this quote, Buhle is stating that to acknowledge that there might be alien forces outside the Western world is to either become mad or attempt to create a new world outside of the known universe. It is evident that Lovecraft has acknowledged the advantages to allowing these aliens into the country. These stories detail his process of coping with the change like any other person

during the 1920s. Like Lovecraft, the earlier narrators in the first few stories went mad after discovering the existence of “others”, but in the last tale, the narrator is a product outside of the known world. Joshi comments on the racism within the text, “It is undeniable that there is a racist substratum to the story: the horror that Lovecraft wishes us to feel at the notion of humans interbreeding with fish-frog monsters is a symbol for the ‘miscegenation’ that he abhorred among human races” (118). The narrator is part-human and part-“other”, yet he seems completely normal, except the minor detail that he feels the ocean calling to him. This story normalizes “otherness” and allows the reader to think question if there is some sort of otherness within themselves.

There has been a complete transition from “The Nameless City” through to “The Shadow over Innsmouth”. There has been reconciliation to the fact that these “others” are a part of life and there will be effects at the hand of their inclusion. On one hand, their existence can be denied and allowed no merit for their perspective on the world. Yet, on the other hand, they can be accepted and acknowledged to possess advantages and knowledge outside of the typical Western philosophy. It appears as if Lovecraft has gone through this same conflict and has resolved to side with acceptance rather than alienation.

Lovecraft was a Potential Psychic?

Lovecraft provides a commentary on the world as he sees it. Yet, Lovecraft was a very changeable man, who would jump from ideology to ideology in order to fit his specifications and desires. At the beginning of the Cthulhu mythos, there is an overt representation of nationalistic ideals. It is not that Lovecraft believes that these others should be terminated, but rather that the country should not change or adapt to these newcomers. Our country should remain the same; whereas, the immigrants should alter their own practices to align with those of this country. Yet,

Lovecraft even understands the changeable world that we live in while writing in one of his own personal letters, “As for civilization—there is no reason for mourning the passing of the present western world; for all cultures, peter out in the end, and I don’t think this has been a very notable one except in the single field of scientific achievement”. If the world is just going to change then it does not matter what philosophy a person happens to believe in at this moment. With the influx of immigrants and the increase of industrialization, there was bound to be some sort of retaliation to this change.

As the society and Lovecraft began to accept these foreigners and the change that was happening, there was a transition from nationalism to socialism. Lovecraft writes about his changeable moods and ideals:

I have today not a single well-defined wish save to die or to learn facts. This position makes me eminently receptive, for a new idea no longer meets with any conflict from old ideas—I can change my theories as often as valid evidence is changed, or as my judgment improves through exercise in the province of philosophical reflection. I am, I hope, now a complete machine without disturbing and biasing volition; a machine for the reception and classification of ideas and the construction of theories (Joshi 116).

In the latter part of his life, Lovecraft was open to new ideas and perspectives on the world. Once the original idea of nationalism was no longer possible because of the drastic change in Providence, a socialistic craze began and became the center of Lovecraft’s views as well as his writing. Lovecraft believed in the division of labor and everyone working for their own living. This included the foreigners that he used to be so against even allowing into his city. Now, he encouraged them to feel equal to the wealthier class and strive to make themselves higher in

society. This new world created from the industrialization and immigration is one of freedom, acceptance, and unity. Lovecraft acknowledges this not only in his writing but in his own personal comments. It is useless to fight change because it will outlast everyone as the not so crazy Arab Abdul Alhazred stated. Lovecraft managed to not only come to terms with the complete destruction of his original ideals, but he managed to construct a world in which otherness is normalized, appreciated, and propels society further. The mythos is not concerned with identifying the meaninglessness of humanity, but rather encouraging all people to be a part of this new world, in which everyone is a little different—a little alien.

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