

CTHULHU ASCENDANCY

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Taking as a focus the theme of witchcraft and the idea of secret ancient cults, our goal is to discuss how H. P. Lovecraft and the related scholarship connects itself with Speculative Realism. We argue that is possible to understand that connection with the notion of *lovecraftian networks*. The idea of network proposed is based in the works of Bruno Latour and “it designates a series of associations”¹ marked by “series of small discontinuities”² that, as they occur, creates “a certain continuity of action”.³

By deploying that notion we understand that the theme of witchcraft and its correlated contents are part of that network. However, it’s necessary to build and extrapolate some of its aspects. For example, the *lovecraftian networks* are inserted into chains of production and circulation that should be considered. This also includes how the *lovecraftian networks* have inside flows and clashes where their own interpretation are disputed by those involved in it. In this sense, lovecraftian networks are not only the literary texts by H. P. Lovecraft but everything that can possible be related to it, from scholarship to amateur criticism, or even esoteric and religious groups.

The lovecraftian networks that we aim to build are molded by a narrative that starts with H. P. Lovecraft, as we try to understand the space of production of his writings, the circulation of ideas and the interaction between authors and readers. One of the material spaces that serves as reference for this network was *Weird Tales*, in a sense that we understand that magazine as a hub for associations. That being said, the *lovecraftian networks* aren’t limited by the magazine. It’s possible to perceive the discontinuities in the network, as it happens not only

¹LATOUR, Bruno, **An Inquiry Into Modes of Existence - An Anthropology of the Moderns**, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2013, p. 32.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

in the magazine itself but also via letters, publications in other spaces, external projects, different intellectual ideas, etc.

The network started to change after Lovecraft's death, as August Derleth aimed to formalize and exercise control of the stories and the lore related to them. The result of this process was the creation of the *Cthulhu Mythos*. The Lovecraftian network, or at least part of it, became conditioned to this editorial politic of inclusion and exclusion. However, this process of formalization didn't stop the formation of new hybrids as different analyses appeared in other spaces allowing the creation of new connections with the network. In academia, it is possible to see how Lovecraft commented on the works of Edith Birkhead and Dorothy Scarborough as a reader but by the 1950s, he would play the role of a reference alongside these two.

As we cover briefly the academic scenario, we want to point out specific moments where the Lovecraftian networks are taking turns and showing how it was changing. Our idea is not to discuss in detail the works related to Lovecraft but to synthesize the structure of this network. Despite the internal divergences between the scholarship, it's possible to see a movement to analyze the Lovecraftian network via the historical biography of Lovecraft. This process connects and converges with a series of arguments that refute the idea that Lovecraft was non-rational. On the contrary, the Lovecraftian network would build the idea of Lovecraft as a rationalist and realist.

Another set of flows inside the Lovecraftian network is connected to the esoteric and Ufology. In this context, many elements from the network took a different interpretation and resulted in new chains of meaning. The most important example of this was how the *Necronomicon*, which started as a *fictional book* created by Lovecraft and used by authors from the network, became an *actual book*. In the United Kingdom, another *tentacle* of the *Lovecraftian network* appeared in the form of the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit. Central to this group was the concept of *hyperstition* as the proposal where “there is no difference in principle between a universe, a religion, and a hoax”.⁴ The group itself was created in 1995 by Sadie Plant but by 2003 was disbanded. However, the Lovecraftian network reveals that reminiscent and survivors from the group moved to the blog *hyperstition.abstract dynamics*.

It was in this blog that Mark Fisher announced the event that would occur on April 26, 2007, one day before the famous workshop on Speculative Realism. Another similar event organized by Fisher and James Trafford occurred in the same place on December 01, 2007.

⁴CCRU, *CCRU Writings 1997-2003*, New York: Urbanomic, 2015, p. 9.

Tracing some aspects of what was discussed, our goal aims to understand how this new set of tentacles of the network built an ontological view. While Lovecraft had a view built on his racial prejudices, an author like Robert Howard proposed a different notion that was also racist. The Lovecraftian network, however, took different paths and created sets of meaning that diverged and was opposed to that. In this sense, we disagree with Poole's criticism of Speculative Realism because it fails to take into account the Lovecraftian networks. It's via the combination of ontological and historical analysis that it is possible to understand how the witches of the Lovecraftian networks moved and changed their positions.

The Lovecraftian Networks and the Weird Tales

Our starting point to construct the Lovecraftian networks is to situate Lovecraft in relation to the *pulps* in the United States. The process of publication was led by *The Golden Argosy*, a magazine that released its first number in december of 1882.⁵ In the following years, different magazines would appear and, one of those, was the *Weird Tales* in 1922.⁶ Created by Jacob Clark Henneberger and having its first number released in march of 1923, the resources to create the magazine came from the profits earned early with another magazine, *College Humor*. Aiming to follow the trends of the market, Henneberger created first the *Detective Tales* and the *Weird Tales* came a bit later. For the position of editor, Edwin Baird was hired for both magazines. In the words of Mike Ashely:

Weird Tales became not so much a magazine as an institution, but it had an inauspicious start. [...] was the first magazine to be devoted entirely to fantasy and occult fiction. The time seemed to have arrived for such a magazine but in fact Henneberger found it difficult to attract either the writers or the readers he wanted. [...] Part of the problem was that Edwin Baird's heart was not in the magazine. He was a specialist in crime and mystery stories and held the supernatural field in low regard.⁷

⁵AGNEW, Jeremy, **The Age of Dimes and Pulps: A History of Sensationalist Literature, 1830-1960**, Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2018.

⁶TYMN, Marshall B.; ASHLEY, Mike (Orgs.), **Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazines**, Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985.

⁷ASHLEY, Mike, **The Time Machines: The Story of the Science-Fiction Pulp Magazines from the beginning to 1950.**, Cambridge: Liverpool University Press, 2000, p. 40-41.

Lovecraft was sent at least five texts for the *Weird Tales* and got an early refusal by Baird. However, the situation changed. Henneberger had read Lovecraft on other occasions and reverted the decision. Not only that, but also established that all future submissions by the author would have space in the magazine. Baird eventually would lose his position at *Weird Tales* and was replaced by Farnsworth Wright.⁸

Weird Tales since Baird was unique because it had a space called *The Eyrie*, serving not only to announce new editorial leads “and the importance of its readers, while also essentially providing an open invitation to new writers to submit stories.”⁹ As explained by Gary K. Wolfe, this structure of communication would be similar in other magazines like *Amazing Stories*, *Wonder Stories* and *Astounding Stories*. The result was the consolidation of a network of communication that was central in giving form to a “science fiction folk culture”.¹⁰

The *lovecraftian network* had the *Weird Tales* as a reference but the authors also published in different magazines. Lovecraft, for example, sold the story *The Colour Out of Space*¹¹ for Hugo Gernsback and was published in June of 1927.¹² However, this connection didn't took roots because Gernsback¹³ took a long time to pay Lovecraft.¹⁴

The existence of the *Weird Tales* in the market was not guaranteed. Henneberger tried to increase the reach of the magazine by adding a full space for Harry Houdini called *Ask Houdini* where the readers could interact with him.¹⁵ Also two stories by Houdini got published - *The Hoax of the Spirit Lover* and *The Spirit Fakers of Hermmannstadt*. Joshi and Schultz proposed that the writer behind the two stories was Walter Gibson, the future creator of

⁸In Mike Ashley words: “Wright was an erratic editor who admitted he was not over fond of science fiction, but there is no denying that he had more affinity with unusual and bizarre stories than Baird and, allowing for the occasional slip in quality, he developed a publication that lived up to its subtitle as ‘the Unique Magazine’.” *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁹VICK, Todd B., **Renegades and Rogues: the life and legacy of Robert E. Howard**, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021, p. 69.

¹⁰WOLFE, Gary K., **Evaporating Genres: Essays on Fantastic Literature**, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2011, p. 190.

¹¹TYMN; ASHLEY (Orgs.), **Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazines**, p. 645.

¹²LOVECRAFT, H. P., *The Colour Out of Space*, **Amazing Stories**, p. 556–567, 1927.

¹³TYMN; ASHLEY (Orgs.), **Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Weird Fiction Magazines**, p. 645.

¹⁴BUSCH, Willian Perpetuo, **História da Ficção Científica nos Estados Unidos: do herói cientista de John W. Campbell ao herói antropólogo de Ursula Kroeber Le Guin**, Dissertação de Mestrado, Universidade Federal do Paraná, Curitiba, 2019.

¹⁵JOSHI, S. T.; SCHULTZ, David E, **An H.P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia**, New York: Greenwood Press, 2001, p. 116.

Shadow.¹⁶ Henneberger took a trip reportedly made by Houdini based on his travels to Egypt and asked Lovecraft to transform it into a story. The author asked for “as much imaginative latitude as possible”¹⁷ and the result was *Imprisoned with the Pharaohs*.

The tentacles of the lovecraftian network reveal that this process resulted in a connection between Lovecraft and Houdini. Not only Houdini liked the story, but also invited Lovecraft to his house aiming to establish some contact with major figures in the editorial field. The process didn’t get the expected result, but Houdini hired Lovecraft in 1926 to write an article against Astrology.¹⁸ Another project involved Lovecraft and C. M. Eddy and was focused on the writing of a book related to superstitions.¹⁹ However, Houdini died before that and the final version was not published. Part of this material was identified in Lovecraft’s archives as *The Cancer of Superstition*.²⁰ Houdini also gave to Lovecraft his book *A Magician Among the Spirits* (1924) with the following inscription: “To my friend Howard P. Lovecraft. Best Wishes. Houdini. My brain is the key that sets me free.”²¹

Weird Tales was compiled in a single number the edition of May, June and July of 1924. After three months, the number of november was only possible because of the financial donation of the readers.²² The first publication of Lovecraft at Weird Tales was *Dagon*²³ in October of 1923, followed by *The Rats in the Wall*²⁴ in March of 1924.

The second text had some Latin quotes that were actually wrong, but the mistake wasn’t noticed.²⁵ However, when the text got republished in June of 1930²⁶ The mistakes were detected by Robert E. Howard and he wrote a letter to the editor about it. Wright, in his turn, sent the letter to Lovecraft and started a long term friendship between the two authors.²⁷

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*

²²VICK, **Renegades and Rogues: the life and legacy of Robert E. Howard**, p. 68–69.

²³LOVECRAFT, H. P., *Dagon*, **Weird Tales**, v. 2, n. 3, p. 23–25, 1923.

²⁴LOVECRAFT, H. P., *The Rats in the Walls*, **Weird Tales**, v. 3, n. 3, p. 25–31, 1924.rats

²⁵DERIE, Bobby, **Weird Talers: Essays on Robert E. Howard and Others**, New York: Hippocampus Press, 2019.

²⁶LOVECRAFT, H. P., *The Rats in the Walls*, **Weird Tales**, v. 15, n. 6, p. 841–855, 1930.t

²⁷DERIE, **Weird Talers: Essays on Robert E. Howard and Others**, p. 14.

Lovecraft was essential in the development of Howard²⁸ career as a writer. The communication between the two allowed Howard to establish new connections and refine his writings, selling not only to *Weird Tales*, but also to other magazines.²⁹

As explained by Vick, Howard got published in the *Weird Tales* following the editorial lead of Wright. In the number of December of 1924, the editor mentioned that a lot of stories got rejected because they focus on the clash between humanity and dinosaurs.³⁰ The problem is that this sort of idea was already revealed to be false by the development of archeology and geology.³¹ The idea of the editor aimed for stories where Neandertals clashed with Cro-Magnons.³² Vick explained that this is the set where the text *Spear and Fang* was created:

It is most reasonable to think that Robert [Howard] read Wright's editorial and, excited by the story possibilities, almost immediately sat down at his typewriter to write "Spear and Fang". In fact, a simple cursory reading of "Spear and Fang" reveals a striking uncanny similarity between Wright's suggested storyline and Robert's story.³³

In this sense, we want to point out that the lovecraftian networks aren't exclusively related to Lovecraft but include other authors. The connection accelerated in June 1928 when the story *The Space-Eaters* was published in the *Weird Tales*. Written by Frank Belknap Long, it mentioned in his opening quote the *Necronomicon*:

The cross is not a passive agent. It protects the pure of heart, and it has often appeared in the air above our sabbats, confusing and dispersing the powers of darkness.³⁴

As a fictional book, *The Necronomicon* first appeared in the story *The Hound*, written by Lovecraft in 1922 and published in 1924 at *Weird Tales*. Long's use of it reinforced

²⁸VICK, *Renegades and Rogues: the life and legacy of Robert E. Howard*.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 69.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 70.

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴LONG, Frank Belknap, *The Space-Eaters*, *Weird Tales*, v. 12, n. 1, p. 49–68, 1928.

the Lovecraftian network, as it blurred the boundaries between real and fictional. The process was horizontal and modulated by borrowings, mentions, uses, and significations.

Long published *The Hounds of Tindalos* at *Weird Tales* in March of 1929. Joshi and Schultz pointed out that this text was molded and served as a sort of preface to the story *The Shunned House* by Lovecraft.³⁵ Who, at the time, acted as ghostwriter for Long.³⁶ Lovecraft was also working with Zealia Bishop and Adolphe de Castro. For Bishop, Lovecraft worked on the texts *The Curse of Yig* (written in 1928, published in 1929); *The Mound* (written in 1929, published in 1940) and *Medusa's Coil* (written in 1930, published in 1939). As pointed out by Derie:

As with some of his other revision clients, Lovecraft's correspondence goes much beyond the simple "business" side of things. Writing apparently every week or two, his letters would be filled with advice on writing, suggested readings, remarks on articles or newspaper cuttings that Zealia had sent. One letter from Lovecraft to her son James survives, showing how friendly and familiar that the two had gotten, although Lovecraft never failed to address his letters as "Dear Mrs. Reed," or "Dear Mrs. R"—at least until 1930, when Zealia remarried to Dauthard William Bishop, Sr. and the letters were sent to "Dear Mrs. Bishop."³⁷

Castro had hired Lovecraft to review two texts: *The Last Test* (1927) and *The Electric Executioner* (1929). Lovecraft refused to review *Portrait of Ambrose Bierce*, a function that was delegated to Long.³⁸

As the Lovecraftian networks grew, the *Necronomicon* appeared in *The Festival*, a story written by Lovecraft in 1923 and published in 1925. It wasn't the first time that the author played with the idea of a fictional work, since there is a mention of the *Pnakotic Manuscripts* in the story *Polaris* of 1918.³⁹ Clark Ashton Smith in *The Return of the Sorcerer*, a story published at *Strange Tales of Mystery and Terror* in September 1931, mentioned the *Necronomicon* and at the same time introduced a new entity in the universe of Cthulhu:

³⁵JOSHI; SCHULTZ, *An H.P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia*, p. 151.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷DERIE, Bobby, **Her Letters To Lovecraft: Zealia Brown Reed Bishop**, Deep Cuts, disponível em: <<https://deepcuts.blog/2020/12/25/her-letters-to-lovecraft-zealia-brown-reed-bishop/>>.

³⁸JOSHI; SCHULTZ, *An H.P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia*, p. 151.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 187.

Tsathouggua. This entity would be mentioned by Lovecraft in later versions of *The Mound* and *The Whisperer in Darkness*.⁴⁰

In a letter published by the *Weird Tales* in March of 1930, N. J. O'Neil asked if the mention of "Kathulos" made by Howard in the story *Skull-Face* had any relation to *Cthulhu*.⁴¹ Howard questioned Lovecraft about the creatures and got the answer that they appeared and became "references to this myth-cycle in his ghostwritten tales purely for fun".⁴² Howard started to use the material and the early results appear in *Children of the Night* (1931):

Taverel scanned the shelves. "Weird fiction seems to vie with works on witchcraft, voodoo and dark magic."

True; historians and chronicles are often dull; tale-weavers never -the masters, I mean. A voodoo sacrifice can be described in such a dull manner as to take all the real fantasy out of it, and leave it merely a sordid murder. I will admit that few writers of fiction touch the true heights of horror-most of their stuff is too concrete, given too much earthly shape and dimensions. But in such tales as Poe's *Fall of the House of Usher*, Machen's *Black Seal* and Lovecraft's *Call of Cthulhu* -the three master horror-tales, to my mind-the reader is borne into dark and outer realms of imagination.

"But look there," he continued, "there, sandwiched between that nightmare of Huysmans', and Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*-Von Junzt's *Nameless Cults*. There's a book to keep you awake at night!"

"I've read it," said Taverel, "and I'm convinced the man is mad. His work is like the conversation of a maniac-it runs with startling clarity for a while, then suddenly merges into vagueness and disconnected ramblings."⁴³

This long quote aims to show how Howard inserts Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Machen, Lovecraft and Horace Walpole in a sort of "tradition" that was related to the weird. And, at the same time, introduces a new book, *Nameless Cults* by Von Junzt, that was similar to the *Necronomicon*.

In their correspondence, Lovecraft gave Robert permission to incorporate elements from his own stories into these stories. In turn, Lovecraft did the same with Robert's character von Junzt and the book *Nameless Cults*, as well as with Justin Geoffrey, another fictional character Robert created. Lovecraft gave von Junzt his first name, Friedrich Wilhelm. It became a

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 52.

⁴¹*Ibid.*

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³HOWARD, Robert, *The Children of the Night*, *Weird Tales*, v. 17, n. 3, p. 353-362, 1931.

relatively common practice with Lovecraft and his fellow pulp writer correspondents: to exchange ideas and then incorporate them into their stories, developing what is now known as the Cthulhu Mythos. Robert utilized aspects of this mythos in a number of his stories, experimenting with the mythos in several different genres.⁴⁴

The theme of the witches and the secret ancient cults are also present in the network at this time.⁴⁵ *The Festival* that we mentioned before expose this idea as:

It was the Yuletide, that men call Christmas, though they know in their hearts it is older than Bethlehem and Babylon, older than Memphis and mankind. It was the Yuletide, and I had come at last to the ancient sea town where my people had dwelt and kept festival in the elder time when festival was forbidden; where also they had commanded their sons to keep festival once every century, that the memory of primal secrets might not be forgotten,⁴⁶

The strategy deployed by Lovecraft was pointed out by Timothy H. Evans as the combination between folklore and horror to invoke the past and the tradition as elements that got lost in the present.⁴⁷ If we view the network along these lines, we can understand how the notion of the present was created based on the lack of certainties in face of the changes. Lovecraft carried this conservatory figure that was against the process of modernization that was occurring in the United States. However, the lovecraftian network must also consider that this kind of view is shared with other intellectuals, like Samuel Adams Drake, Charles Skinner, Henry Shoemaker, John Lomax, Benjamin Botkin, Thomas Hart Benton and Stephen Vincent Benet. As Evans explained, it was this confluence of antiquarians, folklorists, writers and anthropologists that informed and molded Lovecraft's view of tradition and morality as something that was under attack by new sets of values. This clash was not only in the discursive field, but also in the archetonic spaces.⁴⁸ In Lovecraft case, the difference is how the horror was inserted in this dynamic:

The tales typically begin with an outsider entering an area, describing its landscape in picturesque terms, and then exploring its history and character

⁴⁴VICK, *Renegades and Rogues: the life and legacy of Robert E. Howard*, p. 105.

⁴⁵Mencionar quais.

⁴⁶LOVECRAFT, H. P., *The Festival*, *Weird Tales*, v. 5, n. 1, p. 169–174, 1925.

⁴⁷EVANS, Timothy H., *A Last Defense against the Dark: Folklore, Horror, and the Uses of Tradition in the Works of H. P. Lovecraft*, *Journal of Folklore Research*, v. 42, n. 1, p. 99–135, 2005, p. 100.

⁴⁸EVANS, *A Last Defense against the Dark: Folklore, Horror, and the Uses of Tradition in the Works of H. P. Lovecraft*.

in greater depth. These narratives are about tourists, but their antiquarian explorations become suffused with horror. In Lovecraft's fiction, the experiences that were his greatest source of pleasure transmute into sources of despair, as rottenness is uncovered at the core of tradition.⁴⁹

Taken together with *The Festival* but also the poem *Yule Horror* (1926), it's possible to detect this use of the past as ritualistic and responsible to mobilize a sort of memory that should not be lost. In the poem, the secret celebration of the past is defined as “unhallow'd and old” and performed with “chant wind in the woods as they dance round a Yule-altar fungeous and white” as it celebrates practices “of the lost Druid-folk”.⁵⁰

The lovecraftian network must take into account what Cecella Hopkins-Drewer mentioned: there is a connection between the winter celebrations that predates Christianity and the position of Lovecraft about the present.⁵¹ By returning to the past, the effect is “a liberation of the Holiday season from modern trappings, both religious and commercial”.⁵² What is important to point out is that this movement of present to the past done by Lovecraft is not an act that creates an ideal past.⁵³

There are two different movements made by Lovecraft that must be considered hybrids in the network. The first is the idea of a past that was lost. This was viewed by Lovecraft as related to the Roman Empire as the center of civilization. The second is the opposite as it presents a past that is more ancient and savage. A view that Lovecraft created following the works of Margaret Murray.

In the book *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe*, published in 1921, Murray argued that the cults dedicated to Diana in Antiquity were viewed by the Christians during the Middle Ages as acts of witchcraft. The rituals came from ancient times and escaped even the agrarian time-frames. With the ascension of Christianity, these cults got suppressed and its main god was defined as satanic and diabolic.⁵⁴

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁵⁰LOVECRAFT, H. P., *Yule Horror*, **Weird Tales**, v. 8, n. 6, p. 846, 1926.

⁵¹HOPKINS-DREWER, Cecelia, *Yuletide Horror: “Festival” and “The Messenger”*, **Lovecraft Annual**, v. 24, p. 54–59, 2020.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵³EVANS, A Last Defense against the Dark: Folklore, Horror, and the Uses of Tradition in the Works of H. P. Lovecraft; HOPKINS-DREWER, *Yuletide Horror: “Festival” and “The Messenger”*.

⁵⁴SIMPSON, Jacqueline, *Margaret Murray: Who Believed Her, and Why?*, **Folklore**, v. 105, p. 89–86, 1994, p. 92.

In a letter of March 31 of 1924, Lovecraft mentioned to Lillian D. Clark that Murray was talking about a period of the past where Europe wasn't occupied by the "aryans".⁵⁵ This type of cult was viewed by the author as "barbarous" and had no connections with civilization since there is no correlation with agriculture. The network connects Murray with Lovecraft, and as Poole pointed out, it was by doing this that Lovecraft connected the secret cults with the view that there was a hierarchy of races.⁵⁶ However, it's important to mention how Lovecraft described his writing process for Clark Ashton Smith in a letter from October 9 of 1925:

I am, indeed, an absolute materialist so far as actual belief goes; with not a shred of credence in any form of supernaturalism - religion, spiritualism, transcendentalism, metempsychosis, or immortality. It may be, though, that I could get the germs of some good ideas from the current patter of the psychic lunatic fringe; and i have frequently thought of getting some of the junk sold at an occultists book shop in the 46th St. [...] The idea that black magic exist in secret today, or that hellish antique rites still survive in obscurity, is one that I have used and shall use again. When you see my new tale *The Horror at Red Hook*, you will see what use I make of the idea in connexion with the gangs of young loafers and heards of evil-looknig foreigners that one sees everywhere in New York. I have a nest of devil-worshippers and devotees of Lilith in one of the sugalid Brooklyn neighborhoods, and describe the marvels and horrors that ensued when these ignorant inheritors of hideous ceremonies found a learned and initiated man to lead them. I bedecked my tale with incantions copied from the "Magic" article in the 9th edition of the *Britannica*, but I'd like to draw on less obvious sources if I knew of the right reservoir to tap. Do you known of any good works on magic and dark mystery which might furnish fitting ideas and formulas? For example - are there any good translations of any mediaval necromances with directions for rasing spirits, invoking Lucifer, and all that sort of thing? One hears of lots of names - Albertus Magnus, Eliphas Levi-, Nicholas Flame -, but most of us are appalling ignorant of them. I know I am - but fancy you must be better informed. Don't go to any trouble, but some I'd be infinitely grateful for a more or less brief list of magical books - ancient and mediaval preferred - in English or English translations. Meanwhile le me urge you, as I did over a year ago, to read *The Witch Cult in Western Europe*, by Margaret A. Murray. It ought to be full of inspiration for you.⁵⁷

Central to understand the lovecraft networks of this moment was the letter wrote by Lovecraft to Bernard Austin Dwyer dated from November 1927. The author explains a series

⁵⁵DERIE, Bobby, **Her Letters To Lovecraft: Lillian Delora Phillips Clark**, Deep Cuts, disponível em: <<https://deepcuts.blog/2021/07/31/her-letters-to-lovecraft-lillian-delora-phillips-clark/>>.

⁵⁶POOLE, W. Scott, Lovecraft, Witch Cults, and Philosophers, in: SEDERHOLM, Carl H.; WEINSTOCK, Jeffrey Andrew (Orgs.), **The Age of Lovecraft**, Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2016, p. 215–230.

⁵⁷LOVECRAFT, H. P., **Selected Letters: 1925-1929**, Wisconsin: Arkham House, 1968, p. 28.

of dreams that are occurring since 1905, but got more intense after the Halloween of 1927. In the dream, Lovecraft was a *provincial quaestor* called Lucius Caelius and was arguing with Balbutius, a legatus of the XIIth Legion that was designated to Calagurris. The topic of debate was a “nameless, hovering horror”.⁵⁸ In a nearby territory, there was a group of barbarians called Vascones that are under the process of “romanization”. However, there was another group described as “strange dark folk” that repeats along with Lovecraft's text as *Miri nigri*. They “held the monstrous Sabbaths on the Kalends of Maius and November” and captured people to sacrifice “to their unknown, unnamable deity”,⁵⁹ defined in the dream as *Magnum innominandum*. The language of this group was different and had no connections with any other. The Romans eventually attacked the *Miri nigri* but the result was a disaster. The legion, once in front of the enemy, went either insane or panicked and the dreamer experienced a condition of “absolutely statue-like paralysis and speechlessness”.⁶⁰ A very interesting detail is that inside the dream occurred “a dream within the dream”.⁶¹ “This was a nightmare and involved some stupendous Eastern ruin of which I [Julius] had read in that frightful Hieron Aigyption.”⁶² The Hieron Aigyption was also a fictional book similar to the Necronomicon. The synthesis of Lovecraft's views are:

[...] Rome, as I think I have said, has always exercised the most peculiarly potent effect upon my imagination - forming a second fatherland to which all my sense of loyalty, perspective, affection, pride, and personal identity reverse whenever I think of myself back into the ancient world. As far back as 450 A. D. my retrospective sense adheres altogether to Britain; but behind that point - when the scene of my memory becomes Roman - the chain abruptly snaps. Instead of following the various elements of Teutonic and Celtic Ancestry into their northern forests and druid groves, my sense of personal identity and locale shifts abruptly to the banks of the Tiber - mourning in the downfall of the Empire and the old gods, and slipping back to the virile, warlike days of the republic, when the conquering eagles of our consuls were carrying the names and dominion of the Roman people to the uttermost confines of the known world. S. P. Q. R.! It is as a Roman that I view and judge all antiquity - as a Roman that I feel toward all the various nations and peoples of the elder world. Thus I admire the superior art and intellect of the Greeks - but with the outside sense of who knows Greece only as a conquered province of our republic, whose sculpture is beginning to appear in our temples and villas, and whose craftly, glib natives are

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁶²*Ibid.*

beginning to invade our Roman street with their suave, outlandish jargon. [...] Behind the Roman world my sense of personal identity cannot be projected. [...] ⁶³

The lovecraftian networks are made with different views and interpretations about the present and the past. Murray did not connect the ancient cult with the druids. Murray and also Lovecraft shared and agreed with the views of James G. Frazer. The anthropologist proposed that celebrations like Christmass and the birth of Christ are pagan practices that are taken by the Church in a moment of conflict and transition:

In the Julian calendar the twenty-fifth of December was reckoned the winter solstice, and it was regarded as the Nativity of the Sun, because the day begins to lengthen and the power of the sun to increase from that turning-point of the year. [...] The Egyptians even represented the new-born sun by the image of an infant which on his birthday, the winter solstice, they brought forth and exhibited to his worshippers. [...] December was the great Oriental goddess whom the Semites called the Heavenly Virgin or simply the Heavenly Goddess; in Semitic lands she was a form of Astarte. ⁶⁴

Frazer argued that Mithra was the god identified with the Sun and his birthday was celebrated on December 25. The transition to the Christian ritual occurred “in order to transfer the devotion of the heathen from the Sun to him [Christ] who was called the Sun of Righteousness”. ⁶⁵ This process also occurred as “the Easter festival of the death and resurrection of their Lord to the festival of the death and resurrection of another Asiatic god which fell at the same season”. ⁶⁶

For Frazer and Murray, this transition from paganism to christianity was inserted into a broader social and political process. Both maintained that the same social structures are preserved. ⁶⁷ However, Murray pointed out that this also created a distinction between the witchcraft done by a christian as fitting a role of prophecy while the pagan was also a witch. ⁶⁸

⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁶⁴FRAZER, James George, **Adonis, Attis, Osiris - Studies in the history of Oriental Religion**, London: MacMillan & Company, 1914, p. 305.fra

⁶⁵*Ibid.*

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 305,306.

⁶⁷MURRAY, Margaret Alice, **The Witch-Cult in Western Europe: A Study in Anthropology**, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921, p. 19.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 153.

As pointed out by Jacqueline Simpson, the refusal made by Murray to connect the god celebrated by the ancient cults with the rites of fertility established a rupture with the Wicca that proposed such connection.⁶⁹ Also, for Murray the witchcraft had at its core a patriarchal and centralized structure that revolved around Janus.⁷⁰ This is an important divergence with the Wicca where the rites are based on a matriarchal system and the worship revolved around the goddess while the horned god took a secondary position.⁷¹ The Lovecraftian network consider that this rupture between the Wicca and Murray, while not connected directly to Lovecraft, preludes the notion that the borders between literature, scholarship and religion are malleable. It's also important to mention that the creator of Wicca, Gerald Gardner, had connections with Aleister Crowley, and a later branch of the network would be built around the convergence between Crowley and Lovecraft.

In Poole's view, Lovecraft's position in relation to "the savagery of magic and the terror of superstition and folk belief" should not be taken lightly.⁷² In two letters, one for Howard in October 1930 and another to R. H. Barlow in 1934, the author mentioned Murray and revealed what Poole defined as:

Lovecraft instead terrifies us with the possibility of conspiratorial magic, a term I use to suggest two things: first, that malign properties beyond our understanding are at work in the world and threaten the boundaries of human experience and, second, that these powerful forces can enter this world by the shattering of the parameters that guard the human being from chaos. On the second point, Lovecraft's racism becomes especially apparent. He himself felt terrorized down to his Anglo-Saxon toes by the Untermensch, the subhuman. He transformed this into supernatural horror by imagining the subhuman acting in diabolical concert with the extra-human, the cults of the Elder Gods opening doors to these dread dimensions so that these Beings could lay waste to the world.⁷³

Taking this into account, it's important to consider that this view of the witches in the network also carries another possibility. Emmons argued that Lovecraft didn't accepted the view of the witches as tricksters and thieves produced by the Christianity, but presented as

⁶⁹SIMPSON, Margaret Murray: Who Believed Her, and Why?

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

⁷¹*Ibid.*

⁷²POOLE, Lovecraft, Witch Cults, and Philosophers, p. 215.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 223.

“worshippers of alien gods, and active menace to mankind as a whole”.⁷⁴ This was combined with the theories made by P. D. Ouspensky with the concept of hyper-dimensions and the impacts of Albert Einstein’s theory of relativity. The result presents magic as a module where the lines between enchantments and mathematics are blurred. Therefore, Lovecraftian networks carried different views of the witches.

The historical theory that inspired Lovecraft was proposed by Oswald Spengler. In this view, a set of social, political and intellectual practices of a group creates a cultural unity. Each cultural unity experiences a period of growth, development, expansion and decline.

The cultures were external to each other, neither influencing nor inheriting; in fact, they could not understand each other, and their relations consisted of deliberate misunderstanding.⁷⁵

The Romans for Spengler served as a reference of the transition between the culture centered around Greece to the civilization of Rome. This transition was not positive and for Spengler the Empire wasn’t built by its belic achievements but because the other cultures around it are experiencing the process of decay.⁷⁶ Lovecraft shared with Spengler the notion that Rome was the reference for civilization. Also it is possible to posit that the *Miri nigris* are viewed as part of a cultural unit that had no connection to the cultural unit of Rome. Lovecraft diverges from Spengler in his views of Greece:

Whilst the Hellenes, with their strange beauty-worship and defective moral ideals, are to be admired and pitied at once, as luminous but remote phantoms; the Romans, with their greater practical sense, ancient virtue, and love of law and order, seem like our own people. It is with personal pride that we read of the valor and conquests of this mighty race, who used the alphabet we use, spoke and wrote with but little difference many of the words we speak and write, and with divine creative power evolved virtually all the forms of law which govern us today. To the Greek, art and literature were inextricably involved in daily life and thought; to the Roman, as to us, they were a separate unit in a many-sided civilisation. Undoubtedly this circumstance proves the inferiority of the Roman culture to the Greek; but it

⁷⁴EMMONS, Winfred S., Lovecraft as a Mythmaker, **Extrapolation: A Science-Fiction Newsletter**, v. 1, n. 2, p. 35–37, 1960, p. 36.

⁷⁵MCINNES, Neil, The Great Doomsayer: Oswald Spengler Reconsidered, **The National Interest**, v. 48, p. 65–76, 1997, p. 67.

⁷⁶SPENGLER, Oswald, **The Decline of the West: Form and Actuality**, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926, p. 32.

is an inferiority shared by our own culture, and therefore a bond of sympathy.⁷⁷

The difference between barbarians and civilized people took a very important place inside the Lovecraftian network. This can be traced back to the debate between Lovecraft and Howard that is present in their exchange of letters between 1931 and 1933. Howard's views can be detected in *The Shadow Kingdom* (1929) and *The Phoenix on the Sword* (1932).

In *The Shadow Kingdom*, Robert juxtaposes two extraordinary barbarians, one a Pict (Brule), the other an Atlantean (Kull). Of the two, Brule is clearly the more savage and less civilized. In many ways, Brule's skills are sharper than Kull's, and he manages to save Kull in this and other stories. To a certain degree, the trappings of civilization have softened Kull's rough edges and his barbarian instincts. Aware of these changes, Kull tends to worry and brood, and he is often hard on himself.⁷⁸

Howard approached the role of the pioneers in the United States with the barbarians from the past. Diverging from Lovecraft, Howard explored the clash between civilization and barbarians in *Beyond the Black River*.

Being a voracious reader of history, he [Howard] was well aware of the rise of groups from a base or barbarian state to a more sophisticated and civilized state, and he knew about their subsequent decline through either their own behavior or their defeat by other greater barbarous groups.⁷⁹

In this story it's evident the opposition between Conan, a true barbarian, and Balthus, a civilized warrior. The result was:

Barbarism is the natural state of mankind," the boarder said, still staring somberly at the Cimmerian. "Civilization is unnatural. It is a whim of circumstance. And barbarism must always ultimately triumph.⁸⁰

⁷⁷LOVECRAFT, H. P., *The Literature of Rome*, **The United Amateur**, v. XVIII, n. 2, 1918.

⁷⁸VICK, **Renegades and Rogues: the life and legacy of Robert E. Howard**, p. 159.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁸⁰HOWARD, Robert, *Beyond the Black River*, **Weird Tales**, v. 25, n. 5, p. 591–608, 1935.

From what we could gather so far, the Lovecraftian network was not based on the reproduction of Lovecraft's concepts or ideas. On the contrary, it was based on a process of collaborations and divergences. It was also possible to detect how the network carried two views of the past, one that was near and other that was far. That kind of hibrity was also present in the way that the witches flowed in the network, carrying in one side a set of racial prejudices and in the other a set where the lines between magic and science are blurred.

Lovecraftian Network and the Cthulhu Mythos

After Lovecraft's death in 1937, a new process was started with the foundation of the Arkham Press by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei. The idea was to publish Lovecraft's works and the starting point was with the book *The Outsider and Others* (1939). This collection had 35 stories by Lovecraft, his essay *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, and a brief biography by Derleth. As pointed out by Everett F. Bleiler:

The Outsider is the repository of most of Lovecraft's important fiction, and even apart from its considerable value on the rare book market, it is a major book in the history of American supernatural fiction. Lovecraft's concept of horror from Outside, which he developed from the work of Bulwer-Lytton, Machen, and Hodgson, has been pervasive in later American fiction, while many of his story motifs have been widely borrowed, usually to their great detriment. These included the so-called Cthulhu Mythos or cycle, and the Necronomicon. The central concept of the Cthulhu cycle is, "Let sleeping gods lie." On Earth, at one time in the past, great and malevolent entities ruled. At present they are either temporarily banished from Earth, or imprisoned, awaiting release. On occasion, rash humans, to their sorrow, release them or invoke them.⁸¹

Derleth's early experiences inside the network can be traced back to the story *The Return of Hastur* published in March of 1939 at *Weird Tales*.⁸² At the time, Derleth suggested to Lovecraft that the whole set of ideas should be called "Mythology of Hastur". Lovecraft answered that his "Cthulhuism" or "Yog-Sothothery" didn't belong exclusively to him, but was in reality a theogony/daimongony inherited from the works of Bierce, Chambers and Machen.⁸³

⁸¹BLEILER, Everett F., **The Guide to Supernatural Fiction**, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1983, p. 332.

⁸²JOSHI; SCHULTZ, **An H.P. Lovecraft Encyclopedia**, p. 52.

⁸³*Ibid.*

Derleth synthesized this with the creation of the Cthulhu Mythos. The network started to be regulated by a view where the Great Old Ones are viewed as evil beings and connect to elements of nature while the Elder Gods are good and their enemies. With this set, Derleth organized Lovecraft's stories, pointing out what stories belong to the Cthulhu Mythos. Another point proposed by Derleth was to disconnect the Cthulhu Mythos from the Christian religions. The last movement made by Derleth argued that the Cthulhu Mythos was developed in a conscious form by Lovecraft.⁸⁴

With this new set of rules, Derleth wrote and edited many books related to the Cthulhu Mythos. He was also responsible for setting the space that allowed emerging writers like Ramsey Campbell and Brian Lumley to grow. However, there was also another side of practices exercised by Derleth to keep the Cthulhu Mythos under his control - even going into legal terms as it was with the case against C. Hall Thompson (Joshi, 54). Wolfe explained that:

For a good portion of the postwar period, the Lovecraftian aesthetic - remote, haunted villages, strange half-human families, forbidden books, and most of all ancient elder gods waiting to reclaim the world - dictated many of the terms by which horror fiction would be practiced in its relatively limited literary arena, with authors such as Fritz Leiber, Robert Bloch, Ray Bradbury and Richard Matheson striving to introduce a more contemporary, urban ethos, while Lovecraft's more direct heir, from August Derleth to Brian Lumley and Ramsey Campbell expanded upon Lovecraft's cosmic occultism in stories and novels that, in the beginning at least, were often little more than direct pastiches.⁸⁵

Taking this into account, the Lovecraftian network space that was controlled by Derleth depends on a set of practices that are very different from those deployed by Lovecraft with his Cthulhuism. The criteria to write, read and think inside the network implied a process of constant translation and purification. Unsurprisingly, the result was the proliferation of more hybrids inside the network and their flow escaped Derleth's control.

The process of translation of the network made by Derleth took the article *Supernatural Horror in Literature* as relevant. By following it, we can understand the network better. The first version of the article was written between 1925 and 1927. A new revised

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 53,54.

⁸⁵WOLFE, *Evaporating Genres: Essays on Fantastic Literature*, p. 26.

version was produced around 1933 and 1934. The main objective of Lovecraft was to set the place of the *weird* inside the literary tradition.⁸⁶

The academic scholarship related to the gothic in United States was mostly based on the works of Dorothy Scarborough⁸⁷ and Edith Birkhead⁸⁸.⁸⁹ Everett F. Bleiler explained that a good portion of the first part of Lovecraft's article was based on Birkhead.⁹⁰ The preference for Birkhead was not the result of an intellectual refusal of Scarborough, but the fact that Lovecraft only read her works in March of 1932.⁹¹

The manifestations of hybrids between academic and amateur scholarship appeared with Matthew H. Onderdonk in *Fantasy Commentator* between 1945 and 1948. In his interpretation, the Lovecraftian story is the convergence between the supernatural, the weird, the nostalgia with the 18th century and the developments of sciences. The result was the transition from a supernatural that can't be explained to a supernormal with laws that haven't been discovered yet.⁹² George T. Wetzel published in *the Arkham Sampler*, under Derleth's control, a brief note about how Lovecraft deployed the theme of the "lost manuscript".⁹³ Later, in the article *Cthulhu Mythos: A Study*, Wetzel proposed a view similar to Onderdonk and gave a lot of emphasis to situated Lovecraft as a rationalist.⁹⁴

However, it was Winfred S. Emmons in 1952 with his Ph.D dissertation that used Scarborough, Birkhead and Lovecraft as intellectual references. His study was focused on Poe, Hawthorn, Bierce and Chambers, arguing that the stories of horror are realists in the sense that they recognized the *Unknownable* and reacted against the "Age of Enlightenment". Most

⁸⁶LOVECRAFT, H. P., Supernatural Horror in Literature, in: JOSHI, S. T. (Org.), **The Complete Fiction**, New York: Barnes and Noble, 2011, p. 1041–1098.

⁸⁷SCARBOROUGH, Dorothy, **The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction**, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917.

⁸⁸BIRKHEAD, Edith, **The Tales of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance**, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1920.

⁸⁹A base bibliográfica para o estudo realizado por Scarborough era escassa, sendo C. E. Whitmore o único referencial. WESTFAHL, Gary, On the Trail of a Pioneer: Dorothy Scarborough, the First Academic Critic of Science Fiction, **Extrapolation**, v. 40, n. 4, p. 292–303, 1999, p. 293.

⁹⁰LOVECRAFT, H. P., **The Annotated Supernatural Horror in Literature**, New York: Hippocampus Press, 2000, p. 14.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁹²JOSHI, S. T., **H. P. Lovecraft and Lovecraft Criticism - An Annotated Bibliography**, Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1981, p. 345.

⁹³WETZEL, George T., On the Cthulhu Mythos, **The Arkham Sample**, v. 1, n. 2, p. 48–49, 1948, p. 49.

⁹⁴WETZEL, George T., The Cthulhu Mythos: A Study, in: WETZEL, George T. (Org.), **Howard Phillips Lovecraft: Volume VI**, New York: SSN Publications, 1955, p. 18–27.

importantly, at its core it was a literature that revolved around the fear of the unknown and that kind of fear was not exclusive to a specific historical period.⁹⁵

Thomas D. Clareson also used Lovecraft as reference in his article of 1953 that was published in *Science Fiction Quarterly*, a space that was hybrid by itself because it was between the academic and the science fiction community. Clareson would develop his arguments in his Ph.D dissertation of 1956, and was also responsible for the creation of the academic journal *Extrapolation* in 1959. This new space was connected to the annual conferences of the Modern Language Association and aimed to create and consolidate Science Fiction as a legit object of study inside academia. Emmons was part of this process and published at *Extrapolation* an article and a checklist about Lovecraft.⁹⁶

Colin Wilson in 1962 argued that Lovecraft had a bad writing, was alienated, completely addicted to anti-realist fantasies and escapist.⁹⁷ Despite the fact that this was the opposite of what the rest of the network was doing, Wilson was actually contributing to it by including Lovecraft in his analysis. In the spaces between, Fritz Leiber in the article *Through Hyperspace with Brown Jenkins* (1963) published in the *Sangri-L’Affaires*, argued for an opposite view. Lovecraft had a connection with Science Fiction that was evident if we consider the use of time capsules, space-travels, time-travel and hyperspace travels.⁹⁸

Lyon Sprague de Camp, a reference for the Science Fiction field, published a biography of Lovecraft in 1975. This was the first work that appeared after Derleth’s death in 1971, but not the first experience with the author inside the network. In 1973 the *Necronomicon* was published. With the title *Al Azif*, it had an introduction by de Camp explaining how he got it. The hoax got some attention, but not as much as the biography. In a review published at *Science-Fiction Studies*, Richard D. Mullen argued that de Camp research had a very bad quality and the way that the author tried to explain Lovecraft’s financial failures were superficial. For Mullen, what is central to understand in Lovecraft is his constitutive contradiction:

His [Lovecraft] problem intellectually was that his commitments were emotional rather than critical, and he seems to have understood the

⁹⁵EMMONS, Winfred S., **The Materials and Methods of American Horror Fiction in the Nineteenth Century**, Dissertation, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, Louisiana, 1952, p. 346.

⁹⁶EMMONS, Lovecraft as a Mythmaker; EMMONS, Winfred S., A Bibliography of H. P. Lovecraft, **Extrapolation: A Science-Fiction Newsletter**, v. 3, n. 1, p. 2–25, 1961.

⁹⁷WOLFE, **Evaporating Genres: Essays on Fantastic Literature**, p. 25.

⁹⁸LEIBER, Fritz, *Through Hyperspace with Brown Jenkin*, **Shangri-L’Affaires**, n. 66, p. 8–12, 1963.

irrationality of his being committed to both Aryan Supremacy and the love of his Jewish friends, to both mechanistic materialism and the most absurdly fantastic of subject matters, and most of all to both the world of the 18th century and a prose style far removed, in its vagueness and floridity [...].⁹⁹

In 1977, Barton Levi St. Armand published *the Roots of Horror in the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft* and was reviewed by S. C. Fredericks in the *Science-Fiction Studies* of 1978. The reviewer explained how Armand deployed the notion of archetypes image from Carl G. Jung and the notion of sacred by Rudolf Otto as the basis for the human inclination towards the numinous. However, “this basis religious drive is deflected in Lovecraft’s case into fear and the literature of fear as an approach to the wholly/holy other”.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, the ambivalence once again appears as:

[...] one route was down through the unconscious in a psychic de-volution, most often associated with Gothic fiction and called Horror in Ann Radcliffe’s famous definition; the other route was up and out to the limits of the cosmos; this way to the ineffable, called Terror in Radcliffe’s formulation, is essentially extrinsic and it goes far to explain Lovecraft’s relationship to SF, especially the genre of the cosmic romance which is demonized in Lovecraft.¹⁰¹

One year before that review, Marc A. Michaud created the Necronomicon Press. It was from this new space that emerged in 1979 the book *H. P. Lovecraft: His Life, His Work* by Kenneth W. Faig Jr, and also the journal *Lovecraft Studies* edited by Joshi, who was also working on the book *H .P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism*. Joshi criticized Fredericks because the reviewer considered Lovecraft as an irrationalist.¹⁰²

A few works emerged in this new configuration of the network. Peter Canon in *H. P. Lovecraft* published in 1989 established a defense and a place for Lovecraft inside the literary studies. By focusing on the categories of space and time, it’s possible to argue that Cannon synthesized the view of Lovecraft as a rationalist and, therefore, an important object of study.¹⁰³

⁹⁹MULLEN, Richard Dale, The Great Futilitarian: Sprague de Camp’s Biography of Lovecraft. *Lovecraft: A Biography* by L. Sprague De Camp, **Science-Fiction Studies**, v. 2, n. 1, p. 89–91, 1975, p. 91.

¹⁰⁰FREDERICKS, S. C., The Horrors of Lovecraft, **Science-Fiction Studies**, v. 5, n. 2, p. 196–197, 1978, p. 196.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*

¹⁰²JOSHI, S. T., In Defense of Lovecraft, **Science-Fiction Studies**, v. 7, n. 1, p. 111–112, 1980.

¹⁰³CANNON, Peter, **H. P. Lovecraft**, Boston: G. K. Hall & Company, 1989.

Donald R. Burleson took a completely different approach. His theory is built using Jacques Derrida and the idea of Deconstruction. This allowed Burleson to situate Lovecraft as a deconstructionist and the themes “prefigure arguments that, as many post-structuralists believe, texts are inclined to deconstruct themselves and that notions of totalization and epistemological closure are illusory.”¹⁰⁴ Central to Burleson analysis is the “super-theme” of Lovecraft where “the ruinous nature of self-knowledge” reveals “when we as humans come to look upon the cosmos as it is, we find our own place in it to be soul-crushingly evanescent.”¹⁰⁵ This indifference produces a reversion:

In a perverse and paradoxical way, then, humankind subverts itself, contributes to the possibility of its own insignificance, paves the way for the cosmos to have that most human-centered of qualities - indifference. To put in another way, the only true cosmic indifference is cosmic indifference felt. the pole of the binary opposition that consists of loss of hope is no pole at all without the covert containment of the other pole - the potential for hope, the sense of what it is that is lost.¹⁰⁶

Timo Airaksinen in *the Philosophy of H. P. Lovecraft: The Route to Horror* (1999) took a turn that broke with the notion that was necessary to consider Lovecraft’s biography. The implication was that:

His nihilism, he says he was a nonentity, is our real source of interest. Hence, the only thing to do, from the reader’s point of view, is to admit that the man as a writer did something impossible and that is why he does not exist. Paradoxically, the author who wanted to be a traditionalist appears as a postmodernist, who falls freely into the abyss of his own text.¹⁰⁷

The result is a perspective with three modes of operation. The first is the experience of cosmic horror that destroys humanity and, at the same time, allows it to experience something that is beyond. The second is how the text “suggests that the image, the shadow, ridicules our world of ideas, thus making our world utterly illusory. We human beings exist only as the

¹⁰⁴BURLESON, Donald R., *Lovecraft: Disturbing the Universe*, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1990, p. 158.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷AIRAKSINEN, Timo, *The Philosophy of H. P. Lovecraft: The Route to Horror*, New York: Peter Lang, 1999, p. 2.

memory trace of another, dead race.”¹⁰⁸ And the third is the process of creation that implies its own destruction. Lovecraft created a fictional entity called “Lovecraft” that wrote texts about the Great Old Ones.

Another tentacle of the Lovecraftian network traces back to Lovecraft’s knowledge of religion. In a letter for Willis Conover from June 29 of 1936, Lovecraft mentioned being familiar with the works of Arthur Edward Waite and Eliphas Levi Zahad. A detailed analysis of this correlation was produced by John L. Steadman. In his argument, the witches aren’t inherently evil but individuals interested in experiments that allow the expansion of perception and the body, aiming to reach new forms of knowledge and existence.¹⁰⁹

The Necronomicon craze started after de Camp and was followed in 1977 with the “Simon Necronomicon”. This text carries a lot of connections with the works of Crowley, but also with elements from Chaos Magick. In 1978, another version of the Necronomicon was published by Neville Spearman, edited by George Hay and with an introduction by Colin Wilson. Yes, that same Wilson. The book also features comments by Robert Turner, David Langford and an appendix by de Camp, Christopher Frayling and Angela Carter. Another Necronomicon with the name *Cultus Maleficarium* was published by Fred L. Pelton and served as part of the *A guide to the Cthulhu Cult*. In 2004, Donald Tyson published his *Necronomicon*.

Kenneth Grant was responsible for establishing the most important connections between magick and the Lovecraftian network. The first book where Grant explored that possibility was *Nightside of Eden* (1977). The witches in the Lovecraftian network are no longer the object of fear. On the contrary, Grant is a reference for a movement where the witches started to act and being an active part of the network itself. When talking about this trend, Grant argues that:

The familiars of the witches, no less than the god-forms assumed by the Egyptian priests were adopted in order to transform the practitioners, not into the animals in question, but into the state of consciousness which they represented in the psychological bestiary of atavistic powers latent in the subconsciousness. The formula is summed up by Austin Spare in his system of sexual sorcery and atavistic resurgence which are the themes of Zos Kia Cultus. Ithell Colquhoun correctly place this cult in its contemporary setting as an offshoot of O.T.O and “Traditional Witchcraft”, but Zos Kia Cultus

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p. 217. tir

¹⁰⁹STEADMAN, John L., **H. P. Lovecraft & The Black Magickal Tradition**, San Francisco: Weiser Books, 2015.

comports another stand which stems from influences older than any that can be attributed to merely 'traditional witchcraft', whatever that term may signify. These influences emanate from cults such as those that Lovecraft contacted in New England via Salem Witchcraft which - in turn - had contacts which vastly ancient currents which manifested in the Amerindian astral complex as the 'eldritch' entities described by Lovecraft in his tales of horror.¹¹⁰

Lovecraft was playing a role in the UFO phenomena as it was explored in details in the work of Jason Colavito.¹¹¹ It was also Grant that connected it with magick in *Outside the Circles of Time* (1980). Not only that, but this also implied the notion that *Necronomicon* was an actual book. The divergence created by Grant operated with the view that:

The mystery of Absence, of Non-Being, lies at the root of all creativity and inspiration. Lovecraft is a perfect example of this formula, for it is only when 'rational' Lovecraft is absent that the vital current flows in from Outside, and energizes his imaginative creations, endowing with vivid life concepts which science today is upon the threshold of discovering.¹¹²

In the United Kingdom, the Lovecraftian network took a very interesting shape. Sadie Plant was hired in 1995 to work for the University of Warwick at the Faculty of Social Science. Aiming to study cyber-theory, the early proposal was to create a unit that was not vinculated to Philosophy but as a CCRU - Cybernetic Culture Research Unit.¹¹³ Two years later, the paperwork was not finished and Plant left Warwick in March. This was the moment when Nick Land assumed control of it. Despite the lack of a formal recognition by the university, the group kept functioning and produced events inside and outside the academic space - Pyrotechnics, Swarmmachines, Afrofutures. The material was published in *Abstract Culture*, a series of texts that was also published at the website ccru.net.

As part of the Lovecraftian network, there are a few names associated with the CCRU, either directly or indirectly. To make the matters more interesting, CCRU created its own fictional authors that became actualities in a similar manner that occurred with the

¹¹⁰GRANT, Kenneth, *Nightside of Eden*, London: Skoob Book Publishing, 1977, p. 127,128.

¹¹¹COLAVITO, Jason, *The Cult of Alien Gods: H. P. Lovecraft and Extraterrestrial Pop Culture*, New York: Prometheus Books, 2005.

¹¹²GRANT, Kenneth, *Outside the Circles of Time*, London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1980, p. 44.

¹¹³BUSCH, Willian Perpetuo; CLUNESS, Robert, Nas portas do Pandêmonio: Cybernetic Culture Research Unit e a Invenção da Tradição Mágica, *Relegens Thréskeia*, v. 10, n. 1, p. 237–250, 2021; LE, Vincent, *Invaders from the Future: The CCRU and Their Legacy*, in: , Melbourne: MSCP Winter School, 2019.

Necronomicon. As we mentioned, the interest was cyber-culture and this was connected with the works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the Jungle as a genre of music that developed in the Rave scene of UK, the extensive use of drugs and the artistic creation. This was combined with studies related to Kabbalah, numerology, demonology, Theosophy, Ufology and H. P. Lovecraft. One of the central obsessions of the group was with the Y2K and the Millenium Bug.

As pointed out by Robert Cluness¹¹⁴, CCRU created and developed a series of occult techniques and practices defined as a “time sorcery” that allowed the experience of “the Outside”. For this flow of Lovecraftian network the concept of *hyperstition* appeared. In their view, hyperstitions “are not representations, neither disinformation nor mythology”¹¹⁵, but an “element of effective culture that makes itself real, through fictional quantities functioning as time-traveling potentials. Hyperstition operates as a coincidence intensifier, effecting a call to the Old Ones.”¹¹⁶

The hyperstition mobilized a narrative about the Cthulhu Club and the Lemurian Time-War. The Cthulhu Club appears in a series of letters exchanged between Peter Vysparov and Echidna Stillwell from 19th March to 28th May of 1949. Vysparov explained that he was deployed in the Pacific Ocean by the army during the Second World War and his mission was to rally the natives of Eastern Sumatra, the Dibboma, against the Japanese occupation. Vysparov explained that with the use of the anthropological data produced by the early studies of Stillwell, it was possible to manipulate the dibboma witchcraft (thought as a superstition at the time) and use it as a weapon.

Vysparvo and Stillwell are fictional entities, but the mention that anthropological knowledge could be used as a weapon is not new. Also, the view that the native belief was inferior to scientific knowledge was another recurring topic of debate and, as we saw before, played an important role in the Lovecraftian network. In her turn, Stillwell revealed that her own experiences with the Dib-Nma sorcery used by the Mu-Nma revealed that they are very effective but shared some correlations with the writings of Lovecraft. She even tried to discuss with Lovecraft about the case, but he saw the natives as “the repugnant cult of semi-human Dagonite savages”. The anthropologist explained that the native ontology was not based in the opposition between “true and false” but in the idea of time manipulation. The witches are

¹¹⁴BUSCH; CLUNESS, *Nas portas do Pandêmonio: Cybernetic Culture Research Unit e a Invenção da Tradição Mágica*.

¹¹⁵CCRU, *CCRU Writings 1997-2003*, p. 164.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 330.

capable of traveling in time but also experience space without time: “lemu ta novu meh novu nove” that means “Lemuria does not pass as time passes”. Vysparov created the Cthulhu Club aiming to study the intersection between “cultural constellations, Cthulhoid contagion and twisted time-systems”. At its core, the hyperstition was defined as “semiotic productions that make themselves real”, and in Vysparov words:

This is the ambivalence - or loop - of Cthulhu-fiction: who writes, and who is written? It seems to us that the fabled Necronomicon - sorcerous counter-text to the Book of Life - is of this kind, and furthermore, that your recovery of the Lemurodigital Pandemonium Matrix accesses it at its hypersource.

The Lemurian Time War centers around the discovery made by William Burroughs as it appears in the story *The Ghost Lemurs of Madagascar*, defined by the CCRU as a Necronomicon.

Vysparov had sought out Burroughs because of his evident interest in the convergence of sorcery, dreams and fiction. In the immediate postwar years, Vysparov had convened the so-called Cthulhu Club to investigate connections between the fiction of H. P. Lovecraft, mythology, science and magic, and was at stage in the process of formalizing the constitution of Miskatonic Virtual University (MVU), a loose aggregation of non-standard theorists whose work could broadly be said to have ‘Lovecraftian’ connotations. The interest in Lovecraft’s fiction was motivated by its exemplification of the practice of hyperstition, a concept had been elaborated and keenly debated since the inception of the Cthulhu Club. Loosely defined, the coinage refers to ‘fictions that make themselves real.’

Burroughs explained to Vysparov (and once again is important to point out that these two entities are similar to the “Lovecraft” proposed by Airaksinen) that the story was actually a memory when he was Captain Mission, a pirate that serves as the main character and was in the past. This experience allowed Burroughs to reveal how “OGU [One God Universe] emerges once MU (the Magical Universe) is violently overthrown by the forces of monopoly”. Therefore MU was:

The Magical Universe is populated by many gods, eternally in conflict: there is no possibility of unitary Truth, since the nature of reality is constantly contested by heterogeneous entities whose interests are radically incommensurable.

One God Universe was “antimagical, authoritarian, dogmatic, the deadly enemy of those who are committed to the magical universe, spontaneous, unpredictable, alive. The universe they are imposing is controlled, predictable, dead.” In this view, the result was the “rise to the dreary paradoxes – so familiar to monotheistic theology - that necessarily attend to omnipotence and omniscience.” The group that maintained and enforced this view was the Architectonic Order of the Eschaton (AOE):

[...] an ultra-hermetic metamasonic white- brotherhood at war with Lemurian influences. The AOE progresses by way of chronic internal schism, each resulting in an ever more interiorized inner society. Its traditions are therefore refracted through various – apparently conflicting – front organizations (which include the Heliopolitan Hierophancy, Roman Catholic Church, Knights Templar, Illuminati, Trilateral Commission, and Axsys programme).

To face OGU and AOE, CCRU proposed the use of N’Ma magick via the *Pandemonium* that deployed the evocation of entities (Lemurs) via the Numogram. This system was the “diagrammatization of decimal numeracy, providing the key to Lemurian culture (demonism and time sorcery). The numogram consists of ten zones, interconnected by Currents and Channels.” Lovecraftian network at this moment became a space where witches and warlocks are fighting against the notion that time was linear and this was done by the complete destruction of the barriers between fiction and reality. This convergence was also a hybrid in itself as the frontiers between academic, literature and religion are also wiped out.

By the beginning of the 2000s, CCRU had mostly disbanded. A few survivors created the blog *hyperstition.abstractdynamics.org* as its early posts date back to June of 2004. Nick Land and Mark Fisher (K-Punk) are involved but we can’t guarantee the presence or absence of others since many posts don’t specify who was the author. The material that appeared there was following the lines set by the CCRU. Discussions related to Lovecraft and Ufology started to appear. It was in a post of March 31 of 2007 that was announced the event *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Theory* that was scheduled to occur on April 26, 2007. The space that it would occur was the RHB142 classroom of the Goldsmiths, University of London:

The Centre for Cultural Studies brings a unique one-day symposium dedicated to exploring H. P. Lovecraft’s relationship to Theory. The event will not follow the ordinary format of the academic conference. Some written

materials will be circulated beforehand, but there will be no papers delivered on the day.¹¹⁷

The idea was to discuss the stories: *The Call of Cthulhu*, *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, *The Dunwich Horror*, *The Shadow out of Time* and *Through the Gates of the Silver Key*. Combined with the following themes: The Weird, Fictional systems, Lovecraft's pulp modernism, Houellebecq's Lovecraft, Lovecraft and hyperstition, Lovecraft's materialism, Lovecraft's racism and 'reactionary modernism', Lovecraft and schizophrenia, Lovecraft and the transcendental, Lovecraft and schizoponia.

Names mentioned to take part in the event: Benjamin Noys, Harman, China Miéville, Luciana Parisi, Steve Goodman, Justin Woodman, James Kneale, Fisher and Dominic Fox. Our ethnographic research managed to confirm the presence of Fisher, Noys, Harman and James Trafford. It's very important to highlight that the event of April 26 occurred one day and in the same space of the conference that served as a starting point for Speculative Realism. The relationship between Lovecraft and Speculative Realism was discussed in detail by Carl H. Sederholm¹¹⁸, Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock¹¹⁹, David Peak¹²⁰ and Rebekah Sheldon¹²¹. The term "Speculative Realism" is deployed by us in the Lovecraftian network as a reference to a group of intellectuals that had a set of connections with the conference of April 27 or developed works related to it. When Graham Harman talked about Ray Brassier, Iain Hamilton Grant and Quentin Meillassoux, "all of us turned out independently to have been admirers of Lovecraft".¹²²

During our research we discovered that Fisher organized a second encounter in the same year called *The Weird*. Scheduled for December 1 it occurred in the same place. As we mentioned, the first one didn't produce any papers. However, Trafford organized a brochure with some of the material discussed in the second encounter. By combining the works of Sederholm, Weinstock, Peak and Sheldon with this source it became possible to build some of

¹¹⁷FISHER, Mark, **Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Theory**, Hyperstition, disponível em: <http://hyperstition.abstractdynamics.org/archives/2007_03.html>.

¹¹⁸SEDERHOLM, Carl H.; WEINSTOCK, Jeffrey Andrew, Introduction: Lovecraft Rising, in: SEDERHOLM, Carl H.; WEINSTOCK, Jeffrey Andrew (Orgs.), **The Age of Lovecraft**, Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2016, p. 4.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*

¹²⁰PEAK, David, Horror of the Real: H.P. Lovecraft's Old Ones and Contemporary Speculative Philosophy, in: ROSEN, Matt (Org.), **Diseases of the Head: Essays on the Horrors of Speculative Philosophy**, Santa Barbara: Punctum Books, 2020.

¹²¹SHELDON, Rebekah, Dark Correlationism: Mysticism, Magic, and the New Realisms, **Symploke**, v. 24, n. 1–2, p. 137–153, 2016.

¹²²HARMAN, Graham, **Speculative Realism: An Introduction**, Kindle Electronic. Cambridge: Polity Press, 201

the main elements of the Lovecraftian network. Harman told us in an interview that the first encounter was “an unusual but simulating event, held in a university classroom rather than an auditorium” while Benjamin Noys didn’t recall anything really worthy mentioned at the time. However, Noys pointed out that Tom Bunyard and Nina Powers¹²³ are also present. Most importantly, it was Noys that gave us the source for the research which otherwise was not accessible.

Another discovery made by us is that part of the material that appeared in the brochure would be reworked, expanded and published in the volume IV of the journal *Collapse* edited by Robin Mackay and published by Urbanomic in 2008.¹²⁴ We asked Mackay about it and he had no recollection of the events but mentioned that the theme around Lovecraft material “was in the air at the time...”. Considering the limitations of this text as we already enjoyed a bit too much of the reader’s patience and time, our discussion will take into account the contributions by Fisher, Trafford, Bunyard, Noys and Harman.

Bunyard in *Suggestions for an Inverted Lovecraft* explored the idea that “underlying Lovecraft’s conservative clutch on a mythical age of reason, decency and principle is the conception that human consciousness is itself only a fleeting moment that must inevitably pass.”¹²⁵ This notion implies that the history has meaning only when is inserted in the present. Contrary to common sense, Bunyard points out that the act of reading Lovecraft doesn’t result in an experience of horror for the reader, but perplexity and reflection. The implication is the possibility that the weird can be detached from the view as something that produces fear but as “admirably vivid, creative and imaginative conception of the possibilities inherent in the future”.¹²⁶

The article presented by Fisher had the title *The Door in the Wall: The Weird, Worlds and the Wordly*. The argument proposed was that the story *The Door in the Wall* by H. G. Wells revealed a definition of weird that wasn’t related to the presence of monsters, but the experience of an ontological hesitation and how the insanity could be produced. In Lovecraft’s case, the insanity was the result of a transcendental shock faced when the monstrous entities appeared. The shock was, itself, the act to perceive the entities. This was different from the case

¹²³James Trafford told us that Nina Powers was present in the first encounter but not in the second.

¹²⁴MACKAY, Robin (Org.), *Collapse IV*, Windsor Quarry: Urbanomic, 2009.

¹²⁵BUNYARD, Tom, *Suggestions for an Inverted Lovecraft*, in: TRAFFORD, James (Org.), *The Weird: A one day symposium*, University of London: [s.n.], 2007, p. 19.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 22.

of Wells, as it started with the suggestion that the main character was insane. Therefore, two relations became possible. The first was epistemic as the experience in itself was an illusion. The second was ontologic, occurring in “places between”, which for Fisher was central for the definition as “Weird fiction presents us with a threshold between worlds”.¹²⁷

Trafford argued against the view that reduced the horror to its psychological effects. Taking Thomas Ligotti in contrast with Lovecraft, the author argued for a transcendental realism where the appearances and illusions result in “the empty production of meaning, and the epistemic experience of nothing”.¹²⁸ The epistemology itself became terrorized as the caos of the real is revealed:

Ligotti’s work is characterized by two movements which he refuses to separate: the subject’s passive dispossession of self-consciousness, and the ‘enlightenment of inanity’. This double movement unmasks the reality within which the characters have always been. The suffocating effect Ligotti achieves through this process is intensified by his staunch repudiation of any recourse to the supernatural; there is no possibility of escape. Hence, the ascesis of the personal takes place within a positively insignificant reality, a realization which dissolves both the intimacy of subjective experience, and the impersonal distance of the mechanics of that experience.¹²⁹

Noys article contributed to this ontological transition that was occurring in the Lovecraftian network. The author started aiming to identify how Lovecraft described the scientific knowledge and what was the position of the weird in relation to it. As the sciences operated on the basis that it was possible to access the reality, the Weird was the suspension of this constitutive rule.

This, I want to argue, is the logic of Lovecraft’s second statement, which thereby modulates and radicalizes his first statement. In this case, science pursues its mission until it touches upon the Real as terrifying: the rational order is itself nonall. It is not a matter of an exceptional space but the

¹²⁷FISHER, Mark, The Door in the Wall: the Weird, Worlds and the worldly, *in*: TRAFFORD, James (Org.), **The Weird: A one day symposium**, University of London: [s.n.], 2007, p. 24.

¹²⁸TRAFFORD, James, Thomas Ligotti and the Epistemology of Terror, *in*: TRAFFORD, James (Org.), **The Weird: A one day symposium**, University of London: [s.n.], 2007, p. 11.

¹²⁹TRAFFORD, James, The Shadow of a Puppet Dance: Metzinger, Ligotti and the Illusion of Selfhood, *in*: MACKAY, Robin (Org.), **Collapse IV**, Windsor Quarry: Urbanomic, 2009, p. 201.

immediate identity of inconsistency with reality. In this way the —exception is brought inside, or made immanent rather than transcendent.¹³⁰

Noys pointed out that Lovecraft “might be regarded as the example of producing the Real as horror” and at the same time the “Real as the horror of the incompleteness of reality itself”.¹³¹ This would open up two possibilities. The first was to fit Lovecraft into the kantian system and it resulted in the interpretation where “our horror at the weird Real is our horror at all the infinities and topological distortions playing themselves out with no regard to us and in such forms that they defy our comprehension to the point of madness.”¹³² The end result of this process was the fragmentation of the perception after the contact with the Outside.

The second possibility suggested by Noys was that “something about “reality”, including our quality qua the human body, is weird and horrible”.¹³³ The author argued that was a primary negativity that takes shape as a non-dialectic negativity: “It is this effect of primary negativity secreted in reality itself that leaves it not just chaotic and unstable, but horrible. That is to say, to return to the Lacanian terminology, the Real persists in the Symbolic as the indicator of its inconsistency, but also “in-itself” as incomplete horror and not just for us.”¹³⁴ The primary negative was not only “the inconsistency of reality but its fundamental possibility of complete and final destruction”.¹³⁵

Harman’s article was not published in the brochure but appeared in the Collapse IV mentioned before. A revised and expanded version of Noys argument was also presented with the title Horror Temporis and it also featured an article by Trafford called *The Shadow of a Puppet Dance: Metzinger, Ligotti and the Illusion of Selfhood*. Trafford inserted Thomas Metzinger into the discussion to point out that:

Where Metzinger definitively resolves to destroy the possibility of the synthesis of man and nature, it is through Ligotti’s phenomenological fictionalization that the affective ramifications of this move are elucidated. Ligotti has developed a method of realising the absolute indifference of the

¹³⁰NOYS, Benjamin, Real Weird, in: TRAFFORD, James (Org.), **The Weird: A one day symposium**, University of London: [s.n.], 2007, p. 4.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³²*Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³³*Ibid.*

¹³⁴*Ibid.*

¹³⁵*Ibid.*

real to the human and the personal through a metaphysical irrealism in which he disentangles appearances from both sufficient reason and originary manifestation by severing the nomological isomorphism of appearances and their substrate; in the end, subjectivity is simply a specific exacerbation of objectivity.¹³⁶

Noys had the opportunity to insert and develop the role of time in the discussion. Starting from the concept of antiphysis used by Lacan to depict the broken aspect of the nature, Noys argued that Lovecraft went beyond that:

[...] by not containing it within nature as an emergent fracture. Instead, as the ‘seething vortex of time’, the vortex becomes the chaotic space of the emergence of nature itself: the Outside. We no longer have a confined phenomena, a hole in the imaginary through which the real surges. Lacan would state that while the real does not lack anything, it is full of holes and one can even make a vacuum in it.¹³⁷

In the story *The Shadow Out of Time*, Noys explained that what the main character experienced was a disorder of time produced by the interference of the Yithians. While Bergson and Heidegger aimed to produce new concepts of time as correlated to the human experience of time, Noys affirms that Lovecraft created a view where “the detachment of time from any relation to humanity – proceeding without philosophy towards the real”.¹³⁸

Harman’s article was called *On the Horror of Phenomenology: Lovecraft and Husserl*. The starting point was to consider that Lovecraft could lead the way for a metaphysic that kept a “permanent strangeness of objects.”¹³⁹ The implications for Harman was defined as:

If philosophy is weird realism, then a philosophy should be judged by what it can tell us about Lovecraft. In symbolic terms, Great Cthulhu should replace Minerva as the patron spirit of philosophers, and the Miskatonic must dwarf the Rhine and the Ister as our river of choice. Since Heidegger’s treatment of Hölderlin resulted mostly in pious, dreary readings, philosophy needs a new literary hero.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶TRAFFORD, The Shadow of a Puppet Dance: Metzinger, Ligotti and the Illusion of Selfhood, p. 204.

¹³⁷NOYS, Benjamin, Horror Temporis, in: MACKAY, Robin (Org.), **Collapse IV**, Windsor Quarry: Urbanomic, 2009, p. 280.

¹³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 281.

¹³⁹HARMAN, Graham, On the Horror of Phenomenology: Lovecraft and Husserl, in: MACKAY, Robin (Org.), **Collapse IV**, Windsor Quarry: Urbanomic, 2009, p. 336.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*

Harman argues against a kantian reading of Lovecraft. Despite “the limits imposed on our intellect”, Kant maintained that the phenomenal world was “governed and structured by our own familiar categories”.¹⁴¹ Lovecraft removed the centrality of the reason and presented a universe where “humans face entities as voracious as insects, who use black magic and telepathy while employing mulatto sailors as worse-than-terrorist operatives.”¹⁴² The second part of Harman article presented an interpretation of Husserl as it tried to approach it to Lovecraft. The difference was that not how Lovecraft described but the notion that there was an “insufficiency of the description”.¹⁴³ Lovecraft materialism and Husserl idealism converge point was that “we are never really sure just what an object is”.¹⁴⁴

Harman returned to Lovecraft in the book *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy* (2012). In the period between the two publications, Harman had developed the object-oriented philosophy based on the view that there was a set of opposition related to the real and the sensory and another between the objects and the qualities of it. The differences between the two texts center around Lovecraft. The goal was not to reduce the author to Husserl theory but as in the gap between Husserl and Heidegger. Also, Harman pointed out that the horror as a defining characteristic should be considered as it reveals how Lovecraft operates in the two axes of gaps. Harman tried to avoid the reading that reduced Lovecraft to a pulp author:

Rather than inventing a monster with an arbitrary number of tentacles and dangerous sucker-mouths and telepathic brains, we must recognize that no such list of arbitrary weird properties is enough to do the trick. There must be some deeper and more malevolent principle at work in our monsters that escapes all such definition. That is the manner by which Lovecraft escapes all pup, all Kitsch, and all academic art: by systematically delibitating content, all to the greater glory of the background enthymeme. In Lovecraft the medium is the message.¹⁴⁵

Harman traces an ontography in Lovecraft by pointing out the importance that the interaction between objects and their qualities are taken. Cthulhu operates as a “space”, in the

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 341.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 357.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 364.

¹⁴⁵HARMAN, Graham, *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy*, Washington: Zero Books, 2012.

sense that “it embodies the fact that objects spatially removed from us are both absolutely distant” and at the same time appears as “near to us insofar as they inscribe their distance in directly accessible fashion.” Azathoth mobilizes the problem of the “essence”, as “neither the object nor its qualities are directly accessible.” Both cases are inscribed as “fusion” as “qualities are fused with an object that we do not normally associate with them”. The notion of “time” used by Harman is related to the “fission” as “the qualities of the thing break off from the thing as a whole and seem partially distinct from it for the first time”. The fission is not strictly between the sensual objects and its sensual qualities but also between the sensual objects and “their subterranean real qualities”. Harman called it “eidos” as “tension between accessible sensual objects and the inaccessible qualities that are of structural importance for them.”¹⁴⁶

Lovecraftian Network

We traveled in the Lovecraftian network trying to follow the flows that can be defined as holes. Daniel Harms argued that Lovecraft “created ‘holes in the text’ which the reader would fill with his own ideas of what was horrible”.¹⁴⁷ The currents took turns and revealed different processes, contradictions and unexpected convergences. While a group tried to establish a set of rules for the network, another current produced and emphasized the importance of sciences and reason. But this didn’t stop the creation of different versions of the Necronomicon as Cthulhu became an entity that was outside the texts and could be worshiped.

While it’s true that the witches in Lovecraft are built upon his racist views, this is not enough to limit the network. As something to be feared, the witches invaded reality. The cult of Cthulhu was not created by Lovecraft but was the result of different processes and chains of interpretations and practices as we saw with Kenneth Grant. The academic flow consolidated at least two different trends of analysis, one that was more closely related to the historicity and the biography and another that was structural. If these two forms are taken as units, the result is a view that they were opposed. However with the Lovecraftian network it was possible not only to avoid that but also to correlate this process with others that occurred outside academia. Once inserted into the Lovecraftian network, the CCRU could be understood as a confluence between sets of currents and trends that became encapsulated in the concept of hyperstition.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷HARMS, Daniel, *The Encyclopedia Cthulhiana*, Oakland: Chaosium Book, 1998, p. VIII.

Not only witches are playing an important role in the network but are also deployed in a time-war against the OGU and the AOE.

Fifteen years after the time war continues. The Speculative Realism contributed to the consolidation of Lovecraft and paved the way for the possibility to comprehend the ontological aspects of the network. The network is built in the present and it is in the present that meaning can be created, as pointed out by Bunyard.

Lovecraftian networks are weird. Fisher argued that the weird “brings to the familiar something which ordinarily lies beyond it, and which cannot be reconciled” (10-11) and we saw that this was constantly the case. No one was expecting to worship Cthulhu yet here we are. What keeps the Lovecraftian networks in movement is the idea pointed out by Trafford that any set of rules or meanings are, in their core, based on the horror of nothing. The Lovecraftian network is a “Lovecraftian network” in the sense proposed by Airaksinen but reinforced by Noys as a primary negative that creates and destructs itself. As we follow Harman’s proposal, the processes inside the network can be understood as fusions that are produced in objects that aren’t there at the start, but at the same time are capable of maintaining their own consistency despite the changes.

In a letter to James Ferdinand Morton from 1930, Lovecraft wrote that the objects don’t have any sort of intrinsic value.¹⁴⁸ What interested him was “what that thing has the power to symbolize for the person in question.”

It is the sole and complete key to that elusive and evanescent quality of interest which I have such prodigious difficulty in summoning toward anything not involving the elements of surprise, discovery, strangeness, and the impingement of the cosmic, lawless, and mystical upon the prosaic sphere of the known. Facts as such mean nothing to be. Not because I have the maniac’s or religious mystic’s tendency to confuse reality with unreality, but because I have the cynic’s and the analyst’s inability to recognize any difference in value between the two types of consciousness-impacts, real and un-real.¹⁴⁹

The Lovecraftian network was not created by Lovecraft and we saw how it diverged from what appears in this letter. To trace the network it was necessary to deploy historical documents as they allowed us to establish connections and sets of convergences and

¹⁴⁸LOVECRAFT, H. P., **Selected Letters: 1929-1931**, Wisconsin: Arkham House, 1971, p. 124.

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 125.

divergences. However the documents are unstable and traversed by sets of documents that started as fictional and became actual. This case donot imply that they are false documents and should be discarded as hoaxes. On the contrary, they play an important role to understand the network.

When Derleth proposed the Cthulhu Mythos, the network created and materialized a new set of documents. The value of Derleth interpretation is the same as the value of Lovecraft Cthulhism as both are part of the network. We reject that the Cthulhism is better than the Cthulhu Mythos as it was close to Lovecraft views and therefore original. What the Cthulhism reveal is a process of writing, his personal connections, his role as author and ghostwriter, etc. The same can be said about the versions of the Necronomicon once they are understood and converged into the religious field.

The Lovecraftian network doesn't exist because of Lovecraft. The network is fictional in the same sense that the Necronomicon is. When the network gains its own instance in the present, it carries itself the ontological horror that constantly puts into question its own epistemological certainties as the values are imploded. The Lovecraftian network can be defined in the same way that Crawford Tillinghast did when he talked about the interdimensional creatures in Lovecraft story *From Beyond*: Disintegration is quite painless, I assure you.

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