

## ‘Beyond the Waking World’: The Significance of Dreams in H.P. Lovecraft’s Works

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### Abstract

The horror genre as a whole is often overlooked in research and even less attention is paid to its various subgenres. One such subgenre is cosmic horror or Lovecraftian horror which focuses on the horror of all that is unknowable and incomprehensible. Dreams have been an integral part of folklore and are associated with the unknown. It is, thus, no surprise that they feature heavily in Lovecraft’s short stories, novellas, and poems. This article will utilise textual analysis and a psychoanalytic approach to explore the role that dreams play in the works of H.P. Lovecraft and, by extension, the genre of cosmic horror. A close reading of the short stories “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” (1919), “The Dreams in the Witch House” (1933), and the novella *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1943) show that dreams in Lovecraft’s works stem from the repressed memories and the collective unconscious of the human race and also act as a passage into other worlds and alternate dimensions of a vast, multidimensional cosmos. The findings show that Lovecraft uses these dreams as a device to explore themes and ideas like absurdism, nihilism, alienation and fragmentation which, together with his unique style, puts Lovecraft’s cosmic horror in the ranks of early twentieth-century texts that are considered quintessential modernist works.

**Keywords:** Lovecraft, cosmic horror, dream theory, nihilism, modernism

### Introduction

Dreams have always played an important role in the genre of horror. Dating back to the plays of Ancient Greece, dreams have been used as symbols, warnings, and messages from other worlds. Incorporated into visions and hallucinations, dreams in literature have been used to express guilt or turmoil, to foreshadow death and catastrophe, or to serve as a grim reminder of a supernatural presence.

It is thus no surprise that the works of Howard Phillips Lovecraft are rich in dreams, dreamscapes, and visions. Lovecraft’s stories are a dramatic departure from conventional horror stories of his time, and he could not have imagined the popularity his ‘weird fiction’ would enjoy after his passing. With images of towering cities, derelict New England villages, and shadowy cults, Lovecraft carved a niche for himself within the horror genre that is now celebrated in popular culture and examined in academic contexts (Jones, 2013). More importantly, his works heavily feature men driven to near insanity by the disturbing dreams and the presence of indifferent, looming Gods, all of which point to the vastness of an unknowable cosmos and the insignificance of humanity in such a universe.

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Lovecraft's dark tales have been delicately woven together to create what is now known as Cthulhu mythology. Adherents like August Derleth later added their own stories, expanding and reinforcing the mythos. Instead of the more traditional vampires, demons, and other supernatural elements that readers are more used to, Lovecraft's world is ruled by a pantheon of monstrous Gods existing beyond the conception of time and space, which audiences quickly come to realise are alien beings. This puts his works in a subgenre of science fiction, more specifically, where science fiction is combined with elements of conventional horror (Joshi, 2008). The overarching theme that pervades his short stories and novellas cannot be ignored either—mankind's total insignificance in the cosmos and the meaninglessness of his existence and achievements, when contrasted with ancient, timeless, and powerful Gods. And it is this aspect that places Lovecraft's weird fiction in the genre of cosmic horror. In addition, Lovecraft was a writer ahead of his time and his works are peppered with complex and striking imagery, vivid dreamscapes, and recurring themes that address many of the anxieties of the modern age such as alienation, the purposelessness of existence, and the atmosphere of fear, paranoia, and unease that permeated the world in the aftermath of World War I. These elements, among others, also make it possible to associate Lovecraft's work with High Modernism. At the same time, Lovecraft's fear of all things unknown and unfamiliar is well documented and his works are also an insight into this apprehension, exposing his dread about the mysteries of the world and the greater universe around him (Smith, 2011). Moreover, according to Krzychylkiewicz (2003), Lovecraft's exploration of internal fears and anxiety when facing the challenges of his time is a defining feature of the 'modern grotesque' which further cements him as a modernist author.

With this context in mind, the question remains: what significance do dreams have in the cosmic horror of Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythology? Although the use of symbolism and Jungian archetypes in Lovecraft's works have been examined previously (Welsh, 2019), the use and portrayal of dreams in cosmic horror have not been examined in detail. In his short stories, Lovecraft uses dreams to forge a connection between humans and cosmic entities, transport the characters to a different time or place (usually those inhabited by the Gods), and even create all of existence itself. The use and portrayal of dreams in his works also display a remarkable understanding of psychology. Lovecraft's creation of monstrous alien-gods feels more grounded than the average work of pulp fiction, and his inclusion of scientific and rational explanations only serves to make the entities of his mythos all the more frightening.

This research has been carried out using a qualitative approach, through a close reading and textual analysis of the following works by H.P. Lovecraft: "Beyond the Wall of Sleep", "The Dreams in the Witch House", and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*. Secondary sources are also be used to analyse and evaluate these texts.

Compared to his contemporaries like F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway, Lovecraft exercised little influence on literature during his lifetime. Even posthumously, he had more of an underground following and only became recognizable in mainstream and popular culture in relatively recent years (Smith, 2015). This is reflected in the limited research conducted on his texts, as Lovecraft remains a niche topic among researchers even today. However, significant work has been done involving Lovecraft

and his works, particularly from a psychoanalytic standpoint and when tracing the evolution of the horror genre (Joshi, 2008).

Researchers explored different avenues when applying a psychoanalytic approach to Lovecraft. For instance, Marčinko (2021) used a psychoanalytical framework to examine the aesthetics of the uncanny in Lovecraft and how his writings create a complex narrative that reflected his reality. On the other hand, Zasada (2019) applied trans and post-humanist narrative strategies while utilising Jung's interpretative methods to examine pop cultural archetypes in contemporary horror.

Williams (2021) examines Lovecraft's works as cosmic horror, as well as how they reflect the innermost anxieties of human existence. On a somewhat similar note, Welsh (2019) utilises a Jungian approach to Lovecraft's works, focusing on the concept of the Shadow, as well as dreams, as the expression of the conflict between the conscious and the unconscious. Research on the life of Lovecraft, as well as his family history with mental illness and its possible influence on his writing, has been carried out and it has even been suggested that Lovecraft honed his metacognitive skills by exploring and writing about his own dreams (Bulkeley, 2016). While these works all revolve around Lovecraft and various psychoanalytic interpretations of the dreams featured in his works, they all focus on Lovecraft's most well-known text: *The Call of the Cthulhu* (1926). While this text has been accepted as a part of popular culture, it does not fully convey the essence of Lovecraft's 'weird fiction'.

There are many other texts by Lovecraft that have been overlooked in favour of those stories that are considered more 'mainstream'. Furthermore, the majority of work done on Lovecraft's works revolves around their role in the evolution of the genre of horror or utilises a psychoanalytic approach to the more well-known monsters of the mythos, like Cthulhu or Yog-Sothoth (Lowell, 2004). There is, thus, a research gap in the examination of dreams and their significance in Lovecraft's stories, as well as their connection to Azathoth<sup>1</sup> in his mythos, which this paper aims to explore. Due to the lack of extensive research done on Lovecraft, and existing research focusing on one particular text, this paper will examine texts that are lesser-known but provide greater and more detailed insight into the role that dreams play in Lovecraft's cosmic horror, as well as what they tell us about his works and the particular genre as a whole.

## Discussion

This section examines the dreams that appear in three of Lovecraft's texts, how they are portrayed, what they symbolise, and the role they play in the overarching mythos of the Lovecraft universe. While the following texts, "Beyond the Wall of Sleep", "The Dreams in the Witch House", and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* are the ones primarily being analysed, the paper also touches upon dreams and visions as they appear in Lovecraft's poetry and fragmentary pieces like "Azathoth" (1938) and "Fungi from Yuggoth" (1943).

### The Real Self vs. Waking Self in "Beyond the Wall of Sleep"

Written and published in 1919, "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" details an inmate at an asylum with intense dream episodes, during which he is overpowered by a force that

compels him to commit exceedingly violent crimes. The inmate, Joe Slater, an inhabitant of the 'primitive' and isolated Catskill Mountains, has no memory of these episodes, but they increase in frequency and intensity as he grows older. During these dream episodes, he would utter things that he did not, or could not, know and would gain inhuman strength and fury, ranting about bright walls and floors, "loud queer music far away" and killing someone or something that "shines and shakes and laughs" (Lovecraft, 1919, p. 38-39). Anyone attempting to detain him would be injured or even killed in a frenzy and Slater would describe "green edifices of light, oceans of space, strange music, and shadowy mountains and valleys" (Lovecraft, 1919, p. 39) that he had never seen or heard of before. It would also be quite impossible for him to have read these things as he was illiterate.

The narrator, an intern at the asylum, takes a keen interest in Slater's predicament. He theorised that some sort of "dream-soul" was inhabiting Slater's body and struggling to communicate its desires and wishes through a weaker body. Ultimately, the narrator uses a contraption to connect telepathically to Slater to learn more about his strange dreams and thus, begins a series of experiments on the rapidly declining patient. As Slater lay dying, the narrator (connected to him through a cosmic radio) began to hear a strange, otherworldly melody, and his sight filled with visions of unbelievable beauty as he saw structures of blazing, living fire, mountains, valleys, and fields that seemed familiar. During this episode the narrator telepathically connects to the cosmic entity possessing Joe Slater and communes with him, flying through the cosmos and experiencing the sublime, luminous aura emitted by the being, until Slater's death an hour later. The entity speaks to the narrator, calling itself his "brother of light" (Lovecraft, 1919, p. 44) and a being that has travelled across the galaxies and different solar systems throughout time and space pursuing an oppressor. However, the doctors in the asylum do not believe his experience, believing it to be the creation of an overworked and exhausted mind.

This short story is significant because it establishes the existence of cosmic beings in a greater universe and their connection with humans through dreams. While the dreams in this story can be seen more as supernatural possession, one cannot deny that the dreams that Slater experiences are moments of psychic connections with a higher cosmic being. Furthermore, "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" refers to how humans have a *real self* that can wander through the cosmos, something that their *waking selves* are unaware of. This dichotomy between a waking world and one beyond it can also be found in Lovecraft's fragmentary pieces titled "Azathoth". The visions that Slater and the narrator have also show that dreams are the gateway through which humans can experience a universe grander and older than what we know of.

Lovecraft uses dreams as a passage or portal through which one can leave the waking world and their waking self, access the greater cosmos beyond it and another side of their consciousness (the *real self*), and communicate with otherworldly beings that inhabit the universe. The two selves mentioned here can be connected to Jung's concept of the Self, where the *real self* is the unification of consciousness and unconscious parts of the psyche, brought together through individuation. Meanwhile, the *waking self* represents what Jung (1948) called a separate ego-consciousness, unaware of the

machinations of the unconscious mind. Thus, we can find elements of the Self in Jungian psychology in the dreams in “Beyond the Wall of Sleep”.

### **Folklore and the Collective Unconscious in “The Dreams in the Witch House”**

“The Dreams in the Witch House” was published in 1933 and revolves around a university student named Gilman who is haunted by frightening lucid dreams. It combines conventional elements of horror fiction like witches, black magic, and ritual sacrifices with more Lovecraftian ones: visits to unearthly locations with impossible geometric dimensions, strange cults, as well as references to Azathoth and the heart of Chaos (Lovecraft, 1933), binding all the disparate elements with the fabric of Lovecraft’s pantheon of monster-Gods.

Gilman moves into an old house rumoured to be once owned by a witch called Keziah Mason who escaped from prison during the Salem witch trials. While he is initially curious about Keziah and the house’s history, he soon begins to have strange and increasingly frightening dreams. The unusual slant of the walls of his room had an almost hypnotic effect on Gilman and he started to hear strange sounds that could not be explained. According to Lovecraft (1933), his dreams were “wholly beyond the pale of sanity” where he fell through “limitless abysses of inexplicably coloured twilight” (p. 862) beyond human comprehension. Over time the influence of the old house on him grew, making his visions more unsettling. He began to sleepwalk and others would think he would leave his room at night, although he would find himself in bed in the morning. Gilman suspected that he was moving through realms in different dimensions, and his dreams grew sharper, as he began to see Keziah and her familiar Brown Jenkin. He was told that he must meet the “Black Man” (Nyarlathotep) and visit the throne of Azathoth and sign his name in blood in Azathoth’s book. In his later dreams, Gilman would awaken in strange cities with countless forms intricately carved from stone and metal and could hear strains of piping music. Through these dreams and his research, he learns about Azathoth, the “mindless entity [...], which rules all time and space from a curiously envired black throne at the centre of Chaos” (Lovecraft, 1933, p. 872). Gilman eventually strangles the witch in a dream, but her familiar completes a gruesome ritualistic sacrifice. Ultimately, Gilman perishes like Slater, as Brown Jenkin gnaws a hole through his chest.

The dreams in this text are much more vividly detailed than those of “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” and have more sinister implications. Upon reading, it becomes clear that Keziah and Brown Jenkin are actually visiting Gilman in his dreams, and he is being transported to other dimensions during his episodes of somnambulism. The dream world blends into reality and any injuries or physical harm he experiences in these dreams are inflicted on his body for example, when Brown Jenkin bites him in a dream, he wakes up to find puncture marks on his arm and blood on his sheets. In his dreams, Gilman is also enticed to take part in a ritual sacrifice to Azathoth, the central God and creator in the Lovecraft mythos.

One can note similarities between how dreams are portrayed in “The Dreams in the Witch House” (1933) and “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” (1919). In both texts dreams are used to travel to other universes or dimensions, move across time and space, and

communicate with entities from these worlds. For instance, like the narrator of “Beyond the Walls of Sleep”, Gilman encounters Nyarlathotep or the Black Man, a descendant of Azathoth. Moreover, in both texts, the characters (the Narrator and Gilman) have dreams influenced by external factors like their surroundings or even preconceived notions about the psyche and the incorporeal world. In other words, it can be said that Lovecraft uses dreams not only as a pathway to alternate worlds but also as a way to communicate with otherworldly beings, who are connected to the human spirit or consciousness. Therefore, the story can be linked to the idea of Jung’s (1968) collective unconscious. Some elements of Jungian archetypes can be found here as well, as Gilman’s dreams contain flashes of symbols and surreal imagery of ancient cult activity that have a kind of broad or universal meaning.

### **Memories and Dreams in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath***

Unlike the two texts discussed above, *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* is a novella that was published posthumously in 1943. One of Lovecraft’s longer stories, it revolves around the character of Randolph Carter who grows preoccupied with dreams about a gilded city that “blazed in the sunset” (Lovecraft, 1943, p. 409) and was filled with marvellous architecture. However, unsettling dream elements make an appearance in Carter’s nocturnal visions too; he hears “a fanfare of supernal trumpets and a clash of immortal cymbals” (ibid.) and he understands that the city of his dreams has some significance.

After the splendid city appears in his dreams for the third time, he prays to the Gods to reveal its location to him, following which the dreams stop altogether. “Sick with longing for those glittering sunset streets and cryptical hill lane” (Lovecraft, 1943, p. 410), Carter resolves to go in person to Kadath, where the gods of dreams live, and ask them to tell him the whereabouts of the city. Unable to learn how one can get to Kadath, Carter decides to go on a quest to get there himself. After a very long journey through the Dreamlands and several adventures along the way, he eventually arrives at Kadath, “the incredible home of the Great Ones”, a castle on top of a mountain that glowed with a “daemon-light” (Lovecraft, 1943, p. 479). There, Nyarlathotep (who also appears in Gilman’s dreams) tells Carter that the city of his dreams is none other than the memories of his childhood home, Boston.

According to Nyarlathotep, the Gods were enchanted by the city in Carter’s dreams, abandoning Kadath to live in the city of his memories. He tasks Carter with returning to the city to recall the Gods back to their stations. On the journey, Carter realizes he has been tricked by Nyarlathotep, who was sending him to the centre of the universe, to Azathoth’s throne, to doom him to the Chaos there instead. At first, he is resigned to his fate but then remembers that he is in a dream and forces himself to wake up, while Nyarlathotep rages and broods over his defeat in the cold, empty halls of Kadath.

At an initial glance, this text follows the same threads as “Beyond the Walls of Sleep” (1919) and “The Dreams in the Witch House” (1933). Like the other two texts, dreams allow access to other dimensions and worlds in the Lovecraft mythos, and incidents in dreams can have a bearing on the dreamers’ reality and well-being.

Nyarlahotep appears in both *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1943) and “The Dreams in the Witch House” (1933) as a Messenger of the Outer Gods, who carries out the bidding of the most powerful deities of the cosmos; and he too is malevolent, as his actions toward both Gilman and Carter prove.

It is also interesting to note that in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, Carter seems to be able to control the content of his dreams. He prays to the priests in his dreams, and using his knowledge of the Dreamlands, uses his dreams to enter into the dimensions inhabited by otherworldly beings. Ultimately, he chooses to wake up before he is taken to Azathoth, showing better control when compared to the characters of the other texts discussed here. Like “Beyond the Walls of Sleep” and “The Dreams in the Witch House”, it contains classic hallmarks of Lovecraft’s writing: surreal imagery, encounters with cosmic entities, and the existence of either indifferent or hostile Gods threatening the protagonists.

However, *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* does have a noticeable difference. The driving force behind the conflict of the story, the dreams of the magical, gleaming city that Carter experiences are not alternate dimensions inhabited by cosmic God-like entities, but simply Boston during his childhood years (Lovecraft, 1943). This element of childhood memory puts a unique psychological spin on the events of the story, where repressed memories of Carter’s childhood resurface in his dreams. It also ties to Jung’s (1948) theories of the personal unconscious containing memories, including those that have been suppressed by the conscious mind, and these memories manifest as big or significant dreams for Carter. The inclusion of otherworldly music that seems to suggest the proximity of Azathoth may be a result of Nyarlahotep’s machinations, as it is likely that he planted these dreams in Carter’s psyche to manipulate and trap him—either for his own amusement or at the behest of the Outer Gods. Nonetheless, this text demonstrates the impact of early memories on the psyche, making *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* more than just another one of Lovecraft’s “weird tales”.

### **Dreams, Reality, and Azathoth**

Lovecraft’s creation of a large mythos is one of the more notable aspects of his works. The works are all loosely tied together to create some semblance of coherence to try and correspond with the lore that makes up the cycles of traditional mythology (Mariconda, 2021). This can be seen through the recurrence of certain motifs, as well as locations, objects, and characters. Nyarlahotep appears in two out of three of the texts examined in this paper, and Randolph Carter is featured in many other short stories. According to Mariconda (2021), even the events that take place in the stories contain echoes of each other all woven together to create “a more complex conception of time” (p. 246).

While mentioned sparsely, and without any direct influence on the plot, Azathoth has a noticeable presence in “The Dreams in the Witch House” and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*. Azathoth’s throne is said to be located in the “centre of ultimate Chaos” and while Gilman cannot initially understand what Azathoth exactly is, he instinctively knows that the name stands for “primal evil too horrible for description” (Lovecraft, 1933, p. 867). Other short stories offer more information about Azathoth, who is the “blind idiot god Azathoth, Lord of All Things” (Lovecraft, 1943, p. 1013) and

the supreme deity of the Lovecraft mythos. He has several titles and epithets, such as the “boundless Daemon Sultan” as seen in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (Lovecraft, 1933, p. 410). Azathoth is also mentioned in the poem “Fungi from Yuggoth” and a better understanding of the being can be gained:

Here the vast Lord of All in darkness muttered  
 Things he had dreamed but could not understand,  
 While near him shapeless bat-things flopped and fluttered  
 In idiot vortices that ray-streams fanned. (Lovecraft, 1943, p.66)

These verses cement Azathoth as the dreamer of existence, and for many scholars and enthusiasts, establish much of the canon of the Cthulhu Mythos (MacCormack, 2010). Azathoth is essentially portrayed as the most powerful entity of the cosmos, yet he is blind and an idiot. Azathoth is the source of all existence—he is asleep and has dreamed up the entire universe and all of human existence. According to the Cthulhu mythos, Azathoth is kept asleep by the daemons who surround his throne and play music for him; the “...high, thin whining/Of a cracked flute” (Lovecraft, 1943, p. 66) is presumably the music that Slater, the intern, Gilman, and Carter all hear in the texts mentioned above. When Azathoth awakens, all of existence will cease to be, thus all of reality is merely a dream. The implications are bleak and nihilistic, where life has no meaning as existence is merely just the dream of an indifferent deity that can end without warning. Therefore, Lovecraft’s works put dreams at the very core of existence; they play a bigger role than being a way to travel to other worlds.

The helplessness of humanity’s state can be seen in all three texts and felt keenly in the genre of cosmic horror. They also emphasise our inability to understand ourselves and come to terms with our place in the greater cosmos. Slater is a simple-minded person, unable to comprehend what is happening to his mind and unconscious of the fact that his body and mind are being possessed by a cosmic entity. Gilman has some understanding that what is happening to him is beyond the laws of science, and attempts to protect himself and fight back against Keziah and Nyarlathotep, but ultimately fails, and Carter barely escapes total annihilation. However, according to Mosig (1997), Carter is the outlier here because he not only outsmarts Nyarlathotep but also achieves some kind of Jungian self-actualization through the integration of the psyche because of his experience. The theme of futility against uncaring and malevolent forces in the universe, delivered through recurring dreams and dreamscapes, can be felt in all of Lovecraft’s major works.

### **The Role of Dreams in Lovecraftian Horror**

Dreams are a major element of Lovecraftian lore and this can be seen in his collection of stories known as *The Dream Cycle*, in which “Azathoth” and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* are a part, and “The Dreams in the Witch House” is connected to. These texts all feature the “Dreamland” (Schweitzer, 2018), a vast dimension alternate to the waking world that can be entered only through dreams. Combined with the idea of reality and existence as a dream, we can begin to understand the significance that dreams have in Lovecraft’s works, as both a plot device and a setting.



Lovecraft wrote during the early part of the twentieth century, and it is fair to assume that he was familiar with the Freudian theories that were prevalent during the time. It is interesting to note that Lovecraft does mention Freud—and not in a positive light. In “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” he mentions Freud’s “puerile symbolism” (Lovecraft, 1919, p. 18) while stating that most of our dreams are a reflection of waking experiences, while others offer dreamers a glimpse into a reality beyond our physical world.

Randolph Carter’s dreams of his childhood in Boston are the instigating factor for the events in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1943) and the glorious, shimmering city of his dreams has been defamiliarized from his memories of the past. We are not told why Carter was dreaming of childhood so frequently, but it would be reasonable to assume he had some kind of attachment to childhood and was longing for a return to the past, where young age makes the memories appear grander. According to Freud (1900), dreams are primarily a means of wish fulfilment, and “wish-impulses originating in consciousness contribute to the instigation of dreams” (p. 1130). The idea of repression cannot be dismissed either; as there may be some element or memory of his childhood that Carter is trying to avoid. According to Barry (2010), the fundamental assumption is that repressed memories or wishes always find a way of returning to the conscious mind. Moreover, Freud’s theory claimed that repressed memories and desires have a strong influence on the content of our dreams and the subconscious mind is itself very suggestible, thus Carter’s dream could be the product of “an unconscious and repressed wish...” (Freud, 1900, p. 1139) which was then manipulated by Nyarlathotep.

However, it is when analysing Lovecraft’s portrayal of dreams through a Jungian lens that things come into clear focus. Jung (1948) split the unconscious into two: a personal subconscious and a collective unconscious. The collective unconscious is a layer where the unconscious is not individual but universal (Jung, 1948) and is expressed through certain images and symbols that seem to recur in dreams, regardless of the memories and waking experiences of the dreamers. The recurring elements in the dreams of Gilman, Slater, and Carter, such as strange music, gleaming cities, and impossible geometry certainly lean toward this explanation, where knowledge of otherworldly Gods in different dimensions is a part of the collective unconscious, as their dreams could not be fully explained by professionals, as we can see in “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” and “The Dreams in the Witch House”. According to Jung (1948), the collective unconscious deals with what he calls “primordial types” involving “universal images that have existed since the remotest times” (p. 21), which corresponds to Lovecraftian mythos of Gods that walked the earth since the very beginning of time. It would thus be reasonable to assume that in the Lovecraft mythos, the knowledge of these entities and the horrors that their existence implies has been buried in the collective unconscious of the human race.

Moreover, Jung (1948) believed that dreams could be categorised as big and significant, or little and insignificant. While little dreams may be a reflection of minor, unrealized wishes and waking experiences, it is the big dreams that Jung is concerned with as they “spring from the collective rather than the personal unconscious” (Welsh, 2019, p. 14). They are therefore associated with folklore or myth and archetypes that can be traced back to ancient times. The dreams that the characters experience in the texts

examined above can be classified as big or significant dreams that stem from the collective unconscious, perhaps from a time when people had knowledge of Cthulhu lore, which can be deduced by the existence of ancient cults that appear in several of Lovecraft's works, including "The Dreams in the Witch House".

In short, we can say that the dreams in Lovecraft's works are psychologically significant, and when examined from a psychoanalytic perspective, align with Jung's dream theories more than they do with Freudian ones. Ultimately, the combination of textual analysis and psychoanalytic analysis leads to the inference that the collective unconscious has imprinted primal memories of the entities or Gods and alternate dimensions that make up the Lovecraftian pantheon, of which symbols and imagery recur in the dreams and visions.

### **Conclusions**

Although Lovecraft's works were published during the first half of the twentieth century and while he is considered to be a modernist, he is not included in the ranks of authors associated with high modernism and is linked to what is called the "modernist grotesque" (Martin, 2008). However, the discussion above shows that Lovecraft's works and the cosmic horror genre as a whole have characteristics and features that make them quintessentially modern. These include features such as subjectivity and alienation that the characters such as Gilman and Carter experience, as well as Lovecraft's fragmentary and disjointed style which is especially evident in his descriptions of the alternate dimensions and how his characters experience these other worlds. A superficial examination of these texts show that Lovecraft's literary style was experimental, displaying a significant departure from conventional styles. The fragmented, surrealistic style of writing is reminiscent of Joyce, Woolf, Eliot, and authors associated with High Modernism.

Although all three texts feature dreams with recurring elements, the characters all experience the unusual events in a unique or subjective way, and these experiences prove to be extremely alienating for them. Slater cannot grasp what is happening to him, and Gilman is unable to reach him and get the help he needs. Both characters alarm those around them, and while the onlookers are sympathetic, they cannot identify with what is happening to them. Furthermore, characters like Gilman and Slater deal with fragmentation as their consciousness is overtaken and their actions controlled by forces beyond their understanding, and this idea of a fragmented psyche is also common in modern literature.

In addition, existentialist, absurdist, and nihilist themes feature heavily in modern works, as the characters struggle to grasp their insignificant place in the universe and try to come to terms with a life that has lost meaning and purpose. The same applies to Lovecraft's characters and the overarching theme of his mythos. In the Cthulhu mythos, all of existence is merely Azathoth's dream, and the cosmos are dominated by alien-Gods (Joshi, 2008) that are either malicious or indifferent, then mankind and all its achievements seem minuscule in comparison. Many of Lovecraft's characters, like the intern in "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" (1919) have trouble coming to terms with their new reality and their place in a vast and uncaring universe.

In light of these observations, Lovecraft's works can be viewed through an

absurdist and nihilist perspective as well and bear many of the salient characteristics of what we consider as quintessentially modern literature. More significant, perhaps, is Lovecraft's radical departure from the conventions of the horror genre (Joshi, 2008). Instead of focusing on supernatural horrors, he unveiled a reality where human interests have no significance in the greater cosmos, decentering humans and placing the focus on the monster-like "Gods". Put simply, Lovecraft broke from the conventions of the genre, blended horror and science-fiction, added his own unique ideas and style, and made it new.

The use of dreams as a passage to other worlds, or to communicate with the supernatural is prevalent in literature, but Lovecraft has used them in a much more versatile manner. In the Cthulhu mythos, dreams are both a curtain that can be pulled back to reveal entrances into alternate dimensions, and entrances through which the internal human psyche can be explored.

This idea of dreams as a two-way street also allows the characters to interact with external entities and Gods in the inner recesses of their minds. The recurring imagery across the texts discussed suggests that they stem from the collective unconscious of the human race, and point to human existence as being nothing more than the dream of an all-powerful deity of the cosmos. In short, dreams have a remarkable significance in Lovecraft's works—not only is human reality a dream, but mankind can discover hints about their reality through dreams. Thus, they are a powerful vehicle, both for an outward view of the vast universe, as well as an inward look into the alien shores of the human psyche.

### Endnote

- <sup>1</sup> While Azathoth is the ruler of the Outer Gods in Lovecraft's mythos, he is somewhat overlooked when compared to Cthulhu.

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