

# Do you believe in the Lord and Saviour Cthulhu?

The application of Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos in Western Esotericism



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# 1. Introduction

“Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtag” (Lovecraft 2011, 363), a phrase not known to all, however, many occultists and avid horror readers will recognize it immediately. It means “In His House at R'lyeh, Dead Cthulhu waits dreaming.” The horror stories written by American horror author H.P. Lovecraft have been used in popular culture and Western Esotericism, as well as in Occultism. This application of Lovecraft and his works of fiction in Western Esotericism provide an interesting case, as by researching groups who use Lovecraft in their beliefs and practices, a light can be shone on a very specific brand of Western Esotericism. In doing so, new information can be uncovered about Western Esotericism and fiction-based religions, which are religions with their foundation in fiction.

There are some esoteric and occults groups who see Lovecraft as a prophet and view his world as real on a spiritual or astral level. They assumed Lovecraft had more occult knowledge than was led on, and therefore assumed this fictional world could be real. The status of reality of this world differs between groups, some see Lovecraft's world as existing on a spiritual level, and others view Lovecraft's world and his pantheon of Old Ones as existing in our world. After Lovecraft's death, his works started gaining popularity with a bigger audience, and it started getting noticed by magickians. The first use of Lovecraft in Esotericism was in the 1970s, when Kenneth Grant (famous occultist and founder of the Typhonian Ordo Templi Orientis) and Anton LaVey (founder of the Church of Satan) used Lovecraft in their rituals and their belief system. Lovecraftian magick is here defined as *magick that has Lovecraftian elements at its core*. These groups will be further introduced in the next chapter. The question that will be asked throughout this thesis will be as followed: How are Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos used in Western Esotericism?

Before this question can be answered, a method for researching the groups who use Lovecraft in Western Esotericism must be established first. For this, a method of comparative literary research of primary and secondary literature is chosen. The primary literature will consist of what the groups themselves have written, and of Lovecraft's fiction. The secondary literature is scarce as Lovecraftian religion and spirituality is ill-researched.

## 1.1 H.P. Lovecraft: Writer or Prophet?

Howard Philips Lovecraft was an American horror author who gained popularity posthumously. He is widely known as the creator of the infamous 'Cthulhu Mythos', as his collection of fiction is usually called. In total Lovecraft wrote 67 stories, which all played in a fictional world, much like ours, but where evil nightmarish alien monsters' dwell and cults live that worship these creatures. This fictional world with its pantheon of monsters will be explained later, but first let's take a closer look at the creator of this Mythos.

H.P. Lovecraft was born in 1890 in Providence, Rhode Island, where he spends most of his life as well. He had a rather tumultuous childhood. In 1893 his father had to be hospitalized and five years later he died in the same hospital of tertiary syphilis. Lovecraft's mother returned after this traumatic experience, to her family home, and alternated between overprotectiveness and emotional distance when it came to her son. However, Lovecraft's grandfather turned out to be an excellent replacement for his father and thanks to him, Lovecraft engaged in several literary and scientific pursuits. His grandfather awakened an interest in philosophy, astronomy, literature and science in Lovecraft, which can be traced back in his works of fiction at a later age. Lovecraft started writing short horror stories from the age of seven (Joshi 2008, ix). After doing well at school, he was forced to quit high school without graduating due to an undefined illness, although it is suspected it

was a psychological illness. After this, Lovecraft grew into a hermit due to his social timidity. It was not until he joined the United Amateur Press Association (UAPA), and later the National Amateur Press Association (NAPA), that he thrived. He found that this non-threatening atmosphere in these associations was exactly what he needed to write his stories and essays again and started publishing them in the small journals that were distributed among the members (Joshi 2008, x).

In 1923 he started contributing to the new magazine *Weird Tales* and was asked to be an editor for the magazine in 1924. However, due to several reasons Lovecraft declined the job, one of them was his marriage to Sonia H. Greene. After a while, Lovecraft decided to return to Providence, as he felt he was slowly going insane in New York. He moved back in with his two aunts and Sonia and he divorced in 1929. Lovecraft's return to Providence proved to be great for his writing, as in just nine months he wrote such works as *The Call of Cthulhu* (1929), *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1929), *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1929), and *The Colour out of Space* (1929). (Joshi 2008, xi). What quickly became apparent in all of Lovecraft's work, was his view that humanity was insignificant in a vastly indifferent universe. This became apparent due to his depiction of these alien monsters, called the Old Ones, who come from the farthest depths of space and time. These Old Ones are the monstrous alien deities in Lovecraft's fiction, where they are usually worshipped by a cult and it is said that knowledge about these Old Ones or their sight would drive you insane. Lovecraft's fiction mostly played out in New England, as he was a real Anglophile. Even though the stories are not a continuation on each other, they play out in the same universe, with Lovecraft developing his fictional mythology and cosmology in every tale he wrote. In Lovecraft's works a growing library of 'forbidden' books, such as the Necronomicon by the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred, which provided glimpses of the Old Ones and their encounters with human beings; and a cadre of sober, scientific protagonists whose encounters with the unimaginably bizarre unhinged their minds, were part of the building blocks of most of the stories he wrote (Joshi 2008, xii). Lovecraft's character of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred was based on his encounter at five years old with *Thousand and One Nights*. After reading the tale, he declared himself a Muslim and adopted the name of Abdul Alhazred. The name means nothing in Arabic, yet twenty-five years later Lovecraft used the name for the fictional Necronomicon's author (Harms 2003, 5). When he was young, he was plagued by recurring nightmares about a race of monsters which he dubbed night-gaunts. These night-gaunts later appeared in his works, such as *Night-Gaunts* and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1929).

Lovecraft died due to untreated cancer in 1937. Two of his correspondents, August Derleth (who later coined the term Cthulhu Mythos for Lovecraft's work and contributed to this Mythos himself) and Donald Wandrei, founded the firm of Arkham House to preserve Lovecraft's stories.

Lovecraft was said by Lovecraftian scholars and magickians to have created his alter ego in his fictional character of Randolph Carter. Randolph Carter is an uncelebrated author, and an avid dreamer. Like Lovecraft, Carter dreams of other worlds where these Old Ones exist, and in his dreams, Carter is able to travel to these worlds. Randolph Carter appears in the following stories *The Statement of Randolph Carter* (1919), *The Unnamable* (1920), *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1929), *The Silver Key* (1926), *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1929), *Through the Gates of the Silver Key* (1933), and *Out of the Aeons* (1933). Randolph Carter is the only recurring character throughout all his fictional works, without counting the Old Ones.

As Lovecraft's grandfather was a Freemason, a lot of rumors go around about Lovecraft's father involvement in freemasonry. However, there is no evidence that Lovecraft's father was a freemason or that Lovecraft himself had any links to or was influenced by freemasonry in his writings (Harms 2003, 4). There has been a discussion between scholars whether Lovecraft had and was

influenced by his extended occult knowledge. While it is widely accepted that Lovecraft was familiar with some occult and esoteric works, there is a consensus between Lovecraftian scholars that he was not heavily influenced by that limited knowledge as Lovecraft himself did not believe in Occultism or Esotericism. While Lovecraft's fiction writes of monsters, magick and general bewilderment, he himself was an atheist, scientific rationalist and mechanic materialist. In other words, he had the highest respect for scientific facts, and believed in what was palpable. He saw humanity as insignificant in a vast indifferent universe and that echoed throughout all his tales. However, some esoteric (or occult) groups and movements do see Lovecraft as being able to tap into a new existing world and as a magician or prophet who tapped into a whole new magickal current. They see him as a virtual progenitor of a new aeon of black magick (Steadman 2015, 27).

## 1.2 Introduction to the Cthulhu Mythos

The Cthulhu Mythos is the collective term for all the fiction that plays out in Lovecraft's fictional world. The Mythos does not only consist of Lovecraft's fictional work but of the fiction that was later added after his death by earlier collaborators, as well. The term was first coined by August Derleth, a correspondent of Lovecraft and later a contributor to this so-called Cthulhu Mythos. The Cthulhu Mythos refers to the world and stories Lovecraft created. It is inhabited by the evil Old Ones, who live outside this universe but can be summoned to our world through rituals. The name Cthulhu in the Cthulhu Mythos references to one of these Old Ones, arguably the most famous one, and the creature from *The Call of Cthulhu* (1926). With the Old Ones Lovecraft created a whole pantheon of alien monsters, who will shortly be discussed. There is a lot of discussion as to which stories should be included into the Mythos. Most readers agree that the following stories represent the core documents of the series: *Nyarlathotep* (1920), *The Nameless City* (1921), *The Hound* (1922), *The Festival* (1922), *The Horror at Red Hook* (1925), *The Call of Cthulhu* (1926), *The Strange High House in the Mist* (1926), *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1927), *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1927), *The Colour Out of Space* (1927), *The Dunwich Horror* (1929), *The Whisperer in Darkness* (1930), *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* (1931), *At The Mountains of Madness* (1931), *The Dreams in the Witch House* (1932), *The Thing on the Doorstep* (1933), *The Shadow Out of Time* (1934), and *The Haunter of the Dark* (1935).

I propose a different arrangement when looking at the Cthulhu Mythos and of which stories it consists. In my opinion all of Lovecraft's fictional stories, belong to the Cthulhu Mythos, without a couple of stories consisting of so-called "core documents". All of Lovecraft's fictional stories adhere to this fictional world he created and are inhabited by these Old Ones; therefore, all the stories belong to the Cthulhu Mythos.

The second discussion concerning the Cthulhu Mythos is that of whether the later contributors, after Lovecraft's death, also belong to the Cthulhu Mythos. Later contributors are August Derleth, Lin Carter, Clark Ashton Smith, Robert Block, Robert E. Howard, Frank Belknap Long, Henry Kuttner, Henry S. Whitehead, and Fritz Leiber. Some of these writers collaborated with Lovecraft on his Cthulhu Mythos when he was alive, and some contributed to this fictional universe after his death. As it is impossible to know whether these later contributions would have been in line with Lovecraft's vision, only his own work and collaborations during his lifetime, will here be acknowledged as part of the Cthulhu Mythos. That means that all of Lovecraft's 67 works of fiction are part of the Cthulhu Mythos, and will be used during the research as such.

The narrative religion of the Cthulhu Mythos exists of several horrific entities, with the most important ones being Cthulhu, Father Dagon, Yog-Sothoth, Azathoth, Nyarlathotep, and Shub Niggurath. There is, however, a difference between these deities, although it is not always clearly

acknowledged. There is a distinction between the deities, you have the Great Old Ones, the Outer Gods and the Elder Gods (although this group is hardly mentioned). The Outer Gods are different from the Great Old Ones, as they reside beyond the confines of Earth and the solar system and exert their influence from deep space. The Great Old Ones on the other hand, are malignant deities who reside on various locations on Earth and once ruled the Earth as gods. The Elder Gods are benevolent entities but are hardly mentioned in Lovecraft's work. His focus is mainly on the Great Old Ones and the Outer Gods. Even though there is a distinction between these two malignant forces, they are usually forced together under the term of the Old Ones, therefore after this quick introduction to the important Gods of the pantheon, I will henceforth refer to them all as the Old Ones to avoid confusion.

Cthulhu is first mentioned in *The Call of Cthulhu* (1926). He is described as a combination of a dragon, sort of humanoid and with the face of an octopus. Cthulhu is said to be imprisoned in the sunken city of R'lyeh and sleeping until one of his worshippers wake him. The location of the fictional city of R'lyeh has been said by Lovecraft to lay at 47°9'S 126°43'W in the Southern Pacific Ocean. Some people go beyond the literature and claim R'lyeh is a real place or exist on another spiritual plane. R'lyeh architecture exists of non-Euclidian geometry, which in essence means that there is no symmetry or logic, as in Escher's paintings for instance. Cthulhu is seen as the head of the pantheon and is arguably the most important and popular Old One. In the Cthulhu Mythos he is not only worshipped by human cults, but by other Lovecraftian monsters, like the Deep Ones and the Mi-Go as well. The Deep ones are a race of intelligent ocean creatures, with humanoid features while maintaining a fish-like appearance. They mate with humans along the coast, thus resulting in a hybrid race, who slowly transform into Deep Ones when aging. The Deep Ones are first introduced in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* (1931). The Mi-Go are a fungus-based crustacean alien race who live on Yuggoth (known as Pluto in the real world). They appear in *The Whisperer in the Darkness* (1931). Followers of Cthulhu are known to chant the infamous phrase "*Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn*", meaning "In His House at R'lyeh, Dead Cthulhu waits dreaming" (Lovecraft 2011, 363).

Father Dagon is an extremely large Deep One and can be seen as the ruler of the Deep Ones, next to his partner Mother Hydra. The couple together with Cthulhu are worshipped as Gods by the Deep Ones. The name Dagon first appeared in the short story *Dagon* (1917). The names are likely to be inspired by Dagon, the Semitic fertility deity, and Hydra, the serpentine water monster from Greek Mythology.

Yog-Sothoth is first mentioned in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1927) but was elaborated on in *The Dunwich Horror* (1929). Yog-Sothoth is known as The Gate and is seen as the gate through which humanity can reach the Old Ones, but also as how the Old Ones can enter our world. The Gate is said in *The Dunwich Horror* (1929) to be able to open through a ritual from the fictional Necronomicon. In the story Yog-Sothoth half-human son Wilbur Whateley tries to summon Yog-Sothoth and tries to open The Gate. By summoning Yog-Sothoth the Gate will be opened as Yog-Sothoth is not only the Gate, but also referred to as The Key. Summoning him would automatically result in opening the gate. A passage from *The Dunwich Horror* (1929) explains this further: "Yog-Sothoth knows the gate. Yog-Sothoth is the gate. Yog-Sothoth is the key and guardian of the gate. Past, present, future, all are one in Yog-Sothoth. He knows where the Old Ones broke through of old, and where they shall break through again. He knows where They have trod earth's fields, and where They still tread them, and why no one can behold Them as They tread" (Lovecraft 2011, 645).

Azathoth is known as the Ruler of the Outer Gods. Lovecraft described Azathoth in *The Dream-Quest to Unknown Kadath* (1927) as "an amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which

blasphemes and bubbles at the center of all infinity—the boundless daemon sultan Azathoth, whose name no lips dare speak aloud, and who gnaws hungrily in inconceivable, unlighted chambers beyond time and space amidst the muffled, maddening beating of vile drums and the thin monotonous whine of accursed flutes” (2008, 410). As the ruler of the Outer Gods, he is worshipped by human cults and Outer Gods alike.

Nyarlahotep is known as The Crawling Chaos and is an Outer God. He is first mentioned in *Nyarlahotep* (1920) and is there described as a tall, swarthy man who resembles an Egyptian Pharaoh. He is also known as The Black Man of The Witch-Cult and has multiple ways of appearing in stories through several avatars. Even though he is an Outer God, he frequently visits Earth in one of his many avatars, Lovecraft provides no explanation as to why he walks the Earth even if he is an Outer God. Other Outer Gods and even Great Old Ones are described as mindless rather than evil, however Nyarlahotep is different. He is cruel, manipulative and uses whatever and whomever to achieve his goals. Some even go as far as saying Nyarlahotep is one of the few deities in the Cthulhu Mythos with intellect. Nyarlahotep is the messenger of the Outer Gods and can be seen as the link between the Outer Gods and humanity.

Shub Niggurath is an Old One and known as The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young. Shub Niggurath is never described by Lovecraft but used in various incantations in his stories. These incantations can be found in *The Dunwich Horror* (1929), *The Whisperer in the Dark* (1930), *The Dreams in the Witch House* (1932) and *The Thing on the Doorstep* (1933).

The groups that worship these Old Ones are always underground cults which can be found mostly in the outskirts of civilization: desolate fishing villages (*The Shadow over Innsmouth*); backward rural areas (*The Dunwich Horror*); or in the desert (*The Necronomicon*). In other horror stories, these cults were usually right under the reader’s nose all along. With Lovecraft’s work, these cults do (usually) succeed to stay hidden but their far-away location does play a big role in this success.

### 1.3 Introduction to Fiction-based religions

New religious traditions are emerging, some are revivals of old religions, while other religions take a new starting point: fiction. Religious traditions based on fiction have been a debate in religious studies since their emergence in the 1960’s and have been known through many different names. To further discuss these religions, we first must dissect what these is meant by these specific terms of fiction and religion. For the definition and discussion of these terms, I will heavily draw upon Markus Davidsen, a religious scholar who got promoted on the subject on Tolkien-based religions.

Davidsen defines fiction as “any literary narrative which is not intended by its author to refer to events which have taken place in the actual world prior to being entextualised” (2013, 384). From this definition we can grasp that he mainly focuses his attention on literary narratives and the intention of the author of these texts. However, I would like to propose that we add to this definition, as fiction entails more than just a literary narrative today. I would suggest that the definition of fiction would expand itself, to lend itself for the cinematic genre as well: *any literary or cinematic narrative which is not intended by its author to refer to events which have taken place in the actual world prior to being entextualised*. If we adapt Davidsen’s definition like this, we can also include cinematic fiction into this definition.

Religion has always been hard to define, as no definition satisfies everyone. As there are as many religions as there are people, it makes it hard to make one general definition. However, I propose to use the definition of Davidsen where religion is defined as “beliefs, practices, experiences

and discourses which assume the existence of supernatural agents, worlds and/or processes” (2013, 388). This definition includes most religious traditions and can especially be helpful religions based on fiction.

The term used to best describe these religions is the term opted by Davidsen: fiction-based religions. According to him, fiction-based religions are “religions in which fictional texts are used as authoritative text” (2013, 384). When comparing this definition to his definition of fiction, we can see a clear parallel between the two. A good example of a fiction-based religion is Jediism. The members of the Star Wars-based Jediism identify as Jedi Knights and believe in the force, as is introduced in the popular Star Wars movies (Davidsen 2014, 17). These movies were not just an entertaining story for some, these people saw behind the Force a philosophy and power they identified with. Jediism has been instrumental in acknowledging the religious potential of fiction. In 2001 the so-called Jedi Census Phenomenon took place in Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand when a new question of religious affiliation was introduced. Due to this new question, a chain mail circulated where people were urged to tick the ‘other’ box on the census form and fill in ‘Jedi’ as their religious affiliation (Davidsen 2014, 17). Over half a million people did this, and even though it was a prank for most people, some did actually practice this spirituality that was based around the Force from the movies.

Another example of these fiction-based religions is Tolkien spirituality. Tolkien spirituality is a fiction-based religion, based on the eponymous fiction of Tolkien. J.R.R Tolkien is a fiction writer who has created a whole other world in his books called Middle Earth. Middle Earth is a place of heroes, adventures, other races like dwarfs, orcs, hobbits etc. beside the race of men. Tolkien has gone further than other fiction writers, he has developed a whole literary mythology and history for his creation. Beside his well-known books *The Lord of the Rings (1954-1955)* and *The Hobbit or There and Back Again (1937)*, his other works include *The Silmarillion (1977)*, which is a work that expands and explains his literary mythology, and *History of Middle-earth series(1983-1996)*, which is as the name suggests a history of his created world. When looking at this overview of books, it would make sense that people have chosen Tolkien’s work as a base for a religious tradition, as he has developed his fictional work in such an elaborate way that lends itself for religious potential. Not only has Tolkien inspired a new religious movement, but he is also seen as an influence in Paganism as having inspired contemporary Pagans on a spiritual level (Davidsen 2014, 19). Tolkien spirituality started in the 1960s and has spread even more widely due to the internet. Followers of Tolkien spirituality believe in some way, be that metaphorical, spiritual or literal, in Tolkien’s narrative world of Middle-earth, and some even identify as one of the races that inhabit this world.

The term fiction-based religion is not the first term to be employed when referencing to these religions. However, as I argue, it is the best one so far.

These religions are called hyper-real religions by Adam Possamai, who based this on Jean Baudrillard’s theory of religion as being a hyper-reality. Possamai defines hyper-real religion as “a simulacrum of a religion created out of, or in symbiosis with, commodified popular culture which provides inspiration at a metaphorical level and/or is a source of beliefs for everyday life” (Possamai 2012). When we look at this definition, we can see that indeed he refers to the same group of fiction-based religions as Davidsen does. However, the term hyper-real presents us with some difficulties. The term of simulacrum comes from Baudrillard as well. In this theory on reality and religion, he distinguishes the terms of representations and simulacra. Representation are signs that refer to a real object in the actual world, and simulacra are signs whose object is an evidently constructed or made-up idea without real substance (Davidsen 2014, 71). Simulacra do not relate to reality, but Baudrillard does say that a semiotic quality of realness can be ascribed to simulacra, and



therefore a simulacrum can be perceived as real. He refers to this as hyper-real (Davidsen 2014, 71). According to Davidsen, when Baudrillard looks at religion, he identifies them all as hyper-real, as they are simulacra that are perceived as real. Possamai's term of hyper-real religions therefore is not adequate when looking at these religions.

Possamai later attempts to refer to these religions as popular religions in his article *Popular and lived religions (2015)*. According to him, popular religion often reflects the lived and unstructured religion of subordinated groups and is a term which has developed mainly in contrast to institutionalized, established and/or official religion which has a rationalized, codified and written-down theology (2015, 272). This does not necessarily refer to fiction-based religions alone, but other 'historical' religions as well. Possamai later refers to Jediism when giving an example of these popular religions. Possamai agrees that the term popular religion is still not perfectly defined, nor does it address some aspects of these fiction-based religions.

Carole Cusack offers us another term to describe these religions: Invented religions. She defines this as "explicitly invented, fictional religions, which refused the strategies of legitimation that were customarily employed by new religions" (2017, 2). Not only does this term imply that religions are invented, which brings a whole other discussion with them, it also implies that these religions do not have any legitimizing strategies, which is not true at all. As later will be discussed when looking at the three groups, we see a lot of different legitimizing strategies: from claiming legitimization through ancient cults to legitimization through the success of their rituals.

Fiction-based religions have emerged since the 1960s and are usually based around the literary or cinematic genre of fantasy. Beside the discussion on how to call these religions, another discussion has emerged at the same time as these fiction-based religions. The emergence of these religions has blurred the line between fandom and belief, which has sparked the debate on when one can speak of fandom and when of a religion. Markus Davidsen provides us with a theory on the distinction of fandom and these religions. In his dissertation he conceptualizes fiction-based religion against fandom, he does this by looking at Michael Jindra's article *Star Trek Fandom as a Religious Phenomenon (2000)*. In his article, Jindra suggests that fandom can be seen as a religious phenomenon. He identifies seven dimensions in Star trek fandom: belief, myth, community, ritual gatherings, pilgrimages, alludes to another world, and the effect it has on the lives of the fans (2014, 83). Even though Jindra has identified seven dimensions of religion in this fandom, it cannot be seen as a fiction-based religion. According to Davidsen, it is misleading to suggest that the enactment or 'making real' in role-playing is identical to the way in which religious activity assumes and affirms the reality of supernatural agents (2014, 83). Role-playing and religion do allude to an imaginary or spiritual realm, yet they differ as religion ascribes a reality to this imaginary world, while role-playing does not, or at least not on the level religion does. This is an important difference because religious activity refers to and involves the communication with supernatural entities that are postulated to exist in the actual world. However, role-playing fans create and enter a fictional world (2014, 83-84). Simply put, this means that fans are aware of the fictionality of their created world, and engage in play, rather than belief. Believers on the other hand, see their imaginary world as being connected, and parallel, to the actual world.

Victoria Nelson, an American literary scholar, distinguishes between three groups of believers. According to her, there are two types of Secondary believers: the committed consumers, which are followed by the supercommitted performers. The supercommitted consumers are fans who attempt to re-create the experience of the alternate world in their own lives (2012,57). The experience of Secondary belief separates a fan from the ordinary reader or moviegoer is an intensity of engagement that accepts the content of the reading or viewing experience as real, not fantasy

(2012, 57). The committed consumer are fans who for example go conventions about their favorite fiction and participate in cosplay by dressing up and acting like their favorite character from the secondary world. These committed consumers are followed by the supercommitted consumer, the fans who attempt to recreate the experience of the secondary world in their lives. Examples of this are people who participate in Live Action Role-Playing (LARP) or who dress up as a fictional character outside of these conventions or events. The other-kin movement, in which people identify as another race than human on a spiritual or mental level, also falls into the category of these Secondary supercommitted performers.

Beside these secondary believers, she distinguishes a third group: The Primary Believers, those who believe it is real or partially. The transformation of Secondary Belief from a temporary state of mind into an enduring experience of Primary Belief is the bridge that allows certain individuals to leave behind actual world and the realm of fandom, while entering the textual reference world (2012,58). If we divide the world of Lovecraft fandom into the same three groups of consumers and performers (Secondary Believers) followed by spiritual practitioners (Primary Believers), some similarities and differences with the continuum of other fan groups emerge (Nelson 2012, 61). These primary believers are not playing anymore, they are believing and practicing the culture of this secondary world, and by doing so, they transform from the world of play and fandom to the world of religion. Examples of these other fan groups are for instance fans of Tolkien or Star Wars, which also have established fiction-based religions. All discussed groups fall into Nelson's category of Primary Believers, as they are believing and practicing the culture of Lovecraft's fictional secondary world, and by doing so, they ascend from Secondary belief with the world of play and fandom to the world of religion or Primary belief.

#### **1.4 Lovecraftian Magick: From Fiction to Magick**

The phenomenon of Lovecraftian magick appears to originate from 1972, as a result of two books published that year: *The Magickal Revival* by Kenneth Grant, and *The Satanic Rituals* by Anton LaVey (Hanegraaff 2007, 101). These two books use Lovecraftian elements in their rituals and therefore Lovecraftian magick was officially born that year.

Lovecraftian magick is described by Justin Woodman, a scholar with a focus on esotericism, as "a 'style' of magickal practice inspired by the fictional universe of the Cthulhu Mythos created by the author H.P Lovecraft, and popularised within certain sectors of the contemporary Euro-American magickal subculture. For these contemporary Lovecraftian magickians, the demonic is mobilised as a potent apocalyptic weapon in contesting the alienating consequences of modernity and forms an ambivalent moral category distinct from Christianised conceptions of supernatural evil" (Woodman 2003, 13). The demonic mentioned by Woodman is seen as Lovecraftian magickians but constitutes a form of alien otherness', disruptive of the rationalising aspects of modernity (Woodman 2003, 14). These Lovecraftian magickians see the Old Ones as a way to gain ultimate knowledge, also seen as a cosmic consciousness. Lovecraftian magick places an emphasis on self-knowledge and self-transformation by transgressing the perceived limitations of human and social norms (Woodman 2003, 18). According to Woodman Lovecraftian magick can also be seen as a way of seeking refuge from the rationality of modernism. But why would one even want to practice Lovecraftian magick and contact this parallel universe where this monstrous Old Ones? Gonce III provides us with an answer in his book *The Necronomicon Files, The Truth Behind Lovecraft's Legends (2003)*. According to him, defenders of Lovecraftian magick insist that it is dangerous precisely because it is a powerful system of magick that really works (2003, 121). So according to these practitioners this magick is

exactly so alluring because it works, and these Old Ones aren't necessarily seen as evil in the Christianised moral sense, but as forces of great energy.

In the thin field of Lovecraftian scholars a few stand out: T.S Joshi, a scholar on Lovecraft himself; John Wisdom Gonce III, a practicing Neo-Pagan and occultist who wrote the so-called guide to the Necronomicon and Lovecraftian magick together with Daniel Harms, another prominent Lovecraftian scholar and anthropologist who studies magick in modern society; Wouter J Hanegraaff, a leading scholar in Western Esotericism and Hermetic Philosophy; and Justin Woodman, an anthropologist who researched practical applications of Lovecraftian magick, with a specific focus on one group: Haunters of the Dark. As can be seen from these five scholars who are the leading expert in all things Lovecraft and Cthulhu, the field is a small one. The aim of this research is to provide this field with a clear analytical overview of Lovecraftian magick and the absolute application of Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos in Western Esotericism, with a specific look on the Left-Hand path as this is the only path in Western Esotericism that applies Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos in their movement. The Left-Hand Path is a way of referencing to the "darker" magicks and movements in Western Esotericism. As Lovecraftian magick is seen as one of the darker types of magicks with its involvement with the horror world of the Cthulhu Mythos and Lovecraft, it is not unexpected that this magick fall into the Left-Hand Path. This research does not only have implications for the field of Western Esotericism but for fiction-based religions as well. Whereas fiction-based religions are becoming more and more researched, the application of Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos in fiction-based religions is still scarce. By diving into this application, but in the overall field of fiction-based religions as well, this research will provide the next step in bringing together fiction-based religion and Western Esotericism.

## 2. Method

Throughout this thesis a method of literary research will be set up. An analysis of certain groups that use Lovecraft in their religious traditions will be set up, and a look at what they do, or do not, use will be taken. The groups that will be analyzed are the Esoteric Order of Dagon, Hunters of the Dark, Chaos Magickians, Lovecraftian Magickians, The Church of Satan, The Temple of Set, Grant's Typhonian Ordo Templi Orientis (and its offshoot the New Isis Lodge).

When looking at these fiction-based religions, these religions can be categorized into three categories: (1) fiction-based religions, which we just discussed; (2) fiction-integrating religions, which selectively adopt fictional elements and integrate them into an existing religious frame; and (3) fiction-inspired religions, which are influenced and supported by fiction in a general way, but do not incorporate notions from fiction in their beliefs and practices (Davidsen 2013, 384). These three categories will later be attached to the groups we will analyze.

An example of these fiction-based religions is Jediism, as it takes the fictional movies as their very foundation. Fiction-integrating religions is a broader category, as religions that incorporate fictional elements in their religious frame immediately fall into this category. A good example of this type of religion is The Church of All Worlds. The Church of All Worlds is based on the eponymous religion from Robert A. Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961). In this tale we follow Valentine Michael Smith, a human born on Mars and raised by Martians. The Martians are such an advanced race that have psychic abilities and superhuman intelligence. The story follows Valentine in his journey on earth, where he eventually forms The Church of All Worlds, with rituals like water-sharing (a ritual to symbolize brotherhood), a church based on the concept of Megachurches where sinning is allowed under the auspice of the church coupled with Western Esoteric elements. Its real-life counterpart is an American-founded Neo-Pagan movement which incorporates certain elements, like the water-sharing ritual, certain fictional words and expressions, and mythology, from Heinlein's narrative. This religion only uses the fictional texts as a secondary source of inspiration. Throughout this research the term Western Esotericism will be defined as religious scholar and leading expert on Western Esotericism Wouter J. Hanegraaff defines it as "a large and complicated field of research that has been set apart by mainstream religious and intellectual culture, and is characterized by a strong emphasis on specific worldviews and epistemologies that are at odds with normative post-Enlightenment intellectual culture" (2013, 13-14).

The category of fiction-inspired religion is by far the biggest category. It includes religious movements which are inspired and supported by fiction with which it shares concerns and ideas. Neopaganism for example, is a fiction-inspired religion. Neopaganism is known for having been influenced by certain fictional works with an esoteric or spiritual theme. Examples of this include Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* (1983), James Redfield's *The Celestine Prophecy* (1993), but even fictional cinematic narratives influence Neopaganism; *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *Charmed* (1998-2006), and *The Lord of the Rings* movies (2001-2003).

There are three categories into which the three here researched groups will be categorized: (1) adaptations of Lovecraftian magick into an existing religious frame; (2) Individual magickians who practice Lovecraftian magick; and (3) Cthulhu Cults.

The first group is the broadest, yet they all adhere to the black magickal tradition. These groups have adapted the Cthulhu Mythos and Lovecraftian magick to fit into their existing religious frame. The groups that have incorporated Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos in one way or another and will be analyzed are The Church of Satan, The Temple of Set, and the Typhonian Ordo Templi Orientis

with its offshoot The New Isis Lodge. These religious movements not only have Lovecraftian in common, but they are all left-path religious traditions as well. Left-path religious (or magical) traditions are commonly known as black magical traditions and associated with darkness and anti-Christian sentiment. However, this is not the case. These left-path traditions are indeed black magical traditions, but not as they are to be understood by laypeople. Black magickal, and thus left-path, traditions are traditions that seek to use magick to obtain knowledge and gaining power. Because these two aims are that magick is initially to be used for self-gain instead for a 'higher purpose', it is considered evil. However, the division between black and white magick is not that black and white as it appears to be. The main difference between these two magickal systems are their aims.

The second group are individual magickians that practice magick with Lovecraftian elements. These groups are divided into two movements: the chaos magickians, magickians who are not bound to one magical system but use multiple magical traditions to obtain their desired goal; and Lovecraftian magickians, these magickians use Lovecraft as the base of their magical tradition. The individuals that will specifically be discussed are chaos magician Peter J. Carroll, one of the founders of chaos magic; Phil Hines, prominent chaos magician and author of *The Pseudonomicon (2004)*; Lovecraftian magician Scott R Jones, author of *When the Stars Are Right: Towards an Authentic R'lyehian Spirituality (2014)*; and Lovecraftian magician Simon, famous author of *The Necronomicon (1978)*.

The Cthulhu cults are the category which use Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos as their basis. The groups that fall into this category are the Esoteric Order of Dagon, the Hunters of the Dark. Whilst there are more groups that would fall into this category, these two are the only ones analyzed, as there is little to no information on these other groups. These two groups are the groups that have secondary literature as well, however little as that may be.

In the three groups that will be discussed can we not only see a difference in practical application of Lovecraft in their belief system, but we can distinguish a distinction in degree of fiction-basedness. In the three groups that are discussed, we can see not only a difference in practical application of Lovecraft in their belief system, but we can distinguish a distinction in degree of fiction-basedness as well. While the primary adherents fall neatly in the category of a fiction-based religion, as they use the fictional works of H.P Lovecraft as their basis, the secondary adherents fall into the category of fiction-integrating religions, as they integrate belief elements from Lovecraft's fiction, re-enact fictional rituals, and/or adapt identities from fiction. Within these three groups we will be able to distinguish two types: the primary adherents, the ones that view fiction as authoritative text and base their belief system around it; and the secondary adherents, the ones that are part of an existing belief system.

An explanation for this difference in fiction-basedness can easily be explained. The secondary adherents are part of an existing belief system; therefore, it is only logical that they integrate elements instead of using the fiction as their basis. The secondary adherents can be seen as fiction-integrating religions. When looking at the secondary adherents we have the existing groups and the chaos magickians, which are known for not adhering to one system but actually use different styles, rituals, languages etc., to get their desired result. Even though Chaos magickians differ in their practices, they do have a similar view of the universe; recognizing that all forms of energy and all types of matter behave in terms of probability waves rather than as particles in a patterned space-time continuum (Steadman 2015, 243). Because they integrate all sort of elements, not just Lovecraftian, into their practices and belief systems it is therefore only logical that they are a fiction-integrating religion. The existing groups have adapted Lovecraftian magick and fictional

elements from his Cthulhu Mythos into their belief system. In *The Satanic rituals* we see this integration of Lovecraftian elements for example in the rituals; The Ceremony of the Nine Angles, The Call To Cthulhu, and Die Elektrischen Vorspiele (LaVey 1972).

With the primary adherents it is different, as they use Lovecraft's fiction as authoritative text and base their belief system around it. The Haunters of the Dark, the Esoteric Order of Dagon and the individual Lovecraftian magickians use Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos in a way that bases their religion or spirituality around this fictional base. This can be seen through their assumption of the reality of the Old Ones and the world they inhabit. The aims of these primary adherents are to reach Lovecraft's world, usually through induced trance-states or dreams, and to gain the coveted True Knowledge.

The three groups will be analyzed by the elements they use in their belief system, rituals, cosmology etc. Throughout this analysis, it will become clear how these different groups use Lovecraft and differ not only in their usage, but in their degree of fiction-basedness as well.

We will look if Lovecraft is actually used in their rituals or only in theory or for publicity; how do they engage with Lovecraft's world? How do they see Lovecraft as a person, as a prophet or not? Which works of the Cthulhu Mythos do they use? What status of reality has Lovecraft's world? How do they legitimize their use of Lovecraft? Is Lovecraft or are certain Lovecraftian elements central to their belief system?

All these questions are central in the analysis. They provide us with the structure for analyzing these specific groups and through that structure we can see how Lovecraft is used in each group and how significant his influence was on them. In the fifth chapter we will try to hypothesize why they might differ in their usage of Lovecraft, and why are they all left path?

The answer to all these questions will be discovered through information brought forth, or written by the groups themselves, while comparing them with secondary literature written about these groups. However, as there is little information on these primary adherents, it is important to compare their rites, beliefs and traditions to the ones found in the Cthulhu Mythos of H.P. Lovecraft. The complete fictional works of Lovecraft will therefore also fall under the primary literature used in this thesis. In the table below, we can see a quick overview of the groups that will be analyzed in the next chapter. In the next chapter a broader overview per group will be given.

Table 1: overview of categories of adherents of the Cthulhu Mythos

<b>Adaptations of Lovecraftian magick into an existing religious frame.</b>	<b>Number of members</b>	<b>Founded in</b>	<b>Founder</b>
The Church of Satan	Unknown	1966	Anton LaVey
The Temple of Set	200-500	1975	Michael Aquino
Typhonian Ordo Templi Orientis	Unknown	1955	Kenneth Grant
<b>Individual magickians who practice Lovecraftian magick</b>			
Chaos magickians	Unknown	1970s	Peter J. Carroll and Ray Sherwin
Lovecraftian magickians	Unknown	1970s	Kenneth Grant or Simon
<b>Cthulhu Cults</b>			
Esoteric Order of Dagon	Unknown	1981	"Randolph Carter"
Haunters of the Dark	8	1999	Unknown

### 3. Analysing the Man, the Mythos and the Magick

#### 3.1 Adaptations of Lovecraftian magick into an existing religious frame

When looking at the application of Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos, the adaptations of Lovecraftian magick into an existing religious frame are first. They are the ones that helped Lovecraftian magick reach popularity. They used Lovecraftian magick in their rituals, and through the popularity or notoriety of these religious movements, Lovecraftian magick could be further developed. These movements actually opened up the floor for the other two groups that will be researched as well and can be seen as the forefathers of Lovecraftian magick.

##### 3.1.1 The Church of Satan: Cthulhu versus Satan

The Church of Satan was founded in 1966 by Anton Szandor LaVey. Due to LaVey's charisma and showmanship the church gained media attention and attracted recruits. According to LaVey's lavish background story he found the path towards Satanism when he was only sixteen years old and the story of the founding of the Church of Satan was coupled with equal showmanship and symbolism, it is unsure if the founding actually happened like LaVey describes in his *Satanic Bible* (1969). His theatrical personality can be seen throughout the *Satanic Bible*, as well as in descriptions of LaVey himself. The *Satanic Bible* and its companion *The Satanic Rituals* (1972) are actually written by LaVey's disciple Michael Aquino, who later broke with the Church of Satan to form the Temple of Set. In the *Satanic Bible* we mostly see LaVey's philosophy in a bible-like structure,

Satanism is not just devil worship, as some people think, but instead practices nonconformity, celebrates free will and the resistance to oppression. The Church of Satan is more of a religious philosophy that sees Satan as a symbol of liberty and individualism.

Similarities can be found in between the philosophy of the Church of Satan and in Lovecraft's mechanic materialistic view of the world. LaVey's Law of the Trapezoid, and his concept of the Powers of Darkness (manifestation of an all-inclusive force (Steadman 2015, 235), are similar to Lovecraft's quantum view of the universe (Steadman 2015, 224).

LaVey admired Lovecraft as a philosopher and even though he did not see Lovecraft as some sort of prophet, he said he started to speculate about a reality suggested by Lovecraft's fantasy. The result of this speculation can be found in *The Satanic Rituals* in these rituals: Ceremony of the Nine Angles; The Call to Cthulhu; and Die Elektrischen Vorspiele. In Die Elektrischen Vorspiele LaVey plays with Lovecraft's mechanic materialistic worldview and uses quantum electrodynamics to conduct the ritual. According to *The Satanic Rituals* the rite was intended to alter an existing social climate and establish far-reaching change (LaVey 1972, 108). In this rite the participants call onto the night-gaunts, another reference to Lovecraft as he was haunted by nightmares and called them night-gaunts.

The other two rituals can be found in *The Satanic Rituals* in the chapter "the Metaphysics of Lovecraft". In the ritual 'Ceremony of the Nine Angles' several Old Ones are being called on, including Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep and Shub-Niggurath. Again, a reference to the gaunts are made again, the same night-gaunts as before mentioned in Die Elektrischen Vorspiele. This ritual is an evocation ritual. In 'The Call to Cthulhu' the participants must assemble at night near a large body of water, during this ritual they evoke Cthulhu and a celebrant will assume the presence of Cthulhu. It must be emphasized that this is not a possession ritual but only an evocational one where the celebrant is not possessed by Cthulhu but rather assumes the presence of Cthulhu metaphorically. A reference to the Abyss is made in the ritual, and a reference to the Deep Ones as



mentioned in Lovecraft's *The Shadow over Innsmouth* (1936). In both rituals the Lovecraftian language of Aklo is used.

The Church of Satan engages with Lovecraft's world through rituals. LaVey states that within the Church of Satan fantasy is utilized as a magick weapon by the individual rather than by the system (Gonce III 2003, 113). Therefore, it is logical that the Church of Satan utilized Lovecraft's fictional Cthulhu Mythos into magickal rituals. Aquino stated that LaVey often used the incantation from *The Horror at Red Hook* at the beginning of ceremonies (Gonce III 2003, 111). The works of the Cthulhu Mythos they used are *The Horror at Red Hook*, *The Haunter of the Dark*, *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, *The Dreams in the Witch House*, *The Dunwich Horror*, *Nyarlahotep* and *The Call of Cthulhu*. In all these stories the Old Ones they evoke in their rituals appear: Nyarlathotep, Cthulhu, Shub Niggurath, Yog-Sothoth and Azathoth.

LaVey was a great fan of Lovecraft and saw in his work an esoteric philosophy and cosmology that could be used in the Church of Satan. Lovecraft is not seen as a prophet but as a philosopher and writer who created a workable magickal cosmology. The church of Satan legitimizes themselves by highlighting what they claimed was rational nature. The Church of Satan claims legitimacy in their use of Lovecraft through their statement that conventional religions are based on harnessing imagination, as they can do the same.

### 3.1.2 Temple of Set

The Temple of Set came out of The Church of Satan. Due to internal issues and ideological differences several members of the Church of Satan decided to leave and under the leadership of Michael Aquino, founded the Temple of Set in 1975. This new movement falls under the category of esoteric Satanism, in contrast to the philosophical Satanism of the Church of Satan (Petersen & Dyrendal 2012, 222). Satan made place for the Egyptian deity Set as the inspiring force behind Satan and human intelligence. The Temple of Set is devoted to personal development and is more esoteric than the Church of Satan. It places an emphasis on learning and experimenting with the occult tradition, whereby ritual performance is central, but it is mostly a personal affair with the goal of self-deification. The organization's teachings on magick written down in *Black Magick in Theory and Practice* (1992). The Temple also distinguishes between "lesser black magick," which aims to effect changes in the objective universe, and "greater black magick," which seeks to change the individual's subjective universe. Although there are no universally prescribed rituals for practicing this magick, *Black Magick in Theory and Practice* provides an example of one such ritual, and the Temple of Set has devised various ceremonies for specific occasions (Chryssides 2012, 340).

According to Aquino a new Aeon had begun, the Aeon of Set. In the Temple of Set the key word that was used to convey Setian philosophy, was the Egyptian verb Xeper (pronounced "Khefer"), meaning "I have come into being" (Urban 2015, 188). With the aim of the Temple of Set being self-deification and their Egyptian deity, it is only logical that they used the Egyptian verb Xeper at their core.

The Temple of Set engages with Lovecraft's world through their beliefs and rituals. While reading Lovecraft's works, Aquino became intrigued by Lovecraft's ability to evoke realistic terrors while distancing himself from them in his personal philosophy. He set out to express these tensions in a ritual form (Gonce III 2003, 111). Aquino wrote the whole section on Lovecraft in *Satanic Rituals* by Anton LaVey and said that he worked for two months to develop the 'nameless language', which he calls Yuggothic, of the *Ceremony of the Nine Angles* and the *Call to Cthulhu* (Aquino 2005, 90). He

saw his Yuggothic as being as flexible and useful in esoteric traditions as Enochian, the supposed language of the Angels and frequently used in esoteric traditions.

In one of the rituals he wrote 'Ceremony of the Nine Angles', a masked group evoke Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep and Shub Niggurath. When Shub Niggurath appears, he leads the participants through the enumeration of the powers and properties of the Nine Angles. The ritual 'Call to Cthulhu' summons the Old One Cthulhu, to whom the participants deliver a song of praise and a promise that he shall no longer return to the sunken city of R'lyeh (Gonce III 2003, 112).

### **3.1.3 Grant's Typhonian Order**

The Ordo Templi Orientis was founded in 1895 by occultist Karl Kellner but gained popularity when Aleister Crowley became the leader of the British branch in 1912. Crowley is the founder of Thelema, a magickal system which has at its core the slogan "Do what thou wilt."

The New Isis Lodge was originally a British lodge of the Ordo Templi Orientis. The New Isis Lodge was founded by Kenneth Grant in 1955, following the organizational chaos that fell unto the OTO after the death of Aleister Crowley in 1947. Grant renamed the New Isis Lodge as the Typhonian Ordo Templi Orientis in 1962. In the present the Typhonian OTO is simply known as the Typhonian Order.

The original name New Isis Lodge was chosen as the "New" in the name was a pun on "Nu," or "Nuit," a term borrowed from Egyptian mythology that symbolized absolute consciousness ("New Isis Lodge" 2011). Nu-Isis represents the unknowable concepts of nothingness and the shadow-matter dimension (Steadman 2015, 202). According to Grant, the magickian, by the use of certain practices, project himself, either in the Body of Light or via the avenue of dreams, into alternate dimensions; Grant refers to this experience metaphorically as projecting oneself through the sphere of Daath on the Tree of Life and into the Tunnels of Set on the other side of the Tree. The other side of the Tree, known as the Tree of Death, represents an antithetical Tree of Life, a reversal and intensification of the sephiroth (Steadman 2015, 202). In this assumption by Grant he uses a lot of concept from hermetic Qabalah. Daath, as mentioned before, represents ultimate knowledge. The sephiroth are the emanation of divine benevolent energy and the Tree of Life and of Death are the systems and paths used to explain the plains of existence.

Grant links most of Lovecraft's Old Ones with various Qliphotic entities (the antithesis of the Sephiroth, the evil forces of energy) on the Tree of Death (Steadman 2015, 203). The similarities between Lovecraft and Grant's view on the cosmos are clear: Lovecraft believed that the universe contains different types of energy, which is equivalent to Grant's view of phenomenal existence. Lovecraft saw sentient beings as existing in a localized state that is usually described as being in space and time, and Grant saw the human being as being invariably localized due to the fact that the human being inhabits a physical body which is attached to an actual mind. Both men reject immortality and the afterlife. Grant integrated another philosophy from Lovecraft into his theory: Lovecraft held that the human being can exist in the form of a disaggregated, alternate energy-state, which Grant channels in his view of the non-manifest to which he refers as Universe B (with Universe A being the phenomenal universe) (Steadman 2015, 213).

Grant uses the concept of Kala, magickal experiences associated with the Qliphotic entities, in his rituals and associates it with magickally charged sexual fluids, therefore putting a focus on the sexual aspects of the magickal experience (Steadman 2015, 208). His rituals contain mostly sex magick. In his book *Hecate's Fountain* (1992) Grant describes two rituals which allude to Lovecraft. The first is called the Rite of the Ku, Ku (an entity that resembles a combination of a snake,

centipede and frog) is evoked, which is reminiscent of the Deep Ones from Lovecraft's *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*. In his description of the ritual Grant says that the acolytes watching the priestess having an orgasm in a water tank thanks to Ku, channel the deep ones and their eyes become those of the batrachian minions of Cthulhu (1992, 18–19). Later Grant describes an invocation of Yog-Sothoth during the summer solstice (1992, 134). It is clear that Grant was heavily influenced by Lovecraft in his work. He mostly uses mechanic materialist philosophy in his works, philosophy instead of channeling his fictional works, therefore it can be stated that the actual Cthulhu Mythos had less impact on the Typhonian Order. Although it must be stated that Grant is more human-centric in his work and view, while Lovecraft is not.

Grant engages with Lovecraft's world through rituals. In his book *Hecate's Fountain* (1992) Grant describes two rituals which allude to Lovecraft. The first is called the Rite of the Ku, Ku (an entity that resembles a combination of a snake, centipede and frog) is evoked, which is reminiscent of the Deep Ones from Lovecraft's *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*. In his description of the ritual Grant says that the acolytes watching the priestess having an orgasm in a water tank thanks to Ku, channel the deep ones and their eyes become those of the batrachian minions of Cthulhu (1992, 18–19). Later Grant describes an invocation of Yog-Sothoth during the summer solstice (1992, 134). However, it becomes clear that Grant mostly uses Lovecraft's world symbolically. He uses Lovecraft's. Grant does believe that Lovecraft's world exists on a spiritual plane, as is evident when he says that the infamous Necronomicon exist but in the Akashic records, which is in esoteric tradition a compendium of every event, thought, intent, action that has ever has or ever will occur.

Grant was heavily influenced by Lovecraft in his work. In his *Typhonian Trilogies* he suggests that, by allowing the Old Ones to ingress into the human consciousness, humanity can reclaim its extraterrestrial evolutionary heritage and attain cosmic consciousness in doing so (Woodman 2004, 19).

Grant did not see Lovecraft as a secret initiate but rather as someone having unknowingly tapped into a magickal current, the same one as Crowley tapped consciously into. He saw Lovecraft as a natural adept with the ability to travel astrally in dreams and traverse the Spheres of the Qaballistic universe (Gonce III 2003, 109).

Grant claims legitimacy in his use of Lovecraft through the so-called "Lovecraft /Crowley Axis". During the 1950's Grant claimed to be in contact with extra-terrestrial forces which he came to identify with Lovecraft's Old Ones and his subsequent exegesis of Crowley's writings led Grant to suppose that they contained a system for communing with these very same forces (Woodman 2004, 18). This realization led him to the axis. Aleister Crowley is the founder of Thelema, a religious tradition with "Do What Thou Wilt" as their core tenet, and the third grand master of the OTO. The strong link that now exists in the popular occultist imagination between Lovecraft and Aleister Crowley has been coined by Grant when he saw comparisons between Crowley and Lovecraft. He incorporated a lot of Lovecraftian elements mixed with Crowley's teachings into his Typhonian Ordo Templi Orientis as he believed Crowley and Lovecraft stumbled onto the same truth (Hanegraaff 2007, 101).

### **3.2 Individual magickians who practice Lovecraftian magick**

After adaptations of Lovecraftian magick into existing religious frameworks come the individual practitioners. They practice magick by themselves and as they see fit, this is exceptionally true for the magickians that will be discussed within this category. Lovecraftian magick is usually practiced within the paradigm of Chaos magick, as this magick borrows from all magickal systems, as well as

those which exist in popular culture, as long as it works. When researching this category, it is evident that Lovecraftian magickians sprung from chaos magickians but are more serious in their application of Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos.

### **3.2.1 The Chaos Magickian and Lovecraft**

Chaos magickians use different magickal and religious systems to obtain their desired goal. Chaos magickians are a left-hand path magickal tradition which can be traced back to the 1970s in England. All chaos magickians are automatically left-hand path magickians, or practice the so-called Black Magicks, as their goals are focused on the individual performing the magick. Theory and practice of black magick is rooted in the Dionysian principle: Dionysian personifies the mysterious, irrational, and chaotic aspects of the universe. In its highest metaphysical development, the Dionysian can be equated with the concept of the Void, the Emptiness (Steadman 2015, 4). The black or Dionysian magickian establishes contact with extraterrestrial entities primarily to gain knowledge of different beings and alternative levels of existence. In effect, the black magickian attempts to subordinate the self to the noumenal realms and by doing so, align himself more completely with the entities that inhabit these realms. This is typical what we see within the Cthulhu Mythos (Steadman 2015, 5). Contemporary black magickal systems also instruct their practitioners to subordinate the self to their dark gods and goddesses in order to achieve knowledge (Steadman 2015, 6).

Another difference is the black magickian's emphasis on gaining magickal power, which can be generated for the purposes of promoting health, wellbeing, and longevity, but it can also be used for more mundane reasons, like attracting a lover, finding a job, or ridding oneself of an enemy. These concerns are considered "low magick", by high-minded white magickians, which are typically associated with "evil", because its main focus is self-gain instead of a higher purpose (Steadman 2015, 8).

Chaos magick draws heavily on the work of Austin Osman Spare, which is seen as the grandfather of Chaos Magick. Spare advocated the idea that ritual magick should be more free-form, and in favor of more psychically orientated practices. According to him, the conscious belief and desire were weak compared to their unconscious counterparts, so he sought to manipulate and find a way to program the unconscious. Sigils (monogram-like forms that contain verbal ideas), the concepts of Kia and Zos, and his psychically orientated practices into which he tried to manipulate and program his unconscious (gnosis or trance-magick) are heavily drawn upon in Chaos magick.

Chaos magick was founded in the 1970s, which was a time where Thelema and Wicca dominated the occult sphere. Some magickians expressed their wish to not be confined by one magickal tradition but to use different elements or different magickal traditions to gain their desired result. British occultists Peter J. Carroll and Ray Sherwin, who were members of a loose collective of occultists in London known as the Stoke Newington Sorcerers, are seen as the founders of Chaos Magick. In 1978 they decided to establish a nonhierarchical order called the Pact of the Illuminates of Thanateros (Drury 2011, 251). Chaos magick is referred to as the punk rock of modern occultism as it was dismissive of conventional tradition and belief. Chaos Magick combined Austin Osman Spare's system of sigil magick with Crowleyan individualism, and added a strong dose of Taoism, anarchic humor, and chaos theory into the mix (Drury 2011, 250). The key principles of Chaos magick, were at the beginning that nothing is permanent and that there are no absolute claims to truth. The guiding paradigm of Chaos Magick soon emerged as a motto: "Nothing is true, everything is permitted—provided it interferes with no-one" (Drury 2011, 252).

Despite the diversity in magickal practices, however, most chaos magickians share similar views of the universe, recognizing all forms of energy and all types of matter behave in terms of probability waves rather than as particles in a patterned space-time continuum (Steadman 2015, 243). Due to this shared view, chaos magickians see their magickal system as being compatible with chaos theory.

Peter Carroll, one of the most prominent Chaos magickians, wrote in his book *Liber Kaos* (1992) an invocation rite to the god Azathoth, one of the Old Ones in Lovecraft Mythos. Even though this being has the same name as the Old One in Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, Carroll's interpretation of this deity with the same name differs. Carroll tends to see Azathoth as part of the broader context of Western black magick; as an entity that has been intentionally created by black magickians for some specific purpose, and associated with the emergence of sentience from the primeval slime and the quest of sentience to reach for the stars (Steadman 2015, 261). As can be seen from this description, Carroll's Azathoth differs immensely from Lovecraft's nightmarish Azathoth, also known as the blind idiot god or the daemon sultan. In Carroll's ritual the magickian uses Uranian, Solar or Jupitorean incense to perfume the temple, he uses fresh blood to anoint the material basis. For the evocation the magickian vibrates the name Azathoth nine times, and then the barbarous names: AZAK GRIFE DAGARASH AZATHOTH (Steadman 2015, 262). In this evocation ritual you can see that Lovecraft is only used in the language, the rest of the ritual is more like other black magickal tradition. Chaos magickians are known to use words of power, which in effect are nonsense syllables. By using these words of power, the magickians 'trick' their conscious mind into losing track of the ritual, and magickal power is activated at the level below conscious awareness (Steadman 2015, 261). Therefore, in these words of power, we can often see a thematic Lovecraftian language in their rituals.

One of the other most influential chaos magickians is Phil Hine, author of *Pseudonomicon* (2004) and various essays on Chaos magick and Lovecraftian magick. Hine draws inspiration from figures like H.P Lovecraft, Crowley, and Burroughs etc. Phil Hine considers Lovecraftian magick uncharted magickal territory allowing for high levels of personal innovation. In his book *Pseudonomicon* (2004) on Lovecraftian magick he tries to escape Western ideas of magick, and the book contains no prescribed rites, as he finds that experiences on the Cthulhu Mythos are personal (Wisdom Gonce III 2003, 119).

*The Pseudonomicon* (2004) begins with a disclaimer warning magickians that working with the Cthulhu Mythos is dangerous due to the high risk of obsession and that Hine has decided to release this material because before the throne of Azathoth, questions who is sane and not have become inconsequential (2004, 3). In his introduction he claims that this book is a series of personal postcards into Lovecraft's mythos. He starts with explaining how and when he heard the call of Cthulhu, a feeling of the inrush of eternity, of realizing the world is a threatening place. Hine sees Lovecraftian magick as being elemental, having an immediate presence and as resonating with buried fears, longings, aspirations and dreams (2004, 13). He sees the attraction of Cthulhu magick as being attributed to its mystery and danger. Through the Cthulhu Mythos one can become self-sufficient as the magickian does not depend on other people's view and judgement (2004, 19). He describes the process of integration with our so-called Monstrous Souls, this has three stages: Fear the Beast, Feel the Beast and Feed the Beast. In essence this akin to entering atavistic states of awareness in order to integrate them within the psyche (2004, 19). He does not speak of rituals but rather of events as he sees this is a more appropriate term when dealing with the Old Ones. The book mostly contains rites or 'events' on dream control, the power of words, shape-shifting, emotional engineering, sexual magick. He later goes on to describe the Old Ones from Lovecraft's

Cthulhu Mythos as how he sees them. In Hine's book it is noticeable that he does not give exact rituals on how to gain contact with these Old Ones but rather gives us basic descriptions of his beliefs and not so much his experiences in working with this Cthulhu magick.

Chaos magickians engage with Lovecraft's world in various ways. As Chaos magick is a system of pick and choose at your own behest, it differs how many chaos magickians actively engage with Lovecraft's world. The most important for chaos magickians is to use a system that works for them, it can be an existing esoteric tradition, but it can be a fictional mythos, like the Cthulhu Mythos, as well. This investment of belief into a fictional or self-invented cosmology, like Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, is in order to undermine the culturally intended categorical distinctions which separate the 'real' from the 'unreal'. The popularity of the Cthulhu Mythos amongst Chaos magickians is a consequence of its promotion as a workable magickal paradigm by the influential chaos magickian Phil Hine (Woodman 2004, 20). Phil Hine provides readers with that paradigm in his book *Pseudonomicon*. It is not surprising that Lovecraft's world is used in chaos magick as it does lend itself for chaos magick, as at its core it is a world of chaos. Lovecraft's pantheon of the Old Ones embodies chaos itself.

Phil Hine, one of the most prominent chaos magickians, said that he likes to work with the Cthulhu Mythos as created by Lovecraft, as the old Ones are outside most human mythologies, reflecting the other groups of universe-builders who are thought to be too chaotic for the polite company of the gods of the ordered universe (1995, 142). He sees the Old Ones as having a very primal nature, which for him provides the emotional buffer for magickal exploration (1995, 143). He says that the Chaos magickian does not have to believe in the Old Ones to engage with them through rituals. The chaos magickian only must believe in them during the ritual to obtain their magickal goal. Hine claims that encounters with such forces of unreason are fundamental to the emancipatory project of magick: to stand in the presence of the Old Ones is, to embrace madness as a radical metamorphosis of awareness and become transformed by the experience (Woodman 2004, 26).

It is unclear if chaos magickians view Lovecraft as a prophet. As the chaos magickians engage only with Lovecraft's world during rituals, it would make sense that they only view him as a gifted author whose world lends itself for magickal use. However, some chaos magickians are part of a new movement and can be seen as Lovecraftian magickians. These Lovecraftian magickians are, usually, chaos magickians who use Lovecraft's works, but engage with this world as if it was real and view it as such. They believe in this world and its inhabitants as being real. They link their usage of Lovecraft's world to legitimacy through the 'success' of their rituals

### **3.2.2 Lovecraftian Magickians: From the Simonomicon to R'lyehian Spirituality**

Since the 1970s various magickians have put their own spin on Lovecraftian magick. Lovecraftian magick is here defined as *magick that has Lovecraftian elements at its core*. It therefore differs from chaos magick, who integrate various Lovecraftian elements into their rituals and belief system, but do not use Lovecraftian elements, like language, cosmology, pantheon, eschatology etc., as their starting point. Lovecraftian magickians do use these elements as their starting points.

The most famous Lovecraftian magickian of all time is probably the mysterious Simon, the author of the *Necronomicon* (1980). Since the 1970s Lovecraft's popularity increased enormously and a plague of *Necronomicon*'s was born. According to John Wisdom Gonce III the Simon *Necronomicon* was the only *Necronomicon* that magickal practitioners unanimously agreed on to be of any use (2003, 127). This is due to the fact that it uses enough principles from real magick systems

to be found useful by some (2003, 131). The Simon Necronomicon was actually thought of by a group of friends who gathered at the Magickal Childe Bookshop, and the author Simon is thought to be a composite for two or more authors (Gonce III 2003, 132). One of these authors is suspected to be Peter Levenda, whose work on the Simon Necronomicon was known and whose autograph matches that of Simon at the end of the manuscript for a promotional article written in 1977 (Gonce III 2003, 132).

The name of the book comes from the fictional grimoire by the same name that Lovecraft wrote about. In Lovecraft's fiction the book is a grimoire, written by the so-called Mad Arab Abdul Alhazred, which contains information about the Old Ones, their history and how to summon them. In *History of the Necronomicon (1938)* Lovecraft wrote a pseudo-history on the famous grimoire. According to him this grimoire was originally titled *Al Azif*, *azif* being the word used by Arabs to designate that nocturnal sound (made by insects) supposed to be the howling of daemons (Lovecraft 1938, 1). In this pseudo-history the Mad Arab is described as a worshipper of the Old Ones, specifically of Yog-Sothoth and Cthulhu. He disappeared or died, Lovecraft leaves the ambiguous, in 738 C.E. although Lovecraft does give us one fictional account of what happened to him: it is said that he has been seized by an invisible monster in broad daylight and devoured horribly before a large number of fright-frozen witnesses (Lovecraft 2011, 621). Lovecraft provides us with a timeline of what happened to the Necronomicon after the disappearance of the Mad Arab, and according to this pseudo-history the grimoire bounced around throughout history before finding itself in the hands of the famous esotericist Doctor Dee (the founder of Enochian magick). According to Lovecraft copies of the famous grimoire are under lock and key at various prominent universities and museums. Lovecraft gave himself the Arabic name of Abdul Alhazred in his youth. Lovecraft himself says in one of his many letters that he cannot recall how he came to the name Abdul Alhazred (Gonce III 2003, 88). This can be interpreted by the occultist as another way of giving (religious) authority to Lovecraft, as a prophet. Lovecraft however saw himself as an atheist.

The Simon Necronomicon differs a bit from this pseudo-history by Lovecraft, according to Simon's "Testimony of the Mad Arab" the Mad Arab was a man who stumbled upon a ritual of a cult summoning one of the Old Ones and was so deeply disturbed and terrified by what he had witnessed, that he went on a quest of studying and understanding magick to understand what had happened that faithful night and to protect himself from it. He becomes haunted by visions of his own death and the realization that the Old Ones are not pleased with him for revealing their existence. Throughout the Simon Necronomicon the Mad Arab calls upon the reader to worship the Elder Ones (the benevolent gods countering the dreadful malevolent Old Ones) and provides rituals and rites for invoking and encountering or traveling to these Elder Ones. Throughout the book sigils, the Lovecraftian language of Aklo, texts and warnings are provided to perform these rituals correctly. The Simon Necronomicon has two sequels: *Necronomicon Spellbook (1998)* and *The Gates of the Necronomicon (2006)*. These two books are companions of the original Simon Necronomicon. In *The Gates of the Necronomicon*, Simon goes further into the gates one must walk through to reach ascension. The *Necronomicon Spellbook* is, as the name suggests, a Spellbook but its focus is not only on invocations or protection from these Old Ones, but on spells for mundane things like finding love or gaining wealth as well. Simon wrote one other book as well, *Dead Names: The Dark History of the Necronomicon (2006)*. In this book he provides us with a chronology for the Simon Necronomicon and explains how he acquired the book. In the Simon Necronomicon he already provides us with an introduction on Lovecraft, the Cthulhu Mythos, Aleister Crowley, Sumerian mythology and everything he deems necessary to understand the Necronomicon, as well as a short chronology of the Necronomicon. In his introduction he makes it very clear that he only is the editor of this book, not the writer, he claims that this is the original grimoire Lovecraft wrote about.

Another Lovecraftian magickian is Scott R Jones, author of *When the Stars are Right: Towards an Authentic R'lyehian Spirituality* (2014). In this book he introduces the reader to what he calls R'lyehian spirituality, rather than Lovecraftian, as he does not provide Lovecraft with as big a role as other Lovecraftian magickians ascribe to him. Lot of adherents of some sort of Lovecraftian magick see Lovecraft as some sort of prophet who was able to cross the Abyss and travel to the Old Ones in his dreams but was too scared to do so in his waking hours. Jones sees this differently, he sees Lovecraft as being right enough about matters concerning the Old Ones but says that one must see the truth behind the Cthulhu Mythos (2014, 14). According to him Lovecraft's creative access to deeper truths must be acknowledged but that R'lyehian spirituality at the same time must not be limited to Lovecraft's interpretations of these truths (2014, 14). R'lyehian spirituality is seen by Jones as a way to transcend the limitations of the material and reach clarity through horror and fear (2014, 60). When having achieved this, the person is in a state of Black Gnosis: the paradoxal knowing of the Unknown, which can be compared to Plato's cave theory: We only see shadows of the flames but by breaking free of our shackles we can turn around and see the real flames instead of just the shadows of them on the wall, it is the same with the True Knowledge. In his book we can see clear influences of Buddhism in his R'lyehian spirituality: he refers to Buddhism multiple times including a reference to the Chöd ritual in Tibetan Buddhism in which the body is dismembered by demons as a way not to identify with the physical (2014, 60); and we can see these influences in his Cthulhusattva Vow where he combines the Buddhist term of Bodhisattva with Cthulhu to make it clear that he will lead them to enlightenment. In a way R'lyehian spirituality is just a perverted way of reaching enlightenment, and in the case of this spirituality enlightenment is True Knowledge. Jones provides us with a way, which can only be inspired by Lovecraft himself, to reach the sunken city of R'lyeh: through dreams. He says that all of us can reach R'lyeh and a lot of us have: when you are startled out of a deep sleep, all panicked and you do not know why, he says it is because you have just ingested a particle of R'lyehian atmosphere (2014, 63). He also provides us with the information that for the practitioner of R'lyehian spirituality sex is not done for the pursuit of pleasure but for the pursuit of Black Gnosis. Black gnosis has as an attribute the lust for connection and knowledge and experience that typifies the R'lyehian worldview, and that you must see it as the cultivation of your personal tantra of the strange (2014, 105). In his book Jones also refers specifically to a couple of the Old Ones in his chapter: Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, Shub-Niggurath, Dagon and Cthulhu. It becomes quickly clear that R'lyehian spirituality is Lovecraftian by heart but not by name.

Michael Bertiaux, a voodoo-practitioner and another major figure in Lovecraftian magick, began corresponding with Grant and later established a Lovecraftian Coven, which sought to unite the aquatic energy brought with the Deep Ones in *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, with that of the half-human creatures from *The Dunwich Horror*. This coven carried out a set of rituals using the powers of Lovecraft, including aquatic rites –of a disturbingly sexual nature– near a lake in Wisconsin, where August Derleth (a pupil of Lovecraft) claimed Mythos beings dwelt (Gonce III 2003, 114). The name of the coven is not given.

Lovecraftian magickians, have as the name suggest, Lovecraft at their basis. It is therefore logical that the engage with Lovecraft's world as being real. The engage with this world through rituals, beliefs, and through dreams. The dream techniques they use are specifically for entering Lovecraft's world of the Old Ones. Trance-induced states and dream explorations of Lovecraft's world have become conventionalized in a way as every group who engages with Lovecraft's world sees this as the way to explore this world. The Lovecraftian magickians evoke the Old Ones to gain knowledge, cross the Abyss and bestow unto them powers. In their eyes the Old Ones are not evil, they are merely indifferent to humanity. Lovecraftian magickians see these Old ones as a way to



achieve True Knowledge and strive to obtain this knowledge. They view Lovecraft's world as true and legitimize their use of Lovecraft's world through their 'supposed' successful rituals of getting into contact with these Old Ones and by alluding to certain esoteric traditions that can be found in Lovecraft's work. Through these links between Lovecraft and existing esoteric traditions, like Thelema, Wicca, Sumerian religion and Qabalah for instance, they try to claim legitimacy. Lovecraftian magickians are known for engaging with all the works of the Cthulhu Mythos and mixing them with other esoteric traditions.

The view on Lovecraft differs between the practitioners. Some see him as a prophet who unearthed an esoteric mystery, others like Scott R Jones for instance, do not see Lovecraft as a prophet. Jones acknowledges Lovecraft's creative access to deeper truths and as him being 'right enough', but that the R'lyehian magickian should not become tied down by his limited interpretations of those deeper truths. According to him the R'lyehian should separate Lovecraft from the Cthulhu Mythos, and look beyond the creator of this Mythos.

In *When the Stars are Right: Towards an authentic R'lyehian Spirituality* Jones addresses five Old Ones specifically: Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, Shub Niggurath, Dagon and Cthulhu. He says that "to know the Old Ones is to have the truth of our existence demonstrated constantly" (2014, 21). With this statement he refers to the indifference of humanity and our actions in the light of the vast indifferent universe that we live in. This statement is typical for Lovecraftian magickians, for them the Old Ones are real and through them humanity will abandon their moral codes as they will realize that it does not matter. In a way this is seen by the Lovecraftian magickians as part of the True Knowledge.

### **3.3 Cthulhu Cults**

The last category of Cthulhu Cults is the one where the application of Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos is very evident. The Cthulhu Cults use Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos as their basis of their groups. The Cthulhu Cults are, just like the individual Lovecraftian magickians, an offshoot of chaos magickians. They use whatever bits of magick they find useful and apply them in their practices. However, with the Cthulhu Cults we can speak of a more coherent magickal system, as the group members share the same beliefs and rituals. When looking at all three categories in order, we can argue that the Cthulhu Cults, coherent magickal systems with fixed memberships, are the last step in the evolution of Lovecraftian magick, and in the more general field of fiction-based religions as well.

#### **3.3.1 Haunters of the Dark: Invoking the Old Ones**

Unfortunately, Lovecraftian groups are not always as easily found or known. One Lovecraftian group that uses Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos as their basis is Haunters of the Dark. All information we have on this group comes from the anthropological scholar Justin Woodman.

Haunters of the Dark is one of the so-called Cthulhu Cults we will discuss. They had eight male members in September 1999 (Justin Woodman included) : two students in their late-thirties , a civil servant in his forties, an internet researcher in his late-twenties, an administrative assistant in his late-thirties, a psychology graduate in his mid-twenties who worked in an occult bookshop, and a freelance writer & internet researcher in his early thirties. From October 1999 the Haunters of the Dark met on a twice-monthly basis in various London pubs. The meetings were largely preparatory discussions, which enabled the group not only to determine aims and objectives, but also to evolve itself as a largely informal body without a visible hierarchy or structure (Woodman 2004, 20-21). The

demographic of the group is all male but has various ages. All members are of legal age to participate in such an order and are at least 25, this indicates that the members of the group are not young impressionable adolescents but adults who take this order seriously.

The Haunters of the Dark are a London-based group of Chaos magickians who sought to utilize Lovecraft's fictions as the means of acclimating themselves to a modernity increasingly and normatively experienced as "Lovecraftian" (Woodman 2016, 9). They perform possession rituals by which the members sought to be possessed by one of Lovecraft's Great Old ones, and when this possession occurs, the non-possessed members ask the possessed member, or in fact one of Lovecraft's deities, question about how they can best serve the deity (Woodman 2016, 10). They started these possession rituals in 2000 with one-month intervals, with the first ritual being held in February (Woodman 2004, 21). Their possession rituals had at their core trance-facilitating techniques, and while they used a basic format of questioning and answering, the ritual formed a volatile, unstructured and negotiable space (Woodman 2004, 23).

They call this Cthulhu gnosis. One member of the Haunters of the Dark described his initial experiences of Cthulhu gnosis as "a growing awareness of humans as tiny insignificant ants scuttling around on the way to employment hives with no awareness of the horrors all around them" (Woodman 2016, 10). For the members of the Haunters of the Dark, this Cthulhu gnosis reminds them of the cosmic indifference in this universe, an indifference that is emphasized in Lovecraft's work: we are not alone in this universe. The members claim that by practicing this Cthulhu gnosis, they can identify with these Great Old Ones and spiritually transform themselves into one of them. An example of this comes from one of its members Rob, during Cthulhu gnosis he would imaginably transform himself into and seek self-identification with one of the "Deep Ones. He found his state of non-human consciousness relaxing and comforting. He gives us an explanation for this relaxation through self-transitioning: To become a part of the lurking evil myself and it will pass by" (Woodman 2016, 11). Cthulhu gnosis was commonly utilized by members of the Haunters of the Dark for managing the urbanized alienation of their workaday world. This was often explicitly construed in the reification of late modernity's urban landscape as a monstrously occult terrain, populated by anomalous zones interpenetrative with the Lovecraftian Outside (Woodman 2016, 12).

The Haunters of the Dark participate in exploring the Lovecraftian psychogeography of Central London. According to Kenneth Grant, disciple of Aleister Crowley, claimed that Centre Point in London was the physical manifestation of the "Portals of Inbetweenness"; the thresholds to the chaotic alien and zones of Non-Being that are inhabited by the Great Old Ones from Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos (Woodman 2016, 12). When looking at this statement, we can hypothesize that Grant meant that Yog-Sothoth lies at Centre point in London. One member of the Haunters of the Dark saw the entrance to Tottenham Court Road underground station, which lay directly beneath Centre Point, as a gateway to interdimensional realms (Woodman 2016, 13).

The Haunters of the Dark saw themselves as preparing a psychic conduit through which the Old Ones could enter our world. According to one of the members, this would precipitate an apocalypse of consciousness. The group held that this apocalypse would force humankind to abandon its petty moral, ethnic, religious and national differences, and make the evolutionary quantum leap into an extraterrestrial mode of existence (Woodman 2004, 24). Through this aim we can see that the Haunters of the Dark wanted humanity to accept that we are not alone in the universe and should not act like it.

The Haunters of the Dark did not seek to worship these Old Ones, as one might think from their rituals, but rather sought identification with them as avatars of a 'post-human' metamorphosis

(Woodman 2004, 24). As mentioned before, the members of the Haunters of the Dark used meditation and their Cthulhu gnosis to spiritually transform themselves in these beings and by doing so, experiencing a new state of non-human consciousness. Their identification with the Old Ones reframes the resurgence of these entities as an apocalypse of consciousness. For them, the Old Ones formed a type of social diagnostics by which the ambivalence, disorderliness, ruptures, and uncertainties of late modern 'risk society' were made transparent to experience and strategically managed. In other words, they see this Cthulhu gnosis as a way to escape their society and experience something completely different. Part of the attraction of the Cthulhu Mythos lies in a compatibility between the practitioners' use of postmodern science and Lovecraft's own twisted materialism in which scientific progress returns us to the atavistic abyss (Woodman 2004, 36). This abyss is again linked with the abyss in Qabalah, which was explained before. This abyss is also called Ain Soph Aur in Qabalah: the realm of nothingness that exists outside the known universe (Steadman 2015, 4)

The Haunters of the Dark engage with Lovecraft's world through rituals. They see Lovecraft's world as real and try to encounter these Old Ones through possession and evocation rituals. They do not specifically refer to works of the Cthulhu Mythos; however, they do specifically refer to Lovecraft's pantheon. They refer to several Old Ones and try to reach them through these possession rituals. The Old Ones they try to summon are Nyarlathotep, an entity described by Lovecraft as the "Black Man" of the witch-cult, he is often depicted as being an intermediary between humanity and the Old Ones, and therefore it is logical that the Haunters of the Dark have chosen Nyarlathotep as one of the Old Ones to contact. Nyarlathotep was the first Old One the group tried to get into contact with. One of the other Old Ones the group tried to summon was Shub Niggurath, also known as the "Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young", and is sometimes depicted as an amorphous, protoplasmic cloud. With their fourth possession ritual, the group decided to evoke Shub Niggurath, and through hyperventilation as a way of reaching a trance state, one of the group members called Damien was supposedly possessed by Shub Niggurath. Other Old Ones they invoke are Yog-Sothoth, seen as the gate between the Old Ones and humanity; Azathoth, known as the daemon sultan; and Dagon, the Deep one.

The Haunters of the Dark even go beyond Lovecraft's pantheon of the Old Ones and add to this pantheon. Through possession rituals several more Lovecraftian entities reveal themselves (for example Uranakai, Lazul, and Orzaz) and the HoD sees themselves as a post-Lovecraftian group because of this. Lovecraft may have introduced them to the Old Ones, but the HoD has gone beyond Lovecraft's knowledge of this otherworld and during their rituals encountered new entities that inhabit Lovecraft's world. The HoD even goes as far as that they saw themselves as preparing a psychic conduit through which the Old Ones could enter our world (Woodman 2004, 24).

Whereas Lovecraft saw these Old Ones as nightmarish monsters who would end the world and humanity with it, the HoD saw them as precipitating an apocalypse of consciousness. The HoD saw this apocalypse as a way to force humanity to abandon their moral, ethnic, religious and national differences and make the evolutionary quantum leap into an extra-terrestrial mode of existence (Woodman 2004, 24). In a way this apocalypse of consciousness and the ending of humanity are not that far apart, as they both would end humanity as we know it now, just not in a literal way.

The HoD seeks identification, and in a way hybridization, with the Old Ones as a way of a post-human metamorphosis. In *the Shadow Over Innsmouth* Lovecraft describes this hybridization. The Deep Ones mate with humans and their offspring slowly turns into a Deep One. In a shapeshifting ritual the HoD conducted, they sought to encompass the transformative effect of

hybridity by assuming the mantle of Deep One consciousness and identity (Woodman 2004, 25). The HoD sees the evocation of horror as a way to induce an experience of the sacred. The HoD uses the Lovecraftian language of Aklo, in combination with noises, speaking in tongues and other barbarous names in their rituals. Through their believed success of the evocation and possession rituals they provide legitimacy to Lovecraft's world.

### 3.3.2 Esoteric Order of Dagon: Bringing the Cult to Life

The Esoteric Order of Dagon is a Western esoteric order which was founded in 1981 by "Randolph Carter". Randolph Carter is the name of a fictional character from Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, and is thought to represent Lovecraft himself in these stories. Just like Lovecraft, he is an unpopular author and plagued by visions and dreams of horrific monsters and a terrifying parallel universe where these monsters' dwell. Lovecraft himself also suffered from nightmares about these monsters and universe. The five stories in which Randolph Carter appear are: *The Statement of Randolph Carter* (1919), *The Unnamable* (1923), *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1926), *The Silver Key* (1926), and *Through the Gates of the Silver Key* (1934). The Esoteric Order of Dagon themselves see Randolph Carter as having assumed an independent existence during and after Lovecraft's life, a created being called a thoughtform. For many years Randolph Carter waited in the parallel world that men and women of this world can sometimes visit in dreams for someone to discover the clues to the Mythos that Lovecraft had unconsciously revealed in his stories (Esoteric Order of Dagon EOD, 2010). The real name of the founder "Randolph Carter" is Paul Remi Prevost, who is also the current director, or Grand Master, and who now goes under a new pseudonym of Obed Marsh. He is also known under the name of Steven Greenwood. Even though he mostly goes by his pseudonym(s), he signs his real name in *An Introduction to the Esoteric Order of Dagon* (2008). The Esoteric Order of Dagon, which I will henceforth reference to as the EOD, describes themselves as serious occult order which has been working with Lovecraftian magick for nearly thirty years. The EOD utilizes the Cthulhu Mythos as a magickal method of exploring the Collective Unconscious. The order claims descent from the traditions of the Sirius mystery cults of ancient Egypt and Sumer. Other influences include Kenneth Grant (Esoteric Order of Dagon EOD, 2010).

The name Esoteric Order of Dagon comes from *The Shadow over Innsmouth* (1936). This novel focuses on an unnamed narrator, who comes to the town of Innsmouth to investigate for the American government. He quickly encounters the Esoteric Order of Dagon, the narrative religion in this novel. This order has a deal with the Deep Ones, humanoid fish-like creatures, for wealth and fish. In return they must breed with the Deep Ones and the offspring that is born from this will slowly turn into a Deep One. After the transformation in their adulthood is complete, the transformed person goes to live with the Deep Ones in their underwater cities for eternity. These Deep Ones are feared and worshipped by most of the townspeople, who are, mostly, also members of the Esoteric Order of Dagon. The name of Dagon comes from another H.P Lovecraft literary work *Dagon* (1919), where a Deep One is the antagonist. In this novel the antagonist, and the leader of this order, goes by the name of Obed Marsh. It is therefore not surprising that the current director has chosen to change his pseudonym to Obed Marsh, the name of the cult's leader in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*. As members take on a new name with each new degree they obtain, this new name is usually obtained through a dream or otherwise chosen by them after deep consideration to reflect their True Will (P. Prevost, personal communications, June 6, 2018).

The members of the EOD mostly meet online as they are separated geographically across continents. It is unclear how many members the EOD has. The history of the EOD has been eventful, to say at least. After its founding in 1981, multiple lodges adhering to the (main) Grand R'lyeh Lodge.

In 1991, the Order's Yaddith Lodge announced that the EOD was entering a Period of Silence, with only the three top members, Paul Remi Prevost, Nina Crummett and Peter Smith (which are likely also pseudonyms), remaining active. The Period of Silence ended on 20 March 1997 with an announcement by a Father Bokrug XIII of the opening of a new lodge (Wisdom Gonce III 2003, 116). However, when looking at the official site of the EOD, they claim the Period of Silence ended on 20 March 2007, with the appointment of Paul Remi Prevost as Grand Master. It can be hypothesized that this re-emergence is done for publicity, or that this new date has a more significant astronomical meaning, although both dates are on a Vernal Equinox.

The EOD claims legitimacy by claiming descent from the Sirius Mystery cults of ancient Egypt and Sumer. Through linking themselves historically to these cults, they hope to gain authority through this link and legitimize their order. The EOD themselves say this about their beliefs: "Though the initiates of the Esoteric Order of Dagon do not believe in the absolute existence of the deities which are portrayed in the Cthulhu Mythos, they find the iconography of Lovecraft's work to be a useful paradigm for gaining access to deeper, non-rational areas of the subconscious. The oneiric origin of Lovecraft's stories is of crucial importance here, in pointing the way of access to parts of the human mind which are identified with alien and (literally) nameless horrors in his fiction (Prevost 2008, 6)."

A lot of the beliefs the EOD refer to come from *The Sirius Mystery* (Temple, 1976) and the Oannes mythology. The Sirius Mystery is a pseudoarcheology book that hypothesizes that the ethnic group of the Dogon people of Mali have been in contact with extraterrestrial beings from the Sirius star system throughout history. The Sirius Mystery has some influences that can be traced back to the Oannes mythology. The Oannes mythology is about the being Oannes from Mesopotamian mythology, who is an amphibious being who taught mankind wisdom. Oannes had the form of a fish but with the form of a man underneath that fishy exterior. It was said that in daytime he came up to the seashore of the Persian Gulf and instructed mankind in writing, art and science (Encyclopaedia Britannica, Oannes). The EOD not only takes a lot of influences from other occult and esoteric orders, but from hermetic Qabalah as well. The EOD believes that the Cthulhu Mythos is compatible with certain elements from Qabalah. The EOD's aim is to use Lovecraftian magick is to open "the Gate of Yog-Sothoth" (referred to in Lovecraft's "The Dunwich Horror") and descend "into the Abyss of Daath" to gain access to True esoteric knowledge. This Abyss can be reached through dreams and meditation. The EOD see Lovecraft as a prophet whose nightmares were actually visions of this parallel universe where the Old Ones dwell. They believe that while Lovecraft never explored these visions in his waking hours, he walked through the gate to this parallel universe in his dreams, and that practitioners of Lovecraftian magick can cross this same gate into the Abyss to gain ultimate knowledge. While Lovecraft himself feared this abyss, occultists compare this Abyss to the Abyss found in the Jewish mystical tradition Kabbalah. In this tradition the Abyss is filled with evil entities as well. (Hermetic library, Daath and the Abyss). The belief here is that by crossing the Abyss, the believer is stripped from the physical world and "much of what we perceive about the world and other people is an illusion created by the machinery of perception; strip away the trick and the illusion becomes Daath (meaning ultimate knowledge), and a yawning abyss opens up where one is conscious less of what one knows than of what one does not." (Hermetic library, Daath and the Abyss).

Little is known about the rituals conducted by members of the EOD, except for the fact that creativity plays a huge part in it. Rituals are conducted individually due to the large geographical distance between members. The EOD says to exist of researchers exploring the connections between the hidden mysteries concealed in Lovecraft's fiction and discovering the convergence of

the esoteric traditions alluded to in various Lovecraft Stories. The EOD utilizes the Cthulhu Mythos as a magickal method of exploring the Cosmic via the Collective Unconscious (Prevost 2008, 4). These esoteric traditions Lovecraft alludes to, are, according to the EOD: Thelema (the *Necronomicon*), Sex Magick (*The Thing on the Doorstep*), Wicca (*The Festival*), Dream Working (*The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath*), Enochian Magick (*The Dunwich Horror*), The Yezidi and Qabalah (*The Horror at Red Hook*), Shamanism (*The Call of Cthulhu*), Skryering in the Aethyr (*The Haunter of the Dark*), Alchemy (*The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*) and many others (Prevost 2008, 4). The EOD do not believe in the absolute existence of the Old Ones as portrayed by Lovecraft but find the iconography of Lovecraft's work to be a useful paradigm for gaining access to deeper, non-rational areas of subconscious (Prevost 2008,6). Through this statement it becomes clear that through their rituals they engage with Lovecraft's world, however, in a symbolic way instead of literal. Members of the EOD see the apocalypse of the Old Ones as reaching consciousness of the universe.

The EOD does attribute hidden meanings and magickal formulae to the works of Lovecraft. The EOD sees Lovecraft as the 'prophet of the dawning Aeon of Cthulhu', and say that he never realized that in fact he was the high priest 'Ech-Pi-El'. According to the EOD, Lovecraft never realized this due to an acute inferiority complex, which prevented him from crossing the Abyss in his waking hours. The EOD believes that Lovecraft left behind the "Silver Key to the Ultimate Gate" in the form of Randolph Carter, a reoccurring character who appeared in several stories and is considered to be Lovecraft's alter ego. They believe that Randolph Carter waits in in the parallel world that men and women of this world can sometimes visit in dreams, for someone to discover the clues to the Cthulhu Mythos that Lovecraft had unconsciously revealed in his stories (Prevost, EOD 2010). The EOD put a focus on dream techniques when visiting this world. The means of traveling between the conscious world and Lovecraft's creative writings are believed to be the result of his unconscious connection to trans-dimensional sources via dreams. The aim of the EOD is to forge a link with the cosmic entities and embody them, resulting in tangible manifestation of creative self-expression (Prevost 2008, 6). They refer to Lovecraft's original pantheon of the Old Ones (Hastur, Shub Niggurath, Nyarlathotep, Cthulhu, Dagon, Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth), but use the deities added by contributors of the Cthulhu Mythos as well (the black and amorphous god Tsathoggua, the spider-god Atlach-Nacha, and the primal deity Ubbo-Sathla).

Peter Smith, one of the members of the EOD, describes Lovecraft as showing signs of being different, in a positive way, since the age of four. According to him Lovecraft could read fluently and would study history and mythology at that age. He later goes on to explain that Lovecraft preferred the company of adults over that of children and that he developed his world of imagination through writing with his first horror story being produced at the age of fifteen and submitting several essays on astronomy and philosophy to publishers. In this way Smith tries to ascribe legitimacy to Lovecraft's work and the claim of him being a prophet for the dawning Aeon of Cthulhu. (6). It is common for prophets to display signs of being different and intellectual from an early age on as a way of claiming legitimacy. This technique is used in historical, as well as 'newer' religions and spirituality. Even though esoteric orders and Lovecraftian magickians claim Lovecraft had an extensive knowledge of esoteric traditions, this was never proven. However, it was proven that Lovecraft had read Arabian nights multiple times at a young age and several other esoteric books. The claims of Lovecraft having extensive esoteric knowledge, are another way the esoteric orders and magickians that use Lovecraft, claim legitimacy and ascribe a higher reality status to Lovecraft's writings.

## 4. Conclusion

The discussed groups all influence each other, not only in their application of Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos, but in their rituals and cosmology as well. All groups use Lovecraft and his Mythos yet differ in degrees of practicality. The primary adherents can be seen as a fiction-based religion, while the secondary adherents are a fiction-integrating religion.

Lovecraft is ascribed a bigger spiritual role with the primary adherents, where he is seen as a prophet or a high priest. While with the secondary adherents Lovecraft is more valued as a philosopher who may unconsciously stumbled on a magickal current but is not ascribed a bigger role than this. His Cthulhu Mythos, however, is used more extensively by both groups.

The primary adherents actively try to contact these Old Ones and do not see them as demons but more as primordial indifferent forces of energy who will bring about an apocalypse of consciousness. The Old Ones are seen as well as the way to gain True Knowledge, although that knowledge comes with the risk of insanity.

The secondary adherents see the Old Ones not necessarily as entities but rather as symbolic forces who stand for individualism, free will and chaos. They use their rituals to contact the Old Ones and the Old Ones answer that to serve them is to be themselves and to do what they want.

In the tables below we can see a short summary of the research done in the analysis per group and category, in these summaries we can once again distinctly see the overlap between the answers of the primary adherents and that of the secondary adherents.

Table 2: summary of the adaptations of Lovecraftian magick into an existing religious frame

<b>Adaptations of Lovecraftian magick into an existing religious frame</b>	
<b>The Church of Satan</b>	
<b>Engagement</b>	Through rituals described in the <i>Satanic Rituals</i> . However, it is not clear if these rituals are actually performed or written just for publicity.
<b>Lovecraft as a person</b>	They viewed him as a philosopher and a great author.
<b>Works of the Cthulhu Mythos</b>	<i>The Horror at Red Hook, The Haunter of the Dark, The Shadow over Innsmouth, The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath, The Dreams in the Witch House, The Dunwich Horror, Nyarlathotep and The Call of Cthulhu.</i>
<b>Reality status</b>	They view this world as philosophical and metaphorical but not as real.
<b>Legitimization</b>	The claim that conventional religions are based on harnessing imagination.
<b>Central Lovecraftian elements</b>	They incorporate Lovecraftian elements in three rituals, however, it is not central for their belief system.
<b>Overall application</b>	They use Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos as a philosophy rather than as a cosmology.
<b>Temple of Set</b>	
<b>Engagement</b>	Through rituals and beliefs. The founder (Michael Aquino) actually wrote the Lovecraftian rituals in the <i>Satanic Rituals</i> .

<b>Lovecraft as a person</b>	They viewed him as a philosopher and inspiration for new esoteric ideas.
<b>Works of the Cthulhu Mythos</b>	<i>The Horror at Red Hook, The Haunter of the Dark, The Shadow over Innsmouth, The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath, The Dreams in the Witch House, The Dunwich Horror, Nyarlathotep and The Call of Cthulhu.</i>
<b>Reality status</b>	They view this world as philosophical but real on a certain level as Aquino did saw the barbarous language as a way to be used in esoteric traditions.
<b>Legitimization</b>	They see his philosophy and work as being useful for esoteric traditions, however, they did not feel the need to legitimize their use.
<b>Central Lovecraftian elements</b>	Lovecraft's ability to evoke realistic terrors while distancing himself from them in his personal philosophy actually influenced Aquino to write the Lovecraftian rituals and develop his Yuggothic language.
<b>Overall application</b>	They use Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos as an esoteric philosophy.
<b>Grant's Typhonian OTO</b>	
<b>Engagement</b>	Through rituals and beliefs. They perform several rituals to engage with Lovecraft's world.
<b>Lovecraft as a person</b>	They saw him as a philosopher and a natural magick adept.
<b>Works of the Cthulhu Mythos</b>	<i>The Shadow Over Innsmouth.</i>
<b>Reality status</b>	Grant saw it as real on an astral plane
<b>Legitimization</b>	Through the so-called Lovecraft/Crowley axis.
<b>Central Lovecraftian elements</b>	The philosophy and the Old Ones.
<b>Overall application</b>	Draw inspiration from Lovecraft's work and do provide this world and Lovecraft with some reality status as they view the world as real on an astral plane. However, they do not see this world as being tangible and real.

Table 3: summary of Individual magickians who practice Lovecraftian magick

<b>Individual magickians who practice Lovecraftian magick</b>	
<b>Chaos Magickians</b>	
<b>Engagement</b>	Through rituals and beliefs. Perform several rituals to engage with Lovecraft's world.
<b>Lovecraft as a person</b>	Differs per individual. Some just as an author, others as a magick adept.
<b>Works of the Cthulhu Mythos</b>	All works
<b>Reality status</b>	They view this world as real during rituals, differs per magickians if they hold this view outside rituals.
<b>Legitimization</b>	Through the success of their rituals.



<b>Central Lovecraftian elements</b>	Nothing is central in Chaos magick, as everything can be used, as long as it fulfills its purpose.
<b>Overall application</b>	They use Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos as real in their ritual use, some chaos magickians hold this view after the ritual as well. Those can be considered Lovecraftian magickians.
<b>Lovecraftian Magickians</b>	
<b>Engagement</b>	Through rituals and beliefs. Perform several rituals to engage with Lovecraft's world.
<b>Lovecraft as a person</b>	Differs per individual. Some just as a magick adept, others as a prophet.
<b>Works of the Cthulhu Mythos</b>	They look at all of the Cthulhu Mythos.
<b>Reality status</b>	They view this world as real, if on a spiritual, astral or a metaphorical level.
<b>Legitimization</b>	Through the success of their rituals.
<b>Central Lovecraftian elements</b>	Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos are central to belief system.
<b>Overall application</b>	Lovecraft and their Cthulhu Mythos is used as their basis.

Table 4: summary of Cthulhu Cults

<b>Cthulhu Cults</b>	
<b>Haunters of the Dark</b>	
<b>Engagement</b>	Through rituals and beliefs. Perform several rituals to engage with Lovecraft's world.
<b>Lovecraft as a person</b>	As a magick adept, someone who tapped into an existing alternate reality.
<b>Works of the Cthulhu Mythos</b>	All works
<b>Reality status</b>	They view it as real, actively engage with this world through rituals and their beliefs.
<b>Legitimization</b>	Through the success of their rituals.
<b>Central Lovecraftian elements</b>	Based on Lovecraft
<b>Overall application</b>	Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos are the base of this group.
<b>Esoteric Order of Dagon</b>	
<b>Engagement</b>	Through rituals and beliefs. Unclear what sort of rituals they perform to engage with this world.
<b>Lovecraft as a person</b>	As a prophet.
<b>Works of the Cthulhu Mythos</b>	They look at all of the Cthulhu Mythos.
<b>Reality status</b>	They view this world as real on a spiritual and astral level but not do not see it as absolute existence.
<b>Legitimization</b>	Through claiming a descent from Sirius Mystery cults.
<b>Central Lovecraftian elements</b>	Iconography of Lovecraft's work is used as a way of gaining access to deeper, non-rational areas of the subconscious.
<b>Overall application</b>	Lovecraft and their Cthulhu Mythos is used as their basis.

If we look at the three categories and their groups, we can see an overlap of their answers. The groups within each category view Lovecraft and his world as (mostly) the same and through that we can conclude a general consensus when applying Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos in Western Esotericism. We even see a consensus in the works of the Cthulhu Mythos they use in their practices. Yet can this difference in application between groups can easily be explained through the fact that the secondary adherents already had a religious framework, or does it go deeper than that? Further research could answer that question. The hypothesis for now is that it comes because of this existing framework, however, as this was not the question this research aimed to answer, it cannot be verified without further research.

Another interesting issue to research would be fieldwork whereby it would be researched whether Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos would actually be used in rituals by these groups, or if they used the popularity of Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos for publicity? This question would be harder to answer than the difference in application, as it would involve active contact with the groups and field work instead of literature research. As most of these groups are rather secretive, it could prove to be impossible.

The last suggestion for further research could be to investigate if Lovecraft and his Cthulhu Mythos could be applied in right-path magickal traditions. During this research it quickly became evident that Lovecraft and his created Mythos were only applied by groups who are part of the left-path tradition. It was to be expected that Lovecraft's fictional world and pantheon of evil nightmarish alien monsters would find more traction in the left-path magickal tradition. However, it would be interesting to research if Lovecraft and his Mythos could be applied in the right-path magickal tradition.

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## 6. Appendix

### 6.1 Interview with Paul Remi Prevost on June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Dear Nadine,

I hope the following proves useful. I would appreciate seeing your finished paper.

As Randolph Carter I founded the Esoteric Order of Dagon in 1980. I am also its Current Director, this office now known as Grand Master, under the name of Obed Marsh.

I decided that the organization The Esoteric Order of Dagon, as described by Lovecraft in his story The Shadow Over Innsmouth, was suitable for manifesting. This occurred after several personal dreams and experiences. The esoteric inspiration was the book Sirius Mystery and the Oannes connections that were implied but not detailed by Lovecraft. These go back to when I was merely 13 years old and read Carl Sagan's book Intelligent Life in the Universe, which was my first exposure to the Oannes Mystery.

I briefly corresponded with the writer Robert Anton Wilson, offered him Honorary Membership in the Order, which he accepted, and later met with him when he was visiting Eugene for a lecture. Also, as Zkauba, a dual personality of Randolph Carter, I gave Kenneth Grant Honorary membership, which resulted in over 20 years of correspondence with him.

Nina Crummett was my then wife and was promoted to Directorship under my careful supervision. Peter Smith made contact via reference by another correspondent, when the Manifesto of the Order announcing its appearance was sent out to many occult personalities and organizations. Another Honorary Member was H.R. Giger, who acknowledged this in both one of his books, and in an interview.

Members are chosen if they meet the basic qualifications of: age of majority, no serious criminal background, and demonstrable sanity. This entitles them to the First, Neophyte Degree, which must be raised to the Initiate Degree after one year or dropped from membership. The Degree System is explained in the Introduction booklet.

Various magickal rituals are conducted, these are all created and performed by individual members, there are no official or formal rituals member must conduct. As most members are separated geographically, most, but not all, are individual efforts in raising deep unconscious forces. These many include sexual and entheogenic aspects, or not. The language used can be the native language of the member, include Latin or Greek, and of course R'lyehian or Aklo or other self-created sounds.

Members are expected to conduct their rituals with consideration of the public (no wild, nude, crazy displays) and the performance should have creative craft and style, even if unseen by others. Props and dress should be within reasonable use, and setting should be considered and appropriate. Documenting with photos or creative results in the form of art, writings, or music, is Key.

The Abyss is considered the metaphysical correlation of the asteroid belt, that is Daath. This area of the Collective Unconscious is fraught with peril but is also rich in creative reward if explored carefully. The so-called False Knowledge is the Black Light of the Initiator, (in biblical terms, the Serpent,) and is the Lie that tell the Truth, in the sense that all Art is False and True at the same time.

The knowledge of Oannes and the real story behind Dagon has not been revealed by the Order but is the core Mystery of its Inner Circle.

Members obtain their new name for a Degree usually in dream or otherwise chosen by them after deep consideration to reflect their True Will.

I hope this short response will be of help. Please do not hesitate to ask any more questions. I have been in poor health for the past few years, and the Order has been quiet, but with recent improvements in my health and finances, efforts are underway for revived activities, including publications.

Yrs by the Black Tower,

Obed Marsh