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SLUMMING IN THE HORROR-FANTASY GHETTO: UTOPIAN IDEALS IN THE WORKS OF H.P. LOVECRAFT

Brandon Reynolds
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Thesis Abstract

Of those who take the time to lend a more critical eye to the fictional and non-fictional works of Howard Phillips Lovecraft, few will debate his atheistic leanings and blatant racism. Though Lovecraft dismissed any and all belief in organized religion in late life, his brief childhood affinity for the Greek pantheon reveals a preference for paganism that predates his absence of faith. The assigning of specific deities of Lovecraft's fictional pantheon to represent these two extremes of belief allow them to share common ground in that they both represent ideals that Lovecraft wishes the human race to adopt. These "Lovecraftian Utopias", as I term them, encompass my first chapter and connect the aforementioned deities with Lovecraft's early paganism and later atheism.

Lovecraft's racism shares a similar role in my second chapter in that it is used as a basis for an ideal extraterrestrial society perpetuated by Lovecraft in select works that is based on both racial and cultural purity through a hierarchy of slavery. I incorporate the criteria of Friedrich Nietzsche's "Master Race" set forth in On the Genealogy of Morals to provide a theoretical background for Lovecraft's societal utopia.

Keywords: H.P. Lovecraft, Utopia, Nietzsche, Religion, Race, Cthulhu Mythos
Introduction

The fundamental question that drove my research on H.P. Lovecraft is not necessarily “why study H.P. Lovecraft?” Rather, I am driven by a somewhat simplistic response to this question: why not study H.P. Lovecraft? In a period where cultural studies is quickly becoming an established touchstone of academia, it would seem relevant to examine a man whose work is nothing less than a pop culture phenomenon. The influence of Lovecraft’s famous “Cthulhu Mythos” stretches its otherworldly tentacles beyond the printed page and into the realms of music (the 1960s underground band H.P. Lovecraft, Gothic instrumentalists Nox Arcana and their 2004 Lovecraft tribute Necronomicon), film (John Carpenter’s In The Mouth of Madness, Stuart Gordon’s cult film Reanimator) and computer gaming (1993’s Call of Cthulhu: Shadow of the Comet, 2006’s Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth).

In the two-plus years I spent researching the “gentleman from Providence”, the name S.T. Joshi was attached to almost every piece of Lovecraftian scholarship I could find. I invite the reader to pause and briefly peruse my works cited page to better illustrate my point. The reader will also no doubt discover that the number of Lovecraft’s anthologies of fiction greatly outweighs the volumes of criticism and analysis contained herein. This general
lack of academic scholarship is another key factor in my decision to study Lovecraft. In addition, S.T. Joshi’s seemingly inescapable influence over “Lovecraft Studies” continues to fascinate me. Very few can truly claim to be the figurehead of their particular field of study. And yet, Joshi seems to accomplish this thanks to his near thirty year love affair with Lovecraft. In addition to his numerous analytical essays, his exhaustive (and, at times, long-winded) 700 page biography of the life and times of H.P. Lovecraft makes him nothing less than Lovecraft’s own personal Boswell.

Despite Joshi’s obvious contributions to the study of Lovecraft, the question remains: how can a man whose works have such extensive cultural influence so frequently be denied examination under the lens of literary analysis? This notion, of course, is not new. At a 1991 conference at Brown University in Lovecraft’s native Rhode Island, Lovecraftian scholar Peter Cannon offered his own take on the lack of mainstream Lovecraftian criticism:

The audience for *Lovecraft Studies* consists almost entirely of horror fiction fans; only a handful of college libraries carry the premier journal in the field. Serious Lovecraft criticism has rarely appeared in print outside the science-fiction horror-fantasy realm... as amateur scholars, we lack the necessary
expertise...we must try harder to break Lovecraft out of the horror-fantasy ghetto, where he has been “marginalized.” We must do more to persuade keen scholarly minds outside the cult that here is a “U.S. Author”...whose life and work merits their serious attention. (Stanley 1-2)

I believe the academic neglect that Cannon mentions here springs from two sources: the “pulp fiction” origins of Lovecraft’s work (he was a staple of *Weird Tales* magazine in the 1920s) and the content of the work itself. The majority of Lovecraft’s work revolves around extraterrestrial beings and the destruction of humanity. Lovecraft’s anachronistic reliance on heavy description and adjectives over dialogue and character development presents another hurdle for any attempting scholar to jump. The “horror-fantasy ghetto” that Cannon refers to is another consistent obstacle to objective literary analysis. The very labels “science fiction”, “horror”, and “fantasy” are assumed to denote cheap, pop culture-derived fiction undeserving of a scholarly audience.

I do not presume to know the actual reasons why academia has neglected Lovecraft. I do, however, believe that diversifying the academy—especially in lieu of the validation of pop culture as a field of study—can only
be ultimately beneficial. If we must strip Lovecraft’s work of its pop culture influence and willfully forget its humble pulp magazine origins in order to incorporate it into the Modernist period, then we must do so to avoid depriving ourselves of an immensely rewarding body of work.

The bulk of the research contained herein deals with Lovecraft’s religious and racial views and their connection to his notorious “Cthulhu Mythos.” The latter has been greatly debated among Lovecraftian scholars. Yozan Dirk W. Mosig argues in his psychological study *Lovecraft at Last* that Lovecraft was a “mechanistic materialist...totally devoid of any dualistic belief in religion or the supernatural” (Mosig 21) and that he “clearly perceived man’s abysmal insignificance and meaninglessness in the vast mechanistic and purposeless cosmos” (Mosig 21-2). I do not debate Mosig’s assertion that Lovecraft was at his philosophical core a materialist. However, Mosig glosses over Lovecraft’s brief (yet significant) phase of childhood paganism which would be integral in shaping the disdain for Christianity that led to his championing of a materialistic or atheistic point of view.

Mosig also seems content to rob the fictional Lovecraftian pantheon of any religious context whatsoever. This is chiefly due to the superimposition of the Christian ideal upon it by Lovecraft’s best known imitator, August Derleth:
The Yog-Sothoth Cycle of myth centers around a group of alien entities from the “Outside”—from beyond the spheres of conscious human experience...these Old Ones were, are, and will be. They are not mere symbols for the power of evil...it should be readily obvious that there is no real parallel between the Christian mythos and Lovecraft’s pseudomythology, despite Derleth’s assertions to the contrary...nowhere did Lovecraft...refer to any powerful benign deities which might intercede for man. (Mosig 24-25)

Fellow Lovecraftian scholar Robert M. Price, in his essay *Lovecraft’s Mythology of the Old Ones*, offers the opposite point of view:

...A crucial factor in our consideration of the mythos as Lovecraft conceived it is the question of to what extent the mythos is...*revelatory of religious truth*. August Derleth...made the Cthulhu Mythos...parallel to the Christian mythos...against this whole scenario a new generation of Lovecraft interpreters rose up in protest...he had imposed his own mythology onto Lovecraft’s, which lacked any notion of a moral contest between good and evil and which claimed rather that the cosmos was a
meaningless void...certainly, Derleth’s critics had perceived a crucial element of truth: Lovecraft did no doubt mean to convey just the human–minimizing perspective...Lovecraft meant to portray the cultists serving the Old Ones as a bunch of stooges...but...Lovecraft did indeed mean to depict something like a religious reality in the stories. (Price 33-35)

The key to this debate over religion and the creatures of Lovecraft’s “Cthulhu Mythos” is the imposition of Lovecraft’s materialism, or Derleth’s Christian ideals upon them. What Price refers to as a generic “religious reality” is the key to my first chapter. I do not make the mistake of superimposing my own belief system over Lovecraft’s mythology, but rather what I perceive to be the two extremes of his own religious evolution: paganism and atheism. Rather than attempting to incorporate the entire Lovecraftian pseudomythology to accompany these ideals, I assign specific deities as their respective representations. Instead of looking for parallels to conventional systems of religious belief (including my own) or what Price refers to as “revelations of religious truth”, I argue that paganism and materialism (along with their representative beings) comprise two ideal utopias that Lovecraft desires mankind to adopt.
Unlike the role of religion in Lovecraft’s fiction, the issue of racism is not a subject of such debate among Lovecraftian critics. S.T. Joshi’s biography, *H.P. Lovecraft: A Life* provides strong examples of Lovecraft’s racial views. Joshi quotes Lovecraft as saying “the black is vastly inferior. There can be no question of this among contemporary and unsentimental biologists—eminent Europeans for whom the prejudice-problem does not exist” (Joshi 484). This type of irony is not uncommon in Lovecraft’s racial philosophy. However, it is not the blatant racism that Lovecraft exhibits here that is the focus of my second chapter, but rather the cultural impact that it has. At the risk of courting the obvious, I incorporate Friedrich Nietzsche’s concept of a “Master Race” to a select few stories in Lovecraft fictional corpus. My goal is not to expose Lovecraft as a racist (his fictional and non-fictional work do a fine enough job already), but rather address the concept of a racially pure society that can—like the religious and materialist ideals of my first chapter—be seen as a Lovecraftian utopia.

To put it quite simply, I am interested in the *cultural* aspect of Lovecraft’s work. More specifically, I am interested in the cultures that he himself creates and the ideals surrounding them. It is my intention to treat Lovecraft’s paganism, atheism, and racism as established facts rather than
grounds for analysis themselves. By doing so, I aim to give the reader a
glimpse into how these aspects factor into what Lovecraft believed to be ideal
states for the human race to live in.
Lovecraft’s Avatars: Azathoth, Dagon, and Lovecraftian Utopias

Yozan Dirk W. Mosig asserts in his 1978 essay *The Great American Throwaway* that H.P. Lovecraft was “philosophically...a rationalist, a mechanistic materialist who harbored no belief in the supernatural...for what he wrote were, in a sense, stories for unbelievers” (Mosig 14). I agree with Mosig to an extent. Lovecraft indeed championed atheism in his later years, but it should also be noted that he spent the majority of his childhood as a self-proclaimed follower of the polytheistic Greek pantheon. It is these two extremes—paganism and atheism—that comprise Lovecraft’s ideal constructs for human race in that he ultimately wishes for mankind to return to one of these belief systems. This return is unsurprisingly forced onto humanity within his fiction and is best perpetuated by a select few extraterrestrial beings in his fictional pantheon. Lovecraft’s pagan utopia is best represented by the fish god Dagon and his mate Mother Hydra, while the return to materialism devoid of an afterlife is best symbolized by the Demon Sultan Azathoth and his messenger Nyarlathotep.

According to Lovecraftian Scholar S.T. Joshi’s biography *H.P. Lovecraft: A Life*, Lovecraft’s brief “pagan phase” reached its apex in 1897.
This approximation stems directly from his citation of Lovecraft's own "A Confession of Unfaith":

When about seven or eight I was a genuine pagan, so intoxicated with the beauty of Greece that I acquired a half-sincere belief in the old gods and nature-spirits. I have in literal truth built altars to Pan, Apollo, Diana and Athena and have watched for dryads and satyrs...once I firmly thought I beheld some of these sylvan creatures dancing under autumnal oaks; a kind of "religious experience" as true in its way as the subjective ecstasies of any Christian. If a Christian tell me he has felt the reality of his Jesus or Jahveh, I can reply that I have seen the hoofed Pan... (Joshi 25-6)

Lovecraft's differentiation between Christianity and paganism relies on the simple concept of tangibility. A clear emphasis on visual proof of religion is present here. For the sake of better contextualizing my argument, I propose defining the term "paganism" as a non-Christian belief system with the added Lovecraftian element of tangibility presented above when applying it to the utopian ideals I shall set forth later. This definition should also be expanded to include the aspect of physical tangibility as well.
Because of his devotion to the anachronistic Gods of ancient Greece, Lovecraft spent his early life lamenting over the loss of Pagan (non Christian) religion in the world around him and dedicated much of his early fiction and poetry to the glorification and preservation of these dying belief systems. S.T. Joshi (within the confines of his biography on Lovecraft) reveals this tendency by citing Lovecraft’s essay “A Confession of Unfaith”: “Lovecraft reports in ‘A Confession of Unfaith’ that ‘my pompous book called Poemata Minora, written when I was eleven, was dedicated To the Gods, Heroes, and Ideals of the Ancients’ and harped in disillusioned... sorrow of the pagan robbed of his antique pantheon’” (Joshi 48-9). The Poemata Minora that Lovecraft alludes to here is a small collection of five Classical poems that a young Lovecraft penned in 1902. It includes: Ode to Selene or Diana, To the Old Pagan Religion, On the Ruin of Rome, To Pan, and On the Vanity of Human Ambition.

All five poems in Lovecraft’s Poemata Minora contain a distinct lean towards Paganism. However, the following passage from To the Old Pagan Religion best encapsulates Lovecraft’s sorrow at the loss of pre-Christian faith: “Olympian Gods! How can I let ye go / And pin my faith to this new Christian creed? / Can I resign the deities I know / For him who on a cross for man did bleed?” (Lovecraft 11, lines 1-4). It is clear that the narrator worships the Gods
of ancient Greece within the context of this poem. There is also an obvious question of assimilation posited here as well. Can the narrator indeed renounce his beliefs in favor of the “new” Christian faith? The final stanza of the piece provides us with the answer: “Fast spreads the new; the older faith declines / The name of Christ resounds upon the air. / But my wrack’d soul in solitude repines / And gives the Gods their last-received pray’r” (Lovecraft 11-12, lines 13-15).

The lament over the “loss” of Paganism here—though emotional and heartfelt—is very unrealistic. The main flaw here is the exaggerated result of Christianity’s increase in popularity. By penning the “last-received pray’r” line, Lovecraft is arguing that the gods of the Greek pantheon no longer exist in lieu of the ascension of Christianity. The overtake of paganism (depicted here through the Greek pantheon) here is too literal; as if Christianity literally destroyed young Lovecraft’s pagan gods and they cannot be resurrected or deified any longer. This, of course, is untrue. Though Christianity is indeed the more dominant of the two belief systems here, nothing is in fact preventing our narrator from maintaining his original pagan faith in defiance.

Although the narrator of To the Old Pagan Religion was content to let the Gods of Ancient Greece fade into the past, Lovecraft himself was not. Over
eighteen years after he wrote about the “destruction” of the Greek pantheon, Lovecraft once again attempted to resurrect it in his 1920 collaboration with Anna Helen Crofts titled *Poetry and the Gods*. The story opens on “a damp gloomy evening in April...just after the great war” (Lovecraft 15) with protagonist Marcia “alone with strange thoughts and wishes...which floated out of the spacious twentieth century drawing room...and eastward to olive groves in distant Arcady which she had only seen in her dreams” (Lovecraft 15). Because Marcia feels “separated from...the strange home in which she lived...where relations were always strained” (Lovecraft 15), she reaches for “some healing bit of poetry” (Lovecraft 15) and promptly lapses into a deep sleep.

Marcia, while dreaming, “cried to the rhythmical stars, of her delight at the coming of a new age of song, a rebirth of Pan” (Lovecraft 16). Marcia’s elation at the “rebirth of Pan” is rewarded by the appearance of the Greek god of poetry and literature, Hermes. He deems Marcia a “nymph more fair than the golden-haired sisters of Cyene” (Lovecraft 17). More importantly, Hermes designates her, a “prophetess more lovely than the Sybil of Cumae when Apollo first knew her” (Lovecraft 17). Hermes’s transformation of Marcia
from mortal woman to prophetess has a singular motivation that is revealed in the following monologue:

...thou has truly spoken of the new age, for even now on Maenalus, Pan sighs and stretches in his sleep, wishful to wake and behold about him the little rose-crowned fauns and the antique Satyrs. In thy yearning hast thou divined what no mortal, saving only a few whom the world rejects, remembereth: that the Gods were never dead, but only sleeping the sleep and dreaming the dreams of Gods...and now draweth nigh the time of their awakening, when coldness and ugliness shall perish, and Zeus sit once more on Olympus...the Gods are patient, and have slept long, but neither man nor giant shall defy the Gods forever...the day now dawns when man must answer for centuries of denial, but in sleeping the Gods have grown kind and will not hurl him into the gulf made for deniers of Gods. Instead will their vengeance smite the darkness, fallacy, and ugliness which have turned the mind of man; and under the sway of bearded Saturnus shall mortals, once more sacrificing unto him, dwell in beauty and delight. (Lovecraft 17-18)
Though the reemergence of the Greek pantheon here takes place within a
dreamscape (and is therefore purely hypothetical), I propose that the above
connection between mankind and paganism be considered one of two
religiously based utopias set forth by Lovecraft. Allow me to elaborate further.
I consider the preceding passage utopian in that it (naively) promises an eternal
state of “beauty and delight” for the human race upon its rededication to the
slumbering gods of ancient Greece. The concept of mortal death is also notably
absent. This implies that this pagan resurgence takes place on earth. And, since
these new disciples of Saturnus can presumably see and interact with the gods
they are sacrificing to in exchange for a blissful existence, both physical and
visual proof of the existence of pagan deities are certainly present. However,
the utopia set forth here is not free from negative aspects. There is an air of
menace hovering around the “neither man nor giant shall defy the Gods
forever” line. It hints at an act of assimilation that must be undergone by
mankind prior to residing in this Grecian paradise. Although the narrator
promises no divine retaliation against our race directly, he does mention later
that the “…shadow of false faiths will soon be gone and the Gods shall once
more walk among men” (Lovecraft 20). This can be interpreted as the
destruction of all other systems of belief save the pagan gods of Greece. To put
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it simply, Lovecraft’s pagan utopia requires four elements: the reawakening (literal or symbolic) of dormant pagan deities, physical (or visual) tangibility of said deities, the assimilation of mankind into their specific belief system, and the absence of any opposing religion. These four specific elements—and thus the first of Lovecraft’s ideal societies—are best embodied in the fish-god Dagon and the devout followers of his pagan cult.

The fish-god Dagon is not Lovecraft’s creation, but rather an incorporation of the biblical deity of the Philistines. In terms of Lovecraft’s fiction, however, Dagon made his debut-in-passing in 1917’s short story, Dagon. The story itself is unremarkable and brief. We as readers only glimpse Dagon as a “vast, polyphemus-like and loathsome” (Lovecraft 40) object that “darted like a stupendous monster of nightmares…” (Lovecraft 40). The details surrounding Dagon’s followers are vague as well, citing only a “pictorial carving…supposed to depict…a certain sort of men…paying homage at some monolithic shrine…under the waves…” (Lovecraft 40).

S.T. Joshi amusingly contends in H.P. Lovecraft: A Life that “Lovecraft…conceived only a relatively small number of…plots or scenarios and spent most of his career reworking…them” (Joshi 159). Joshi’s assertion that Lovecraft tended to “recycle” his plots certainly proves true in 1931’s The
Shadow Over Innsmouth. This fifty-five page story elaborates on all the aspects of the Dagon pseudo-mythology that was only hinted at in the story of the same name years earlier. The story opens when the narrator, Robert Olmstead (who according to Joshi is “never mentioned by name but identified in the surviving notes” [Joshi 496]) travels to “...the ancient Massachusetts seaport of Innsmouth” (Lovecraft 262) on a “tour of New England—sightseeing, antiquarian, genealogical...to Arkham...whence [his] mother’s family derived” (Lovecraft 263).

It is upon Olmstead’s arrival by bus to Innsmouth that the Dagon mythology comes to the forefront of the story: “the bus had come to a sort of open concourse...with churches on two sides...once white paint was now grey and peeling, and the black and gold sign on the pediment was so faded that I could only...make out the words ‘Esoteric Order of Dagon’ (Lovecraft 274). Olmstead then deduces that this ruined structure “...was the former Masonic Hall now given over to a degraded cult” (Lovecraft 274). The occupation of former churches by the followers of the Fish God Dagon can be seen as one of the four elements I have proposed for Lovecraft’s pagan utopia in that it symbolizes paganism rising above Christian “opposition” through the
conversion of the churches of Innsmouth into places of worship for Dagon's cult.

The origin of the Esoteric Order of Dagon's presence in Innsmouth—and thus the elimination of the opposing religion of Christianity—can be traced to its founder, Captain Obed. After Olmstead fills ninety-six-year-old Zadok Allen with multiple bottles of Innsmouth's finest hard liquor, the old man more than willingly divulges Innsmouth's history of paganism:

Never was nobody like Cap'n Obed—old limb o' Satan...callin' all the folks stupid fer goin' to Christian meetin'...says they'd orter get better gods...gods as ud bring good fishin' in return for their sacrifices...told abaout an island east of Othaheite...with carvin's...that looked like the big statues on Easter Island. Thar was a little volcanic island near thar too, whar they was other ruins...all wore away like they'd been under the sea onct, an' with pictures of awful monsters all over 'em...the natives around thar had all the fish they could ketch, an' sported bracelets and armlets an' head rigs made aout o' a queer kind o' gold with picters of...fish-like frogs or frog-like fishes that was...in all kinds o' positions like they was human bein's (Lovecraft 284).
While I abhor Lovecraft’s attempt to transcribe backwoods dialect here, this monologue is significant in its incorporation of *Dagon* into *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* in addition to providing crucial background to Dagon’s followers. In addition to the original locale of the Order of Dagon (“Otheheite” — a horribly arcane version of Tahiti), the monologue reveals that the cult achieved its takeover of Innsmouth by offering a “divine” answer to Innsmouth’s severe shortage of fish. Like the followers of Saturnus in *Poetry and the Gods*, the members of Dagon’s order show their devotion through the act of sacrifice. As a reward, they are given a near boundless supply of food. The carvings on the undersea monolith (whose contents are now fully described) can be seen as a prophecy or ancient documentation of the transformation that is overtaking the denizens of Innsmouth who belong to the Esoteric Order of Dagon.

Another key encounter with a non-native of Innsmouth reveals the assimilation aspect of Lovecraft’s pagan ideal. Through a conversation with a teenage grocer, Olmstead learns key facts about Innsmouth and its reclusive citizens:

Certain spots were almost forbidden territory… one must not, for example, linger much… around any of the still used churches, or around the pillared Order of Dagon Hall at New Church
Green...their creeds were heterodox and mysterious, involving hints of certain marvelous transformations leading to bodily immortality—of a sort—on this earth...as for the Innsmouth people—the youth hardly knew what to make of them...they seemed sullenly banded together in some sort of fellowship and understanding—despising the world as if they had access to other and preferable spheres of entity. Their appearance—especially those staring, unwinking eyes which one never saw shut—was certainly shocking enough; and their voices were disgusting. It was awful to hear them chanting in their churches at night, and especially during their main festivals which fell...on April 30th and October 31st. (Lovecraft 276-77)

Recall the promise in *Poetry and the Gods* that mankind will “dwell in beauty and delight” upon its rededication to Saturnus. A similar notion of “reward for worship” is set forth here in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*. The form of worship here is much more extreme in nature because the members of Dagon’s order undergo grotesque bodily transformations (made clear by the narrator’s description of their inhuman “unwinking eyes” and “disgusting voices”). The reward for this sacrifice of humanity—a gesture of worship to Dagon—is the
promise of eternal life. Zadok Allen tells Olmstead that “we all had to take the Oath o’ Dagon” (Lovecraft 291) and that “the faithful...shud never die, but go back to the Mother Hydra an’ Father Dagon what we all come from onct...Ia! Ia! Cthulhu fhtagn!” (Lovecraft 291). Clearly, the physical devolution of the townspeople of Innsmouth was not undertaken by choice and can therefore be seen as a grotesque form of assimilation into Dagon’s religion.

The third and fourth elements of my proposed Lovecraftian pagan utopia—which I have identified as the reawakening of dormant pagan deities and an element of physical or visual tangibility—resides in mankind’s origins within the context of The Shadow Over Innsmouth. These origins are directly linked to the physical regression of Dagon’s followers. Key information regarding these aspects of the Esoteric Order of Dagon is once again relayed to Olmstead by the drunken Zadok Allen: “Seems that human folks has got a kind o’ relation to sech water-beasts—that everything alive come aout o’ the water onct, an’ only needs a little change to go back agin...them as turned into fish things an’ went into the water wouldn’t never die...” (Lovecraft 286). This passage implies that all human life originated from the sea at one time or another. Therefore, the physical reversion from human to fish on the part of Dagon’s followers can be seen as an internal reawakening of the pagan deity.
Let me explain. The reawakening of Saturnus in *Poetry and the Gods* is an external event beyond mankind’s control. Saturnus (along with the rest of the ancient Greek pantheon) simply reawakens with no human provocation to reclaim their rightful position as the dominant belief system of the human race. The reawakening of Dagon, however, does not actually involve the deity itself, but rather his followers’ return to the sea after their transformation is complete. By leaving Innsmouth and rejoining Dagon and Mother Hydra underneath the surrounding ocean, the members of the Esoteric Order of Dagon enjoy an immortal life while simultaneously establishing their fish god as the dominant deity of the story. In addition, the physical return to Dagon’s undersea kingdom by the newly transformed members of the order as a reward for religious worship can be interpreted as the tangible aspects (physical in the act of transformation, visual in the return to the ocean which is viewed as the source of Dagon’s cult) of Dagon’s pagan belief system.

The eradication of the Christian presence, combined with the physical assimilation of Innsmouth’s human inhabitants through the “Oath of Dagon” and the ultimate return as immortals in the “lair of the Deep Ones…amidst wonder and glory for ever” (Lovecraft 317) constitutes the ideal representation of the four elements of Lovecraft’s pagan utopia that I have set forth.
Despite the clear return to paganism in 1931’s *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*, it is important to note that Lovecraft was already an avid subscriber to the atheistic philosophy that would become synonymous with his life by this time. Hints of this viewpoint permeate the Esoteric Order of Dagon and its members. Recall the reward of “earthly immortality” promised to all those who faithfully take Dagon’s oath. This is Lovecraft’s sly attempt to avoid acknowledging the concept of an afterlife. By achieving immortality without experiencing physical death, the concept of a perfect afterlife is not needed since the members of Dagon’s order have already achieved their ideal state through their physical degeneration. It is this disavowal of the afterlife (and any deity that may preside over it) along with Lovecraft’s proposition that man return to a perpetual state of nothingness that comprises my second Lovecraftian utopia (whose symbolic representations will be discussed shortly). Before examining this second ideal, it is important to grasp and define the core of Lovecraft’s atheistic philosophy.

Though we have seen Lovecraft’s early advocacy of non Christian religion, his continued spiritual evolution transformed him into a devoted atheist whose attacks on concepts ranging from faith, to man’s dependence on organized religion, and mortal notions of the afterlife became more blatant.
The period between 1919 and 1920 is of particular interest in Lovecraft’s new view of the world. According to S.T. Joshi’s *H.P. Lovecraft: The Decline of the West* (which presents his own chronicle of Lovecraft’s philosophical evolution), Lovecraft “…read Nietzsche, Haeckel, and Elliot” (Joshi 16) in 1919 and therefore “…felt at liberty to condemn the various mythical philosophies of the time in tones of withering scorn” (Joshi 16). Joshi’s allusion to materialist Hugh Elliot as an influence on Lovecraft’s own philosophy is of particular interest here. Joshi, in the same chronicle of Lovecraft’s philosophical thought, cites the “…three main principles of mechanistic materialism” (Joshi 7) that originated in Hugh Elliot’s *Modern Science and Materialism* as: “the uniformity of law, the denial of teleology” (Joshi 7), and “the denial of any form of existence other than those envisaged by physics and chemistry, that is to say, other existences that have some kind of palpable material characteristics and qualities” (Joshi 7).

The influence of Elliot’s materialism (in addition to Haeckel’s and Nietzsche’s which shall be examined later) on Lovecraft’s religious views can be seen in the biting satire of Lovecraft’s 1920 poem *On Religion*:

Would that we all might innocently dream / In primal bliss by

Lethe’s flow’ry stream; / ‘Neath fancy’s glow a fairy would
survey / Nor glimpse, beyond, the with’ring light of day; / Drink
Drink from the perfum’d tide a pleasing draught, / And breath the
scent that lotos’d zephyrs waft, / While others, not so blest, lift
tearful eyes / To the bleak cycle of the godless skies! / O Truth!
What ills attend thy grisly train! / What griefs and sorrows share
thy frigid reign! / From curtain’d deeps thy claws the curtains
tear, / And mortals weep to find but vacant air.

(Lovecraft 240, lines 1-12)

This segment of the poem could mirror Lovecraft’s own religious evolution
from Pagan to atheist. However, the two philosophies present within this
passage present a contradiction. The first half of the segment again laments the
lack of paganism in the world. The second half of the piece is a mock-
revelation of the “truth” that no God exists and that the nature of the world is
nothing but a “bleak cycle” and also possesses a saddened tone that mankind is
indeed alone in the universe and cries to “vacant air”. Though these two
laments appear connected, the first five lines denote exclusivity within this
seemingly hopeless poem. The lines “Would that we all might innocently
dream” and “while others, not so blest” are of particular interest because they
create a dichotomy between small circle of pagans who are relaxing
comfortably by the river Lethe and the rest of mankind whose religion and faith in a supreme being has no validity within the cosmos. While this may be another of Lovecraft's attempts to attack the Christian god and claim pagan supremacy, *On Religion* ultimately falls short of perpetuating either of Lovecraft's philosophies due to the aforementioned conflict between those select few pagans who will enjoy a lush afterlife within their pantheon, and (presumably) everyone else whose God does not exist.

Contradictions aside, it is the "bleak cycle of godless skies" that is of value here. For the sake of better understanding this crucial principle, let us turn to Yozan Dirk W. Mosig's psychological study of Lovecraft once again. Mosig's citation of a letter written by Lovecraft (whose recipient is unknown) offers the clearest definition:

Now all my tales are based on the fundamental premise that Common human laws and interests and emotions have no Validity in the vast cosmos-at-large....To achieve the essence of real externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all. (Mosig 27)
Lovecraft clearly does not hold the human race in high regard based on this passage. Like the call to embrace the deities of the long-dormant Greek pantheon, Lovecraft is again calling for mankind to wholly subscribe to a belief system he sets forth. However, instead of promising an eternity of beauty and human sacrifice, Lovecraft—in accordance with his evolution from pagan to atheist—promises “real externality” as the only reward for this conversion to atheism.

This excerpt also establishes the insignificance of the human race within Lovecraft’s universe (no pun intended). Due to the fact that we as a race are “negligible” and “temporary”, I propose that Lovecraft’s second utopia involves the eradication of the entire human race. Lovecraft himself expressed his desires for this end in Nietzscheism and Realism, a non-fictional essay written in 1921: “universal suicide is the most logical thing in all the world—we reject it only because of our primitive cowardice and childish fear of the dark. If we were at all sensible we would seek death—the same blissful blank which we enjoyed before we existed” (Lovecraft 71). In simpler terms, Lovecraft’s second utopian ideal for mankind involves one key principle: mankind’s destruction through the apocalypse. This ideal—like those of my first Lovecraftian utopia—is best characterized by two specific deities in
Lovecraft’s fictional pantheon: the Demon Sultan Azathoth, and his avatar, the shape-shifting Nyarlathotep.

Nyarlathotep made his debut in the story of the same name in 1920. S.T. Joshi contends in his biography of Lovecraft that Nyarlathotep was the “direct product of a dream” (Joshi 240); Lovecraft even boasted that he wrote the first paragraph of the story “before [he] fully waked” (Joshi 240).

Although Nyarlathotep acts as the messenger and avatar of superior beings residing in the cosmos, he too has cosmic origins which are revealed in the events that herald his coming to earth: “...out of the abysses between the stars swept chill currents that made men shiver...everyone felt that the world and perhaps the universe had passed...to...gods or forces which were unknown...and it was then that Nyarlathotep came out of Egypt” (Lovecraft 52). Nyarlathotep’s arrival in conjunction with the takeover of the universe by “unknown forces” is no coincidence. In fact, the link between the forces now in control of the cosmos and Nyarlathotep reveals his specific role within the confines of this particular story:

I remember when Nyarlathotep came to my city...my friend had told me of...the impelling fascination and allurement of his revelations...my friend said they were horrible...beyond my
most fevered imaginings, and what was thrown on a screen in the
darkened room prophesied things none but Nyarlathotep dared
prophesy...I saw hooded forms amidst ruins...I saw the world
battling against blackness...against...destruction from ultimate
space...a sickened, sensitive shadow writhing in hands that are
not hands...corpses of dead worlds with sores that were
cities...beyond the worlds vague ghosts of monstrous
things...and through this revolting graveyard of the universe the
muffled, maddening...monotonous whine of blasphemous flutes
from...beyond time...whereunto dance slowly...and absurdly the
gigantic, tenebrous ultimate gods—the blind, voiceless, mindless
gargoyles whose soul is Nyarlathotep. (Lovecraft 53-54)

This lengthy excerpt reveals Nyarlathotep has the prophesier of the universal
apocalypse at the hands of unnamed "Ultimate Gods." Since these gods are in
spheres of existence beyond earth in addition to being without sight, voice, and
mind, Nyarlathotep comes to earth in their stead to bring the message of
Armageddon to mankind. It is this specific function that makes Nyarlathotep
key in perpetuating Lovecraft’s atheistic ideal. Like the pagan ideal
established in *Poetry and the Gods*, mankind’s destruction is limited to a
hypothetical. It is important to note that Nyarlathotep does not actually bring the end of days upon mankind, but rather displays a terrifying inevitability at the hands of deities who reside in space.

Though he is seen here as the prophesier of the apocalypse, Nyarlathotep has versatile functions within Lovecraft’s fiction as well. In 1932’s *The Dreams in the Witch House* Nyarlathotep reprises his role as a messenger, this time in the guise of a hooded figure dressed in black. As the title suggests, the theme of witchcraft is heavily prominent within this story; complete with a Lovecraftian twist. Walter Gilman moves into “the changeless, legend-haunted city of Arkham” (Lovecraft 318) in an effort to “…connect his mathematics with…legends of Elder Magic” (Lovecraft 319). After taking up residence in the “Witch House”, so named because it was once home to Arkham’s most notorious witch, Keziah Mason, Gilman contracts a violent fever caused by graphic nightmares involving the long deceased witch and her rat-like familiar known only as “Brown Jenkin.” We learn later that these so-called nightmares, along with Keziah Mason and Brown Jenkin actually exist. Gilman’s first real-life encounter with the ancient woman also reveals Nyarlathotep’s specific function within the story:
The expression on her face was one of hideous malevolence...[Gilman] could recall a croaking voice that persuaded and threatened. He must meet the Black Man and go with them all to the throne of Azathoth at the center of ultimate chaos...he must sign the book of Azathoth in his own blood and take a new secret name...what kept him from going with her and Brown Jenkin to the throne of chaos where the thin flutes pipe mindlessly was the fact that he had seen the name ‘Azathoth’ in the *Necronomicon*. And knew it stood for a primal evil too horrible for description...he could remember in the morning how [Brown Jenkin] had pronounced the words ‘Azathoth’ and ‘Nyarlathotep.’ (Lovecraft 327)

Here we are introduced to the relationship between the supreme God Azathoth and the messenger Nyarlathotep. There are several clues as to Nyarlathotep’s role present here. In order to venture into what Lovecraft calls “ultimate chaos”, Gilman must sign Azathoth’s book which is not coincidentally offered on earth to Gilman by Nyarlathotep as Azathoth is inaccessible to him in his kingdom of “ultimate chaos.” Later in the story, Lovecraft gets more specific in his description of Nyarlathotep by labeling him as a “…deputy or messenger
of hidden and terrible powers—the ‘black man’ of the witch-cult, the ‘Nyarlathotep’ of the *Necronomicon*” (Lovecraft 338). This type of description is reminiscent of Nyarlathotep’s debut as the Nostradamus figure predicting the final hours of the universe. Though Lovecraft stresses in multiple stories that Nyarlathotep—though all-knowing—is but a messenger for the all-powerful Azathoth who resides in unseen realms, the fact that he can freely travel to earth whereas Azathoth cannot undermines his supposed supremacy.

According to Lovecraft’s mythology, Azathoth is the most powerful and malignant of all his fictional beings. However, when compared to his earthly avatar Nyarlathotep and his theater of apocalyptic delights, Azathoth’s purpose in my second Lovecraftian ideal is actually rather passive. However, I am not implying that Azathoth has an insignificant role here. Rather, I am proposing that Azathoth is the ideal itself. Allow me to elaborate further. Lovecraft argues in *Nietzscheism and Realism* that universal suicide—which he defines as the return to a state of “blissful” nothingness—should be willingly accepted by mankind for our own benefit. The kingdom in which Azathoth resides has certain characteristics that associate it with the concepts of total destruction and nothingness that comprise the above definition.
To better illustrate my point, consider the following excerpt from *The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath* written in 1927:

If in our dreamland [Kadath] might conceivably be reached...there were, in such voyages, incalculable local dangers; as well as that shocking final peril which gibbers unmentionably outside that ordered universe, where no dreams reach; that last amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which blasphemes and bubbles at the centre 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 amidst the muffled, maddening beating of vile drums and the thin, monotonous whine of accursed flutes; to which detestable pounding and piping dance...absurdly the gigantic Ultimate gods, the blind, voiceless, tenebrous, mindless, Other gods whose soul and messenger is the Crawling Chaos Nyarlathotep. (Lovecraft 107-8)

I have already established that Azathoth dwells beyond the reaches of time and space. However, this excerpt from *The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath* (in which the monstrosity debuts) provides a detailed description of the desolation...
surrounding Lovecraft’s “daemon sultan.” Azathoth dwells in absolute nothingness, a realm devoid of time and space that Lovecraft labels the “center of infinity.” The daemon sultan himself is also “amorphous”, denoting the absence of definite, tangible form within his kingdom as well.

An additional excerpt (simply titled Azathoth) from Lovecraft’s 1930 poetry collection, Fungi From Yuggoth, provides additional insight into Azathoth, his surroundings, and his relationship with the Messenger God Nyarlathotep:

Out in the mindless void the daemon bore me / Past the bright clusters of dimensioned space / Till neither time nor matter stretched before me / But only chaos, without form or place.

Here the vast Lord of All in darkness muttered / Things he had dreamed but could not understand / While near him shapeless bat-things flopped and fluttered / In idiot vortices that ray-streams fanned. They danced insanely to the high, thin whining / of a cracked flute clutched in a monstrous paw / Whence flow the aimless waves whose chance combining / Gives each frail cosmos its eternal law / ‘I am His Messenger,’ the daemon said /
As in contempt he struck his master's head. (Lovecraft 73, lines 1-14)

We see once again the formless, blank nature of Azathoth's dwelling. In addition, we learn that the monotonous droning of his cracked flute "gives each frail cosmos its natural law." This is significant in that it makes Azathoth the creator of the structure of our universe, the Lovecraftian origin of existence. Furthermore, it is clear that Azathoth's "messenger" (earlier established as Nyarlathotep) is none too pleased with his position of servitude and thus strikes Azathoth's head in contempt.

Azathoth and Nyarlathotep represent a cause-and-effect relationship that encapsulates Lovecraft's atheistic ideal of "universal suicide." Nyarlathotep is the causal element, the evil prophet who shows mankind its inevitable end in a terrifying theater show. And, since he has been labeled as the messenger of Azathoth, it can be inferred that his role on earth is assigned to him by his master. Nyarlathotep's coming—along with the inevitable apocalypse that it signals—is the means by which mankind will ultimately be destroyed and thus return to a state of perpetual nothingness which I interpret as Azathoth's realm at the "center of infinity."
My purpose here has not been to establish H.P. Lovecraft as a religious man by any means. He is more than deserving of the atheistic label that the majority of Lovecraftian scholars have placed upon him. His abrupt transition from his “half sincere” belief in pagan gods to belief in a cold, cyclical cosmos shows a man unwilling to accept anything other than these two extremes. This extremism is best shown through the two Lovecraftian utopias I have set forth. In either case, the future is unsurprisingly bleak for the human race. Within Lovecraft’s universe, we are given two choices: physical degeneration into Innsmouth’s fish-like people coupled with an eternal undersea existence for the rebirth of paganism, or, complete and utter destruction of everything for the sake of achieving a “blissful” existence of nothingness. I, personally, have always liked the water.
The Extraterrestrial Übermensch: Nietzschean Slavery in Lovecraft

Few philosophers compliment the racial edge of H.P. Lovecraft's own philosophical stances on race and supremacy quite as well as Friedrich Nietzsche. Though the notions of racial discrimination and Anglo-Saxon dominance pervade the majority of Lovecraft's stories, poems, and non-fictional essays, they rarely go beyond a blatant racial slur against any and all minorities. It is when Lovecraft establishes a clear racial hierarchy within the ranks of his extra-terrestrial beings that an application of certain aspects of Nietzsche's own racial hierarchies and views on superiority can occur. There are two of Lovecraft's works in particular that best exemplify Lovecraft's extraterrestrial racism in addition to the unapologetic domination that comprises Nietzsche's Übermensch or Superman: 1929's The Mound, and Lovecraft's 1931 novella At the Mountains of Madness.

The core of the connection between Lovecraft's work and Nietzsche's philosophy lies in the racial and aristocratic views that Lovecraft developed in his early life. A particularly interesting example of this early philosophical development is provided in S.T. Joshi's seminal biography, H.P. Lovecraft: A Life: "at about the age of six, when my grandfather told me of the American
Revolution, I shocked everyone by adopting a dissenting view...Grover Cleveland was grandpa’s ruler, but Her Majesty, Victoria, Queen of Great Britain...commanded my allegiance. ‘God Save the Queen!’ was a stock phrase of mine” (Lovecraft 16). Lovecraft’s early case of “anglophilia” was also nurtured by his father, Winfield Lovecraft:

My father was constantly warned not to fall into Americanisms of speech and provincial vulgarities of dress and mannerisms—so much so that he was generally regarded as an Englishman despite his birth in Rochester, N.Y. I can just recall his extremely precise and cultivated British voice. (Joshi 16)

Lovecraft’s careful word choice almost lulls the reader into the proposed image of his father: a suave, cultured, Englishman mistakenly born and raised across the pond in the United States. However, the reality of this quote is starkly different. One cannot help but feel the overwhelming presence of peer pressure upon Winfield Lovecraft by whoever “warned” him not to embrace his true American heritage. In this situation, the “cultivation” of Winfield Lovecraft’s British accent can only be synonymous with “learned.”

Though Winfield Scott Lovecraft died of tertiary syphilis in 1898—when Howard was a mere eight years old—his simultaneous reverence of
English culture and disdain of American culture would have a strong, continuous influence upon Howard’s life and work. The influence of Lovecraft’s ancestry upon his philosophical thought and social attitudes is also touched upon by Lovecraft’s wife of two years, Sonia H. Davis, in her 1948 memoir *The Private Life of H.P. Lovecraft*: “H.P. once told me that on the Phillips side he came down from a long line of highly educated and cultured gentlefolk among whom were judges, ministers, public benefactors and teachers. One ancestor...was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence” (Davis 7). When considering Lovecraft’s colorful heritage, his affinity for the British Empire is ironic considering his own ancestor fought for the other side during the Revolutionary War. Whatever the case, it is clear that Lovecraft takes no small amount of pride in his high class forebears.

It is no surprise, then, that Lovecraft’s early social and philosophical views evolved into strong feelings of Aryanism, racial purity, and aristocracy. Lovecraft wrote two particularly blatant statements of his burgeoning racism in 1902 and 1905, respectively. These pieces, entitled *To the Starry Cross of the South* and *De Triumpho Naturae* depict a teenage Lovecraft’s views on the “folly” of the American Civil War. Though Lovecraft’s dislike of American culture has been established, he displays a clear sympathetic tone towards the
cause of the Southern Confederacy in *To the Starry Cross of the South*: “When first this warlike banner was unfurl’d / A noble cause was born into the World / No purer flag hath e’er defy’d the wind / Proclaiming high the Rights of Human kind. / The cruel YANKEE, midst ignoble fight / Stood aw’d or fled in Panick at the sight” (Lovecraft 13, lines 1-6). In addition to asserting the power of the Confederacy during its peak, Lovecraft—in his typical fashion—switches quickly into a lament for a once proud cause in the second half of the piece: “And though the South by Treachery’s o’erthrown / The Mem’ry of past Valour ne’er is gone: / Midst Ruin vast, and overwhelming loss, / All Southrons true revere the STARRY CROSS!” (Lovecraft 13, lines 7-10).

Though Lovecraft (here only twelve) does not elaborate on why he allies himself with the Confederacy nor define what the “rights of human kind” entail, an examination of 1905’s *De Triumpho Naturae*—also written in response to the outcome of the American Civil War—provides a more specific motivation to Lovecraft’s biases: “The Northern bigot, with false zeal inflam’ed / The virtues of the Afric race proclaim’d / Declar’d the blacks his brothers and peers, / And at their slavery shed fraternal tears / distorted for his cause the Holy Word / And deem’d himself commanded by the Lord / To draw his sword, whate’er the cost might be, / And set the sons of Aethiopia free”
Lovecraft’s brash condemnation of the Union within the first few lines of this poem reveals a strong stance in favor of slavery.

While the pro-slavery sentiment of these lines could be attributed to Lovecraft’s early feelings of aristocratic superiority, the latter half of De Triumpho Naturae focuses his scathing pen upon a more specific subject:

“Among the free in cursed mock’ry sate / The grinning Aethiop, conscious of his state…/ The Savage black, the ape-resembling beast / Hath held too long his Saturnalian feast / From out the land, by act of far’way heav’n / To ling’ring death his numbers shall be driv’n / Against God’s will the Yankee freed the slave / And in the act consign’d him to the grave” (Lovecraft 14, lines 15-16, 19-24). Here we see early signs of Lovecraft’s white supremacist attitude through the divination of genocide. The religious angle given to this act of extermination, along with the false perception that their race poses a threat to the dominant white culture, makes Lovecraft little more than a twelve-year-old neo Nazi hiding behind the charm of archaic English. Lovecraft goes to great lengths to establish a sympathetic tone toward the “plight” of the south in these two poems. They are, however, another case of Lovecraft’s fruitless desire to belong to a social group other than his own. Lovecraft was in fact
born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1890 (well after the Civil War ended). It should also be noted that he never travelled to any southern state during his lifetime. Needless to say, Lovecraft’s credibility (or how much he think he had as a twelve-year-old Northerner) is quickly shot down and his criteria for what makes up a “true” Southerner are hopelessly invalid.

Lovecraft maintained his Aryan-esque viewpoint up through his teenage years and later life by applying it to his personal politics. In 1919, he set forth his white aristocratic philosophy in a non-fictional rant on America’s racial diversity entitled *Americanism*. The core of this essay lies in Lovecraft’s desire to resurrect America’s British influences: “…all would-be definers of ‘Americanism’ fail through their prejudiced unwillingness to trace the quality to its European source…and consequently waste their efforts in trying to treat America as if it were an isolated phenomenon without ancestry” (Lovecraft 33). Lovecraft’s Revolutionary War-era ancestor would surely turn in his grave at such a notion. Whatever the case, Lovecraft continues to advocate his pro-British position in regard to America: “Americanism is expanded Anglo-Saxonism. It is the spirit of England…it is the spirit of truth…and progress—which is England—plus the element of equality and opportunity caused by pioneer settlement…the world’s highest race under the most favourable
conditions” (Lovecraft 33). There is a contradiction in Lovecraft’s preferences here. The affinity he had for his father’s rejection of “Americanisms”, along with his awkward proclamation of “God Save the Queen” at age six, creates a distinct lean towards England. However, Lovecraft argues that Americans are the “world’s strongest race.”

There is a definite flavor of Aryanism present in this passage when Lovecraft refers to Americans (or perhaps more appropriately, imported Anglo Saxons) as the “world’s highest race.” However, the latter half of Lovecraft’s Americanism shows that not all Americans carry this label: “most dangerous...of the several misconceptions of Americanism is...the so-called ‘melting-pot of races and traditions...a mixture of really alien blood or ideas...can accomplish nothing but harm” (Lovecraft 34). According to Lovecraft, those races that are not “capable of assimilation to our English types” (Lovecraft 34) by “choosing the prevailing language and culture as their own; and neither try to modify our institutions, nor to keep alive their own in our midst” (Lovecraft 34), are not allowed to “enjoy...the liberties which our British ancestors carved out in toil and bloodshed” (Lovecraft 34). Clearly, Lovecraft’s idea of the “world’s highest race” are those of English descent. More specifically—when considering the racist contents of *De Triumpho*
Naturae and To the Starry Cross of the South—those who are white and of English descent. Lovecraft’s politics crossed over into his personal life more than once. Sonia H. Davis’s memoir briefly illustrates this crossover: “soon after we were married [Howard] told me that whenever we have company he would appreciate it if there were ‘Aryans’ in the majority” (Davis 20). Like his philosophical companion Adolf Hitler (Lovecraft apparently “liked the boy” [Joshi 589] and dubbed his motivation for the holocaust as a “basic urge” [Joshi 589] according to Joshi’s biography), Lovecraft did not fit the description of a true “Aryan” thanks to his dark hair and eyes. No doubt he would be the odd man among his desired company.

H.P. Lovecraft is not the first to desire a “pure culture” in his own country. The idea of a single “master race” is most synonymous with the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche’s concepts of the “blonde beast” and the “master race” outlined in On the Genealogy of Morals closely parallel Lovecraft’s Anglo-Saxon philosophy outlined above:

...the oldest “state” thus appeared as a fearful tyranny, as an oppressive and remorseless machine...some pack of blond beasts of prey, a conqueror and master race which...unhesitatingly lays its terrible claws upon a populace perhaps tremendously superior
in numbers but still formless and nomad...their work is an
instinctive creation and imposition of forms; they are the most
involuntary, unconscious artists there are—wherever they appear
something new soon arises, a ruling structure that lives...they do
not know what guilt, responsibility, or consideration are, these
born organizers; they exemplify that terrible artists’ egoism that
has the look of bronze and knows itself justified to all eternity in
its “work,” like a mother in her child. (Kaufmann 522-23)

Lovecraft’s Aryan perspective reaches Nietzsche’s level upon
collection. His call for the genocide of the African American race by the
denizens of the South in *De Triumpho Naturae* certainly fits the “laying of
terrible claws” image that Nietzsche presents here. Like Lovecraft, Nietzsche
shows a distinct preference for blonde hair and light skin in his superior race.
Both Nietzsche’s “blonde beasts” and Lovecraft’s ideal master race set forth in
*De Triumpho Naturae* also share the same purpose of exterminating an inferior
race of people. Both authors also present a feeble idea of justifying their
 genocide: Lovecraft tries to pass it off as “God’s will” (which cannot be taken
seriously since he already proclaimed his devout atheism by age twelve) while
Nietzsche tries to assign a hopelessly awkward mother-child metaphor to the
task. However flawed the concept of genocide might be (how exactly does one proclaim a position of power over a dead race?), it plays a pivotal role in Lovecraft's fiction that shall be addressed later.

Lovecraftian scholar S.T. Joshi contends in his summation of Lovecraft's philosophical development *H.P. Lovecraft: The Decline of the West* that Lovecraft had indeed read Nietzsche's works by 1919 (Joshi 17). Though it is not clear whether this had a direct influence on his penning of *Americanism* that same year, Lovecraft offered a critique of Nietzsche's philosophy two years later in 1921 simply titled *Nietzscheism and Realism*. This essay discusses what Lovecraft perceives to be the flaws of Nietzsche's stream of thought. Consider the following passage regarding the concept of a "master race" (referred to by Nietzsche as the "blonde beast"):

I doubt whether it would be possible to create any class strong enough to sway permanently a vast body of inferiors, hence I perceive the impracticality of Nietzscheism and the essential instability of even the strongest governments. There is no such thing—there will never be such a thing—as good and permanent government among the crawling, miserable vermin called human beings. Aristocracy and monarchy are the most efficient in
developing the best qualities of mankind as expressed in achievements of taste and intellect; but they lead to an unlimited arrogance. That arrogance in turn leads inevitably to their decline and overthrow. (Lovecraft 69)

Though Lovecraft points out the flaws of Nietzsche’s “master race” by arguing that “…humanity is in a state of perpetually and incurably unstable equilibrium” (Lovecraft 70), he is not entirely convinced that the capitalistic alternative will be any more effective: “on the other hand, democracy and ochlocracy lead just as certainly to decline and collapse through their lack of any stimulus to individual achievement” (Lovecraft 69).

Although Lovecraft is quick to point out the flaws in Nietzsche’s extreme vision of a dominant culture, he contradicts himself by embracing an aristocratic system of government more readily than a system based on Capitalism. Lovecraft confesses that “aristocracy alone is capable of creating thoughts and objects of value…such a state must precede democracy…in order to build the original culture. Fewer are willing to admit…that democracy and ochlocracies merely subsist parasitically on the aristocracies they overthrow” (Lovecraft 70). Though he is clearly asserting the political dominance of aristocracy, Lovecraft’s vision of the aristocrat greatly differs from that of
Nietzsche’s: “the real aristocrat is ever reasonable, kindly, and affable toward the masses—it is the incompletely cultured *novus homo* who makes ostentation of his power and position” (Lovecraft 71). Lovecraft later adds that “the undesirability of any system of rule not tempered with the quality of kindness is obvious; for ‘kindness’ is...highly necessary to the smooth adjustment of botched and freakish creatures like most human beings” (Lovecraft 71).

It is certainly awkward to hear about an aristocracy based on kindness from Lovecraft when considering his call for the extermination of the entire African American race two years earlier. His concept of aristocracy (in practice rather than theory) more closely allies with Nietzsche’s structure based on cruelty: “...spiritualization and ‘deification’ of cruelty...permeates...higher culture...to see others suffer does one good, to make others suffer even more...without cruelty there is no festival...and in punishment there is so much that is *festive!*” (Kaufmann 502-3).

*Nietzscheism and Realism* is quite contradictory to say the least. It also suffers from a gross misinterpretation of Nietzschean philosophy on Lovecraft’s part. While it cannot be denied that key aspects of Nietzsche’s argument in favor of his “blonde beast” include domination and cruelty, Lovecraft makes the mistake of placing these concepts into political and
governmental contexts when Nietzsche himself clearly emphasizes the *individual* as his ideal “master race.” According to Nietzsche, the so-called “blonde beasts” are “by nature master...they appear as lightening appears...too sudden...even to be hated...it is not in them that the ‘bad conscience’ developed...but it would not have developed without them” (Kaufmann 522-23). Nietzsche defines “bad conscience” as “the serious illness that man was bound to contract under the stress of the most fundamental change he ever experienced—that change which occurred when he found himself enclosed within the walls of society and of peace” (Kaufmann 520). In addition to the context in which “bad conscience” occurs, Nietzsche also provides its actual qualities: “…the political organization protected itself against the old instincts of freedom...brought about that all those instincts of wild, free, prowling man turned backward against man himself. Hostility, cruelty... turned against the possessors of such instincts: that is the origin of the ‘bad conscience’ (Kaufmann 521).

The connection between Nietzsche’s “blonde beast” and his concept of “bad conscience” is critical in stressing emphasis on individuality and is therefore necessary to understand Lovecraft’s misapplication of Nietzsche’s philosophy. In a nutshell, Nietzsche’s “bad conscience” is the result of societal
repression of the basic human instincts of cruelty and hostility. This
demonization causes the “political structure” to view these traits as undesirable
when in fact (according to Nietzsche) they are the truest form of freedom. By
arguing that the concept of “bad conscience” would not have been possible
without the existence of the “blonde beast”, Nietzsche has thus established his
ideal within a group of individuals rather than a form of government or
aristocracy. Therefore, Lovecraft’s use of Nietzschean ideology in terms of
government and aristocratic structure is misplaced.

Lovecraft is quick to criticize what he believes is the Nietzschean ideal
of a singular, powerful government built by cruelty and fear by insisting that
such a structure will never last. However, he quickly retreats to his beloved
ideas of aristocracy and monarchy and insists that they are the only valid forms
of governing the population. In supporting an aristocratic system, Lovecraft is
also supporting the misinterpreted Nietzschean concept that he is so keen on
criticizing. Lovecraft’s misread establishes Nietzsche’s ideal as a political
structure rather than a dominant group of individuals. Therefore, rather than
critiquing what can actually be considered as Nietzschean ideology, Lovecraft
is in fact criticizing a misrepresentation of it that he himself has made.
Lovecraft ends his essay by ultimately resigning himself to political neutrality by reminding us once again of mankind’s impermanence and insignificance: “… it is futile to pass judgment upon any type of social order, since all are but the blind result of uncontrollable fate and utterly beyond the power of any statesman or reformer to alter or amend…all human life is…sardonically purposeless…and always will be” (Lovecraft 71). The insertion of his notorious disdain for humanity can be seen as nothing more than a cop out on Lovecraft’s part; as if he himself was tired of writing on the subject and found an easy way out of any real analysis. Lovecraft attempts to backpedal further with his proposed “solution” to the problem: “universal suicide is the most logical thing in all the world—we reject it only because of our primitive cowardice and childish fear of the dark. If we were at all sensible we would seek death—the same blissful blank which we enjoyed before we existed” (Lovecraft 71). This Deus Ex Machina only serves to invalidate Lovecraft’s argument in favor of an aristocracy based on kindness because of his repeated reliance on extermination. One also cannot help but feel that the essay is a wasted effort on Lovecraft’s part. What is the purpose of critiquing a political structure built by mankind when Lovecraft places no value on the human race?
The Nietzschean concepts of aristocracy, cruelty, political overthrow, societal decay and decline, genocide and a concept of a “master race” are all especially present in *The Mound*, and *At the Mountains of Madness*. Before examining each work in detail, it is important to note that the term “master race” will not necessarily apply to the human race, but rather to Lovecraft’s various extra-terrestrial civilizations and the hierarchies that each story sets forth. It should also be established that the following theoretical application utilizes Lovecraft’s misinterpretation of Nietzschean philosophy that I previously identified as an emphasis on a dominant totalitarian system of government rather than on the actual Nietzschean ideal of tyrannical individualism.

*The Mound* as it exists today is a revision of a story written by Zealia Bishop that Lovecraft completed in 1929. Although the story opens with an ethnologist in Oklahoma studying the “rites of Yig, Father of Snakes” (Lovecraft 97) and their relation to an ancient Native American burial ground in the present day, the story told by Pánfilo de Zamacona y Núñez—a Spanish conquistador commissioned by Cortez to explore the world underneath the burial mound circa 1545 A.D.—through his recently unearthed manuscript is
most relevant when considering the presence of the aforementioned Nietzschean concepts.

According to his manuscript, Zamacona’s exploration eventually leads him to the “region of great mounds” (Lovecraft 117) which, according to the natives, “had something to do with the evil world... the Old Ones below had had colonies on the surface and had traded with men everywhere, even in the lands that had sunk under the big waters” (Lovecraft 118). Typically, the presence or mere mention of the Old Ones in the Lovecraftian mythos prefaces destruction on a grand scale. However, *The Mound* offers a unique role for Lovecraft’s terrifyingly powerful beings:

> It was when those lands had sunk that the Old Ones closed themselves up below and refused to deal with surface people. The refugees from the sinking places had told them that the gods of outer earth were against men, and that no men could survive on the outer earth unless they were daemons in league with the evil gods. That is why they... did fearful things to any who ventured down there where they dwelt... the Old Ones themselves were half-ghost—indeed, it was said that they no longer grew old or reproduced their kind... it was because the
underground world needed air that the openings in the deep valleys were not blocked up as the mound-openings...had been.

(Lovecraft 118)

An exchange between a young Sioux Indian named Charging Buffalo and Zamacona prior to his descent under the burial mound also provides key aspects of the identity of the Mound Denizens. The young Sioux warrior reveals that “...they worshipped Yig, the great father of snakes, and Tulu, the octopus-headed entity that had brought them down from the stars” (Lovecraft 119). This excerpt establishes a clear connection between the Mound Denizens and his larger “Cthulhu Mythos” through their worship of Lovecraft’s most famous creation: the gigantic octopoid priest Cthulhu.

Soon after venturing into the mound, Zamacona is met by a group of mound dwellers and subsequently discovers that this new underground world “...bore an ancient name...best represented to Anglo-Saxon ears by the phonetic arrangement K’n-yan” (Lovecraft 131). He is then taken to K’n-yan’s metropolis city of Tsath. While in Tsath, Zamacona’s is exposed to a distinct master-slave relationship between certain classes of mound denizens. Before exploring this relationship in detail, let us examine the Nietzsche’s fundamental reasoning for advocating slavery put forth in Human, All Too
Human (the following excerpt is provided by S.T. Joshi in H.P. Lovecraft: The Decline of the West): “A higher culture can come into being only where there are two castes of society: the working caste and the idle caste, capable of true leisure; or, to express it more emphatically, the caste for forced labor and the caste of free labor” (Joshi 61). Quite simply, Nietzsche feels that a slave class toiling under a ruling class is an essential building block of any developed society.

There are multiple instances of slavery within the city of Tsath that are a result of a social hierarchy established by its dwellers. The most rudimentary of which is established before Zamacona even sets foot in K’n-yan’s metropolis:

[The Old Ones] had frightful beasts with a faint strain of human blood, on which they rode...the things...were carnivorous, and like their masters, preferred human flesh...although the Old Ones themselves did not breed, they had a sort of half-human slave class which also served to nourish the human and animal population. This had been very oddly recruited, and was supplemented by a second slave-class of reanimated corpses...which would last almost indefinitely and perform and
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sort of work when directed by streams of thought. (Lovecraft 118-19)

This passage establishes one tier of the master-slave hierarchy within The Mound. Though Lovecraft is not specific as to the method of which the Mound Denizens transform men into these hideous beasts, the domination of the human race by the entire underground race of the ancient burial mound through the enslavement of both living and dead is apparent. It is important to note, however, that human beings are slightly above K’n-yan’s half-breed beasts in the sense that they (along with whatever animal population that resides there) are nourished by their meat. It is certainly refreshing to see human beings in a place other than the bottom of Lovecraft’s evolutionary ladder for once.

While the lowest level of slavery in The Mound establishes any generic Mound Denizen as ruler over the human race through their powers of transformation and reanimation, the citizens of Tsath consider those who do not dwell within the city itself to be “the naturally inferior members of the ruling class of Tsath” (Lovecraft 134) who are controlled by a “race of reduced numbers whose mental force could govern an extensive array of inferior and semi-human industrial organisms” (Lovecraft 134). Thus, according to Lovecraft, there is a second more powerful ruling class that presides over K’n-
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yan’s outsiders. Ironically, this second tier acquires this specific slave-class in the exact same manner in which they acquire their carnivorous half-breed beasts: “this extensive slave-class was highly composite, being bred from ancient conquered enemies...from dead bodies curiously galvanized into effectiveness, and from the naturally inferior members of the ruling class of Tsath” (Lovecraft 134). It is also important to note that the “slave class [does] not share the immortality of the freemen of Tsath” (Lovecraft 144).

There is a major flaw in Lovecraft’s second ruling class. Clearly, the Mound Denizens who live in Tsath share the same abilities of reanimation and telepathy as those who they supposedly rule over. In simpler terms, the only factors that differentiate Tsath’s Mound Denizens and those who live outside the city are geography and immortality. Lovecraft makes it clear that Tsath’s inhabitants are immortal whereas its outsiders are not. Where does this immortality originate? Lovecraft establishes that the entire race of Mound Denizens was transported to earth from their original home beyond the stars by Cthulhu. He provides no history or background to establish the segregation of the race that is put forth here.

The actual driving force behind the superiority of the primary ruling class of Tsath is the political structure of their society. According to
Zamacona’s manuscript, Tsath’s “ruling type...had become highly superior through selective breeding and social evolution” (Lovecraft 134) which they gained by “having passed through a period of idealistic industrial democracy which gave equal opportunities to all, and thus...raising the naturally intelligent to power, drained the masses of all their brains” (Lovecraft 134).

This excerpt is crucial in that it reveals the power source of the Tsath dwellers. By literally draining the minds of the majority of the citizens of K’n-yan, a small majority is able to reign over the entire mound underworld. There is a clear sense of political evolution here. Though the finer points of this “democratic” government are not revealed, it is clear that a select few members of Tsath’s inhabitants use it as a means to ascend to power and then transform K’n-yan’s government into a totalitarian aristocracy. This is the exact opposite of the parasitic relationship between democracy and aristocracy that Lovecraft argued for in Nietzscheism and Realism in that Tsath’s aristocratic structure sprang up from democracy.

Though a democratic system of government is responsible for the ascension of the upper tier of Mound Denizens, Lovecraft makes it clear that it is nothing more than a fleeting system fueled by idealism and little else. The massive “brain drain” that ensues as a result of adopting this system can be
seen as an extension of Lovecraft’s own sentiments on democracy reflected in *Nietzscheism and Realism* mentioned earlier. The current, ongoing political of Tsath is a “kind of communistic or semi-anarchical state; habit rather than law determining the daily order of things. This was made possible by the paralyzing ennui of the race, whose wants and need were limited to physical fundamentals and to new sensations” (Lovecraft 135). The current state of government that Lovecraft describes as “semi-anarchical” implies a loss of power structure within the ruling class of Tsath. Here, it is important to pause and consider Nietzsche’s “Will to Power” concept and the consequences for becoming sated in one’s pursuit of power and domination:

> What is good? All that enhances the feeling of power, the Will to Power, and power itself...what is bad? All that proceeds from weakness. What is happiness? The feeling that power is increasing, that resistance has been overcome. Not contentment, but more power; not peace at any price, but war. (Nietzsche 4)

This excerpt from Nietzsche’s *The Antichrist* warns of the dangers of becoming too comfortable in a position of power. The anarchism of the Mound Denizens is less a move of radicalism and more a product of laziness. They have lost the will to sustain rule over the lesser residents of *K’n-yan* and have
regressed to stimulating fundamental physical and emotional sensations within their ranks as the sole form of entertainment. Nietzsche goes on to say that "where the will to power is lacking, degeneration sets in" (Nietzsche 6).

Despite their decadence, the rulers of Tsath have not lost their position of power over the rest of the mound underworld in that they still exercise a form of power over their slaves: "daily life was organized in ceremonial patterns; with games, intoxication, torture of slaves, day-dreaming, gastronomic and emotional orgies, religious exercises, exotic experiments...and the like...as the principal occupations" (Lovecraft 135). The current state of *K’n-yan* is not quite as anarchistic as Lovecraft would like it to be. S.T. Joshi also reminds us in *Lovecraft’s Alien Civilisations: A Political Interpretation* that “Zamacona was given ten slaves to ‘protect him from thieves and sadists and religious orgiasts on the public highways’” (Joshi 112). As depraved as it may be, a daily structure does indeed exist in Tsath. The daily torture of the slave class by the upper class of Tsath as a form of entertainment is a reminder of their power over them in lieu of their diminished desire to rule with an iron fist.

Based on what we know about Lovecraft’s political preferences, the underground world of *K’n-yan* can be viewed as utopian. There is a distinct
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aristocracy that caters to the “pure” race of Tsath’s inhabitants who rule thanks to their drain of intelligence imposed on the masses. Most notably, there is an (unrealistic) absence of slave revolt. The idea of Tsath’s elite ruling unopposed and using the other Mound Denizens however they see fit certainly creates a singular, eternal power structure within the context of this story and thus further invalidates Lovecraft’s critique of (misinterpreted) Nietzscheism by contradicting his argument that such a structure or ruling class can never exist.

There is a third and final tier to the master-slave dynamic in *The Mound*. This tier is less specific than the others but also provides a connection to Lovecraft’s larger mythology other than the small role of Yig and Cthulhu as the primary deities of Tsath. Though mentioned solely as a piece of history, the occupants of this final tier wield enough power to take position above the Tsath-dwelling Mound Denizens:

At some point infinitely in the past most of the outer world had sunk beneath the ocean...this was undoubtedly due to the wrath of space-devils hostile alike to men and to men’s gods—for it bore out rumours of a primordially earlier sinking which had submerged the gods themselves, including great Tulu, who still lay prisoned and dreaming in the watery vaults of the half-cosmic
city Relex. No man not a slave of the space-devils...could live long enough on the outer earth; and it was decided that all beings who remained there must be evilly connected. Accordingly traffic with the lands of sun and starlight abruptly ceased...

(Lovecraft 131)

The reference to “Tulu” and “Relex”—which are alternate spellings of Cthulhu and his underwater city of R’lyeh—and their forced submersion connects The Mound to one of Lovecraft’s most famous works: The Call of Cthulhu in which this well-known couplet can be found: “in his house at R’lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming” (Lovecraft 81). Recall that Cthulhu brought the Mound Denizens to earth from the stars and was thus deified by all residents of K’n-yan prior to the degeneration of their society. This deification elevates Cthulhu into a position over K’n-yan’s inhabitants in a religious context. However, unlike traditional religious figureheads, Cthulhu is still present (though lying dormant) in his sunken city.

By sinking Cthulhu, the primary deity of the Mound Denizens, the space-devils occupy the third and final tier of the master-slave dynamic within The Mound. Though this excerpt may be nothing more than filler material used by Lovecraft to connect his collaboration with Zealia Bishop to his “Cthulhu
"Mythos", it nonetheless establishes the power of the space-devils over the gods of the Mound Denizens by forcing them into an underwater exile. The severing of all methods of contact between K’n-yan and the outside world and outer space after the isolation of their primary god Cthulhu shows the Mound Denizens’s tremendous fear of the space-devils and their powers. It is important to note that these “space devils” take no active role within the story. Rather, they are (as is the case with the majority of Lovecraft’s fiction) lurking on the outskirts of the story as a reminder of something immense, ominous, and nameless. Though the “space devils” passively reign supreme over the world depicted in Lovecraft’s The Mound, they are part of another power-based Nietzschean hierarchy in Lovecraft’s 1931 novella, At the Mountains of Madness.

Lovecraft’s novella tells the story of an Antarctic archeological expedition led by Professor William Dyer of the Miskatonic University Engineering department. Dyer is accompanied by fellow professor Frank H. Pabodie whose “drilling apparatus...was unique and radical in its lightness, portability, and capacity to...cope quickly with strata of varying hardness” (Lovecraft 257). The group of “four men from the university...sixteen assistants, seven graduate students...and nine skilled mechanics” (Lovecraft
sets off in “four large Dornier aeroplanes, designed especially for the tremendous altitude flying necessary on the Antarctic plateau” (Lovecraft 257) with Pabodie’s drill and “no greater load than three seven-dog sleds could carry” (Lovecraft 257).

After repeated “successful mineral borings at several points...with...Pabodie’s apparatus” (Lovecraft 261), Dyer’s group discovers fossils of a “…radically unclassifiable organism of considerably advanced evolution...(Lovecraft 264). It is later discovered that these fossils originated from a “Cyclopean city of no architecture known to man or to human imagination” (Lovecraft 282).

The discovery of this ancient city by Dyer leads to the uncovering of a prehistoric, extraterrestrial civilization and a history of racism, genocide, and slave revolt between its inhabitants. While scouring the desolate Arctic city, Dyer and his group come across several walls with sculptures and hieroglyphics that reveal the history of the city’s extraterrestrial inhabitants. Most notably, the sculptures reveal their connection to the formation of life on earth: “it was under the sea, at first for food and later for other purposes, that they first created earth life—using available substances according to long-known methods” (Lovecraft 309). The notion that all life on earth originated as
a manufactured food supply is Lovecraft’s not-so-subtle reminder of the superiority of the Old Ones over mankind. While I dislike the thought of being a snack for a larger extraterrestrial being, Lovecraft’s lack of description once again raises questions as to the scope of the abilities of his beloved Old Ones. What do these “long-known methods” entail? Were we bred? Grown? Churned out in some kind of Arctic factory? Evolutionism versus Creationism aside, it is impossible to tell within the context of this novella.

However, earth was not the only locale in which this “manufacturing process” took place. Apparently, the Old Ones “had done the same thing on other planets” (Lovecraft 309). In addition to a healthy food supply, the Old Ones had perfected a method of creating “multicellular protoplasmic masses capable of molding their tissues into...temporary organs under hypnotic influence and thereby forming ideal slaves to perform the heavy work of the community” (Lovecraft 309). Like the Mound Denizens, the Old Ones of At the Mountains of Madness use hypnosis as a means to control and create an inferior slave class. The Necronomicon of the “Mad Arab” Abdul Alhazred (as referenced within the context of Lovecraft’s novella) identifies them “without doubt...as the ‘Shoggoths’...” (Lovecraft 309). Unlike the slave class in The Mound, who degenerated into a form of sadistic entertainment for the elite of
K’n-yan, the Old Ones use the Shoggoths to “lift prodigious weights” (Lovecraft 310). As a result, the Old Ones’ “small, low cities under the sea grew to vast and imposing labyrinths” (Lovecraft 310).

The relationship between the Shoggoths and the Old Ones is more conventional in than that of the Mound Denizens in its “worker-overseer” dynamics. The Shoggoths also serve as the primary builders of the “cyclopean” cities of the powerful Old Ones and are therefore not expendable like the slave classes of The Mound. Because the Shoggoths have a distinct purpose and are thus kept alive, they eventually acquire a “dangerous degree of accidental intelligence…” (Lovecraft 314) through the ages because the Old Ones lose “…the art of creating new life from inorganic matter…” (Lovecraft 313). As a consequence, “…the Old Ones had to depend on the molding of forms always in existence” (Lovecraft 313). This is a rare instance where Lovecraft’s seemingly invincible Old Ones lose some of their abilities with the passage of time.

The newly developed intelligence of the Shoggoth slave class inevitably leads to a revolt against their masters, the Old Ones. Friedrich Nietzsche’s criteria for slave revolt set forth in The Genealogy of Morals is of greatest relevance here when considering the motivation of the Shoggoths:
The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values: the *ressentiment* of natures that are denied the true reaction, that of deeds, and compensate themselves with an imaginary revenge. While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is “outside,” what is “different,” what is “not itself,”; and *this* No is its creative deed. This inversion of the value-positing eye—this need to direct one’s view outward instead of back to oneself—is the essence of *ressentiment*: in order to exist, slave morality always first needs a hostile external world; it needs, physiologically speaking, external stimuli in order to act at all—its action is fundamentally reaction. (Kaufmann 472-73)

The “hostile external world” mentioned here need hardly be established in the case of the Shoggoths. The fact that they were literally born into slavery serves as motivation enough for an uprising. Like the majority of events in *At the Mountains of Madness*, the revolt of the Shoggoths is depicted visually through hieroglyphics and various bas-reliefs discovered by Dyer and his expedition:
...one hundred and fifty million years ago...a veritable war war waged upon [the Shoggoths] by the marine Old Ones. Pictures of this war, and of the headless...fashion in which the Shoggoths typically left their slain victims, held a marvelously fearsome quality...the Old Ones had used curious weapons of molecular and atomic disturbances against the rebel entities, and in the end had achieved a complete victory. Thereafter the sculptures showed a period in which Shoggoths were tamed and broken by armed Old Ones as the wild horses of the American west were tamed by cowboys. (Lovecraft 314)

Though brief and unsuccessful, the revolt of the Shoggoths reveals key weaknesses in Lovecraft’s Old Ones. Most importantly, it establishes that these powerful entities can indeed be killed (decapitation being the preferred method of the Shoggoths), Secondly, it creates doubt as to the scope of the Old Ones’s powers. This question of power is expertly addressed by Lovecraftian scholar S.T. Joshi in his essay Lovecraft’s Alien Civilisations: A Political Interpretation: “all [Lovecraft’s] alien civilizations...seem to deal in warfare...in a roughly similar fashion—through the use of a vast army...it implies the failure...to develop weapons that...would render the use of large
bodies of men needless" (Joshi 112). While focusing specifically on the revolutionary war between the Shoggoths and the Old Ones, Joshi adds: "it is true that the Old ones ‘used curious weapons of molecular disturbance’ against...the Shoggoths...but these seem to avail them little, since the Old Ones were defeated...” (Joshi 112).

Joshi’s commentary raises interesting questions of power regarding the Old Ones in *At the Mountains of Madness*. It has already been established that they created life on other planets in addition to all earth life (including the Shoggoths) out of sheer will. Why, then, did they not obliterate the slave uprising of the Shoggoths through the use of the same immense power that was used to spawn all earth life? The fact that the Shoggoths were merely re-enslaved following their uprising reveals a major weakness in the Old Ones.

In addition to the uprising of the Shoggoths, the Old Ones battled other extra-terrestrial entities that originated from space. The outcome of this second war establishes the dominance of another alien race over the Old Ones. The history of this second conflict is documented within the pictographs of the ancient cyclopean walls:

...another race—a land race of beings shaped like octopi and probably corresponding to...prehuman spawn of Cthulhu—soon
began filtering down from cosmic infinity and precipitated a monstrous war which for a time drove the Old Ones wholly back to the sea...later peace was made, and the new lands were given to the Cthulhu spawn whilst the Old ones held the sea and the older lands...then suddenly the lands of the Pacific sank again, taking with them the frightful stone city of R'lyeh and all the cosmic octopi so that the Old Ones were again supreme on the planet except for one shadowy fear about which they did not like to speak. (Lovecraft 313)

The defeat of the Old Ones by the Cthulhu spawn is significant in and of itself. However, the manner in which the war between the two races ends is even more so. The fact that the Cthulhu spawn were disposed of with the *Deus Ex Machina* sinking of their newly acquired lands rather than by the supposed strength of the Old Ones establishes their place over the Old Ones in terms of strength and power.

There is a second extra terrestrial that succeeds in defeating the Old Ones. The hieroglyphics tell of “a new invasion from outer space—this time by half-fungous, half crustacean creatures” (Lovecraft 314). Rather than engage this new threat on earth, the Old Ones “attempted...to sally forth again into the
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planetary ether; but, despite all traditional preparations, found it no longer possible to leave the earth’s atmosphere…it was now definitely lost to the race” (Lovecraft 314). The loss of interstellar travel is yet another example of the weakness of the Old Ones. This loss of power is similar to the governmental decay of K’nyan’s Mound Denizens in that it is no doubt a result of the Old Ones becoming too comfortable in their position of power over the Shoggoths. Without the ability of interstellar travel, the Old Ones are once again forced to battle within their own Arctic territory. Eventually, “the Mi-Go drove the Old Ones out of all the northern lands, though they were powerless to disturb those in the sea. Little by little the slow retreat of the elder race to their original Antarctic habitat was beginning” (Lovecraft 315). Though the Mi-Go (Lovecraft’s term for these extra-terrestrial crustaceans) succeed in driving the Old Ones out into isolation within the Arctic and thus prove themselves to be more powerful, the fact that they cannot disturb the underwater Cthulhu spawn places the Mi-Go slightly below them in the racial hierarchy of At the Mountains of Madness. Therefore, despite the focus of the story upon the conflict between the Old Ones and the Shoggoths, it is actually the Cthulhu spawn that ultimately hold the most power within the novella. The role of the Mi-Go and the Cthulhu spawn is similar to that of the elusive “space
devils’ in *The Mound* in that they alter the master-slave dynamic within the text through their attacks upon the existing power structure put in place by the Old Ones.

There is no doubt that the slave class of *The Mound* and the Shoggoths of *At the Mountains of Madness* share the same plight: both are created and exploited by a higher extraterrestrial class. However, upon comparison, the Shoggoths are clearly the superior of the two races because of their rebellion against their masters. This act of slave rebellion within the confines of Lovecraft’s novella shows an evolution in his political thought. Whereas the society of *K’n-yan* could be seen as an ideal Lovecraftian utopia in which the advanced aristocracy wields its power eternally, the political atmosphere of *At the Mountain of Madness* is more realistic in its depiction of the rise and fall of an aristocratic power structure due to the loss of what Nietzsche termed as the “Will to Power.” *At the Mountains of Madness* is more akin to the relationship between aristocracy and arrogance (what I have referred to as “comfort”) that Lovecraft set forth in *Nietzscheism and Realism*.

Though Lovecraft himself rejected the idea that one superior race could rule an entire society or system of government, he has nonetheless perpetuated the idea multiple times within these two pieces of fiction. The major flaw here
does not reside in Lovecraft’s fiction, but rather in the conflict between his personal politics and his essay *Nietzscheism and Realism*. His love for the slavery of the Civil War-era south, his ready embrace of racist Aryan philosophy; and the poetic genocide to which he condemned an entire race, makes his critique of Nietzsche’s “master race” and aristocracy in general seem little more than an attempt to conceal his own racist viewpoints behind the guise of unqualified political commentary.
Conclusion

As I gaze into my bookshelf at the now numerous anthologies of Lovecraftian fiction and criticism, I notice a striking duality between the two. The quality of Lovecraft’s anthologies of fiction outdoes that of my anthologies of criticism. The covers of Lovecraft’s work are carefully—and terrifyingly—illustrated, elaborate introductions by pop culture icons like Neil Gaiman preface them, praise hailing Lovecraft as a major influence on modern horror fiction from the likes of Stephen King, Anne Rice, and Clive Barker litter the back covers. The anthologies of criticism, however, are cheaply bound and printed. The majority of the scholarship is published by the aptly named Necronomicon Press, located in West Warwick, Rhode Island. This simple contrast served as the strongest form of motivation. Lovecraft’s work is clearly revered in horror, science fiction, and fantasy circles whereas the criticism has the look and feel of self-manufactured essays composed in dark basements on dusty typewriters by the biggest of Lovecraft’s fans.

The overall goal of my research on H.P. Lovecraft was validation. It was my sincerest hope to show that Lovecraft’s work transcends its humble pulp fiction origins and massive pop culture influence into the realm of worthy
literary analysis. For all his lurid plots involving extraterrestrials and the constant atmosphere of impending doom that accompany them, Lovecraft’s work is remarkably complex and detailed. The negligence of H.P. Lovecraft within the academy is twofold: scholars feel that its heavy horror and science fiction leanings deem it an unsuitable part of American literature (which brings up curious questions as to why the work of Lovecraft’s primary influence, Edgar Allan Poe is so revered), and, those amateur scholars who make the effort to criticize and analyze Lovecraft’s work are content to remain in the underground themselves; cult figures much like Lovecraft himself. If we are to truly bring Lovecraft out of the depths of cult stardom, we must adopt a more accepting attitude toward the genres he is so famous for contributing to. Horror, Science Fiction, and Fantasy may never achieve a place alongside the works of Twain, Faulkner, or Hemingway in the American literary canon, but they are deserving of the occasional academic eye nonetheless.
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