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Arianna C. Mayorga

St. Mary's University, arianna22carolina@gmail.com

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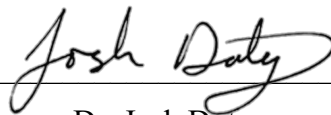
An Astrological Look into H.P. Lovecraft's "The Call of
Cthulhu:" A Celestial Telescope For Literary Analysis

by

Arianna Mayorga


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Approved by:



Dr. Josh Doty

Associate Professor of English Literature and Language



Dr. Robert Boyd Skipper, Professor of Philosophy

Honors Program

A Starry-Eyed Introduction to Astrological Criticism

No one has evidence beyond a doubt that the stars do not dictate every movement on Earth. Consequently, there is also no evidence for the opposite either. When the sun sets and all is said and done, it does not matter either way; people will believe what they want to. H.P. Lovecraft, for instance, did not want to believe in astrology. In a letter to his friend, Maurice W. Moe, he wrote, “As for astrology—since I have always been a devotee of the real science of *astronomy*, which takes all the ground from under the unreal and merely apparent celestial arrangements on which astrological predictions are based, I have had too great a contempt for the art to take much interest in it—except when refuting its puerile claims” (“H.P. Lovecraft's Interest in Astronomy.”). With that information, one who has no reason to argue with Lovecraft’s opinions posthumously, will leave it at that.

In the pursuit of laying a valid claim regarding astrology in Lovecraft’s fiction, I will add that he was a vicious bigot. In fact, Lovecraft “was extremely racist, and his personal letters reveal his opposition to interracial relationships, as well as his support of Adolf Hitler” (New York Public Radio 1). Bigotry is often the number one contender for creating a block of open mindedness in a person. Oftentimes, bigotry blocks individuals from learning about subjects they could potentially be in favor of purely “on the basis of opinions supposedly held by the members of a designated out-group, (2) the way of life that is perceived to have been chosen or is followed by members of the out-group, or (3) supposed innate characteristics that determine the behavior of members of the out-group (Markus 227). Along with his blatant racism and bigotry for all marginalized groups (including women), Lovecraft’s literature only features these groups to dehumanize them and lower them to purely primitive levels of existence (Paz 5). Though in cases like these, readers are often encouraged to look past the writer’s character, but I

suggest we keep it in mind. Lovecraft's heinous positions go to show that his opinions do not need to be held sacredly or dearly; if he adamantly disagreed with the intellectual properties of a practice there is a great likelihood it is valid in actuality. On top of this, his opinions on astrology are inconsistent; in another letter to a different friend regarding "the divisions of the moon and their relation to astrology, as it is in a couple of letters to Talman, then Lovecraft holds forth with all his erudition" (Joshi 251). Lovecraft's character was spotty *at best*; many of his contemporary fans claim to hold only his fiction dear, and reject who he actually was as a person (Joshi). Therefore, though Lovecraft would roll over in his grave were he aware someone was claiming astrology is active in his most acclaimed work, my claim does not lack moral or intellectual integrity. The prospect of him rolling over in his grave should be used as fuel to open one's mind to what I propose: a critical application to literature through astrology.

Lovecraft favored astronomy to such an extent that he often wondered what the stars' relation to him was (Joshi 182). His bigotry caused his philosophical quest to end there, but from his letters and through an analysis of "The Call of Cthulhu" we can see his astrological potential. Had Lovecraft not cut off all creative and mystical potential he had, perhaps the twelve year-old boy he once was would have been privy to a more intuitive relationship with the stars ("Physics."). The boy who was gifted a telescope and never looked away from the heavens after, who would grow into a man who yearned for a relation to his beloved cosmos ("Physics."). The gargantuan balls of gas he saw were pure renditions of physics and astronomy, but if he saw something else, something deeply mystical and otherworldly, we would have a completely different reading of "Cthulhu." Were readers to wander off the path he paved for us, creative feats can be achieved. Intellectual superiority should be left at the door, for the tradition of suppressing fundamentally cultural ideologies as a result being discounted or trivialized by

society is now defunct (xvi *Outsider Theory*). In this thesis I argue that modern conventions, used to debunk and make little of ancient methods of interpretation of the world around us, be disregarded in exchange for a completely unique literary criticism.

The application of unorthodox ideas may seem like a step back from the modern intellectual's way of thinking, but through discovery, you would actually become a forefather of a new pathway of intellectual thought. For clarity, rather than following a predesigned method of critical analysis or sticking to the typical slope of contemporary intellectual thought, I will be paving my own way. Using H.P. Lovecraft's theoretical gaps in logic, I will apply astrology to his work. The majority of representation of Lovecraft's opinions involves an overwhelming rejection of speculative sciences, such as astrology or mysticism. However, the gaps in his opinions and theories will be further unearthed and examined and used to prove the validity of an astrological approach to "The Call of Cthulhu." From there I will discuss thought processes accelerated by astrological ways of thinking that give way to vital concepts which will open up a reader's mind to a more complex understanding of any subject at hand. From this successful interpretation of one piece of literature, from a closed off individual, I aim to inspire other astrological-driven critiques of literature.

Astrological Criticism in Theory

Humans look to the miracle and unrelenting beauty of the stars in the sky, so it should not be surprising there is potential significance in such preternatural grace. Astrology's ancient roots add to its acclaim, rather than minimize its practice back to archaism. Intellectual and personal obstructions such as religion should not stop one from having an open mind, for it is common knowledge the three wise men who attended the birth of Christ followed a star because it predicted the birth of the Messiah. This is basic astrology: the prediction of events via stars.

The first intellectual level that must be cleared prior to the dissection of my astrological approach to literature is the understanding of basic astrology. Normally, for theses based on thorough research, it is common courtesy to use a credible academic source; Consider the lack of credit the general practice of astrology has as a whole. In addition to this, understand that even if I were to use a source such as that, it would not be much different from the well-researched introduction literature I have chosen as my primary astrology source. Damian Sharp, a two time winner of the Literary Fellowship Award from the Australian Council for the Arts, gave a clear ideological breakdown on the speculative science in question in his novel, *Learning Astrology*. He affirms that astrology is “partly science, partly intuitive discipline, and ultimately a synthesis of both” (Sharp 14). In another astrological text by the astrological pioneer, James Herschel Holden, it is again confirmed that as a result of the arithmetical nature of astrology the connection between religion and astrology faded; it became more of an exact practice (Holden 4). The use of the word “science” when describing the practice of astrology is distinctly wrong in the way that it is often used intuitively as well. The reason behind the stark distinction can be broken down further with the distinction between hard and soft sciences. Astrology, in its essence, is the combination of mathematical calculations of the stars and the real-world,

contextual and intrinsic understanding of the world we live in. In other words, it is if astronomy and human intuition merged together to create one study.

Human intuition is only a precursor though; the majority of astrology relies on scientific calculations. As Sharp states, “a horoscope is a precise instrument based on real forces, events, and relationships occurring in nature. It is, most importantly, a diagram of an individual's purpose in life and a symbolic language that describes how different factors—signs, planets, and houses—are combined to produce a meaningful whole.” A horoscope can be applied to anything with a precise time. This factor introduces the premise that an *event* can have a horoscope, which will aid in The understanding of my later application of this theory to “The Call of Cthulhu.”

One can procure their own horoscope or natal chart with “precise calculations, the exact time, date, and place of birth, latitude and longitude, an ephemeris, a table of the houses, a list of time changes, and other tools;” however, it is easier to just use a website to do all the calculations for you, presently (Sharp 18). The placement of the planets and other luminaries determines, for lack of a better word, the fate of that date and time. Ancient Babylonians discovered astrology and later the Greeks added further nuance to the common practice of it, but it was not until the 1930s (when Pluto was discovered) that it became the parapsychological ordeal it is today (Holden 11 & Sharp 31).

There are twelve houses in a natal chart. The order of the twelve houses depends on the ascendant, which is the “point where the eastern horizon is positioned in the horoscope at the time and place of birth” (Sharp 40). For example, if the ascendant was in Libra, then the first house would be ruled by Libra and the second house would be ruled by Scorpio. The order from Libra onward follows the sidereal, linear progression of the constellations that we normally perceive annually. From there, the houses of the planets and luminaries can be determined. For

simplicity, there will be no inclusion of asteroids or other stars in astrological charts. The primary focus is the effect of the eleven main astronomical bodies.

Purely fictional attributes like clairvoyance or telepathy are occurrences that land outside the understanding of science and nature, but parapsychology attempts to explain them (Magdalino 198). Clairvoyance is very commonly associated with the use of astrology, but it is incorrectly done so. The practice of astrology does not inherently include the act of relaying a predicted future to its practitioners. At least, not in any way that is more abnormal than a weather channel forecasting the weather; In the way you would equip an umbrella during a forecast of rain would you understand any variable of a natal chart. Building upon this understanding, we can move past the similarities between weather and astrological forecasting into the differences. Unlike weather forecasting, astrologers typically take forecasts and make a turn towards a psychological understanding of the individual, event, day, energy, etc. in question.

Sharp uses Carl Jung as his main example of psychological interpretations of charts, but it is also common to see people using Sigmund Freud's and other psychologists' approaches to psychology for chart interpretation. In one of Jung's academic journals he performed an experiment of which the hypothesis was "How do the conjunctions and oppositions of the sun, moon, Mars, Venus, ascendant and descendant behave in the horoscopes of married people?" (Jung 113). Which is exactly what led to the birth of the astrology that is practiced today rather than the archaic form of astrology. In his experiment, Jung wished to see how the aspects within the respective charts of married people functioned within their marriages. He tested to see if there were correlations, and if there were- what were they? In sum, he found that in married couples there were positive aspects between a pair of partners' big three. Common knowledge says that correlation does not equal causation and Jung's survey did not prove beyond reasonable

doubt that these spouses' marriages were impacted by such compatibility (Jung 114). That being said, we need not a correlative cause for an application of astrology to literature, but a correlation to be drawn so that ideas may be formed.

Literary analysis does not entirely depend on whether or not something is factual or provable. Critical approaches to literature exist mainly to give a writer further access to a text to deepen interpretation, analysis, and exploration of it. With this knowledge of how astrology and literary criticisms individually function, it should be easier to imagine how an astrological criticism would work. If Psychoanalytic criticism works by making a critic think through a character's subconscious and rational thoughts and desires, then astrology can be used by writers to do the same conceptually. It is not rational or academically appropriate to attempt to prove that, for example, Holden Caulfield from *Catcher in The Rye* acts like *this* so he must be a Scorpio. The reason it is not a worthy reading is because an astrological application could not truly add any supplementary, conceptual depth for a reader. When applying astrology, I propose that we think about the possible interpretations of the heavenly bodies' effects on us and the events on the Earth. *How does the connection between the occurrences in Earth, nature, and humanity, reflect the masses in the sky?*

A fundamental concept in astrology that must be comprehended before using it for literary analysis is the trust in the karmic wheel. Though in some branches of astrology authentic, Hindu karma is utilized, the karmic wheel for contemporary practice is simply a belief in a predetermined and judicious cycle of giving, taking, and receiving. Sharp discusses karma in his book several times, but only in this way. Things that are karmic *could* be coming from a past life, but normally, and for simplicity, karmic occurrences are meant to be significant and reflective of a change one went through or needs to go through. In terms of astrology, when practitioners

speak about karmic events or links they are likely signifying a destined event. An event that could be objectively good, bad, or neutral, but is ultimately bringing someone closer to where they are supposed to be. This trust is not dissimilar from the faith expressed in Christianity for God's plan. The main dissimilarity is that faith is religiously affiliated and astrological trust in the karmic wheel can be described as hopefully philosophical.

The sun, moon, and planets are always forming a chart the way a clock is always telling time. Any event that occurs has a chart from the second at which it occurs. For further development of this concept, the current astrological placements of the day I write this paper are: Ascendant in Aries, Sun in Scorpio, Moon in Aries, Mercury in Scorpio, Venus in Scorpio, and Mars in Gemini (in retrograde). In order to, very basically, glean the energy of the day, one can summarize it by determining that it is predominantly Martian. One can tell it is a Martian-heavy day because more than three placements of the day are in signs ruled by Mars (Aries & Scorpio). This notion brings the next foundational idea for an astrological application to literature: the importance of the psychoanalytic properties that tether a chart and its interpretation. Per Sharp, Mars is the planet of "how we channel our drives, including what we do to get the things we want, how we assert ourselves with others, and the kind of physical and sexual energy we carry" (Sharp 272). The fact that I am (purely coincidentally) choosing today to get to work and write is a straightforward example of how astrological energy can reflect our day to day lives.

To go further in depth on the prospect of the aforementioned tether, astrological interpretation is almost wholly psychological. Examples can be seen all throughout Sharp's explanations of placements, but one needs only to understand how astrologers can interpret one placement to comprehend how they interpret them all. A straightforward example would be how Sharp explains a Moon in Cancer:

“The Moon in Cancer indicates strong ties to the mother, the family, and the home. Here, marriage and domestic security are important to emotional well-being. These individuals are extremely sensitive to the moods of others, often to the point of being psychic. They make good homemakers, parents, and cooks. When the Moon is afflicted, they can be manipulative and domineering, especially with their children, and even emotionally unstable” (Sharp 202).

There is a distinct air of psychological practice within the explanation of the placement. It only gets more psychological when an astrologer goes in depth on the other astrological details that can affect a placement. If this Cancer Moon was in the 8th house of the chart, this could indicate “highly developed psychic sensitivity and an awareness of invisible forces that may lead to an interest in the occult,” on top of being very emotionally sensitive, this placement could be destructive (Sharp 212). In the same way consultations can vary from psychologist to psychologist, chart readings can vary.

Metaphysics is the complicated study of the concepts that cannot become conceptual; In other words, it is the study of the factors outside of our understanding that cannot be observed through any of the hard sciences. It is also the final key concept of astrology to keep in mind for application. Metaphysics is essentially the study of “the nature of being; the first causes of things; things that do not change” (Inwagen). Astrology’s metaphysical nature is demonstrated through its attempt to make sense of our reality. At the core of any astrological practice is the desire to understand the events that occur. Questions that people can commonly find answers to through religion, can also be answered through metaphysics. The main principles in religion must be fueled by metaphysics. Metaphysics is part psychology, part philosophy, and part physics, which is exactly why it is so hard to conceptually comprehend the study of it (Inwagen). The

very reason it is difficult to wrap one's mind around it, is the very reason it was created. If one person was capable of understanding the immeasurable, cosmic complexities of existential questions, humanity would not need metaphysics.

Similar to astrology, Metaphysics also operates in a gray area. Metaphysics is notably not a religion, nor is it a hard science (though it is hardly a science at all). Similar to this notion, astrology is not a religion, nor is it a science. One must understand this, because it is a vital concept to this piece as a whole. Astrology needs to be seen as a theory or simply a way of understanding the world rather than a religion or a science. Though the methods applied to the galactic masses are a kind of exact practice, interpretations of the purely astronomical calculations are greatly varied. In addition to being varied, the interpretations are affected by the mind of the interpreter. This makes astrology a kind of an art in some practices.

On top of all the other concepts previously mentioned, the main takeaway from astrology is the overarching theme of linearity. Existence is a balancing act in astrology. This can be seen in the nature of the cycles used in it; as well as the aforementioned theories and discussions attached to astrology. The cycle of the moon, and the systematic orbit of the planets around the sun, and the cycle of humans trying (again and again) to wrap their brains around our existence through systems of astrology, philosophy, religion, metaphysics, psychology, science, math, et cetera. There is everything in everything. Astrology not only connects our physical reality to the heavens, but also makes one aware of the systems and cycles within the foundation of our existence.

The main question now should be: "What could astrology, as a speculative science, highlight in literature that could expand our readings of deeply creative writers like H.P. Lovecraft?" To understand the answer to this question, one would first need to look at the

principal functions of a literary criticism. The functions are, one, challenge a writer to look at a piece of literature. Not only with new eyes, but also to create a thorough analysis of it using the new perspective. Two, they provide writers with an instrument for interpretation. Critical approaches function as the tether between a writer and the literary work. Thinking through pieces is a creative process, but with a critical approach, it becomes a sort of experiment/ testing of a theory. Finally, three, literary analysis using a criticism allows a reader to experience theoretical breakthroughs they wouldn't have been able to experience prior to their usage. The revelations that can occur within the minds of readers and writers alike when they utilize criticisms can be so revolutionary as to be life changing. The purpose of thinking through literature, writers, and context differently, through criticism, is primarily to build logical stamina and expertise in interpretation. Adding another method of doing so, let alone a method as boundlessly creative and deeply philosophical as an astrological approach, would allow criticisms to achieve greater intellectual feats.

Astrological Criticism at Play

Astrological criticism works best with works that aren't intellectually rigid. Literature needs to be moderately to highly linguistically, contextually, and figuratively open to interpretation in order to apply this criticism. Potential applicators should consider works similar to "The Call of Cthulhu" rather than works akin to *Jane Eyre*, because *Jane Eyre* has too many fixed definitions and has been picked apart in every shape and form extremely thoroughly. To explain this concept out of the abstract would be very difficult, but suffice to say that there isn't enough world to work within the confines of *Jane Eyre* for an astrological perspective. "The Call of Cthulhu" may have been repeatedly analyzed and have some fixed aspects, but ultimately it harbors many possibilities within its conceptual shores. The reason for this is that since astrology is not objective, it can only work in subjective contexts. An author's work would need to operate rationally and figuratively with the odd astrological combination of hard mathematics and pliable ideologies. One could take a piece whose author had no astrological knowledge and apply astrology but it would be a tad more difficult. The theoretical framework must have existed within their realm of consciousness or else it would be hard to find such leanings in their work. For this reason, H.P. Lovecraft's work is a perfect work to form the paradigm of an astrological criticism.

There are certain aspects to an astrological approach that permit a reader or writer to find a stunningly profound new way of thinking about a text. These aspects have everything to do with the way astrology forms a paramount connection between ours and others' terrestrial life and the cosmos. Aspects that cannot be found or covered at all using any of the other criticisms. It may be hard for one to understand that although Lovecraft himself was, by all definitions, a perfect depiction of masculine stereotypes, there is still a way to find a groundbreaking

connection between his work and the divine strings of life, fate, and the stars. Though it is a slightly unbelievable premise, Lovecraft was one to write about such things; Thus, it is not hard to find unbelievable, surprisingly fitting themes within his work.

Lovecraft mainly uses spiritualism in his stories as literary devices that “emphasize the otherworldly and probably decrepit nature of the character in question, who is certainly a person to be avoided and which is exactly why the hapless protagonist of the story cannot seem to do so” (Matthews 167- 168). In other stories, he describes “necromantic rites, allusions to astrological forces, spiritualist trance states and various kinds of scrying;” In addition to this, the aforementioned are “often considered to be practices below the dignity of the narrators who are frequently portrayed as either too stalwart and practical or rational and scientific to take such procedures seriously. And this does seem to be a reflection on what Lovecraft actually believed about such matters; he often proclaimed himself a resolute atheist and materialist despite the fantastic content of many of his stories” (Matthews 168). Ironically, Lovecraft’s real world opinions are so successfully omitted from his mythological tales that many readers and scholars, who dedicate their time to analyzing his work, are often surprised to, inevitably, learn he was a raging nonbeliever. The multitudes of inconsistencies between his own opinions and writings creates a gap of errancy within the understanding we have of Lovecraft. Within this gap of errancy, we can apply astrology efficiently and validly.

Before I expand on the gap of errancy, a couple notes from Lovecraft regarding his perspective:

“I have no opinions — I believe in nothing . . . My cynicism and skepticism are increasing, and from an entirely new cause — the Einstein theory. The latest eclipse observations seem to place this system among the facts which cannot be dismissed, and assumedly it removes

the last hold which reality or the universe can have on the independent mind. All is chance, accident, and ephemeral illusion — a fly may be greater than Arcturus, and Durfee Hill may surpass Mount Everest — assuming them to be removed from the present planet and different environed in the continuum of space time. There are no values in all infinity — the least idea that there are is the supreme mockery of all. All the cosmos is a jest, and fit to be treated only as a jest, and one thing is as true as another.” (Joshi 182).

This quote mainly serves to showcase how limited Lovecraft felt spiritually. Only recently it has become easy to have undefined aspects of one’s life. The way I see it, Lovecraft had a hard time taking his beliefs out of the abstract and constantly battled himself and society in order to define them. He was quick to state he was cynical and skeptical, because if he was not perhaps he believed he would face negative societal repercussions if he officially put his faith into the cosmos. As a result of him being anxious and insecure, he refused to physically take part in any kind of speculative science; However, that didn’t stop him from putting it into his fiction. In his own words, it was “man’s relation to the cosmos— to the unknown— which alone arouses in me the spark of creative imagination. The humanocentric pose is impossible to me, for I cannot acquire the primitive myopia which magnifies the earth and ignores the background” (Joshi 182). Were he to have been alive in the contemporary, I have no doubt he would find the confidence to personally dabble in the speculative sciences.

His profound curiosity about space and its effect on us is derivative of astrology. The curiosity drove him to create rich and inversely vivacious fictional worlds. Though he was unable to break beyond the theoretical boundaries that kept him from an acceptance of astrology, he sort of created his own astrology (the following S.T. Joshi quote follows the previous quote):

“This is Lovecraft’s first explicit expression of the view he would later call ‘cosmicism’. Cosmicism is at once a metaphysical position (an awareness of the vastness of the universe in both space and time), an ethical position (an awareness of the insignificance of human beings within the realm of the universe), and an aesthetic position (a literary expression of this insignificance, to be effected by the minimizing of human character and the display of the titanic gulfs of space and time)” (Joshi 182).

In the grand scope, his cosmicism is astrology. In a way, him being able to comprehend the vastness of the universe in both space and time alludes to an inherent understanding of the *depth* that brings to the existence of the universe as a whole. From this point in logic, it is a matter of semantics dividing him from a *belief* in the universe and space and time. Astrology would be non-existent were it not for space and time; thus, Lovecraft dedicating a deep and almost intimate understanding of space and time is supremely correlative to our modern day approach to astrology.

It is true that Lovecraft hated the *idea* of astrology, as in his own preconceived notion and judgment of it. This can be seen in the way he engaged in a debate with an astrologer about the irrationality of astrology; regardless, this opinion of his is not the end of my argument (Joshi 87-88). He contradicted himself in that opinion when he wrote the following to Maurice W. Moe, which was evidenced in an astrology-based blog post:

“I confess to an over-powering desire to know whether I am asleep or awake—whether the environment and laws which affect me are external and permanent, or the transitory products of my own brain. I admit that I am very much interested in the relation I bear to the things about me—the time relation, the space relation, and the causative relation. I desire to know approximately what my life is in terms of history—human, terrestrial,

solar, and cosmical; what my magnitude may be in terms of extension,—terrestrial, solar, and cosmical; and above all, what may be my manner of linkage to the general system—in what way, through what agency, and to what extent, the obvious guiding forces of creation act upon me and govern my existence. And if there be any less obvious forces, I desire to know them and their relation to me as well” (Joshi 182).

This quote proves nothing if not Lovecraft’s desire for a practice that studies the relation between oneself, nature, and the universe. It is very straightforward how my previous conclusion came about.

When I refer to astrology, I am summarizing a vast study of the effect of all types of planets, stars, asteroids, and luminaries on us and worldly events. This is a point I have hit several times within this thesis, and I will hit it many more times. When one applies astrology to literature, they do not need to discuss every single orbiting mass within the solar system’s effect. This isn’t necessary, and a paper that does this could easily become redundant. For Critical Disability theory, one would not lay out every possible disability within a text during application. The reason behind this logic is that it uselessly amplifies the amount of ground a writer would need to cover to efficiently conduct their argument. A writer does not need to interpret or conjure an entire natal chart for their select topic in order to utilize astrological theory. They simply need to choose at least one aspect to apply to a topic. For my application of astrology onto “Cthulhu” I will mainly discuss the effect of Pluto within the work. As mentioned before, Pluto is one of the most intensely karmic planets within the solar system. It is a generational, outer planet, meaning it takes years to move signs and decades to return back to one sign (“Planets.” 10-11). Pluto is capable of causing massive energy shifts within our lives that often lead to revolutions and uprisings, historically (“Planets.”15). Saturn returns and Pluto returns are especially prone to

causing such things. Which is the precise reason why the effects of these planets are the most prime for applying to “Cthulhu.”

In the twentyish pages that make up Lovecraft’s “The Call of Cthulhu” there are seventeen mentions of the stars, nine mentions of the sun (which is a star), one mention of the planet, two mentions of the moon, eleven mentions of the earth, and zero mentions Pluto. Pluto definitely does not need to be mentioned directly in order for me to confidently apply their impact on the story. In one’s average, day to day life, there would be sparsely any mention of any of the planets, but in astrology, the effect of the planets will still be present. Providing a list of each mention of a potential astrological aspect within the piece is mostly performative. It goes to show that though there may be sparse mentions of applicable content, an inch is a part of a mile. A small part, but an integral part. An astrological approach will emphasize the small and otherwise nonsignificant astral mentions and show how it can become an integral part of the story; as well as the reader’s interpretation of the story.

At the beginning of the story, Thurston says “Theosophists have guessed at the awesome grandeur of the cosmic cycle wherein our world and human race form transient incidents” (Lovecraft 1). The theosophists are a part of the cult of Cthulhu, so it is easy to say that though Thurston alludes to astrology in this sentence, he does so with the intent to demean it to an archaic practice. Therefore, to analyze this sentence efficiently, one needs to look past the beliefs of the theosophists and to the context of the narrator. When Thurston says “cosmic cycle” he probably imagines the linear movement of the universe across the sky, but in an astrological approach, we can take it to mean the zodiac’s cyclical progression across the sky. Then, the “incidents” mentioned become incidents that are consistent with the planets affecting the world at that time. At this point, readers should be able to see the connection between the physical

world and the events that occur; they should be able to see how astrology is already functioning within the story in the first couple of paragraphs.

Unlike the stars, my analysis of the story will not be linear in accordance with the text. In the climactic resolution, Thurston begins to conclude the narrative as such:

“The Thing cannot be described—there is no language for such abysses of shrieking and immemorial lunacy, such eldritch contradictions of all matter, force, and cosmic order. A mountain walked or stumbled. God! What wonder that across the earth a great architect went mad, and poor Wilcox raved with fever in that telepathic instant? The Thing of the idols, the green, sticky spawn of the stars, had awaked to claim his own. The stars were right again, and what an age-old cult had failed to do by design, a band of innocent sailors had done by accident. After vigintillions of years great Cthulhu was loose again, and ravening for delight” (Lovecraft 22).

The expressed horror of Cthulhu is purely Plutonian in effect. What is meant by Plutonian in this context can become common knowledge with some light critical thinking. Historically, Pluto is Greek for Hades, which means that Pluto was the god of the underworld (Sharp 409). The underworld is the land of the dead, therefore Pluto is the god of the dead. “Plutonian” is symbolic of death; death in this context can mean any type of death or maybe in Cthulhu's case, the bringer of death. Death can also symbolize endings in literature. In the literary world, death having abstract and metaphorical significance is not new. This logic can easily lead to the exact, and comically literal, significance of Pluto: “Pluto, the Lord of the Underworld, rules death and transformation and the wielding of power” (Sharp 409).

Subsequently, in the aforementioned quote, there are numerous references back to the stars. The “eldritch contradictions of all matter, force, and cosmic order,” can be interpreted as a

statement similar to the biblical phrase “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me” (Psalms 22). However, instead of God, Thurston can be seen as questioning the stars’ hand in fate. The cosmos, seemingly systematic and pragmatically wired, cannot maintain the order within the world in Lovecraftian horror. On top of this they wrought “the sticky spawn of the stars” upon the world. Following this description, Thurston continues his astoundment with “The stars were right again, and what an age-old cult had failed to do by design, a band of innocent sailors had done by accident” (Lovecraft 12). By this, Thurston means that though the cult tried to raise Cthulhu, they couldn’t; thus, it was concluded that the prediction made via the stars was invalid. Then randomly the prediction wasn’t inconclusive, but perhaps falsely calculated. The false calculation resulted in the deaths of the sailors. A simple connection to be made from this is that from a misinterpretation of the stars, destruction may arise.

In spite of that, a better connection can be made by thinking about the will of the stars. Though the stars are never considered to be God or god-like, they are real-world connections between strings of fate and humanity. From them, we could glean what can and will occur. Regardless of the miscalculation, the climactic event had been charted in the stars. The cult had known, but was simply missing the proper tools to utilize the rise of Cthulhu for their own devices. Perhaps this turn of fate was also meant to be, for what could have happened had they believed they had control of such a being? This is a way an astrological approach could function. With a belief in a predetermined future based on the stars, one could read this failure as a willful misguidance from the stars in order to save the world. Armageddon-types of analysis have been conducted from “The Call of Cthulhu,” so it is open to interpretation whether the correct knowledge would have changed the observed fate at the conclusion of the story. For all readers

know, Cthulhu never ended the world. It simply wrought fear and paranoia on a couple of poor souls.

The return to the Plutonian themes within the story is mandatory, because death is tremendously prevalent. Initially, the story begins with a death. This is the embodiment of Plutonian devices as previously defined. From this sentence at the very end, readers can be able to see the significance of death within the story: "He could not tell—they would think him mad. He would write of what he knew before death came, but his wife must not guess. Death would be a boon if only it could blot out the memories" (Lovecraft 24). For full conceptual development, the sentence can be reworded like this: He (Thruston's Great Uncle) could not tell people about the Death creature causing death, before he died and his wife must not guess the secret of the death creature and the death creature's deadly cult. After the first sentence, the subject of death is obvious. For all its worth, Lovecraft might as well have written death, death, death, and from that it is easy to sum up the story using Plutonian ideologies. The planet Pluto takes 250 years to orbit around the sun, and it can take up to 32 years to change signs ("Planets."14). This makes Pluto the longest spanning generational planet that affects astrology, which makes sense if one considers it is the farthest "planet" from the sun. Ages of Pluto commonly define the end and the beginning of epochal periods("Planets."13). If the stars aligning for the rise of Cthulhu could also mean an end or beginning of an era of Pluto, then the rise would definitely reflect it. There are also "returns" in astrology; it is when a planet returns to the exact position it was in when at the formation of a chart. Returns often symbolize transformational periods within the aspect the planet rules, and Pluto is an exceedingly transformational planet ("Planets." 13-14). The farther along we get across the solar planets, the more intensely they impact the forces around us rather than us. Humans do not live to their Pluto return, but countries and cities often do. Pluto rules

over death, and thus rebirth, and chaos, so Pluto returns could, potentially, be times of global upheaval. It would be too perfectly literal to say the rise of Cthulhu took place during a Pluto return, but showcasing it in this light could give readers theoretical clarity.

To force the story to give to a Pluto return reading might be asking too much from an introductory piece such as this; for this reason, this piece will move back to the basic Plutonian reading. The death of the sailors led to the story eventually being passed to Thurston's uncle, then eventually being passed to Thurston. Without the death of the sailors we would not have the birth of the story as Thurston narrates it. Ultimately, this would have been better for our main character, but without the deaths readers would not have the knowledge of the supremely adverse ramifications of the stars. Therefore, the question at this point is how can an astrological perspective enhance this theme of death more than an average thematic reading?

From a Plutonian standpoint, death marks an end and a beginning, but it can also represent "intensity, regeneration of the phoenix, mystery, debts, power, power structures, deep strength, secrets, research, market reversals, transformation, and that which is hidden" ("Planets."13). A broad view of the themes of Pluto would show a massive amount of significance regarding life changing events that are not controllable by any force ("Planets."13). The majority of the themes listed can be applied to "Cthulhu," but with a Plutonian reading, one need not list out every single of the themes above, but simply lay the claim that the reading is heavily reminiscent of Plutonian themes. Then it would be easy for an astrological theorist to apply the themes as they see fit. The above Plutonian themes of "secrets" and "power" are some of the most prevalent themes in "Cthulhu." The theme of secrets can be seen through the secret society, the unearthing of said secret society by Thurston's great uncle and then Thurston (Lovecraft 11). After that, the concluding narrative of Thurston leaves readers with the notion

that he does not believe he will survive his findings about Cthulhu, and will take the secret to his grave (Lovecraft 24).

As for the theme of power in Cthulhu, it seems to be the chain which links the entire story together. *Knowledge is power* so therefore the knowledge of Cthulhu and the cult being passed on from person to person is the power in which led to their demise. For even the sailors quickly learned the power of Cthulhu would lead to their deaths. The awful power of Cthulhu, which Thurston learns about through his great uncle, is a potential power he has, and his great uncle had, over the secret cult which is why he fears he will be exterminated for what he knows. The fear and horror surrounding Cthulhu is not entirely because he is a mysterious monster, but mostly because of his power to demolish the psyche of whoever is in his presence (Lovecraft 22). The thematic elements of power and secrets are particularly Plutonian because they are linked and support one another instead of operating independently from one another. Plutonian aspects are known to carry the heavy amounts of influence on the world; therefore, if there are several Plutonian elements within a story they will overlap with one another and become linked in some fashion ("Planets." 13). The most prevailing Plutonian themes in "Cthulhu" are death, secrets, power, and intensity, and they are all if not caused by one another, then affected by one another.

Literary criticisms are supposed to get gears turning in the reader's brain. Though the tone in "The Call of Cthulhu" is distinctly devoid of any sort of faith, divine reasoning is often what people turn to when normal understanding is not possible. A reader's instinct may be to look to the heavens for comprehension; all I propose is that instead of looking past the stars for answers, readers look towards the stars. Especially when reading "The Call of Cthulhu" because H.P. Lovecraft never directs blame to the Abrahmic God for the events that happen in the story;

however, he does occasionally point blame to the stars. The stars link the calling of Cthulhu back to the earth in a literally revolutionary way if we see it through the lens of Pluto (Sharp 409). This perspective adds mysticism and a sort of starry integrity to the otherwise average reading of "Cthulhu."

Causes for Further Astrological Ruminations

The propelling force behind this thesis is not the desire to convince anyone astrology is real, or superior to other beliefs in any way. Astrology is a very entertaining subject, so it is inconsequential if it ends up being a load of woo woo prophecy; at the very least, obtaining more knowledge about it has been a gratifying experience. The actual primary purpose of this thesis is to explore a possible new literary criticism that holds the potential to bear many fruitful endeavors. In addition to this purpose, one of the sub themes of this work regards exploring a world where people did not put down valuable topics simply because women enjoy them. As Dr. Jonathan Eburne, a Penn State English Professor, says in his book *The Outsider Theory*:

“Attention to the particulars of distribution and redistribution, and to the curiosities of readership and belief, is fundamental to any critical examination of so-called junk thought and its currency in modern intellectual history. A sustained reckoning with the circulation of outlandish ideas, as much as with the ideas themselves, is likewise fundamental to any attempt to uphold intellectual endeavors— whether artistic, scientific, or popular— against their institutional discreditation or ideological mobilization” (Eburne Preface.....xvi).

For around a millennium, astrology has existed, and only within the last couple of hundred years, has it been reduced to pseudoscience (Wouter 171-172). Even with the boom of interest in the 1960s because of Carl Jung, mainly women hold an interest (Wouter 295). This is not a new or uncommon fact for women, who are well-versed in misogyny. Topics predominantly pursued by women are often the most shamed, especially astrology. Innocent subjects they are often drawn to, like reading romance novels or enjoying starbucks, are constantly made fun of in the common sphere. Even men who take part in “girly” pastimes are

ridiculed. Women and men alike are entitled to enjoy harmless things without the fear of being mocked.

This certainty brings us back to the star-obsessed boy who became an astrology-hating man: H.P. Lovecraft. With all of his hopes about the stars and humanity being connected in some cosmic way, he never forgave astrology for its puerilities. It is truly a wonder what kind of fiction a brilliant mind such as his could have been if he moved past his bigotry. By no means do I intend to evoke pity out of my readership; H.P. Lovecraft himself was detestable and can likely be found rolling in his grave at the idea of someone pointing out astrology in his work, let alone a person of color. That being said, creative endeavors, even ones that go against the morals of the author retain their integrity all the same. This concept is supported and explained by Nathaniel Hawthorne in the preface to his novel *The House of Seven Gables*, “The author has considered it hardly worth his while, therefore, relentlessly to impale the story with its moral as with an iron rod, — or, rather, as by sticking a pin through a butterfly, — thus at once depriving it of life, and causing it to stiffen in an ungainly and unnatural attitude” (Hawthorne 15). Further explanation of the notion is simple: to weigh down a story with one’s own morals is to kill it; therefore, readers should hope that Lovecraft did not aim to extinguish the purpose of “The Call of Cthulhu” by weighing it down with his own morals. In the pursuit of this hope, this story remains open to interpretation and analysis through astrology.

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