H.P. Lovecraft's Literary "Supernatural Horror" in Visual Culture

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ABSTRACT

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Lovecraft's Literary "Supernatural Horror" in Visual Culture

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H.P. Lovecraft, an early twentieth-century author of supernatural horror, was a materialist who believed that science had diminished the mysteries that previously existed in everyday life. To counteract this development, he felt that the arts could be a viable platform where reality, especially the dimensions of time and space, might be disrupted. His literary approach in achieving this effect was to introduce phenomena to the audience that were complex and vast in scope, potentially creating a sense of the sublime. Two particular elements that characterize such disruptive phenomena are repetition and symmetry. This dissertation considers Lovecraft’s aesthetic theories and his larger body of work in order to establish a theoretical framework concerning disruption which can be applied to visual culture. As a self-described “visually minded” author, Lovecraft’s literary approach bears a close relationship to visual culture, since he often appropriated existing artistic works and incorporated them through description within his literature.

To further connect Lovecraft’s literature and visual culture, this dissertation designates certain disruptive tropes within Lovecraft’s oeuvre that may be found in later visual adaptations. Intersecting the dimensions of time and space with elements of repetition and symmetry, this analysis establishes four disruptive tropes: repetition in time (montage), symmetry in time (ideograms), repetition in space (polyocularity) and
symmetry in space (non-Vitruvian architecture). The elements of repetition and symmetry work within each respective disruptive trope to undermine anthropocentric notions of time and space. In chapter 1, this analysis establishes the dynamic between first-person point of view, the “inside” and the “outside,” which characterizes the disruptive tropes discussed in subsequent chapters. In chapter 2, Lovecraft’s short story “Pickman’s Model” is analyzed to demonstrate how temporal repetition can result in a fragmentation of the unity of the present. In chapter 3, the inclusion of ideograms in Lovecraft’s work as a means of creating asymmetrical relationships in time is discussed, particularly as it applies to the novella *At the Mountains of Madness* and the film, *Prometheus*. Concerning the repetition of form in space, Chapter 4 focuses on Lovecraft’s polyocular fictional bodies and the manner in which multiple focal points within space create anxiety for the audience. Finally, Chapter 5 addresses the asymmetrical relationship between the human body and alien non-Vitruvian architecture described in Lovecraft’s work.
This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Sara Berens, my mother, Jadeen Hergenrother, my grandmother, Carol Williams, and my deceased grandfather, James Williams.
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INTRODUCTION

H.P. Lovecraft, a near lifelong resident of Providence, RI, was an obscure writer of supernatural horror fiction featured within pulp magazines, such as *Weird Tales* and *Astounding Stories*, during his short-lived career in the early 1920s and 1930s. Though Lovecraft wrote an estimated 64 stories and novellas, including "Herbert West—Reanimator" (1922), “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928), and “The Dunwich Horror” (1929), it was not until after his death, when his friends and colleagues, August Derleth and Donald Wandrei formed the publishing firm Arkham House, that the author’s work began to resonate and become acknowledged by the larger public. The particular importance of Lovecraft within the genre of horror fiction is best summarized by the fantasy writer Neil Gaiman, who asserts that Lovecraft “defined the themes and obsessions of twentieth-century horror” (Woodward 2009). Major contemporary horror writers, like Stephen King, Clive Barker and less well-known authors, such as Ramsey Campbell and Thomas Ligotti, often cite Lovecraft as a major influence. Lovecraft’s acceptance within the literary establishment culminated in the publishing of a Library of America collection in 2005, elevating the author’s work to that of such American luminaries as Herman Melville, Gertrude Stein and W. E. B. Du Bois.

What perhaps distinguishes the author from his peers within the genre of supernatural horror is both the sincerity of his stories and the strong connection he developed between his fiction and larger materialist philosophy. Remarking “What I am is a hater of actuality—an enemy to time and space, law and necessity,” Lovecraft believed

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1 Lovecraft lived all but two years of his life (1890-1937) in Providence. The exception was between 1924-1926, when he lived with his then wife, Sonia Greene, in New York City.
that science and technology had stripped the world of its mysteries, and that humanity
was at the mercy of the brute laws pertaining to the dimensions of time and space
(Lovecraft 1923, 228-229). In particular, Lovecraft scorned the immediate and the local,
and derided the spatiotemporal limitations that restrict human action and experience. Not
content with these restrictions, the author regarded the domain of the arts and literature as
a creative sphere of cultural production where the disruption of reality could be
represented. This dissertation examines a selection of the author’s stories in order to
ascertain the manner in which they are disruptive to linear time and space, identifying
specific tropes in his literary work that are applicable to Lovecraft-related visual culture.

The foundation of this analysis, disruptive tropes, can be found throughout
Lovecraft’s oeuvre; however, they are partially qualified and categorized here utilizing a
passage from a letter he wrote to his friend Zelia Brown Reed in 1929. Within this
passage, Lovecraft contends that the presence and modulation of specific formal
properties in the arts could achieve certain desired effects in an audience, stating that his
“theory of aesthetics” is comprised of two “elements,” one of which is “absolute and
objective… based on” repetition, and “symmetry” (Lovecraft 1928, 229). Using these
elements of repetition and symmetry, as a starting point, this dissertation intersects them
with the dimensions of time and space in order to identify four disruptive tropes
contained within the author’s many stories, such as “The Outsider” (1926), “Pickman’s
Model” (1927), “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928), At the Mountains of Madness (1936), and

2 Though Lovecraft actually uses the word “rhythm” in this passage, for the purpose of this analysis, it will
be replaced with the term repetition, since both are dependent on reiteration. Similarly, the author
connects his aesthetic theory with the subjective value of beauty; however, in this dissertation these
elements will relate to the sublime.
The Shadow Out of Time (1936). Drawing on Lovecraft’s aesthetic theories, this dissertation explores the following disruptive tropes within his literature and related visual arts: temporal repetition (montage), temporal symmetry (ideograms), spatial repetition (polyocularity), and spatial symmetry (non-Vitruvian architecture) (Fig. 1.1).

Fig. 1.1. Diagram of H.P. Lovecraft’s Disruptive Tropes

Taken together, these disruptive tropes are characterized by complexity and an immense sense of scale. These qualities, coupled with the author’s stated intention of cultivating the feelings of “awe,” “wonder” and “fear” among his audience, have been commonly associated in Lovecraft studies with the notion of the sublime (Lovecraft 1935, 21, 22).³

³In particular, the work of the eighteenth-century English philosopher, Edmund Burke, concerning the sublime has often been linked to Lovecraft’s literature, a connection that will be elaborated upon in the prior studies section
This analysis defines this concept as the presence of temporal or spatial stimuli within sensory experience, in particular, creative artistic and literary works, which are too vast and/or complex for the human mind to fully process, comprehend, and formulate a stable relationship between the observer and the observed. Within Lovecraft’s narratives, certain phenomena characterized by the sublime are brought into an initial anthropocentric approximation of actuality, which results in a conflict or disruption between the two states of being for the audience that is not easily reconcilable.

Each of these disruptive tropes in Lovecraft’s literature functions through their visual exposure to the protagonist, and are frequently relayed to the reader through a first-person point of view of a human observer. What this dissertation seeks to do is directly examine visual iterations of such disruptive tropes, rather than simply relying on literary descriptions of them, necessitating an analysis based on visual representations of relations between human subjects and nonhuman phenomena. To this end, it is imperative to focus on Lovecraft-related visual culture in order to demonstrate how imagery shifts and is interpreted as it migrates from one medium to the next; from the images the author appropriated from Western visual culture, the manner in which they were described in his writings, and finally, to the form in which artists adapted these literary texts into images. W.J.T. Mitchell, an interdisciplinary theorist in art history and English, has defined visual culture as “the visual construction of the social, not just the social construction of vision” (Mitchell 1998, 91). Concerning the first portion of his definition, this analysis will concentrate on the construction of visual phenomena in both Lovecraft’s literary work and derivative visual adaptations; especially situations where a linear and localized
account of time and space by the human protagonist is violated through the presence of one of the four aforementioned disruptive tropes. Frequently, Lovecraft-related visual culture is associated in the media with the author’s fictional deity Cthulhu, as portrayed in his short story “The Call of Cthulhu”. Additionally, artists seeking to signify Lovecraft often will incorporate tentacles, the author’s invented text, the *Necronomicon*, or even representations of the author himself into their work. This dissertation is more narrowly focused on tropes that concern the disruption of the dimensions of time and space, which is at the foundation of Lovecraft’s intentions in writing his supernatural horror.

A fundamental portion of the analysis centers on the relationship between the anthropocentric point of view, often emblemized by a human protagonist in the text as (s)he experiences the “outside” represented in Lovecraft’s literature, and the visual arts. The “outside” as a category, often invoked by Lovecraft, is defined here as phenomena with origins beyond the limits of known reality, often from locations humanity has never seen, including the “boundless depths of outer space,” the remote regions of the ocean, other dimensions and deep underground (Joshi 2004, 86). In contrast, anthropocentrism refers to the privileging of human culture, productions and values, and, to some degree, is manifested within the author’s stories mostly as an exemplar from which the “outside” is juxtaposed. This relationship between the human and the “outside” is largely characterized by what Lovecraft defines as the formal quality of symmetry, though it is not understood in the traditional sense as a mere similarity between two or more elements; rather, the author defines it in terms of gradients of similarities and
dissimilarities between two objects. Lovecraft’s disruptive tropes generally function as a stark distinction to the anthropocentric notions of time and space held by the protagonist and, by extension, the audience. The modulation of the qualities of symmetry and repetition, which characterize these disruptive tropes within his literary texts, directly controls their function and effect on the audience, an aspect of Lovecraft’s aesthetic theory, which will be explored in each subsequent chapter.

The creation of such an aesthetic framework, where little scholarly analysis has been conducted previously, is relevant since there have been two major developments pertaining to Lovecraft that have taken place in Western visual culture: the proliferation of visual adaptations of the author’s works and the ascension of artists practicing within or related to the umbrella of Speculative Realism, a philosophical movement strongly influenced by Lovecraft’s aesthetic. Concerning the former, since the time of Lovecraft’s death in 1937, there has been a proliferation of adaptations of his work, and their presence within Western visual culture is extensive. Film-makers within the U.S., as well as internationally, have produced over eighty film and television adaptations of Lovecraft’s stories, showing varying degrees of quality and fidelity to the original texts. There are few media in which Lovecraft has not been adapted nor continues to be.

The second development, the ascension of Speculative Realism as a movement and influence on contemporary artists since 2006, is perhaps more nebulous, though still relevant to the discussion of Lovecraft-related visual culture. Pertaining to the current analysis of visual culture, there is a distinct element of the philosophy critical of traditional anthropocentric elements of culture which privilege humans over animals,
material objects and elements of the environment. Though the connection between Lovecraft and the Speculative Realism movement will be taken up further in the prior studies section of this introduction, for the purpose of the current discussion, it is significant to note that there are numerous artists such as Amanda Beech, Julian House, Lennette Newell and Julijonas Urbonas, who are producing art which addresses and critiques anthropocentrism using similar techniques as seen in the author’s work. Both developments, the increased production of visual adaptations of Lovecraft’s work and works critical of anthropomorphism, call attention to the significance of identifying Lovecraft-related visual culture’s artistic and literary origins and disruptive tropes.

Each chapter of this dissertation focuses primarily on one or several of Lovecraft’s stories, such as *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936); identifies a particular disruptive trope relevant to the dimensions of time and space, as well as qualities of symmetry and repetition; and outlines particular instances of these tropes within Lovecraft-related visual culture. Significantly, the visual works selected for analysis in this dissertation are not confined to one specific time period; rather, they are chosen for their relationship to Lovecraft’s work. To this end, some images function as a direct influence, as explicitly acknowledged by Lovecraft – for example, the nineteenth-century English painter John Martin and the early twentieth-century Russian artist, Nicholas Roerich. Other earlier artistic works will be examined to demonstrate their relation to Lovecraft’s work and related tropes, such as the nineteenth-century German artist Adolph Menzel and depictions of Argus Panoptes in ancient Greek vases dated to the fifth-

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4 While these artists do not necessarily categorize themselves as belonging to the Speculative Realism movement, they are clearly challenging notions of what being human is, as well as humanity’s relationship to the wider universe.
century BC. Lovecraft’s own drawings will be referenced in several chapters, as well as the work of illustrators who adapted his work at the time, such as B. Goldschlagel’s 1926 illustration for “The Outsider” and Howard V. Brown’s 1936 cover illustration for *At the Mountains of Madness* in *Astounding Stories*. Additionally, this dissertation examines relevant artistic works from a variety of media, including films, such as *Prometheus* (2012) and *Starship Troopers* (1997); television shows, such as the *Night Gallery* (1969); video games, such as *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* (2005); concept illustrations of Lovecraft’s novella, *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931) by Yap Kunrong; illustrations of Lovecraft’s “The Outsider” by Erik Kriek; and illustrations for *The Shadow Out of Time* by Howard V. Brown. These works were chosen as they exhibit significant qualities related to repetition and symmetry, and parallel the tropes established in this dissertation based on Lovecraft’s aesthetic theories and fiction.

Prior Studies

*Lovecraftian Images*

Steven Mariconda, in his essay, “Lovecraft’s Cosmic Imagery,” has substantially contributed to the establishment of scholarship concerning the visual elements Lovecraft described and utilized within his supernatural horror literature. Through a close reading of Lovecraft’s stories, and a few correspondences, Mariconda outlines the following common visual and auditory structures: “kaleidoscopic visions, weird sounds, alien rhythms, disturbing outlines and proportions, geometrical figures and patterns, asymmetry, and Ultimate Chaos and the black void beyond” (Mariconda 2011, 206).
Mariconda contends that the central characteristic of these elements is the use of pattern: “The idea of pattern, and the related ideas of proportion, symmetry, and geometry, combine to form the most important motif of Lovecraft’s cosmic imagery” (201). In terms of organization, he does not reposition these ideas into a systemic framework from which the reader might come to see how each idea is related by formal properties, a project that is the basis of this dissertation. Further, Mariconda largely ignores some of the rather important cultural connections between Lovecraft and the visual arts that influenced his stories and aesthetics. Though he references modern art and the related movements of Cubism and Futurism, he does so only in passing (Mariconda 2011, 204).

Little description is included in his essay of the many artists that Lovecraft appropriated, such as Nicholas Roerich in “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928), or the many artists referenced in “Pickman’s Model,” (1927) such as Francisco Goya, Gustave Doré and Henry Fuseli, thus isolating the author from some of his more significant artistic influences. Lovecraft’s “characteristic set of imagery” as Mariconda terms it, does not originate from a vacuum; rather, it stems from the myriad of visual influences Lovecraft absorbed during his lifetime (196).

Additionally there are visual concepts Mariconda refers to in his essay which are never fully expounded upon beyond their relationship to Lovecraft’s work. For instance, he brings up rhythm, which he confines to a discussion of sound; however, Mariconda neglects to explore how rhythm is expressed within the visual arts. Indeed, Lovecraft did not confine his discussion of rhythm to sound alone within his correspondence and seems
to conflate the term on occasion with repetition, something this dissertation will explore in depth in subsequent chapters.  

Finally, though Mariconda introduces a discussion of symmetry into his essay, he does not elaborate or begin to exhaust the manner in which symmetry functions in relation to “humankind” (Mariconda 2011, 201). Lovecraft often utilized the term symmetry in reference to an object, but he also made it a point to maintain that, in regards to proportionality, humans have a strong connection to their “culture-stream” (Lovecraft 1930, 220-221). In his essay, Mariconda does not delve into this discussion except to include a footnote indicating three examples of “the non-human nature of its builders” (206). The distinction between the human and non-human is significant in Lovecraft’s writing, and this relationship will be further examined within this dissertation.

Lovecraft’s Problematic Relationship to Race

Any analysis based on what constitutes humanity can easily lead to the creation of objectionable hierarchies involving race, gender and class, and Lovecraft in particular was guilty of such bigotry. In correspondences with friends and contained within certain stories, Lovecraft expressed a level of racism that went well beyond what was conventional in his era. For example, in short stories such as “The Horror of Red Hook” (1927) and “The Street” (1920), Lovecraft utilized highly racist language to

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5 Lovecraft associates the terms directly, stating on the nature of creating associations between humans and the external world requires “the essential identity of rhythm with repetition-the latter being the crux of the matter of imaginative association. Art must cause certain nerves in the brain to repeat a former pattern (Lovecraft 1929, 185).

6 Notable Lovecraft scholar, S.T. Joshi estimates that, of the author’s work, “five stories (out of sixty or so) are based on racist presuppositions” (Joshi 2014).
describe immigrants to the United States. In “The Horror of Red Hook,” Lovecraft describes some of the inhabitants of the area of Red Hook in Brooklyn, NY as “the worst of the organized cliques which smuggled ashore certain nameless and unclassified Asian dregs wisely turned back by Ellis Island” (132). Though his views softened considerably as he grew older, Lovecraft continued to hold regressive beliefs regarding the topic his entire life.

In the contemporary era, as Lovecraft has become more popular within visual culture, the problematic components of his work in relation to race have become highly contested topics in numerous quarters, especially within academia. One of the more recent scholarly works on the subject, “Abject Hybridity,” by David Simmons, traces Lovecraft’s connection with the “contemporary racialist theories” at the time of his writing and the assumption in many of his stories of the superiority of the white male narrator in such works as “Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family” (1921). The conclusion of Simmons’ analysis is that Lovecraft appropriated “wholesale” various pseudo-scientific and political rhetoric concerning race in circulation at the time, and was stridently opposed to racial integration (Simmons 2013, 16, 28). Yet, such scholarship has a long historiography. Within Lovecraft studies, as Joshi has said, there are “at least 20, perhaps as many as 50, items that discuss Lovecraft’s racism,” which are listed within his *H.P. Lovecraft: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (Joshi 2013).

Lovecraft’s use of “Non-Western people and cultures as a horrific Other” can be described as...

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7 The Nigerian-American fantasy writer, Nnedi Okorafor, won a World Fantasy Award in 2011, which is a bust of H.P. Lovecraft, only to learn about the author’s racist views after receiving it (Flood 2014). Additionally, the Canadian author David Nickle has written a recent essay discussing his contention that, in academia, “not very many people at Lovecraftian panels wanted to talk about race as it pertained to Lovecraftian fiction” (Nickle 2014).
connected to larger traditions within Gothic literature, going back to the work of Edgar Allen Poe (15, 17, 28). Both methods of appropriation from contemporary discourse and the Gothic tradition by Lovecraft are not confined to racial theories; rather, can be found in a diverse cross-section of Western culture, since Lovecraft often borrowed new theories, approaches and perspectives in multiple areas such as science, philosophy and the arts. This dissertation will concentrate on disruptive tropes Lovecraft found in visual culture related to time and space, rather than race; however, the latter certainly warrants further study beyond the extensive scholarship on the topic.

*Lovecraft and the Burkean Sublime*

As mentioned previously, Lovecraft’s primary intention in writing supernatural horror was to create the feeling of the sublime in the audience, similar to the views espoused by the English eighteenth-century philosopher, Edmund Burke, in his treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). This connection between the two authors is not a new idea, since Vivian Ralickas, in her “Cosmic Horror and the Question of the Sublime in Lovecraft,” makes a similar association and chronicles previous studies of the sublime by Dale Nelson, in his "Lovecraft and the Burkean Sublime" (1991), and Bradley A. Will’s "Lovecraft and the Semiotic Kantian Sublime" (2002). The general conflict between these various critiques rest with differing views regarding the significance of Burke’s assumed teleology as well as rigid presumptions concerning the minutiae of how the sublime operates.
For her part, Ralickas proposes that, though there are clearly elements present within his work that are related, Lovecraft does not represent the Burkean sublime, since there is a lack of human freedom within his work; moreover, humanity is sublimated to the machinations of the universe, and thus the experience does not reify their sense of self (Ralickas, 4, 6). One might argue that, despite Ralickas’ insistence that sublimity “depends upon and champions the divide between good and evil or reason and madness,” Lovecraft clearly saw the process as not relying upon morality in order to create such an effect (6). Ralickas’ contends that Burke and Lovecraft’s views on the sublime are too distinct to be considered related, despite sharing many of the same essential characteristics regarding repetition and scale, a proposition that is far too constricted to be convincing. Most of the formal objects and scenarios Burke describes in his essay on the sublime are present in Lovecraft’s stories and aesthetics and, although they held very different outlooks on religion, this does not diminish the functions of these objects or the former’s ability to describe the effect on the human observer. This dissertation, therefore, assumes that many of the formal structures and scenarios Burke describes in his treatise do indeed have a strong presence within Lovecraft’s work and affect the reader through their complexity and scale.

*The Visual Qualities of Speculative Realism*

In a letter to Reinhardt Kleiner, Lovecraft wrote of the aspects of life that he most treasured: “Speculation is also indispensable, for my mind is distractingly curious and sensitive as to the unknown phaenomena and abysses of space that press upon it from the
world and the aether beyond” (Lovecraft 1921, 131). Speculation, as opposed to imagination, is informed to some degree by empirical data and experience and is driven by theory. Indeed, in his many works of fiction, Lovecraft utilized such speculation to build alien environments and biology outside of the purview of human knowledge, possessing traits devoid of anthropocentric elements or relations. Little did the author know that a major philosophical movement, that of Speculative Realism, would view his philosophy and work as bridging the diverse and conflicting factions attributed to the movement. Primarily, this movement is based on opposition to the traditional anthropocentric view that humanity has an exceptional perspective within the universe, and a greater relationship with truth than other forms of being. Historically, within visual culture, this results in an over-reliance on representing the human body to the detriment of all other biological and non-biological objects that share or relate to this temporal and spatial identity.

One of the key scholars within the Speculative Realism movement who has pushed back against anthropocentrism, Graham Harman, is the author of *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy*, a work of scholarship that analyzes Lovecraft’s philosophy utilizing an Object-oriented Ontology (OOO) approach. As an analytical framework, OOO focuses on the disparity “between the real and the sensual, and the other between objects and their qualities” and the manner in which humans do not have access to a greater perception of reality than any other mode of being (Harman 2012, 4).

In *Weird Realism*, Harman establishes the manner in which Lovecraft’s writing opened up “new gaps in the world where there were formerly none” and thus produced a
gulf between an object’s reality and the ability of an observer to experience such phenomena on a sensual level or represent it via language (Harman 2012, 3). There are two methods by which Lovecraft achieves this division: through a vertical gap and a horizontal gap. The former is a disconnection “between unknowable objects and their tangible qualities” which resist representation, and the latter “a gap between an accessible object and its gratuitous amassing of numerous palpable surfaces” or a “multitude of sensual planes”, “a gluttonous excess of surfaces and aspects of the thing”, in this case visual perspectives (25, 31, 35). This “amassing of numerous palpable surfaces,” he compares to Cubism, in that each perspective lends itself to defining the object, though ultimately that object cannot be completely represented. Ultimately, Harman finds that “visible objects display unbearable seismic torsion with their own qualities” (27). Thus, an observer only sees the sensual qualities of an object through a limited exposure, which can never replace conceiving of the entirety of the object’s existence in time and space. Such a visual dynamic is indeed beyond traditional and conventional relations among a human subject and a visual object. This dissertation, while not directly informed by Speculative Realism, examines how this “torsion” in time and space, as Harman labels it, can be represented via images, and thus tangentially contributes to the growing body of scholarship attempting to bridge the burgeoning movement with the arts.

Lovecraft’s Relationship to Visual Culture

Lovecraft’s connection to Western visual culture is complex, considering his primary role as a writer producing literature that contains descriptions of imagery, rather
than the actual imagery itself. However, his position as a writer reinforces the interdisciplinary nature of his approach since he appropriated elements from the visual realm and served to translate these elements into his literary work. The concept of visual culture is ideal in studying Lovecraft, as this analysis presented here includes literature, commercial and amateur visual productions and philosophy. In relation to the interdisciplinary nature of the arts, it is significant to note that Lovecraft himself believed that “all the arts would seem to be fundamentally related despite their profound differences in function & method” (Lovecraft 1934, 408). If such a premise were extended into the visual arts and literature, then the tropes found in Lovecraft’s work would have analogous representation within the visual arts. The structures present in Lovecraft’s texts not only can be traced to external sources in visual culture, but also can serve as templates for new potential visual concepts, allowing for a greater examination of the intersecting visual and social connections, as ideas migrate and translate from one medium to another.

Though Lovecraft was foremost a writer, he did engage in the production of imagery related to his texts. Admitting the limitations of his artistic abilities in a letter to Reinhardt Kleiner, Lovecraft professed his desire to create images, stating “I always wanted to be able to draw, but I have no talent, and in one of my pictures you cannot tell a cow from a locomotive” (Lovecraft 1915, 17-18). Nevertheless, he confided his limited artistic abilities to Kleiner, “I used to be a water-colour fiend, and someday I may paint a picture or two for your amusement (and my own), for I still possess the painting materials that gave me so much harmless pleasure in happier days. I used to delight in
marine subjects with the brush, just as with the pen I chose landscapes” (Lovecraft 1916, 22). Lovecraft made a variety of rudimentary sketches of characters and locations based on his stories and travels for his own use, and to illustrate certain qualities of his literary work for his colleagues and friends, many of which will be examined throughout this dissertation.

Of greater importance was Lovecraft’s awareness of trends and debates happening within the larger visual culture of his era. On many occasions he frequented numerous galleries and museums in his home city of Providence and during his short residence in New York City. In countless correspondences with his colleagues and friends, Lovecraft spoke of visiting numerous galleries in Boston and Providence, and attending lectures on art at Brown University (Lovecraft 1934, 671). He also visited major art galleries such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, The Roerich Museum and The Whitney Museum (Lovecraft 1930 265-6; Lovecraft 1933, 535). Additionally, Lovecraft also went through various phases during his life where he would frequent the cinema and relayed his reactions to various films through written correspondence.

It is significant to note that Lovecraft often drew upon a vast visual lexicon of existing imagery both from the past and present, borrowing and describing existing forms from biology, architecture and paintings to represent the “outside” in his work. Of his reliance on the visual, Lovecraft declared in a letter to his friend August Derleth, “The fact is, that my imagination is almost wholly visual, so that nothing very far removed from the potentially pictorial could make a very big dent in me. I am what the psychologists call ’eye-minded’” (Lovecraft 1930, 298). Further, Lovecraft insisted that
he depended upon real visual models for use in his stories, stating that “The visible world is my circus and prompt-book” (Lovecraft 1932, 32). In a letter to Clark Ashton Smith, he affirms that his “chief use of the visible world… is simply to provide a springboard for leaps into abysses & dimensions forever beyond visibility” (Lovecraft 1930, 111).

Building upon his use of the visual, in a letter to Maurice Moe, he contended that, “I demand a more cleanly-cut visual image than formerly, before I will commit any picture or conception to paper” (Lovecraft 1930, 167). Lovecraft’s fiction was largely dependent on visual imagery as it both stimulated him and provided a template from which to extend his speculative narratives.

Lovecraft referred to numerous artists, paintings and buildings in his literary work; sometimes by name, other times through description. Notably, he established a supernatural horror canon of artists in his short story, “Pickman’s Model” (1927), which included Anthony Angarola, Gustave Doré, Henry Fuseli, Francisco Goya, and Sidney Sime. Supplemented with artistic references from his other stories, such as the work of John Martin, Nicholas Roerich, Lovecraft created his own criteria for what constitutes “outside” art, offering scholars and artists a foundation to study the elements such works have in common as well as offering a point of comparison for later artists. Indeed, his many visual influences often serve as models for later artists adapting the author’s work.

The publication of Lovecraft’s work in literary venues, such as Astounding Stories and Weird Tales, was adjoined with corresponding visual adaptations. Though Lovecraft preferred his stories to be unaccompanied by illustrations, remarking, “All the alleged

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8 S.T. Joshi has said of the story, that “it expresses, in fictionalized form, many of the aesthetic principles on weird fiction that Lovecraft had just outlined in ‘Supernatural Horror in Literature’” (Joshi 1996, 133).
'art’ work is indescribably vile, and I feel lucky whenever Wright is merciful enough to leave the beastly stuff off my effusions,” many of his stories did include images by artists, such as Andrew Brosnatch and B. Goldschlagel (Fig. 1.2) (Lovecraft 1926, 49). Despite the author having no direct control over these drawings, his writings influenced their production, and ultimately, they added a visual component to his texts, creating additional significance to his work. These images not only mark the first visual adaptations of Lovecraft’s work, they also represent the emergence of the author into the greater visual culture of the early twentieth-century.

Fig. 1.2. B. Goldschlagel. *The Outsider*. 1926.
Textual Reading

As mentioned previously, the core of Lovecraft’s aesthetic is composed of visual works he viewed from within his culture during his lifetime. This situates his work as a viable platform for the inscription of visual culture within his many literary texts and presents an opportunity to ascertain his intentional effects and the formal qualities of derivative disruptive tropes. To facilitate the establishment of such tropes within this analysis, it is necessary to conduct a textual reading of Lovecraft’s fiction, essays and letters, in order to correlate his intentions with the corresponding visual objects which he introduces in his narratives. The result of this analysis is the establishment of visual scenarios and their particular qualities that, through their inclusion in a greater geography of narrative space, make it difficult for the audience to gain a concise understanding of what they are experiencing. As Speculative Realism theorist Graham Harman has said of such passages in Lovecraft’s texts, the author liked to invoke repeatedly descriptions of an “outside” object to the point where it was difficult for the reader to understand how such disparate parts conjoined together to form a singular mass (Harman 2012, 31).\(^9\)

To gain a more thorough understanding of Lovecraft’s aesthetics, it is imperative to draw not only on his published essays and stories, but also his extensive personal correspondence. S.T. Joshi, a widely recognized Lovecraft scholar, has estimated that Lovecraft authored nearly 87,500 letters during his lifetime, with only 10,000 remaining in existence (Joshi 2003, 9). Many of these letters contain further elaborations of Lovecraft’s thoughts on aesthetics, since many of the correspondences were directed to

\(^9\) Harman specifically refers to “unknowable objects” and their “gratuitous amassing of numerous palpable surfaces” (Harman 2012, 31).
fellow writers, like Robert Howard and Ashton Clark Smith. The John Hay Library at
Brown University houses nearly 2,000 of these, as well as copies of Lovecraft’s various
essays and stories published during his lifetime (Brown University 2011).

A significant part of the research of this dissertation involved a trip to Providence
in order to search the archives of his existing letters to gain further insight into
Lovecraft’s philosophy as it relates to the visual arts. This trip to the John Hay Library
reinforced the sheer amount of energy and dedication the author devoted to
corresponding with his friends and acquaintances, as well as the remarkably illegible
nature of his handwriting. Fortunately, a good amount of his letters have been
transcribed and published by the preeminent Lovecraft scholar, S.T. Joshi.

The trip to Providence also yielded a substantial architectural element to the
dissertation, largely thanks to the tireless efforts of Donovan K. Loucks, owner and
operator of the website *The H.P. Lovecraft Archive* (Loucks 1998). Working from a map
that Loucks generously provided during a Lovecraft-centric conference which took place
in Rutland, VT, this study identifies particular buildings located in Providence, RI,
Salem, MA and Marblehead, MA that are referenced in a variety of Lovecraft’s stories,
such as *The Haunter of the Dark* (1936).

**Lovecraft’s Disruptive Tropes: Form and Function**

When examining Lovecraft’s texts, this analysis focuses on objects with visual
qualities that serve to disrupt time and space for the audience. Central to the current
approach is the translation or adaptation of Lovecraft’s aesthetic ideas to visual objects,
specifically their mode and expression. Such an analysis will utilize the specific signifiers inherent in each visually oriented medium as outlined by the literary theorist Linda Hutcheon, who maintains that literature tells, film shows and video games interact (Hutcheon 2006, 22). With this medium specific focus, it is possible to outline the visual dimension of these texts, privileging form over content in examining how each of these signifiers functions as cosmic horror within the given work. The resulting visual representation can be classified as a disruptive trope that expresses a rupture of reality or the presence of the “outside” within the conventional.

This dissertation takes its inspiration from the Speculative Realist movement, an object-oriented approach towards analyzing reality. If any existing text can become a focal point for analysis, and the site of various formal and social interactions, then the appropriation of Lovecraft’s disruptive tropes offers a rational approach to conduct further analysis on spatiotemporal disruptive objects. In his book, *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy*, Graham Harman advocates not only for the separation of texts from their socio-historical context, but also the ability of the analyst to remove portions of text from the whole “as a partially autonomous unity” (Harman 2012, 249). Within this project, the approach used is to remove visual objects and scenarios from their context, as a means of examining their formal qualities, as they are reiterated within visual culture. This approach is distinct from traditional formalism in that it focuses on the manner in which each expression of these disruptive tropes produces different consequences, depending on the context.
In his post entitled, “Lovecraft as Source Code,” Peter Damien contends that Lovecraft was unable to realize his grand ideas, that he “lacked the capability to do anything useful with them himself” (Damien 2013). While Damien’s premise that Lovecraft was a poor writer is problematic, his contention that later artists “compiled that source code of ideas into amazing works of art,” does appear to be an ongoing, intensifying process, especially in contemporary Western visual culture. Undoubtedly, Lovecraft would not have objected to such an appropriation of his own work, as he admits to doing much of the same thing, borrowing individual elements from the work of Arthur Machen, Lord Dunsany, Ambrose Bierce and Robert Chambers. Significantly, in a letter to August Derleth, the author concedes to his friend, “I feel flattered by your adoption of some of this background” (Lovecraft 1931, 337). In further remarks using speculative creatures by his friends and colleagues, Lovecraft contends:

And what pointless censure of the introduction of Cthulhu & Yog-Sothoth-as if their use constituted any ‘infringement’ on my stuff! Hades! The more these synthetic demons are mutually written up by different authors, the better they become as general background-material! I like to have others use my Azathoths & Nyarlathoteps-& in return I shall use Klarkash-Ton’s Tsathoggua, your monk Clinthanus, & Howard’s Bran (Lovecraft 1931, 353).

The author certainly was not concerned with maintaining strict ownership of his ideas, which has been codified, according to Joseph Kranak, under copyright law since Lovecraft’s writings were relegated to the public domain, allowing any artist to adapt any element of his numerous works (Kranak 2011).

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10 A search of H.P. Lovecraft on Google Trends demonstrates that countries such as Mexico, Chile, Russia, Costa Rica, Argentina, and Uruguay have produced more search interest than the United States since 2004 (Google Trends 2014). Additionally, Lovecraft has been a constant influence and source for adaptations within Japan (Mullis 2013; Thompson 2010).
Once the visual framework is constituted from Lovecraft’s writings, the subsequent portion of the dissertation mobilizes these disruptive tropes in a critical manner and contextualizes them in Western visual culture. This component of the dissertation will focus on works which are related to adaptations of Lovecraft’s texts to varying degrees, and which parallel the four tropes established within this analysis.

To illustrate this dissertation’s approach in isolating the disruptive tropes in Lovecraft’s work, and tracing their adaptation within Western visual culture, it would be useful here to examine a visual translation of Lovecraft’s short story “The Call of Cthulhu” (1926) by artist Matt Brooker from the graphic novel, *The Lovecraft Anthology – Volume 1* (2012) (Fig. 1.3). In a significant passage at the climax of the original narrative, a group of Australian explorers examining the formerly underground city, R’yleh, find themselves fleeing from the fictional deity Cthulhu. In their haste to escape, one specific character, Parker, encounters an architectural anomaly that overwhelms him, removing him permanently from the story. Lovecraft describes the event:

Parker slipped as the other three were plunging frenziedly over endless vistas of green-crusted rock to the boat, and Johansen swears he was swallowed up by an angle of masonry which shouldn't have been there; an angle which was acute, but behaved as if it were obtuse. (Lovecraft 1926, 194)

The angles that Lovecraft described in the story he related to the artistic movement of Futurism and established them as aspects of the overall structure of the city (192). Thus the audience sees that Lovecraft is referencing visual elements pertaining to a certain
artistic practice of his era, traditionally associated with the larger artistic category of Modernism.

When visually translating the function of such deviant architecture described in the original text, it is likely that an artist would return to architectural related works within the category of Futurism. However, Brooker instead utilizes, in his words, a “fairly prosaic storytelling style with relatively few odd angles” that borrows heavily from the influential works of a much later twentieth-century artist, MC Escher, in depicting the impossible event referenced (Badham 2011). In an interview with the magazine writer Matt Badham, Brooker admits that “There’s also a bit where someone falls through an odd angle in a wall – I was really wracking my brains for a way to deal with that one, in the end I was reduced to pinching an idea from MC Escher!” (Badham 2011). In seeking to represent the unportrayable in Lovecraft’s literary passage, Brooker draws on the work of Escher, especially the artist’s ability to subvert perspective to give architectural structures infinite loops of space, which have no possibility of collapsing into a realistic spatial order by the viewer.

In the specific panel referencing this scene, there is an angular passageway forming a zig-zag pattern that transverses the center of the composition where the explorers are seemingly fleeing the deity Cthulhu. Here, Brooker conflates the perspective of the middle angle of the passage with the top angle on both sides of the structure to create an impossible arrangement of space, leaving two human characters positioned behind the passage, but also on top of it. The illusion of the disruption of time and space, or the function of this work, is the viewer’s cultural conditioning connected
with linear perspective and Brooker’s willingness to subvert the viewer’s perception in order to create a rupture of space, deviating from traditional artistic conventions.

Fig. 1.3. Matt Brooker and Ian Edginton. Panel from *The Call of Cthulhu*. 2012.

Matt Brooker’s adaptation of Lovecraft demonstrates the elastic nature of art and its ability to portray the violation of time and space through its deviance from linear perspective and realism. Divested of conventions of time and space that pertain to the real world, visual art can be a plastic sphere of cultural production where existing objects can be evoked by the artist, only to be brought together in unfamiliarly disruptive ways. Lovecraft’s literary efforts offer a challenge to artists wishing to replicate his disruptions, seeking to cultivate the same feeling of the sublime through showing rather than telling.
Brooker uses conventions of linear perspective in this example to create impossible situations, locating human characters in a manner not consistent with a realistic representation.

Additionally, Brooker’s work reinforces the transitory and evolving nature of visual language and, because of its constant evolution and refinement, its ability to represent what was previously thought to be unportrayable. His use of the work of Escher indicates the great potential artists have in appropriating existing structures and strategies within visual culture to solve narrative challenges. Significantly, his adaptation also demonstrates the uniquely interdisciplinary nature of translating concepts from literature to visual art, and reflects a locus of intersecting elements pertaining to literature, popular culture, art history, comic books and philosophy.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 of this dissertation, “The “Inside” of H.P. Lovecraft’s Supernatural Horror in the Visual Arts,” examines the use of the first-person point of view in Lovecraft’s fictional work, specifically his story “The Outsider” (1926), and applies his theory of aesthetics regarding repetition and symmetry to visual culture. The focus of this chapter is the occurrence of disruption within the author’s texts, exemplified through an encounter with the “outside” that is relayed to the audience through the first-person narrator, or, the “inside”. The basis of this analysis stems from a letter Lovecraft wrote which contains a passage concerning his view of aesthetics and the importance of repetition and symmetry in art. This passage introduces a form of subjectivity which
finds parallels within the first-person point of view so often utilized by Lovecraft. Once the conception of the “inside” is established, the remainder of the chapter concerns qualities of the “outside” which intersect with it. The resulting disruption of time and space takes place when these distinctive elements intersect, offering a contrast of relationships that are difficult for the audience to delineate.

In Chapter 2, “Lovecraft’s Temporal Model: Disruptive Montage,” the structure of Lovecraft’s story, “Pickman’s Model,” is utilized to demonstrate the author’s use of montage and repetition as a means of constructing the history of a fictional race of creatures, the ghoul. The use of montage in his work disrupts the unity of the present through repeated visual reference to temporal frames outside of localized space and time. To supplement the analysis of “Pickman’s Model,” this chapter examines two visual adaptations of the story: Jack Laird’s directed segment from the television show, *Night Gallery* (1970), and Herb Arnold’s illustrated comic “Pickman’s Model” (1972). These texts are examined to ascertain their connection with what the film theorist Morten Nielson describes as “disruptive montage,” which is a technique that does not contain “implicit order,” a “privileged point of view,” or “an unequivocal representation” (Nielson 2013, 41). This analysis argues that the manner in which Lovecraft utilized this repetition and montage throughout the narrative of “Pickman’s Model” conforms to Nielson’s notion of disruptive montage by establishing a pattern which challenges the audience’s unified temporal frame.

Chapter 3, “Lovecraft’s Disruptive Hieroglyphics: The *mise-en-abyme* and Time,” focuses on Lovecraft’s use of a text within a text, or *mise en abyme*, to disrupt a
narrative’s temporal frame. By including a time-contingent pictorial text within the temporal frame of the narrative, Lovecraft is contesting a unified sequence of events with a multitude of parallel temporal structures. Particularly, in *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936), Lovecraft incorporates the use of ideograms as a means of telling a historical narrative that takes place over millions of years within a story that, for the protagonist, only amounts to a few days. Providing context for the audience, the temporal space of the present comes into spatial contact with that of the past, resulting in a conflict between the two dimensions of time. To evaluate the use of *mise en abyme*, as a disruptive function in the visual arts, this chapter will examine *At the Mountains of Madness*, a graphic novel adaptation of the work by Ian Culbard, and the *Alien* film franchise (1979-2012), including the latest entry *Prometheus* (2012). These films will be analyzed to trace the manner in which visual texts within a text disrupt the temporal space of the narrative, ultimately creating conflict between frames of the present and the past.

Chapter 4, “The Cosmic Gaze: Polyocularity in H.P. Lovecraft-related Visual Culture” concerns the use of polyocularity and its relationship to human identity and the sublime. Found as early as ancient Greece, polyocularity has been associated with divinity in mythological figures such as the giant Argus Panoptes. Several species of sentient life forms in Lovecraft’s fiction, such as the Yithians in “The Shadow Out of Time,” (1936) the Elder Ones and Shoggoths in *At the Mountains of Madness*, and Cthulhu of “The Call of Cthulhu,” are all similarly imbued with varying polyocular systems of vision. The presence of bodies with an abundance of eyes in a narrative translates into a difference from that of biocular anthropomorphic forms, causing an
asymmetrical relationship between identity and aspect that causes anxiety for a human viewer.

Chapter 5, “Masonry of No Human Pattern: H.P. Lovecraft’s “Outside” Architecture,” contrasts Lovecraft’s much-praised Georgian architecture, as emblemized by references to his 66 College St home in Providence in his short story, “The Haunter of the Dark” (1936) with several non-Vitruvian examples of architecture featured in the author’s work and correspondence. In particular, the work of the artists Nicholas Roerich and John Martin, as well as the work and writings of the Futurists will be examined within the chapter to establish a disruptive trope of architecture that does not conform to the human body, thus displacing it within a given narrative. Lovecraft utilized architecture and landscape in his stories, such as in *At the Mountains of Madness* and “The Call of Cthulhu,” to create a disruptive atmosphere without necessarily having to introduce an active antagonist. Such architecture challenges humanity’s assumed dominance over its environment but also signifies the presence of the “outside”.

The conclusion of this dissertation will examine the further evolution and mobilization of Lovecraft’s disruptive tropes within visual culture that challenges an observer’s perception, communicating the limitations of human power and senses. As technology allows for new forms of visual arrangements, Lovecraft’s tropes may be employed and adapted to enhance a work’s ability to create the feeling of the sublime in the viewer. The conclusion is devoted to speculation on the four disruptive tropes explored in the previous chapters and their potential within contemporary visual culture, as digital media allows for even more sophisticated configurations of time and space.
CHAPTER 1: THE “INSIDE” OF H.P. LOVECRAFT’S SUPERNATURAL HORROR IN THE VISUAL ARTS

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine images adapted from Lovecraft’s literature to determine how they disrupt time and space for the audience. To this end, it is essential to outline the author’s theory of aesthetics, starting first with his fundamental approach to introducing and describing imagery in his narratives. This chapter posits that Lovecraft utilized the first-person point of view, or the “inside,” in his fictional works, such as “The Outsider” (1926), as a means of creating identification, or symmetry, between the narrator and the audience. His approach is in marked contrast to some of his peers, such as Clark Ashton Smith and Donald Wandrei, who were more radical in assuming non-human points of view in their stories. However, as he occasionally voiced hostility or indifference towards humans, Lovecraft did not see such a point of view as essentially more important than any other. Rather he emphasized that the best way to frighten the audience, and create the feeling of the sublime, is to replicate an anthropocentric way of seeing and related-subjectivity within the text. Similarly, this analysis proposes that utilizing the first-person point of view, the “inside” within the

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11 Lovecraft himself wrote to his friend and colleague August Derleth “I am myself less exclusively cosmic than Klarkash-Ton & Wandrei, in that I recognize the impossibility of any correlation of the individual & the universal without the immediate visible world as a background-or starting-place for a system of outward-extending points of reference.” (Lovecraft 1930, 288) This quotation is examined later in the chapter in more detail.

12 Lovecraft railed against overemphasizing humanity’s desires in a letter to Frank Belknap Long: “There is, to my mind, a kind of hideous irony in the assumption of the human point of view at all-in the exaltation, celebration, or even detailed notice of the contemptible organic processes of the filthy louse called man” (Lovecraft 1922, 172-173). Rather, he understood reality as something beyond and greater than humanity, a view he often labelled “cosmic”.

visual arts, in conjunction with repetition and symmetry, allows for the disruption of time and space for the audience.

Lovecraft’s “inside” and “outside” dynamic is essential to understanding how his stories, as well as the visual scenarios within them, function to create the feeling of “fear” and “fascination of wonder and curiosity” commonly associated with the sublime (Lovecraft 1934, 21, 23). For Lovecraft, the division between the two approaches and the manner in which they function is based on his greater aesthetic related to beauty. In 1928, this concept was outlined in a letter to his friend, Zelia Brown Reed:

My theory of aesthetics is a compound one. To me beauty as we know it, consists of two elements; one absolute and objective, and based on rhythm and symmetry: and one relative and subjective, based on traditional associations with the hereditary culture-stream of the beholder (Lovecraft 1928, 229).

The first formal element, containing rhythm (repetition) and symmetry, relates to qualities of external “outside” objects. The term “outside” refers to phenomena that are essentially beyond anthropocentric origins, knowledge, conventions and experience, i.e., beyond human culture. Further, Lovecraft associates the concept with “astronomical infinity,” representing images that reflect “the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law” (Lovecraft 1933, 176; Lovecraft 1930, 288).

Regarding the second category in Lovecraft’s aesthetic, the “subjective,” Lovecraft contends that it is “based on traditional associations with the hereditary culture-
Further, Lovecraft referred to such subjectivity in a letter to Arthur Harris, stating:

The constant discovery of different peoples’ subjective impressions of things, as contained in genuine art, forms a slow, gradual approach, or faint approximation of an approach, to the mystic substance of absolute reality itself—the stark, cosmic reality which lurks behind our varying subjective perceptions (Letters II, To Mr. Harris 287).

Within both passages, Lovecraft is referring to a form of subjectivity, and the “beholder” is the narrator. Essentially, the protagonist, or narrator, is embodied within the text and relays his experiences to the audience, giving the narrative an “inside” account of events from his own point of view. Uncharacteristically, within “The Outsider,” Lovecraft does not assign a gender to his protagonist; hence, this analysis refers to the character as “it”. The cultural “associations” are derived from a subjectivity that is dependent on the human body. Within the majority of Lovecraft’s tales, he devotes a certain amount of literary space to establishing such a subjectivity through which the reader experiences the proceedings of the narrative.

In order to illustrate how such a dynamic between “outside” and “inside” translates from Lovecraft’s literature to the visual, let us address Lovecraft’s short story, “The Outsider” and, specifically, the manner in which the “inside” of the text may be realized through images. The story adopts a first-person point of view, whereby the narrator protagonist describes its ascent from a mysterious underground structure to the

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13 With Lovecraft, an avowed racist, this “hereditary culture-stream” on a socio-political level manifested itself in a rather retrograde manner in short stories such as “The Horror at Red Hook” (1925) and “The Street” (1919). This analysis focuses less on distinctions between humans and rather the difference between humans and the “outside”.

14 All of Lovecraft’s stories refer to a male protagonist, with the exception of “The Outsider,” which does not mention the gender of this character. Indeed, Lovecraft scholar Ben Indick finds that “none of his narrator-protagonists is feminine” (Indick 1975, 63).
earth’s surface, referencing its own body in passages such as, “I raised my free hand”, “I used both hands,” and “my hands came upon a doorway” throughout its journey (Lovecraft 1926). Throughout the journey to the surface, the protagonist encounters elements of the “outside” characterized by repetition and symmetry defying the audience’s expectations regarding time, space and identity. Once it encounters a large house containing party-goers towards the end of the narrative, it discovers a mirror, realizing that it is actually a ghoul who has arisen from its subterranean crypt.

To transpose the first-person point of view from Lovecraft’s original text of “The Outsider” to the visual arts, this study analyzes the comic adaptation of “The Outsider” by the Dutch comic artist, Erik Kriek. However, to properly contextualize Kriek’s work, there will be included a brief discussion of the nineteenth-century German artist, Adolph Menzel, an important precursor to much of the art that utilizes the first-person point of view today. Though his paintings and sketches predate both Lovecraft and related adaptations, Menzel’s work is connected to the notion of the “inside,” since much of it suggests “embodiment” (Fried 2002, 17). Traditionally within the visual arts, perspective is associated with linear perspective and approximating spatial reality through a two-dimensional picture plane. Within this chapter the term perspective will be associated with other related terms such as point of view, field of view, viewpoint and “embodiment” to signify ultimately the “inside” or a visual representation of what a human would see while looking out at the external environment.

Represented through a partial reference to the human body, such as arms and feet, the “inside” gives the illusion that a composition is the expression of “the position of a
subject in order to show us what the subject sees” (Branigan 1984, 103). This point of view can be seen in Kriek’s adaptation of Lovecraft’s “The Outsider,” and even within Lovecraft’s own amateur landscape sketches. For example, (Fig. 2.1) Kriek utilizes the first-person point of view within his adaptation to represent the unnamed protagonist of the story, much as Menzel’s earlier work. The audience is shown the protagonist’s field of view with its hands raised up toward the high walls of the blackened tower, much as a person would see the scene from his own eyes, if he were conducting such an action.

Fig. 2.1. Erick Kriek. Panel from “The Outsider.” 12

15 Edward Branigan was referencing the subjective shot in film; however, this POV is applicable to two-dimensional art, without the temporal component.
Modified to fit within the individual panel comprising a larger sequence of the comic’s narrative, the composition approximates a human point of view. Such a perspective creates identification for the audience as they share this mode of sight when interacting with and viewing the external world. Kriek’s composition manifests “embodiment” as it represents the “inside” of the human body’s point of view, possessing all the limitations related to that perspective. This includes a narrow field of view not allowing a full representation of the protagonist.

The examination of the advantages of Lovecraft’s approach of the first-person point of view within the visual arts, concludes with representations of the “outside.” The first-person point of view is an effective way of presenting a narrative, both literary and visual, as it offers a highly conventional mode of sight from which artists may introduce formerly unknown “outside” objects. As demonstrated here, the potential of this mode of sight within horror themed visual arts likely explains the increased proliferation of the first-person point of view in contemporary films and video games.

“The Outsider” and the First-Person Point of View

The foundational perspective of a majority of Lovecraft’s stories is created through the first-person point of view, whereby the narrator relays the events to the reader as it transverses the geography of the narrative. This offers a limited perspective

of events, a frame from which the internal voice of the narrator is constantly organizing what it sees, while providing context for the audience. An example of this dynamic, and the centerpiece of this discussion of the first-person perspective, is in Lovecraft’s short story “The Outsider”. Written in 1921 and later published in the pulp horror magazine, *Weird Tales* in April 1926, “The Outsider” is considered by many, according to Lovecraft scholar, S.T. Joshi, as “Lovecraft’s signature tale” (Joshi 2001, 141). Despite Lovecraft’s derision of the story - he found it too close to the work of Edgar Allan Poe – it serves as the primary example of the first-person point of view in this discussion since so much of the plot twist depends on the protagonist’s perspective (Lovecraft 1931, 379).

In “The Outsider” the unnamed protagonist repeatedly describes its point-of-view as it traverse the spatial geography of the narrative, stating “I looked,” “I observed,” “I saw,” and “I beheld,” coupled with descriptions of its actions such as “I now stepped,” and “I stood” (Lovecraft 1926, 11, 12). Nothing is mentioned regarding the specific gender identity of the character throughout the narrative, even when it sees itself in the mirror at the climax of the story. Rather, the narrator’s body is repeatedly expressed in the text through a reference to the protagonist’s act of looking, through specific physical actions of the protagonist’s body, or certain actions that the character makes. Essentially, it is a literary representation of the self that the audience can identify with, as they too experience reality in a similar way. A kind of symmetry exists between the two patterns

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17 Indeed Lovecraft found the perspective in “The Outsider” to be the only redeeming quality of the work, remarking, “I’ll concede that the tale has the single merit of an original point of view” (Lovecraft 1931, 379).
of seeing, between the narrator and the audience, as the former serves as proxy for the latter.

Through the form of the protagonist, this surrogate of the human point of view is constructed in such a way as to create identification between the audience and the narrator, which is essential to Lovecraft’s exploration of the “outside”. The narrator becomes a stand-in for the audience, forming a pattern from which all else is related and compared, and becoming an essential component in any potential exploration of the “outside” within the narrative. Lovecraft reinforces this notion in a letter to August Derleth, explaining:

I recognize the impossibility of any correlation of the individual & the universal without the immediate visible world as a background-or starting-place for a system of outward-extending points of reference. I cannot think of any individual as existing except as part of a pattern and the pattern’s most visible and tangible areas are of course the individual’s immediate environment; the soil and culture-stream from which he springs, and the milieu of ideas, impressions, traditions, landscapes, and architecture through which he must necessarily peer in order to reach the “outside”…. I begin with the individual and the soil and think outward-appreciating the sensation of spatial and temporal liberation only when I can scale it against the known terrestrial scene (Lovecraft 1930, 288).

Thus the author is commenting on the essential entry point within a narrative that the audience needs in order to invest themselves within the story. This initial anthropocentric point of view is very similar to what the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin terms homeland, which serves “as organizing center for the point of view, the scales of comparison, the approaches and evaluations determining how alien countries and cultures are seen and understood” (Bakhtin 1938, 103). If there is an origin or center within “The Outsider” and other Lovecraft texts, it is within the confines of constructed human subjectivity.
At the beginning of the story, the unnamed narrator establishes its own subjectivity, stating “Unhappy is he to whom the memories of childhood bring only fear and sadness”, relaying this distinction between its memories and the “barren” existence it lived while contemplating such memories (Lovecraft 1926, 8). In terms of its domain, the narrator describes living in a “castle” that “was infinitely old and infinitely horrible,” where there was little light besides the candles that it occasionally set aflame (8). There were no other living entities that it could recall living in this place, professing, “I cannot recall any person except myself” and “and I do not recall hearing any human voice in all those years” (9). The condition of the narrator speaks to the absence of external culture but also a lack of other points of view from which it might find a reference to reality other than its own.

In the absence of other living beings, the narrator’s contact with culture, or “culture-stream”, is severely limited. Instead of actual people, the narrator comes to identify with or cognitively create symmetry between itself and numerous human figures found in the book’s illustrations. Thus the narrator’s personal and cultural identity is determined not only by memory but also by cultural objects in which a pattern becomes established between the narrator and representations of humans. This narrowly informed subjectivity is reinforced, as the narrator “would often lie and dream for hours about what [it] read in the books; and would longingly picture [itself] amidst gay crowds in the sunny world beyond the endless forest” (Lovecraft 1926, 9). The narrator’s interactions with the books create identification but also empathy for the human and, more importantly, the human visual form.
Despite the protagonist’s habitation alone in a desolate, alienating castle, the constant reference to body parts and human actions within the text creates the sense that the protagonist is essentially a conventional human, albeit in a remarkably oppressive situation. With respect to Lovecraft’s aesthetic, repetition convinces the audience that the protagonist bears symmetry with itself, thus helping to identify with isolation and lack of social contact. This approach allows the audience to maintain a center of interest and interaction, undeterred by the mysterious and bleak surroundings.

First-Person Perspective: From Literature to Images

Here the current discussion shifts from examining theoretical issues concerning the first-person point of view in literature, to the analysis of visual texts. The focal point of this analysis is the Dutch illustrator Erick Kriek’s comic adaptation of Lovecraft’s “The Outsider.” Located in Amsterdam, Kriek is known for his Gutsman Enterprises, an operation he established to facilitate the production and sale of art-based goods and services, including comics, t-shirts and posters (Kriek 2014). His comic adaptation of “The Outsider” is featured in his graphic novel, “H.P. Lovecraft - From Beyond and Other Tales,” an anthology of Lovecraft narratives published in 2013. Kriek’s adaptive approach for Lovecraft’s text of the “The Outsider” is to replicate the first-person point of view into images, and to maintain this field of vision or frame.\footnote{Horacio Lalia, an Argentinian comic book illustrator, also utilized this perspective in his own graphic novel adaptation of “The Outsider.”} Essentially, the audience is shown exactly what the character sees as they encounter various objects and architecture throughout the narrative.
An example of Kriek’s adaptation which illustrates an element contained within the beginning of “The Outsider” is shown at the beginning of the sequence (Fig. 2.2). Here one can see the narrator utilizing its hands to examine one of the books referenced in the story, giving the audience a modified “inside” point of view. However, the composition’s frame is narrow and deviates from a more realistic human biocular vision, only indicating the point of view through the incorporation of the protagonist’s hands holding the candle while paging through the book. As a result of this individual image, as well as the similar structural perspective in later sequences, the viewer comes to identify with the protagonist’s process of deriving its identity through exposure to visual phenomena and movement through narrative space. Throughout the sequence, the audience is shown the protagonist’s shadow as it transverse the dark dwelling of the underground and later its hands comes into contact with an object which requires interaction. Yet, this perspective also maintains the limited visual knowledge of the protagonist throughout the original story, since the viewer is never shown the narrator’s face until the climax.
Within pictorial three-dimensional art, the use of visual signifiers, like those featured in Kriek’s work, are used to represent a “portion of a character’s body” within a compositional frame (Duncan and Smith 2009, 113). These signifiers stand in for “the reality of the entire body” and thus are synecdoches (113). Synecdoche applies to the analysis of Lovecraft’s first-person perspective in the visual arts as it reflects an artist’s approximate point of view, similar to what is described within “The Outsider”. This device utilizes references to the body such as arms, legs, feet or indirect signifiers such as shadows. The use of synecdoche in traditional art is rare, at least in the manner that Kriek explicitly utilizes it within “The Outsider” to depict the first-person viewpoint through the use of human appendages. However, in conjunction with eye-level view, it
may be used to reinforce “identification with the characters and [a] sense of involvement in the action” (143). Within the horror genre, the use of the first-person-point of view is especially effective, as the film theorist Thomas Sipos contends that, “A victim’s POV [point of view] can heighten tension and fear by increasing audience identification with that victim. Horror is more horrifying when it strikes someone we care about – or when it strikes us” (Sipos 2010, 83). This identification between the protagonist and audience is crucial in understanding how Kriek’s visual adaptation of “The Outsider” functions, much as the point of view in the original text.

Kriek’s use of the first-person viewpoint is not unusual within the larger contemporary visual culture of the West, especially within video games. Numerous games such as *Wolfenstein* (1992), *Doom* (1993), *Half-Life* (1998), *Halo* (2001), *BioShock* (2007) and the *Call of Duty* series all use the first-person point of view to some degree in order to approximate a human mode of vision. However, prior to the creation of video games, there is a notable example seen in the work of the nineteenth-century German painter, Adolph Menzel. Although there is no record of Lovecraft’s awareness of Menzel, there are certain analogies inherent within his given techniques with respect to the first-person viewpoint. Menzel utilized what Michael Fried labels a “lived perspective”, a term which “corresponds to and evokes the actual physical movements – the actual inclinations of the head and neck – with which an embodied viewer would have perceived the original scene” (Fried 2002, 19). An example of Menzel’s “inside” point of view can be seen in his work, *Hand Holding a Paint Dish* (1864), which depicts
the artist’s right hand as an extension of his perspective (Fig. 2.3). This is very much in line with Lovecraft’s own embodied literary POV, as it assumes the first-person perspective via the use of synecdoche. Image and body become fused together within this composition to create symmetry between the artist’s and the audience’s gazes.

![Hand Holding a Paint Dish](image)

Fig. 2.3. Adolph Menzel. *Hand Holding a Paint Dish*. 1864.

Similar to Menzel’s technique of incorporating the body as an extension of the viewer, Lovecraft establishes in “Some Notes on Interplanetary Fiction”, that this way of seeing is significant in introducing “weird” phenomena to the audience. He suggests, “The characters of a story are essentially projections of ourselves; and unless they can share our own ignorance and wonder concerning what occurs, there is an inevitable handicap” (Lovecraft 1934, 180). On this notion, such extensions of the self or the

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19 Michael Fried notes that Menzel was ambidexterous and likely painted exactly what he saw with his left hand, freeing his right hand to serve as a model (52).
audience are visually signified in a manner similar to Menzel’s work, as the body serves as an extension of the observer’s gaze. Indeed, the eighteenth-century philosopher and political theorist, Edmund Burke, suggests that sympathy is essential to experience pain and terror, in the arts, and this feeling arises through an observer’s relationship to a phenomenon or person (Burke 1767, 80). With “The Outsider,” such sympathy arises from the close relationship of the reader to the depiction of a first-person point of view (Fried 2002, 3).

Lovecraft’s contention that the character and reader must “share” “our own ignorance”, speaks of the limitations in the point of view that the author was attempting to foster within his work. Ignorance, employed within the visual, includes all which exists outside of the frame or POV of the narrator. This limitation is largely signified through unawareness of the protagonist’s own visual aspect within “The Outsider”, which plays an important role once it encounters a human possessing its own point of view and perspective. The narrator in “The Outsider” describes this dynamic of an identity’s absence: “My aspect was a matter equally unthought of, for there were no mirrors in the castle, and I merely regarded myself by instinct as akin to the youthful figures I saw drawn and painted in the books” (Lovecraft 1926, 9). Equally significant to the story, the narrator never hears its own voice. Later, the character admits, “I knew not who I was or what I was” (Lovecraft 1926, 11). Likewise, the audience, entering the spatiotemporal frame of the story, shares subjectivity with the narrator but never transcends its limited first-person point of view until coming into contact with a mirror.
Returning to Lovecraft’s quote regarding his theory of aesthetics, particularly the first “objective” element of “rhythm and symmetry,” one finds that “The Outsider” contains components of the “outside” and “inside” consistently repeated throughout the story (Lovecraft 1928, 229). Indeed they intersect at specific moments in the narrative to create points of interactivity which locate the protagonist in the text’s setting. Repetition, within this context, reinforces the human characteristics of the protagonist and the tremendous scale of the dark tower. After a prolonged period of dissatisfaction, the protagonist relays its desire to climb the “single black ruined tower that reached above the forest into the unknown outer sky” in order to witness “day” (Lovecraft 1926, 9). From this point, Lovecraft alternatives between describing the protagonist’s physical actions through reference to its body and the dimensions of the “outside” architecture it encounters throughout its journey, until the climax of the story.

The account of the protagonist’s climb up the side of the tower is infused with specific language alluding to its body. At the beginning of this ascension, the protagonist remarks, “In the dank twilight I climbed the worn and aged stone stairs till I reached the level where they ceased, and thereafter clung perilously to small footholds leading upward” (Lovecraft 1926, 9). Further scaling the tower, the narrator “vainly groped with one free hand for a window,” from which to ascertain how far it had traveled up the side of the structure. Here, the narrator discovers an end to its struggle, pronouncing “All at once, after an infinity of awesome, sightless crawling up that concave and desperate precipice, I felt my head touch a solid thing, and I knew that I must have gained the roof
or at least some kind of floor” (Lovecraft 1926, 9-10). This “infinity” of climbing referred to in “The Outsider” is seen in the following passage from Edmund Burke’s treatise on the sublime:

Infinity has a tendency to fill the mind with that sort of delightful horror, which is the most genuine effect, and truest test of the sublime. But the eye not being able to perceive the bounds of many things, they seem to be infinite, and they produce the same effects as if they were really so. We are deceived in the like manner, if the parts of some large object are so continued to any indefinite number, that the imagination meets no check which may hinder its extending them at pleasure (129-130).

In this instance, the protagonist is climbing “sightless” in the dark, unable to determine neither the height it had climbed nor the distance to the top. Subsequently, this lack of dimensions enlarges the narrator’s perimeters of vertical space to the extent of infinity producing the sensation of the sublime. This spatial boundlessness is previously invoked within the story, when the protagonist relays the details regarding its surroundings, including the castle, which it finds “infinitely old and infinitely horrible” and the forest, which it characterizes as “endless” (Lovecraft 1926, 8,9).

Returning to the narrator’s ascension, the protagonist relays, “In the darkness I raised my free hand,” and circled the tower until “finally my testing hand found the barrier yielding, and I turned upward again, pushing the slab or door with my head as I used both hands in my fearful ascent” (Lovecraft 1926, 10). This body-centric section of the narrative conveys the immense challenges that the protagonist faced in climbing this mysterious, decrepit structure. Concurrently, each reference to the protagonist’s body supports the notion that it is human, or at least human-like, despite the atypical circumstances alluded to at the beginning of the narrative.
As the text functions to compel the audience in identifying with the protagonist, so does Kriek’s comic adaptation, especially through its reference to the body. Of the five panels which adapt this ascension, four of them feature the protagonist’s hand. Kriek’s first depiction of the protagonist’s hands during the ascension (Fig. 2.4) alludes to the passage from the original text which mentions that it “clung perilously to small footholds” (Lovecraft 1926, 9). In the composition, Kriek portrays the protagonist’s arms tight with strain, the very tendons of its muscles tense from attempting to hold onto the shallow crevasses in the wall of the tower. Just as a viewer would have difficulty seeing below from this position, Kriek limits the frame, including only what the protagonist sees directly in front of it. In each of the subsequent panels, a hand or hands are featured reaching or pushing up in order to climb the great heights of the tower. These elements come together to form a representation of the “inside” that the audience can identify with, even if the setting might not be overly familiar.
Landscape and Architecture Through the Point of View of the “Inside”

Upon reaching the surface in “The Outsider,” the narrator encounters a series of architectural structures in which it proceeds to traverse. Here the audience gets a sense of the narrator’s deliberate movement through space, navigating paths and, in the process, calling attention to its own corporeal form, the “inside” of a point of view. Additionally, the short story represents Lovecraft’s enthusiasm for architecture and landscape, and his tendency to integrate both elements within his fiction. In a letter to August Derleth,
Lovecraft proclaims, “What has haunted my dreams for nearly forty years is a strange sense of adventurous expectancy connected with landscape and architecture and sky-effects” (Lovecraft 1930, 100). In numerous correspondences the author indicates that architecture and landscape are essential visual elements which the audience “must necessarily peer in order to reach the ‘outside’” (Lovecraft 1930, 288). To contextualize the nature of the protagonist’s journey and as a means of driving the plot, “The Outsider” incorporates architectural elements in order to repeatedly cue the audience as to its identity. Similarly, Kriek’s comic adaptation represents the mobilization of the body negotiating such space.

Returning to events depicted in “The Outsider”, the protagonist encounters a “doorway, where hung a portal of stone, rough with strange chiselling” and discovers that the immediate outside is surrounded by “nothing less than the solid ground, decked and diversified by marble slabs and columns” (Lovecraft 1926, 11). Initially barred from exiting due to the presence of a locked grating, the protagonist bashes through it, “staggered out upon the white gravel path that stretched away in two directions” and “passed under an arch out of that region of slabs and columns, and wandered through the open country” (11). The narrator’s negotiation of open space, after its previous concerted ascension, requires a somewhat different visual approach in representing a body’s movement through landscape and architecture, especially considering Lovecraft’s own attempts at describing such a process.

Lovecraft’s preference for the element of architecture and landscape can be seen in two notable drawings within his many correspondences. These sketches portray a
traversal of space that parallels, to some degree, the narrator’s journey in “The Outsider.”

In a letter to F. Lee Baldwin in 1934, Lovecraft included a drawing from his short story, “The Colour Out of Space” (Lovecraft 1934, 158). In the composition, shown in Figure 4, the work is largely viewed through the perspective of a person traveling down a path. This is very similar to the point of view utilized in a landscape drawing within Lovecraft’s correspondence to Elizabeth Toldridge in 1929 (Lovecraft 1929, 38). In both drawings, he attempts to place the audience within the viewpoint of a person who is walking down a path through a given landscape. In the composition Lovecraft orients this person as though he is travelling towards a ground well, as the “outside” globulous creature emerges out of its depths (Fig. 2.5). By locating the horizon line in the center of the composition, almost on the path, and establishing a wide view, Lovecraft replicates the scene from his fiction, as though the viewer were seeing and experiencing it.

Fig. 2.5. H.P. Lovecraft. Sketch of “The Colour Out of Space”. 1934.
The manner in which Lovecraft establishes viewpoint within his work above, visually and metaphorically, harkens back to the idea of “embodiment” within the work of Adolph Menzel and the scholarship of Michael Fried. Within Menzel’s sketch, *Study of a Landscape* (1872), it is clear that there is a continued adherence to point of view which creates subjectivity analogous to Lovecraft’s sketch (Fig. 2.6). Significantly, Fried notes that there are multiple landscape drawings and paintings created by Menzel which reflect “a sense of himself not just as in the world but also as intimately and complexly engaged with it in countless large and small ways” (Fried 2002, 24). Indeed, Fried contends that within the nineteenth century, “the new concern with the embodied subject brought with it a heightened sense of that subject’s orientation and mobility, which in turn found a natural home in the experience of architectural space” (36). In conjunction with Lovecraft’s professed admiration of landscape and architecture, it is clear he similarly attempted to represent mobility within not only his literary works but also his illustrations in much the same manner as Menzel did.
Like Menzel and Lovecraft’s earlier compositions, Erick Kriek’s visualization of “The Outsider” attempts to connect this type of “embodiment” to an image with the protagonist walking down paths, traveling through the spatial geography of the narrative. In this particular panel Kriek portrays the protagonist moving down a paved road that is similar to Lovecraft’s passage in “The Outsider”, which describes the journey from the graveyard where it “wandered through the open country, sometimes following the visible road” (Lovecraft 1926, 11) (Fig. 2.7). Both works, as well as Lovecraft’s own sketch, offer up an “inside” from which the viewer enters into the composition, almost as if s(he) were actually within the space.
Having demonstrated how the first-person point of view operates within both Lovecraft’s texts and related visual adaptations, the remainder of this chapter will be devoted to the qualities of “outside” objects found in “The Outsider”. This short story is a highly relevant text to introduce such “outside” elements, since Lovecraft saw a connection between the title and his description of disruptive phenomena. On naming a potential collection of his fiction, “The Outsider and Other Stories,” Lovecraft wrote “I consider the touch of cosmic outsideness-of dim, shadowy non-terrestrial hints-to be the characteristic feature of my writing” (Lovecraft 1927, 204). The nature of the “outside” objects within the story is particularly connected to Lovecraft’s stated theory of aesthetics concerning symmetry. The latter term refers to a patterned relationship between one or more points based on their similarity. However, Lovecraft stretched the term to include
general relationships between two or more objects imagined within the mind, stating, “To me it seems glaringly clear that there is no intrinsic value or meaning in anything which stands by itself. Value is wholly relative, and the very idea of such a thing as meaning postulates a symmetrical relation to something else” (Lovecraft 1928, 234). Thus, any relationship constituting value is created within the human mind. To make such connections, according to Lovecraft, requires “mental-physical-imaginative responses of organic beings of a given type and training to certain forms of relationship” (234). This last section of the chapter concerns both similar and dissimilar relationships and the manner in which they are expressed in “The Outsider”.

It is significant to note, that disruption is highly dependent on having an observer present who holds certain expectations, in order for those expectations to be transgressed. Without a human frame to observe events, there would be nothing to disrupt nor expectations from which to deviate. Recognizing this, Lovecraft utilized the first-person perspective in this particular story to create a human point of view from which the “outside” could be compared and reacted to by the narrator. In this manner, as established previously, the “inside” of the story is comparable to an audience’s own point of view. The manner in which the “outside” functions within the story is largely based upon an asymmetrical relationship between the protagonist’s expectations, and by extension the audience’s, and the reality of the narrative’s world referenced in the text. This division between expectations and diegetic reality creates tension for the audience until the climax of the narrative, which is a visual representation of the fundamental asymmetrical relationship of “inside” and “outside”.
There are three major conflicts within “The Outsider” that pertain to visual phenomena. The first concerns the nature of the protagonist’s vertical journey to the surface. To reiterate the protagonist’s motivation for this journey, originally it seeks to climb the dark tower in order “to glimpse the sky” and states that after its ascension, “I was now at prodigious height,” and occupied a “high apartment” (Lovecraft 1926, 9,10). The narrator believes that it was actually trees that blocked access to the sky in its former abode and assumes that once it reaches a greater height, it might have the opportunity to see the sun and sky. Instead, the protagonist gazes upon the following:

The sight itself was as simple as it was stupefying, for it was merely this: instead of a dizzying prospect of treetops seen from a lofty eminence, there stretched around me on the level through the grating nothing less than the solid ground, decked and diversified by marble slabs and columns, and overshadowed by an ancient stone church, whose ruined spire gleamed spectrally in the moonlight (11).

This passage represents a distinction in the protagonist’s expectation versus what it actually has viewed. The visual phenomena in question, exposed to a first-person perspective, have a greater impact as the audience senses the body relayed through the protagonist’s point of view. Lovecraft, by building up to the revelation through repeated references concerning the protagonist’s assumptions, undermines them once the character reaches the surface and observes a contradictory image that displaces expectations based on location.

The second major disruption in “The Outsider” concerns a stark difference in time and space from the protagonist’s memory. After the protagonist climbs to the surface, motivated by “a “frantic craving for light,” it wanders through an area possessing qualities defying its expectations (Lovecraft 1926, 11). This disruption occurs as the
narrator states, “I became conscious of a kind of fearsome latent memory that made my progress not wholly fortuitous” (11). Specifically in the following passage, this distinction between expectations on the part of the narrator and the visual phenomena it encounters reflects a disruption in time:

I passed under an arch out of that region of slabs and columns, and wandered through the open country; sometimes following the visible road, but sometimes leaving it curiously to tread across meadows where only occasional ruins bespoke the ancient presence of a forgotten road. Once I swam across a swift river where crumbling, mossy masonry told of a bridge long vanished. Over two hours must have passed before I reached what seemed to be my goal, a venerable ivied castle in a thickly wooded park, maddeningly familiar, yet full of perplexing strangeness to me. I saw that the moat was filled in, and that some of the well-known towers were demolished, whilst new wings existed to confuse the beholder (11).

The effect of this passage hints that the narrator has previously experienced these roads and castle, but that they have since changed and fallen into disrepair. This element of time, demonstrating a deviance from the protagonist’s expectations, requires its point of view in order to make subjective remarks regarding its relationship with the architectural components. As a result, this distinction provides the narrator with a mysterious history beyond its habitation of the dark depths from which it recently emerged, especially coupled with the nature of its ascension from the ground. The audience begins to learn that the protagonist emerges from the depths of what is alluded to as a tomb within a familiar area. However, the state of the architecture and landscape reflects a significant passage of time.

The final disruptive image in “The Outsider” concerns the narrator’s displacement of identity. At the beginning of the last section, the protagonist discovers a castle peopled with “dressed company… making merry, and speaking brightly to one another”
(Lovecraft 1926, 12). Upon realizing the disconnection between itself and the inhabitants of the party, the narrator pauses at this discovery, as it causes a fundamental difference in the audience’s understanding of self. Once the threshold into the castle is initially crossed by the protagonist, alternative points of view in the form of party-goers are presented. As the narrator joins the celebrating company, the crowd begins to panic with fear:

Scarcely had I crossed the sill when there descended upon the whole company a sudden and unheralded fear of hideous intensity, distorting every face and evoking the most horrible screams from nearly every throat. Flight was universal, and in the clamour and panic several fell in a swoon and were dragged away by their madly fleeing companions. Many covered their eyes with their hands, and plunged blindly and awkwardly in their race to escape, overturning furniture and stumbling against the walls before they managed to reach one of the many doors (Lovecraft 1926, 12).

Affected by this panic, the protagonist “trembled at the thought of what might be lurking near me unseen” (12) and responds to the “presence” by ushering in the sound of what it describe as “the first and last sound I ever uttered - a ghastly ululation that revolted me almost as poignantly as its noxious cause” (12). Despite its earlier contention that, “although I had read of speech, I had never thought to try to speak aloud” (9), this utterance arises, and the narrator is frightened by the disconnection between its expectations of self.

Approaching what the narrator believes to be the cause of this panic, it catches a view of an “unmentionable monstrosity,” (12) remarking on the deviancy of the figure in relation to the human form, stating,

God knows it was not of this world - or no longer of this world - yet to my horror I saw in its eaten-away and bone-revealing outlines a leering, abhorrent travesty
on the human shape; and in its mouldy, disintegrating apparel an unspeakable quality that chilled me even more” (Lovecraft 1926, 13).

The narrator’s purposing of the visual form, which it sees as outside of human conventions, is a common theme in Lovecraft’s work, especially the aquatic fish creatures in “Dagon” (1919), *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* (1926), “The Street” (1920), “Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family” (1921) and “The Horror at Red Hook” (1927). In all of these stories, the narrator mediates this difference to the audience by assigning subjective values to the unconventional beings, often labelling them abject.

At the very climax of the “The Outsider,” the protagonist is caught by surprise as they stumble onto the disruptive figure. Questioning all of the evidentiary images of hands and shadows that the audience has seen so far, this moment is when repetition ends and a new corporeal element is introduced. Characterizing the creature as “the ghoulish shade of decay, antiquity, and dissolution; the putrid, dripping eidolon of unwholesome revelation, the awful baring of that which the merciful earth should always hide”, the protagonist falls forward, prompting a revelation in identity (Lovecraft 1926, 13). This realization is described as the narrator “recognized the altered edifice in which I now stood; I recognized, most terrible of all, the unholy abomination that stood leering before me as I withdrew my sullied fingers from its own” (13). Looking in the mirror, the narrator realizes that they were actually seeing an abject image of its own representation. Disrupted by the mirror’s reflection, an “outside” image or third-person point of view changes the idea of identity held by the protagonist and audience at the beginning of the

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20 Here Lovecraft conflates “outsideness” with overt racism in certain instances, othering non-white races as something less than human.
text. This rupture in the narrative represents a new configuration of relations, which comes to contest the formerly assumed values held by the narrator.

The essence of this literary event in “The Outsider” is based on the subjective identity of the narrator or the asymmetrical relationship between its formerly held identity and the new visual representation in the mirror. This is very similar to Jacques Lacan’s notion that such a realization in infants leads to the construction of ongoing subjectivity (Lacan 1949, 76).  

Without access to a mirror, the protagonist comes to identify with the human figures contained in the books, yet once it sees itself in the mirror, it realizes that it is “an outsider” (14).

In Lovecraft’s own terminology on aesthetics, there is an objective component of symmetry in the form of a mirror which casts an unmediated view of reality of the figure standing in front of it. Essentially, the mirror’s reflection bears a third person point of view representing visual reality counter to what the protagonist formerly associated itself with. The former culture stream of the beholder was limited to “the coloured pictures of living beings which” the narrator “found in many of the mouldy books” stored in his underground habitation (Lovecraft 1926, 9). Of his understanding, the protagonist states, “My aspect was a matter equally unthought of, for there were no mirrors in the castle, and I merely regarded myself by instinct as akin to the youthful figures I saw drawn and painted in the books” (9). Here Lovecraft constructs a cognitive framework of the protagonist’s self-identity and the manner in which it empathizes with the human figures. Through the assumption of first-person point of view, Erik Kriek represents the

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21 Lacan refers to this identification as “the mirror stage” which refers to “the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image” (76).
enculturation of the protagonist within the “The Outsider” (Figure 2). Here it is focused on observing the human figures represented in books found in its previous habitation. This particular climax relies on the expectations of both the protagonist and audience in order to disrupt the introduction of an image not conforming to these expectations.

Regarding the qualities of disruptive art relevant to “The Outsider,” Anthony Julius succinctly outlines three methods by which art may be transgressive, one of which is “an art that violates certain beliefs and sentiments of its audience,” (Julius 2002, 102). In his argument regarding social conventions, Julius discusses that they ultimately “are about respect for boundaries, then, and the panic we can experience when they are transgressed or muddled” (Julius 2002, 123). In “The Outsider” both Lovecraft and Kriek have used the structure of the first-person point of view, with its limitations, to hide the true aspect of the narrator, and to expose it to an image that displaces this identity.

As the mirror within “The Outsider” reveals the narrator’s misguided assumptions about its physiology, the image is disruptive of time and space, once it finds its appearance abject.22 This disruption also occurs within the audience, as they realize that the narrator is shaken by its unrecognized reflection. Again, there is an asymmetrical relationship between reality and the expectations that this image divulges, creating a new identity, and more importantly, a way of seeing that assumes a new set of values held by the protagonist. In adapting the scene from the story, Erick Kriek chose to break the first-person point of view; while the protagonist sees a representation of third person perspective, so does the audience (Fig. 2.8).

22 Lovecraft’s The Shadow Out of Time (1936) similarly utilizes mirrors in displacing identity. The narrator Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee finds that his mind and that of an alien representative of the Great Race of Yith are transposed, resulting in a fear of mirrors.
In revealing a third-person perspective, Kriek acknowledges the audience’s difficulty with emotionally investing in an “inside” that lacks a distant or removed viewpoint of the central figure. With an absence of facial expression, as demonstrated in the previous panels of the comic, the viewer has little to interpret the emotional status of the protagonist. Instead, Kriek opts to indicate the protagonist’s anxiousness and transformation of subjectivity by changing perspective, allowing the reader to see the character’s reaction when viewing its own face in the mirror just as the character does.  

This point of departure from the first-person point of view arises in the panel sequence  

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23 One of the first visual depictions of a person looking into a mirror from a first-person viewpoint is Parmigianino’s *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, made in 1524 (Kunsthistorisches Museum 2014).
during the moment of self-realization when the protagonist understands that this image reflects his true state.

Here, Kriek breaks into the third-person point of view demonstrating the totality of this discovery, as well as the subject’s abrupt awareness of its identity, showing both the protagonist and its reflective image (Figure 8). The audience, formerly invested in this human perspective, is distanced from the proceedings once this revelation occurs. In Kriek’s composition the audience is shown a creature looking at itself, revealing an asymmetrical relationship of what the narrator identifies with, versus who the creature appears to be. Through the introduction of this newly defined relationship, the narrative is disrupted with transformative effects to the underlying premise. Exposing the limitations of the first-person perspective, this moment captures the view’s inability to comprehend reality and communicate subjective feelings to the audience, something that requires distance.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced Lovecraft’s larger theory of aesthetics, particularly the use of the first-person perspective, or the “inside,” as a primary mode of encounter within his literature. From his introduction of elements of repetition, symmetry and the “culture-stream of the beholder” within his aesthetics, one finds that the first-person point of view is a potent mode of sight within literature and the arts that represents a known and conventional manner of seeing which the audience can readily identify with. The short story, “The Outsider,” and its comic adaptation by Erick Kriek, reinforce the
potential of the “inside” as well as affirm Lovecraft’s privileging of repetition and symmetry in both creating identification among the viewer and the protagonist and causing conflict within this relationship. In his discussion of aesthetics, Lovecraft was attempting to express the importance of representing relationships between one or more elements for the audience within the first-person point of view in order to generate meaning. Coupled with elements of repetition, such connections can be established or undermined within a narrative and, as is the case with “The Outsider,” the audience’s identification can be methodically challenged with a constant exposure to “outside” elements.

Lovecraft’s approach to supernatural fiction places him at odds with some of his colleagues, notably Clark Ashton Smith, since he argued that such a viewpoint was important in gaining the reader’s empathy. Indeed, Lovecraft believed as though such stories needed to be grounded, at least initially, by human characters and settings in order to demonstrate how fantastic the events in his narratives were. By reiterating the limitations of human subjectivity, expressed through a related viewpoint, Lovecraft sought to undermine it, and in using such an approach, demonstrated its viability in introducing audiences to “outside” phenomena. His method of the first-person point of view not only would be employed in adaptations of his work, such as in Kriek’s comic adaptation of “The Outsider,” but would come to form an important mode of sight in horror films and videogames.

The first-person point of view, regularly invoked within Lovecraft’s work, has seen a major increase in its use within a variety of horror related media in recent years.
In regards to film, the found footage horror genre utilizes a modified version of the “inside” with the camera serving as an extension of the body within such films as *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), *Cloverfield* (2008), *The Tunnel Movie* (2011), *V/H/S* (2012) and *V/H/S 2* (2013). In a similar development, as video games come to occupy a more prominent position within contemporary visual culture, there appears to be an acknowledgement among artists, as well as the audience, that the use of such a perspective is effective in generating the kind of “awe”, “fear” and “wonder” Lovecraft coveted (Lovecraft 1935, 21). In recent first-person-centric horror video games, such as *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* (2005), *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* (2010), *Outlast* (2013) and *The Forest* (2014), the first-person point of view continues to have relevance, reinforcing the practical nature of Lovecraft’s approach.

Significantly, *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth*, a video game adaptation of Lovecraft’s novellas *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* (1936) and *The Shadow Out of Time* (1936), replicates the “inside” point of view seen in the “The Outsider” and in Kriek’s Lovecraft adaptation (Fig. 2.9). As demonstrated by the image, the gameplay in *Call of Cthulhu* is largely conducted through the first-person point of view with the screen standing in for what a person would see from his perspective. The composition demonstrates how the game responds to the intersection of the “inside” and “outside,” since the screen directly disrupts the players’ ability to see through the use of oscillating and distorted imagery. As horror video games increase their presence in contemporary visual culture, the continued relevance of the “inside” image speaks to the great potential to create further works through the use of such a form.
Fig. 2.9. *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* screenshot. 2005. (IGN 2005).
H.P. Lovecraft often utilized repetition within his fictional narratives to establish elements of the “outside” for the audience. Elaborating on his views regarding the use of repetition, Lovecraft states:

…art is a very complex matter, with diverse roots drawing upon sources as widely separated as abstract rhythm or symmetry, & certain types of imaginative association which vary with the individual & the civilization. The two extremes are connected, however, by the essential identity of rhythm with repetition-the latter being the crux of the matter of imaginative association. Art must cause certain nerves in the brain to repeat a former pattern (Lovecraft 1929, 185).

From Lovecraft’s insight, one can determine that repetition establishes a pattern, which sustains itself beyond a phenomenon’s initial iteration. In order to accumulate connections beyond this original citation, repetition requires the dimension of time. According to Lovecraft, time was indeed paramount as he stated “Conflict with time seems to me the most potent and fruitful theme in all human expression” (Lovecraft 1933, 176). Considering Lovecraft’s preoccupation with the dimension of time, as well as his theory of aesthetics related to the element of repetition, this analysis seeks to bridge these two categories within the single technique known as montage. Defined by the film theorist, Andre Bazin, montage is “the ordering of images in time” and “the creation of a sense or meaning not objectively contained in the images themselves but derived exclusively from their juxtaposition” (Bazin 1952, 24,25). To determine how the repeated use of images serves to disrupt time for the audience, this analysis examines the use of montage in Lovecraft’s work and related visual adaptations.
Within stories such as “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928), “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1931) and *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936), Lovecraft used montage to compile different aspects of a fictional creature, affording it further depth within the larger text. A key example of his use of montage is demonstrated in the short story “Pickman’s Model” (1927), a narrative highly dependent upon temporal sequencing and repetition. Within the story, Lovecraft introduces the ghoul, a fictional creature, through referencing the painting ‘Ghoul Feeding,’ a work attributed to the artist character Upton K. Pickman. The ghoul, a mythological character originating from the Middle East, is frequently characterized as originating from humans and feasting on dead bodies. The introduction of the painting merely serves as a container from which the ghoul becomes nested within the story, a model from which alternative references might emerge.

Eventually, a “sequence of paintings” by Pickman is introduced into the narrative and portrays the creature within multiple iterations of time and space (Night Gallery 1971). This sequence in the story describes a montage of different pictorial scenes of the ghoul in various colonial historical and contemporary urban locations, such as Salem during the Witch Trials, and the Boylston Street subway. Through a repetitive citation of the ghoul throughout time and space, Lovecraft displaces the temporal frame of the narrative.24

In order to ascertain how disruptive montage functions, this analysis seeks to elaborate on the presence of montage within “Pickman’s Model” via sequence dependent

24 Of the relationship of Lovecraft and the use of citations, Mark Fisher, a notable Speculative Realism theorist has stated, “Lovecraft seemed to understood [sic] the power of the citation: something seems more real if it is cited than if it is encountered in the raw; and a text is only accepted as genuine once it is authenticated by another text” (Fisher 2007). When this notion is applied to “Pickman’s Model”, it is only through montage that the audience is able to appreciate the true meaning of the text.
visual media such as comic books and television. To help contextualize the degree to which montage is disruptive within “Pickman’s Model”, as well as related visual adaptations such as Jack Laird’s directed segment from the television show, *Night Gallery* (1970), and Herb Arnold’s illustrated comic “Pickman’s Model” (1972), the film theorist Morten Nielson’s notion of disruptive montage will be utilized. Nielson contends that disruptive montage does not contain “implicit order,” a “privileged point of view,” or “an unequivocal representation” (Nielson 2013, 41). Ultimately, analyzing Lovecraft’s original text of “Pickman’s Model” and related visual adaptations will determine the extent to which they conform to Nielson’s notion of disruptive montage.

The Structure of “Pickman’s Model”

“Pickman’s Model,” written by Lovecraft in 1926 and published in the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* in 1927, consists of two major temporal frames, the present and the past, which is relayed to the audience through the narrator (Joshi and Schultz 2001,204). Structurally, “Pickman’s Model” utilizes what is known as a wraparound narrative, a framing device which provides context to the multiple fragments constituting the body of content. Though it often has a strong presence at the beginning or end of a given story, a wraparound may come at any time. Within Lovecraft’s overall work, the wraparound is not unique to “Pickman’s Model,” as one can find it in various forms within “The Call of Cthulhu” (1926), “He” (1926), “The Rats in the Walls” (1924), “The Whisperer in the Darkness” (1927) and *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936). In a letter

25 "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926) uses a “framing”, or wraparound story narrated by the protagonist Francis Wayland Thurston that holds a variety of short narratives only connected through their relationship to the
to Clark Ashton Smith, Lovecraft remarks upon the importance of connecting “outside” events to the present, stating “No avenue can lead us away from the immediate to the remote or the shadowy or the universal unless it really does begin at the immediate—& not at any false, cheap, or conventional conception of the immediate” (Lovecraft 1930, 195). Allowing a diverse set of literary or visual texts to share the same narrative structure, the wraparound structure permits temporal flexibility within the individual fragments while maintaining a larger continuity of temporal form.

Providing a subjective point of view, the wraparound is located in “Pickman’s Model” at the beginning and end of the story, with occasional interjections throughout the text. This literary device utilizes two characters engaged in conversation about the history and whereabouts of the notorious fictional artist, Upton K. Pickman. These characters are Thurber, who doubles as both narrator and protagonist, and his companion, Eliot. The audience is not presented with Eliot’s portion of the dialog; rather it is only exposed to Thurber’s narration of the past, resulting in the combination of two temporal frames. Using a slightly modified form of Marie-Laure Ryans’ technique of mapping the fictional deity, Cthulhu. The short story “He” (1926) involves a narrator travelling to an obscure portion of New York City, led by a mysterious magician to an old building located in Greenwich. Proceeding through the building to a library, the protagonist is taken by the man to the front of a series of three windows covered with “yellow silk curtains” (Lovecraft 1926, 153). The incredible function of these windows is that of a film screen in that they have the ability to show scenes related to that location as it appeared within in various time periods, both from the past and the future. In “The Rats in the Walls” (1924), Lovecraft’s protagonist, Delapore, travels to England to his ancestral home where he finds a type of architectural montage greatly informed by its temporal origins “in one terrified glance I saw a weird pattern of tumuli, a savage circle of monoliths, a low-domed Roman ruin, a sprawling Saxon pile, and an early English edifice of wood” (Lovecraft 1924, 93). In “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1927) the perils endured by the character Henry Wentworth Akeley are told through letters which are mediated to the reader through the protagonist, Albert N. Wilmarth. As the alien race of Mi-gos attacks Akeley’s farmhouse in Townshend, VT, his successive letters convey the increasing tension inherent in the siege. The repeated inclusion of these letters within the narrative is to highlight the intensity of relations between Akeley and the aliens, though by doing so from a distance, since Wilmarth is ultimately the one relaying such information to the reader.
narrative boundaries, the wraparound narrative in “Pickman’s Model” looks like the diagram featured in Fig. 3.1 (Ryans 1990, 366). Every event or object that is contained within the square, representing the past, is still mediated and contained within the present, including Thurber’s description of a sequence of Pickman’s paintings.

Fig. 3.1. Diagram of the narrative in “Pickman’s Model”.

On a temporal level, the wraparound in “Pickman’s Model” connects past events with the present. However, it also serves to establish the fictional artist Pickman’s “scientific realist” style, while introducing the alleged “model” of the ghoul. Within the wraparound, the audience is presented with two major conflicts: the truth of Pickman’s images contained in the text, and the contradictory temporal frames. Notably, “Pickman’s Model” resolves this temporal and cultural impasse through the inclusion of a photograph, connecting the past activity of Pickman’s image production with Thurber’s present, something that will be described later in this analysis.
Explicitly demonstrated within the television show *Night Gallery’s* adaptation of “Pickman’s Model,” the temporal nature of this wraparound is revealed. *Night Gallery,* a product of the writer and actor Rod Serling, ran on NBC from 1969 to 1970, and adapted two specific Lovecraft stories, “Pickman’s Model” and “Cool Air.” The adaptation of “Pickman’s Model,” directed by Jack Laird and scripted by Alvin Sapinsley, aired December 1, 1971 (Skelton and Benson 1999, 206).

This Lovecraft adaptation contains a keen awareness of temporal issues contained within the original text as it uses montage in an innovative manner. In this television version, Eliot, a contemporary artist, and Larry, the owner of a local gallery, serve the same function as Thurber and Eliot in the original narrative in order to provide contextual information about past events to the audience. This is conveyed through a conversation between the two characters which takes place within the wraparound in the present. The main difference between the adaptation and the original text is that Eliot and Larry are not physically present within the past as they did not directly take part in the events at Pickman’s studio. However, they serve to punctuate the very beginning and end of the segment in the wraparound, bookending the past events pertaining to the story of Pickman. Just as in the original text, they exist in the narrative’s present to give the audience a more immediate entry into the story.

The Ghoul as Model

The introduction of the “model,” referred to in the narrative’s title, “Pickman’s Model”, is the second major function of the wraparound. The central antagonist and
“model” within the narrative belongs to a legion of creatures known as ghouls who inhabit a complex web of passages, such as subway tunnels, catacombs, and cellars within the lower portion of Boston, Massachusetts. These fictional creatures have their cultural origins in Mesopotamia and were later popularized and disseminated within Arab culture in the Middle East (Al-Rawi 2009). Lovecraft became aware of the mythological ghoul in his childhood during repeated readings of his grandfather’s copy of One Thousand and One Nights. Appropriating the creature from these previous cultural contexts, Lovecraft placed them within a contemporary urban setting to represent an unseen antagonist. Rather than hinting at the ghoul’s actual cultural origins, the author established his own fictional narrative regarding their history with New England’s early colonies.

In “Pickman’s Model,” Lovecraft introduces the Ghoul within the initial wraparound through referencing the painting, ‘Ghoul Feeding’. However, beyond the title and somewhat vague descriptions concerning his technique, he does not go into detail as to what specific event or scenario the composition references. Later in the story, a painting found within Pickman’s cellar is referred to which fits the description of the initial painting’s title, though the narrator, Thurber, never makes this connection explicit. If placed into the previous narrative map, the painting is located temporally within the present’s wraparound, as demonstrated in Fig. 3.2. What distinguishes it from the other paintings in the story, at least in the beginning, is its status as a container, devoid of specific internal content beyond its actual title. Therefore, in the diagram, it is represented

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26 Lovecraft read the English version of One Thousand and One Nights, Arabian Nights, when he was five years old (Joshi 2012, 22). The structure of “Pickman’s Model” and Arabian Nights are very similar to each other in their respective use of a wraparound.
in the present with dotted lines, though it becomes more fully realized as Thurber describes later in his account. Despite the absence of description concerning this painting, Lovecraft goes on to describe the artist’s technique, giving the reader an indirect representation of what the ghoul looks like. After Eliot relays to Thurber that “Pickman’s forte was faces,” he attributes the ghoul’s visage as appearing like “the gargoyles and chimaeras on Notre-Dame and Mont Saint-Michel,” and the work of Francisco Goya (Lovecraft 1927, 198).

Fig. 3.2. Diagram of the temporal elements and paintings in “Pickman’s Model”.

27 The artist Jack Jackson references the gargoyle sculpture in a depiction of a graveyard in his 1984 adaptation of Lovecraft’s “The Hound.” (Jackson 1972, 79)
Though Lovecraft utilized the ghoul as the subject of Pickman’s paintings, the author later created a rather crude drawing of the creature which was sent in a letter dated April 30, 1935 to Robert Bloch (Fig. 3.3) (Derleth and Wandrei 1944, 311). The illustration demonstrates the physical deviance from the human body, as Lovecraft depicted the ghoul with a protruding jaw, pointed ears, shortened tail and hairy body. The ghoul also appears to have a distinct posture, which reflects a predilection to walk on four legs, rather than two.

Fig. 3.3. H.P. Lovecraft. Illustration of “Pickman’s Model”. 1934.

The introduction of the ghoul and its continuous presence through a variety of contexts in “Pickman’s Model" are very much like what Fritz Leiber, Jr. labels as
“orchestrated prose” (Leiber 1963, 57). The essence of this style of writing is to take an object or location and describe it using slightly different sets of adjectives or wording, or what Leiber refers to as “sentences that are repeated with a constant addition of more potent adjectives, adverbs, and phrases” (57). The result is to grant these objects additional qualities with every new reference and subsequent context. When applied to a narrative, which similarly is bound with temporal progression, a time dependent concept is established within the proceedings of the narrative through citation related to an object or set of objects. The introduction of the painting, “Ghoul Feeding,” into “Pickman’s Model” is similar to what Leiber describes as establishing a melody into a song that is later reworked and elaborated upon (57). The continuous citation within the narrative is expressed in the form of paintings which all take the ghoul as subject and depict it in different spatio-temporal contexts, elaborating on the initial theme.

In the Night Gallery adaptation of “Pickman’s Model,” ‘Ghoul Feeding’ is linked with specific cuts in video footage, which assume transitions within time and space (Fig. 3.4). The painting is shown by the host of the show, Rod Serling, just prior to the segment’s beginning, where he says “It’s a painting that tells a story of a young artist who recruits his models from odd places and the models are very odd indeed” (Night Gallery 1971). The segment cuts to a closeup of the painting within the camera’s frame, remaining there as the credits are interspersed. The segment then begins with the audio of a conversation taking place, in the assumed present, between two gentlemen, Eliot and Larry, who are discussing the work. During their conversation, they give the painting the much less menacing title, “Ghoul Preparing to Dine.” As the camera pulls back from the
painting a significant change in time and space is revealed, which deviates from Rod Serling’s introductory description.

Similar to the wraparound in the original text, the conversation between Eliot and Larry continues until the camera cuts to a close-up of the painting again. As the two gentlemen finish their conversation, Pickman’s voice can be heard, marking a transition in time and space, despite the continued presence of the painting within the mise-en-scene. The camera again pulls back to reveal that Pickman is teaching a women’s painting class, and “Ghoul Preparing to Dine” is featured at the front of the room. Despite its occurrence in distinct temporal moments in the narrative, the painting’s presence in each segment ties these distinct scenes together. This use of montage, moving from the present to the past, largely disguises this cut, demonstrating how film can be employed temporally in much the same manner as the paintings in the original text.
Fig. 3.4. Painting by Tom Wright. Still from Night Gallery’s adaptation of “Pickman’s Model”, 1971.

Pickman’s “Sequence of Paintings”

Once the ghoul is introduced within the wraparound, the narrator, Thurber, begins to discuss the events which prompted his disengagement with the artist. While writing a monogram on weird art, Thurber increasingly converses with Pickman until the artist eventually asks the writer to accompany him to his studio, located in the disreputable North End of Boston. Once in the studio, Thurber is shown a variety of paintings related to the ghoul. There are two groups of paintings, those which center on the history of the “forefathers” within the region of Boston and those regarded by the artist as his “modern
studies” (Lovecraft 1927, 204-205). All told, Lovecraft references ten specific paintings in “Pickman’s Model,” with only three of these possessing titles, denoted through the use of single-quote marks. Of those ten, ‘Ghoul Feeding’ is isolated from the series through its early introduction in the story and the last image is actually a photograph introduced in the present by Thurber at the very end of the story, demonstrating that the ghoul exists rather than serves as a mere figment of Pickman’s imagination. In Night Gallery’s 1971 adaptation of the story, the female character, Goldsmith, a student in Pickman’s class, refers to these paintings as “a series of canvases”. In concert with Pickman, she regards them as a “sequence of paintings so horrible that they would turn a man to stone” (Night Gallery 1971).  

As expressed through this series of paintings, the repetition of time and space is representative of the artistic and cinematic technique of montage. Through repeated reference to each distinctive painting, montage is utilized by Lovecraft to bring time and space together in a manner which elicits greater meaning than the sum of any individual reference. As previously mentioned, such a technique is defined by Bazin as “the ordering of images in time” and applies to “Pickman’s Model” through Lovecraft’s description of a multitude of paintings, juxtaposed with each other (Bazin 1952, 24,25). Further, the function of montage in this example is to disrupt linear time through the use of multiple image fragments within the narrative. Montage, through its particular use of

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28 The Night Gallery “Pickman’s Model” sequence, which essentially functions much the same way as the original story, focuses on the horrors of the creatures and their constant efforts to capture women and mate with them. There is a particular panel that seemingly shows Pickman as a child with his mother. Seen in the shadows behind Pickman is the image of a ghoul, possibly indicating that the creature is the artist’s father.
time manipulation, allows an artist the ability to foreground certain relationships among separate scenes or elements. Indeed, Lovecraft’s use of montage within his fiction is very similar to the process of quotation that Peter Wollen ascribes to directors Dušan Makavejev and Jean-Luc Godard, as such references “impose a new meaning on material by inserting it into a new context” (Wollen 1986, 125). Through a repetitive process of representing disparate scenes, which all involve an object or category of objects, an artist may implicate a greater meaning concerning the object within that process. Each scene or image then elaborates a distinct quality of the object, which results in a cluster of related qualities attributed to said object that are subsequently held by the observer. Lovecraft acknowledged such a process when remarking on his use of the fictional Necronomicon within his friends’ and colleagues’ stories: “I think it is rather good fun to have this artificial mythology given an air of verisimilitude by wide citation” (Lovecraft 1930, 166). An object’s significance increases through repeated reference, as gaps in knowledge are constantly filled with the addition of new qualities or sets of behaviors.

If one associates this sequence in “Pickman’s Model” with Lovecraft’s desire to disrupt time, a strong parallel would be found with the film theorist Morten Nielson’s notion of disruptive montage. This use of such a technique is not exclusive to cinema, as visual images can just as easily enter into temporal relationships without the necessity of a mechanical process. Of the use of a disruptive montage by an artist, Nielsen contends:

![The Necronomicon](https://example.com/necronomicon.png)

The *Necronomicon* is a fictional text Lovecraft invented, along with other grimoires such as the *Pnakotic Manuscripts*, that lent his many stories cohesion and a semi-historical foundation. Lovecraft did not elaborate fully on what the book contained, but rather referenced small sections of it in numerous stories in order to give the ancient text a bit of mystery. This device is very similar to Robert Chambers’ earlier fictional play, *The King in Yellow*, which is referred to in his collection of short stories bearing the same name.
...disruptive montage liberates individual images from a pre-given whole and present them alongside each other without assuming neither implicit order (say, the narrative structure of a film) nor a privileged point of view (say that of the director). In the latter instance, then, time cannot be understood as a function of linearity where moments are somehow exterior to each other (e.g. Moment A as occurring before and thus outside moment B). Rather, disruptive montage allows for a series of volatile connections to be established between incongruous images without committing the cinematic composition to an unequivocal representation. In the gaps between the different images, a peculiar nervous energy subsists that continues to produce new constellations of meaning that transcend the content of each individual image (Nielson 2013, 41).

The kind of disruptive montage Lovecraft employs in “Pickman’s Model” is not entirely without elements of order, as the two main sequences are divided by categories of past and present. However, the former demonstrates the duration of the ghouls’ interactions with humans and the latter specific geographical context. In themselves, both elements do not construct a discernable narrative for the audience, conforming to Nielson’s definition of disruptive montage. This concept will be applied to each representation in the sequence in terms of Lovecraft’s original text and related adaptations.

Within “Pickman’s Model” the visual adaptations of this sequence of paintings vary from medium to medium and some artists, in not revealing too much about the monstrosities, opt not to include any direct depictions of the ghouls. Visual artists, like Kim Holm, have completely left out the sequence of ghoul paintings or changed their content to remove references to the creature in their adaptations, diminishing the importance of the paintings.30 Similar to the one in the original text, the two main visual

30 Indeed, Holm, in his 2012 graphic novel adaptation, only depicts Thurber and Pickman looking at the works, rather than the works themselves. The film, Chilean Gothic (2000), similarly abstains from showing the sequence. The comic adaptations, “Demons and Vampires” (1971), “Portrait of Death” (1952) and Jamie Delano and Steve Pugh’s version from Lovecraft Anthology Volume 1, a collection of comic adaptations, contains a multiplicity of paintings but does not explicitly contain images relating to the original text. “Portrait of Death” features representations of the creature but lacks any narrative
examples which prominently feature the sequence of paintings are Night Gallery’s 1971 television adaptation and Herb Arnold’s comic adaptation from the Skull Comics 1972 issue. Of the two, Arnold’s adaptation includes more specific imagery related to the original text and devotes eight panels to the sequence. Of these, four are attributed to the past and four are attributed to the present. The first two comic panels depict a picture frame surrounding the painting, placing the image within the space of Pickman’s Gallery. Subsequently these frames disappear in the sequence, removing their intermediate function to place the past and modern events into the same temporal space as the present.

In comparison, the Night Gallery adaptation generally emphasizes these works as paintings and utilizes the camera to depict different modes of experiencing them. The show’s resident artist, Tom Wright, produced the paintings featured in this segment, all of which are characterized by Scott Skelton and Jim Benson, authors of the book, Rod Serling's Night Gallery: An After-hours Tour, as “dread-inspiring renderings of Pickman’s ghoulish, Goya-esque oeuvre” (209). Upon entering Pickman’s studio alone, the character of Miss Goldsmith alternates between looking at individual canvases and pulling them out from a larger stack to place them on easels. Within this sequence there are six paintings that generally lack clear division between the past and present sequences, leading the audience to believe that these were made within the same time frame which Pickman occupies. With each movement and new painting displayed by Miss Goldsmith, Laird cuts the scene, creating individual fragments of video devoted to context beyond merely depicting its physical features. The later comic “Demons and Vampires,” tracks closely with “Portrait of Death” but only contains one image portraying the creature, not named within the story, attacking a scantily clad female. The late Tower of Shadows version of “Pickman’s Model”, published in 1971 also contains various depictions of paintings, a few of the actual ghoul, but they are not connected in any logical manner.
each painting arranged in time through the use of montage. This effect is utilized to
highlight both Goldsmith’s act of looking at these paintings through the first-person point
of view, as well as her movement and interactions with the paintings through the third-
person point of view.

Pickman’s Colonial Sequence

For the purpose of this analysis, the initial sequence of paintings that Pickman
exhibits to Thurber will be labeled as “colonial,” as they pertain to the chronological
interactions between ghouls and humans within the region of Massachusetts. Indeed,
Thurber specifically uses the term when describing the paintings as “frightful pictures
which turned colonial New England into a kind of annex of hell” (Lovecraft 1927, 205).
Within this sequence montage is used to express the temporal past, much as Lovecraft
references in a letter to Clark Ashton Smith, where he explains “I want, too, to juggle the
calendar at will; bringing things from the immemorial past down into the present”
(Lovecraft 1930, 214). By incorporating images of the past through paintings, Lovecraft
manipulates the calendar within his narrative to provide a visual history which pertains to
present events. Additionally, these paintings represent a chain of distinct events in which
inclusion of both human and ghoul serve to establish their mutual relationship. In Figure
4, the colonial sequence of paintings, three are specifically singled out within Thurber’s
narration of his past visit to Pickman’s studio within the original text.

The colonial sequence portends a history of the ghoul’s interactions with humans
throughout Massachusetts. Each individual image Lovecraft refers to in the text
establishes this relationship without placing an origin or narrative context to the
proceedings. Rather, each image serves to reinforce the nature of this association, which crosses cultural boundaries between the fictional and the human. By examining Lovecraft’s description of these images, this author seeks to analyze both the function of montage in communicating such phenomena, while establishing how this technique is disruptive. From this analysis, one finds that through montage Lovecraft attempts to represent the length of 234 years, a span during which the ghoul and residents of New England have been interacting, from 1692 to 1926, the year Lovecraft wrote “Pickman’s Model”. What is disruptive about the segment is not only the manner in which humans and ghouls interact with each other but also the mystery regarding how Pickman could have first-handedly witnessed hundreds of years represented on the canvas.

During the first segment of the story concerning Thurber’s visit to Pickman’s studio, Lovecraft chronicles an intentional sequence of images within the artist’s collection, jumping from one image to another. However, three in particular stand out as more defined than the others. These three images include two untitled works that depict a hanging at Gallow’s Hill in Salem Massachusetts and a scene of an ancient puritan family seated at the dinner table, and one painting titled “The Lesson,” which depicts a pack of ghouls teaching a human baby to eat human flesh. Taken together, these images document interactions between humans and ghouls throughout history, and as each one is introduced, a complicated relationship between humans and ghouls within time and space is created. Ultimately, the incorporation of this historical sequence of paintings in “Pickman’s Model” provides documentation of interactions that demonstrates the breadth and intensity of the relations between the two groups.
The first fully described composition, the painting of Gallow’s Hill, directly links the Salem Witch Trials and the presence of ghouls in the early colonial period in America. Previously within “Pickman’s Model,” Lovecraft included textual references to the event such as “Witches’ Sabbath”, “Salem,” “Salem Witchcraft”, “Gallows Hill” and “Cotton Mather,” which accumulate to form intersections between the historical event and the fictional one (Lovecraft 1927, 198, 199, 203, 210). However, with the invocation of this painting, what was hinted at becomes explicit, and the connection between the ghouls and certain abject humans is visually represented. Lovecraft describes the painting: “One canvas showed a ring of them baying about a hanged witch on Gallows Hill, whose dead face held a close kinship to theirs” (203). Significantly, Bridget Bishop, the first Salem resident convicted of witchcraft, was hanged at that specific location during the Salem Witch Trials of 1692 (Robinson 1992, 109). This painting recontextualizes the historical episode and supplements recorded events within time and space with fictional creatures, in this case a pack of ghouls. Such an image problematizes the conventional historical narrative, seeking to establish its own account of events. In the process, the notorious Witch Trials gain a new wrinkle complicating both the history of humans in the area and that of the ghouls.

Both previously cited adaptations of “Pickman’s Model”, Herb Arnold’s comic adaptation and the television adaptation, Night Gallery, did not contain any representations of this scene, which was featured in the original text. The Gallows Hill painting, unlike the other two works referenced in the colonial sequence, does not necessarily build upon each other; rather, it is additive to the entirety of sequences
without explicitly connecting with another painting. However, it does serve to provide an exact date and context to these interactions between humans and ghouls, and demonstrates that they occurred over an expanded period of time.

When analyzing the Arnold adaptation, one sees that instead of depicting Gallow’s Hill, the work focuses on the following passages “They were sometimes shewn in groups in cemeteries… Occasionally the things were shewn leaping through open windows at night, or squatting on the chest of sleepers, worrying at their throats” (Lovecraft 1927, 203). These descriptions do not lend themselves to major distinctions from one another but are instead generalities which characterize the entirety of the sequence beyond the specific paintings mentioned. Arnold represents this passage using two different panels depicting a group of ghouls eating a man who is struggling on the ground. His limbs are pulled as his face is turned toward a ghoul pinning down a man sleeping in his bed, his anguished expression also turning toward the viewer. Nevertheless, just as in the Gallow’s Hill painting, the ghouls do not have a strong narrative connection to the larger collection of paintings beyond establishing another incident where the ghouls interact with humans, much to the detriment of the latter. These initial nonlinear compositions do not build upon the subsequent works; rather, they seem to add to the overall atmosphere of the work, just as in the original text.

The next painting in the series, 'The Lesson,' is introduced in a rather significant manner and depicts a distinctly intimate social interaction between a human baby and a group of ghouls, with the latter training the former how “to feed like themselves” (Lovecraft 1927, 204). Engaged in teaching the human child, the ghouls serve as models
for survival and gaining sustenance. Repeatedly utilizing words such as “relationship” and “establishing a sardonic linkage”, connecting “human and non-human figures,” Lovecraft challenges the ghouls’ and humans’ distinctness as separate objects or of possessing distinct qualities from one another (204). The result is that this image serves as a means of challenging social conventions through its invocation of the taboo of cannibalism and the depiction of a human taking its cues, not from another human but from creatures Lovecraft labels “non-human figures” (204). In addition, by giving particular paintings in the sequence titles, indicated by their positioning between single- quotation marks, Lovecraft elevates these paintings, assigning them a status by granting them a name, and thus bringing attention to formal and cultural qualities.

Herb Arnold’s adaptation of “The Lesson” depicts a circle of ghouls in a graveyard, accompanied by a child, eating what appear to be human body parts (Figure 3.5). The focal point of the composition is the child in the center of the group. Significantly, this work shares features with Lovecraft’s earlier reference to a circle of “baying” ghouls.
In the final significant painting within the historical section of Pickman’s works the narrator describes a composition of an ancient puritan family reading and listening to scripture, led by the father, at their dinner table. All of the family members display visages that demonstrate “nobility and reverence”, save for the son, who is told by Thurber that his face “reflected the mockery of the pit,” due to his association with the ghouls (Lovecraft 1927, 204). This painting is represented in Herb Arnold’s adaptation as a panel within the larger sequence of paintings, much in the spirit of Lovecraft’s original text (Figure 3.6). In this composition one can see that amidst the supposedly conventional dinner, there is a ghoul within the confines of the human domestic space, granting the two groups of objects, the human and non-human, a strongly held intimacy.
Within the composition, the fantastic and horrible intersect with the conventional, placing both genealogies of objects into the same space, and in the process, transgress physical and cultural borders.

Additionally, what is rather unclear to the audience, is Pickman’s ability to witness this event in colonial times, considering that he required a model and was not there to view these events in person. As the climax later suggests, each of these paintings is based on real events and was created by Pickman, though the text does not make evident how he would have been able to have viewed these events in person.
In comparison, the Night Gallery’s adaptation of “Pickman’s Model” contains two paintings which depict a similar kind of intimate relationship between the ghoul and humanity, although this juxtaposition implies mating between the two species. After the audience is presented with a variety of paintings depicting the ghoul eating dead bodies in cemeteries, the character Miss Goldsmith picks up a painting of a ghoul walking through a graveyard as it holds a woman wearing a white dress. After she places it on the floor, she discovers another painting featuring a juvenile next to his mother, who is wearing the same white dress (Figure 3.7). In the background behind the youth’s shoulder, likely that of Pickman himself, is the faded image of a ghoul, implying that the woman in the previous painting is his mother. To emphasize this connection, the director, Jack Laird, includes a voiceover of Pickman’s former recounting of the backstory behind the ghouls: “It became a fanatical obsession, especially those whose womenfolk had disappeared in the dead of night. They believe that these creatures had carried them off to their subterranean dwellings for purposes of procreation” (Night Gallery 1971). Thus, these two images are clearly attempting to provide a specific backstory to Pickman, rather than a history of the ghoul in New England, and serve less to disrupt the narrative and more as exposition.
The colonial sequence of Pickman’s paintings is adapted in both Arnold and Night Gallery as a means of documenting a past, or duration of time, outside of the narrative. Present in the original text and featured in Arnold’s version, the last two compositions, “The Lesson” and the Puritan interior, might be connected, demonstrating the origins of the abject son, just as the Night Gallery’s segment appears to suggest that the ghoul captured a woman for “procreation” and the result was the son represented in the next painting. However, a linear progression is not entirely present from one composition to the next within the original text or the visual adaptations. The paintings are not entirely within a chain of logical sequences, especially as they do not necessarily build upon the others. Indeed, through the “gaps”, as Nielson coins this juxtaposition of
elements, there exists an underlying reality that is never entirely expressed and, as a result, “transcend[s] the content of each individual image” (41).

Pickman’s ‘Modern Studies’

In the original text, the next sequence of paintings is described by Pickman as his ‘modern studies’, alluding to the contemporary nature of the interactions between humans and ghouls. This particular sequence is connected by a spatial map, or geography, of the ghouls’ interaction with humans, which is set within Boston’s present time frame of 1926. Indeed, the narrator, Thurber, contends that this sequence “brought the horror right into our own daily life,” and thus one finds that they document the location and quantity of the ghouls’ interactions (Lovecraft 1927, 205). Thurber’s account of each of the four paintings within this sequence includes references to the following locations within Boston: Boylston Street subway, Copp’s Hill, Beacon Hill and Mount Auburn Cemetery. The connection between these paintings is purely geographical, rather than causal, which reinforces the ghouls’ presence in this particular area.

The first painting, ‘Subway Accident,’ depicts a group of ghouls emerging “from some unknown catacomb through a crack in the floor of the Boylston Street subway and attacking a crowd of people on the platform” (Lovecraft 1927, 205). Lovecraft continues to cite existing locations within Massachusetts, while populating them with his own fictional creations, and thus producing associations between the real and the fictional. This painting is depicted in Arnold’s adaptation but not within the Night Gallery
segment, likely because the events directly concerning Pickman in this particular version took place in the late 1880s (Skelton and Benson 1999, 206).

Thurber describes the second and third painting in the “Modern Studies” sequence as portraying ghouls dancing on Copp’s Hill in the former and burrowing through a cross-section of Beacon Hill in the latter (Lovecraft 1927, 205). The Copp’s Hill painting is not represented specifically in either Arnold’s comic adaptation or the Night Gallery segment; however, Arnold does depict the Beacon Hill scene within this sequence.

The final painting in the sequence, entitled “Holmes, Lowell and Longfellow Lie Buried in Mount Auburn,” represents Lovecraft’s attempt at humor, as the names within the title are close friends of the author (Joshi 2001, 88). The painting portrays a large group of ghouls gathered in a tomb, laughing, while reading a copy of a Boston guidebook, “where scores of the beasts crowded about one who had a well-known Boston guidebook and was evidently reading aloud” (205). Within Arnold’s adaptation of this work, multiple ghouls are gathered, holding a book labelled “Visit Boston” (Fig. 3.8). This demonstrates the ghoul as a social creature and, despite its status and appearance as a “non-human,” one who is actually engaging in human activities. This reinforces both their origins and Lovecraft’s contention that “The dog-things were developed from mortals!” and the universal social configuration of the circle, transcending categories of human and non-human (Lovecraft 1927, 204). Additionally, this scene is an inversion of the puritan interior painting referred to earlier in the sequence, as here ghouls are shown reading “Visit Boston” aloud rather than the Bible, adding a humorous element to the proceedings.
Generally, the paintings described by Lovecraft in “Pickman’s Model” involve repeated aggressions by the ghouls against humans, leading to a domination of humanity within the sphere of multiple representations. All of these referenced scenes, such as the child learning to consume human flesh in “The Lesson,” break social boundaries and as a result, as art theorist Anthony Julius finds of disruptive art, leads to a “panic we can experience when they are transgressed or muddled” (Julius 2002, 134). Indeed, the character of Thurber states of Pickman: “The fellow must be a relentless enemy of all mankind to take such glee in the torture of brain and flesh and the degradation of the mortal tenement” (Lovecraft 1927, 206). Bruce Kawin, a notable scholar in film studies,
has stated that, “Repeated enough, a word or idea or phrase or image or name will come to dominate us to such an extent that our only defenses are to concede its importance or turn off the stimulus completely” (Kawin 1972, 50). This idea of the ghouls’ consistent dominion over humanity, depicted in these scenes, comes to overwhelm the audience through constant repetition within the visual space of Pickman’s paintings, which can be seen within Arnold’s comic adaptation and the segment from* Night Gallery.*

The “Unequivocal Representation” in “Pickman’s Model”

A final significant juxtaposition in “Pickman’s Model” between the montage of paintings and photograph, occurs when the character of Thurber shows a photograph taken from Pickman’s studio to his friend, Eliot. It is not the photograph alone that bears the weight of revelation to the viewer; rather, it is the relationship it has to Pickman’s oeuvre. This connection between subjective and objective images implies that Pickman is not using his own imagination as an artist in producing his works; rather, he is copying something in reality. With respect to Morten Nielson’s conception of disruptive montage, he states that it “liberates individual images from a pre-given whole and presents them alongside each other without assuming… implicit order (say, the narrative structure of a film)” (Nielson 2013, 41). In regards to “Pickman’s Model” not a single painting in the sequence stands in as an “unequivocal representation.” However, the introduction of a photograph at the very end of the story invokes the ontological cultural status of the image, placing it at the top of the hierarchy of sequential images alluded to in the narrative. Lovecraft’s scenario in “Pickman’s Model” is essentially based on a
conflict in the audience’s belief in the reality of images, as Andre Bazin aptly contextualizes ontology relative to artistic images: “No matter how skillful the painter, his work was always in fee to an inescapable subjectivity. The fact that a human hand intervened casts a shadow of doubt over the image” (Bazin 1945, 12). Until this photograph is introduced in the wraparound, immediately after the sequence of paintings, the audience is unsure about the authenticity of subjects contained within Pickman’s work.

Leading up to the introduction of the photograph at the end of the story, Pickman, when talking with Thurber, hears scuttling noises outside of his work area and produces a gun to put an end to the sounds, which he attributes to “rodent friends” (Lovecraft 1927, 209). During the uproar, Thurber pockets a photograph taped against a rather large canvas. Frightening the narrator, the event marks the end of Thurber’s tour in Pickman’s studio. Subsequently, the artist guides him back home and the audience is brought back to the immediate present conversation in the wraparound between Thurber and Eliot. The climax of the story ends with Thurber producing a photograph that the reader is told was used by Pickman as a model in painting his pictures of the ghoul, indicating that the artist models his paintings on reality. Lovecraft describes the unveiling of this image as such:

Well - that paper wasn't a photograph of any background, after all. What it showed was simply the monstrous being he was painting on that awful canvas. It was the model he was using - and its background was merely the wall of the cellar studio in minute detail. But by God, Eliot, it was a photograph from life! (210)

The revelation of the photograph reinforces the connection of Pickman’s artistic “scientific realist” technique to representing reality as well as confirming the existence of the ghouls.
Despite the fact that the narrator never sees an actual ghoul during his visit to Pickman’s studio, only directly sensing it through sound, he, and by extension, the audience, are overwhelmed by these subjective reflections of reality within the narrative. The photograph re-contextualizes the montage of images as documenting events which actually occurred. On this potential evidentiary aspect of the photograph of the type introduced in the story, Bazin states:

The objective nature of photography confers on it a quality of credibility absent from all other picture-making. In spite of any objections our critical spirit may offer, we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually re-presented, set before us, that is to say, in time and space (Bazin 1945, 13).

The photograph ends up establishing the “credibility” and underlying reality of the ghouls, which is somewhat in doubt throughout the narrative. The various viewpoints expressed through the paintings in the montage do not gain a linear narrative thread, but shift from subjective representation to those based on objectivity. These images in “Pickman’s Model” become documentary evidence of historical and frequent interactions between ghouls and humans.

In the Night Gallery adaptation of “Pickman’s Model,” the director Jack Laird does not include this photograph of a ghoul, but instead features a sequence which functions in the same manner. As Pickman’s Art Institute student, Miss Goldsmith, talks with her father about Pickman, they conduct their conversation in front of one of Pickman’s earlier works, “View From an Artist’s Window.” At the end of the scene, the father approaches the painting to take in its details, stating “Well if that’s the view from his studio, his outlook on life can’t be particularly cheery.” During this moment, the
camera cuts to the painting of an urban scene of the “North End” of town, where the camera zooms in, until the image dissolves into actual video footage of that same scene (Fig. 3.9). This juxtaposition between a painting and a video image within this montage confirms that Pickman paints exactly what he sees, rather than basing his work on invented subjects. If this montage is unequivocal, it is done with such subtlety as not to overwhelm or trump the forward movement of the narrative as it serves to punctuate the proceedings rather than serve as a climax, unlike the original story.

Fig. 3.9. Painting by Tom Wright. Two stills from the Night Gallery adaptation of “Pickman’s Model”. 1971. This montage, which cuts from a painting to the scene the painting is depicting, demonstrates the manner in which Pickman “paints what he sees”.

On the contrary, Herb Arnold’s comic adaptation includes an approximation of the photograph from the original story, as well as the text’s actual dialog (Fig. 3.10). In the panel, the viewer assumes Eliot’s first-person point of view rather than the original story’s narrator, Thurber. Arnold, by using this perspective, places the audience into the character’s point of view, as though they too are picking up the photograph. As was
discussed in Chapter 1, this approach lends the moment a heightened symmetry between
the audience’s point of view and the character within the comic.

Fig. 3.10. Photograph reveal from “Pickman’s Model”. Herb Arnold. 1972.

If one considers each painting to be a repetition, the final depiction of the ghoul
perhaps serves as the unequivocal representation. However, this image relies less on the
actual content of the scene and, rather, depends on the medium in which the image is
presented. Even though it might eclipse the images previously mentioned in the story,
there still exists major “gaps between the different images,” which requires the
audience’s sensual justification, even if they are not connected in a linear fashion
Lovecraft effectively utilizes montage within “Pickman’s Model” to create “volatile connections” between the described paintings. Arnold and the Night Gallery’s respective adaptations contain a similar element of montage that is perhaps best expressed within the latter’s use of the paintings as transition devices within the narrative.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the intersection of time and repetition through the use of montage in Lovecraft’s fictional work and related contemporary visual culture. Though this analysis, it was found that montage creates an alternative temporal stream that, disrupts the temporal frame of the present. Lovecraft utilized this technique in a variety of his stories, from a larger structural segmentation within “The Call of Cthulhu,” to its inclusion within “Pickman’s Model,” to create an alternative sphere, in the form of art, from which an object can be assigned additional qualities without removing the narrator completely out of the present. It is through such a sequence, combining visual scenarios involving the same object, or ghoul, in this case, that it is repeatedly invoked in new contexts, resulting in an accumulation of qualities. Where montage is found in a narrative, it rewrites the values within the temporal space of the story, which are initially assumed by the reader, resulting in the renegotiation of relations among objects.

Disruptive montage, as Morten Nielson defines it, can be seen in different degrees in both Lovecraft’s initial text and the two visual adaptations. It is primarily used within all three to represent the temporal, spatial and social scale of the interactions between the ghouls and humans. This does not necessarily contribute to a linear buildup of the story;
rather, it adds to the mood of the narrative, placing a frenzy of activity as representation disrupting a dilapidated, isolated studio. Each representation demands to be interpreted and linked together by the audience despite the lack of content which might align each image with one another.

The use of this temporal disruption in contemporary Lovecraft-related adaptations, such as “Pickman’s Model,” as represented through images contained within a given narrative, may potentially involve new media, such as film, video games and even the internet. A good example of this can actually be seen in two early comic adaptations of “Pickman’s Model”: “Demons and Vampires” (1971) and “Portrait of Death” (1952). Both utilize film as the means of introducing images of the monsters and conflict into the story. Larry Woromay’s “Demons and Vampires,” seen in Fig. 3.13, shows what happens to the character of Pickman, who, in the adaptation, is named Gilman. Such footage gives the audience a gruesome spectacle of an ending for the artist, while serving much the same purpose as the photograph in the original story. The film provides evidence of what occurred within a span of time in the past, formerly unseen in the sequence of comic panels, while allowing those in the present to have access to them. Both adaptations take the basic premise of “Pickman’s Model,” exclude the sequence of paintings, and exchange the photograph with actual film footage, in a manner that recalls the “View From an Artist’s Window” painting from the Night Gallery version. Essentially, film is used to capture a moment outside of the present in the comic, and allows it to inhabit the same space. Perhaps the most significant difference from the original text is the lack of a multiplicity of images of the ghouls. Should artists wish to
place the story in the contemporary era, one could see them trading Pickman’s studio containing numerous paintings for a multiple-station surveillance system, replete with numerous video feeds of ghouls representing disparate spatio-temporal locations. Disruptive montage, as demonstrated in Larry Woromay’s “Demons and Vampires,” can employ new visual media; however, Lovecraft’s use of the technique in “Pickman’s Model” is much more effective in that it repeats images of humans under assault with a certain amount of distinctiveness from one another, in order to reinforce the scope of the ghoul threat.

Fig. 3.13. Larry Woromay. Panel from “Demons and Vampires”. 1970.
CHAPTER 3: LOVECRAFT’S DISRUPTIVE IDEOGRAMS: THE MISE-EN-ABYME
AND TIME

H.P. Lovecraft was fascinated with the idea of bridging the present with the past, a point he makes in the following passage:

Time, space, and natural law hold for me suggestions of intolerable bondage, and I can form no picture of emotional satisfaction which does not involve their defeat—especially the defeat of time, so that one may merge oneself with the whole historic stream and be wholly emancipated from the transient and the ephemeral (Lovecraft 1930, 220-221).

This blending or merging of the passage of time in the author’s work takes place between a present first-person point of view and the “historic stream” of time through the presence of visual texts, or ideograms, which document the past. An ideogram is a pictorial form of language that expresses a concept or an idea, of which, a glyph, or symbol, forms the basis of the expression. Significantly, this form of writing is often associated with such disparate cultures as ancient Mesopotamia, China and early Mesoamerica (Unger 2004, 21). Within Lovecraft’s work, ideograms are expressed in the form of hieroglyphics, bas-reliefs, murals, frescoes and maps, and generally chronicle vast spans of time and extended histories of fictional creatures. Examples of such visual languages are described by Lovecraft in “Dagon” (1919), “The Nameless City” (1921), “The Horror at Red Hook” (1927), “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928), “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1931), At the Mountains of Madness (1936), “The Dreams in the Witch House” (1933), “Under the Pyramids” (1924), “Through the Gates of the Silver Key” (1934), The Shadow Out of Time (1936), The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath (1943) and the novella Lovecraft co-wrote with Zealia Bishop, The Mound (1940).
The “defeat of time,” which Lovecraft refers to in the previous quotation, is a disruption of time. This disruption is mediated through the juxtaposition of the narrator’s immediate point in time and a larger temporal scale, symbolized by ideograms within the diegesis of the narrative. Through a close reading of Lovecraft’s texts, this analysis will demonstrate that ideograms come to represent a greater temporal scale and disrupt time in the following ways: by introducing a history of certain fictional races, reinforcing potential threats in the present, representing a much larger temporal scale, diminishing the present, and, finally, visualizing a history that often portrays humanity in an uncomplimentary light. This analysis will identify disruptive ideographic tropes in the author’s oeuvre and highlight their presence in Lovecraft-related visual culture.

When artists adapt Lovecraft stories that feature ideograms into visual representation, the text is altered from a second-hand description of phenomena to their actualization. The description of ideograms that characterizes the original literary text gives way to actual visual representations, raising their signification in the hierarchy of signs contained within the narrative. On this level, the ideograms become a text within a text, or *mise-en-abyme*, a narrative device that represents a separate and distinctive perspective of a given concept or object. The qualities of such a device have been elaborated upon by the French theorist, Lucien Dällenbach, in his book, *The Mirror in the Text* (1989), and will be taken up by this analysis. The result of Lovecraft’s introduction of a *mise-en-abyme* is the establishment of a cultural and temporal point of comparison between immediate “human time” and an extended temporal frame which disrupts the present of the protagonist and ultimately the audience. Extended temporal frames,
represented through ideograms, are significant, not only because they represent an asymmetrical duration of time compared to that of “human time,” but also because their content conveys to the audience the limitations of human power and achievement.

To get a better understanding of how Lovecraftian adaptations utilize ideograms to disrupt time, this analysis will examine the novella, *At the Mountains of Madness*, as well as specific examples of ideograms from the short stories, “Dagon” and “The Nameless City.” In particular, this analysis focuses on ideograms that contain larger temporal scales and human origins. Once these tropes have been isolated, they will be identified within contemporary visual culture, by focusing on the *Alien* film franchise, specifically the latest entry, *Prometheus* (2011). In scrutinizing these visual texts, this chapter presents an opportunity to elaborate on the manner in which Lovecraft’s ideograms may disrupt time when adapted to the visual arts.

“That Monstrous Chapter of Prehuman Life:” *At the Mountain of Madness*

The story that incorporates descriptions of ideograms the most out of Lovecraft’s body of work is his novella, *At the Mountains of Madness (ATMOM)*. Written by Lovecraft from February 24 through March 22, 1931, it was published in 1936 in the pulp magazine, *Astounding Stories* (Joshi and Schultz 2001, 9). The narrative contains a scenario in which ideograms invest the history of speculative “outside” races, especially the Old Ones, as well as humanity’s origin story. Additionally, it refers to these creatures through the span of several million years, contextualizing humanity as inhabiting a limited amount of time. On the surface, *ATMOM* appears to blend two actual historical
developments: the discovery in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of major ancient Egyptian tombs and interior chambers, such as the Great Pyramid by Colonel Howard Vyse in 1837, and ongoing geological expeditions conducted in Antarctica (10). Additionally, Lovecraft, having been commissioned in 1924 to ghost-write a story for Harry Houdini in the publication, *Weird Tales*, researched ancient Egyptian sites located within “the Cairo-Gizeh locality,” such as the “subterranean place betwixt the Sphinx and the second pyramid known as ‘Campbell’s Tomb’” (Lovecraft 1924, 311). Lovecraft came across major details about the hieroglyphics contained within this archaeological site. According to the early twentieth-century Egyptologist Samuel Mercer, such ancient Egyptian pictorially-based script is based on the ideogram, or “pictures for whole words” (Mercer 1961, 3).

*At the Mountains of Madness* focuses on a group of scientists surveying Antarctica, whereby they discover traces of what they assume to be an extinct civilization. The plot is relayed through the protagonist, William Dyer, a professor from Miskatonic University. Much of the events take place through his point of view, but are supplemented with dispatches through shortwave transmitters from another expedition member, Professor Lake. Within the later portion of the text, the central protagonists, Professor Dyer and a graduate student, Danforth, encounter the seemingly uninhabited urban remains of a race known as the Old Ones and discover numerous ideograms that communicate their ancient past.

Within the deep confines of this alien city, Dyer and Danforth come across numerous “mural carvings”, “pictorial friezes and dadoes” and “maps and
diagrams” that line the walls of its interior (Lovecraft1936, 537, 538, 540). Based on a multitude of ideograms present within the alien city, this section of the novella covers nearly two chapters, with Chapter 7 devoted exclusively to relaying the history of the Old Ones. Lovecraft describes the style of the ideograms in the following passage:

The prime decorative feature was the almost universal system of mural sculpture, which tended to run in continuous horizontal bands three feet wide and arranged from floor to ceiling in alternation with bands of equal width given over to geometrical arabesques. There were exceptions to this rule of arrangement, but its preponderance was overwhelming. Often, however, a series of smooth cartouches containing oddly patterned groups of dots would be sunk along one of the arabesque bands…. The pictorial bands followed a highly formalized tradition, and involved a peculiar treatment of perspective, but had an artistic force that moved us profoundly, notwithstanding the intervening gulf of vast geologic periods. Their method of design hinged on a singular juxtaposition of the cross section with the two-dimensional silhouette, and embodied an analytical psychology beyond that of any known race of antiquity (Lovecraft 1936, 535).

As mentioned in this passage, the cartouche has strong connections with ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, as Mercer contends that “royal names are enclosed in an oblong, called a cartouche” (Mercer 1961, 13). Lovecraft does not employ such forms to represent specific names. However, these forms represent additional text expressed as “oddly patterned groups of dots” which are not discernable by Dyer and Danforth (535). The ideograms located in these murals tell a larger historical narrative about three races from the past which also are situated within the diegetic present: the Old Ones, the Shoggoths, and the humans. As the protagonists read the ideograms, the audience discovers that the story contains a visually coded history for the Old Ones explaining the presence of the alien city.

To demonstrate how Lovecraft’s ideograms might be translated into a visual medium, allowing such images to be represented in concert with other elements of the
narrative, this analysis will include illustrations from a rather faithful graphic novel adaptation of *ATMOM*, which was produced by the illustrator, Ian Culbard, in 2012. Culbard has adapted numerous Lovecraft stories in recent years and has published adaptations of *The Shadow Out of Time* (2013) and *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (2013). His version of *ATMOM* contains numerous ideograms, as demonstrated in Fig. 4.1, which depict William Dyer examining a segment of ideograms blanketing the wall on the left side of the passage he is moving through. Here Culbard focuses on representing Dyer’s act of reading and interpreting the ideograms, as well as the extraordinary abilities of the Old Ones expressed in the pictorial texts and the scale of their productions.

Fig. 4.1. Ian Culbard. Panel from *At the Mountains of Madness*. 2010. 83

Aetiology of the Speculative
Within *At the Mountains of Madness*, Lovecraft’s use of ideograms serves as textual evidence of an advanced race of creatures, the Old Ones. Dyer’s account of his journey through the alien city is superseded in time by the multiple textual documents in the form of ideograms. These texts constitute a broader history of the development and capabilities of this race and also a pretext for the events of the present in the novella. Dallenbach describes how a text may inscribe within itself a justification for why it exists, or what he refers to as an “aetiology,” a means of introducing an origin “to tell the story of [its] own creation” (Dallenbach 1989, 90). Elaborating on this idea he states:

This discovery of a mythical genesis or antecedence is a device intended to enable the narrative to appear to precede itself, and not only betrays the difficulty the work has in denying its context and thinking of itself as a pure work of art; it reveals its need to provide itself with a rational foundation to justify its presence here and now (90-91).

Within *ATMOM*, this aetiology recounts the history of the Old Ones through the presence of ideograms described by the protagonist, Dyer, providing essential background as to why this alien city and culture exists. Most importantly, it provides a separate reference to support the existence of the fictional object, a further channel from which it may gain its reputation and status. The ideogram within his work not only is the product of a history, but also serves as a static, site specific text which references a powerful creature within the narrative. Such origins are not carried or voiced by the object itself but are rather the product of the narrator reading an external visual text within the narrative’s geography, which provides documentation to this effect. By adding an additional perspective to the object or group of objects within a narrative, Lovecraft is creating an
alternative sphere for the object to interact with. It is through this interaction that the observer is capable of seeing further qualities of the object in a cumulative manner.

Immediately preceding the narration of this aetiology, the narrator discusses the nature of the placement, age and style of the ideograms, assigning complexity to the process of tracing a history of the ancient race of aliens who used to inhabit this urban space. First, the narrator speculates that the creation of these ideograms has taken place over a significant expanse of time, “possibly even fifty million years” (Lovecraft 1936, 539). The more recent carvings were estimated to be two million years old, placing the Old Ones on a timeline of 48 million years, compared to the commonly held scientific view that modern humans have only been around for 200,000 years (Natural History Museum 2013). This much longer timeline is introduced into the novella through the physical manifestation of the ideograms and yet posits an asymmetrical relationship between the the Old Ones and humanity.

The actual narrative focuses on the cyclical history of the Old Ones, demonstrating that the race, at its cultural apex, achieved great feats of technology, politics, and culture. However, as conflict with external alien populations, such as the Mi-gos and Cthulhu’s star spawn, took their toll on the race, it marked a sharp decline in all of these cultural areas. What is significant about the ideograms in regards to these changes is that they reflect cultural decline within their very representation, as the most recent ideograms “embodied an art which would be called decadent in comparison with that of specimens we found in older buildings” (Lovecraft 1936, 539). This is not unlike similarly described ideograms of the Old Ones in Lovecraft’s novella, *The Mound* where,
after observing them, the protagonist remarks, “Art and intellect, it appeared, had reached very high levels in Tsath; but had become listless and decadent” (Lovecraft and Bishop, 135). As Lovecraft firmly believed that the arts reflect a culture’s dynamic trajectory, the register of this flux within the ideograms conforms with this view. This dynamic between culture and its depiction through language was similarly elaborated upon within his previous short story, “The Nameless City”.

Asymmetrical Time: Human vs. Deep Time

Within *ATMOM*, Lovecraft establishes two asymmetrical timeframes that conflict with each other, despite their simultaneous presence within the narrative. Time within Lovecraft’s narratives is typically expressed as a “construction based on that integration of sensory information” on the part of the human narrator, much as the linguist, Roy Harris, ascribes to “human time” (Harris 1995, 38). To Lovecraft, such time is equivalent to the “transient and the ephemeral,” and is commonly represented through the viewpoint of the protagonist narrator in many of his stories (Lovecraft 1930, 220-221). Within the “human time” of the protagonist, he shares the same diegetic space with pictorial language, in the form of the ideogram that originated millions of years ago. In *ATMOM* the timeframe that characterizes these ideograms is best epitomized by what the contemporary horror fiction writer Caitlin R. Kiernan labels as “deep time” (Woodward, 2008). 31 A concept originally envisioned by the Scottish geologist, James Hutton, in the eighteenth century, “deep time” represents geological time or millions of years of the

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31 Indeed, Kiernan suggests that “Deep time is critical to his cosmicism, the existential shock a reader brings away from his stories. Our smallness and insignificance in the universe at large” (VanderMeer, 2012)
earth’s history (Clary and Wandersee 63, 2009). Such a temporal span is employed by Lovecraft in “Dagon” (1919), “Through the Gates of the Silver Key” (1934), and “The Shadow Out of Time” (1936). In a key passage within *At the Mountains of Madness*, the protagonists, after examining ideograms and sculptures in a frozen alien city, determine a similar temporal duration, remarking “There could now be no further merciful doubt about the nature of the beings which had built and inhabited this monstrous dead city millions of years ago, when man’s ancestors were primitive archaic mammals, and vast dinosaurs roamed the tropical steppes of Europe and Asia” (Lovecraft 1936, 538). Signified by Lovecraft’s placement of ideograms within the temporal frame of the text, this passage represents the essence of the asymmetrical relationship between “human time” and “deep time”.

Significantly, the narrator contends that the alien city did not contain materials dating after the “Pliocene age”, a period spanning 2.5-7 million years in the past, clearly placing it within the scale of deep time (Joshi 1997, 258). In one particular section, Lovecraft invokes a map that references the scientific theories of “Taylor, Wegener, and Joly,” alluding to a time billions of years before the origins of humanity, when the continents were situated in close proximity to one another in a supercontinent known as Pangaea. Here Lovecraft describes the map:

…all the continents are fragments of an original Antarctic land mass which cracked from centrifugal force and drifted apart over a technically viscous lower surface—a hypothesis suggested by such things as the complementary outlines of Africa and South America, and the way the great mountain chains are rolled and shoved up—receives striking support from this uncanny source (Lovecraft 1936, 548).

Within *At the Mountains of Madness* Lovecraft refers to an ideographic representation of deep time. However, it is only capable of hinting at the full scope of the earth’s
development. As the noted evolutionary biologist Henry Gee has stated, “deep time can never support narratives of evolution” and humans “want to think of the history of life as a story: but that is precisely what we cannot do” (Gee 1999, 5). Deep time cannot be truncated and expressed in conventional language, even pictorially. However, within *ATMOM*, Lovecraft uses deep time as a signified temporal “outside,” which exists beyond limited human history, while referring to past pictorial representations of the earth distinct from its present configuration.

Within Ian Culbard’s adaptation of *ATMOM*, an overhead map of Pangaea, seen by Dyer and Danforth, is incorporated into the floor of the alien city (Fig. 4.2). In the comic panel, Dyer states to his colleague “The map beneath your feet is now no longer of any earthly geographical formation” (Culbard 2012, 85). Essentially, this map represents knowledge of the geographical elements of the continent not available to the characters in the story. Were this image to appear without the text, the audience might not know exactly what the map is depicting. Indeed, in the next series of panels, Danforth remarks: “Each chamber is a period in this world’s glorious past – these maps and astrological charts provide a context to the events depicted on the walls” (84). Thus, the combination of narratives seen in the ideograms related to the Old Ones and the maps of the earth, communicates to the audience the extensive temporal scope of these histories.
Mise-En-Abyme: Multiple Points of View

Lovecraft’s use of *mise-en-abyme* challenges the notion that a fixed unitary point of view, as a means of representation, can adequately provide contextual meaning to the observer. Rather, he suggests that multiple points of view expressed through an ideogram, linked together with the protagonist’s point of view, can come to represent a reality more completely, thus granting the audience a greater understanding of truth. This chapter focuses on the examination of two points-of-view which are emblematized by the mise-en-abyme and represented through pictorial communication, as well as through the narrator.
Further, within the arts and literature, the concept of a text-within-a-text is known as mise-en-abyme, a term first coined by the French author, Andre Gide, in 1893 (Dallenbach 1989, 7). According to Susan Hayward, a mise en abyme “is a play of signifiers within a text, of sub-texts mirroring each other. This mirroring can get to the point where meaning can be rendered unstable and in this respect can be seen as part of the process of deconstruction” (Hayward 2013, 239). This instability is exactly the type of disruption Lovecraft sought to create within his narratives using mise-en-abyme.

This analysis of disruptive ideograms reveals the ability of a larger text to contain multiple texts and a hierarchy of signifiers. Each text can be embedded with qualities which are activated once placed in a relational chain of objects. Indeed, when placed within a visual scenario, an ideogram containing figures related to a particular object can be thought of as extensions of itself. Lovecraft does not introduce the “outside” into his stories without context; rather, he utilizes fragmented texts as a device to mediate and contextualize within a larger scale of time.

In highlighting her preference for his use of “the found manuscript as a narrative device,” Caitlin Kiernan describes an essential quality of Lovecraft’s historical narratives (VanderMeer 2012). The main distinction between Lovecraft’s invented manuscripts, such as the *Necronomicon* or *The Pnakotic Manuscripts*, and the type of ideograms discussed here, is that the latter is site-specific and occupies a fixed spatial location within the narrative’s geography. In *ATMOM*, these visual texts blanket the walls of the alien city and are strongly connected with architecture, as well as the experience of the characters Dyer and Danforth, while they move through space.
Lovecraft’s technique of injecting a second point of view through ideograms is much in line with the Canadian media theorist, Marshall McLuhan’s analysis of Cubism. McLuhan found that the techniques of Cubism allow for the expression of multiple perspectives within one composition and subsequently grant the audience a greater understanding of reality. On the ontological form of Cubism, and the use of multiple perspectives within a two-dimensional space, McLuhan explains:

In other words, cubism, by giving the inside and outside, the top, bottom, back, and front and the rest, in two dimensions, drops the illusion of perspective in favor of instant sensory awareness of the whole. Cubism, by seizing on instant total awareness, suddenly announced that the medium is the message. Is it not evident that the moment that sequence yields to the simultaneous, one is in the world of the structure and of configuration? (McLuhan 1964, 13)

Lovecraft’s view of art appears to conform to McLuhan’s, in that he contends bridging multiple perspectives is the only way humans can come to achieve a greater understanding of reality. When Lovecraft’s vision of art intersects with McLuhan’s, we see that “Only the subtler illusion of art is left—the illusion that our ability to command slightly different points of view within the human radius gives us a triangulation-base large enough to permit mensurational guesses regarding absolute reality” (Lovecraft 1929, 287). This “triangulation-base” is established by Lovecraft in *ATMOM* through the placement of certain visual elements related to the Old Ones diegetically within the original text. First there is the account of Professor Lake encountering the bodies of Old Ones, which are dissected by his scientific team. The results of the vivisection are relayed at the beginning of the story to the narrator Dyer through a short wave.

32 Graham Harman also heavily references Cubism in his discussion of the “outside” city in *ATMOM*, stating “as with cubist painting, there is a clean separation between multiple facets the thing displays to the outer world, and whatever organizing principle is able to hold together the various monstrous features” (Harman 2012, 35).
transmission. The second documentation of the Old Ones’ existence is contained within the mise-en-abyme of the ideograms, which recounts an extensive history of the race. Finally, Dyer and Danforth encounter the mutilated bodies of four Old Ones directly as they seek to exit the alien city. Though Lovecraft indicates that multiple manifestations of an object are not exhaustive, and do not portray the entire truth of a given concept, he would likely agree with McLuhan that multiple points of view offer a greater understanding of context for the audience. The author’s use of mise-en-abyme through ideograms in *ATMOM* is simply a way to further realize the Old Ones within the temporal frame of the narrative.

**Humanity: A Diminished History**

Within *At the Mountains of Madness* there are references to the “pre-human”, a term that applies to the temporal status of the ideograms Dyer and Danforth encounter (Lovecraft 1936, 526). As previously stated, within this fictional history documented by the ideograms, there is a series of conflicts the Old Ones undergo with other races upon the Earth. However, in the later portion of this history, references to humanity appear:

These vertebrates, as well as an infinity of other life forms - animal and vegetable, marine, terrestrial, and aerial - were the products of unguided evolution acting on life cells made by the Old Ones, but escaping beyond their radius of attention. They had been suffered to develop unchecked because they had not come in conflict with the dominant beings. Bothersome forms, of course, were mechanically exterminated. It interested us to see in some of the very last and most decadent sculptures a shambling, primitive mammal, used sometimes for food and sometimes as an amusing buffoon by the land dwellers, whose vaguely simian and human foreshadowings were unmistakable (Lovecraft 1936, 544-545).
In this passage one discovers that early humans were not worthy of interest or conflict as they were useful as sustenance and entertainment by the Old Ones. Culbard’s graphic novel adaptation attempts to relay this information to the reader through the incorporation of an ideogram which depicts a human figure, an embryo and an Old One in a sequence of glyphs (Fig. 4.3).

![Fig. 4.3. Ian Culbard. Panel from *At the Mountains of Madness*. 2010. 88](image)

Within the multitude of images regarding the Old Ones, as well as various alien species such as the shoggoths, Culbard features a composition focusing on Dyer coming across an ideogram that features a recognizable element, with the character stating “At long last I see a familiar form” (88). Contextualized in the subsequent panel, this familiar form is alluded to having a relationship with the Old Ones as it is depicted with a fetus, followed by an image of an Old One and bookended with an image of what looks like an ancestral human. The sequence of these images from left to right speaks to the Old Ones’
intervention within human development to produce a more contemporary version of humanity.33

Within Lovecraft’s work there are several examples of ideograms which portray humanity as dominated by fictional creatures, such as the ancient nameless reptiles featured in “The Nameless City.” The story, in particular, contains an ideogram which features a visual depiction of a human amidst the reptilian’s prosperous and long-surviving civilization. Lovecraft describes this scene in the following passage, “Mental associations are curious, and I shrank from the idea that except for the poor primitive man torn to pieces in the last painting, mine was the only human form amidst the many relics and symbols of the primordial life” (Lovecraft 1921). This ideogram reinforces Lovecraft’s common theme that runs through many of his mise-en-abymes in his work; for much of Earth’s history humanity did not exist and is a minor footnote within the larger scope of time. However, as evidenced by these fictional histories, humanity was found to be lacking when their time stream crossed that of these fictional races, either through obliteration as depicted in the ideogram in “The Nameless City” or inability to come to terms with humanity’s low hierarchical placement in the universe.

Ideograms and the Alien Film Franchise

From the present discussion of Lovecraft’s reference to ideograms within At the Mountains of Madness, this analysis will shift toward related contemporary visual.

33 Dyer and Danforth continue their conversation after the representation of this creation glyph, with Dyer saying “We were nothing more than an occasional meal, and an amusement”, to which Danforth replies, “We were a Joke? A mistake?!?” (Culbard 2012, 89) Dyer ends this portion of their conversation by proclaiming, “A by-product of unguided evolution. Dear God!” and the inference is that humanity was created but largely abandoned to its own devices.
manifestations of this trope. Accepting the film theorist Alexandre Astruc’s contention that “film language is the exact equivalent of literary language,” this author proposes that films have the ability to relay the same information that literature does (Astruc 1948). However, it can do so by showing the audience content rather than merely describing it. With regards to hieroglyphics, this is important as film allows such a language to be seen rather than described, giving the audience immediate access to the text.  

34 By examining the ways in which an ideogram-based trope has been adapted into film, this analysis will demonstrate how such a conceit might be used to further disrupt the temporal frame within a given narrative.

The adaptation of these ideogram-related Lovecraft stories, such as ATMOM with any degree of fidelity within contemporary visual culture has largely been limited to graphic novels.  

35 The closest opportunity the greater public has had to view a contemporary Lovecraftian use of ideograms within film has been the Alien franchise (1979-2012). Established by Ridley Scott and screenwriter Dan O’Bannon in 1979, this film series heavily adopts Lovecraft’s use and function of ideograms within the numerous films that constitute the series, especially within the latest film, Prometheus (2012).  

36 Through three separate films tangentially related to Lovecraft, the film-makers

34 Of the hieroglyphic, P. Adams Sitney suggests in his commentary on Gregory Markopoulos that “picture narrative ontologically and historically precedes verbal narrative and that the invention of the motion picture camera made possible a revival of this ancient and fundamental form of expression.” (Sitney, 142)  

35 Writer Dan Lockhart and illustrator Alice Duke adapted “Dagon” for the graphic anthology The Lovecraft Anthology: Volume 1 and writer Pat Mills and illustrator Attila Futaki adapted “The Nameless City” for The Lovecraft Anthology: Volume 2.  

36 Dan O’Bannon said of the relationship between Alien and Lovecraft’s writings, “One especially insightful critic- I wish I remembered who - wrote that Alien evoked the writings of H. P. Lovecraft, but where Lovecraft told of an ancient race of hideous beings menacing the Earth, Alien went to where the Old Ones lived, to their very world of origin. He was right, that was my very thought while writing. That baneful little storm-lashed planetoid planetoid halfway across the galaxy was a fragment of the Old Ones’ homeworld, and the Alien a blood relative of the Yog-Sothoth”. (O’Bannon 2003).
reintroduce the ideogram within distinct narratives, inscribing it as an important component of this fictional universe and utilizing it as a potent narrative device.

The first film in the series, *Alien*, made in 1979, had indirect narrative elements appropriated from Lovecraft’s work, both in terms of plot elements and imagery. Of Lovecraft’s influence on the film’s production, O’Bannon, the screenwriter, stated:

Alien was strongly influenced tone wise of Lovecraft, and one of the things that proved it is that you can't adapt Lovecraft without an extremely strong visual style. It has to be very stylised and very particular. What you need is a cinematic equivalent of Lovecraft's prose, that's the problem, that's very hard to achieve (O’Bannon 2009).

This visual style was rendered by H.R. Giger, the Swiss set and creature designer, who incorporated his Lovecraft related works into the film, such as his composition *Necronom IV* (1976).

While not actually making it into the final cut of the film, the Lovecraftian ideogram was originally supposed to play a major part in relaying a significant portion of the film’s plot to the characters and by extension, the audience. Giger created ideograms to explain the life cycle of the alien, which were to be featured upon the human crew’s first encounter with the alien ship. These ideograms were referred to by O’Bannon’s original script in the following manner:

The beam reveals that he is in a stone room. Strange hieroglyphics are carved into the walls. They have a primitive, religious appearance. Row after row of pictograms stretch from floor to ceiling, some epic history in an unknown language. Huge religious symbols dominate one wall (Strange Shapes 2012).

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37 Most of this information regarding the *Alien* hieroglyph and the process of translating it from script to the visual and its eventual removal from the film was featured in an article “Alien Hieroglyphs” published on the website *Strange Shapes* (2012).
The “hieroglyphics” mentioned in this passage serve the same function as those referred to by Lovecraft in *ATMOM* in documenting an “epic history” of an “outside” fictional race of creatures.

Dan O’Bannon continued to work within the *Alien* fictional universe, writing a script with director Paul W.S. Anderson and Ronald Shusett for the 2004 film *AVP: Alien Vs. Predator*. As within his script for *Alien*, O’Bannon included a key scene featuring ideograms relaying key background information to the audience. Significantly, this scene parallels the visual scenario of ideograms featured in Lovecraft’s *At the Mountains of Madness* and breaks from the written pictorial language of the present to portray events of the distant past, creating a segmentation between the two time frames. Rather than convey this information directly through ideograms in the mise-en-scene, the director Paul W.S. Anderson cuts from the film’s proceedings to a montage of live-action scenes detailing the Alien’s history to provide context to the film’s present events.

**Ideograms in Prometheus**

The latest film within the *Alien* franchise, *Prometheus*, has a significant relationship to both the *Alien* universe and *ATMOM*. Released in 2012, it serves as a prequel to the original *Alien* film and is heavily dependent on ideograms as a plot device unlike previous cinematic entries in the series. Directed by Ridley Scott, who also directed *Alien*, the film serves as a vehicle for exploring ideograms in a manner that does not occur in the original film. Though *Prometheus* is not a direct adaptation of *ATMOM*, it is so similar that director Guillermo del Toro, who had been planning on filming his
own version of the novella, decided that the two projects were too identical and that it “will probably mark a long pause -if not the demise- of ATMOM” (del Toro 2012).³⁸

Perhaps because this is not a strict adaptation, the filmmakers were able to expand the structure of the multiple ideograms contained in ATMOM through the use of new technology. The stationary, stone ideograms described in Lovecraft’s early twentieth-century work are experienced by the contemporary audience in three dimensions through the use of stereoscopic film and the simulation of holographic images. In Prometheus, these technologies invariably affect the manner in which time is disrupted, further merging the present and the past.

Worshipping of an Alien God

In the beginning of Prometheus, a pair of archaeologists, Elizabeth Shaw and Charlie Holloway, while excavating the Isle of Skye in Scotland, discover a series of cave paintings. These depict human figures worshipping a taller anthropomorphic deity pointing to a constellation of stars contained within the composition (Fig. 4.4). In a hierarchy of power created through ideograms, the audience is shown that humans are ranked lower, not only because of its diminutive size in the composition but also their willingness to prostrate themselves in front of this mysterious towering creature. Bearing a strong resemblance to the cave paintings contained within the Chauvet Cave in southern France, the ideograms featured here are rendered in a very basic style.

³⁸ Del Toro has since backtracked; however, there is still no production date set for his project, due to a lack of funding and issues concerning an ‘R’ rating (Rivera 2013).
Later, Shaw and Holloway show the crew a holographic image of the Isle of Skye painting while travelling aboard the spaceship Prometheus to reach the star system featured in this composition. They explain to the crew that “The same pictogram, showing men worshiping giant beings pointing to the stars was discovered” within other ancient cultures, including Egypt, Early Mesoamerica, Sumeria, Babylonia, Hawaii and Mesopotamia (Prometheus 2012). This scene brings representations of humanity’s distant past into the present of the film, while verifying the truth of Shaw and Holloway’s claims through the citation of similar motifs and narratives across human cultures.

The essence of this particular ideogram, that of “men worshiping giant beings,” is very similar to that referenced in Lovecraft’s short story, “Dagon” (1919), which is the first instance of the author incorporating ideograms (Joshi and Schultz 2001, 57). Within the story, an unnamed narrator stranded on a largely uninhabited island in the Pacific Ocean, discovers a visual text of an ancient race of aquatic beings. The narrator
protagonist finds himself upon “a portion of the ocean floor” containing “regions which for innumerable millions of years had lain hidden under unfathomable watery depths” (Lovecraft 1919, 38). Having no idea where he is, the narrator walks across a waterlogged plane to discover a large monolith bearing ideograms, “a system of hieroglyphics,” on a bas-relief which visually documents the history of an unknown aquatic race:

Plainly visible across the intervening water on account of their enormous size was an array of bas-reliefs whose subjects would have excited the envy of a Dore. I think that these things were supposed to depict men -- at least, a certain sort of men; though the creatures were shown disporting like fishes in the waters of some marine grotto, or paying homage at some monolithic shrine which appeared to be under the waves as well... Curiously enough, they seemed to have been chiseled badly out of proportion with their scenic background; for one of the creatures was shown in the act of killing a whale represented as but little larger than himself. I remarked, as I say, their grotesqueness and strange size; but in a moment decided that they were merely the imaginary gods of some primitive fishing or seafaring tribe; some tribe whose last descendant had perished eras before the first ancestor of the Piltdown or Neanderthal Man was born (Lovecraft 1919, 40).

The narrator finds the figures depicted within these ideograms frightening, as they indicate the presence of rather large beings who are the subject of worship by these ancient human-like figures. The ideograms featured at the beginning of Prometheus are established by Shaw and Holloway as evidence that the Engineers came from Zeta(2) Reticuli. However, in the context of “Dagon,” the information contained within the ideograms on the monolith serves to give context to the enormous sea creature the protagonist sees towards the end of the story.

A contemporary illustrative adaptation of “Dagon,” was created by the artist Sergio Cariello in his graphic novel bearing the same title in 1993 (Fig. 4.5). The image featured within this text is very similar to the cave painting within Prometheus, as the
center of the composition is inhabited by a large standing figure. These aquatic beings, described in the text, as “chiseled badly out of proportion with their scenic background,” portray the central creature as overshadowing the surrounding worshipping figures who appear much more human-like (Lovecraft 1919, 40). The scene represents elements of humanity in a diminished capacity, subject to the towering figure at the very center.

Fig. 4.5. Steven Philip Jones and Sergio Cariello. Panel from “Dagon” Part 1. 1993.
The subtext of *Prometheus*, and indeed the ancient Greek myth that the title itself refers to, is the granting of special powers by the gods to humanity and what del Toro refers to as “creation aspects” in regards to the film and *ATMOM* (del Toro 2012). The cave ideogram at the Isle of Skye in *Prometheus* demonstrates this element of time, an origin of contact between the alien god and humanity, but this is constantly reinforced throughout the film in the dialogue as well. For example, during Shaw and Holloway’s briefing to the Prometheus crew, the following conversation takes place, explicitly contextualizing humanity as the product of an alien civilization:

Elizabeth Shaw: We call them Engineers.

Fifield: Engineers? Do you mind, um, telling us what they engineered?

Elizabeth Shaw: They engineered us.

The earlier reference to the ideograms within the Isle of Skye cave and the dialogue within the film complement each other to make it clear to the audience that humans are the products of the aliens, known in *Prometheus*, as Engineers. Though the film does not pose a clear intention upon the Engineers in their interactions with Earth, the scenario established does bear a strong resemblance to the scenario Lovecraft conceived between the Old Ones and early humans.

Deep Time and Space

Once Shaw and Holloway establish the location of planet LV-223, which is featured in the ideogram during their briefing to the crew of Prometheus, they reveal that the ship is currently travelling there at light speed. Upon its arrival, the ship orbits the
planet and the crew discovers that there are artificial structures on and under the surface; a decision is made to land. After these artificial structures are explored, David, an android, returns to discover that the Engineer’s ship contains a chamber, deemed Orrery, of holographic devices which function as a navigation system. After pressing a series of buttons, he is able to play a holographic recording of the events leading up to the Engineer’s departure from LV-223 (Fig. 4.6). This sequence contains two types of pictorial information: a moment by moment holographic record of the Engineers’ determining their destination, Earth, and a massive moving map of space, which reveals the Engineer’s present location in space within Zeta(2) Reticuli, and the path they would take to get to their celestial target. The distance between Earth and Zeta(2) Reticuli is 39.35 light years and is represented via this holographic star map (WolframAlpha 2014). By showing this star map, and the Engineers’ use of it in determining their destination, Scott provides a more complex exposition to the narrative proceedings through a unified holographic image. The audience is informed that the Engineers visited Earth and thus tie the narrative back to the cave painting at the beginning of the story, which gains additional meaning and relevance. By demonstrating their power to navigate and travel to Earth over the course of nearly forty light years, the Engineers are attributed qualities

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39 This scene was highly influenced by Joseph Wright’s 1766 painting “A Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery.” Scott insisted that the star map look like the Neo-Classical painting (Olson 2012)

40 Ridley Scott has stated that the primary location of the planet featured in Prometheus is in Zeta Reticuli. Specifically in an interview for an online Prometheus featurette, he elaborates, “The planet where they go is called Zeta(2) Reticuli, and what they find there is an establishment that is not what they expected it to be,” adding, “this story kind of walks around the truth of what there may be out there... It presents some big questions." (Prometheus: Exclusive Featurette "Origins")
which reflect their ability to transverse time and space, as well as the capacity to create life.

Fig. 4.6. *Prometheus* screen capture (Fuel VFX 2012).

The Orrery star map of the universe shown in *Prometheus* is a three-dimensional version of similar star charts described in *ATMOM* by Lovecraft. Both detail the manner in which aliens came to travel to earth from distant galaxies, something Lovecraft alludes to in the following passage, “Myth or otherwise, the sculptures told of the coming of those star-headed things to the nascent, lifeless earth out of cosmic space - their coming, and the coming of many other alien entities such as at certain times embark upon spatial pioneering” (Lovecraft 1936, 540-541). A similar scenario is depicted in Culbard’s graphic novel adaptation of *ATMOM*, with Dyer and Danforth looking up at a celestial map on the ceiling (Fig. 4.7). The distinction between the graphic novel and the film is
that *Prometheus* utilizes stereoscopic technology, specifically, holographs, to directly represent the stars within the physical space of the room. Within *ATMOM* and Culbard’s adaptation, the star maps inhabit a largely two-dimensional space, creating a boundary between representation and reality, whereas the holographs in Prometheus, in Lovecraft’s terminology, “merge” the two spaces together in time and space (Lovecraft 1930, 220-221).

Fig. 4.7. Ian Culbard. Panel from the graphic novel *At the Mountains of Madness*. 84

From Ideograms to Holograms

With regard to ideograms, the *Alien* franchise takes its cues from Lovecraft’s *ATMOM* and other stories in the author’s body of work. However, *Prometheus* expands on the potential of such visual communication in its use of stereoscopic imagery to bring representation into the mise-en-scene of the film. After visiting the set of Jim Cameron’s *Avatar* (2009), Ridley Scott decided to utilize 3D technology within one of his future films (Doty 2012). Once *Prometheus* was on the director’s plate, it offered the perfect
project to employ such technology. The use of stereoscopic images within the film further erased the temporal distinctions between the present and past, offering a model from which future Lovecraftian ideograms might disrupt time in new media.

The key scene to illustrate this migration of ideograms from literature, to film, to three-dimension ability, is during Prometheus’ initial exploration of the alien structures within the depths of planet LV-223. David discovers hieroglyphics covering the passage’s wall (Fig. 4.8). These ideograms are much more abstract from the previous cave and appear distorted, giving the viewer few clues as to what they actually represent. The film’s production designer, Arthur Max, concerning the film’s ideograms stated that the design team “was very careful to evolve our own visual language, which we used throughout our set design, based mostly on a combination of ancient Persian and a pre-Sumerian Middle Eastern language, because of its visual quality. Then we blended them together so it had its own unique style” (Salisbury 2012, 143). The audience comes to discover that these ideograms have a dual function: representing formalized and caricatured ideograms based on their spatial placement within a sequence, and manipulated in order to play a holographic recording of previous events that took place within the tunnel. This is where the mechanical reproduction of time within film can incorporate and utilize a unique form of ideogram that bears a closer representation to reality in time and space.
Indeed, David traces certain hieroglyphics in order to play a holographic recording of the engineers fleeing down the tunnel (Fig. 4.9). The central component of this recording retraces the Engineers’ movement through time within space, exactly as it occurred in the past. This further establishes the spatio-temporal ontology of the event in a way which written language cannot, without the necessity of a physical object bounding these sensual qualities together. Not just a signified history, the holograph is an attempt to reproduce the visual components of the event’s history within a particular temporal frame. Within this scene, upon perceiving the activation of the hologram, David positions himself at the center of the tunnel, allowing the holographic engineers to run through him. This moment emphasizes the disparity between the physical and the material, especially while the rest of the crew reacts to the hologram by fleeing and ducking from the virtual images of the Engineers. This response calls to mind the conflicting account of viewers of the French 1895 documentary, *Train Pulling into a*
Station, when the audience ran out of the theater in panic, afraid that a real train was moving through the theater (Loiperdinger 2004, 90). According to Paul Butterworth, the film’s visual effects supervisor, the original intention of the holographs’ incorporation was to function as “security recordings” (Seymour 2012). Thus, history is visually communicated in the film through holographic representations of actual events in time and space.

![Prometheus screen capture](image)

Fig. 4.9. Prometheus screen capture (Fuel VFX 2012).

The separate time-frames represented in ATMOM, the present of the protagonist and the past of the ideogram, are brought together within this particular scene in Prometheus. Of the use of the hologram and time, Philippe Boissonnet remarks on its unique temporal properties in relationship to the immanent time of the audience “The time of the image is the time of the observer” (Boissonnet 2013, 2). Within Prometheus
one sees that two distinct time streams share the same temporal progression, despite these separate events occurring at different times. Holographic images, in this instance, would seem to remove the frame, or the distinction between image and reality, which generally intersects within the mis-en-abyme, as seen in Culbard’s comic adaptations of *ATMOM*. Boissonnet further describes the manner in which holograms are dependent on time in order to be experienced:

> Out of the encounter between the hologram and light (diffraction) is created another kind of encounter, one more temporal and relational: that of human time, the time experienced by each individual who “inhabits” the holographic image through the investigation of their gaze. Beyond the hologram, the holographic image thus brings into play one’s entire subjective comprehension, brought to bear by visual perception and the cognitive processes associated with it (3).

If one agrees that the holographic images within *Prometheus* are a type of intentional visual documentation, a communication to be viewed and experienced by the protagonists and audience, one can agree that Scott has raised the ideogram to a higher state of being within the mise-en-scene of his film. As the director said of such technology, “The 3D world allows you to engage even more with a film because you're somehow drawn into the landscape or the universe of that scene. Even when it's two people talking at a table, you feel like you're a third party” (Nathan 2012). The fantastic three-dimensional world of *Prometheus* is realized and allows the expression of three-dimensional ideograms that not only reflect the past but also actually move through time in concert with other, more immediate objects and people, allowing a higher latitude of disruption for the audience. Lovecraftian ideograms and their status as objects of the past, can be raised to the level of the present within local time and space even if there is a lack of materials facilitating this convergence.
Conclusion

As has been demonstrated in this analysis, Lovecraft’s description of ideograms in his literature largely functions to incorporate an extended time-frame into a given narrative. Represented by ideograms, the duration of extended time is exponentially larger than the temporal length of such stories, creating a distinctive asymmetrical relationship between the two time frames. Ideograms, in their various forms throughout Lovecraft’s work, which include maps, star charts and alien histories, all represent a temporal dimension of existence from the “outside” that disrupt time, or more specifically the present. The difference in scale serves to diminish the present events in the narrative and limits the power of the protagonist, and by extension the human audience. In *ATMOM* the extended history of the Old Ones not only starkly contrasts with human history, as represented by the protagonist, Professor Dyer, but also contains a minor reference to human origins that diminishes their stature. In these circumstances, ideograms are ultimately disruptive, because they split time and challenge the immediate temporal frame of the narrative with an alternative one, leaving the audience to question their own time-frame, the frame they are familiar with and experiencing in the present or an alternative frame with a much greater scope. As it relays the scale of intellectual and technological developments of the Old Ones, *ATMOM* demonstrates this conflict well, contextualizing the threat they pose not only to Dyer and Danforth but also to humanity as a whole.
When Lovecraft’s use of ideograms are translated into the visual, such as in the adaptation of *At the Mountains of Madness* by Ian Culbard and in Ridley Scott’s *Prometheus*, they are direct representations of the temporal “outside” that come to inhabit the same visual representation of the present. This textual doubling has the potential to create serious narrative and temporal gaps, leaving the audience to question how the present and the past are explicitly connected. The evolutionary biologist Henry Gee has stated, “deep time” does not support narratives, and the historian Maurice Mandelbaum, in his seminal treatise, “A Note on History as Narrative,” makes similar remarks about history not being applicable to narrative. The inclusion of both within Lovecraft’s work through ideograms would seem to challenge the significance and linear nature of the narrative emphasized in the text (Gee 1999, 2; Mandelbaum 1967).

Finally, as the ideogram evolves in contemporary visual culture to encompass new media, such as stereoscopic film and holographs in *Prometheus*, it will continue to find new expressions and ways of communicating fictional histories of the “outside”. Lovecraft, to his credit, understood that one of the more potent means of disrupting time was to bridge the past with the future, a process he was constantly engaged with in his fiction. Through visual communication, in the form of ideograms, there exists a great potential to offer new ways of erecting this temporal bridge to the audience, something that will undoubtedly continue to occur in future Lovecraft-influenced art.
Philosophers have attempted to grapple with issues surrounding the concept of anthropomorphism for centuries – since at least the sixth-century BCE, the era of the Greek philosopher Xenophanes – debating the merits of characterizing the world in human terms versus skepticism over such an approach.41 H.P. Lovecraft entered this ongoing discourse through the creation and use of speculative creatures notable for their departure from anthropomorphism in his fictional work. These monsters often possess multiple, repetitious eyes, tentacles or appendages, offering a visual dissent against the anthropomorphic form. In his essay, “Some Notes on Interplanetary Fiction,” Lovecraft contended that when creating monsters from the “outside” within supernatural horror, “the denizens must be definitely non-human in aspect” (Lovecraft 1933, 181). Further, within the essay he spends a good deal of time deriding various human-based forms such as “beautiful anthropomorphic princesses”, “pseudo-human kingdoms” and “hairy apemen” (181). Lovecraft insisted that “standardized ghosts, werewolves, and vampires” of the pulp magazines of his era were rather unremarkable since they involve recapitulations of anthropocentrism (Lovecraft 1935, 197).

41 Xenophanes was born in Colophon in Ionia in 570 BC, and helped found the Eleatic school of philosophy (Graham 2010, 95). Significantly, he contended that god did not possess human traits. Xenophanes specifically entered into the debate concerning anthropomorphism by stating, “But mortals think gods are begotten, and have the clothing, voice, and body of mortal,” thus indicating that humans tend to believe that the divine are similar to humans (109). Further, Xenophanes elaborates in another passage “Now if cattle, <horses> or lions had hands and were able to draw with their hands and perform works like men, horses like horses and cattle like cattle would draw the forms of gods, and make their bodies just like the body <each of them> had” (109-110).
Lovecraft’s morphological contestation of the anthropomorphic form and associated ways of seeing is largely based upon the reiteration or repetition of the eye in multiple iterations, known as polyocularity. Polyocularity is a term utilized by David Williams to describe monsters with multiple eyes (Williams 1996, 151). This repetition is presented in a manner that distinguishes such a system from the human’s biocular view, causing a form of disruption for the audience. As postulated throughout this dissertation, disruption is characterized by the creation of the sublime through repetition and a contestation of anthropomorphism, using symmetry or pattern to demonstrate the imbalance of humanity’s relationship to the larger cosmos.

This chapter focuses on polyocularity, creating a theoretical framework concerning Lovecraft’s fictional bodies and their proportionality to anthropomorphic forms. The resulting heuristic will be applied towards evaluating the use and theory of polyocularity, which creates disruption within Lovecraft-related visual culture. Individual Lovecraft stories such as “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928), *The Shadow Out of Time* (1936), and *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936) and their visual adaptations will be examined to establish a range of ocular systems. Within the author’s work there are numerous configurations of ocularity and “outside” creatures possessing polyocularity which are assigned advanced capabilities in comparison to the human. Towards the later part of his career, Lovecraft would gradually incorporate more complex speculative creatures into his greater Yog-sothothean pantheon.  

Lovecraft bristled at his friend August Derleth’s suggestion that his larger oeuvre could be reduced to a Cthulhu mythos and instead suggested, “it’s not a bad idea to call this Cthulhuism & Yog-Sothothery of mine ‘The Mythology of Hastur’” (Lovecraft 1931, 336). Though Lovecraft did not invent the aforementioned deity of Hastur, he alluded to the manner in which it originated with the late twentieth-
To supplement Lovecraft’s monsters and contextualize their polyocularity, the latter concept needs to be traced through historical and cultural sources, as well as the biological sciences. Indeed, Lovecraft remarked that most of his creatures’ morphologies were appropriated from existing biological specimens. Additionally, within Western culture, there is a long standing polyocular-related iconography that Lovecraft, if not completely aware of, may have been influenced by. Such examples include the ancient Greek mythological giant Argus Panoptes and the angel Ophanim from the Judeo-Christian Bible (Pettazzoni 1978, 110, 151; Ezekiel 1:15-21). These influences, both biological and cultural, form a significant intersection of theory and object to exemplify how polyocularity is represented within Lovecraft’s work, as well as contemporary visual culture. In this dynamic, polyocularity expresses the ascension of science as the arbitrator of truth during Lovecraft’s era of Modernism, as well as a connection to the supernatural parallel conveyed in myth.

To further elaborate on polyocularity, this chapter will examine the film *Starship Troopers* (1997) in order to demonstrate how repetition of the eye has come to define Lovecraftian art in contemporary visual culture. Artists seemingly increase the number of eyes when representing a Lovecraft creature to make it more alien, while reducing the number of eyes when attempting to make it more anthropomorphic. In each case, this departure from the original text has a specific effect, creating distance between the audience and the character or, conversely, identification with it. Repetition, in this

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century author Ambrose Bierce and was later utilized by Robert Chambers in his “The King in Yellow” (1895) collection of short stories, a connection he labels “the Bierce-Chambers line” (336). This mythology is more about appropriation and extending existing concepts or creatures into new narratives and conflicts.
instance, becomes a mode for expression: the asymmetrical physical relationship between the anthropomorphic audience and those bodies related to the “outside.”

Lovecraft’s Polyocular Bestiary

Lovecraft’s production and creation of speculative beings is similar to that of a sculptor crafting a three-dimensional object, as he attempts to synthesize appendages and organs in a coherent manner, deliberately creating an unconventional morphology. Jeffrey Cohen contends that “The monster’s body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy (ataractic or incendiary), giving them life and an uncanny independence” (Cohen 1996, 4). It is apparent that Lovecraft created his polyocular creatures with all of these elements in mind. The multitude of eye configurations caused fear and anxiety in the narrator and audience, since they diverged from a conventional anthropocentric structure in their greater ability to see from a larger field of view.

Lovecraft’s polyocular creatures were not unprecedented within the larger history of western visual culture, as there are models dating back to 3500 BC, namely, the eye idols of Tell Brak. Unlike these earlier models, Lovecraft’s creatures were not expressly divine; rather, they reflected the continued ascension of science as a driving force within his larger culture. As Cohen states, “The monstrous body is pure culture,”

43 One of the earliest examples of polyocularity in the visual arts are the ‘eye idols’ discovered at the Eye Temple in Tell Brak, Syiria (Collon 1995, 45). Thousands of such idols were found at this ancient Assyrian site, named for this archaeological discovery, and have been dated 3500-3300 BC (47). These eye idols, carved out of stone, alabaster and steatite, consisted of a solidified and undifferentiated body, crested with a series of eyes ranging from two to six, always represented in pairs (Figure 6) (Fingesten, 1959, 23). The configuration of this particular system of polyocularity creates a predominantly horizontal overlapping field of implied vision. Peter Fingesten, considering the portable and practical nature of such idols, contends that they were used as “counter-charms against the evil eye” (24).
and, on this point, Lovecraft’s monsters are distinctly informed by his professed influences of biology and geometry rather than traditional polyocular examples from myth, such as the ancient Greek Panoptes. Robert Solso has remarked that, “our human eyes are not the most complex optical system in the world. They are complex and sophisticated, but other beings have more complex optical structures” (Solso 1994, 14). Lovecraft’s invented monstrosities were an acknowledgement of this variation and departed from anthropomorphically visual systems as a means of demonstrating different abilities of sight. Conventionally within nature, vertebrates such as reptiles, mammals, amphibians, fish and birds tend to have biocular vision, while insects and crustaceans often have a greater variety of visual sensory configurations, such as compound or polyocular systems of vision (Land 2002, 13). Lovecraft particularly appeared to recognize the unique nature of the ocular senses within the latter group of animals, assigning characteristics to his monsters which placed them outside of conventional anthropomorphomorphic forms. In effect, he utilized speculation to create a diverse set of morphologies highly informed by existing biological structures. Significantly, Lovecraft elaborates on the strong connection between his creatures and biological specimens in nature:

Usually they tend to be exaggerations of certain known life-forms such as insects, poisonous plants, protozoa, & the like, although a few writers break wholly away from terrestrial analogy & depict things as abstractly cosmic as luminous protoplasmic globes. If I have gone beyond these, it is only subtly & atmospherically-in details, & in occasional imputations of geometrical, biological & physic-chemical properties definitely outside the realm of matter as understood by us (Lovecraft 1929, 316).
Thus Lovecraft invokes a variety of biological forms as inspiration, many of which possess distinct visual organs stemming from their habitation in specific geological and ecological environments.

From the examples of creatures within his work, Lovecraft clearly believed that the presence of multiple eyes translated into various capabilities. This is particularly evident when chronicling the numerous creatures based on their distinct ocular systems. With each system containing an additional nodule of sight, we may assume that it translates into a greater visual perception of reality when compared to humanity. Thus this analysis of Lovecraft’s bestiary is based on the number of eyes each respective creature possesses, granting a greater understanding of reality to those with multiple eyes. Though Lovecraft does not detail the type of eye, whether it is apposition or superposition, he does indicate that he conforms to the belief that additional eyes lend themselves to a greater ability of sight. Lovecraft himself hints at an ideal cosmic perspective which “concern[s] some ethereal quality of indefinite expansion and mobility, and of a heightened perception which shall make all forms and combinations of beauty simultaneously visible to me, and realizable by me” (Lovecraft 1930, 301-02). It is this ideal cosmic perspective, this cosmic gaze that represents an exemplar from which Lovecraft’s creatures and humans are constantly compared to, with varying degrees of asymmetry.

Returning to Jeffrey Cohen’s notion of monstrous effects, “fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy”, coupled with the sublime and the contestation of anthropomorphism, this analysis will bridge these concepts together to further elaborate on Lovecraft’s use of
polyocularity in his fictional work (Cohen 1996, 4). To reiterate, the overall project within this dissertation is to take disruptive ideas within Lovecraft’s fiction and trace them within contemporary visual culture. To this end, some of the concepts derived from this chapter’s examination of Lovecraft’s various polyocular monsters find strong parallels in contemporary artistic productions. Moving from one medium into another, this analysis will elaborate on the effects of the sublime and anthropomorphic dissent within contemporary visual culture.

**Triocular Vision of The Great Race of Yith**

Within the narrative of *The Shadow Out of Time* (1935), Lovecraft describes a group of alien observers, known as the Great Race, who possess a “triangular-base” of eyes connected to one of four appendages attached to the top of its conical base. Describing the creature, Lovecraft outlines the structure of its ocular configuration in this passage: “The fourth [upper appendage] terminated in an irregular yellowish globe some two feet in diameter and having three great dark eyes ranged along its central circumference” (Lovecraft 1936, 742). This ocular configuration is very similar to the Hinduism’s deity, Shiva, who is widely portrayed as possessing three eyes (Pettazzoni 1978, 123). The deity “is generally shown with the third eye placed vertically in the middle of his forehead between the other two,” which also allows for a triangular ocular configuration similar to the Great Race of Yith. However, unlike Shiva, whose third eye can shoot fire, the Great Race of Yith’s triocular visage merely allows the creature to have a larger field of view.
The corporeal characteristics of the Great Race of Yith play an important part of *The Shadow Out of Time*, as the premise of the story rests on the major morphological distinctions between two races: humans and Yithians. The primary interest of this analysis is the difference between the human narrator’s biocular system, represented by Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee, and the polyocular system possessed by a member of the alien Great Race of Yith. As the narrator switches bodies, occasionally taking on the corporeal form and perspective of the Great Race, the asymmetry of inherent sensory organs between the two races causes numerous points of conflict for the protagonist. This dynamic is predicated on identity and anthropomorphic preferences, as well as the sense of alienation presented with an alternative manner of seeing.

The Great Race’s corporeal form was illustrated by Lovecraft in background notes he created for *The Shadow Out of Time* (Fig. 5.1). The remarkable quality of this drawing is Lovecraft’s employment of segmentation and “polymelia,” a repetition of form that decenters the focus of body’s composition. The Yithian’s head bearing the eyes is one of four sensory limbs that arise from the central trunk of the body. Though the eyes are clearly different from that of a human, they are placed within a greater organization of the body that does not necessarily privilege one limb or sense from another. It is also significant to note that this drawing portrays the triangular arrangement of eyes as less vertical and more horizontal. Coupled with the rounded head, and the manner in which the two furthest eyes rest at 180 degree angles, we can assume that the Yithian has close to 180 degree vision.
In terms of polyocularity, a creature can expect to see more sides of a three-dimensional object with every additional eye. Of the creature’s expanded visual capacity, Lovecraft wrote, “Of other and incomprehensible senses - not, however, well utilizable by alien captive minds inhabiting their bodies - they possessed many. Their three eyes were so situated as to give them a range of vision wider than the normal” (Lovecraft 1936, 748). Significantly, this passage also refers to a human’s inability to become proficient in the use of such expanded ocular capabilities, indicating a disconnection between systems of sight. The protagonist’s inability to adapt is highlighted again once the narrator returns to his own body, which “required an odd amount of re-education in the use of my hands, legs, and bodily apparatus in general” (722). This displacement of identification appears to be what Robert Solso identifies as visual dissonance, which he defines as “a state of psychological tension caused when one experiences a disparity
between what one expects to see and what one actually sees” (Solso 1994, 122). In this light, this disruption is not just the content of what the narrator sees, but also the manner in which the narrator sees.

Once the narrator returns to his previous body, identification becomes a point of contention in *The Shadow Out of Time*. His self-perspective, problematized because of his habitation in an alien body, begins to conflict with the image he held of himself. These dual perspectives were a constant source of anxiety, forcing the narrator to avoid binding his identity as a conscious being, with visual qualities of his physical body. The character remarks, “There was, too, a feeling of profound and inexplicable horror concerning myself. I developed a queer fear of seeing my own form, as if my eyes would find it something utterly alien and inconceivably abhorrent” and “I shunned mirrors as much as possible” (Lovecraft, 1936 729). Most debilitating to the protagonist was the association he drew between their image and identity, causing constant friction within himself.

In creating his monsters, Lovecraft seemed to react against human limitations, including sight, which he perceived as inherently subjective. In describing his larger view of art, Lovecraft indicated in a letter to a Mr. Arthur Harris, that there could be an advantage in bridging multiple fields of view together. He goes on to contend, “Only the subtler illusion of art is left-the illusion that our ability to command slightly different points of view within the human radius gives us a triangulation-base large enough to permit mensurational guesses regarding absolute reality” (Lovecraft 1929, 287). Although Lovecraft seems to be focused on combining subjectivities, it can be argued
that a “triangulation-base” can also extend to the addition of one nodule beyond the biocular sight conducive to the human observer. While human sight involves a biocular configuration, emphasizing a horizontal field of view, the introduction of a third nodule, especially when positioned above two eyes, creates not only an overlapping of three perspectives but also a vertical axis. Each perspective in this ocular configuration is registered through the presence of an eye on the Yithian’s body.

The use of eyes, as previously mentioned, can be an important expression of the body within the arts, especially when mediating the unknown for the audience. With a largely anthropocentric gaze, the audience continuously looks to the human figure for cues regarding the larger meaning of a work and the intention of the artist. Significantly, Robert Solso has indicated that canonic representations, a cluster of related concepts of an idea or thing, are stored within our memory and are constantly summoned within the human mind “when a theme or subject is mentioned” (Solso 1994, 237). Because of this early identification with the eye, the human visage becomes established as a canonic representation from the moment we are born and come in contact with other people. This gives additional weight to the visual configuration of the human body, despite the existence of a great variety of ocular systems exemplified in biological life throughout the planet. Any deviation from this exemplar, such as Lovecraft’s regard to the Yithians in *The Shadow Out of Time*, creates a mental space which requires the brain to process the relationship between concept and visual qualities.

The human form is a significant point of reference for a human audience and there is often a significant predilection in popular culture among artists to further
anthropomorphize cosmic entities, especially in relationship to the eyes. This practice is
done as a means of creating identification between the audience and the speculative
creature within a work, acknowledging the difference between such canonic
representations of the eye and more abstract configurations. The artist chooses to
represent the eye within this spectrum by privileging the human exemplar, resulting in a
diminution of Lovecraft’s dissent against anthropomorphism, well expressed in *The
Shadow Out of Time*.

However, it is important to note that this trend has long been a staple of
speculative fiction, which Lovecraft often railed against as diminishing the verisimilitude
of a given narrative, within essays such as “Some Notes on Interplanetary Fiction”
(1934). Here he speaks to the unique nature of alien observers as opposed to humanity,
“It must be remembered that non-human beings would be wholly apart from human
motives and perspectives.” (Lovecraft 1934, 181) Further elaborating on the distinct
nature of alien appearances and perspectives, Lovecraft goes on to say:

…the denizens must be definitely non-human in aspect, mentality, emotions, and
nomenclature, unless they are assumed to be descendants of a prehistoric
colonizing expedition from our earth. The human-like aspect, psychology, and
proper names commonly attributed to other-planetarians by the bulk of cheap
authors is at once hilarious and pathetic (181).

A significant element of what makes a sizable portion of Lovecraft’s creatures distinctive
in both perspective and aspect is his description of their bodies as possessing polyocular
systems of vision. This is a major departure from the anthropomorphic antagonists he
rails against in the aforementioned quotation, and within the author’s oeuvre, the
polyocular comes to stand in for the “outsideness” of his creatures, representing a cosmic
gaze as opposed to a human one.

The push to anthropomorphize speculative creatures, as stated previously, has
largely come from concerns that they would prove difficult for a human audience to
identify or empathize, leaving them un-invested in the proceedings of the narrative. After
reviewing research on facial aesthetics, Thomas Alley and Katherine Hildebrandt
concluded that “the eyes and mouth consistently have been the specific facial regions
found to be most influential for facial attractiveness” and have pointed to research that
demonstrates that infants, from a very early age, focus on the human eye more than any
other area of the human face (Alley and Hildebrandt 1988, 109). Thus when it comes to
identifying with and evaluating other sentient beings, humans over- privilege eyes in such
an appraisal. Discord arises when such visual signifiers are not present, similar to what
Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee experiences in The Shadow Out of Time. This sentiment is
aptly expressed by the character of Dr. Snaut in the film Solaris (1972) when he declares:

    We don't want to conquer space at all. We want to expand Earth endlessly. We
don't want other worlds; we want a mirror. We seek contact and will never
achieve it. We are in the foolish position of a man striving for a goal he fears and
doesn't want. Man needs man! (Solaris 1979)

Just as Lovecraft wrote, human observers come to identify with each other and thus any
divergence from such a formal representation of the human figure is seen as inferior or
something to be avoided. In the context of relational aesthetics, it proves that human
relationships, through instruments of visual communication, are privileged above all
other considerations.

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44 Research from Haith, Bergman, & Moore demonstrate that infants take their visual cues from the eyes,
even more than the mouth when they are spoken to by a person (Haith, Bergman & Moore 1977, 854)
Within popular visual culture, recent efforts to further anthropomorphize speculative creatures have come in numerous forms. Contemporary illustrations of the Yithian range from further deviations of the creature from the human figure. In his “Great Race of Yith”, the artist douzen forces what formerly was decentered, into a vestige of the human figure, almost like the corporeal form of a body builder (Fig. 5.2). Douzen is a Japanese illustrator, specializing in digital art, who is an active poster on the amateur art site, DeviantArt. His depiction of the Yithian conforms closely with the human body, which is especially noticeable in the torso and region and upper arms of the figure. Similar to a human visage, douzen’s illustration of the Yithian possesses only two eyes. Though the Yithian’s claws and lower cone-like base deviate from a strict anthropomorphic configuration, the human aspect of the creature is placed at the very center of the composition, giving the audience a clear point of similarity with themselves. This is very much in opposition to what Lovecraft was attempting to do with his “outside” creatures, especially in *The Shadow Out of Time*, as he was attempting to play up their differences with humanity, not their similarity. Had the story’s protagonist, Peaslee, found himself in this body the effect would not have been as dramatic. The technique douzen uses is an attempt at gaining empathy from the viewer rather than express a distinction.
Pentocular Vision: The Elder Thing/Elder One

Featured in the novella, *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936) and in “The Dreams in the Witch-house” (1933), the Elder Things, or Elder Ones, are suggested to have five eyes. In a deliberately truncated message included in the story describing the creature, Lovecraft states of their ocular system, “At the end of each tube is spherical expansion where yellowish membrane rolls back on handling to reveal glassy, red-irised globe, evidently an eye” (Lovecraft 1936, 499). These speculative creatures’ bodies conform to the shape of a star, allowing a tremendous 360 degree visual capacity, as their eyes are
situated at the end of each point. This arrangement allows for a field of view very similar to that of some birds.

Fig. 5.3. H.P. Lovecraft. Elder Thing Sketch from Lovecraft’s Notes. (Slate 2013).

As seen above, The Elder Thing’s ocular system is illuminated by a drawing contained in a series of notes Lovecraft wrote while drafting the story, recently published in the online magazine, Slate (Fig. 5.3) (Onion 2013). Lovecraft even indicated that this ocular system allowed the race of creatures a greater ability to manipulate their reality, finding that:

Those in shallow water had continued the fullest use of the eyes at the ends of their five main head tentacles, and had practiced the arts of sculpture and of writing in quite the usual way - the writing accomplished with a stylus on waterproof waxen surfaces (Lovecraft 1936, 542).
Thus, Lovecraft maintained that cultural advancement, especially within the arts and technology, was linked with an organism’s greater field of vision.

The Elder Things also possess distinctive cilia lining their head which allowed them to see at night. Lovecraft described this ability in the following passage:

Those lower down in the ocean depths, though they used a curious phosphorescent organism to furnish light, pieced out their vision with obscure special senses operating through the prismatic cilia on their heads - senses which rendered all the Old Ones partly independent of light in emergencies (Lovecraft 1936, 542).

Not only could the Elder Things see 360 degrees, granting them a greater field of vision than humans, but they could also see in areas without light, giving them a further advantage.

One visual source of Lovecraft’s “outside” bodies, such as the Elder Thing, is the illustrated work of the nineteenth-century German biologist Ernst Haeckel, specifically his elaborate aquatic life drawings. The noted Lovecraft scholar S.T. Joshi has determined that the author first read the German’s work around 1918-19 (Joshi 2006, 8). Haeckel’s highly technical illustrations demonstrate a marked level of detail and serve as models to the bodies of Lovecraft’s creatures: the Elder Things and the Great Race of Yith. Further, Lovecraft briefly references Haeckel in his short story, "Herbert West—Reanimator" (1922) and philosophical essays such as “Idealism and Materialism – A Reflection” (Lovecraft 1922, 25;Lovecraft 1919, 42). In his book, Art Forms in Nature, Haeckel features numerous illustrations of aquatic life, where the scientist represents every intricate detail of the individual specimen. Each is more geometric than figural and possesses a form that is based on segmentation rather than limited anthropocentric
appendages. The illustration referenced here especially demonstrates Lovecraft’s aesthetic qualities of repetition and symmetry in a manner that is almost mechanical (Fig. 5.4). The majority of the specimens within this image are marked by a radial symmetrical structure and possess the same five points as the Elder things described in Lovecraft’s *At the Mountains of Madness*. Clearly Haeckel’s drawings were very influential on Lovecraft’s creative process in generating ideas for biomorphic figures that would ultimately populate the horror author’s work.

Fig. 5.4. Ernst Haeckel. “Echinidea” page from *Art Forms in Nature*. 1904.
Hexocular Cthulhu

In Lovecraft’s story, “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928), he describes the creature named in the title, Cthulhu, as possessing “luminous” and “shining eyes” (Lovecraft 1922, 179,180). While no reference was originally made to the number of eyes that the creature had, in two separate letters Lovecraft included a personally drawn sketch of Cthulhu, one of which was directed towards his friend R.H. Barlow. This drawing revealed a side view of the creature possessing three eyes located on the left hemisphere of its head (Fig. 5.5). Jason Thompson, a noted contemporary comic book artist and illustrator of Lovecraft’s work, has remarked that this drawing indicates Cthulhu actually has six eyes, assuming that the drawing is not indicating an “asymmetrical” ocular configuration. Thompson’s statement is especially true when reading Lovecraft’s notation of the word “Profile” placed to the right of the sketch, informing the viewer that they are seeing a lateral view of Cthulhu (Thompson 2012).

What is relevant to this analysis is the manner in which Lovecraft utilizes an unconventional ocular configuration when representing the creature visually, as many illustrators conform to the human-like aspect of the rest of its body and depict Cthulhu with two eyes. Instead, Lovecraft made his creature more alien and less anthropomorphic, demonstrating the artist’s intention to increase the number of eyes to

45 There is one additional creature in the author’s bestiary which possesses six eyes, the character Dam Bor, whom Lovecraft references in his and R.H. Barlow’s collaborative story fragment, “Collapsing Cosmoses” (Loucks 2014). Unpublished in Lovecraft’s life, the story begins with the two lines “Dam Bor glued each of his six eyes to the lenses of the cosmoscope. His nasal tentacles were orange with fear, and his antennae buzzed hoarsely as he dictated his report to the operator behind him” (Lovecraft 1938). The story is rather underdeveloped and does not assign any additional functions to this creature’s ocular system.
achieve a greater alienation between a monster and the audience by deviating from anthropomorphism.

Fig. 5.5. Lovecraft’s Cthulhu Sketches (Daring 2012).

Cthulhu is the most widely known Lovecraft creature in popular visual culture, and according to Google Trends, has a wider web presence than even its author (Google Trends 2014). Significant to this analysis, a cursory survey of Cthulhu drawings demonstrates the overwhelming convention of depicting the creature with two eyes within contemporary visual culture. This would indicate that artists are using the original text and possibly the passage that describes the creature as a “human caricature” in creating their adaptations, as opposed to Lovecraft’s drawings. The Belarussian artist,

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46 There are 32 searches for H.P. Lovecraft on the internet for every 41 searches for Cthulhu daily according to Google Trends from January 2004 through April 15, 2014.
47 From 2004 to the present, March 27, 2014, Cthulhu scored 57 searches per day compared to H.P. Lovecraft at 38 according to Google Trends.
Blazan, for instance, accentuates the anthropomorphic aspects of Cthulhu, giving him an almost superhero muscular appearance, coupled with a biocular visage (Fig. 5.6).

At the other end of the anthropomorphic spectrum, with respect to Cthulhu in contemporary visual culture is the illustration by Sarah Hollings featured in Fig. 5.7. Here the artist places additional eyes upon the creature, well beyond what Lovecraft portrayed in his drawing of Cthulhu. This effect directs the audience’s focus away from a single pair of eyes and instead moves the viewer’s line of sight around the composition of repeating forms throughout the creature’s visage. This decentralization makes it difficult for the audience to determine what constitutes the essence of the creature’s ocular system, especially with the presence of fourteen different eyes. For an observer, it is difficult to see exactly where this Cthulhu is actually looking.
Both Lovecraft’s and Hollings’ visual departure from an anthropomorphic visual representation speaks to the creation of the sublime through the presence of repeated forms and presence of eyes. Concerning monsters, Jeffrey Cohen states that “fear” and “anxiety” are a major effect of the monstrous, which conforms to Lovecraft’s intentions of creating a feeling of the sublime (Cohen 1996, 4). As referenced in conjunction with the sublime throughout this dissertation, Edmund Burke, in his treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* is useful in understanding concepts related to repetition.
Within this present analysis, repetition strongly applies to polyocularity, especially the distinction between the singular and the multiple. On this issue, Burke states:

…when we attend to the infinite divisibility of matter, when we pursue animal life into these excessively small, and yet organized beings, that escape the nicest inquisition of the sense, when we push our discoveries yet downward, and consider those creatures so many degrees yet smaller, and the still diminishing scale of existence, in tracing which the imagination is lost as well as the sense, we become amazed and confounded at the wonders of minuteness; nor can we distinguish in its effect this extreme of littleness from the vast itself. For division must be infinite as well as addition; because the idea of a perfect unity can no more be arrived at than that of a complete whole to which nothing may be added (Burke 1767, 128, 129).

Though in this passage Burke is discussing the effect of the sublime as it applies to smallness, he is also directing his discussion towards the conflict which occurs in the anthropocentric mind between the one and the many. As it applies to polyocularity within the drawings of Lovecraft and Hollings, the sheer number of eyes becomes difficult to read due to their multiplied decentering aspect. In turn, anxiety is produced within the audience, as rendering a simplified notion of how the individual eyes relate to the whole, proves difficult.

Here, the use of fantasy allows a departure from the anthropomorphic biocular system, not necessarily registering the infinite but stretching towards it, increasing the paradox of the individual objects’ relationship to each other. With each additional eye an artist introduces to his monstrosities, he complicates the system of nodules and their relationship with each other. In this process, a dynamic is created which is difficult for an audience to resolve, especially when they have their own preconceived anthropocentric notions.
The Many-Eyed Shoggoth from *At the Mountains of Madness*

The remaining polyocular creatures in Lovecraft’s bestiary of fictional creatures possess an abundance of eyes from which to view the world: the Shoggoths referenced in *At the Mountains of Madness*, and the parasitic fungus present in “The Shunned House” (1937). Lovecraft describes the latter creature, the fungus, as “all eyes-wolfish and mocking-and the rugose insect-like head dissolved at the top to a thin stream of mist which curled putridly about and finally vanished up the chimney.” (Lovecraft 1937, 111). Of these two, the Shoggoth, will be analyzed in depth, considering the unconventional pliability of its body, as well as the complex nature of its polyocularity when compared to the previous creatures discussed in this chapter. Shoggoths, created by the Elder Ones to function as slaves, possess the extraordinary ability to refashion their bodies to any shape or organ, including their eyes. Lovecraft describes these creatures as “multicellular protoplasmic masses capable of molding their tissues into all sorts of temporary organs under hypnotic influence and thereby forming ideal slaves to perform the heavy work of the community” (Lovecraft 1936, 481). Thus, they are contextualized within the story as biological tools nominally controlled by their creators but able to manipulate matter and conduct certain tasks.

The shape-shifting ability of the Shoggoths is particularly tied to sight, as they are able to fashion their ocular organs at will. The narrator, Dyer, relays this unique ability to the audience, stating, “They had, however, a constantly shifting shape and volume - throwing out temporary developments or forming apparent organs of sight,
hearing, and speech in imitation of their masters, either spontaneously or according to suggestion" (Lovecraft 1936, 546). Towards the end of the novel this unconventional ability is reiterated when the protagonists Dyer and Danforth encounter a member of the race directly:

It was a terrible, indescribable thing vaster than any subway train - a shapeless congeries of protoplasmic bubbles, faintly self-luminous, and with myriads of temporary eyes forming and un-forming as pustules of greenish light all over the tunnel-filling front that bore down upon us, crushing the frantic penguins and slithering over the glistening floor that it and its kind had swept so evilly free of all litter (581).

From these passages, the audience is informed that Shoggoths may have as many or as few eyes as needed, giving them a high degree of dynamic control over their vision and how they see the external world. Every previous ocular system mentioned in this analysis, whether it be biocular, triocular, hexocular, may be replicated by a Shoggoth, potentially allowing for countless configurations of sight.

One of the earliest depictions of the Shoggoth, illustrated by Howard V Brown, is featured in the February 1936 publication of the pulp magazine, *Astounding Stories* (Fig. 5.8). The body of this creature is dispassionately focused towards the foreground of the composition, depicted as shifting tendrils anchored by a spherical core dotted with orange eyes. When compared to the biological specimen, the Shoggoth would seem to possess some of the same qualities as invertebrates, as they possess the ability to extend eyesight onto other portions of their body, such as “chitons with eyes spread over their dorsal shell, tube worms with eyes on their feeding tentacles and clams with eyes on the mantle edge” (Land and Nilsson, 2002 13-15). Such a combination allows these biological structures to have dual functions. Appendages or body parts are able to manipulate or
protect the creature, but they also provide additional nodules for sight, potentially presenting a more sophisticated system of vision with a 360-degree field of view, not only horizontally, but also vertically.

Fig. 5.8. Howard Brown. *Astounding Stories* Cover. 1936.
With the Shoggoths’ tremendous ability to see in every direction, they appeared to hold a special relationship with space in comparison to other creatures with more capabilities. As Lovecraft often professed an inclination towards disrupting time and space, his incorporation of polyocular creatures indicates an awareness of their predilection towards the negation of space. David Williams found that fictional and mythological creatures, such as the Shoggoth, with the ability to see in all directions “negates the concept of space – seeing in all directions at once is to eliminate the concept of direction” (Williams 1996, 33). Further, Lovecraft places the Shoggoths rather high within his hierarchy of bestiary, stating that initially the Elder Things created these creatures in order to perform various tasks. In the following passage, Lovecraft describes the motivation for this generation:

They [the elder things] had done the same thing on other planets, having manufactured not only necessary foods, but certain multicellular protoplasmic masses capable of molding their tissues into all sorts of temporary organs [the Shoggoths] under hypnotic influence and thereby forming ideal slaves to perform the heavy work of the community (Lovecraft 1936, 541).

Once the Shoggoths were established, their “expansions could be made to lift prodigious weights” in order to build the foundation of the elder things’ new earth base and also to provide material transportation under the sea (541). In essence, they were originally “controlled through the hypnotic suggestions of the” elder things and served as technologically created tools, initiating the settlement of the planet (546).

The Shoggoth is not the first fictional creature in Western culture to synthesize polyocular sight and the functionality of a tool or device. From ancient Greek mythology is the giant Argus Panoptes, who, according to David Williams, “is the most
renowned example of the monstrosity of multiple eyes” (Williams 1996, 151). In various accounts, this creature possessed up to ten thousand eyes, sometimes “scattered all over his body” (Pettazzoni 1978, 151). Argus’ main function was to guard over the cow, Io, whom he watched for the goddess Hera. In this capacity he was “ever watchful,” looking for threats; his very nature connected with his ability to see all through his numerous sensory organs (Williams 1996, 151). One of the first visual depictions of the Argus Panoptes can be found on a vase painted by an anonymous Agrigento painter and dated sometime around 460 BC (Fig. 5.9) (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2014). Argus’s basic morphology is essentially human within this composition. However, in addition to the two eyes located on his face, eyes cover the entire surface of his body. The repetition of eyes, layering the surface of his skin as well as his clothing, creates a hybrid of artificially and biologically bound sight.
Significantly, this ever present vision on the part of Panoptes was aided by the creature’s decidedly non-human ability to forego sleep. Hesiod relates in his poem, Aigimios that the goddess Hera “set a watcher upon [Io], great and strong Argus, who with four eyes looks every way. And the goddess stirred in him un-wearying strength: sleep never fell upon his eyes; but he kept sure watch always” (Hesiod 273). Argus’ ability to remain awake was tested when Zeus sent Hermes to free Io, attempting to play music through a pipe to sooth the giant to sleep. In most versions of the tale, Hermes was initially unsuccessful and resorted to nonsensical ramblings, resulting in Argus’ slumber. Once in this vulnerable state, Hermes slew the giant, earning him the name “dog-killer”
The central concept gained from this fictional account is that ever-present sight is vulnerable to the commonplace, especially that which is mundane to its perspective.

Freed from the necessity of sleep, Argus possesses an all-seeing ability within his field of vision and time. The creature’s field of vision, spanning 360 degrees, offers a unique ocular structure that is non-cyclical and uni-directional. According to the historian Raffaele Pettazzoni, this “universal power of sight” is significant, granting Argus the capacity to guard the cow Io (Pettazzoni 1978, 151). Clearly, Argus’ greater facility increases his ability to defend and to maintain boundaries of objects against those who wish to displace them.

Within the Old Testament in the Book of Ezekiel, there is a polyocular creature known as Ophanim (wheels), which is also similar to the Shoggoth (Rees 2013, 130). Ophanim is not only a precursor for the Shoggoth in terms of the creature’s syncretic qualities but also a veritable cyborg. Significantly, this creature is a hybrid of biological and technological materials, mixing the structure of a tool, in the form of a wheel, with sensory organs, in the form of eyes. From the pertinent passage in Ezekiel:

…his was the appearance and structure of the wheels: They sparkled like topaz, and all four looked alike. Each appeared to be made like a wheel intersecting a wheel. As they moved, they would go in any one of the four directions the creatures faced; the wheels did not change direction as the creatures went. Their rims were high and awesome, and all four rims were full of eyes all around” (Ezekiel 1:15-21).

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48 M.L. West notes that Hermes’ name “is appropriate to Hermes, because he is the god of thieves. He helps the thief to overcome his main danger, the guard dog” (369). Significantly, Argos is often associated with watching over the flock or the role of “watcher” (Pettazzoni 1978, 152).
Each wheel, covered with eyes, indicates the capacity of the creature to have total omnivision. One can understand Ophanim as a creature who is ever-seeing, always visually locating itself within space by virtue of its eyes. Like Argus Panoptes, Ophanim is assigned the function of guardian which is explicitly related with its ever present sight. To watch is to protect the integrity of another object, to preserve a given relationship, in this instance the very foundation of god in the form of a throne.

When looking at the iconography of this creature, one of the more defined visual adaptations of Ophanim is depicted in Adolphe Napoléon Didron’s book, *Christian Iconography* (1851). Didron discovered this religious imagery at a church in Athens, Greece and includes a detailed illustration of the Ophanim, which he dates to the thirteenth century (Fig. 5.10). The illustration depicts two interlocking wheels, each with a set of four wings covered with eyes and thin strings which suggest movement in space.\(^{49}\)

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\(^{49}\) David Williams, in *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Mediaeval Thought and Literature*, contends that Ophanim is one of the “less anthropomorphic” creatures described in the Bible and refers to this illustration (Williams 1996, 123).
Fig. 5.10. Ophanim. Adolphe Napoleon Didron, (Christian Iconography, 2:91, Fig. 152).

The depiction of the wheels are very similar to Lovecraft’s portrayal of the Shoggoth in *At the Mountains of Madness:* an “onrushing subway train”, a veritable machine in itself (581).

When considering ocularcentric, western visual culture, one must consider such a creature’s position. An organism with the presence of a multiplicity of eyes potentially represents a direct challenge to humanity’s dominance within this narrow visual sphere of existence, an ideal cosmic perspective. As humanity’s notion of reality is so connected with sight, a creature possessing organs such as the Yithian, Elder Thing, Cthulhu or Shoggoth, could be perceived as an existential threat. In a culture increasingly moving

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50 David Michael Kleinberg-Levin, in his introduction to *Modernity And The Hegemony Of Vision,* mentions the term (Kleinberg 1993, 2).
toward “more is better,” a proliferation of eyesight places such a speculative creature at the very top of the hierarchy of observers.

Indeed, the United States military sees polyocularity as an important tool for combat, a point which was emphasized with the production of the Quadeye, by Elbit Systems of America (Fig. 5.11) and the Ground Panoramic Night Vision Goggle by Tactical Night Vision Company. Both ocular technologies incorporate four cameras mounted on a helmet that transmit images to the user. According to information gathered from Elbit’s website, the Quadeye offers a “Direct View [of] 100° Horizontal” and “40° Vertical” (Elbit Systems of America, 2014). Tactically, humans recognize their sensory limitations and are using technology to increase their field of vision, and the resulting greater degree of spatial visual acuity related to power that this entails.

Fig. 5.11. Elbit, Quadeye viewing system. digital image

Returning to the earlier discussion of Lovecraft’s insight on vision, one can see that enhanced vision, potentially through the placement of additional sensory organs, can
allow the observer to have a greater understanding of reality. Indeed, if placed at a
distance from each other, additional nodules result in a greater three-dimensional picture
of the object or group of objects in question. Deriving from the placement of two
perspectives together, often not far apart from each other, biocular sight offers
stereoscopic vision and imbues objects with depth and distance. By way of extension,
polyocular sight allows a more complete visual map of the qualities of an object,
potentially interjecting a vertical set of qualities to mere biocular vision. Indeed, for
Jacques Riviere, in his discussion of Cubism, “The knowledge I have of an object is, as I
said before, a complex sum of perceptions” (Riviere 1912, 183). The sum of this visual
knowledge within an anthropomorphic configuration becomes even greater in Lovecraft’s
fictional creatures with every additional perception, giving a more complete and three-
dimensional understanding of the object in question.

Conclusion: Polyocular as a Signifier of the “Outside” in Contemporary Visual
Culture

This analysis has demonstrated the manner in which polyocular visual sensory
configurations have come to define the “outside” as a major departure from an existing
conventional anthropomorphic one. The essence of this deviance is an asymmetrical
relationship dependent on multiplying or repeating a specific human sense. The resulting
signifiers place a fictional creature outside of the homo-sapiens category, while offering
up a novel, more potent means of sight greater than that of conventional biocular,
anthropomorphic vision.
Though Lovecraft’s use of polyocularity in realizing his fictional creatures was not a new phenomenon within the larger history of visual culture, it was tied to specific cultural factors taking place at the time. As shown in this analysis, polyocularity is an outgrowth of the emphasis on the science in Lovecraft’s modernist era and reflects his disdain for the use of anthropomorphic creatures to represent, for him, what existed on the “outside” of the universe. In this light, polyocularity was employed by Lovecraft to mark not only a creature as not human but also as an observer with extraordinary powers of vision. The contemporary inclusion of polyocularity within speculative based narratives, such as science fiction, horror and fantasy, has continued to rearticulate iconographies tied to the past. Additionally, it serves as a physical and subjective indicator of cultural and biological difference between the antagonist and the human protagonist. However, the increased popularity of Lovecraft and related iconography within visual culture, such as the use of the tentacle, has caused the greater public to associate polyocularity with the author and his fictional bestiary. Thus, polyocularity becomes another style or set of visual codes within a greater iconography tied to the monstrous, reflecting an origin of influence within the horror genre while still aspiring to indicate a relationship with the outside and unknown.

A good example of polyocularity present in contemporary visual culture is found in the Paul Verhoeven directed film *Starship Troopers* (1997), an adaptation of science fiction writer Robert Heinlein’s original 1959 novel of the same name. Within this film, the brain bug, leader of the insect-like aliens, is visually marked with what the special effects crew describes as “multiple eyes. Again kind of a spider type attribute there”
(Starship Troopers 1997). The brain bug possesses eight eyes set within a circular half-moon configuration (Fig. 5.12). This configuration is not entirely different from Lovecraft’s Cthulhu drawing, since it involves a wider field of vision, though not as much as granted to a Shoggoth. Much of the design for this creature was informed by the director, Paul Verhoeven’s intent to make the bug visually similar to Lovecraft’s own speculative deity, Cthulhu. Craig Hayes, a member of Phill Tippet’s effects team working on the film elaborated that, “Early on Paul was saying well it’s like a Lovecraft thing. Like this horrible Cthulhu type that the great the god of the insect people” (ST extras 1998). Within Starship Troopers, the bug brain represents a Lovecraftian expression of the “outside,” while simultaneously connecting polyocularity within a greater mode of intelligence.

Fig. 5.12. Screen Capture of the Brain Bug from Starship Troopers. (Stampede Entertainment 1999).
As anthropomorphic culture strives to achieve more potent regimes of sight, as demonstrated by the chapter’s earlier discussion of the Elbit Quadeye viewing system, it is evident that polyocularity is well situated to continue as a significant concept. With such developments, polyocularity even has the potential to be considered as something that eventually is brought into the “inside” of human vision, pushing the boundaries of the known and unknown even further. Accordingly, if such developments were to take place, Lovecraft would undoubtedly turn to new speculative sensory modes in order to maintain the asymmetry between conventional anthropomorphic culture and the “outside”.
CHAPTER 5: “MASONRY OF NO HUMAN PATTERN”: H.P. LOVECRAFT’S “OUTSIDE” ARCHITECTURE

Monstrous living things moved deliberately through vistas of fantastic handiwork that no sane dream ever held, and landscapes bore incredible vegetation and cliffs and mountains and masonry of no human pattern. There were cities under the sea, and denizens thereof; and towers in great deserts where globes and cylinders and nameless winged entities shot off into space, or hurtled down out of space. All this Carter grasped, though the images bore no fixed relation to one another or to him. “Through the Gates of the Silver Key” (1934). H.P. Lovecraft & E. Hoffman Price 1934, 273-274

Taken from one of Lovecraft’s literary collaborations with E. Hoffman Price, this quote demonstrates the significance the author placed on the relationship between architecture and humanity. Stating “I am above all else scenic and architectural in my tastes,” Lovecraft manipulated the relationship between architecture and the protagonist within his narratives to create a dynamic between everyday architecture and that of the “outside” (Lovecraft 1928, 229). Further, the author believed that there is a fundamental component of aesthetics which revolves around patterns of difference and similarity. He remarked: “To me it seems glaringly clear that there is no intrinsic value or meaning in anything which stands by itself. Value is wholly relative, and the very idea of such a thing as meaning postulates a symmetrical relation to something else” (Lovecraft 1928, 234). Focusing on the manner in which Lovecraft incorporated descriptions of architecture into his literature, this chapter will examine the ways in which the author utilized patterns predicated on difference from the human body in order to attain “the creation of a given sensation,” the sublime (Lovecraft 1939, 21).
Much of the architectural elements Lovecraft represented in his literature are based on existing buildings, as well as those portrayed in various artworks concerning the fantastic. Within his fiction, the author referenced numerous structures located in Providence and New England that provide concrete examples from which his narratives depart to more “outside” locations. In turn, these “outside” locations were appropriated from the visual work of such artists as John Martin, a nineteenth-century English Romantic painter; Nicholas Roerich, an early twentieth-century Russian painter; and the Italian Futurists.

Based on selected works from these artists, this analysis examines Lovecraft’s stories “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928) and *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936), as well as his personal correspondences in order to establish an architecture of the “outside”. Such an architecture is characterized by two principle means of disruption in his narratives; cyclopean scale and disordered composition. These qualities continue to be used in contemporary art to displace human perception and movement, and thus to disrupt time and space for both the protagonist and audience.

Supplementing Lovecraft’s architectural aesthetic throughout the chapter is the work of the architectural theorist Nikos A. Salingaros. Much as Lovecraft advocated the use of traditional forms in architecture, Salingaros advances a similar point of view in the contemporary era. The architectural theorist’s perspective is applicable to this analysis, as he shares similar views with Lovecraft on Classical and Modernist architecture. Specifically he finds the latter disruptive and inherently difficult for humans to negotiate.
and interact with. Significantly, these are the very effects which Lovecraft fosters in the reader through his use of architecture to represent the “outside”.

The Human Body and Architecture

For Lovecraft, the foundation of any comparison for a human viewer as they relate to the external world, such as with architecture, is primarily derived from the human body and the protagonist’s corporeal form. This is stated succinctly by the author in a letter to Woodburn Harris, “We may say that every man’s ego—the thing he fights to exalt & preserve, is a sphere with his body at the centre, & with its density rapidly diminishing as it extends outward” (Lovecraft 1929, 84). Thus one can see that the integrity of the body becomes a significant point of comparison for the observer, especially as they approach the external world. Lovecraft further remarked on the significance of such relationships in a correspondence to August Derleth:

I recognize the impossibility of any correlation of the individual and the universal without the immediate visible world as a background—or starting-place for a system of outward-extending points of reference. I cannot think of any individual as existing except as part of a pattern—and the pattern’s most visible and tangible areas are of course the individual’s immediate environment; the soil and culture—stream from which he springs, and the milieu of ideas, impressions, traditions, landscapes, and architecture through which he must necessarily peer in order to reach the “outside” (Lovecraft 1930 220-221).

For Lovecraft, the audience approaches an external phenomenon, such as architecture, with their own associations and visual understanding, situated within their immediate cultural stream. Indeed, the foundation of a person’s knowledge regarding architecture is based on that which they have seen and experienced previously.
The human body in Lovecraft’s fiction ultimately serves not only as a form of identification for the audience but also as a point of comparison to the external objects located within the geography of the novel. In *The Shadow Out of Time*, the narrator, Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee, responds to the alien architecture of the Great Race, “One thing only was unfamiliar, and that was my own size in relation to the monstrous masonry. I felt oppressed by a sense of unwonted smallness, as if the sight of these towering walls from a mere human body was something wholly new and abnormal” (Lovecraft 1936, 768-769). Here Lovecraft explicitly references a relationship between human and alien architecture, remarking on the asymmetry inherent within such a dynamic. Stanley Abercrombie contends that one potential “source of power of size to delight and impress us is the relationship of buildings to our own bodies. The manipulation of this relationship is one of the architects’ chief tools for controlling our response to their work” (Abercrombie 1984, 25). Thus the positioning of large buildings relative to the human body cultivates responses on the part of the person negotiating the space.

It is significant to note that Lovecraft’s reference to the human body, as a point of comparison for architecture, has been voiced in contemporary architectural theory. As Salingaros contends, “a building’s components and dimensions must accommodate people, their anatomy, movement, and tactile sense,” and architecture that resists such identification “might even appear so alien as to be oppressive (Salingaros 2006, 54,55). Further, Salingaros finds that human observers “connect to design components that correspond to the entire human structural scale: The whole body; an arm’s length; a foot;
a hand; a finger’s width, etc” (54). Thus certain forms are more conducive to human identification, especially those structures which take into account their relationship with the human figure. This distinction in geographies is significant to the human viewer as humanity often strives to territorialize empty and natural space, and replace it with artificial geometries that facilitate its control.

A lack of association in architecture represents an insecure space for humanity not sufficiently conducive to human interaction. Humanity’s potential power becomes limited if not its purpose within such a construction. One such example can be found in Lovecraft’s short story, “The Nameless City” (1921), in which the protagonist notices passages within the temple he is exploring. These passages appear to be inhospitable to normative human movement and are seemingly more conducive to interactions with a non-human body. This element of the narrative not only reinforces Lovecraft’s view that humans come to identify forms in reference to their own body but it also represents a constructed space which resists direct human mastery. If one agrees with Salingeros’ contention that “visual patterns are a “visible tip” of mathematics, which otherwise requires learning a special language to understand and appreciate,” then the architectural structures in Lovecraft’s stories would indicate a divergent conception of mathematics and the body that is related to the “outside” (Salingeros 2006, 132).

Colonial Guideposts: Architecture in Providence

To Lovecraft, the colonial architecture present in his native Providence, R.I., as well as in New England, formed his ideal spatial point of departure in encountering the
“outside”. Lovecraft lived all but two years of his life in the city and in a letter to Lillian D. Clark made the remarkable claim that “Providence is part of me—I am Providence” (Lovecraft 1926, 186). As Lovecraft viewed these structures on a daily basis, they came to form a strong foundation of his visual lexicon. These existing architectural works were utilized throughout the author’s fictional work and came to occupy the same space as his invented objects within a given narrative. For Lovecraft, Providence and New England served as a constant source for his narratives, since they were viewed and experienced by him on a daily basis and were described and elaborated upon in his communication with friends and colleagues.

In his numerous correspondences, Lovecraft frequently praised his home-city, alluding to the geographic journey many of his characters would take. In a letter to Clark Ashton Smith, he explicitly explains the nature of this process, stating:

But I want the familiar Old Providence of my childhood as a perpetual base for these necromancies & excursions-& in a good part of these necromancies & excursions I want certain transmuted features of Old Providence to form parts of the alien voids I visit or conjure up. I am as geographic-minded as a cat – places are everything to me (Lovecraft 1930, 214).

This passage demonstrates the author’s practice of setting his stories within Providence, utilizing buildings in tales such as The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, “The Call of Cthulhu” and “The Haunter in the Dark.” By locating his stories in such a familiar environment, he conformed to his own contention that artists should be as true to life as possible in an effort to give the narrative an element of verisimilitude. Lovecraft essentially replicated the relationship of his own body with architecture in New England
within his texts in order to create a point of contrast between human architecture and that of the “outside”.

A key architectural location Lovecraft utilized as a point of origin is the colonial house where he and his aunt resided at 66 College St., which is featured in “The Haunter in the Dark” (1935). Once Lovecraft decided to move to this location after a short period of house-hunting, he wrote on May 3, 1933 to his friend August Derleth:

After May 15 I shall be located-together with my surviving aunt-in the upper half of a delightful Georgian house (130 years old-of the sort I have always admired but never lived in) at 66 College St. on the crest of the same ancient hill which I now inhabit, but about a half a mile farther south” (Lovecraft 1933, 563).

Not only did the author provide great detail in his correspondence which described his new home, but in one letter dated May 23 to Derleth, he included two illustrations which featured its exterior and the front doorway (Fig. 6.1). Of the facade, Lovecraft stated, “The colonial front doorway is a fine specimen-like my bookplate, except that it is of the 1800 instead of the 1750 period. With about an hundred pictures of such doorways in my collection, it certainly gives me a kick to be actually living behind one!” (Lovecraft 1933, 570). This Georgian characterization of his house bears significant merit, considering his longstanding preference and knowledge for such architecture and the fact that it was built in 1825 at the tail end of the Georgian architectural movement in the United States (Joshi 2013, 565).
Lovecraft’s professed enthusiasm for residing in a Georgian home has a rather long history, not only within his writings but also pre-dating to his early childhood. The author indicated an early affection within his poem, “Background” within the lines, “And Georgian steeples topped with gilded vanes-- These were the sights that shaped my childhood dreams” (Lovecraft 1930, 92). Further cementing his preference for such architecture, Lovecraft published a letter in the Providence Journal on March 20, 1929, in which he indicates his predilection for Georgian architecture in reference to a proposed construction project taking place in downtown Providence, proclaiming:

The harmony with the old brick row facing the water will be complete, since these genuine survivors of the Georgian era will set the keynote for the soaring tiers of neo-Georgian gables above them, forming an ideal starting point for the eye and the imagination, and bridging the years between the early maritime Providence and the modern metropolis” (Lovecraft 1929).

Georgian architecture was a significant influence on the author and his advocacy for its continued use in Providence is reflected within his numerous stories, including “The Haunter of the Dark.”
Lovecraft’s pride in living at such a home clearly originated from his intense love of English culture, as American buildings were often based on English models, specifically the ideals pertaining to the use of cubes as a system of proportion, which were championed by the noted architect, Robert Morris (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia 2013; University of the West of England 2009). These architectural related ideals were highly informed from the then recent discoveries related to the ancient Greeks and Romans, placing Georgian architecture within a larger cultural stream of the West, something that the classicist Lovecraft would undoubtedly take note of (Cruickshank 2011). One of the chief qualities of such buildings, an element Lovecraft undoubtedly took into consideration when assigning the label Georgian, was the “regularity of plan”, and symmetrical characteristics though the decentered placement of the door likely points to the presence of a parlor extending from the entrance of the building (Donnelly 2003, 115; University of the West of England 2009).


Shortly afterward I was taken through those antique ways so dear to my fancy-narrow, curving alleys and passages where rows of red Georgian brick blinked with small-paned dormers above pillared doorways that had looked on gilded sedans and paneled coaches - and in the first flush of realization of these long-wished things I thought I had indeed achieved such treasures as would make me in time a poet (Lovecraft 1926, 147).
This passage reveals the strong connection Lovecraft had with Georgian architecture, and the miraculous effects the narrator attributes to the structures.

In “The Haunter of the Dark,” Lovecraft, through the narration of the protagonist, Robert Blake, specifically describes his 66 College St. home, positing the Georgian structure as conventional, domestic and safe in relationship to the site of the mysterious Church of Starry Wisdom, a fulcrum of mysterious activity seemingly connected to the outside:

Young Blake returned to Providence in the winter of 1934-5, taking the upper floor of a venerable dwelling in a grassy court off College Street - on the crest of the great eastward hill near the Brown University campus and behind the marble John Hay Library. It was a cozy and fascinating place, in a little garden oasis of village-like antiquity where huge, friendly cats sunned themselves atop a convenient shed. The square, Georgian house had a monitor roof, classic doorway with fan carving, small-paned windows, and all the other earmarks of early nineteenth-century workmanship. Inside were six-paneled doors, wide floor-boards, a curving colonial staircase, white Adam-period mantels, and a rear set of rooms three steps below the general level (Lovecraft 1936, 785).

These Georgian buildings provided clear models for the settings of the author’s stories and offered a distinct ideal in terms of symmetry and geometrical proportion related to the square (University of the West of England 2009). Their structure represents architecture that is easy to read, and their functional simplicity is conducive to human-centered activities. They serve as a clear contrast to the subsequent works Lovecraft referenced in relationship to the “outside” that will be discussed for the remainder of this chapter.
The Blasphemous Architecture of John Martin

From the “immediate visible” architecture of Providence Lovecraft utilized to represent reality, this analysis now focuses on the artistic models which the author appropriated and described in his fiction in order to represent the “outside.” The first artist of note who influenced Lovecraft’s work, especially in his depiction of architecture, was the nineteenth-century English painter, John Martin. Martin “combin[ed] the science of optics and the emerging awareness of the interaction of human perception, sensation and feeling with nature” to create large-scale works based on landscapes and apocalyptic scenes from the Bible (Morden 2010, 9). Martin’s work was often disregarded by his contemporaries for being overly dramatic and courting the favor of the general public, earning him the ire of the art establishment in England (101). Nevertheless, at the beginning of the next century, Lovecraft found that the artist held a complementary aesthetic, especially in his privileging of the landscape and architecture in comparison with humans within his compositions.

In a letter to Vincent Starrett, Lovecraft outlined key components of John Martin’s style and indicated that such work was much in line with the author’s own particular techniques and obsessions (Lovecraft 1928, 220-1). Of Martin, Lovecraft stated that his:

…characteristic qualities were the use of vast space-suggestions, colossal effects of ancient architecture, & a daemon-dowered mastery of subtle & unearthly lighting effects amidst an all-engulfing gloom – the ravenous gloom of the outer void, whose fluctus decumanus beast so perilously on the frail dykes of our little world of light (220).
The use of “space-suggestions” and “colossal effects of ancient architecture” creates a dynamic between the human figures and architecture portrayed in Martin’s work. The presence of such structures serves to dominate environmental space but also control the movement and freedom of humans represented within the composition. Proportionately, they signify, not a practical human-centric space, but one which is outside of time and space and beyond human power.

In the same communication with Starrett, Lovecraft noted that Martin concentrated on architecture to the detriment of his human figures. According to the author, “His [Martin’s] greatest weakness was the rendering of the human figure, but this was no major defect because with him figures were only slight & subsidiary parts of great landscape & architectural conceptions” (Lovecraft 1928, 219). A similar criticism might be leveled at Lovecraft’s portrayal of characters within his horror stories, as they often serve as mere vessels from which the events of the narrative are relayed to the reader. Characterization and any attempt to relate to the reader the inherent personality of the protagonist, is sublimated in Lovecraft’s work to focus on navigating the geography of the external world.

Sympathetic to Martin’s approach in depicting naturalistic objects, Lovecraft delved further into his technique, stating, “It is more fitting to compare him with Gustave Dore, since his scenes were always conceived in the external spirit of classic naturalism, the element of terror, mystery, or sublimity being infused by a process much subtler than mere distortion” (Lovecraft 1928, 219). Thus, through this passage one can make connections between the wonder and awe Lovecraft attempted to create within his work
and the sublime that Martin was similarly able to achieve in his paintings. Both artists depict a fictional space; however, this fictional space is notable for its realism, not for its departure from reality.

Significantly, Lovecraft encountered copies of Martin’s work as a child. In the same letter to Starrett, the author wrote of his first awareness of the artist:

…bad copies or adaptations of some of his work may now & then be found in 19th century family Bibles—that which my own parents procured when setting up their own household in ’89 having a clumsily ‘elegant’ imitative engraving of Belshazzar’s Feast, which I recognized upon seeing a proper plate of the subject for the first time.” (Lovecraft 1928, 221)

For Lovecraft, *Belshazzar's Feast* (1821) was not only notable for being the first Martin work he was exposed to, the Biblical story it depicts is actually referred to in his short story, “The Doom that Came to Sarnath” (1920) (Fig. 6.2). Drawing from an Encyclopedia Britannica entry, Lovecraft remarks in the letter “In 1821… appeared the very famous *Belshazar’s Feast*, which precipitated acute controversy. This took a $200 prize at the British Institution” (Lovecraft 1928, 220). His knowledge and connection with the painting make it an ideal work of Martin’s to analyze, especially considering its use of architecture and scale to minimize the humans present within the composition.
The painting portrays the decadent feast of Belshazzar, an event contained in the Old Testament, Daniel 5:1-31, which is interrupted through the divine intervention of God, who signals through the writing on the wall that the king’s reign has ended. The human figures in the foreground are proportionally smaller than the surrounding architecture, giving them a diminutive presence, just as Lovecraft alluded to in his commentary on the artist. No one figure, even the specific historical and biblical figures, are given predominance within the composition, as Martin has placed them within the greater hierarchy of all of the humans present. This supernatural event collectively affects those humans in the painting, creating mass panic, as all figures equally are subjected to the catastrophe depicted in the composition.
The humans’ response to the divine message, intense lighting and cloud cover is dramatically reactionary, signified through their panicked and fear-laden mannerisms. Indeed Lovecraft felt that:

In many sorts of literature-weird most of all-the real protagonists of the drama are phenomena, and not people at all; hence if we strike the proper atmosphere and unfold the chosen events in the most vivid possible fashion we do not need to rely very heavily on the delineation of subtleties of human characters (Lovecraft 1932, 119).

Despite the minimal characters referenced in the original tale, the scale of the event is privileged by Martin and depicted as affecting a multitude of people depicted within the composition. Their individual reactions vary; however, all people represented are responding to the phenomena.

The architecture represented within the courtyard is immense in comparison to the figures, and despite its location in the background, is a dominant presence within the composition. Underlying the composition’s structure is that of an impossible object, the kind one might find in the later work of the twentieth-century artist, M.C. Escher, especially with regard to orthogonals and vanishing points.51 The compilation of a multitude of conflicting perspectives represented in the original painting makes it more difficult for the viewer to come to terms with the composition’s layout and properly contextualize the events depicted within a concrete time and space. Thus, the viewer is not presented with ready entry into the painting and is denied the ability to render the visual in terms of meaning, further creating a sublime experience. The difficulty a viewer might have in processing the painting was lessened by the author’s production of

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51 As Barbara Morden stated of the composition, “there is no single vanishing point” present within the composition (Morden 2010, 26).
pamphlets that would often accompany his paintings, which were used to “aid the viewing public in their interpretation of the works” (Campbell 1992, 29). Specifically, the pamphlet connected to Belshazzar’s Feast contained numbers and arrows to help guide the viewer through the composition as a clear spatial hierarchy was not self-evident within the work (29).

Gateways to the Outside: Nicholas Roerich

Another major artist Lovecraft mentioned in his correspondence and in his novella At the Mountains of Madness was Nicholas Roerich, an early twentieth-century Russian painter, who focused on the spiritual dimensions of landscape and architecture. Like many of his peers, Roerich was “concerned that increasing industrialization would rob life of its natural beauty;” thus, the artist favored cultural elements pertaining to the past (Decter 1989, 51). Taking a rather strongly interdisciplinary approach towards the arts, Roerich worked as an amateur archaeologist, stage designer, painter and lawyer (Decter 1989, 19, 26, 75-78). His notion that all human cultures shared common traits with each other motivated him to seek out and study Eastern cultures, leading him to travel through the Himalayan region of India to create the very paintings that so influenced Lovecraft.

Of the author, Lovecraft professed to James Morton in a letter, “There is something in his handling of perspective and atmosphere which to me suggests other dimensions and alien orders of being-or at least, the gateways leading to such” (Lovecraft 1937, 436). Indeed, Lovecraft appreciated the Russian painter to such a degree that he
and Frank Belknap Long visited the Nicholas Roerich Museum in New York City in 1930 and “were fairly knocked out by the exotic impressiveness of the paintings therein displayed” (Lovecraft 1930, 263). In a later letter to Derleth he elaborates on Roerich’s museum:

This is wholly devoted to the strange & mystical paintings of the Russian artist Nicholas Roerich, who draws his inspiration & scenic subjects from the daemonic-haunted uplands of forbidden & half-fabulous Tibet. Some of these things have a bizarre, cosmic, & eerily two-dimensional quality which allies them wholly with the land of dream as opposed to the objective world-so that they make a tremendous appeal to any lover of outré outsideness (Lovecraft 1930, 265-6).

Here, Lovecraft explicitly links Roerich’s paintings with his often used term, the “outside,” and in doing so further defines the kind of architecture that would fit into this category.

Lovecraft strongly felt that Roerich was suggesting something which transcended immanent reality and specifically non-anthropocentric modes of being. Further, he went on to describe a particular quality of a series of paintings the artist produced while living in the Kulu Valley in India during the late 1920s and 1930s (Decter 1989, 182). Of these works Lovecraft conveyed the juxtaposition of landscape and architecture contained within, “Those fantastic carven stones in lonely upland deserts-those ominous, almost sentient, lines of jagged pinnacles-and above all, those curious cubical edifices clinging to precipitous slopes and edging upward to forbidden needle-like peaks!” (Lovecraft 1937, 436). Taking his admiration of Nicholas Roerich a step further, Lovecraft appropriated the general aesthetic of his Kulu period paintings and used them as a model for the setting of his novella, *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936).
Set in Antarctica, the geography of the story is described by Lovecraft as consisting of “Odd formations on slopes of highest mountains. Great low square blocks with exactly vertical sides, and rectangular lines of low, vertical ramparts, like the old Asian castles clinging to steep mountains in Roerich’s paintings” (Lovecraft 1936, 492). Though a few of Roerich’s paintings from this period do contain human figures, Lovecraft concerned himself with paintings such as Tibet. Himalayas. (1933), which depict the asymmetrical relationship between the patterns of architecture as they are situated within the natural landscape (Fig. 6.3). Undoubtedly Roerich sought to portray within his paintings a sense of harmony and enlightenment; however, Lovecraft instead saw such associations, described in his novella, as “forbidding,” “strange” and “sinister,” more menacing than calming (519). Indeed there appears to be embodied within these physical structures an element which resists a unified perspective, as the character Lake relays in a communication to the narrator of the artificial structures, “Impressive from distance. Flew close to some and Carroll thought they were formed of smaller, separate pieces, but that is probably weathering” (492). The observer within the narrative is not entirely sure where this structure is divided and whether it is comprised of small pieces or is simply a larger, more unified arrangement.
Finally, Lovecraft mentions in *At the Mountains of Madness* a specific reference to an organization, Corona Mundi, which Nicholas Roerich and his wife, Helena, established in 1922 in New York City (Alonso 2011). Within this passage, Lovecraft establishes the scale and immense history behind this alien city, stating:

Only the incredible, unhuman massiveness of these vast stone towers and ramparts had saved the frightful things from utter annihilation in the hundreds of thousands - perhaps millions - of years it had brooded there amidst the blasts of a bleak upland. "Corona Mundi - Roof of the World" - All sorts of fantastic phrases sprang to our lips as we looked dizzily down at the unbelievable spectacle (Lovecraft 1936, 524).

Thus Lovecraft not only links his story to Roerich’s work through reference of particular structures, he also connects it thematically. The stone towers he characterizes as

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52 The term Corona Mundi also refers to a painting Roerich produced in 1921.
“unhuman,” and thus contextualizes for the audience that this architectural structure neither originates from humans nor functions for their purposes.

“Courting Bizarre Ugliness”: Futurism as a Representation of the “Outside”

Of the Modernist artists of his time, Lovecraft had little tolerance for their attempts at creating works which disregarded the long strain of classically informed art that he so treasured. Indeed, the author wrote several critical essays on the subject, such as, “Heritage or Modernism: Common Sense in Art Forms” (1935). However, his most direct attack came in a letter to Helen Sully, where he stated “I have no use at all for the theoretical abstract art of futurists, functionalists, & kindred spawn of a sterile & disintegrative modernism” (Lovecraft 1934, 408). Though it would seem that Lovecraft strongly opposed such Modernist art and architecture because of its departure from more classical forms of art, it did not prevent him from utilizing it within his stories in a manner that served to provide the source of displacement within the narrative. Just as Lovecraft found Modernist art abject, he sought to utilize related elements of such art in his fiction in order to achieve the same desired effect within the audience.

For example, in “The Call of Cthulhu”, H.P. Lovecraft compared the ancient city of R'lyeh, the watery prison of the god Cthulhu, visually to the art movement of Futurism, highlighting the severity of angles in which it was composed. Specifically within the following passage he invokes the term, “Without knowing what futurism is like, Johansen achieved something very close to it when he spoke of the city; for instead of describing any definite structure or building, he dwells only on the broad impressions
of vast angles and stone surfaces” and later in the narrative said of such angles that “a second glance showed concavity after the first showed convexity (Lovecraft 1928, 192,193). Eventually, a member of the crew exploring the island prison was consumed by “an angle which was acute, but behaved as if it were obtuse” (194). The visual appearance of the city of R'lyeh contains a multitude of angles which resist a single unified perspective, resulting in an unreliable overall understanding of the structure on the part of the protagonist and, by extension, the audience.

Much of Lovecraft’s criticism of Modernism is based on the movement’s perceived rejection of past artistic models and styles. These traditional forms, according to Lovecraft, hold certain cultural and anthropocentric associations which provide “harmony” and “orientation” for a person interacting with such structures (Lovecraft 1933, 211). These elements of stability were often incorporated into Lovecraft’s stories initially through architecture, such as the Georgian style he so cherished, allowing the narrator to travel from known structures to those which make the audience more anxious and uneasy. The geography of the novel is symmetrical to reality and eventually is overtaken at the very climax of the story by a Futurist structure from which Cthulhu emerges.

The description of this structure in “The Call of Cthulhu” is similar to the architecture of the Futurist, Virgilio Marchi, demonstrated in his sketch Search for Volumes in an Isolated Building (1919) (Fig. 6.4). Marchi was one of the more prominent architects within the movement, and was noted by the art historian Sylvia Martin for his “untrammeled architectural fantasy” (Martin 2005, 90). Here, the
architecture can be seen as resisting boundaries and a unified human perspective, creating a disruption of vision but also complicating the human body’s relationship with the structure. With the addition of each heterogeneous angle within the composition, Marchi creates a complexity to the arrangement of space that makes it difficult to see how a person might engage with the building, obscuring its function. Such a modern form, seen as alien and decadent by Lovecraft to everyday life, is well-suited for the “outside” fictional deity of Cthulhu as it has no human-centric associational elements. The various angles that comprise Marchi’s structure decentralize the overall unity of the building, preventing the viewers from determining their relationship to it.

Fig. 6.4. Virgilio Marchi. “Search for Volumes in an Isolated Building”. 1919
Additionally, the quasi-futuristic angular lines which comprise R’lyeh are, as Lovecraft contends, not within the boundaries of normally associative geometry. The right angles of line, a product of human design, serve to demarcate and to control space, whereas these stark angular lines confuse space and displace the viewer. Indeed, Lovecraft often proceeds from the human associative geometries of “straight lines and right angles”, as he often attributed to contemporary urban spaces, to the curves related to non-human architecture which evoke “a veritable gateway of memory and mystery inscrutable and ineluctable” (Lovecraft 1924, 288). Lines within a given composition become an organizing principle and more predictable lines offer a cognitive entry for the human eye to easily read the purpose and function of a building.

The significance of Futurism within Lovecraft’s work accumulates additional properties when connected to F.T. Marinetti’s influential essay “Futurism Manifesto of Futurist Sacred Art” (1931). Marinetti, the founder of the Futurism, firmly believed that the movement had a unique function in its ability to render art which was both unique in its configuration and its ability to express something which had never been seen before. This conforms to Lovecraft’s view that objects and environments which had been examined, explained and utilized have no ability to frighten the reader. To this end, Marinetti contended that “Only Futurist artists – anxious for originality at all costs and hating, on principle, that which has already been seen – are able to endow the painting, fresco or plastic complex with the power of magical surprise necessary for expressing the miraculous” (Marinetti 1931). This “magical surprise” is akin to the violation of time and space that Lovecraft so deeply cherished in weird fiction. Indeed, Marinetti used the
phrase “dynamism of time-space interpenetration” in the introduction of his essay, lending further credence to the movement’s potential to produce Lovecraft’s desired effects upon a potential audience.

**Human and Cyclopean Scale**

The human body, to many architects, is the foundation for any structure which is built for human interaction. Indeed, Nikos Salingaros, citing Vitruvius, has concluded that humans prefer architecture which conforms to a structural hierarchy informed by a human scale. This scale tends to manifest itself in a three to one ratio, with the initial point of comparison equal to the average doorway capable of allowing passage to a human figure (Salingaros 2006, 54). In essence, this conforms with Lovecraft’s edict that humans measure experiences and sights based on their own bodies and that buildings which arise from such an origin are anthropocentric in form but also lend themselves to being viewed through the human perspective. The three works examined in this chapter are outside of anthropocentric architectural convention through their use of colossal scale (a radical departure from human scale), and through their emphasis on angularity.

Lovecraft often utilized the word “Cyclopean” in his stories, such as “He” to describe architecture related to the outside. Such a term denoted less a particular style and more a production of architecture based on an immense scale. Dan Clore, in *Weird Words: A Lovecraftian Lexicon*, defines Cyclopean as:

> Of, pertaining to, or resembling a Cyclops (or one-eyed giant) in any manner, as, for example, having a single eye. In particular, from the 19th century on, constructed in the manner of certain prehistoric ruins which the Classical Greeks
believed had been built by the Cyclopes. The Cyclopean style uses stones of immense size, which are shaped to fit together without mortar (Clore 2009, 170).

Lovecraft’s use of the term references less the particular style of these megalithic buildings, and more the mythological imaginary beings that built them. Significantly, Salingaros finds that “giant scale” structures result in a functional process whereby:

Hundreds or even thousands of lives are here subordinated to a geometrical abstraction. Such a building exists only because of its geometry—its function is to house an abstract class of people, and in doing so it disregards the needs of the individual. The shape is most often a formal geometrical statement having nothing to do with the persons inside it (Salingaros 2006, 191).

The body of the human has little relationship to a structure of such immense size and is subjected to an asymmetrical scale that creates anxiety for the audience. Significantly, Edmund Burke reinforces this notion of dimensional scale and the feeling of fear and awe it evokes: “Greatness of dimension is a powerful cause of the sublime” (Burke 1767, 127). The three aforementioned pictorial examples are prodigious in their scale in relation to the human body.

Colossal scale, as demonstrated within John Martin’s Belshazzar’s Feast, leads the viewer to feel insignificant in comparison with the architecture (Ching 1996, 316). Charles Siegel contends that certain “buildings often use higher ratios because they want to feel imposing rather than comfortable” and when examining Martin’s work, one can see how such a change in scale can affect the viewer’s perception of the human figures contained in the composition (Siegel 2012, 4). Significantly, one finds a ratio of nearly 10 to 1 when measuring the various human figures’ relationship in the composition with the larger courtyard columns in the composition and an even greater 15 to 1 ratio when applied to the columns and segmented doorways. This is very distinct from the 3 to 1
scale that Salingaros refers to and places this architecture out of space and time, minimizing human interactions and contact with the structure because of its colossal size. The figures present within the composition offer an immediate point of comparison to the surrounding architecture. An example of this colossal scope occurs in Lovecraft’s story “From Beyond,” when the narrator, subjected to the strange effects of Dr. Tillinghast’s machine, finds himself “in some vast incredible temple of long-dead gods; some vague edifice of innumerable black stone columns reaching up from a floor of damp slabs to a cloudy height beyond the range of my vision” (Lovecraft 1934, 26). Thus, one can see that this structure, though clearly artificial, consists of an immense size that transcends the mere colossal to access the infinite.

Roerich, on the other hand, utilizes scale in his painting, Tibet, as a means of diminishing the architectural structures produced by humans relative to the surrounding natural landscape. Within the composition one can see a cluster of rather large mountains vertically dominating the human-made structures. Indeed the ratio of the largest building to the largest full mountain is 8 to 1. Since this is an open composition, Roerich’s placement of even larger mountains on the left of the painting demonstrates a disproportionate discrepancy in size between nature and human-made architecture. However, these structures, while all containing cubic traits, just as Lovecraft noticed, are dispersed and diverse in their size and position relative to each other, forming an artificial cluster nested within the larger cluster of the mountain. The particular slope which forms the foundation of these buildings comes to be expressed through the positioning of the cubes, rendering its overall shape and line in architectural structure, supplementing nature
rather than dominating it. These artificial constructions are built in response to the
topography of the landscape and are thus rendered as simplified extensions of it.

*Tibet* also reflects a dynamism between the complexity of nature, represented by
the mountains, and the geometric simplicity of the numerous abstract human-made
structures. Salingaros contends that “geometrical fundamentalism,” the predilection to
create abstract structures displaying simplistic geometric forms, results in the
construction of architecture that diminishes complexity (Salingaros and Mehaffy 2006,
172). Roerich’s depiction of this scene reinforces the simplicity of architecture as
opposed to the branching repetitive patterns demonstrated by the mountains, and provides
commentary on an anthropocentric pattern of life. This analysis takes this difference in
representation to refer to the closed and limited mode of power within the culture of
humanity, walled off within this minimalistic architecture, as opposed to the
sophisticated, dynamic structure inherent within the greater dimensions found in nature.
In emphasizing the dispersed form of the human-made structures within the composition,
Roerich denies their stature in relationship to the mountain range in which they are
embedded.

Much as Roerich manipulated scale in his *Tibet* painting, the futurist artist
Virgilio Marchi, in his *Search for Volumes in an Isolated Building*, depicts a departure
from human scale. Doorways are rendered in discontinuous sizes and do not lend
themselves to a 3 to 1 ratio, since it is rather difficult even to make such comparisons
among the various sections of the structure. Indeed, the Italian Futurist architect and
theorist, Antonio Sant’Elia, in his “Manifesto of Futurist Architecture” contends that
futurist architects wish to stop “fooling around with the rules of Vitruvius” (1914). If one traces this reference to Vitruvius to particular writings on the subject of proportion and scale, one finds that the ancient Roman architect believed that the human body was the ideal model for implementation of scale in architecture. Indeed, Vitruvius introduces in his *De Architectura* various proportions associated with the human body, of which, 1:3 is significant, especially concerning the face which he outlines in the following passage: “Of the height of the face itself, one-third goes from the base of the chin to the lowermost part of the nostrils, another third from the base of the nostrils to a point between the eyebrows, and from that point to the hairline, the forehead also measures one-third” (3.1.2). Charles Siegel, comparing the human scale to Modernist architecture, contends that it leaves humans feeling uncomfortable, because their structures are not symmetrical and do not reference doorways and windows conducive to a human scale (Siegel 2012, 11). This is certainly the Futurists Marchi and Sant’Elia’s intentions, as expressed in the former’s manifesto, and the latter’s architectural design.

Rather than using the human figure as the primary influence in this new Futurist architecture, Sant’Elia stated that architects “must find that inspiration in the elements of the utterly new mechanical world we have created” (Sant’Elia 1914). The Futurists, including Sant’ Elia, sought to remove traditional elements of architecture to create something entirely new based upon the burgeoning technology that was increasingly being used in a multitude of cultural productions. Lovecraft may have denigrated Modernism for its reliance on originality, at the cost of negating art’s relationship to

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53 Vitruvius states “No temple can have any compositional system without symmetry and proportion, unless, as it were, it has an exact system of correspondence to the likeness of a well-formed human being” (3.1.1)
human concerns; nevertheless, he constantly utilized these same techniques to create unique alien structures or combinations of structures and landscapes which created astonishment and awe within the reader. He did so, recognizing that modern developments in technology were displacing and confusing those living in the modern world. In a letter to Robert E Howard, Lovecraft stated, while relaying to his friend why modern art had not connected to life more, “this age is one of singular transition, hence is scarcely settled in a psychological sense” (Lovecraft 1933, 680). Lovecraft, through his introduction of Modernist architecture in stories, such as “The Call of Cthulhu” and *At the Mountains of Madness* attempted to unsettle his audience and deny them a stable orientation. When expressed in terms of scale, such Modernism is marked by a strong departure from the 3 to 1 ratio typical of classical architecture, conforming to Lovecraft’s notion of the “Cyclopean.”

**Outside Architecture: Complex Arrangements and Minimalist Exteriors**

Beyond the use of scale, architecture can also utilize line and composition, not only to emphasize a structure’s function but also to reinforce meaning. Lovecraft’s stories often contain strong elements of “outside” architecture in that they do not repeat form in an organized manner, at least in the text, and the invocation of fundamentally geometric shapes, such as pyramids and spheres, present particular difficulties for the optimum interaction with the human body and perspective. Salingaros, when referring to patterns in architecture similar to the forms Lovecraft evokes in *At the Mountains of Madness*, has stated that “deconstructivist buildings deliberately avoid any type of pattern (Salingaros
2006, 140). This lack of pattern creates difficulties in the human viewer, especially when attempting to establish boundaries within architecture and establish an association between it and the environment. The ever shifting boundaries of line and shape may come to undermine the stability of the thing itself within the human mind and thus is not readily assigned a category of understanding in the greater visual vocabulary of human cognition.

Indeed, Lovecraft describes an alien city in *At the Mountains of Madness* that is characterized by a clear lack of boundaries with it bearing a variety of complex and simple elements that become difficult to visually negotiate. In one particular passage, Lovecraft relays to the reader a macro-view of the city, almost compiling the various elements, with little regard for anthropocentric organization:

The effect was that of a Cyclopean city of no architecture known to man or to human imagination, with vast aggregations of night-black masonry embodying monstrous perversions of geometrical laws. There were truncated cones, sometimes terraced or fluted, surmounted by tall cylindrical shafts here and there bulbously enlarged and often capped with tiers of thinnish scalloped disks; and strange beetling, table-like constructions suggesting piles of multitudinous rectangular slabs or circular plates or five-pointed stars with each one overlapping the one beneath. There were composite cones and pyramids either alone or surmounting cylinders or cubes or flatter truncated cones and pyramids, and occasional needle-like spires in curious clusters of five (Lovecraft 1936, 508-509).

The amount and variety of geometrical shapes Lovecraft describes in this passage is difficult to reconcile with each other, especially because no organizing pattern is established from which to place each respective element. Concerning the anarchical composition that such structures represent, Salingaros contends, “Chaotic forms have too much internally uncoordinated information, so that they overload the mind’s capacity to
process information” (Salingaros 2006, 141). With so many dispersed visual points of interest, the viewer is left to drift from one element to the next, very similar to Martin’s painting, *Belshazzar's Feast*. Individual elements within the structure are also extremely simplistic, assigning properties to them not unlike the “giant minimalist sculptures” Salingaros references within “A Theory of Architecture” (Salingaros and Mehaffy 2006, 172). These smooth shapes create a situation where, “Meaning is removed from the built environment by eliminating information encoded in surface design, which historically served to connect an individual to a structure through mental associations” (173). Thus one can see that the narrator, Dyer, in *At the Mountains of Madness* is the victim of visual dissonance, focusing on the simplistic giant shapes, devoid of specific content, placed within a geography of random relations, generating multiple points of interest with little possibility of collapsing their complexity so that they can be understood by a human viewer.

Lovecraft described these various intersecting structures that create a rather large composite framework, “All of these febrile structures seemed knit together by tubular bridges crossing from one to the other at various dizzy heights, and the implied scale of the whole was terrifying and oppressive in its sheer gigantism” (Lovecraft 1936, 509). Related to the enormity of structure this text implies, Salingaros, speaking of the Modernist architecture of Le Corbusier, finds that “monolithic geometry, when applied, erased an intricate connective network and replaced it with a grandly simple non-hierarchy. In so doing, it destroyed both complexity and life” (Salingaros and Mehaffy 2006, 182). Applied to the context of *At the Mountains of Madness*, such architecture is
alienating for the human protagonists, constraining their participation and movement through the structure.

Conclusion: Contemporary Representations of “Outside” Architecture

This examination shows that Lovecraft, in his fiction, visualized “outside” architecture as one of vast scale and disorderly arrangement. The foundation of this imagined architecture was derived from the various artists and works the author encountered and appropriated, such as the paintings of John Martin and Nicholas Roerich and the work of the Futurists. These models served as significant counterpoints to his Georgian architecture that was often idealized within his fiction and correspondence. The spatial movement that the audience engaged in, from moving through traditional and conventional space to one characterized by either excessive size and dispersive elements, or a combination of the two, often served to create a sense of the sublime.

Further, to create such sensations, the manipulation of scale and disordered arrangements can be readily applied to new adaptations within one’s search for new forms of the “outside. Just as Lovecraft appropriated and utilized existing models within his literature, artists, in adapting the author’s work, often take his descriptions to expand on “outside” elements, deviating further from anthropocentric architecture. As computers allow for unique configurations of space, driven by the software industry’s development of new algorithms and applications, artists have the ability to create complexity within architecture. Hence, within “outside” stories, contemporary artists can elaborate on images associated with Futurism through computer generated graphics, such as fractal-
based images.\textsuperscript{54} This outside architecture creates the foundation of its structure without consideration for the human figure and, indeed, conforms to what Salingaros deems “geometrical fundamentalism,” a term he links with scales that privilege novelty and abstraction over relations to the human form (Salingaros and Mehaffy, 172).

Yap Kun Rong, a Singaporean illustrator living in Japan, created several visual adaptations of \textit{At the Mountains of Madness} in 2010. These images depict the architectural structure referenced in the book, maximizing both size and complexity of aspect to create anti-architectural structures that adhere to Salingaros’ categorical definition. When compared to the original visual models, Kun Rong essentially adapts Lovecraft’s work, expanding its scope into more radical visual configurations. In \textit{Discovery}, Rong incorporates two observers from the narrative, Dyer and Danforth, into the composition as a kind of figural entry to the vast and heterogeneous space of the pictorial frame (Fig. 6.5). From the various structures’ spatial relationship to the crevasse, the viewer comes to recognize just how large these artificial constructions are. Their seemingly disorderly placement and lack of clear paths challenge any potential reading of the space conducive to human interaction. The incorporation of human bodies only serves to underscore the distinct nature of these architectural forms.

\textsuperscript{54} Concerning the creation of Lovecraft-related architecture, the illustrator John Coulthart has suggested “another solution today might be to get a computer to ‘grow’ some architecture using fractal processes” (Coulthart 2010). Coulthart has illustrated numerous Lovecraft adaptations, some of which are included in his book \textit{Haunter Of The Dark: And Other Grotesque Visions} (1999).
Fig. 6.5. Yap Kun Rong. *Discovery*. 2010.

Significantly, this representation of a scene from *At the Mountains of Madness* not only reflects the varied structures referenced in the text but also appears to be influenced by the very Futurism Lovecraft references in “The Call of Cthulhu” and in *At the Mountains of Madness*. Along with the inclusion of the human figures, Kun Rong provides just enough of the natural environment to give the superstructure a sense of location, as though this fantastic configuration of architecture is possible. Additionally, the idiosyncratic structures in the middle trailing down to the depths of the canyon share a remarkable similarity to that of Virgilio Marchi’s sketch, *Search for Volume in an Isolated Building*.

As a final point, it is important to consider that just as “outside” architecture can change to accommodate trends and developments in art within a given culture, so can the traditional architecture a given society sees as conventional. During the contemporary era, the Georgian buildings Lovecraft often advocated have come to be supplemented and
replaced by a greater diversity of architectural structures throughout New England and the West. Meanwhile, the developments of Modernism have been solidified and reiterated in a multitude of diverse architectural contexts, much as Salingaros has argued. Those artists and architects seeking to create unique and disruptive architectural forms in the contemporary era have a much greater and diverse pool of existing buildings to react against, perhaps calling for new approaches to complicating space and creating new architectural relationships.
CONCLUSION

This dissertation highlights the disruptive properties of H.P. Lovecraft’s literature, relating them directly to the dimensions of time and space, which he felt needed to be overcome “to achieve the essence of real externality” (Lovecraft 1927, 150). This “externality” or “outsideness,” to which he often referred, was strongly based on expressing elements and phenomena that were characterized in his narratives as not originating from or intimately connected to humanity (Lovecraft 1931, 294). Coupled with his theory of aesthetics that held that the “absolute and objective” qualities of repetition and symmetry determined an object’s relationship to a human observer, this analysis creates a framework from which these “outside” objects can be scrutinized and classified (Lovecraft 1928, 229). In particular, the intersection of repetition, in creating a multiplicity of spatial and temporal elements, and symmetry, in creating a gradient of similarity and dissimilarity between the human subject and external phenomena, work in conjunction to express complexity, resulting in the audience feeling a sense of the sublime, or “awe” and “wonder” as Lovecraft often labeled it (Lovecraft 1935, 21, 22).

This dissertation takes all of these interconnected concepts and applies them to both the visual models he appropriated from his own culture, and those adaptations of his work that were produced afterwards, in order to identify and draw attention to common disruptive tropes.

It is significant to note that Lovecraft did not seek to create completely independent representations of alternative realities devoid of humanity; rather, he contrasted the “outside” with the “inside” of human subjectivity. Lovecraft’s
protagonists were extensions of the audience, and to this end shared their manner of experiencing the world, especially through sight. This “inside” translates well to the visual arts, since it reiterates the sensory limitations of human experience, making it a perfect vehicle for disruption, as is demonstrated in the Dutch illustrator, Erik Kriek’s adaptation of Lovecraft’s “The Outsider” (1926). By maintaining the limited point of view of a human within his work, Lovecraft was able to introduce spatial and temporal phenomena that starkly contrast with anthropocentrism. For instance, the limited unified temporal frame of the human protagonist becomes more readily disrupted when introduced to repeated phenomena, such as the ghoul paintings of Pickman in “Pickman’s Model,” or the extended time frames symbolized by ideograms in At the Mountains of Madness. Similarly, the polyocular bodies that populate Lovecraft’s fictional world, such as the Yithians in The Shadow Out of Time, contrast starkly with the human form, while the Futurist inspired architecture of “The Call of Cthulhu” is difficult for the narrator to navigate and perceive.

Lovecraft’s approach to utilizing humanity as a foundation to explore alternative modes of reality within art speaks to his contention that audiences quite naturally require an entry point to provide a point of comparison or relationship. This is not to say that Lovecraft would agree that reality does not exist apart from humanity, like the contemporary art theorist Nicolas Bourriaud, who contends “that form only assumes its texture (and only acquires a real existence) when it introduces human interactions” (22). Rather, he would argue narrowly that the inclusion of a human point of view on events can be crucial in demonstrating their limitations, from which the “outside” functions to
Clearly, Lovecraft saw human subjectivity in an entirely different manner than Bourriaud, insisting that reality exists beyond the reach of humanity’s ability to understand it. In this sense, Lovecraft’s literary narratives are comparable to an open composition in the visual arts, which contains content extending well beyond the frame. Within his work, the temporal and spatial confines of the narrative provide little resolution beyond the promise of the ongoing presence of the disruptive object, especially within time, and demonstrate the limitation of the human point of view.

Moreover, Lovecraft’s aesthetic theories seem to interrogate supernatural horror which does not take into account a human audience. For example, within *At the Mountains of Madness*, the multiple eyes of the Elder Ones, as well as the colossal scope and seemingly randomness of architecture, would not appear so alien without the inclusion of a human protagonist. Lovecraft’s approach of utilizing a human point of view in his work is very different from his peers, such as the author Clark Ashton Smith, and those artists within the contemporary Speculative Realism movement, who seek to create art which does not include references to humanity. As contemporary productions, such as Michael Bay’s *Transformers* (2007-2014), increasingly contain “discorrelated images,” a term Shane Denson has proposed to distinguish images lacking a human perspective, Lovecraft’s approach argues against this development.\(^{56}\) Though Lovecraft clearly detested being confined to a human body, and the sensory limitations of such

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\(^{55}\) Lovecraft did allow for the possibility of constructing narratives that are not dependent on representatives of humanity, saying “There need be no connexion with man, earth, solar system or galaxy so long as the abstract idea of liberation-escape-contravention-can find some pseudo-concrete embodiment or parallelism capable of human comprehensión” (Lovecraft 1936, 259).

\(^{56}\) “Dis correlated images” are images which are not connected with “human embodied subjectivities and (phenomenological, narrative, and visual) perspectives” (Denson, 2013).
corporeality, he understood that it was quite natural for a human observer to identify with the body of another human. Most of his narratives conform to such a perception.

The Evolving Human Point of View

The human point of view has changed a great deal from Lovecraft’s era in the early twentieth century, especially with the rapid ascension of visual-centric technology into areas of everyday life. Though Lovecraft constantly opposed the proliferation of Modernism, what he termed “machine-culture,” into Western culture, he appropriated and described such art to signify “outside” bodies and architecture (Lovecraft 1929, 287). So, too, have artists attempted to mobilize technology in creating scenarios and objects which surprise and cause feelings of the sublime. Increasingly, the abstract and the departure from traditional forms that characterizes Modernism have come to co-exist alongside more traditional forms, and, as a result, Western culture has shifted to accommodate and conventionalize these new artistic productions. This is not to say that Postmodernism has ushered in an end to unique configurations of space; rather, it simply means that what Lovecraft termed, the “freakish” Modernism has, contrary to his predictions, achieved a “certain kind of familiarity” that requires artists to use new technologies and techniques in order to capture the public’s imagination (Lovecraft 1944 161, 172). What he found so objectionable in his day has become commonplace, and his notion of “traditional associations” held by human audiences has becoming increasingly modified to include visual objects that lack materiality and exist only in electronic form,
giving rise to new configurations of space that were previously not possible due to the very spatial and temporal limitations Lovecraft derided (Lovecraft 1928, 229).

The transformation in the manner in which contemporary audiences experience the visual can especially be seen in technologies that supplement the human point of view. Significantly, technology in the form of cell phones, stereoscopic film and even virtual reality have become predominant, changing how people view the external world on a fundamental level. The presence of multiple video screens in both the public and private spheres collude to display visual information from near and distant sources from a variety of sensors and inputs connected via the internet, adding additional points of view to the human perspective with every additional screen. Within contemporary Western culture, the unified point of view prevalent in the early twentieth century becomes a cluttered field of sight from which virtual and abstract information is rendered in real time for the viewer. As Alexander Galloway has contended, the gaming vision of electronic media, and possibly the cybernetic, becomes a conventional regime of vision within broader culture, now facilitated by Google Glass and Occulus Rift (Galloway 2006, 62). Particularly, Google glass and similar devices have the potential to integrate a person’s view of the external world with a variety of supplementary digital visual information as seen in Fig. 7.1. This image is taken from the Google Glass application Race Yourself, which allows a user, when jogging, to see interactive maps and visual stimuli to help motivate them within the headgear apparatus. This software also includes the option for the headgear to display images of zombies, a close fictional relative of

\footnote{Galloway specifically refers to film, stating that gamic vision is mobilized within “the formal grammar of filmmaking” (Galloway 2006, 62). The author proposes that this process has continued into the larger visual culture.}
Pickman’s ghouls, chasing the user, adding an element of horror to everyday activities. As seen in this image, information concerning distance and digital zombies can occupy the same visual space as the user’s field of view, complicating the temporal and spatial frame of the user’s vision.

![Zombie Chase Screenshot](image)

**Fig. 7.1. Race Yourself screenshot.** Images taken from the article by Chloe Glover “Flesh-eating zombies and giant boulders chase you down the street while you jog with Google Glass”. 2014.

This change in Postmodern viewing invites the question: will the earlier twentieth-century human point of view of Lovecraft’s literature continue to be preserved in supernatural horror visual culture, like in the video game *Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth* (2006) or will new modes of vision overtake these conventions to add information in order to keep up with how people actually see in everyday life? As
Galloway says of the gamic vision which increasingly dominates visual culture, “time and space are mutable within the diegesis in ways unavailable before,” and, when applied to the anthropomorphic perspective, it brings new qualities of sight into human vision (Galloway 2006, 65). As this point of view, especially within video games, potentially shifts to incorporate new technologies, it creates new ways in which “outside” visual objects are presented to the audience and requires new modes of expression in order to create feelings of the sublime, which Lovecraft sought in his own work.

“Human Time” Obscured

The unified notion of “human time” has been problematized through the introduction of modes of communication that allow for an unheralded ability to preserve the past through digitization. Whether through three-dimensional scanners, or the contestation of time through the encroachment of digital time or computer time, qualities of digital virtual objects are increasingly intersecting with real objects. The contemporary art theorists, Jean Robertson and Craig McDaniel, have elaborated on these developments: “Our views of the past have changed because of changes in our technological capacity to record or represent the past” (Robertson and McDaniel 2005, 49). In the film *Prometheus*, where the characters present within the film intermingle with holographic recordings of the past, one sees that different frames of time can come to exist within the same space. Extended histories of the earth or ancient events can find new forms of expression, creating new dynamics in the present. As digital technology has afforded the ability to represent deceased celebrities via holographic images, such
developments have left the realm of science fiction and entered the realm of possibility. For example, during the 2014 Billboard Music Award show, a holographic representation of the deceased pop singer, Michael Jackson, performing was projected in front of a live studio and television audience (Figure 2) (Sherwell 2014). As a form of visual communication, such efforts further degrade the distinctions between the past and the present. If real historical figures can be conjured up to inhabit the same space as the present, then fictional histories and characters can as well.\(^ {58}\)

Significantly, there is a modern adaptation of a Lovecraft story which explores this premise beyond the allusions to electronic modes of being in the original text. Though two-dimensional in aspect, the 2011 film, “The Whisperer in Darkness,” created by the H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society, contains a scene depicting a holographic head of the character Henry Akeley, whose brain has been removed from his body and preserved using alien technology (Fig. 7.2). Here the audience is shown Akeley’s detached brain, which has now connected to a holographic projector, which radiates an image, similar to the “semi-material electronic organisation” Lovecraft refers to in his original text (Lovecraft 1931, 463).\(^ {59}\) Like the holographic Engineers in *Prometheus*, Akeley’s image is subject to random distortions and glitches, capturing the inexact nature of projecting identities in a digital capacity.

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\(^ {58}\) One of the most famous pop singers in Japan is a fictional holographic construct known as Hatsune Miku. Miku, a character able to interact with humans, is the product of software that incorporates a holographic image in order to perform in front of live audiences. Her voice consists of a “virtual voice program” that mimics human speech, in order to speak and sing (Verini 2012).

\(^ {59}\) Though Lovecraft does not refer directly to holograms in “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1931), this passage concerning the “semi-material electronic organization” would appear to be a major influence for film-makers to incorporate light-based imagery of disembodied human heads.
Increasingly the past, as well as fictional pasts, can find new ways of expression in the present within visual culture, and the divide in time that was so evident within Lovecraft’s age, has come to be contested by ever-advancing technology. To remark on these changes within this analysis is not necessarily to endorse them; rather, it is an acknowledgement that Lovecraft’s notion of anthropocentric conventions of time have evolved since his era. Similarly, the type of hieroglyphics he associated with cultures from the past are finding new expressions in visual media, in films such as *Prometheus*, further bridging art works of the past with the present to a degree that further unravels the division of time.
Complicating and Digitizing Space

In stories such as *At the Mountains of Madness* and “The Call of Cthulhu,” Lovecraft describes certain architecture related to Modernism as a means of creating anxiety within the audience. However, the structures of Modernism within architecture do not get discarded as the author often suggests they will in essays such as “A Living Heritage: Roman Architecture in Today’s America” (Lovecraft 1934, 122). Rather, as Salingaros has demonstrated in his discussion of anti-human architecture, contemporary buildings, such as the Bilbao Art Museum, built in 1997, have become more abstract in the modern era, informed by capital and the persistence of Modernism in architecture (Salingaros 2008, 139, 177). Since Lovecraft’s era, it seems that Western culture has tolerated and adapted to these structures, creating a situation where Classical architecture and abstract Modernist architecture co-exist. This development has caused artists operating in the supernatural horror genre to develop new techniques to represent the “outside,” in an effort to create something new.

Indeed, John Coulthart, in advocating the use of fractals to create Lovecraftian architecture, points out how technology might aid contemporary artists in creating new configurations of space (Coulthart, 2010). Michael Hansmeyer and Benjamin Dillenburger, both computer programmers and architects, have, in their *Digital Grotesque* (2013) project (Fig. 7.3) combined three-dimensional printing, fractals and architecture to create an artificial structure that would not be out of place in Lovecraft’s supernatural horror stories. The architectural team significantly sought to create in their work “new spatial experiences and sensations“ (Briggs 2013). Upon discovering images
of this project, Coulthart declared “Those ridged and fluted columns could be R’lyeh or they could equally be the vast and ancient buildings that Dyer and Danforth discover in *At the Mountains of Madness*” (Coulthart 2013). The development of new ways of manipulating space offers up real opportunities to make new configurations that will surprise the viewing audience.

Contemporary developments in technology and visual culture have allowed new expressions of the “outside,” as science continues to cast its gaze towards diminishing the unknown. Despite the intensification and continuation of this process, Lovecraft’s aesthetics have the potential for new digital representations of space which are not dependent on physical matter, similar to *Call of the Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth*.
(2006). Indeed, in his short story, “The Silver Key,” the narrator, discussing the manner in which the protagonist Randolph Carter began privileging the “outside” to the everyday, states: “all life is only a set of pictures in the brain, among which there is no difference betwixt those born of real things and those born of inward” (Lovecraft 1929, 252). This passage indicates that Lovecraft perceived representations or events equally as significant to the human observer as everyday visual phenomena that they view and experience. Thus, the increasingly digital spheres of culture that have enmeshed contemporary life might be elevated to the same status as existing material reality. Could technology and cultural transformation make remnants of such cultural time streams less important, as each successive generation is imbued with a distinctly transformed set of key visual exemplars?

As new technologies are introduced into visual culture, undoubtedly the limitations of time and space will continue to be contested within Lovecraft-related arts. However, this division between the “inside” and “outside,” the “known” and the “unknown,” will continue to manifest itself within the genre of supernatural horror within Western visual culture, something Lovecraft attests to in a letter he wrote to his friend Harold S. Farnese: “To my mind, the sense of the unknown is an authentic & virtually permanent-even though seldom dominant-part of human personality; an element too basic to be destroyed by the modern world’s knowledge that the supernatural does not exist” (Lovecraft 1932, 69). It is perhaps through this dichotomy between technology’s ability to strip away the mysteries of life and its ability to represent new mysteries in the form of
spectacle that provides a great source for further study into Lovecraft’s presence within the contemporary visual arts.
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