



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 36 | Number 2 | Issue 132, Spring/Summer

Article 21

4-15-2018

Letting Sleeping Abnormalities Lie: Lovecraft and the Futility of Divination [Article]

Carol S. Matthews

Dutchess Community College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore>



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Matthews, Carol S. (2018) "Letting Sleeping Abnormalities Lie: Lovecraft and the Futility of Divination [Article]," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 36 : No. 2 , Article 21.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol36/iss2/21>

This Special Section is brought to you for free and open access by the Mythopoeic Society at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature by an authorized editor of SWOSU Digital Commons. An ADA compliant document is available upon request. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.



Letting Sleeping Abnormalities Lie: Lovecraft and the Futility of Divination [Article]

Abstract

By way of divinatory dreams, astrology, geomancy, or other means, the Lovecraft quester discovers that universe is more deeply frightening than anything he could possibly have imagined. Lovecraft's lack of faith in divination practices, not because of their inefficacy, but rather due to his conviction that humans lack the essential capacity to understand their lowly place in the universe, is ironically not shared by many of his admirers and followers, who have created magical and divination systems galore since Lovecraft's demise.

Additional Keywords

Lovecraft, H.P.—Knowledge of divination; Divination in H.P. Lovecraft



LETTING SLEEPING ABNORMALITIES LIE: LOVECRAFT AND THE FUTILITY OF DIVINATION

CAROL S. MATTHEWS

Few mythopoetic universes are as thoroughly plumbed and deployed as that of H.P. Lovecraft's 'Cthulhu Mythos.'¹ There is hardly a science fiction or horror franchise in existence, from *Star Trek* to *The X Files*, that has not, at some point, paid homage to either the particulars of Lovecraft's envisioned nightmares or, at the very least, some portion of his singular and peculiar manner of expressing horrified disgust. Born in the last decade of the 19th century, Lovecraft lived most of his life in Providence, RI, and died in relative obscurity and poverty. His fame was largely generated and subsequently maintained by an ever-growing cadre of followers. Despite his rather inconspicuous beginnings, Joyce Carol Oates has declared him "The King of Weird," whose influence on horror/fantastic genres in the United States is "incalculable," an extraordinary assertion for a man who did not receive much notice until years after his death. During his lifetime, much of his work was published in pulp magazines, most notably the famously garish 1920s rag, *Weird Tales*. Due to complications with his estate, as he had not completed the process of copyright transferal at the time of his death, Lovecraft's work has now passed into the public domain and is readily available for anyone to peruse at their leisure.² Despite this, special editions of his stories are published literally every year to be snapped up by both newbies and seasoned collectors alike.

Indeed, a prodigious literature has emerged that exists solely for the purpose of tracing the influence of Lovecraft on the collective and popular

¹ Lovecraft did not invent the phrase or idea of the "Cthulhu Mythos." Rather this term was coined by one of his early fans, August Derleth, and applied by Derleth and other early Lovecraftian aficionados to several of his tales that feature similar monsters, called collectively the Ancient Ones, and themes. Those fans began writing their own stories expanding on this fictionalized universe, an activity that Lovecraft encouraged, and the "Mythos" has taken on a community life of its own ever since. The name "Cthulhu" first appears in Lovecraft's story "The Call of Cthulhu," which was published in *Weird Tales* in 1928.

² All page references to Lovecraft's fiction in this essay are to the print book *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*, Chartwell Books, 2016. Unless otherwise indicated, all of Lovecraft's fiction and much of his non-fiction is also available in full text at the H.P. Lovecraft Archive (<http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/>).

psyche of the Western world and beyond.³ A routine search on Amazon [August 24, 2017] delivered almost 11,000 registered titles having something do with Lovecraft, including games, toys, both audio and video recordings and other assorted products. For those who might argue that Tolkien and Stephen King are to be regarded as equal heavy weights, I will simply say that King admits to being influenced by Lovecraft,⁴ and while there are action figures of both Tolkien and Lovecraft denizens, I could find no plush examples of Hobbits or Elves, while a cursory glance at Amazon and E-Bay uncovered at least a dozen stuffed Cthulhus, all ready and suitable for one's toddler and a bedside story. Furthermore, Lovecraft's haunted universe is held responsible for at least two dozen video/online gaming environments, three Tarot decks, five systems of practiced occultism, and has inspired many examples of Japanese anime.⁵ This doesn't even count the sheer multitude of short stories, novels, films, and TV episodes that claim to have been inspired by Lovecraft's seemingly omnipresent eldritch hand, including the latest installment of the Netflix hit series, *Stranger Things 2*, which features a super villain that merges Cthulhu-esque horror with the Mind Flayer from *Dungeons and Dragons*.⁶ Brown University awards an endowed yearly fellowship to lucky applicants who desire to study Lovecraft from an academic perspective.⁷ Lovecraft's singular stylistic darkness even

³ One of the most accessible guides to the Lovecraftian novice is Daniel Harms's *The Cthulhu Mythos Encyclopedia*.

⁴ King has been quoted as saying that Lovecraft "has yet to be surpassed" as a master of horror (qtd. in Wohleber). King's 2014 novel *Revival* was his most blatant homage to Lovecraft to date.

⁵ These items can be readily found through an Amazon or Google search. John Engle in "Cults of Lovecraft" describes four of these developed occult traditions in some detail, while omitting reference to Donald Tyson's personal and idiosyncratic approach. Although the tentacle sex demons in *Urotsukidoji (Legend of the Overfiend)* are said to have a different origin than Lovecraft, various of his monsters and themes have influenced several Japanese animators and the upcoming *Force of Will (2018)* plans to reference Lovecraft directly ("H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Gets the Anime Treatment").

⁶ Lovecraft's influence is explicitly invoked by the creators of the show, The Duffer Brothers, in a series of interviews, *Beyond Stranger Things*, which can be viewed on Netflix immediately following the series itself.

⁷ The S.T. Joshi Endowed Research Fellowship (<http://library.brown.edu/joshi/>). It is perhaps a continuing tribute to Lovecraft's iconoclastic influence that this fellowship is named after the most recognized Lovecraft scholar in North America, who is not, himself, an academic. S.T. Joshi has written, among an almost endless assortment of monographs and analyses of Lovecraft's letters, essays and stories, a biography that is considered the most authoritative account of the 'King of Weird,' *Lovecraft: A Life*, and the more recent two-volume update to it, *I am Providence: The Life and Times of H.P. Lovecraft*.

lends itself to parody; Harry Potter's world meets Lovecraft in a retelling of Dumbledore's death by journalist Ross Field, among other examples.

However, this paper is not actually about the artistic, academic and commercial empires that Lovecraft's work has inspired in others. He was known, even among his immediate writing companions, to be generous with ideas, encouraging others to build on his oeuvre. As Jess Nevins describes it, Lovecraft was one of the very first writers to "open source" his texts and ideas, thus ensuring himself an audience, at least eventually (Nevins). If Lovecraft could have foreseen the ongoing fruitful progeny of his creation, he would, no doubt, have noted with irony two developments. The first would be, of course, the vast fortunes that have been made by a few capitalizing on the tales of the Ancient Ones, since Lovecraft died virtually penniless and obscure. The second irony approaches our paper topic closely and so it is from this point that I will begin my discussion. Lovecraft would have been at the very least amused, but more than likely discouraged and then perhaps finally dismayed, that the subjects of his deepest nightmares could have become fodder for magical systems, games of divination, and the basis for worldviews.

Since many of Lovecraft's stories concern themselves with the revealing or unveiling of realities seemingly hidden underneath the mundane appearances of external reality, and how practitioners of witchcraft, voodoo or other forms of "non-mainstream" spirituality seem to be tuned into these same planes of existence, it is a perfectly legitimate question, among others, to ask how Lovecraft actually portrayed the divinatory arts that such practitioners are often said to employ. This is especially pertinent because the Tarot decks and magical systems already mentioned seem to imply, by their very existence, that Lovecraft's world somehow "justifies" these interpretations.

In fact, throughout the corpus of Lovecraft's work, there is almost no reference to cartomancy or palmistry, two well-known divination practices. The only type of divination specifically alluded to as such, in any Lovecraft story, is "spirit bottles," a form of bottle dowsing that was popular among spiritualists back in Lovecraft's time. A weight was suspended in a narrow bottle and set beside the medium. Movements made by the medium in a trance set the bottle jiggling, and it would clink and tinkle as the weight hit the inside of the bottle. These sounds were then interpreted for possible meaningful communication with the spirits. In some ways, the get-up was similar to the "spirit box" now utilized by ghost hunters.

Lovecraft alludes to spirit bottles in connection with a sinister elderly gentleman in his stories "The Terrible Old Man" (87) and "The Strange High House in the Mist" (421). In both stories, bottle divination is used as a literary device to emphasize the otherworldly and probably decrepit nature of the character in question, who is certainly a person to be avoided and which is

exactly why the hapless protagonist of the story cannot seem to do so. In other stories, necromantic rites, allusions to astrological forces, spiritualist trance states and various kinds of scrying are implied or mentioned, but never fully described as they are often considered to be practices below the dignity of the narrators who are frequently portrayed as either too stalwart and practical or rational and scientific to take such procedures seriously. And this does seem to be a reflection on what Lovecraft actually believed about such matters; he often proclaimed himself a resolute atheist and materialist despite the fantastic content of many of his stories.

In his *In Defence of Dagon*, a series of three essays directed to an international writing group, the Transatlantic Circulator, of which he was a member in the early 1920s, Lovecraft reiterates his resolute scientific materialism by defending the writing of 'weird fiction' as an aesthetic choice designed to create a mood: "the *raison d'être* of 'Dagon'—I will give it—purely and simply to reproduce a mood. Its object is the simplest in all art—portrayal" (*Defence* 14).⁸ And further, in dismissing the critiques of one Mr. Chesterton, Lovecraft rather stiffly responds, "By manipulating the evidence—playing up trifles and minimising important facts—one may make a very brilliant case [against the theory of natural selection]; but when a man soberly tries to dismiss the results of Darwin we need not give him too much of our valuable time" (17).

Lovecraft seemed to be aware of what may have appeared to others as conflicting tendencies. Writing about himself, Lovecraft made the following two observations: "I should describe mine own nature as tripartite, my interests as consisting of three parallel and dissociated groups—(a) Love of the strange and fantastic. (b) Love of abstract truth and scientific logic. (c) Love of the ancient and the permanent. Sundry combinations of these three strains will probably account for all my odd tastes and eccentricities" (qtd. in Joshi, *Subtler* 13). And in directly speaking of his fiction, Lovecraft maintained that: "I choose weird stories because they suit my inclination best—one of my strongest and most persistent wishes being to achieve, momentarily, the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law which for ever imprison us and frustrate our curiosity about the infinite cosmic spaces beyond the radius of our sight and analysis" ("Notes on Writing Weird Fiction").

Such a view would seem to mitigate heavily against the idea that Lovecraft "believed" it was possible for divination, magic, religion, or even dogmatic science to have any point or purpose whatever, other than that of an

⁸ "Dagon," written in 1917, is considered one of Lovecraft's first "adult" stories, and also one of the first to feature a Cthulhu-like being in Dagon. The story can be found in *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* as well as the online archive.

aesthetic railing against the vast darkness of the cosmos.⁹ However, it is also true that Lovecraft's fictional protagonists often find themselves in hot water precisely because they don't regard at least some of the prognostications of mediums, shamans and witch doctors seriously enough, although Lovecraft also takes pains in many of his stories to ridicule the naïve with regard to such matters. His work clearly displays ambivalence towards divination in general: the psychic is probably right in some way, but oh, what an unsavory character! One gets the very real sense that Lovecraft did, somehow, desire (if that word could be used) for the intuitive arts to play some role in the revealing of secret knowledge. The problem was, that kind of 'knowledge' is very difficult to rely upon, to duplicate, to transmit to another.¹⁰ So for the reader, the analyst-critic of Lovecraft, the question then becomes: can divination, in Lovecraft's stories, play any role whatsoever in providing indicators about future events? In fact, Lovecraft's fiction shows numerous examples of divination proving itself as useful for foreknowledge, if not forewarning. To this end, Lovecraft focuses on dreams and obscure methods of geomancy and astrology as his primary examples of divination.

DREAMS

The preternatural dream is the most common divinatory event in Lovecraft's tales, often had, unwittingly, by main characters, as precursors to a horror they will soon face. A surprising number of Lovecraft's protagonist/narrators are led by dreams prior to entering into the circumstances which will transform or even destroy their lives. Dream divination, or oneiromancy, is the gateway into both knowledge and horror for Lovecraft, and the former *always* portends and leads to the latter. Some of these dreams are described in exquisite detail, and Lovecraft all but admitted to his community of writing companions that many of his most striking literary images came directly from his own highly

⁹ In *In Defence of Dagon*, Lovecraft cautions his critics not to suppose that science is above correction; it is just that further science is what is needed to refine scientific inaccuracies (15).

¹⁰ "Reason [he means scientific method here] has never yet failed. Intuition and emotion are constantly failing" (*Defence* 16). Many of us living in the 21st century are not nearly as sanguine about the accuracy of reason and scientific knowledge, since technologies and industries related to such have also unleashed the specters of nuclear war, uncontrolled AI, and climate change. It is also important to remember that 19th and early 20th century science was largely responsible for the "racial type" taxonomies and theories of Social Darwinism that seem to inform Lovecraft's now rather embarrassing race/class and infamous stereotypes in many of his stories. That his faith in science may seem rather naïve now does not, of course, detract from the fact that in his personal philosophy, he contrasted reason and intuition in this manner.

elaborate dreamscapes.¹¹ The horror for the protagonist is then in the unfolding discovery that what he thought was a nightmare, is, in fact, a truer vision of reality than he could have ever imagined. Examples from a few of Lovecraft's most famous stories can serve as illustration of this pattern.

In "The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath," one of Lovecraft's recurrent protagonists, Randolph Carter, a character who is believed by many Lovecraft scholars to be an alter-ego for the man himself, is described as having had three dreams of a "marvellous city," and each time he was "snatched away" before he could enter it (439). The story then consists of a detailed description of the city, its alien inhabitants, and, eventually, what happens to Carter when he insists on trying to discover a way to enter the city via the agency of what would today be called lucid dreaming. While in the dream realm, Carter discovers that the Ancient Ones have been banished from the city and the priests who are presiding over it warn him not to venture into the realms where the Ancient Ones still remain. The story was never completed; thus Carter's nightmare never entirely ended, and it is considered to be part of a larger series of works which Lovecraft referred to as his 'dream-cycle' tales.

Dreams do not occur until late within the storyline of "The Whisperer in Darkness," but that is due to it being one of Lovecraft's most diligently materialist science fiction productions. The basic tale is that of a scientist/scholar who becomes interested in reports of strange otherworldly beings coming out of Vermont. After a bit of cursory investigation, the scholar pens an official dismissive "explanation" for a well-known skeptical journal. He then receives a very articulate and intelligent letter from a man living in the region of the reports, who has read his piece and has convincing photographic evidence to the contrary. At this point, the scholar discovers that these reported creatures are not left-over legends passed down from Natives to rural, colonial dullards, but are actually extraterrestrials who are interested in contacting and absorbing suitable humans to travel with them back to their home planet Suggoth. While this all sounds very fantastic, Lovecraft does a masterful job describing how the materialist worldview of the narrator, limited as it is by the hubris of a scientific rationalism that holds the nature of the universe to be explicable, is broken down and crushed beneath the truth of Suggoth, a greater reality which includes the possibility of sentient fungus capable of interstellar travel.

While this story is fascinating in many ways, including the manner in which details of the narrative anticipate specific features of what will become the UFO/alien contact narrative in the United States, it is the restless dream that the main character, Dr. Wilmoth, has toward the conclusion of the story that is

¹¹ In "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction," Lovecraft describes how he had begun some stories by "literally" having "written out a dream."

the most consequential moment in the tale. Despite his best efforts and the trauma and excitement of being exposed to unimpeachable evidence of superior extraterrestrial life, he falls asleep. Dr. Wilmith finds himself dreaming: “a doze filled with bits of dream which involved monstrous landscape-glimpses” that were all too familiar to him from his studies of the Ancient Ones, a race he had thought was mythical, but which had proven itself to be quite real (769). Upon awakening, he realizes, almost too late as he hears shuffling movements approaching his room, that the fungoid beings (the Migo) are coming for him and that the dream landscapes are not fantasy, but representative of a real location somewhere else in space-time. Dr. Wilmith manages to escape and vows to never enter Vermont again, but admits he doesn’t know if he will always be safe from the Migo.

Lovecraft’s most famous story, “The Call of Cthulhu,” is rich in dream imagery, and significant precognitive dreams are reported early in the story. They are not had by the main narrator, a scholar named Francis Wayland Thurston, but are reported in the experience of a young man, Henry Anthony Wilcox, who is having dreams about a strange artifact that he doesn’t even know physically exists, but which eventually turns out to be an idol of the Ancient One, Cthulhu, who dreams in his sunken kingdom of Ry’leh, awaiting a correct alignment of the stars which will permit his return. Eventually, the reader will wonder whether Wilcox dreams of Cthulhu or Cthulhu dreams of Wilcox. Wilcox had been known his entire life for his “strange stories and odd dreams,” and it was his specific dream experience of Cthulhu’s realm Ry’leh which became the literary genesis of the “Cthulhu Mythos:”

an unprecedented dream of great Cyclopean cities of titan blocks and sky-flung monoliths, all dripping with green ooze and sinister with latent horror. Hieroglyphics had covered the walls and pillars, and from some undetermined point below had come a voice that was not a voice; a chaotic sensation which only fancy could transmute into sound, but which he attempted to render by the almost unpronounceable jumble of letters, “*Cthulhu fhtagn*.” (384)

Wilcox’s dreams are not fantasy, but actual mental impressions of a place in time and space. It is discovered that the phrase “*Cthulhu fhtagn*” was rendered in the same hieroglyphics found on the aforementioned idol, and there was no way Wilcox could have known that. Later on, others start having dreams about Ry’leh, strange rituals, and Cthulhu himself. After all, how else is a dreaming god supposed to communicate to others about his imminent return?

The remarkable capacity of dreams to reveal hidden true worlds is probably best articulated in one of Lovecraft’s earliest stories, “Beyond the Wall of Sleep.” In this narrative the young protagonist, who works as an intern in a

“state psychopathic institution” (39), becomes the keeper and observer of a man who has been admitted for what would now be called a dissociative pathology. Periodically, the patient lapses into a trance-like state and begins acting and speaking like a far more intelligent being than he obviously is, at least according to the protagonist’s rather acerbic assessment. According to his medical history, the man first began experiencing this superior being in dreams, and being unable to adequately describe this personality, given his limited intelligence and education (which is described in embarrassing classist and racist detail by Lovecraft), begins to experience a mental breakdown. Eventually, the dream personality begins to speak for itself, while the poor patient lapses into an ever more permanent trance-like state. The trance personality describes coming from a world that is far more advanced, both technologically and socially, than anything on Earth, and is so persuasive that eventually the protagonist concludes that this manifestation is not pathological, but rather reflects a genuine expressive projection from one world to another, through the medium of the patient.

The protagonist becomes obsessed with the patient, and determines that, if this is an actual “broadcast” from one world to the next, through the body/mind of the patient, that it should be possible to create a mechanism which would transmit the thought energy of the intelligent entity more directly, perhaps straight into the mind of an interested receiver. It would be somewhat like a technologically-mediated form of telepathy. Eventually, the protagonist is able to create a device that seems to work—even though the almost constant transmission of the intelligence through the body of the patient is destroying the latter’s health. The protagonist soon realizes that through his own dreams, this otherworldly personality has begun to control his responses as well—and this has led to his obsession to communicate—even though it will result in the demise of the patient. Right as the patient reaches the point of death, a thought and image of the hidden world is transmitted to the protagonist and the otherworld personality declares that the patient is dead. The protagonist is left with the knowledge that he has discovered proof of another world, yet no one will believe him due to the unorthodox nature of its manifestation and his methods. As he states in the beginning of the narrative:

I have frequently wondered if the majority of mankind ever pause to reflect upon the occasionally titanic significance of dreams, and of the obscure world to which they belong. Whilst the greater number of our nocturnal visions are perhaps no more than faint and fantastic reflections of our waking experiences—Freud to the contrary with his puerile symbolism—there are still a certain remainder whose immundane and ethereal character permits of no ordinary interpretation, and whose

vaguely exciting and disquieting effect suggests possible minute glimpses into a sphere of mental existence no less important than physical life, yet separated from that life by an all but impassable barrier. From my experience I cannot doubt but that man, when lost to terrestrial consciousness, is indeed sojourning in another and uncorporeal life of far different nature from the life we know; and of which only the slightest and most indistinct memories linger after waking. From those blurred and fragmentary memories we may infer much, yet prove little. We may guess that in dreams life, matter, and vitality, as the earth knows such things, are not necessarily constant; and that time and space do not exist as our waking selves comprehend them. Sometimes I believe that this less material life is our truer life, and that our vain presence on the terraqueous globe is itself the secondary or merely virtual phenomenon. (39)

In these instances, dreams convey information that is known in some way to the dreamer but which cannot signal its reality in a more overt fashion to the conscious mind. Dreams reveal the existential horror that nightmare and/or visionary vistas are actually materially real and that the human conscious mind is unwilling or unable to accept due to arrogance, ignorance, or stubbornness. In such light, it makes little difference who has the dream; it is more important that the 'dream is had' by someone.

GEOMANCY

Lovecraft also frequently uses geomantic references in his narratives. He does not adhere to any particular school of thought or approach of geomancy but rather implies that minions of the horrific unknown have their own systems, and by exposure to it, humans become aware of their presence. He was certainly familiar with the classic depictions of geomancy found in popular texts such as the *Arabian Nights*, a well-thumbed copy of which was found in his private library. He also appears to have been acquainted with the essential idea of Feng Shui, that energies or atmospheres can be effected/affected by the manner in which buildings are built or placed.¹² Lovecraft expresses the view that buildings with mixed architecture, i.e. displaying two or more styles, were particularly indicative of degenerate inhabitants who may live within. This degraded essence can then spread to vegetation and even rocks and other geological features, as if the haunted energy of a domicile can cause a contagion or taint to despoil nature itself.

¹² See Harms, *The Encyclopedia Cthulhiana* 7-8, and Joshi, "Lovecraft's Library," in *Primal Sources*, 932.

Obviously, from a literary perspective, this provides a sense of foreboding for the reader, but it also acts as a mechanism of warning to protagonists who are said to encounter physical features such as “[g]orges and ravines of problematical depth,” as described in “The Dunwich Horror,” and from such intuit the unnatural characteristics of a nearby village (675). In another example found in “The Nameless City,” ruins reveal themselves as non-human in origin because the explorer who describes them says “There were certain *proportions* and *dimensions* in the ruins which I did not like” (166). Earlier in this same story, somehow “Fear spoke from the age-worn stones” (165) as if the geological features themselves could give utterance to ancient histories and traumas.

In “The Rats in the Walls,” the young narrator has just inherited the rights to an ancient estate, Exham Priory, which is infamous for its decrepit and haunted nature and has been abandoned for several centuries. The estate’s worth had passed to the Crown, which barely maintained it; for a small price, even though it was an entitled holding, it had to be purchased back by the heir, a deal which he soon came to regret. He planned on restoring the place, but soon came to know of its dark history.

I deduced that Exham Priory stood on the site of a prehistoric temple; a Druidical or ante-Druidical thing which must have been contemporary with Stonehenge. That indescribable rites had been celebrated there, few doubted; and there were unpleasant tales of the transference of these rites into the Cybele-worship which the Romans had introduced. (259)

And the pagan rituals had not ceased with the Romans, but had continued right on through the Anglo-Saxon period, the Norman invasion, and beyond, with chapels of every subsequent religion and people built on top of the previous, until the entire site constituted a vast syncretic mélange of history, dark rites, and demonic predecessors who were said to abduct, sacrifice and consume villagers as part of their vile worship. “They represented my ancestors as a race of hereditary daemons beside whom Gilles de Retz and the Marquis de Sade would seem the veriest tyros [...]” (260). In this instance, the evidence was built right into the walls and gardens of the estate itself, while inside, a vast predatory horde of rats awaited the entrance of any curious visitor.

In “At the Mountains of Madness,” one of Lovecraft’s most famous novellas, known principally for its lengthy description of an alternative prehistory of Earth that has also been a primary source for the Cthulhu Mythos, the main narrator describes his first encounters with the topography and geological features of Antarctica. He found the mountains beautiful and yet troubling: “Something about the scene reminded me of the strange and disturbing Asian paintings of Nicholas Roerich, and of the still stranger and

more disturbing descriptions of the evilly fabled plateau of Leng which occur in the dreaded *Necronomicon* of the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred" (779). The mountains appeared to the narrator to be hidden battlements of a long-lost kingdom of the damned, but not sleeping, Ancient Ones. And so they indeed turned out to be. Yet they were still only mountains, from which one could take rock borings and date them, which the explorers proceed to do, until they discover the underground entrance to the kingdom itself.

The explorers also find other kinds of 'geomantic' evidence in the form of strange marks which occur along with normal fossils in the borings and during excavations. "There was also a queer triangular, striated marking about a foot in greatest diameter which Lake pieced together from three fragments of slate brought up from a deep-blasted aperture" (782). The narrator regards it as probably a natural variation of shoreline rippling which can occur in sedimentary rock under great pressure but another explorer becomes obsessed and haunted by its appearance:

It seems he had pondered a great deal, and with alarmingly radical daring, over that triangular striated marking in the slate; reading into it certain contradictions in Nature and geological period which whetted his curiosity to the utmost, and made him avid to sink more borings and blastings in the west-stretching formation to which the exhumed fragments evidently belonged. (783)

And so the marks turned out to be the signs of something completely horrific and dangerous to humanity.

In many of Lovecraft's stories, the geomantic signs take the form of unknown marks found on the ground, on trees, or even on stones. In some cases, it is difficult for the protagonist to determine whether he is looking at a type of footprint, or some kind of sigil or hieroglyph. All he knows is that the unknown mark fills him with terror and a sense of some great impending doom—most precisely because of the mark's impenetrability. In "The Whisperer in Darkness," Dr. Wilmith becomes increasingly unhinged over the photographic evidence of the marks or footprints of alien fungoid creatures, reading into the "crabbed scratches" signs of a creature not of this earth, as if some essence of the being itself could be read from simple marks left behind. Dr Wilmith's reaction to the traces of the Migo is not dissimilar to what is reported by individuals who believe that they have discovered evidence of Bigfoot or the Dogman in their local woods. A physical trace left behind is proof of something miraculous and terrible. Similarly, in "At the Mountains of Madness," it becomes evident to the entire expedition that the creatures that left the mysterious marks in primordial slate are still alive and making more recent marks which they leave around their hidden city in the Antarctic.

ASTROLOGY

Although Lovecraft does not seem to regard astrologers with any respect (along with his similar distaste of most psychics and mediums), his stories appear, at least in the broadest sense, to see astrological or planetary configurations as being possibly significant—at least insofar as celestial movements provide opportunities for the opening of heretofore unknown star portals. Aspects of astrology, astronomy, or at least the significance of important alignments of certain stars and planets, are mentioned in several stories. It is commonly said that Cthulhu will awaken and the Ancients will return “when the stars are right.” However, the signs seen in the sky are also averred to be of unnatural or unusual type, and so there seems to be the implication that the common practices of astrology may predict an event, such as the return of the Ancient Ones, but nothing can be done to prevent a terrible outcome. On the other hand, what is seen in the sky may be so at variance with expectation, that no prediction is possible other than disaster, as in the case of a meteor.¹³

In his famous story “The Colour Out of Space,” Lovecraft’s narrator describes a hidden valley, somewhere in upstate New York, that has been blighted by the descent of a strange meteorite which fell during daylight hours into the local woods, accompanied by strange sounds and smoke. The closest inhabitants to the location, a farmer and his family, went out to investigate and found a strange stone, and, in the manner of all silly primates, brought it home. It turned out to be the ‘pod’ of an alien collective which slowly takes over the farm, seemingly through the water courses, by settling in the well, invading the minds of the family, driving them mad, poisoning the cattle, and polluting the ground itself. The most damning thing about the creature(s) is that they evidence themselves in brilliant patterns of color which are quite seductive to humans.

As the creature(s) reach the point where the farm, its inhabitants, and the immediate surrounding land are almost consumed, and the protagonist has gathered a posse to see what, if anything might be done to destroy the creature(s), the lights at the bottom of the well join together to re-ascend into the heavens. The celestial spheres, including the moon, appear to be transformed in the process as the Colors shoot themselves into space. However, it becomes clear, soon enough, that not all the beings have left—as there is a bit of blight that continues to spread around the farm, and, according to the narrator there was even “something wrong with the sunlight I saw above that miasmal brink.” Something about the alien creature changed the order of the universe itself, as evidenced by changes in the sky, moon and sun (660).

¹³ Lovecraft apparently knew enough about astrology that he wrote to newspapers complaining about horoscopes printed therein (Harms and Gonce 97).

It is more correct to say that Lovecraft was interested in the stars because he was fascinated with aliens and the huge unknown universe beyond earth that astronomy seems to suggest. This interest of his is an important source of what is often called "Lovecraft's cosmicism" (Moore xi-xiii), which was an expression of his atheism: that there is no divine power overseeing the universe, there is only the vastness of the cosmos itself, impossible for humans to understand in its totality. In a sense, the horror experienced by his protagonists comes from the realization of their smallness and ignorance when confronted with the immensity of more powerful forces that need not and do not take human concerns into account.

Many of Lovecraft's stories are filled with astronomical details and measurements, indicating that he was widely read on the subject. And true to form, his fictional approach to celestial objects is far from simply scientific. An example of this can be seen in another early story, "Polaris," in which he uses the precession of the equinoxes (a natural movement of the earth which results in the Pole Star changing every 26,000 years) to describe how his narrator confronts a perceived negativity of the present pole star. He finds the star personally repellant and says about it that the "Pole Star [...] leers down from the black vault, winking hideously like an insane watching eye which strives to convey some strange message" (38). The narrator discovers that he is really reliving past lives from 26,000 years ago when a different star held sway in that position.

In "The Dreams in the Witchhouse," the evil sorcerer at the heart of the narrative is really a master alien scientist, who knows how to apply mathematical formulas to space and the stars so profoundly that she seems to work magic. She uses that knowledge to create what amounts to a kind of wormhole (although Lovecraft does not use that term—as it had not yet been coined) and escapes to a distant planet in a triple star system far away. In this story, there may be secrets in the stars, but they cannot be read correctly or completely through processes of either superstition or science. Lovecraft seems to imply that the universe is so large, varied, and probably unlike us, that there is no sure way that we can hope to understand it in totality. We can only observe, wonder, and occasionally duck, although some, like the evil sorcerer, may determine enough of its verities to exhibit amazing powers and put them to personal use. Maybe.

Lovecraft's personal beliefs toward divinatory practices notwithstanding, many of his admiring fans, including individuals in his private circle who elaborated on aspects of the Cthulhu Mythos, often developed occult and spiritual themes and storylines which were more accepting of such activities. By way of example, Robert Bloch, an early contributor to the "Mythos," and who later became well-known in his own right, wrote a short

story "The Shambler from the Stars," in which he introduces another Ancient One, Byatis, who together with the serpent Yig and "dark Han," are considered to be the "gods of divination" for those gods in exile (373). It is their task to read the signs, so that when the stars align correctly, they can help open the gates and allow the dark minions to rule the Earth again.

In the brilliant HBO movie spoof, *Cast a Deadly Spell* (1991), the witch Hypolite Kropotkin, played admirably by Arnetta Walker, is one of the few humans who can read the baleful planetary signs correctly. "All of the wrong planets will be in the right place at the wrong time," she says to the character H.P. Lovecraft, who, in this instance is a scrabbling private detective, and after warning him declares that if she had more money she would "surely be in Miami."¹⁴ More recently the collection *Lovecraft's Monsters* features Neil Gaiman's tale "Only The End of the World Again," in which Madame Ezekiel, Tarot reader and palmist, seems to be the only person who understands the dark dreams and fears of the protagonist, although she can't save him or herself from the nightmare.

OCCULT SYSTEMS

In the same vein, writer and occultist Donald Tyson has created a system of ritual magic which draws heavily from both Lovecraft and the *Simon Necronomicon*, an alleged translated Greek-Babylonian grimoire which has become popularly associated with a book of occult secrets mentioned by Lovecraft in many of his stories. While Lovecraft insisted the book called *Necronomicon*, which he describes in several stories, is purely fictional, many individuals have come to believe that the *Simon* text is either actually the book mentioned, or a clever hoax written to capitalize on Lovecraft's notoriety. Peter Levenda, who has written extensively about the use of Lovecraft in the development of occultist Kenneth Grant's "Typhonian Current," has also complicated the picture for many occultists drawing on Lovecraft, by insisting that Lovecraft may have been inspired by an actual ancient text. According to Levenda, the anonymous author of the *Simon Necronomicon* "borrowed" an ancient scroll when he (and Levenda) came across it while covertly inspecting a cache of antiquities that had been delivered to one of the New York occult bookstores they frequented in the early seventies. It turned out to actually bear the inscribed title of *Necronomicon*. Through a complex tale of synchronicities and associations, Levenda encourages his listeners to consider the possibility

¹⁴ This movie has become a cult classic and stars Fred Ward, Clancy Brown, David Warner, and Julianne Moore. It spoofs everything from Lovecraft to Mickey Spillane, the movie *Gremlins* to Cole Porter songs. Although it has never been released on DVD, it has gained a repetitive life on *YouTube* where people continuously upload it in spite of copyright censors.

that Lovecraft himself may have had access to this very scroll earlier in earthly time and space.¹⁵

In any case, Tyson has created a magical system that is popular enough, and in Tyson's eyes, "effective enough," that the principle texts have remained in print ever since. In his system, the dark powers of the West, ruled by Dagon (the aforementioned Ancient One and the name of a deity who was actually worshipped in Mesopotamia), oversees the powers of divination, prophecy, and clairvoyance. Basically, Dagon will make you a better Tarot card reader if you approach him correctly through the ritual processes Tyson outlines.¹⁶

Lovecraft's appeal to occultists, especially considering his own materialism, may seem very strange to some people. John Engle, in "Cults of Lovecraft," appears to believe that occultists are apparently the "sort of people who would likely not respond in any meaningful way to a demonstration of Lovecraft's true views," as if they are somehow either unaware of, or unaffected by them (96). This is, at best, a gross simplification, if not misunderstanding, of the occult quest generally, at least insofar as many occultists have actually described their own endeavors. One of the best counter-examples to Engle's assertion is the work, both creative and magical, of the occultist Don Webb, who has been a High Priest in the Temple of Set, the best-known offshoot of the Church of Satan begun by Anton LeVay, and who is also a relatively well-known writer of Lovecraftian themed fiction.¹⁷

¹⁵ Despite Levenda's "muddying of the Lovecraftian waters," his overall analysis of Grant's attempt to form a magical synthesis of Crowley and Lovecraft is very good and his exegesis of Crowley's magical project is probably the best introduction available in English. References to possible Lovecraft/*Necronomicon* historical synchronicities are scattered throughout the same analysis. A succinct version via interview of this account is "Finding the Simon Necronomicon," and a longer interview, "The Dark Lord: H.P. Lovecraft & Necronomicon," is also available. I am quite skeptical of Levenda's claim for any number of reasons.

¹⁶ Donald Tyson has created his own magical construction using both Lovecraft and materials found in the *Simon Necronomicon*. *The 13 Gates of the Necronomicon* and the *Grimoire of the Necronomicon* are the two ritual texts. Others in this series tell the imaginary story of Abdul Alhazred, Lovecraft's fictional Arab outcast who alone has compiled a dossier of the damned: the rituals that will summon the Ancient Ones from their celestial slumbering exile. In the wider sense, one might consider Tyson's project to be an extension of the "Cthulhu Mythos," which, no doubt, goes quite beyond what Lovecraft probably intended or envisioned.

¹⁷ Webb's most recent Lovecraftian fictional offering is *Through Dark Angles*. A recent discussion of the use and importance of Lovecraftian material in his occult workings can be found in his online interview of the same title.

Webb is thoroughly versed in Lovecraft's history, philosophy and world-view and is, himself, 'atheistic' and scientific, in the sense that he agrees with the basic tenets of Lovecraft's cosmicism. For Webb, Lovecraft was a genius in creatively articulating the deep unconscious desires, fears, and atavistic creative tendencies of the human psyche. He sees Lovecraft as having many of the same insights as the infamous magician Aleister Crowley, who anticipated Freud in understanding "the dangers of [psychological] repression" (*Overthrowing* 267). Repression and denial of impulses leads to unhealthy, imbalanced projection onto others (215). This approach would seem to fall in line with Lovecraft's admonition in *In Defence of Dagon*, when he cautions his critics thusly: "We may not like to accept Freud, but I fear we shall have to do so" (*Defence* 17). In this sense, for Webb, occultists are using Lovecraft precisely because he has crafted such intriguing portraits of subconscious projection and because he freely admits to his own contrary impulses, as noted in his observational confession of having a "tripartite" nature earlier in this essay. Webb's occult use of Lovecraft is based on a nuanced knowledge of the man and of his material, and while it is probably true that not every consumer of Tyson's or Webb's occultism is a similar expert, academic critics would do well to acquaint themselves more fully with communities who creatively utilize Lovecraft's materials before breezily making pronouncements about their collective knowledge and motivations.

Webb does part company with Lovecraft regarding the absolute unreliability of intuitional knowledge, but that is the result of his personal experiences of ritual and creative work, not due to ignorance of Lovecraft's conclusions or predilections.¹⁸ It is quite possible for intelligent, informed people to disagree about these kinds of issues, as Lovecraft well knew. From an academic perspective, it is generally a useful scholarly endeavor to actually seek out individuals with whom one might disagree in order to make sure one really understands where they are coming from; such a practice is not sloppy thinking or overly broad ecumenicism, but rather thorough scholarship and simple courtesy. The fact that Lovecraft did that kind of thing himself, at least through the agency of correspondence with interested author comrades, should be salutary example enough. There are many additional ways in which literary analysis of Lovecraft's work may proceed, but when scholars are actually approaching community uses of mythopoeic literature, it is wise to consult the communities in question directly as part of the process.

¹⁸ Webb is quite articulate in expressing how important Lovecraft has been to his work. His most recent remarks on this and related issues can be found in an interview on "The Outsider."

Lovecraft portrayed occult and divination practices, such as he understood them, as genuine, if benighted, attempts by humans to join with unknown, universal powers that promised immortality, wealth, health, or worldly status. Despite his narrative and personal distaste for them, such practitioners are always portrayed as true, if deluded, seekers. In Lovecraft's fiction, the fact that beings invoked by occultists, such as Cthulhu and Nyarlathotep, are deceitful and would consume their followers in some way is also part of the horror, part of his larger point. For Lovecraft, the cold, implacable forces that rule the universe are simply too vast to be fully explicable in human terms. At the same time, it is precisely the inexplicable that drives the occult fascination to understand, and in this regard, occultists are not that different, or doomed, from scientists, at least in Lovecraft's stories.¹⁹ The hope of each occultist or scientist is, in part, to understand and harness the enabling powers necessary to become like the sorcerer mentioned earlier in "Dreams in the Witchhouse," and in this, for Lovecraft, they are both deeply mistaken to even try.²⁰

Lovecraft's fictional point about divination is not that it might not work occasionally; it is that, ultimately, divination, by whatever means, does not really matter. You can come to know the future and it will still destroy you in the end. In that sense, Lovecraft seemed to view practices such as divination and scientific experimentation in much the same light. Humans are trying to discern patterns of cause and effect whereby they might come to understand, predict, and possibly control the future. In Lovecraft's fiction, the projects of both medium and scientist are doomed to fail because the universe is too large to be explicated and understood by human reason and/or intuition. Furthermore, the larger powers of the Universe have no concerns for humans on their own terms and are so different from us that they cannot really be meaningful subjects of study or worship. The questions of meaning that drive human inquiry, in the larger scheme of things, are literally of no ultimate consequence. The whole existential basis for Lovecraft's horror lies in his various protagonists discovering this, in one way or another, over and over again, and with few exceptions, not being able to do anything about it. Some of his characters come to accept this state of affairs and others do not. The summation of Lovecraft's view is best seen in one of his most famous quotations, taken from "The Call of Cthulhu":

¹⁹ This is explained in great detail in John Steadman's *H.P. Lovecraft: The Master of Horror's Influence on Modern Occultism*. See especially Chapter 1 for a rather sophisticated psychological explanation of what occultists are attempting with regard to Lovecraft.

²⁰ The ambivalent nature of this impulse can be seen even in the late Stephen Hawking's warning about the danger of "alien" life and his simultaneous ongoing project to discover it (Lineweaver).

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age. (381)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bloch, Robert. "Shambler from the Stars." *Weird Tales*. September 1935, pp. 368-375. <https://chadschimke.wordpress.com/2017/02/20/the-shambler-from-the-stars-by-robert-bloch-pdf/>
- Cast a Deadly Spell*. Directed by Martin Campbell, performances by Fred Ward, David Warner, Julianne Moore, Home Box Office, 1991.
- Engle, John. "Cults of Lovecraft: The Impact of H.P. Lovecraft's Fiction on Contemporary Occult Practices." *Mythlore*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2014, pp. 85-98.
- Field, Ross. "Dumbledore's Death in the Style of HP Lovecraft." *The Guardian*, 7 July 2005. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/jul/07/harrypotter.jkjoannekathleenrowling>
- "Finding the Simon Necronomicon." *TheLipTV*, 30 Nov. 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMMrqUS8-As>.
- Gaiman, Neil. "Only the End of the World Again." *Lovecraft's Monsters*, edited by Ellen Datlow, Tachyon, 2014, pp. 17-34.
- Galand, René "The Wounded Ego of H.P. Lovecraft." Wellesley College, 1999. <https://repository.wellesley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=frenchfaculty>. French Faculty Scholarship. Paper 12.
- Grant, Kenneth. *The Nightside of Eden*. Skoob, 1995.
- Harms, Daniel. *The Cthulhu Mythos Encyclopedia*. 3rd edition. Elder Signs, 2008.
- . *The Encyclopedia Cthulhiana*, 2nd Ed. Chaosium, 1998.
- and John Wisdom Gonce III. *The Necronomicon Files: The Truth Behind Lovecraft's Legend*. Weiser, 2003.
- The H.P. Lovecraft Archive*. 1998-2018, <http://www.hplovecraft.com>.
- "H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Gets the Anime Treatment." *Dangerous Minds*, 29 Sept. 2016. http://dangerousminds.net/comments/h.p._lovecrafts_cthulhu_gets_the_anime_treatment
- Joshi, S.T. *H.P. Lovecraft: A Life*. Necronomicon, 1996.
- . *I am Providence: The Life and Times of H.P. Lovecraft*. 2 vol. Hippocampus, 2010.
- . *Primal Sources: Essays on H.P. Lovecraft*. Hippocampus, 2003.
- . *A Subtler Magick: The Writings and Philosophy of H. P. Lovecraft*. Borgo, 1996.

- Levenda, Peter. *The Dark Lord: H.P. Lovecraft, Kenneth Grant and the Typhonian Tradition in Magic*. Ibis, 2013.
- . "The Dark Lord: H.P. Lovecraft & Necronomicon." *Church of Mabus Radio*, 30 March 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RU6SHRPPZBQ>.
- Lineweaver, Charley. "Why Stephen Hawking is Right to Urge Caution Before Contacting Alien Civilizations." *Newsweek*, 22 Nov. 2016, <http://www.newsweek.com/stephen-hawking-aliens-space-extraterrestrial-communication-523935>.
- Kracker, Dave. "Facts Concerning the Late H.P. Lovecraft and his Fandom." *Ceiling Gallery*, 21 Aug. 2016, <http://www.ceiling-gallery.com/blog/2016/8/19/lovecraft>.
- Lovecraft, H.P. "Beyond the Wall of Sleep." *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*. Chartwell, 2016, pp. 39-48.
- . *The Classic Horror Stories*, ed. by Roger Luckhurst with critical and historical commentary. Oxford, 2013.
- . "The Call of Cthulhu." *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*. Chartwell, 2016, pp. 381-407.
- . "The Colour Out of Space." *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*. Chartwell, 2016, pp. 637-661.
- . *Dagon and Other Macabre Tales*, edited by S. T. Joshi, Arkham House, 1986.
- . *In Defence of Dagon*. Necronomicon, 1985.
- . "The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath." *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*. Chartwell, 2016, pp. 439-525.
- . "The Dreams in the Witchhouse." *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*. Chartwell, 2016, pp. 924-56.
- . "The Dunwich Horror." *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*. Chartwell, 2016, pp. 674-712.
- . "At the Mountains of Madness." *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*. Chartwell, 2016, pp. 776-865.
- . "The Nameless City." *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*. Chartwell, 2016, pp. 165-175.
- . "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction." 1933. <http://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/essays/nwwf>.
- . "Polaris." *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*. Chartwell, 2016, pp. 35-38.
- . "The Rats in the Walls." *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*. Chartwell, 2016, pp. 257-73.
- . "The Terrible Old Man." *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*. Chartwell, 2016, pp. 87-89.
- . "The Strange High House in the Mist." *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*. Chartwell, 2016, pp. 420-27.
- . "The Whisperer in Darkness." *The Complete Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft*. Chartwell, 2016, pp. 718-75.

- Moore, Alan. "Introduction." *The New Annotated H.P. Lovecraft*, edited by Leslie S. Klinger, Liveright, 2014, pp. xi-xiii.
- Nevins, Jess. "To Understand the World is to be Destroyed by It." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 5 May 2013, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/to-understand-the-world-is-to-be-destroyed-by-it-on-h-p-lovecraft/>.
- Oates, Joyce Carol. "The King of Weird." *The New York Times Review of Books*, 31 Oct. 1996, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1996/10/31/the-king-of-weird/>.
- Steadman, John L. *H.P. Lovecraft: The Master of Horror's Influence on Modern Occultism*. Wieser, 2015.
- Tyson, Donald. *The 13 Gates of the Necronomicon: A Workbook of Magic*. Llewellyn, 2010.
- Webb, Don. "The Outsider [interview]." United Public Radio, 29 Sept. 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJsTnT0iPhg>.
- . *Through Dark Angles*. Hippocampus, 2014.
- . "Through Dark Angles: Works Inspired by H.P. Lovecraft." *Church of Mabus Radio*, 28 Jan. 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeTulDNwP7U>.
- and Michael Aquino. *Overthrowing the Old Gods: Aleister Crowley and the Book of the Law*. Inner Traditions, 2013.
- Wohleber, Curt. "The Man Who Can Scare Stephen King." *American Heritage*, vol. 46, no. 8, Dec. 1995, pp. 82-90.

CAROL MATTHEWS earned her Ph.D. in American Studies and is an independent scholar specializing in American religious/spiritual movements and the paranormal in popular culture. She currently lives in the Mid-Hudson Valley, New York where she writes, teaches history and social science at local colleges, and does data analysis for non-profits.

