

The Network of Cthulhu 8

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Abstract

The Call of Cthulhu by H.P. Lovecraft, which shifts the focus of Gothic literature from the human to the cosmic, necessitates an analysis that transcends traditional interpretations of monsters. This study aims to add depth to horror literature by examining the Cthulhu mythos, by applying Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *field* and *habitus*, and Bruno Latour's *Actor-Network Theory*. The study establishes an efficient dialogue between the text and social theory by analysing the concrete scenes in the story, such as Wilcox's dreams, R'lyeh's architecture and cult rituals. Through the swamp flower and sand snake metaphors, themes of the deceptive allure of knowledge and the inherent deceptive reality are explored. The study's fundamental premise is that Cthulhu is not merely a monster, but an entity that destabilises human-constructed meaning (science, religion, art) and functions as an obligatory passage point in a network of non-human actors (sculpture, dreams). In this sense, how Cthulhu's human centre fragments the world will be revealed through Bourdieu's tools and Latour's relational network analysis. Ultimately, it is argued that Cthulhu functions as a metaphor for the modern individual's presence in the universe, a denial of his arrogance and confrontation with cosmic scarcity. This interdisciplinary approach positions Cthulhu as more than a monster, but a powerful metaphor for modern humans' confrontation with cosmic insignificance. This study aims to bring Gothic literature research into an interdisciplinary dialogue with social theory.

Introduction

Since its birth in the eighteenth century, Gothic literature has depicted the chilling world of castles, shadows, and human frailties that lurk in the dark recesses of the human mind. Initially lurking behind haunted castles, the threat gradually evolved into the monster within, and then, like Frankenstein's creature, into the *other* ostracised by society. However,

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by the twentieth century, writers like H.P. Lovecraft radically shifted the focus of Gothic horror from the psychological and social to the cosmic and existential. The symbol of this new fear is finding oneself surrounded not by the walls of a fortress-like castle of the mind, but by the deep, indifferent darkness of a vast and indifferent universe. The most iconic representation of this cosmic gothic and modern horror is undoubtedly Lovecraft's 1928 work, *The Call of Cthulhu*.

This kind of disengagement by Lovecraft is not limited to only one work; it is the product of a philosophical foundation called Cosmic Horror that spreads throughout its vast mythos. For example, in his work *At the Mountains of Madness*, an ancient civilisation discovered in Antarctica reveals *forbidden knowledge* that fundamentally shakes human history and our place in the universe. Similarly, the threat or evil in *The Shadow over Innsmouth* goes beyond social alienation to a cosmic invasion of one's own biological origins and integrity. The Call of Cthulhu is located at the centre of this Cosmic Horror as it brings together the themes that are found scattered throughout other works (ancient beings, the fragility of the human mind, the danger of forbidden knowledge) and weaves them around the concrete presence of the sleeping devil, Cthulhu. From this, the analysis of Cthulhu refers to comprehending not just one story. It is the essence of Lovecraft's entire horror universe.

This chapter aims to examine the Cthulhu mythos within the context of Pierre Bourdieu's *field* theory and Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT). It goes beyond traditional Gothic monster interpretations. Among the fundamental questions are: What does an entity like Cthulhu actually *want*? What categories and structures of humanity does it disregard and how does this disregard contribute to making it a *monster*? And ultimately, what does this cosmic monster suggest about humanity's place in the universe, its knowledge systems, and its beliefs?

Bourdieu's concept of field views society as a series of structured spaces in which actors struggle within the framework of specific rules, types of capital, and habitus. This study will demonstrate how the scientific, religious, and artistic fields established by humanity collapse or become meaningless in the face of Cthulhu's presence. Cthulhu is an *external entity* that refuses to belong to any of these spaces; in fact, it fundamentally undermines the very search for reason, causality, and meaning that underpin them. Its *call* is a manifestation that invades these stable spaces, shattering human habitus—our ways of understanding and conceiving the world.

Actor Network Theory, on the other hand, underlines the significance

of the roles that the nonhuman entities, such as sculptures, dreams, texts, and myths in the story, act as active actors in social networks. Rather than a solitary monster, Cthulhu is the *obligatory passage point* of a vast network that brings together cults that worship him, sculptures depicting him, artists' dreams, and researchers' notes. Within this network, human actors unknowingly become elements that fuel this cosmic entity's power and mediate its dissemination.

To enhance this analysis, thematic parallels between the demonic figures in religious mythologies and the type of evil symbolised by Cthulhu will also be investigated. Characteristics such as the desire to mislead people from the truth, cloud their judgment, and undermine stable belief systems emerge as common denominators that bring these two figures closer together. However, this connection will not be considered a direct equation, but rather a parallel that suggests reflection on the metaphorical representations of *evil* and *deviation* throughout human history.

This chapter, therefore, examines Cthulhu not simply as the monster of a horror story, but as an agent who transgresses the boundaries of our anthropocentric world, disrupts our spaces in the Bourdieusian sense, and wields unimaginable power within our nonhuman networks in the Latourian sense. Ultimately, this examination aims to demonstrate how the monster of Gothic literature can illuminate modern man's deepest existential fears.

Theoretical Framework

The tools that the scholars use for literary criticism are not enough to go through *The Call of Cthulhu* as it has totally changed the understanding of horror in Gothic literature. The mythos is mainly made up of themes like cosmic fear and post-human existence. So, a combination of sociological and philosophical frameworks is required. Therefore, the two distinguished theoretical approaches in the field are chosen: Pierre Bourdieu's *field* theory and Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT), and they will be the basis of the study. These theories will enable us to understand Cthulhu as a force that invades the meaning universes constructed by humans, moving beyond being merely an element of horror. After introducing the basic concepts of both theories, it will be shown how these concepts synergise to analyse the Cthulhu mythos.

Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory conceptualises social life as structured *fields* in which actors struggle around specific rules, values, and practices (Bourdieu, 1993). A field is shaped by a belief system (doxa) that is valid within it and shared by actors, and by the types of capital (economic,

cultural, social, and symbolic) that are operative within that field. Bourdieu (1977) introduced the concept of *habitus* as the enduring structures that individuals acquire within these fields, which embody their dispositions to perceive, evaluate, and conceive of the world. Another concept that supplements the structure is *doxa*. Doxa refers to the fundamental beliefs and assumptions within a field that are unquestionably accepted and that are indisputable (Bourdieu, 1977). Humanity's scientific and religious spheres are built upon a doxa that the universe is rationally understandable or has an anthropocentric meaning. Cthulhu's existence works precisely by shattering this doxa. Habitus is, in a sense, both the product and the producer of an individual's interaction with the social world; it governs the dialectic between social structure and individual action.

In the analysis of the Cthulhu mythos, Bourdieu's conceptual framework is of critical importance in demonstrating how the human world of meaning is fundamentally shaken. Humanity has constructed various domains such as science, religion, art, and law, making a seemingly chaotic reality understandable and manageable. Cthulhu, however, belongs to none of these domains; it exists outside, beyond them, in a completely alien position. Its existence fundamentally invalidates the principles of causality, measurability, and empirical verifiability that form the foundation of science; the spiritual solace, moral framework, and relationship with the sacred offered by religion; and the ultimate goal of art: the creation of meaning, beauty, and aesthetic expression (Bourdieu, 1993). In this context, the fear emanating from Cthulhu stems not from a simple physical threat but rather from its invasion of these stable domains, completely disrupting human habitus—that is, the ability to understand, interpret, and act upon the world. This process can be interpreted as a manifestation of Bourdieu's concept of *symbolic violence* on a cosmic scale. Bourdieu (1990) states that “symbolic violence is the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with their complicity”. Hence, it operates the imposition of meaning and thought structures by presenting social order as natural and inevitable. By researching, inspecting and trying to understand its existence, the victims (artists, inspectors, researchers) actually become the collaborators in this violence.

Taking a step further within the Bourdieusian framework, it is possible to interpret the cult that worships Cthulhu as a deviant counter-field positioned outside legitimate religious spheres (Bourdieu, 1971). This counter-field has its own doxa (the belief in Cthulhu's awakening), rituals, and form of capital (the proximity to the power of magic and to non-human beings). The symbolic capital found in traditional religious fields (e.g., religious authority, piety) is of no value here. This deviant field embodies the threat to the

stability of the fields, functioning as a tumour within the meaningful world constructed by humanity, yet rejecting all its rules. Bourdieu's theory has been exposed to criticism from structuralism and determinism. In particular, it has been argued that individuals are overdetermined by habitus, and the possibility of change or resistance is underemphasized (e.g., Jenkins, 1992). However, in this study, this *structural* emphasis is used consciously to show how the habitus experiences disintegration and helplessness in the face of a completely unstructured and overwhelming entity like Cthulhu. In this way, the stability of field and habitus is valid only until a non-human reality is encountered.

Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT) offers a radical critique of the anthropocentric approach in the social sciences by defining the social as a network composed not only of humans but of all interconnected entities and forces, including objects, technologies, texts, organisms, and discourses (Latour, 2005). According to the theory, anything (human or non-human) has the capacity to act and to make a difference within a network. Anything can be included in the network and considered an *actor* or *actant*. Latour emphasises the ability of non-intentional entities to act, and so he commonly employs the terms *actant* and *actor* (Latour, 2005). This distinction allows us to grasp how non-human entities, such as Cthulhu sculptures and the character's dreams, play critical roles in shaping the flow of action in the story, even if they have no intention to act. They are crucial parts of the network: they help to mediate the spread of Cthulhu and maintain its existence as *actants*. Another crucial concept is the "obligatory passage point", which was put forward by Michel Callon (1986). This concept highlights the importance of the central position of the network: it is a must for all actors to interact or negotiate to fulfil their goals in it.

Actor Network Theory takes its roots from (is based on) Science and Technology Studies. Its main purpose is to observe how the scientific fact is built socially within the network by human or non-human actors as it is carried out in laboratories (Latour & Woolgar, 1986). From this point of view, the tools in Actor Network Theory can help us to observe and analyse how a *reality* (such as the subject research for Thurston, the object of belief for the cult, the physical experience for Johansen) is built, gains stability and spreads socially. *The Call of Cthulhu* is almost an ideal example to illustrate the principles of the Cthulhu Mythos. Cthulhu is not merely a single, isolated monster, but rather a posthuman actor at the centre of a vast and complex network that brings together cult members who worship him, sculptures depicting him, artists' dreams and visions, newspaper clippings,

academic research, and police reports. Each element in this network becomes an actor that feeds Cthulhu's existence and threat. In particular, the Cthulhu sculpture is not merely a passive work of art, but a powerful non-human actor that triggers the entire research process in the story, directs the characters' actions, and thus creates a significant impact (Latour, 2005). From Latourian perspective, Cthulhu becomes the *obligatory passage point* of this network; no character in the story—be they a detective, an artist, or a cult member—can live their story or achieve their goal without being part of this network woven by its presence (Callon, 1986). This situation reveals how evil or threat operates not as a personal and intentional hostility, but as an inevitable and spreading product of a relational network. However, the ANT has been criticised that it makes invisible the power relations, political context and normative stance by oversimplifying all in a network (Winner, 1993). This study does not ignore the criticism; rather, it utilises ANT's mapping power while analysing how the Cthulhu network fundamentally produces a relationship of domination. One of the main purposes of the study is to uncover this asymmetric power dynamic underlying the seemingly neutral structure of the network.

Bourdieu and Latour's approaches complement each other perfectly when understanding the Cthulhu mythos. While Bourdieu explains how Cthulhu destabilises the structural fields (science, religion, art) that constitute human worlds of meaning and fragments the habitus (the human cognitive map), Latour shows how this structural disruption spreads through concrete, relational networks, becomes embodied, and is embodied through non-human actors (sculpture, dreams). Bourdieu's fields help us understand Cthulhu's goals, while Latour's networks help us understand how it achieves them. Together, the two theories offer the opportunity to read Cthulhu not as a mere element of fear, but as a multilayered phenomenon representing the existential crisis experienced by modern humans' search for meaning and their arrogance regarding their place in the universe when confronted with a posthuman reality.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design and aims to analyse a literary text in light of sociological theories. The primary methods of the research are text analysis and theoretical application. In the first step, the story *The Call of Cthulhu* is examined in detail in the context of its departure from traditional Gothic monster representations and the elements of cosmic horror. In the second step, the key concepts of Pierre Bourdieu's field theory and Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (field, habitus, capital, non-

human actor, obligatory passage point, network) are introduced. Hence, the aim is to demonstrate how these concepts can provide a framework for literary analysis.

The analytical framework was applied in two stages: First, from a Bourdieusian perspective, it was demonstrated how Cthulhu destabilises the scientific, religious, and artistic domains of humanity and how it fragments the individual's habitus (schema for perceiving the world). Second, through a Latourian reading, the actor-network centred on Cthulhu (cult members, sculptures, dreams, newspaper clippings) was mapped, analysing how this posthuman entity became an *obligatory passage point* and how it functions as a relational power. The intersection of these two theoretical lenses allows us to grasp simultaneously both the structural and relational dimensions of the threat posed by the monster. This approach provides a chance to read or analyse a literary work through the prism of modern social theories, going beyond merely formal or thematic analyses.

Analysis

The Call of Cthulhu by H.P. Lovecraft challenges the traditional boundaries of gothic in literature. The source of fear shifts from the psychological and social to cosmic and existential dimensions. This radical shift requires analysing the story beyond traditional literary analysis methods and requires the involvement of other frameworks in fields such as sociology and philosophy. This analysis section will go beyond viewing Cthulhu as merely a monster figure, in light of Pierre Bourdieu's field theory and Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT). Our fundamental argument is that Cthulhu is a relational power (Latour) that structurally disrupts the fields of meaning constructed by humans (science, religion, art) (Bourdieu) and is simultaneously positioned at the centre of a vast network of non-human actors. These two theoretical lenses will help us to understand both what the Cthulhu myth destroys and how it exists through its actions.

Pierre Bourdieu's sociological conceptual framework allows us to grasp Cthulhu's threat to humanity's world of meaning at a structural level. Humanity has constructed domains such as science, religion, and art to bring order to chaos, developing a habitus (schemes for perceiving and conceiving the world) around the rules and forms of capital of these domains. Cthulhu, however, is an *external entity* that challenges this entire order.

The researchers in the story use every single tool of scientific methodology to understand the phenomenon which they encounter. Professor Angell's nephew shows a rational attitude while he is going through his uncle's notes.

Similarly, Inspector Legrasse shows the same attitude while he is searching for the deviant ritual in New Orleans as a phenomenon. However, every single piece of evidence they collect, such as sculptures, etymological connections, and statements by cult members, undermines the principle of causality, measurability, and empirical variability which underpin the scientific field. What they encounter is the reality that science cannot classify and explain. The result is not scientific data but is a dead-end that contributes to madness. Scientific habitus breaks into pieces by becoming completely dysfunctional in the face of this new reality. The researchers' effort to unravel the secret of Cthulhu can be understood through the metaphor of a *flower blooming in a swamp*. Like a traveller heading towards the beautiful and alluring flower in the middle of the swamp, Professor Angell's nephew and Inspector Legrasse are initially driven by the pure scientific curiosity and a thirst for discovery (What an interesting finding!). However, every single step brings them closer to the inevitable: mental collapse and madness. Even if the scientific realm seems like a safe and stable ground, it is actually a swamp filled with Cthulhu beneath it. Bourdieu's scientific habitus is an illusion that unknowingly leads one into the very heart of this deadly swamp.

The cult worshipping Cthulhu creates a deviant counter outside the legitimate religious field defined by Bourdieu (1971). In this counter-field, the spiritual solace and moral framework offered by traditional religions are replaced by the expectation that a non-human entity will awaken and bring chaos. The symbolic capital here is not traditional religious authority or piety, but proximity to the *great* and *ancient* power of Cthulhu and to have a grasp of its secrets. The statements of the cult members questioned by Legrasse, "We believe that in those ancient times the people of Great Cthulhu raised their cities..." (Lovecraft, 1928, p. 11) constitute the doctrine of this heretical belief. This counter-field functions like a tumour within humanity's meaningful religious universe, turning all its values upside down.

The field of art is traditionally seen as the highest expression of human creativity and sensitivity. However, Cthulhu invades this field too. The fact that sculptor Henry Wilcox *suffers from nightmares* and, based on nightmares, he creates the sculpture of Cthulhu that "no sane person could model" (Lovecraft, 1928, p. 4) is the radical distortion of the source of artistic inspiration. While the artist thinks he is chasing his muse, he is indeed feeding a destroyer waiting for him in the depths of his own mind. This indicates that the creative process and habitus in the field of art are captured and directed by a post-human power.

The Actor Network Theory by Latour shows how Cthulhu's structural

fragmentation operates through concrete, relational networks. Cthulhu is not a single entity on its own, but it is the centre of a heterogeneous network that involves various and numerous actors that attract and connect to Cthulhu. The components of this network include human actors (Investigator Thurston, Inspector Legrasse, sculptor Wilcox, cult members, sailor Gustaf Johansen) and non-human actors (Cthulhu sculpture, Wilcox's dreams and nightmares, Johansen's diary, press clippings, old texts). Even spatial actors like R'lyeh, *the unspoken city* in the Pacific Ocean act as active players within this network. This assemblage clearly demonstrates that the social is not limited to humans, but is collectively constructed by objects, texts, ideas and spaces. All of them act within a Cthulhu-centric network.

One of the most critical concepts in Latourian analysis is the "obligatory passage point" (Callon, 1986). Cthulhu is at the centre of all the research, exploration and escape attempts in the story and becomes an unavoidable focal point of encounter. Thurston, in his research beginning with his uncle's notes; Legrasse, in his investigation of heretical ritual; Johansen, as a crew member of a ship that accidentally approached R'lyeh, each arriving by different paths, they ultimately find themselves forced to confront Cthulhu. None of the characters can live their stories or achieve their goals without being a part of this web which is woven by its existence. This is evidence that Cthulhu operates as an inevitable and central product of a relational network rather than a personal adversary.

The Cthulhu sculpture is a perfect example that proves the stressed idea of *non-human actors* in ANT. The sculpture is not only a passive work of art or evidence. It actively affects all the research or investigation process and drives the characters' actions. Therefore, it is a powerful actor that creates an important effect. It is this sculpture that drives Wilcox to create it, that started Thurston's research, that became the focus of Legrasse's investigation. Just as Latour's (2005) example "You are different with a gun in your hand; the gun is different with you holding it" (p.71), the sculpture turns into a catalyst thanks to the relationship it establishes with researchers.

Cthulhu's invasion towards the human world of meaning starts in the dreams that are the most intimate area of the mind before the physical world. Sculptor Henry Wilcox's nightmares, made up of *great grey sheets of water; and timeless, formless silhouettes*, are Cthulhu's first and most insidious attack on human consciousness. These dreams serve a two-way function considering Bourdieu's theoretical framework and Latour's network analysis: They both perform a *foreground invasion* by distorting the individual's habitus before they confront the reality and constitute one of the first and most powerful

non-human actors, which is necessary for the expansion of the Cthulhu network.

From Bordieuan perspective, dreams are the first primary front of the invasion. Habitus for Bourdieu is a permanent structure formed as a result of individuals' concrete practices in the social world. However, Wilcox's case shows that this schema can be overturned by pre-experiential, direct, perceptual invasion. Dreams destroy the possibility of constituting a stable habitus from the very beginning, before they encounter real physical evidence. The artist's mind *prepares* for a posthuman entity or reality, and it is forced to express this entity through his art in the absence of any empirical data. The sculpture that Wilcox made is a concrete product of this *foreground invasion*. This process represents the silent and individual collapse of habitus that precedes the final collapse of the fields.

From Latourian perspective, on the other side, Wilcox's dreams are not only a psychological symptom but also one of the most effective non-human actors or actants. These dreams unearth a concrete component (sculpture actor) of the network by triggering the creation of the sculpture. The sculpture, later, launches Thurston's research and causes the network to widen even further. Dreams here function as a precursor of a catalyst, an *obligatory passage point*, that transmits, amplifies and activates the power of Cthulhu. What transforms Wilcox into a puppet is not a physical contact but the network relations that function through dreams. The fact that the other sensitive characters have similar dreams shows how common and systematic this transmission is. It is as the inspector Legrasse expresses "The sensitive persons in diverse parts of the world could and did dream very peculiar things during the nights of that period" (Lovecraft, 1928, p. 12). This proves that the dreams in the story are not an individual phenomenon but a part of a coordinated invasion and of a network that continuously widens.

Consequently, dreams in the Cthulhu mythos are an important crossroad for both Bourdieu's structural and Latour's relational analysis. They are a perfect demonstration of how a post-human reality/entity penetrates the most fundamental layers of human consciousness and starts destruction on both the individual (habitus) and collective (network) levels. Before the danger knocks on the door, the threat or devil has already penetrated or been welcomed through the dreams.

The threat or devil operates not only through dreams or individuals but also through the physical presence of a concrete space. R'lyeh is the unspoken city which lies deep in the Pacific Ocean, and which is the tomb of Cthulhu that has been dead but dreaming. However, R'lyeh is not a passive decor

or a simple city; it is an entity that transcends Bourdieu's concept of spatial field and that Latour might describe as an actor, that affects, transforms and acts on its own.

Spaces for Bourdieu are places (fields) that are the physical equivalents of fields where the social relations are produced and reproduced. Human beings organise the space in line with their own habitus, give meaning to it and establish dominance over it. R'lyeh completely reverses this relationship. The city Johansen and the crew came across has *immeasurable blocks of stones, walls that meet an unnatural angle and a non-Euclidean geometry* (Lovecraft, 1928, p. 21). This architecture completely destroys the habitus of people to perceive space and to find their way in it. R'lyeh rejects the symbolic dominance of humans over space and leads them into a physical and mental impasse. The nature of this threat is further clarified by the metaphor of the *sand snake*. R'lyeh, just like the snake in the desert that conceals itself in the sand and lures its prey with its flower-like tail, lurks beneath the ocean's seemingly calm surface. What Johansen and the crew see first is merely *an elevated landmass with unusual architecture* (the snake's deceptive tail). However, as they approach this *tail* (the visible space), the huge, vivid and deadly reality that lies beneath it emerges. Lovecraft's cosmos works likewise: the perceptual reality that human beings rely on is merely a deceptive surface, beneath which lie dormant dangers that the human mind cannot grasp. R'lyeh shows that the space/place itself is the ultimate deception. This is not the invasion of space but rather the space (field) itself becoming a threat.

From Latourian reading, R'lyeh is not just a scene; it is the most powerful non-human actor in the story. The rise of the city and its emergence on the ocean surface create an *obligatory passage point* that determines the actions of all other actors in the network (Johansen's ship, the crew, Cthulhu). Furthermore, the architecture of the city is an actor itself. Labyrinthine corridors, massive structures, and the unreasonable geometry guide the characters' movements, trap them, and finally force them to confront Cthulhu. The architecture functions not as an extension of Cthulhu's power, but as an independent actor working in alliance with it (Cthulhu). The existence of R'lyeh demonstrates how a space can be not only an object but also a subject that decides, directs and changes the outcomes within the network.

R'lyeh functions as a stress test for both Bourdieu and Latour's theories. It confronts Bourdieu's concept of social field with a non-human and superhuman space. It expands Latour's actor-network with an architectural

actor whose scale and power far exceed human understanding. R'lyeh, in the Cthulhu mythos, demonstrates that the thread comes from not a mere biological entity but from the very space where it lies dormant, alive, responsive and actively dangerous. This is the evolution of gothic horror from castles into a cosmic dimension where the castles themselves can come to life. In the Cthulhu mythos, the most radical manifestation of the collapse of human meaning worlds is experienced in language itself. Language, the primary means of human communication and information transfer, experiences a complete bankruptcy when confronted with Cthulhu, loses its symbolic capital and turns into a tool for madness.

Language, for Bourdieu, is not only a means of communication but also a form of symbolic capital. Individuals use language to position themselves in social spaces/fields, to persuade, to convey information and to establish authority. Yet, this capital becomes completely worthless in the face of Cthulhu. The adjectives that the characters use in the story to describe Cthulhu and his existence -*indescribable*, *unfathomable*, *formless*- point to the limits of language's expressive capacity. Language cannot conceptualise or classify this new reality and therefore loses its function as a symbolic force in the face of it. Wilcox's characterisation of his dreams as *ineffable* or Thurston's constant use of the phrase *ineffable* in his notes are evidence of the decline of language as a symbolic capital. This is not the invasion of a field but the destruction of the communication field itself.

From Latourian reading, the linguistic elements such as the name *Cthulhu*, the cursed texts in old manuscripts, and the mantra-like repetitions of the cult members are active actors in the Cthulhu network. These actors, however, cause the destruction of meaning rather than building it. Especially *forbidden texts*, rather than being a source of information, function like *mistranslation machines* that shatter the reader's mind and drive them to madness. Invented sound expressions like "*Hprida pnisgua'menter Cthulhu R'lyeh dwgn'inusty trnuiden*¹" do not convey meaning but spread directly like a mental virus. While these linguistic actors connect human actors to the Cthulhu network, they simultaneously disrupt their mental stability and ensure the stability of the network. Language here stops being a means of communication and becomes an instrument of dissolution and destruction.

The Cthulhu mythos calls into question the central role of language in human existence. When we encounter a reality, we cannot understand, even our most basic tool, language, becomes dysfunctional: Bourdieu's symbolic

1 This sentence represents a deliberate modification of the original sentence due to the author's personal ethical considerations.

capital evaporates, and in Latour's actor-networks, language transforms into a destructive power. This is not merely the indescribability of a monster, but the absolute defeat of language, the cornerstone of the human universe of meaning, in the face of a posthuman reality. Lovecraft's *fear* comes not from a nonhuman *entity* but from the abyss of meaninglessness, the desert of communication where *silence* and *scream* mean the same.

Conclusion

This study aims to transcend the boundaries of traditional gothic monster readings by examining H.P. Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu* in the light of Pierre Bourdieu's field theory and Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory. The resulting analysis moves Cthulhu beyond being a mere object of fear and allows us to position it as a multilayered phenomenon that invades human worlds of meaning at both structural and relational levels.

Bourdieu's theoretical framework helps us to reveal how Cthulhu destabilises the human worlds of meaning, such as science, art and religion. With the state of belonging to none of these fields, Cthulhu undermines the underlying doxa- the belief that the universe is understandable and human-centred. The fact that the scientific field is dysfunctional, the evolution of the religious field into a deviant counter-field and the capture of the artistic field by nightmares, reveals how stable structures become fragile in the face of a posthuman entity.

The synergy of the two theories is more meaningful with the metaphors *swamp flower* and *sand snake*. *Swamp flower* shows how even the noblest human efforts, such as scientific and artistic curiosity, may host traps. *Sand snake* prognosticates that the nature of reality might be fundamentally deceptive, that the danger might lurk in the most unexpected places, in the most innocent forms.

Last but not least, the Cthulhu mythos is a rejection of modern individuals' arrogance regarding their place in the universe, and it is a mirror that confronts them with cosmic insignificance. Lovecraft's genius lies in shifting the source of *fear* from the personal or social to a cosmic dimension that transcends human limitations and pushes the boundaries of human understanding. This study has demonstrated that Gothic literature can enter into an interdisciplinary dialogue with social theories and that a literary text can be a powerful tool to question the deepest existential questions about human beings. Cthulhu is not only a literary monster; it is the representation of the modern human's search for meaning and the darkness that lies within this search.

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