

The Origins of the Space Gods

**ANCIENT ASTRONAUTS
AND THE CTHULHU MYTHOS
IN FICTION AND FACT**

AUTHOR OF *THE CULT OF ALIEN GODS*

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The Origins of the Space Gods

Ancient Astronauts and the Cthulhu Mythos in Fiction and Fact

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The Cult of Alien Gods: H. P. Lovecraft and Extraterrestrial Pop Culture (Prometheus, 2005)

Knowing Fear: Science, Knowledge, and the Development of the Horror Genre (McFarland, 2008)

“A Hideous Bit of Morbidity” : An Anthology of Horror Criticism from the Enlightenment to World War I (McFarland, 2009)

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This ebook contains some material that originally appeared in the article “Charioteer of the Gods,” *Skeptic* 10.4 (2004).

Cover image: View SW over Manzanar, dust storm, Manzanar Relocation Center by Ansel Adams (Library of Congress).

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I. Aliens in the Mythos

ONE OF THE MOST dramatic ideas found in the Cthulhu Mythos is the suggestion that extraterrestrial beings arrived on earth in the distant past, were responsible for ancient works of monumental stone architecture, and inspired mankind's earliest mythologies and religions. In the 1970s, this basic premise was resurrected as the "ancient astronaut theory," a fringe hypothesis that gained widespread popularity thanks to Swiss hotelier Erich von Däniken's book *Chariots of the Gods?* (1968) and its television adaptation, *In Search of Ancient Astronauts* (1973), hosted by Rod Serling, of *Twilight Zone* fame. According to research done by Kenneth L. Feder, at the height of von Däniken's popularity in the 1970s and '80s one in four college students accepted the ancient astronaut theory, but twenty years later less than ten percent did (78). Though mainstream science does not recognize extraterrestrial intervention in human history, the theory continues to receive exposure on cable television documentaries, in magazines, and in a plethora of books.

Providence, Rhode Island author H.P. Lovecraft (1890-1937) has been justly hailed as a master of the horror story, and his work claims a place beside Edgar Allan Poe and Stephen King in the pantheon of the genre. Born into a wealthy family in 1890, Lovecraft's life was a series of reverses and declines as his family lost their fortune and his parents succumbed to madness. He was a precocious and self-taught scholar who read voraciously and devoured as much literature as he could read. He read the novels of H.G. Wells, whose *War of the Worlds* told of the coming of alien creatures to earth. He also read the eighteenth-century Gothic masters of horror, and above all Edgar Allan Poe. He also read works of pseudoscience and mysticism for inspiration.

When he set about writing his own works, he began to blend the modern world of science fiction with his favorite tales of Gothic gloom. Lovecraft tried to bring the Gothic tale into the twentieth century, modernizing the trappings of ancient horror for a new century of science. Lovecraft published his work in pulp fiction magazines, notably *Weird Tales*, though many of his works were not published until after his death in 1937. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, science fiction and horror magazines reprinted Lovecraft's tales numerous times, and he became one of the most popular pulp authors.

Lovecraft's works banished the supernatural by recasting it in materialist terms. He took the idea of a pantheon of ancient gods and made them a group of aliens who descended to earth in the distant past.

Across his works, Lovecraft provided a number of different explanations for the arrival ancient visitors on the primeval earth. In

“The Call of Cthulhu,” the Old Ones, including the tentacled, star-born Cthulhu, are said to have come “to the young world out of the sky” and to have raised mighty cities whose remains could be seen in the cyclopean stones dotting Pacific islands. These Old Ones brought with them images of themselves (thus inventing art) and hieroglyphs once legible but now unknown (the origins of writing). They spoke to humans in their dreams, and established a cult to worship them (the origins of religion). They appeared as, and were treated like, monstrous living gods, so great were their mystical powers.

In later stories, Lovecraft added new details and altered his previous conception of the Old Ones to provide a richer and more developed picture of alien intervention in earth life. In *At the Mountains of Madness*, Lovecraft presents his most complete vision of the extraterrestrial origins of human life. Here, the Old Ones were now a separate species of alien creature at war with Great Cthulhu and his spawn, who only arrived eons later. The Old Ones were “the originals of the fiendish elder myths” of ancient mythology, and they raised great cities under the oceans and on the primitive continents. These beings arrived on earth after colonizing other planets, and they created life on earth a source of food. These artificial primitive cells they allowed to evolve naturally into the plants and animals of the modern world—including primitive humanity, which they used as food or entertainment.

❧ EXCERPT ❧

Old Castro remembered bits of hideous legend that paled the speculations of theosophists and made man and the world seem recent and transient indeed. There had been aeons when other Things ruled on the earth, and They had had great cities. Remains of Them, he said the deathless Chinamen had told him, were still to be found as Cyclopean stones on islands in the Pacific. They all died vast epochs of time before men came, but there were arts which could revive Them when the stars had come round again to the right positions in the cycle of eternity. They had, indeed, come themselves from the stars, and brought Their images with Them. These Great Old Ones, Castro continued, were not composed altogether of flesh and blood. They had shape - for did not this star-fashioned image prove it? - but that shape was not made of matter. When the stars were right, They could plunge from world to world through the sky; but when the stars were wrong, They could not live.

- **H. P. Lovecraft**, "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926)

Elsewhere, Lovecraft described his ancient visitors as maintaining a presence on the modern earth, and like the Nephilim of the Bible, they begat children with earth women in "The Dunwich Horror," "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," and "Medusa's Coil." In "The Horror in the Museum," it is suggested that the monstrous creatures once worshipped as gods were not all extraterrestrials, and that

some may have come from alternate dimensions. In *The Shadow Out of Time*, the extraterrestrial Great Race is one of countless species spanning the universe, and their mental powers let them project themselves backward and forward in time, gathering intelligence and knowledge for their library and, in places, imparting their own wisdom. Most to the point, in his ghostwriting of William Lumley's "The Diary of Alonzo Typer" the title narrator learns from the pre-human *Book of Dzryan* that aliens from Venus came to earth in spaceships to "civilize" the planet.

Human knowledge of these aliens is fragmentary and obscure. Evidence exists in the form of anomalous ancient artifacts of pre-human manufacture, garbled folklore and mythology, and written texts like the *Necronomicon*, *Nameless Cults*, and the *Book of Eibon*, which hint at but do not fully disclose the extraterrestrials' nature and habits.

Many critics of Lovecraft have noted that his vision for the Mythos changed over time, as the godlike and semi-supernatural Cthulhu of "The Call of Cthulhu" gradually gave way to the fully material aliens of *At the Mountains of Madness*; in time faux mythology gave way to faux science in the Mythos. Many Mythos writers, beginning with August Derleth, were dismayed by the contradictions in Lovecraft's writing (e.g., Cthulhu is an Old One in "Cthulhu" but merely "their cousin" in "The Dunwich Horror"; the Old Ones change identity several times, too), and they have attempted to systematize the Mythos. However, Lovecraft's writings reflect the way real myths develop, with changes and contradictions and anomalies. This is compounded by the fact that Lovecraft did not write as an omniscient

narrator but rather presented his Mythos through the eyes of scholars and writers who had only part of the story and therefore could not present the whole truth. Even in the *Necronomicon* Abdul Alhazred (it is implied) was privy only to hints and rumors and interpreted the Mythos through the guise of the Near Eastern mythologies he knew. In other words, Lovecraft's Mythos tales show us a fragmented, shifting, and uncertain view of the alien beings reflected through the biases and prejudices and mental limits of those who encounter them.

⌘ **EXCERPT** ⌘

These viscous masses were without doubt what Abdul Alhazred whispered about as the "Shoggoths" in his frightful *Necronomicon*, though even that mad Arab had not hinted that any existed on earth except in the dreams of those who had chewed a certain alkaloidal herb.

- **H. P. Lovecraft**, "At the Mountains of Madness" (1931)

II. Ancient Astronauts before Lovecraft

THE IDEA THAT LIFE could exist on other worlds was not unique to Lovecraft, of course, and the concept had a long history dating back to early Greek philosophers who speculated on the nature of beings on other worlds. Anaxagoras (c. 500-428 BCE) proposed that life began from “seeds” that littered the universe; Anaxarchus (c. 340 BCE) thought there to be an infinity of worlds, and Epicurus (c. 341-270 BCE) felt life existed on many planets across the vastness of space. These philosophers, though, did not propose the visitation of these aliens to the earth.

The most important early writer to propose extraterrestrial visitation on earth was Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), the founder of Theosophy, a Victorian-era amalgam of Spiritualism, Eastern religions, and good old-fashioned hokum. In *The Secret Doctrine*, Theosophy’s most important text, Blavatsky noted Greek speculation about life on other worlds and asserted that the ancients had first-hand knowledge of the fact of extraterrestrial existence. She

speculated that the beings on the innumerable inhabited worlds may have “influence” or “control” over the earth. She also asserted that spiritual beings originating on the moon contributed to the metaphysical development of earth life, but for her any alien intervention is a sideline to the epic history of evolutionary and spiritual developments of an assortment of earth creatures who grew from primal ooze to Aryan supremacy on the lost continents of Hyperborea, Lemuria, and Atlantis.

❧ EXCERPT ❧

The first race of men were, then, simply the images, the astral doubles, of their Fathers, who were the pioneers, or the most progressed Entities from a preceding though *lower* sphere, the shell of which is now our Moon. But even this shell is all-potential, for, having generated the Earth, it is the *phantom* of the Moon which, attracted by magnetic affinity, sought to form its first inhabitants, the pre-human monsters.

- **Helena Blavatsky**, *The Secret Doctrine* (1888)

Blavatsky’s disciple W. Scott-Elliot expanded on hints in the Theosophical cosmos by creating a race of divine beings inhabiting Venus. In *The Lost Lemuria* (1904), Scott-Elliott claimed that beings that evolved on Venus but had reached a spiritual or “divine” stage of development came to earth and taught the inhabitants of Lemuria the arts of civilization and gave them wheat and fire (34-44). A critical difference between the lords of Venus, Blavatsky’s moon creatures, and Mythos beings (and indeed modern ancient astronauts) is that the

Theosophical Venusians and lunarians are not envisioned as true extraterrestrials (in the modern sense) from distant star systems but as incarnations of spiritual beings who share a mystic connection to earth creatures and feel a spiritual calling to aid their brethren on earth. Here, the Venusians are inhabitants of Venus in the same sense that the angels of God were once thought to inhabit Venus, Mars, and the other crystalline spheres that surrounded the earth.

✎ EXCERPT ✎

The positions occupied by the divine beings from the Venus chain were naturally those of rulers, instructors in religion, and teachers of the arts, and it is in this latter capacity that a reference to the arts taught by them comes to our aid in the consideration of the history of this early race, continued.

- **W. Scott-Eliot**, *The Lost Lemuria* (1904)

In 1919, the great collector of anomalous trivia, Charles Fort, published the *Book of the Damned*, in which he speculated that old stories of demons could be related to “undesirable visitors from other worlds” (66), though he did not draw a firm connection between devils and aliens. He also suggested that other worlds may have communicated with ours in the distant past (118), left behind advanced technology (124), or attempted to colonize the earth (164). However, Fort made no claim that such things actually happened, only that they *may* have happened, and at any rate there is no way to tell whether the creatures

were alien, trans-dimensional, spiritual, or even imaginary—perhaps the result of telepathy, communications from the spirit realm, or from myriad other sources.

❧ EXCERPT ❧

If other worlds have ever in the past had relations with this earth, they were attempted positivizations: to extend themselves, by colonies, upon this earth; to convert, or assimilate, indigenous inhabitants of this earth.

- **Charles Fort**, *The Book of the Damned* (1919)

H. P. Lovecraft read both *The Book of the Damned* and Scott-Elliott, in the compilation volume *The Story of Atlantis and Lost Lemuria* (1925), and from these fragmentary ideas about prehistoric extraterrestrial visitation imagined (more-or-less) flesh-and-blood aliens arriving on earth in the distant past and all that this implied.

III. Ancient Astronauts after Lovecraft

LOVECRAFT'S MYTHOS BECAME one of the touchstones of modern horror literature and a powerful theme in horror, fantasy, and science fiction, where the idea of alien visitors in the deep past continues to enjoy popularity in contemporary works like *Stargate*, *The X-Files*, *Doctor Who*, *Alien vs. Predator*, and hundreds of other movies, books, and television shows. However, Lovecraft's alien gods also spawned the decidedly non-fiction (if not factual) ancient astronaut theory, which continues to convert new adherents today.

The names of Lovecraft's alien gods, like Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, and Shub-Niggurath, began to crop up in other stories during Lovecraft's lifetime. Lovecraft himself started this practice by inserting these names, or variants on them, into stories he ghostwrote or revised for other authors. In his revision of Zelia Bishop's "The Mound," for example, Lovecraft slipped his alien god Cthulhu into the story under the variant name Tulu, giving magazine readers what they thought were independent stories featuring references to the same ancient gods. By the 1960s, several dozen authors were using elements of what came to be

called “The Cthulhu Mythos” in stories they wrote for science fiction and horror magazines.

Lovecraftian fiction became increasingly popular in Europe, where the French embraced him as a bent genius, much as they embraced Edgar Allan Poe. In France, the Russian expatriate Jacques Bergier and the writer Louis Pauwels read Lovecraft and were inspired by his cosmic vision. Bergier claimed to have corresponded with Lovecraft in 1935, though no letters survive. He spent much of the 1950s promoting Lovecraft in the French media, including the magazine he and Pauwels edited, *Planète*, and working to bring Lovecraft’s work out in French editions. The *Planète’s* editors held Lovecraft as their prophet, and their reprints of his stories helped to popularize him and the Cthulhu Mythos in the French imagination.

Digging into Lovecraft’s Theosophical and Fortean source material, Bergier and Pauwels wrote *Le Matin des magiciens* (1960) (published in English as *The Morning of the Magicians*) and presented the first fully-fledged modern ancient astronaut theory. In it, they presented the themes found in Lovecraft as nonfiction, speculating about such alternative history touchstones as the “true” origin of the Egyptian pyramids, ancient maps that appear to have been drawn from outer space, advanced technology incongruously placed in the ancient past, and the other staples of later ancient astronaut theories. They note that ancient mythologies are replete with gods who visit earth in fiery chariots and return to the sky. These, they state, may have been alien visitors in spaceships.



Figure 1: The Sphinx and Pyramids of Giza, frequently claimed evidence of alien visitation. (Library of Congress)

Pauwels and Bergier drew on unrelated writings from a number of French and other authors who wondered to a greater or lesser extent that modern UFO sightings might have antecedents in prehistory, but they combined this 1950s space-age speculation with a Lovecraftian cosmic vision and a New Age sensibility that translated Cthulhu into an ancient astronaut in a way that shiny atom-age extraterrestrials in spacesuits never could.

Morning of the Magicians became one of the most important sources for Erich von Däniken, the Swiss writer whose *Chariots of the Gods?* brought what had hitherto been a theory known only to

Theosophists, Lovecraft aficionados, and fringe theorists into the cultural mainstream. Von Däniken did not mention Pauwels and Bergier in his works, however, until a lawsuit forced him to disclose the sources he closely paraphrased in *Chariots*. The bibliography of *Chariots* thereafter listed the French writers' book in its 1962 German translation, *Aufbruch ins dritte Jahrtausend*. Tens of millions of copies of *Chariots* and its sequels sold, and the ancient astronaut theory became a cultural phenomenon, appearing in movies, on Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show*, in *Playboy*, and practically anywhere people were talking about the past.

Other authors were inspired by von Däniken's theories, including Robert Temple (whose *Sirius Mystery* argued that amphibious aliens from Sirius taught Sumerians civilization) and Zecharia Sitchin (whose *Twelfth Planet* argued that aliens from a "wandering" planet called Nibiru conquered ancient earth to steal its gold and other precious metals). By the end of the 1970s, there was an entire network of authors and promoters then known as the Ancient Astronaut Society (now the Archaeology, Astronautics and SETI Research Association, or AAS RA). As of this writing, the History Channel broadcasts *Ancient Astronauts: The Series*, a weekly program that explores the work of von Däniken and AAS RA. The program is seen by more than two million viewers each week.

So what made so many believe aliens visited our ancestors?

IV. The Evidence for Aliens

THE ANCIENT ASTRONAUT THEORY, as it developed in the hands of Pauwels and Bergier, von Däniken, and others, uses a combination of suggestive archaeological, mythological, and artistic evidence. Though believers interpret nearly every piece of ancient history as supporting the ancient astronaut theory, in outline, the most important evidence is as follows:

Archaeological

Believers maintain that ancient cities and monuments the world over display three important properties that speak to their non-human origins. First, many are composed of stones that weigh so much that it seems impossible for ordinary humans to have moved them. For example, the blocks making up the Great Pyramid of Egypt weigh as much as fifty tons each, and the stones of the Incan fortress of Sacsayhuaman weigh as much as two hundred tons. Further, believers hold that these ancient sites are laid out and constructed with a precision that is unmatched by all but the most modern of contemporary

constructions. The Great Pyramid, for instance, is said to be placed on a base within 0.049 inches of flat; its sides are oriented to the cardinal directions within three minutes of arc, something unmatched in nearly all modern constructions. Such engineering is said to be possible only with alien help, either as the builders themselves or as teachers who imparted the knowledge of such building techniques.



Figure 2: Inca masonry, which ancient astronaut theorists believe is too perfect to be the sole work of human beings. (Library of Congress)

Second, believers argue that ancient sites and artifacts encode scientific data that should be unknown to Stone Age peoples. The Great Pyramid, to take a familiar example, is said to be an accurate scale model of the northern hemisphere of the earth thousands of years before Eratosthenes first estimated the planet's circumference. It is also said to be placed in the exact center of the earth's land masses. The monumental pyramids of the ancient Mexican city of Teotihuacan are often said to be a scale model of the solar system.

Third, anomalous artifacts represent advanced technology of possibly inhuman origin. The famous "Baghdad battery" is a small jar that may have held electrodes that when exposed to vinegar could have produced a small electrical charge. Small golden bees from Mexico may be depictions of ancient airplanes. A sparkplug may have been found inside a billion-year-old rock known as the Coso artifact.

Mythological

Ancient myths and legends record the arrival of the aliens and their deeds upon the earth. Believers in the ancient astronaut theory are united in their belief that myths and holy books are factual accounts of events that happened in the real world. The apocryphal Book of Enoch is a favorite, along with the legend of the Jewish prophet ascending to heaven in a fiery chariot. The Biblical vision of Ezekiel, who saw a fiery apparition of interlocking wheels, is said to represent an encounter with a flying saucer. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in fire and brimstone is suggested to be an account of aliens dropping an atomic

bomb. Elsewhere, mythological appearances of savior gods such as Oannes in Sumer, Osiris in Egypt, Quetzalcoatl in Mexico, and Viracocha in Peru are thought to be factual accounts of anthropomorphic aliens bringing civilization to benighted ancient tribes. Hindu mythology is an especially rich source of proof because of its descriptions of flying machines, ray guns, and explosions that resemble atomic detonations.

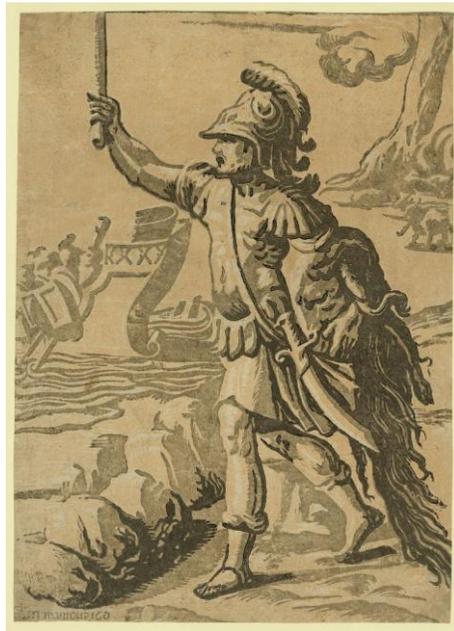


Figure 3: *Jason Returns with the Golden Fleece* by Ugo da Carpi, c. 1500. Von Däniken believes Greek gods were aliens, the Golden Fleece was really an alien helicopter, and Jason's ship, the *Argo*, was really an alien spacecraft. (Library of Congress)

And of course, like the Old Ones in *At the Mountains of Madness*, the gods who created humans and other earth life in myth and religion are here interpreted as aliens that genetically engineered earth life for their inscrutable purposes. They also manage earth life, like the Old Ones who wipe out unfavorable races, by sending floods or annihilating trouble spots with nuclear weapons.

Artistic

Ancient art shows images of the aliens and their advanced technology, according to believers. Aboriginal cave art in Australia depicts beings with circles around their heads, obviously the helmets of space-faring aliens. Similarly, ancient Japanese statuary of rotund monsters actually shows aliens in bulky spacesuits. Medieval paintings are said to contain images of flying discs or aerodynamic chariots that resemble flying saucers and rocket ships. The lid of the tomb of the Mayan king Palenque does not show the king in the underworld but rather depicts him at the controls of technological device, perhaps a rocket ship. An image of a lotus blossom in the Egyptian temple of Dendera is really a depiction of a light bulb, complete with power cord and filament. Ancient maps are believed to show a) earth as depicted from space, b) the world as it existed in the Ice Age before human civilization, c) Antarctica centuries before its discovery in 1818.

V. The Science

ARCHAEOLOGISTS, paleontologists, anthropologists, and other scientific professionals were less than impressed by the web of suggestion and interpretation that masqueraded as a scientific hypothesis. Since the mid-1970s, skeptics have produced articles, books, and documentaries aimed at debunking the ancient astronaut theory and explaining its “evidence” as a series of misinterpretations, misrepresentations, and ignorance of scientific research. It would be impossible to thoroughly explore the scientific arguments against the ancient astronaut theory in anything short of a book (for which, see my 2005 book, the *The Cult of Alien Gods*), but the general lines of argument run like this:

Archaeological

No evidence of extraterrestrial technology has ever been found on earth, and no artifact can conclusively be tied to a planet other than earth. Such claims are exaggerations, misinterpretations, or frauds. For example, the alleged Coso artifact is not a billion-year-old bit of advanced technology but a 1920s spark plug encrusted in solidified crud

mistaken for ancient rock. Ancient monuments show every sign of being constructed by the ancient people who lived around them, as demonstrated by the artifacts found in, around, on top of, and under ancient sites. Construction of buildings—even highly precise and heavy ones—can be accomplished with large numbers of people working together.



Figure 4: Stonehenge. Despite centuries of investigation, no alien artifacts have ever been found in, around, or under Stonehenge. (Library of Congress)

Mythological

Ancient myths do not have a direct correlation with events in the distant past. Instead, they are complex web of symbolism, religious belief, historical events, and imagination. There may be some distorted

truth behind myths (as the discovery of Troy proved for Homer's *Iliad*), but they cannot be interpreted as literal accounts of historic happenings. Nor are the myths themselves consistent across time. The myth of Jason and the Golden Fleece, for example, shows significant changes to major events between its earliest recorded forms and the best-known version, written by Apollonius of Rhodes many centuries later. In the earliest forms of the myth, it is unclear whether the Golden Fleece was even present—a far cry from those like Robert Temple or Erich von Däniken who assumed that one version of the myth stood for all, could be considered definitive, and could be interpreted literally as evidence of alien intervention. Mythology must be seen in its cultural context, and any interpretation must account for changes, distortions, and mutations that accrue over time as oral stories are retold, come into contact with stories from other cultures and lands, and eventually take on a written form. This is not unlike the contradictory variants of Mythos legends found in Lovecraft's own stories.

Artistic

Again, ancient art should not be taken as a literal recording of events happening before the artists' eyes. Many works of prehistoric art, such as cave paintings, depict shamans engaged in rituals designed to imbue them with the powers of the netherworld and their spirit animals. These cannot be taken literally but must be seen in cultural context and in terms of the visions of strange shapes and forms humans see when in shamanic trance states. Other pieces of ancient art, like the Dendera

light bulb or Palenque's coffin lid, must be viewed in light of other artistic depictions from the period, not by itself, in order to understand the symbolism and artistic conventions used in the work. Neither seems so much like ancient depictions of technology when compared to other Egyptian depictions of the lotus, or Mayan funerary art. No one piece exists in isolation, and an interpretation based only on what something "looks like" instead of its place in the broader cultural picture will lead to mistaken correlations.

VI. Conclusions

RICHARD L. TIERNEY NOTED the potential correlations between Lovecraft's story "The Mound" (with Zealia Bishop) and actual Mesoamerican and Native American legends and traditions, and he identifies Yig, father of serpents, with the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, the feathered serpent. At Teotihuacan, the Mexican city so old and mysterious that even the Aztecs themselves knew it only as a ruin belonging to the gods who descended from the sky, Tierney humorously identifies the sculptures of tentacled Tlaloc the rain god and serpentine Quetzalcoatl on Quetzalcoatl's temple as representations of Cthulhu and Yig. Thus is the ancient astronaut theorists' evidence for aliens transformed again into proof of the Mythos. This, of course, was meant in jest, but the same reasoning transformed ancient achievements into alien interventions.

In 1982, Charles Garofalo and Robert M. Price wrote an article for *Crypt of Cthulhu* noting the similarities between the Mythos and Erich von Däniken's ancient astronaut theories. They concluded that despite the high degree of correlation between von Däniken's

evidence and claims and Lovecraft's fictional conceits, direct influence was impossible because von Däniken denied ever having read or heard of Lovecraft. As we have seen, though, the influence need not be direct. The connections between those who propose ancient astronauts as fact and those who write of them as (science) fiction are myriad, and the web of influence runs in many directions. Perhaps someday the Great Race will swap minds with some of us and tell the world how aliens once ruled the past, but until that happens, Cthulhu will have to rest in his tomb and the ancient astronauts will have to stay in their fictional chariots.

Appendix: More to Explore

Where to Go

- **Giza Plateau, Egypt.** Home to the Great Pyramid, the Sphinx, and other wonders of the age of the pharaohs, Giza is also a hotbed of alternative theories, from ancient astronauts to Atlantis to lost civilizations. Go to see for yourself the wonders that inspired legends.
- **Teotihuacan, Mexico.** An ancient abandoned city in the heart of Mexico, Teotihuacan's monumental pyramids rival those of Giza and have inspired nearly as many outrageous theories. The Aztecs believed the gods descended to earth here, and ancient astronaut theorists wonder if those gods were aliens who set up a scale model of the solar system in stone. (They didn't really, though, but it's fun to pretend.)
- **Nan Madol, Micronesia.** A ruined stone city made of large basalt blocks crisscrossed by canals, Nan Madol on the remote island of Pohnpei (Ponape) in the Pacific Ocean is known by the suitably Lovecraftian name "the spaces between." The city has inspired many alien and lost civilization theories, despite its late date (no earlier than the 12th century CE). Nan Madol is thought to be the inspiration for Lovecraft's sunken city of R'lyeh, also in the Pacific Ocean, home to Great Cthulhu.

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Jason Colavito is an author and editor based in Albany, NY. His books include *The Cult of Alien Gods: H.P. Lovecraft and Extraterrestrial Pop Culture* (Prometheus Books, 2005); *Knowing Fear: Science, Knowledge, and the Development of the Horror Genre* (McFarland, 2008); and more. His research on extraterrestrials and H. P. Lovecraft has been featured on the History Channel. Colavito is internationally recognized by scholars, literary theorists, and scientists for his pioneering work exploring the connections between science, pseudoscience, and speculative fiction. His investigations examine the way human beings create and employ the supernatural to alter and understand our reality and our world.

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