



COVER STORY

# H.P. LOVECRAFT AND TIME

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Artwork: *Spawn of the Stars*, Sofyan Syarief's artwork based on H. P. Lovecraft's story *The Call of Cthulhu*.

Some famous critic said that all fiction is about the subject of *time*.



H. P. Lovecraft

Naturally I scoffed, because I don't think that's at all true: *Don Quixote*? *The Wings of the Dove*? *Gulliver's Travels*? Proust, of course writes about time. It's the subject of his great novel. And, among the works of H.P. Lovecraft, which I've discovered the more I've read on, are great deal more varied themes and subjects than anyone might expect. But there is really only one, a novella, about time. And while it has hints of "recovering lost time" a la Proust, that is only a minor distraction, not the main theme; not by any means.

Only one piece of fiction, despite the fact that the more Lovecraft wrote and the deeper he traveled into his own imagination, the more persuaded this "strange tales" author became that he—and all of us—were living in some kind of blessed interregnum of time in which the worst obscenities of creation were somehow held at bay from us. At bay, yet at times they might come crashing down upon us, since the separation is permeable. Dagon might arise from the sea; Cthulhu might erupt from underground; other super beings might arrive through a tear in space and find their way to a New England farm house. That became Lovecraft's cosmology and his oppressive belief as he wrote on. The stories he wrote in his later years are all about the moments that those mind bending powers did break through -- with horrific repercussions.

So there actually is only one story about time itself in Lovecraft's oeuvre; however, it's a dilly, and it's the first piece of fiction to have had any kind of effect upon me, an effect so deep and all-encompassing that it's difficult to say *what* that effect actually was, except that I never forgot the story and that it "opened my mind up" as a reader and I suspect as a writer too. Partly this has something to do with *when* I read it.

I was eleven years old. I was a clever if not particularly brilliant child at that age and I was also an indifferent reader. I could read well enough; I'd been able to do that since the age of four when, imitating my older brother and sister, I taught myself how to read. I simply didn't read *that much*. I read what I had to for school, but unless books were about my interests —the Grand Tour de France bicycle race, for example, I didn't bother: I lived for the outdoors: for roller skating and soft-ball playing and especially for bicycles and bicycle racing. A few years later we would move to new house set to one side of the Belt Parkway at the edge of Queens at the border line of New York City and Nassau County, a roadway deep in lush local parkland. In front of our new house was a park and pond, and across the bridged main street was another pond. Together they were Twin Ponds which was what the new area was called. I was soon ice skating every night that those shallow ponds were frozen. So how in the world would that particular child come to read a writer as obscure in 1955 as Lovecraft?

Blame —or bless-- my Aunt Lillian and Uncle Bert. Both

FELICE PICANO's many stories, novellas and novels are translated into seventeen languages, and include national and international bestsellers. Four of his plays have been produced. He's received awards for poetry, drama, short stories, and novels in the U.S., U.K., France, and Germany. Picano's recent non-fiction: *True Stories, True Stories Too* and the 1970's memoir, *Nights At Rizzoli*, have received glowing reviews and awards. He currently teaches two writing workshops for the West Hollywood Public Library. His autobiographical novel, *Justify My Sins* will be published in 2019. [www.felice.picano.net](http://www.felice.picano.net)