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Dissecting Cthulhu: Essays On The Cthulhu Mythos



Synopsis

This collection of essays on the Cthulhu Mythos range from pioneering articles by Richard L. Tierney and Dirk W. Mosig to penetrating studies by Robert M. Price, William Murray, Steven J. Mariconda, and others.

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Customer Reviews

One might expect that a gathering of essays discussing the Cthulhu Mythos and edited by S. T. Joshi would be rabidly anti-Derleth; and there is, in this book, a clearing away of many of the misconceptions concerning the Mythos that August Derleth put forward as inarguable fact. Most damning is the exposure of what has become known as the "Black magic quote" with which Derleth a link between Lovecraft's weird fiction and the Christian Mythos. However, the Mythos as Lovecraft handled it is far more complex and mysterious than most readers have fathomed, and one would be a fool to deny that the myths of Christianity played no part in Lovecraft's imaginative writing. The superb and controversial Robert M. Price touches on this in "Demythologizing Cthulhu," one of his five essays in this book. Current Lovecraft scholars have great disdain for most Mythos fiction not written by H. P. Lovecraft, for they feel that most of such fiction is bad fiction, poorly written and full of cliches; and they feel that the young immature writers have followed the path of August Derleth and his approach to Lovecraftian horror, thus misunderstanding and ignoring the subtle and truly cosmic approach of H. P. Lovecraft. It is often pointed out the the Cthulhu Mythos, as we know it today, was invented by other writers after Lovecraft's death and that Lovecraft himself, as an artist, is far removed from such fiction. There has also been great discussion and disagreement as to just

what the hell IS the Cthulhu Mythos. What tales by H. P. Lovecraft can actually be called Cthulhu Mythos? Different writers have different lists. Some include "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward" and "The Hound" as "belonging to the Mythos," while others hotly deny their inclusion.

I'm friends with the owners of Miskatonic Press (MRP), who thoughtfully provided me copies of all their books. *Dissecting Cthulhu*, edited by S.T. Joshi, is a departure for MRP, collecting a series of critical essays about H.P. Lovecraft, August Derleth, and the nature of the Cthulhu Mythos. The first chapter, *Some Overviews*, might sound like a broad topic but it's actually a series of excoriating attacks on Derleth. It starts with Richard L. Tierney who argues that the phrase "Cthulhu Mythos" is a misnomer created by Derleth but attributed to Lovecraft. It lays out the primary issues critics have with Derleth's legacy: the elemental assignments of Cthulhu et al, the application of a layer of order to Lovecraft's uncaring universe, and the knitting together of it all into a cohesive weave. Dirk W. Mosig uncouples Derleth's contributions from Lovecraft with a new phrase, "Yog-Sothoth Cycle of Myth." It's a valiant attempt to correct the writings of a pupil Lovecraft called a "self-blinded earth gazer." And here we come to one of the major bones of contention with "little Augie Derleth," who was responsible for spreading a quote incorrectly attributed to Lovecraft: "All my stories, unconnected as they may be, are based on the fundamental lore or legend that this world was inhabited at one time by another race who, in practicing black magic, lost their foothold and were expelled, yet live on outside, ever ready to take possession of this earth again." Lovecraft never said it. Harold Farnese, whose later essays show had a spotty memory, was inaccurately quoting Lovecraft to Derleth.

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