



**AN ANALYSIS ON FORMULAIC STRUCTURE OF H.P. LOVECRAFT'S AT  
*THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS***

**THESIS**

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UNIVERSITAS JEMBER**

**2022**



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Submitted to English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember, as one of requirements to obtain the degree Sarjana Sastra in English Studies.

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**DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my entire family for their endless and continuous support that they have given in my whole life



**MOTTO**

“If you’re going to hell, keep going.”  
(Winston Churchill)



**DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis entitled **“An Analysis on Formulaic Structure of H.P. Lovecraft’s *At the Mountain of Madness*”** is an original writing. The analysis and research contained in this thesis have never been done for any degree or publication. I also validate that sources utilized and supports received in the process of writing this thesis all been acknowledged.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

All my praises and gratitude belong to Allah SWT for His endless blessings and kindness. I would also like to show my deepest gratitude and appreciation for those who helped, contributed, and motivated me during my study.

1. Prof. Dr. Sukarno, M.Litt., the Dean of Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember.
2. Irana Astutiningsih, S.S., M.A., as my first advisor, Erna Cahyawati, S.S., M.Hum., as my second advisor, Eko Suwargono, M.Hum., as my first examiner, and L.Dyah Purwita Wardani S W W, S.S.,M.A., as my second examiner.
3. All of my lecturers in English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember, who have educated and shared valuable experience to me during my academic years.
4. All of the staffs of Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember.
5. My beloved parents, Sudibyو and Wiwik Martiwidiastuti, for their unconditional love and endless support.
6. My older sister, Deandra Puspita Ratri, and my younger brother, Farrel Maulana Ramadhan for their support.
7. My extended family members who I could not mention one by one for their love and support.
8. My best friends, Calvin A. Nugroho, Rizky Firmansyah, David, and Aditya Okto for being great friends to me and making my academic years unforgettable and precious.
9. My close friend, Muhammad Iqbal Al Fardi, for accompanying me and giving me plenty of inspiration.
10. My friends, Azan Taufiq Pratama and Abram Maulan, for both accompanying and helping me.
11. All of my friends in English Department 2015 for being good friend during my academic years.

12. All of my friends from English Department Student Association for the valuable experience and precious memories.
13. My Almamater

Jember, October 2022

Aditya Ibnu Ibrahim





## SUMMARY

**An Analysis on Formulaic Structure of H.P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountain of Madness***; Aditya Ibnu Ibrahim, 150110101066; 53 pages, English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Jember.

This research analyzes the pattern of formulaic structure and the correlation between the formula and culture in H.P. Lovecraft's novella, *At The Mountains of Madness*. *At The Mountains of Madness* is a horror novella about a group of people discovering mysterious place and encountering alien in Antarctica. John G. Cawelti's formula theory is used in order to analyze the formula within the novella. In Cawelti's formula, there are two concepts that are used in order to analyzing formula in literary works, standardization and escapism. To find the formulaic structure in the novella, standardization is needed. Standardization consists of three elements, settings, characters and characterization, and plot. Escapism is needed to find the correlation between the formula and the culture. This research explores the construction of alien concept in early 20<sup>th</sup> century United States of America.

This thesis uses qualitative research because the data are from quotes and words within the novella. The data is divided into two, primary data and secondary data. Primary data are taken from the novella *At the Mountain of Madness*. Reading and understanding the content of the novella, *At the Mountain of Madness*, is essential to find and collect the needed data for the finding the standardization and the escapism. The secondary data are taken from sources that are related to the topic of this research. These sources are taken from articles, journals, thesis, and various sources from internet. The secondary data serve to support the primary data.

As a result, *At The Mountains of Madness* uses the pattern of alien beings or states. Through analyzing the standardization within the novella, which is settings, characters and characterizations, and plots, construct a horror story which is aligned to the moral fantasy of alien beings and states. Through the pattern within the novella, the uniqueness can be found in the settings and how some of the characters are described in *At The Mountains of Madness*.

Escapism within *At The Mountains of Madness* shows the correlation between the concept of alien constructed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century American culture. Even though the idea of alien has existed since ancient time, the idea became popular due to American astronomer, Percival Lowell's theory of the existence of alien civilization of Mars. This idea of extraterrestrial civilization can be seen within the novella when the story describes the monster as a being that come from another planet and colonize other planets before colonizing Earth.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an overview of the analysis of this research. This chapter is divided into four sub-chapters, consisting of the background of the study, research topic, research question, and goal of research.

### 1.1 Background of The Study

Howard Philips Lovecraft was an American author born in 1890 in Providence, Rhode Island. He is famous for his horror stories. He started his writing career by writing journals in newspapers, and in 1917, Lovecraft focused more on writing his stories. His writing was inspired a lot by Lord Dunsany, an Irish writer, and Edgar Allan Poe. After his death, two of his friends, August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, formed Arkham House, a publishing company to promote and preserve Lovecraft's works. Lovecraft has gained great success since his death than during his lifetime. He became an inspiration for many writers such as Peter Straub and Stephen King.

H.P. Lovecraft had his first success in literature at 1923, when the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* bought his short story *Dagon* and his other short stories. At 1928, *Weird Tales* published one of Lovecraft's short stories called *The Call of Cthulhu*, a story which Lovecraft created and introduced the readers to an otherworldly terror and become his most well-known story today. *The Call of Cthulhu* created the term "Cthulhu Mythos" which consisted of stories that shared the same theme and Lovecraft's philosophy. Some stories that are included in "Cthulhu Mythos" are *The Dunwich Horror*, *The Whisper in The Dark*, *At the Mountain of Madness*, *Color out of Space*, *The Shadow out of Time*, and *The Shadow over Innsmouth*.

*At the Mountains of Madness* is a novella written by H.P Lovecraft and published by *Weird Tales* magazine. As mentioned above, *At the Mountain of*

*Madness* is part of “Cthulhu Mythos”, where mysterious and alien beings have important roles in the story. *At the Mountains of Madness* tells a tale about a geologist named William Dyer and his team of experts from Miskatonic University. The team traveled to Antarctica in order to search and investigate geological features on the continent. In the middle of an investigation, Lake found strange triangular tracks. He then proceeded to investigate the tracks alongside a small team further towards the inland. There, Lake found previously undiscovered and incredibly tall mountains range and found a symmetrical and unnatural cave. Shortly after, Dyer found Lake’s entire team dead and Gedney was disappeared. Dyer, alongside Danforth, searched Gedney using airplane. They was flying across the mountains range when Dyer realized that the mountains were some sort of wall, and within that wall is an ancient city of alien origin.

The theme of fear of the unknown became prevalent in Lovecraft’s works as stated in his essay, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, “The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown” (Lovecraft, 1927). This theme is enhanced by the setting of the novella which is in Antarctica. The continent is well-known as “The Last Unexplored Place on Earth” due to its hostile environment. Antarctica also has several unique traits such as the entire continent being covered by ice sheets and a day and night cycle that spans around six months each. Launching an expedition to Antarctica is difficult causing much of its regions left unexplored, hence the nickname. *At The Mountains of Madness* explored these unknown parts, and utilized them to bring the horror to the story such as bizarre caves and ancient alien cities.

Analyzing the formula structure of the novella requires an examination of the pattern or structure of the stories. John Cawelti introduced in his book, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (1976), there are five moral fantasies to understand the underlying diversity of formulaic construction. *At The Mountain of Madness* aligns with one of these archetypes which is “Alien states and beings” where the main point is to evoke fear of the unknowable to the

audiences. Having the characters explore the uncharted region of Antarctica, in addition to finding bizarre structures of unknown origins add the feeling of uneasiness about what is to come. Cawelti's formula theory will help analyze the formula structure and discover its literary characteristics.

## 1.2 Problem to Discuss

*At the Mountain of Madness* shows the strangeness of alien beings and architectures in the novella through the discovery of the characters. I assume the genre of this novella is horror. This assumption will be further analyzed in this research. Lovecraft uses Antarctica, an uncharted land, as the setting for his works.

## 1.3 Research Question

1. How is the formula structured in Lovecraft's novella *At the Mountain of Madness*?
2. How does the concept of alien is constructed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century United States of America culture within the novella?

## 1.4 Goals of Study

There are two purposes of this research. First, it is finding and analyzing the formulaic structure of *At the Mountain of Madness* through its setting, characters, characterization, and plot. Second, it aims to analyze the concept of alien or strangeness that is present in the novella, and how the culture in the United States of America is related and helps shape the concept of alien within the novella.



## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses about previous research, concepts and topics that are related to the subject. This chapter is divided into two subchapters. They are previous researches that are related to the discussed topic and the review of formula theory by John Cawelti.

### 2.1 Previous Research

Previous researches are used to help to discuss and support this research. There are two related previous theses that are picked for this research. Agustin's thesis discussed the formula in Cassandra Clare's novel, *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones*. In her thesis, she discussed the construction of the religiosity concept and its relation to the cultural background of American towards religiosity. In the thesis, she mentioned that *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones* uses the popular pattern of urban fantasy and mystery. The novel uses the parallel world as its setting and hybrid creatures as its characters which both are part of the characterization of urban fantasy. Agustin used formula theory by John G. Cawelti in order to analyze the formula within the novel.

Next, Lestari's thesis discussed the formula in Stephen King's novel, *It*. The novel is about the monster that terrorizes the people of Derry, Maine while wearing a clown suit. People called the monster as the clown or "It" due to nobody knows the origin or what exactly the monster is. Lestari analyzed the horror aspect of the story and the cultural problems toward clowns in American society by using the formula theory by John G. Cawelti to help her thesis. She discussed the formula by analyzing the pattern in the setting, character, characterization, and plot in the novel. She also analyzed the American culture and society using formula since the author, Stephen King, lives in the USA.

These two theses helped me with my research and better understanding on how to apply Cawelti's formula theory in my research. Agustin's thesis used the formula to discuss the religiosity concept in *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones* while I used the formula to discuss the alien and horror aspect in *At the Mountain of Madness*. Lestari's thesis is similar to what I discuss in my research which is the horror aspect of the authors' works. The difference is that the subject of Lestari's thesis discussion is the cultural problem towards clown in Stephen King's *It*, while I discuss the alien beings and states in Lovecraft's *At the Mountain of Madness*.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

This research will use the theory of formula proposed by John G. Cawelti. In his book *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (1976), he explains:

“There are two common usages of the term formula closely related to the conception to set forth. The first usage simply denotes a conventional way of treating some specific thing or person. The second common literary usage of the term formula refers to larger plot types; boy meets girl, boy and girl have a misunderstanding, boy gets girl. These general plot patterns are not necessarily limited to a specific culture or period. In fact, they are examples of what some scholars have called archetypes or patterns that appeal in many different cultures.”

(Cawelti, 1976:5-6)

Based on the explanation above, stories have patterns that share similarities throughout culture and period. These similar patterns are used and followed by various authors in their works it becomes commonly used. These are called archetypal stories. An archetypal story is a story element, formula, or pattern that appears and is repeated in stories from various cultures and symbolizes a universal value in human experience. A similar pattern can be the genre for the story, for example, romance, adventure, mystery, and horror. It can be the main problem within the story, such as a boy meets girl, and misunderstanding as stated by Cawelti above.

The writers can combine multiple patterns to create something new and different from other works.

In Cawelti's formula, there are two concepts that are used in order to analyze formulas in literary works, standardization and escapism. He explains:

“While standardization is not highly valued in modern artistic ideologies, it is, in important ways, the essence of all literature. Standard conventions establish a common ground between writers and audiences. Without at least some form of standardization, artistic communication would not be possible. But well-established conventional structures are particularly essential to the creation of formula literature and reflect the interests of audiences, creators, and distributors.”

(Cawelti, 1976: 8-9)

Standardization is an essential and main aspect of all literature works as it functions as a common ground between the writer and the audience. Standardization is also a conventional structure that forms a common ground in order to build a connection between writers and readers. This common ground is essential in order for the audiences to find a specific type of story that they recognize and enjoy, and for the writer in order to help them write their story.

Meanwhile, escapism is an aspect of formulaic structure which is used by a writer to create a story with different patterns from outside common conventions to make its own characteristic. However, the story does not leave every conventional pattern that has been used. Moreover, escapism is created to fulfill the readers' relaxation and enjoyment in escapist the reality (Cawelti, 1976:8). To achieve this, there has to be enough variety in the common concept and pattern in the literary works.

### **2.2.1 The Typology of Literary Formulas**

Cawelti explains that it is important to be able to differentiate the archetypal structures in order to gain a clear definition of them. It is one of the important problems connected with the study of literary formulas is to arrive at some



understanding of the general story types that underlie the diversity of formulaic constructions (Cawelti, 1976:37). There are five moral fantasies that are mentioned by Cawelti in his book. These are Adventure, Romance, Mystery, Melodrama and Alien Beings or States.

### **1. Adventure**

The hero overcoming obstacles and dangers, and accomplishing important missions become the centre of the adventure story. Adventure presents a character that readers identify with by passing through obstacles and achieving triumph.

The specific characterization of the hero depends on the cultural motifs and themes embodied in the adventure formula. In general, there are two characteristics of a hero; A superhero with exceptional strength and the ordinary hero with the characteristic that is shared by the audience.

### **2. Romance**

The main characteristic that defines romance is its organizing action is the development of a love relationship, usually between a man and a woman (Cawelti, 1976:41). Similar to adventure stories, there is an obstacle in romance. This obstacle however is meant to challenge the love relationship rather than the character themselves.

### **3. Mystery**

Investigation and discovery is the defining principle of mystery story which benefits the character(s) that the audiences identify with. In mystery formulas, the problem always has a desirable and rational solution, for this is the underlying moral fantasy expressed in this formulaic archetype (Cawelti, 1976:42-43).

### **4. Melodrama**

The term “melodrama” is sometimes applied to the dramatic productions of a certain period; it also often designates a certain kind of literary structure (Cawelti, 1976:44). The structure of melodrama formula does not reflect a single

dramatic focus, such as adventure or romance; instead it combines these different fantasies toward other purposes.

The melodrama fantasy operates towards fulfilling the desire of the audiences' hearts while other formula types concentrate on countering the audiences' fears or concentrate on audiences' wishes of victory or loves.

## 5. Alien Beings or States

One of the largest and the strangest of all formulaic types consist of stories dealing with alien beings and states (Cawelti, 1976:47). This is the type of story that presents some monsters that bring terror and destruction. The main point of this formula is to evoke fear and threat of the unknowable to the audience as the audience takes some pleasure in being scared, at least in fantasy, as Cawelti stated, "The very intensity of emotion of horror may be one reason for its success as escapism." (Cawelti, 1976:47)

### 2.2.2 Formula and Culture

Formulas are cultural products and in turn, presumably have some sort of influence on culture because they become a conventional way to represent and relate some certain images, symbols, themes, and myths (Cawelti, 1976:20). This statement explains that formula is related to culture. It grows and changes over time.

According to Cawelti, there are four interrelated hypotheses about the dialectic between formulaic literature and culture that produces and enjoys it:

1. Formula stories affirm existing interests and attitudes by presenting an imaginary world that is aligned with these interests and attitudes. By confirming existing definitions of the world, literary formulas help to maintain a culture's ongoing consensus about the nature of reality and morality.
2. Formula resolves tensions and ambiguities resulting from the conflicting interests of different groups within the culture or from ambiguous attitudes toward particular values.

3. Formulas enable the audience to explore in fantasy the boundary between the permitted and the forbidden and to experience in a carefully controlled way the possibility of stepping across the boundary.
4. Literary formulas assist in the process of assimilating changes in values to traditional imaginative constructs. Literary formulas ease the transition between old and new ways of expressing things and thus contribute to cultural continuity (Cawelti, 1976: 35-36).



## CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are three sub-chapters in this Research Methodology chapter. These are the type of research, data collection, data processing, and data analysis. The type of research sub-chapter explains on what method will be used to analyze the novella. Data collection explains the process of filtering and collecting in order to gain the needed data. Data processing and data analysis explains the process of the collected data that will be analyzed in order to answer the research question.

### 3.1 Type of Research

The qualitative method is the type of research that will be used in order to analyze the data that are taken from H.P Lovecraft's *At the Mountain of Madness*. The qualitative method focuses on the data from words or sentences that are taken from narrative text rather than numeric data. Furthermore, John G. Cawelti's formula theory is applied to analyze the narrative structure of the novella. The formula will be used to find the background, history, and culture of the United States of America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that influenced the novella.

### 3.2 Data Collection

There are two types of data, primary data and secondary data. The data are taken from various resources that are related to the topic of research, such as, articles, journals, books, and internet sources.

The primary data are taken from the novella *At the Mountain of Madness*. Reading and understanding the content of the novella *At the Mountain of Madness* is essential to find and collect the needed data for the research. The secondary data are taken from sources that are related to the topic of this research. These sources are taken from articles, journals, theses, and various sources from the internet. These secondary data are used to help understand formula theory and how to apply it for analyzing the novel in order to answer the research question.

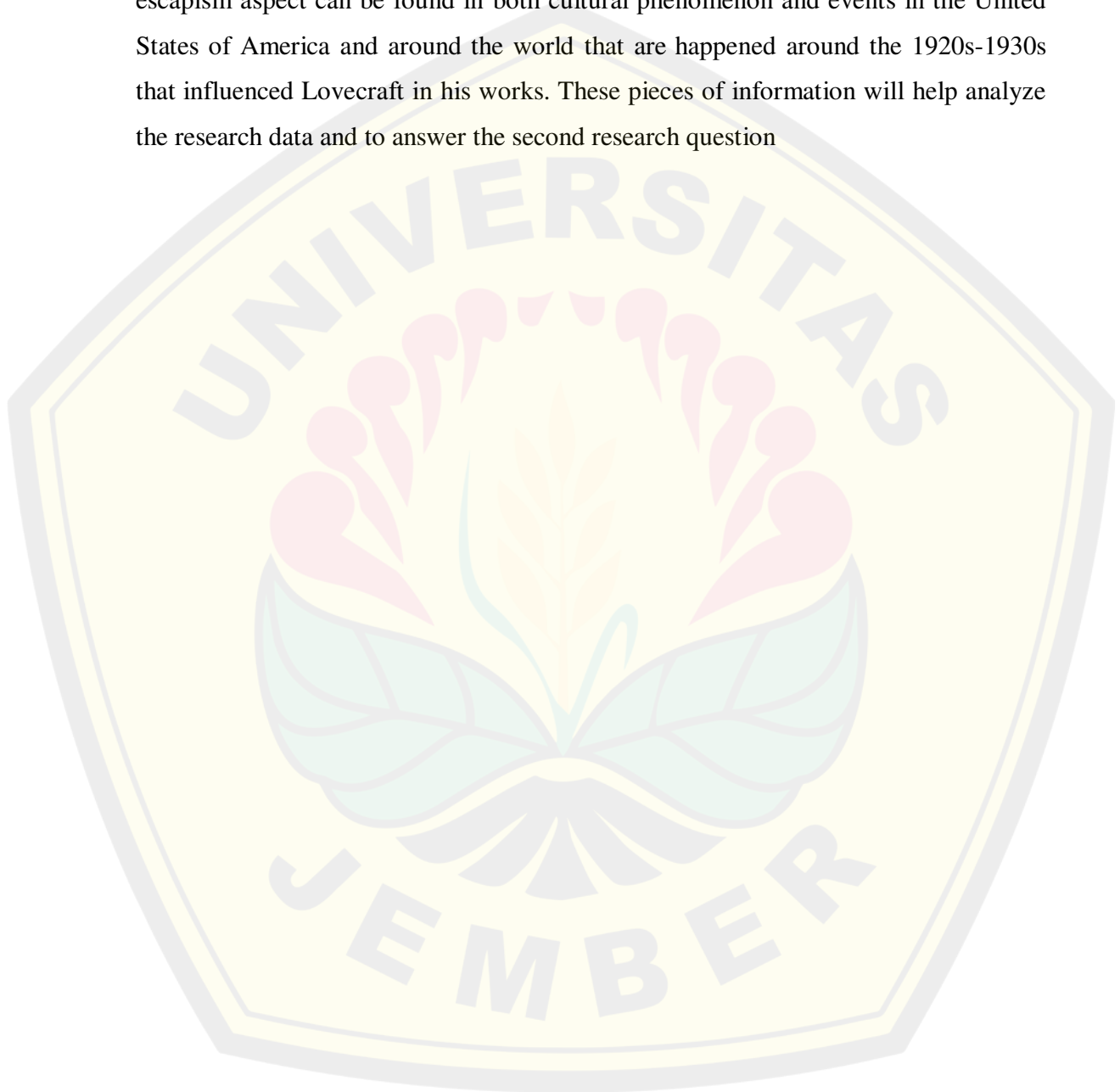
### 3.3 Data Processing and Data Analysis

There are several steps that are taken in order to process and analyze the novella to answer the research question. Repeating this process is necessary in order to sort the data for this analysis. This process helps filter data that are relevant to the topic of discussion, which is how the culture in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America correlates with the horror theme in Antarctica that is present in the novella. Reading Cawelti's book, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (1976) is the next step in order to analyze the novella. Cawelti's formula theory from his book is necessary for analyzing the formulaic structure that is constructed inside the novella which makes it a unique literary work. Additional data that complement the analysis of the formulaic structure will be included. These various data are taken from external sources such as journals, articles, and H.P Lovecraft's website.

Standardization and Escapism are important in order to analyze the formula structure. Standardization is a conventional structure to build a connection between writers and readers which can be seen through the usage of moral fantasy. Analyzing both the moral fantasy and the intrinsic elements of *At The Mountains of Madness* is essential to find the pattern of formula structure that makes *At The Mountains of Madness* distinct from other literary works. Lovecraft creates stories where his characters face incomprehensible phenomena that drive them toward insanity, including *At The Mountains of Madness* which creates a new sub-genre in the horror genre. Therefore *At The Mountains of Madness* falls under Alien Beings and States moral fantasy which is used within horror stories in general. Analyzing the formula structure within the novella and finding the correlation with the moral fantasy will help answer the first question of this research,

While analyzing the intrinsic elements helps in finding the standardization, analyzing the extrinsic elements of the novella is important to discover the escapism aspects within it. Searching for the correlation between the cultural background that

existed in early 20<sup>th</sup> century United States of America, specifically around 1930, and formula structure will help find what influences the novella and what shapes the concept of aliens within it. There are correlations between the readers finding enjoyment in reading *At The Mountains of Madness* and how the concept of aliens affected it which is called escapism. Other extrinsic elements that help find the escapism aspect can be found in both cultural phenomenon and events in the United States of America and around the world that are happened around the 1920s-1930s that influenced Lovecraft in his works. These pieces of information will help analyze the research data and to answer the second research question





## CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION

This chapter will discuss the subject matter and answer the research questions by applying steps that are explained in previous chapters. This chapter will be divided into two sub-chapters, each in order to answer the respective research questions. The first sub-chapter will discuss the intrinsic element of the novella, which is the setting, characters, characterization, and plot. These elements, together with Cawelti's formula theory, will bring results that are related to literary formulas. The second sub-chapter will discuss the cultural background of the United States of America and the events that happen in both the United States of America and Antarctica which become an inspiration and connection to the novella.

### 4.1 The Formula of *At The Mountains of Madness*

*At The Mountain of Madness* tells the story of William Dyer and his team on an expedition in Antarctica. As the story progress, they encounter various bizarre events, such as mysterious creatures, places, and the disappearance of some of their team members. The more they investigate, the more they realize the horrifying implications that those events bring.

*At The Mountains of Madness* is categorized as a horror story, therefore it followed an archetypal pattern, a pattern that shares similarities throughout cultures and periods. Archetypal patterns can be combined with other patterns in order to create something new from other works. Analyzing the intrinsic elements (settings, characters, characterizations, and plot) helps in finding the formula that is constructed within the novella that will lead to standardization that will establish artistic communication between the author and the audiences, as Cawelti stated, "Standard convention establish a common ground between writers and audiences" (Cawelti, 1976: 8-9). Furthermore, analyzing these elements will lead to how the standardization within the novella makes it different and unique compared to other

literary works, in particular in the horror genre. The analysis will bring proof if the formula structured within the novella is still within the standardization or outside the standard convention, creating a unique story.

#### 4.1.1 Setting

Settings in literature are the locations and times in which the story takes place. In addition, it includes the environment of the story which can be consisted of climate, weather, or social and cultural surroundings. Analyzing settings will give indicators about the times and places within the novella which helps to find the formula pattern.

*At The Mountains of Madness* tells a story about a group of people from the university that went on an expedition toward Antarctica for scientific research “As a geologist, my object in leading in leading the Miskatonic University Expedition was wholly that of securing deep-level specimens of rock and soil from various parts of Antarctic continent...” (Lovecraft, 1937:1). Miskatonic University is a fictional place that frequently shows up in most of Lovecraft’s works. Miskatonic University hosts several mystical and Mythic studies and cultist objects that are present or mentioned in Lovecraft’s works. The university is modeled after Ivy League Institutions which consisted of Harvard University, Yale University, Dartmouth College, and in particular Brown University, which is located in Lovecraft’s hometown Providence, Rhodes Island. Another place that was used in many of Lovecraft’s works was Arkham. Arkham is a fictional city that is located in Massachusetts, and it housed the Miskatonic University. Arkham’s notable characteristics are its gambrel roofs and the dark legends that are surrounding the city ([https://lovecraft.fandom.com/wiki/Arkham#Lovecraft.27s\\_fiction](https://lovecraft.fandom.com/wiki/Arkham#Lovecraft.27s_fiction)). In *At The Mountains of Madness*, the name Arkham was mentioned as one of the expedition’s main sponsors, as well as the name one of their ships alongside Miskatonic.

The group intends to explore Antarctica in order to collect various samples, such as rocks and fossils, and to test their new drilling equipment. The group is



convinced that the history of Antarctica is important to learn about Earth's past. The group wanted to expand the information, that Antarctica is once a temperate and even a tropical continent with teeming life, in variety, accuracy, and detail and the group believed that the new drilling equipment will help to achieve their goal.

Dyer, one of the members of the expedition group, explains how they go to Antarctica

“As the newspapers told, we sailed from Boston Harbor on September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1930, taking a leisurely course down the coast and through the Panama Canal, and stopping at Samoa and Hobart, Tasmania, at which latter place we took on final supplies.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:4)

Journey to the Antarctica is long, as it took them to various places and a large number of supplies. Antarctica was an uncharted place that far from civilization, so extensive preparations were essential. There is a wide-open sea that separates Antarctica and other places, and the continent itself is barren. An ill-prepared journey will prove to be fatal.

Lovecraft chose Antarctica due to its location and its hazardous climate. The majority of the continent, at the time when the book was published, was unexplored, as stated by biographer S.T. Joshi, “one of the last unexplored regions of the earth where large stretches of territory had never seen the tread of human feet. Contemporary maps of the continent show a number of provocative blanks, and Lovecraft could exercise his imagination in filling them in...” (S.T. Joshi, 1997:18). An uncharted continent was an ideal place for Lovecraft to add mysterious places, creatures, and events. In addition, the inhospitable condition enhances the scare factor within the story. Moreover, there were various expeditions to Antarctica; most notably Richard Evelyn Byrd's expedition in 1928-1930, before the novella was written. These expeditions yielded a variety of results that piqued the author. But as mentioned, launching an expedition was an arduous and expensive task which meant that the continent was not explored thoroughly at the time period.

“At about 62° South Latitude we sighted our first icebergs—table-like objects with vertical sides—and just before reaching the antarctic circle, which we crossed on October 20th with appropriately quaint ceremonies, we were considerably troubled with field ice.”

“On many occasions the curious atmospheric effects enchanted me vastly; these including a strikingly vivid mirage—the first I had ever seen—in which distant bergs became the battlements of unimaginable cosmic castles.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:4)

Dyer described the phenomenon he and the crews experienced as they draw near to their destination. The sighting of icebergs indicated a significant temperature drop due to the location of Antarctica which is far south of the Earth and is isolated from other lands, significantly gets less sunlight exposure, and high average elevation. Other than the icebergs, there is multiple ice sheets formed in the sea. These ice sheets restrict and impede ships' movement, forcing them to either reroute their course or destroy these sheets both of which require a long time. Another phenomenon that was mentioned is “the curious atmospheric effects”. This was a unique phenomenon known as Aurora. This phenomenon is caused by the stream of electrified particles, emitted by the sun, trapped in the magnetic field of the earth (<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/aurora>). The one that is mentioned in the story is called Aurora Australis. This phenomenon creates a mystical and otherworldly feeling toward the readers. The combination between an isolated, barren, uncharted continent and a rare phenomenon that only happens in Antarctica creates a feeling as if exploring a lifeless and alien world.

As the expedition team moved further, they saw snow-clad mountains, which Dyer noted that they were near Ross Island, and therefore near their destination point. “...the next day descried the cones of Mts. Erebus and Terror on Ross Island ahead, with the long line of the Parry Mountains beyond” (Lovecraft, 1937:5). Ross Island is one of the islands in Antarctica and it houses two volcanoes, Mts. Erebus and Terror. This island was discovered by Sir James Clark Ross, a British royal navy officer, in 1840. Its volcanic mountains were named after his ships, HMS Erebus and HMS Terror. Ross' discovery proved the existence of the Antarctica continent.

The expedition team landed on Ross Island and ascent Mt. Erebus. They assembled five planes in order to continue their expedition further to the continent.

“Wireless reports have spoken of the breathtaking, four-hour, nonstop flight of our squadron on November 21st over the lofty shelf ice, with vast peaks rising on the west, and the unfathomed silences echoing to the sound of our engines. Wind troubled us only moderately, and our radio compasses helped us through the one opaque fog we encountered. When the vast rise loomed ahead, between Latitudes 83° and 84°, we knew we had reached Beardmore Glacier, the largest valley glacier in the world, and that the frozen sea was now giving place to a frowning and mountainous coast line. At last we were truly entering the white, aeon-dead world of the ultimate south.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:7)

The team used the assembled planes to fly toward their destination. It was the same method that was used by the aforementioned Byrd's expedition where he flew across Antarctica in order to map the continent in 1928. The team's next destination was Beardmore Glacier, the largest glacier in the whole world. It took them four hours to reach their destination. As they arrived at their destination, Dyer mentions a mountainous coastline, which is presumably the Cloudmaker Mountain that towers over the Beardmore Glacier. He also noted the condition of the place as “white, aeon-dead world of the ultimate south” (Lovecraft, 1937:7), further establishing that Antarctica as this barren and lifeless continent. Combined with a huge mountain that towers over the glacier, it created a desolating feeling as if the place was cut off from the rest of the world. Furthermore, the only connection the team had with the outside of Antarctica was the occasional wireless reports.

The team established a camp above the glacier and proceeded to conduct their research. There, they found various specimens.

“In certain of the sandstones, dynamited and chiseled after boring revealed their nature, we found some highly interesting fossil markings and fragments; notably ferns, seaweeds, trilobites, crinoids, and such mollusks as linguellae and gastropods”

(Lovecraft, 1937:8)

These fossils were important in order to learn about Antarctica and its history. In real life, around 18 kg of fossilized seed ferns was founded by Captain Robert F. Scott in

1911-1912 (<https://expeditions.fieldmuseum.org/antarctic-dinosaurs/antarctic-fossils>). These specimens proved that Antarctica was once warm enough to support plant life there. Among these fossils, they found some strange fossils which Dyer failed to recognize. Though he didn't have an interest in these queer fossils, Lake one of the expedition team members, insisted to go westward. Ten members proceeded toward the west and despite the difficulty; they intended to conclude their search as soon as possible. "It was now midsummer, and with haste and care we might be able to conclude work by March and avoid a tedious wintering through the long antarctic night" (Lovecraft, 1937:9). The mentioned Antarctic night, also known as Polar night, is a unique phenomenon that happens in Antarctica, and in the case of Polar night in general, it can happen in the northernmost locations. Antarctica night is a phenomenon where nighttime lasts for 24 hours a day for the span of a month or more depending on the location. This phenomenon is caused by the rotation of the earth in relation to its position from the sun. The earth rotates on the tilted axis; as a result, there are periods of the year when the Arctic Circle and the Antarctic Circle are either completely exposed or obscured from the sun (<https://www.offthemap.travel/news/30-days-of-darkness-the-polar-night-explained/>). For this reason, it is understandable why the team wanted to avoid the Antarctic night. A full month of darkness, combined with a windstorm that often occurred, it would be hard to navigate the continent, making the expedition difficult to proceed, and potentially could end in fatality.

Despite Lake's insistence, Dyer refused to accompany him in his journey toward the northwest. The team divided into two and went to separate ways. Lake's team continued their journey to the northwest in order to further research the strange fossils, while Dyer's team stayed in the base, planning for an expedition in the eastern shift.

"In preparation for this transfer, one of the planes had begun to move up a good gasoline supply from McMurdo Sound."

"Lake's sub-expedition into the unknown, as everyone will recall, sent out its own reports from the shortwave transmitters on the planes; these being

simultaneously picked up by our apparatus at the southern base and by the *Arkham* at McMurdo Sound, whence they were relayed to the outside world on wave lengths up to fifty meters.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:11)

McMurdo Sound was where their base was located. McMurdo Sound is a bay in Antarctica that is often used as a base operation for Antarctic expeditions. The bay was discovered in 1841 by Sir James Clark Ross, the same explorer who found Ross Island. He used the bay as one of the main access routes to the continent. Along the shores of McMurdo Sound, Robert Falcon Scott established his base of operations there. From 1950, the bay served as scientific and research stations operated by the United States of America and New Zealand. In the novella, the bay is used as the base of operation for the Miskatonic expedition. It was used as a place to drop supply as mentioned by Dyer. In addition, it served as a place to relay the report from Lake's team to Arkham, the commanding brig, and their headquarters, then to the outside world, specifically to Arkham Advertiser which broadcast their expedition.

Amidst his preparation, Dyer received a message from Lake about another discovery of the strange slate they found and his plan to continue the expedition. Dyer protested Lake's plan which Lake refuse. Soon after Dyer received the message from Lake's team.

"10:05 P.M. On the wing. After snowstorm, have spied mountain range ahead higher than any hitherto seen. May equal Himalayas, allowing for height of plateau.”

“Highest peaks must go over thirty-five thousand feet. Everest out of the running.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:12-13)

Lake and his team saw a high mountain range that rivals the Himalayas. The Himalayas is a great mountain system in Asia. The Himalayas include the highest mountains in the world with over 110 peaks rising to elevations of 24.000 feet (7.300 meters) or more above sea level. One of those peaks is Everest Mountain, the highest mountain in the world, with an elevation of 29.032 feet (8.849 meters). To find a



mountain system with its highest peak of 35.000 feet (10.668 meters) which surpasses Everest is a huge discovery in history. Moreover, it was discovered in Antarctica which at that period of time was still largely unmapped. The rest of the team was ecstatic upon hearing the discovery. Such discovery however came with a cost. Lake's plane was damaged and grounded, disabling them to fly further. Before they landed however, they found that the mountains formations were odd as they formed low square blocks, with vertical sides and rectangular lines, and several cave-mouths with unusual shapes such as square and semi-circular (Lovecraft, 1937:13). Lake delayed his further exploration in order to rest at the foot of the mountain. He planned to climb the mountain and Dyer also planned to join him.

“It was agreed that one of Lake's planes would come to my base for Pabodie, the five men, and myself, as well as for all the fuel it could carry.”

“If we wintered in the antarctic we would probably fly straight from Lake's base to the *Arkham* without returning to this spot. Some of our conical tents had already been reinforced by blocks of hard snow, and now we decided to complete the job of making a permanent village.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:15)

Dyer and his team will use the plane that Lake sent in order to him. Travelling by land was dangerous given the distance and the hostile climate within Antarctica. Travelling by ship was impossible as there are no routes to travel to. Using planes to travel was the safest choice because they could travel a long distance in a short amount of time. Moreover, planes can carry more equipment and supplies and remove any need of making temporary camps or checkpoints in order to rest. They were able to go directly to their destination and back to the base. Construction of a permanent village or base was planned due to the expedition can last a year or more and as anticipation of facing the polar night. Furthermore, it can be used as a base for future expeditions.

Meanwhile, Lake and his team, despite its difficulty, struck a cave that contained full of fossils of cephalopods, corals, echini, spirifera, siliceous sponges, and marine vertebrate bones (Lovecraft, 1937:16). This event was similar to Scott's

discovery of fossilized seed ferns in 1911, and in the novella, it was added multiple marine animal fossils in order to add the sense of wonder and mystery within the story. Later, Lake found an abundance of both animal and plant fossils. This discovery made a historical moment because these fossils proved that the continent was teeming with life.

Later, Dyer and the rest of the team lost contact with Lake and his team. Communication is important while expediting in Antarctica because of its isolated location. Without having communication can end in a fatality as there are no other ways of asking for support if there are problems arise. This event further established that Antarctica is a hazardous place with little to no contact with the outside world and it can be a matter of life and death whenever problems arise. To make the matters worse, Dyer mentioned that Lake brought four planes with him and each one of them was equipped with excellent short-wave radio. The rest of the team decided to search for Lake's team.

The rest of the team used their last plane to reach the mountains that were discovered by Lake.

“Little by little, however, they rose grimly into the western sky; allowing us to distinguish various bare, bleak, blackish summits, and to catch the curious sense of fantasy which they inspired as seen in the reddish antarctic light against the provocative background of iridescent ice-dust clouds.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:29)

The mountains and their sheer size were described as intimidating and foreboding sceneries. Furthermore, the use of red light and clouds that are both surrounding and descending from the mountains creates an otherworldly and ominous feeling. Lovecraft described mountains, something familiar to the readers, as unknown and threatening objects. Danforth pointed out that some of the mountains were shaped in perfect cubes, which he compared to temple ruins (Lovecraft, 1937:29), establishing its unnatural nature. Dyer became more unnerved when he saw the mirage around the mountain. He saw a cyclopean city of no architecture known to man or to human

imagination, with vast aggregations of night-black masonry embodying monstrous perversions of geometrical laws (Lovecraft, 1937:30). Mirage is an optical illusion that occurs due to the bending of light rays in layers of air in varying density (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/mirage-optical-illusion>). The cause of this light bending is the large temperature differences between the surface and the air. In Antarctica, mirages can be seen in the winter or at the end of winter when the sea ice has just broken up (<https://www.coolantarctica.com/gallery/scenic/weather4.php>). Due to the mirage, the objects on the horizon appear as if they are floating in the air. In the novella however, mirages are used as some sort of gateway as a glimpse of what lies beyond. In the mirage, Dyer saw multiple colossal unknown architectures colored in black. He mentioned the sizes, shapes, and masonry of those architectures did not abide by geometrical laws.

They explored further into the mountains and they had a clear sight of the mountains' abnormal structures. "As he had said, their edges were crumbled and rounded from untold aeons of savage weathering; but their preternatural solidity and tough material had saved them from obliteration" (Lovecraft, 1937: 42). The structures' edges were eroded due to harsh windy weather. Dyer assumed that the structures were ancient, yet despite the harsh conditions, they still retained their form and avoided being crumbled. Furthermore, they found abundant cave mouths with a similar regular outline with the mountains, often approximately square or semicircular (Lovecraft, 1937:43). Their abundance amazed Dyer as if those caves were intended to be created that way and not because of natural causes.

Both Dyer and Danforth flew higher toward the mountain until they saw something beyond the mountains

"...for this Cyclopean maze of squared, curved, and angled blocks had features which cut off all comfortable refuge. It was, very clearly, the blasphemous city of the mirage in stark, objective, and ineluctable reality."

[...]

"...unhuman massiveness of these vast stone towers and ramparts had saved the frightful things from utter annihilation in the hundreds of



thousands—perhaps millions—of years it had brooded there amidst the blasts of a bleak upland.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:45-46)

Both of them found multiple aforementioned architectures that formed a city. At first, Dyer assumed that city was natural scenery such as the Garden of the Gods in Colorado and the Arizona desert, both of which have hills that look like buildings. However, the width of that place that seemed to be stretched infinitely and its countless architecture broke his initial assumption. The sheer size of the place and the number of structures creates a mystical atmosphere, similar to what was being used in the mountains. Furthermore, the location of the city which is found in the middle of Antarctica which is far from any civilization and at the period of the time still mostly uncharted produced an unnerving, mysterious, and wondrous atmosphere. Dyer had difficulty comprehending the existence of the city because its location was illogical and the period it came from was more ancient than any other known civilization. Dyer compared the city to other mythical cities such as Valusia, R'lyeh, Ib in the land of Mnar, and Nameless City of Arabia Deserta (Lovecraft, 1937:48). These cities are based on other Lovecraft's works. Valusia and the Nameless City of Arabia Deserta places where snake people lived, come from Lovecraft's *The Nameless City*. R'lyeh is a sunken city, a place where the iconic being called Cthulhu was entombed, that comes from *The Call of Cthulhu*, and Ib in the land of Mnar comes from *The Doom That Came to Sarnath*. With these comparisons, the novella established that the city in Antarctica is a mystical and otherworldly place. In addition, similar to other cities in Lovecraft's works, these cities were built by alien beings from before human civilizations existed and some of these cities came from the Mesozoic era when the dinosaurs still roams the earth.

As they explored the city, both Dyer and Danforth continued their exploration inside one of the buildings. The inner structure, similar to the city, had labyrinth complexity. In addition, the place was well-preserved and had irregular floor levels. Soon after, they found carvings on the wall which then they proceeded to analyze

them. Analyzing carvings can reveal the age and the culture of said civilization, similar to what historians did with the hieroglyphs in Egypt. However, Dyer found peculiarity while analyzing these carvings. These carvings were made with such precision and details as if they were made by advanced tools, and the style of those carvings was alien, unlike any other known human civilizations.

#### 4.1.2 Characters and Characterization

There are several characters that appear in the novella. Some of these characters become the main focus of the novella while others serve as supporting roles that set up the story. These characters and characterizations will be analyzed.

The expedition teams consisted of researchers and engineers that go to Antarctica in order to research the continent.

“We wished also to obtain as great as possible a variety of the upper fossiliferous rocks, since the primal life history of this bleak realm of ice and death is of the highest importance to our knowledge of the earth's past.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:2)

The quote above explained the expedition goal which is to retrieve various fossils and rock specimens in order to learn Antarctica's geography and history. The goal was similar to various expeditions in real life, especially Scott's expedition in 1911-1912 and Byrd's expedition in 1928-1930, both of which are mentioned in the novella. They intend to achieve this goal with their latest drilling equipment. Their expedition achieve more than what they originally intended to. They gather plenty of specimens and find the tallest mountains in the world. As they explored the mountains further, they discovered an ancient city of unknown origin. This moment however, led most of them to their demise.

The leader of the expedition team, William Dyer, was a geologist professor from Miskatonic University who was sent to Antarctica to gather the specimens they retrieved. In the novella, only his last name was mentioned and his full name was later revealed in other Lovecraft works, *The Shadow Out of Time*. Dyer is depicted as

calm and educated man, as he often warned Lake to be cautious and had considerable comprehension of the content of *Necronomicon*. In addition, Dyer was able to decipher the murals of the ancient city. He serves as the main character and the narrator of the novella.

Other notable characters from the expedition team are Lake and Danforth. Lake was a biologist professor from Miskatonic University. After he found the strange fossils, he was drawn to explore further despite Dyer's disagreement. He is the first character that discovered the Mountains and the Elder Ones which led to his and his team's demise. Danforth is a graduate student at Miskatonic University and throughout the story he accompanied Dyer while exploring Antarctica and the mysterious city. Danforth also often made remarks on several landscapes in the novella for example; he claims that Mountain Erebus and Mountain Terror were the sources of inspiration for Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*. As he and Dyer explored the city, Danforth's mental deteriorated, and at the end of the novella, he became mad after he saw a mysterious entity beyond the mountain.

In the novella, the expedition teams encountered several monsters which are The Elder Ones (also known as Elder Things or Old Ones) and Shoggoth. The Elder Ones were beings that created the city within Antarctica that came from outer space. One of them was first discovered by Lake while he was digging. When it was awake, it proceeded to slaughter Lake's team and dissected one of them. Further towards the story, Dyer and Danforth learned the Elder Ones' history while they were exploring the city.

“They seemed able to traverse the interstellar ether on their vast membranous wings—thus oddly confirming some curious hill folklore long ago told me by an antiquarian colleague. They had lived under the sea a good deal, building fantastic cities and fighting terrific battles with nameless adversaries by means of intricate devices employing unknown principles of energy. Evidently their scientific and mechanical knowledge far surpassed man's today...”

(Lovecraft, 1937:64)

The quote above explained that the Elder Ones were species with the capability of interstellar travel with their wings. Other than wings, they were described to have star-shaped heads with eyes at the end of their five main head tentacles (Lovecraft, 1937:65). Such descriptions confirmed that they were beings of alien origin. They were also described as a tough species that are able to live on various planets and to withstand the pressure from ocean depth without specialized foods and equipment. When they arrived on Earth, they lived under the sea and built their cities. These underwater cities are similar to R'lyeh, another underwater city that appears in another Lovecraft's works, *The Call of Cthulhu*. As described multiple times in the novella, their technology far surpassed human technology, being able to settle on multiple planets before earth and built underwater cities. While the Elder Ones were on earth, they synthesized their food, created Shoggoth, and developed other cell groups to serve the Elder Ones (Lovecraft, 1937:65), implying that they were the ones who created life on earth. The description of the Elder Ones made them similar to humans. They had their own government, culture, and society. These traits made them different from other beings in other Lovecraft works, which made The Elder Ones somewhat more comprehensible and more human rather than some mystical creatures, while other beings, such as Cthulhu or Yog-Shothoth, were supernatural by nature and often called "gods" in their respective stories. They were later invaded by other alien beings called Mi-Go who appeared in Lovecraft's *The Whisperer in Darkness* (1931), and the spawn of the aforementioned Cthulhu. Their conditions were worsening when Shoggoths retained their independence and rebelled against their masters, which led to the end of the Elder Ones civilization.

Shoggoths are the main antagonist of the story that threatened Dyer and Danforth while they were exploring the city.

“Formless protoplasm able to mock and reflect all forms and organs and processes—viscous agglutinations of bubbling cells—rubbery fifteen-foot spheroids infinitely plastic and ductile—slaves of suggestion, builders of cities—more and more sullen, more and more intelligent, more and more amphibious, more and more imitative!”

(Lovecraft, 1937:100)

The Shoggoths were servitor creatures created by Elder Ones in order to serve them. They were slime-like and formless creatures with gelatinous flesh in varying sizes that were able to transform into any forms and organs which made them very useful to the Elder Ones in order to build cities in earth's ocean and later in Antarctica. Similar to their creator, they emitted horrible and overpowering smells that were strong enough to mask the smell from the Elder Ones. To complement Shoggoth's terrifying appearance, it had incredible speed. It was described like watching a train closing in on someone standing on the tracks (Lovecraft, 1937:105). First created as mindless creatures, they were mutated through the ages and started to develop intelligence and independence. They committed several rebellions against their creators which brought ruin to their civilization on earth. They had the ability to generate enough suction to decapitate their victims which became their main method to fight and kill the Elder Ones (Lovecraft, 1937:100) as described by many headless drawings of the Elder Ones in the murals. Throughout the exploration within the city, Dyer heard the sounds of musical piping who he dismissed it as the sound of wind at first, though later, it was revealed that the sound came from the Shoggoths themselves. Shoggoths created sounds of musical piping to mimic the sounds of the Elder Ones. Another mimicry they did was the curious phrase “*Tekeli-li, Tekeli-li.*” They repetitively cried this phrase as they chased Dyer and Danforth in the story.

#### 4.1.3 Plot

The plot is one of the formulaic structures which have an important role in the story. Analyzing the plot will help to determine the standardization within the novella. *At The Mountains of Madness* uses first person perspective narration



throughout the story which means the story is told through the perspective of the main character, Dyer.

The story starts with a warning from Dyer after he underwent the expedition in Antarctica.

“I am forced into speech because men of science have refused to follow my advice without knowing why. It is altogether against my will that I tell my reasons for opposing this contemplated invasion of the antarctic—with its vast fossil hunt and its wholesale boring and melting of the ancient ice caps.”

“In the end I must rely on the judgment and standing of the few scientific leaders who have, on the one hand, sufficient independence of thought to weigh my data on its own hideously convincing merits or in the light of certain primordial and highly baffling myth-cycles; and on the other hand, sufficient influence to deter the exploring world in general from any rash and over-ambitious program in the region of those mountains of madness.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:1)

Dyer told that his warning in order to prevent any other expedition to Antarctica was dismissed by other scientists but he was adamant to cancel future expeditions by providing pieces of evidence that he gathered in his expedition. He had his doubt regarding his evidences however because there was a chance that his evidence was dismissed as clever fakery and Dyer doubted that the ink drawings could convince the already doubtful scientists. Furthermore, Dyer was not a well-known man and was from a small university. Yet despite the difficulty, he tried to tell them regardless out of fear of what could have happened to the future expedition and what would be unleashed due to said expedition. This situation creates a big mystery in the story as to why Dyer was so insistent to prevent another expedition to Antarctica. This mystery serves as a hook for the audience in order to read further and discover the answer to the mystery. Furthermore, Dyer's insistence creates a sense of looming dread throughout the story because the reason for his fear is still unknown to the readers.

The story continues with Dyer retelling what happened to the previous expedition that he participated. The expedition's goal was to secure various rocks and

soil from various parts of the Antarctic with the help of the new drilling equipment devised by Pabodie, one of Dyer's colleagues. He hoped with these new technologies, the expedition would yield plenty of specimens that held significant scientific value as the expedition team believed that the continent was once a temperate place. The expedition team consisted of skilled men that were necessary for the expedition. Dyer, Pabodie, Atwood, and other eight members were experienced in navigation; twelve other members were qualified pilots most of whom were competent wireless operators, nine engineers, and two fully-manned ships. The team was well-prepared; meaning there was something that made the expedition became a catastrophic failure. Dyer then told that their communication outside the expedition was through the wireless reports to the *Arkham Advertiser* and Associated Press which publicize their expedition. This means that the team was completely isolated which create a sense of intensity because if something went wrong, there would be no help or at least they would need to wait for a significant amount of time before the help arrived.

The story continues with the expedition team going to several places to collect supplies before they continued to Antarctica. As the team drew close to their destination, Dyer described that the day and night cycle became longer, the temperature dropped drastically, and there was a strange atmospheric phenomenon happening. Lovecraft built the tension within the story with a slow pace by gradually describing the setting as the characters slowly arrived and later explored the continent. When the team saw the continent and its mountains, Lovecraft wrote those mountains as something imposing and threatening thus creating an oppressing atmosphere.

“I need not repeat what the newspapers have already published about our early work: of our ascent of Mt. Erebus; our successful mineral borings at several points on Ross Island and the singular speed with which Pabodie's apparatus accomplished them, even through solid rock layers; our provisional test of the small ice-melting equipment; our perilous ascent of the great barrier with sledges and supplies; and our final assembling of five huge aeroplanes at the camp atop the barrier.”

[...]

“Wireless reports have spoken of the breathtaking, four-hour, nonstop flight of our squadron on November 21st over the lofty shelf ice, with vast peaks rising on the west, and the unfathomed silences echoing to the sound of our engines.”

(Lovecraft, 1937: 6-7)

The team arrived on Ross Island, their first checkpoint before exploring further into the continent. Despite the initial difficulty to reach the said island, they managed to land safely. Dyer mentioned that the health of the team was healthy and the weather was favorable, so they started to assemble the planes and built a semi-permanent camp. This event shows a sense of normalcy with the accomplishment of Pabodie’s apparatus and the assembly of five planes. The tension builds up once the team continues their expedition further into the continent. They took four hours flight to the continent mainland from Ross Island. Dyer described that the flight was quiet and he was able to see the peaks of the mountains in Antarctica, further establishing the mountain as the source of tension and mystery within the story.

The mystery further develops when they collected another specimen. Some of the fossils they discovered were from older life forms that they were looking for. The other slates they found however were different.

“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. These fragments came from a point to the westward, near the Queen Alexandra Range; and Lake, as a biologist, seemed to find their curious marking unusually puzzling and provocative...”

(Lovecraft 1937: 8)

Dyer dismissed the peculiar markings as a natural geographical cause. His colleague, Lake however was fixated on these slates. The mystery builds since it is unknown if the markings were natural or unnatural, and why Lake was so fixated on those markings. The unknown markings on the slates and Lake’s obsession with them create another mystery in the story. The uncertainty builds up the suspense a bit as Dyer did not understand why Lake was with toward the slates and his insistence to go northwest since he believed that they would yield more valuable specimens. Despite



Dyer's disagreement and refusal to accompany him, Lake continued his expedition with his small team to the northwest of Antarctica. Dyer explained that he was still convinced that the markings were caused by natural events and not worth further investigation.

In his book *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (1976), Cawelti stated that a mystery story is an investigation and discovery that leads to the character(s) benefit (1976:46). The markings on the slates lead Lake to the northwest where he believed that it would lead them to some valuable discovery. It was unknown however how Lake was able to decipher the markings and lead to such a conclusion. From Dyer's perspective, and the readers, Lake was driven by his obsession that led him to travel to the northwest. Cawelti mentioned that horror story came from an intense emotion from the readers (1976:47). Those emotions come from the readers when they are confronted with the unknowable within the story. Lovecraft mentioned in his essay, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown" (Lovecraft, 1927).

While Lake continued his expedition with his small team, Dyer and the rest of the expedition team were waiting at the base. Dyer still expressed doubt toward Lake's sub-expedition and gave up on voicing his disagreement due to not being able to contain Lake's excitement. However, Lake and his team found plenty of valuable fossils, confirming his belief that the markings did point to a place with plenty of specimens. The mystery remained however as to how Lake deciphers the markings and why the markings pointed to that specific location. The story continues as one of Lake's planes was forced to land near huge mountains which he described as tall as the Himalayas with strange skyline effects (Lovecraft, 1937: 12-13). Despite the initial setback, Lake and his team continued their expedition which yields plenty of results such as fossils and cavern entrances. Some of these fossils were both strange and groundbreaking. One of them was a monstrous fossil barrel-shaped fossil with a tough yet flexible body and wings. Lake dubbed this monster as The Elder One due to

its similarity to the fabled monster the Elder Things in *Necronomicon*. Furthermore, the sledge dogs became restless near the fossils. The similarity of the fossils to the fabled monsters and the dogs' behavior both increase the stake and mystery in the story. The rest of the team congratulate and praise Lake for his discovery however Dyer reported to Arkham with the instruction of toning down the detail due to the radical findings would cause doubts and skepticism.

The suspense within the story increases when the expedition team lost contact with Lake's team.

“After three o'clock it was very quiet, and we redoubled our efforts to get Lake. Reflecting that he had four planes, each provided with an excellent short-wave outfit, we could not imagine any ordinary accident capable of crippling all his wireless equipment at once. Nevertheless the stony silence continued, and when we thought of the delirious force the wind must have had in his locality we could not help making the most direful conjectures.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:27)

For five hours they were unable to hold communication with Lake, causing anxiety among the rest of the team. At first, they assumed that the harsh wind of Antarctica disrupted communication. However, the main base was still able to contact Arkham. Furthermore, one of the team members reported that there was little wind blowing further into the continent which means that the weather was not the cause of communication loss. The continuous silence from Lake's team was worrying so they planned for a rescue operation. Commencing a rescue operation was risky because they only had one plane left because the distance between the main base and Lake's team was quite large and dangerous. They proceeded to commence the rescue operation despite the danger it posed. The journey through the unknown and dangerous region presents a suspenseful atmosphere and wondrous expectation of what lies in there.

The flight toward Lake's last position took about four hours and a half before they caught a glimpse of the titular mountains. Despite being on the plane, they were

slow in closing the distance and the mountains were only visible due to their sheer size.

“Little by little, however, they rose grimly into the western sky; allowing us to distinguish various bare, bleak, blackish summits, and to catch the curious sense of fantasy which they inspired as seen in the reddish antarctic light against the provocative background of iridescent ice-dust clouds. In the whole spectacle there was a persistent, pervasive hint of stupendous secrecy and potential revelation. It was as if these stark, nightmare spires marked the pylons of a frightful gateway into forbidden spheres of dream, and complex gulfs of remote time, space, and ultra-dimensionality.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:29)

The mountains are depicted as this otherworldly and ominous gateway into the unknown realm with unnatural shapes. The mountains are further described as having dreamlike nature due to clouds surrounding the mountains giving them reddish light. Such description presents the mountains with a threatening atmosphere that is full of mystery which is important because the mountains are the main attraction for the novella. Furthermore, the mountains serve as a shift from a normal scientific expedition to the journey to the unknown region of Antarctica. Dyer grew more anxious and scared as they approached the mountains while further emphasizing the mountains' strangeness and their intimidating nature as if the mountains themselves represented the desolation of Antarctica.

Danforth noticed that the mountains had some regularity in their shape such as the shape of a perfect cube. Lake mentioned the same description which he compared to a temple. Seeing that, Dyer recalled a mythological place of Leng, a mysterious place whose its exact location is unknown and was built by a mysterious race. These similarities follow the mystery formula. According to Cawelti, mystery is about investigation and discovery which usually leads to some benefit for the character(s) (Cawelti, 1976:42). However, the discovery of the mountains and later their inhabitants are not beneficial to the characters. Furthermore, the mystery is never solved until the end of the story which according to Cawelti, a mystery that is not solved or dealt with is an antithesis to the mystery formula (Cawelti, 1976:44). The

unsolved mysteries in the story also followed one of the other formulas, which is alien states and beings that will be explained later in this thesis.

When Dyer looked at the mountains, he started to see a strange mirage of an ancient city for a brief time. Dyer described that the city was vast with strange architecture that seemingly defy any physical laws (Lovecraft, 1937:30). This mirage is used to represent Dyer's inability to comprehend the situation he's in which is common in Lovecraft's works. This city also serves as a setup for the upcoming events in the novella.

After the team landed at the foot of the mountains, they began to go to Lake's camp, hoping they found them there unharmed. As soon they arrived, they found the camp in a destroyed state with the Lake's team, including Lake himself dead. They also found the dogs dead and their sledges destroyed. However, one of the Lake's team members, Gedney, was missing with a dog. The team was trying to secure the specimens when they noticed that several of the specimens including the monstrous fossil were either gone or damaged. Another strange thing they found was the corpses' condition. They were dissected and mangled with an unpleasant odor. This event creates an uneasy atmosphere because of it's lack of explanation on why it happened. Several characters try to come up with explanations such as the team had a quarrel and ended up killing each other, or Gedney, the only surviving member, went mad and kill the entire team. These deductions however were unable to explain the abnormality of the corpses' condition. In the end, Dyer ordered the team to find Gedney in the hope to distract the team from the horror in Lake's camp and finding an explanation for what happened.

The team became discouraged from continuing their expedition due to this horrifying event. Despite their focus on finding Gedney, the horror seemed to follow them making them became more anxious. Later, it was Dyer and Danforth's turn to search Gedney. They used the airplane to explore the mountain and her Dyer further emphasized how unnatural the mountains were, from their size and their shapes. Dyer decided to fly higher to see what was beyond the mountains.

“I think that both of us simultaneously cried out in mixed awe, wonder, terror, and disbelief in our own senses as we finally cleared the pass and saw what lay beyond. Of course, we must have had some natural theory in the back of our heads to steady our faculties for the moment.”

“...”

“Yet now the sway of reason seemed irrefutably shaken, for this Cyclopean maze of squared, curved, and angled blocks had features which cut off all comfortable refuge.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:45)

They saw a massive city with massive and weird-shaped buildings that seemed to span infinitely. The scenery shocked them since they did not expect to find a city in Antarctica. At first, they assumed the city as some sort of natural rock formation; however the shapes of the buildings and the vastness of the city had shaken their reasoning. Their inability to comprehend the city was because it was unknown to them. Facing this unknown city, they became unnerved and questioned their sanity. Yet despite that, they decided to take photos and land in the city in the hope of finding an answer. After they landed, they prepared accordingly and proceeded to explore the city. The story further emphasizes the strangeness of the buildings that there was both a sense of wonders and horrors in exploring an ancient city that had already existed before humans existed.

As they explored the city, they decided to enter one of the buildings. They were amazed at the infrastructure, from its size to its architecture. Through observing the structure, Dyer guessed that the city was abandoned, not destroyed by some sort of calamity. Another thing they found while inspecting the structure was that the structure was built with advanced technology and inhuman methods. These assumptions added another mystery to the story as to what caused the inhabitants of the city to leave and what sort of technology they had. All of these unanswered mysteries inflicted fear on both Dyer and Danforth since their purpose to explore the city was to find some answers yet they ended up with more questions. Furthermore, the walls of structures were full of carvings which included drawings of star-headed



beings that were similar to the missing Elder Ones' fossils. This proved that there was a connection between the creatures that Lake found and the mysterious city.

Further inspection of the carvings, several mysteries about the city and the Elder Ones were answered.

“...the sculptures told of the coming of those star-headed things to the nascent, lifeless earth out of cosmic space—their coming, and the coming of many other alien entities such as at certain times embark upon spatial pioneering. They seemed able to traverse the interstellar ether on their vast membranous wings—thus oddly confirming some curious hill folklore long ago told me by an antiquarian colleague.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:64)

It was revealed that the Elder Ones were space-faring species. Unlike many space-faring species in other sci-fi works where they relied on technologies for space travel, The Elder Ones' physiology alone enabled them to space travel by using their wings. These strange methods of space travel add strangeness to the creature and make them harder to comprehend. The carvings also told that there were other space-faring species and that the Elder Ones came to Earth while it is still a barren planet. The latter information gives information on how strong and durable the Elder Ones were since they were able to live in the early stages of Earth. They used the seas to create lives for food and other purposes which emphasize their advanced yet bizarre technologies. One of their creations was the slave race called the Shoggoths. The carvings also confirmed that their technology was more advanced though they prefer a more biological way rather than using machines.

“With the aid of the Shoggoths, whose expansions could be made to lift prodigious weights, the small, low cities under the sea grew to vast and imposing labyrinths of stone not unlike those which later rose on land. Indeed, the highly adaptable Old Ones had lived much on land in other parts of the universe, and probably retained many traditions of land construction”

(Lovecraft, 1937:65)

The Elder Ones decided to settle on Earth and with the help of Shoggoths, built cities on Earth. The strange city that Dyer found was what remained of one of



the Elder Ones' cities. The Elder Ones seemed to prefer to live beneath the sea since they prioritize building their cities underwater before expanding to the land. Underwater cities were similar to other cities that were used in other *Cthulhu Mythos* stories, such as R'lyeh in *Call of Cthulhu* (1928) and Y'ha-nthlei in *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* (1936). Furthermore, the carvings told about other constructions in other parts of the universe and how they held similarities with the construction found in Antarctica. This implies that The Elder Ones had civilizations across the universes which established that the Elder Ones were otherworldly beings.

“These vertebrates, as well as an infinity of other life forms—animal and vegetable, marine, terrestrial, and aerial—were the products of unguided evolution acting on life cells made by the Old Ones, but escaping beyond their radius of attention. They had been suffered to develop unchecked because they had not come in conflict with the dominant beings.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:68)

The most shocking revelation is that some, if not all of the life forms on Earth were the byproducts of the Elder Ones' creations. These life forms were able to evolve due to the lack of supervision from the Elder Ones. Despite that, they seemed to ignore such phenomenon and only exterminated those who proved to be bothersome. Another interesting thing that was revealed through the carvings is the drawings of primitive mammals, some of which had a vague resemblance to primates and humans. They used these creatures as food and sometimes as a source of entertainment. The implication that the lives on Earth, including humans, are just byproducts of alien beings creates a sense of existential dread.

The story then delves into the Shoggoths. They were controlled by the Elder Ones through hypnotic suggestions and had the ability to transform their shapes (Lovecraft, 1937:69). With their help, the Elder Ones' colony on earth was thriving, developing their own culture and government. However, they began to clash with another alien being called, Cthulhu spawn or star spawn.

“Another race—a land race of beings shaped like octopi and probably

corresponding to fabulous pre-human spawn of Cthulhu—soon began filtering down from cosmic infinity and precipitated a -monstrous war which for a time drove the Old Ones wholly back to the sea—a colossal blow in view of the increasing land settlements.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:68)

The Cthulhu spawns were octopus-like creatures that, as the name implied, served a being named Cthulhu which originated from one of Lovecraft's short stories, *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928). The Cthulhu Spawns were able to drive the Elder Ones from the lands. The reason why they had suffered defeat was that the Cthulhu spawns were from a different world and alien even for the Elder Ones. In the end, they managed to make peace with the Cthulhu spawns. It didn't last long before they were invaded by another alien being- half-fungous, half-crustacean creature (Lovecraft, 1937:70). These invading creatures were called Mi-Go. These creatures also showed up in one of Lovecraft's works, *The Whisperer of Darkness* (1931). During the invasion, the Elder Ones were unable to do space travels and were cut off from their homeland. The sudden rebellion of their slave race, Shoggoth, was making things worse for the Elder Ones, which made them retreat to Antarctica. What caused the collapse of the Elder Ones' civilization on land was not the conflict between other beings; it was due to the earth becoming colder. They retreated to the deep sea and their fate remained unknown. Studying the carvings made Dyer and Danforth realize that they were standing in the ruins of a civilization that older than life on earth. As they studied the carvings, Dyer noticed that the carving mentioned something bigger than the buildings in the city and the mountains themselves. Some records barely mentioned it, while the others were filled with loath and dread about it, and the Elder Ones themselves seemed to be afraid of it.

Dyer and Danforth delved further into the ruins in order to study the city more. They found more of the remnant of once a living city, yet no clue about what happened at Lake's camp and Gedney's whereabouts. With their supplies running low, they abandoned further study of the city in order to find Gedney.

They entered a labyrinth in order to search for Gedney. As they were exploring, Danforth smelled gasoline and a strange odor that was similar to the one at Lake's camp. This strange odor with the strange architecture made both of them hesitate to explore further. Furthermore, Danforth noticed the sound of musical piping which according to the carvings that they had deciphered was how the Elder Ones communicate, though they dismissed it as the sound of winds. They eventually found a camp which Dyer noticed that the equipment came from Lake's camp and Among the camp's remains, they found a note.

“A mad Gedney might have made the groups of dots in imitation of those found on the greenish soapstones, just as the dots on those insane five- pointed grave-mounds might have been made; and he might conceivably have prepared rough, hasty sketches—varying in their accuracy or lack of it—which outlined the neighboring parts of the city and traced the way from a circularly represented place outside our previous route...”

(Lovecraft, 1937:86)

The note contained dots that share the same patterns as the stone that Lake found earlier. It seemed Gedney was drawn to this place just like Lake to the point of obsession. This obsession drove him to madness as he drew those patterns. Dyer noted that the patterns shared similarities with the city layouts though the accuracy between the sketch and the city remained unknown. Dyer stated that these sketches were made for those who found them for an unknown purpose. This event left them scared yet curious. They decided to continue their journey by following the sketches Gedney had left despite being terrified and questioning their sanity.

The story continues as Dyer and Danforth followed Gedney's trails while leaving their own as well. Following these trails finally lead to the preserved body of Gedney and the missing dogs. This discovery left them confused and bombarded with various speculations regarding what happened to him. The tension increased since both of them tried to search for Gedney to find an answer and only ended with more questions. To make things weirder, both of them were more interested in continuing their exploration rather than investigating Gedney's death. After a while,

they heard a familiar sound of wind-piping.

“Had it been some trace of that bizarre musical piping over a wide range which Lake's dissection report had led us to expect in those others—and which, indeed, our overwrought fancies had been reading into every wind howl we had heard since coming on the camp horror—it would have had a kind of hellish congruity with the aeon-dead region around us.”

(Lovecraft, 1937:91)

They had heard this since they started exploring the mountains. At first, this sound can be easily dismissed as the sound of wind blowing through the mountains and the ruins of the city. However, the existence of this sound did not make sense since they were far inside one of the buildings where the winds were not that strong. As they listened to the sound, they became certain that the sound came from something mundane, penguins. They found it strange that there were penguins located far from the sea and inside the city. As they went to investigate the penguins, they found out that the penguins themselves were bizarre. They were huge, bigger than any known species, with all of them being eyeless and having albinism. Dyer remembered that these penguins were in the carvings they investigate earlier and lived deep inside the building where it was warmer. Driven by their curiosity on what made these penguins went out from their usual place, Dyer and Danforth ventured deeper.

As they ventured deeper, they smelled a similar odor except it much worse. Furthermore, they encountered other carvings similar to what they encounter before however, Dyer stated that these carvings were “coarse, bold, and wholly lacking in delicacy of detail” (Lovecraft, 1937:96). This implies that the carvings were imitations which were made by a different entity than the Elder Ones. This discovery serves as a build up to the story that leads to the confrontation with the Shoggoth.

“Formless protoplasm able to mock and reflect all forms and organs and processes—viscous agglutinations of bubbling cells—rubbery fifteen-foot spheroids infinitely plastic and ductile—slaves of suggestion, builders of cities—more and more sullen, more and more intelligent,

more and more amphibious, more and more imitative!”

(Lovecraft, 1937:100)

Shoggoth appearance was described as green formless slime which, as explained before, had the ability to transform into anything. Dyer and Danforth were terrified of it due to facing one of the creatures that were able to topple the Elder Ones, a powerful entity that once dominated the Earth. Facing such monstrosities, Dyer felt sympathy for those who encountered Shoggoth, including the Elder Ones themselves. Dyer and Danforth were frozen in fear, unable to do anything until Shoggoth made a sound that made them start running. Despite its huge size, Shoggoth was able to move at a fast pace which Dyer described its speed as fast as an oncoming train. Furthermore, The Shoggoth made a strange and unknown phrase, which adds another element of strangeness to this alien entity. This strange sound was the same one that was heard by Danforth since they explored the mountains.

In the end, they were able to escape from the Shoggoth and reached their planes. As they start flying away from the city, they still heard Shoggoth's strange cries. Their encounter with Shoggoth had left them shaken; even Dyer states that he was still haunted by Shoggoth's strange cries. However, the Shoggoth and the Elder Ones were not the only alien beings they encountered. As they fly away from the mountains, Danforth looked back at the city and started to scream hysterically. It was implied that the unknown entity was the same one with what Dyer described as something that was larger than the mountains themselves and was feared by the Elder Ones. The mere glimpse of that entity was enough to make Danforth mad as Dyer stated that Danforth started to whisper many things. The story ends with Dyer telling the readers that Danforth screams the same strange phrase they heard from the Shoggoth.

Lovecraft used the strange description in this story in order to intrigue the readers and to create suspense within the story. As mentioned before, the story builds up a mystery as the main characters as they explored the unknown region, its



history, and its inhabitants; however the story also builds up tension and horror within the story. The tension and horror are aligned with one of Cawelti's moral fantasies which is Alien Beings or States. According to Cawelti, a horror story portrays the depredation and ultimate destruction of some monsters (Cawelti, 1976:47). In the case of *At the Mountains of Madness*, the monster has faced destruction before the story began. The Elder Ones had lost their cities on land and there are only a few Shoggoths remained. Another aspect of Cawelti's Alien Beings or States is how the intensity of emotion is used as escapism (Cawelti, 1976:47). This intensity of emotion can be seen in how various characters in the novella having some sort of compulsion, for example Lake was obsessed on strange symbols on the stone, and both Dyer and Danforth decided to explore the city despite knowing the danger it holds. What makes this compulsion more interesting is the fact that the story does not tell the readers the cause of it, and this creates terror within the story as Cawelti explained that story becomes scary to the readers by presenting terror as something unknown (Cawelti, 1976:48). However, Cawelti also stated that horror domesticated the terror that comes from the unknown by making it understandable therefore creating a familiarity to the readers (Cawelti, 1976:48). The familiarity within the story is created with an extensive description of the ancient city and its inhabitant. The Elder Things and their civilization is more similar to humans such as their act of colonization and having their own government and culture, while the other entities in other Lovecraft works are more supernatural by nature.

*At the Mountains of Madness* uses the Alien Beings and States typology since it uses its unfamiliar setting and creatures to create a horror story. There is one staple aspect that makes Lovecraft's stories stand out from any other horror story is the inclusion of some unknown entity that is beyond comprehension which makes the characters lose their sanity. This aspect is represented best in the story when Danforth saw the unknown entity beyond the mountains which made him mad. The lack of explanation and description reinforces the idea that this entity is beyond



human understanding. Other than making *At the Mountains of Madness* unique, the implementation of this aspect has led to the creation of a new sub-genre in the horror genre which is Lovecraftian Horror or also known as Cosmic Horror.

#### 4.2 The Shaping of Alien Concept in American Culture

According to Cawelti, formulas are cultural products and in turn presumably have some sort of influence on culture because they become a conventional way to represent and relate certain images, symbols, themes, and myths (Cawelti, 1976:20). The formula goes through a process in which it develops, changes, and gives way to other formulas as a cultural evolution with survival through audience selection, hence why the formula cannot be separated from culture.

The concept of alien beings or extraterrestrial beings has existed throughout human cultures. However, these alien beings were mentioned in various mythologies as mythological creatures or gods. There are debates about the existence of alien beings, and according to Frank J. Tipler in his article, *A Brief History of the Extraterrestrial Intelligence Concept* (1981) such debates can be traced back to ancient Greeks and it continues to reoccur and reinvent periodically (Tipler, 1981:133). Even today there are still debates about whether there are any intelligent life forms or any life forms in general that exist outside the Earth.

One phenomenon that reignites the belief of alien beings is the phenomenon that occurs on planet Venus called The Ashen Light. The Ashen Light was first discovered by Italian astronomer Giovanni Riccioli in 1643 however, the term Ashen Light is first used by Agnes M. Clerke in her book, *A Popular History of Astronomy in Nineteenth Century* (1885). This phenomenon has created many theories; one of them is from a Bavarian astronomer, Franz von Paula Gruithuisen. In his book, *Naturgeschichte des gestirnten Himmels* (1836), Franz von Paula Gruithuisen proposed that Venus was inhabited by a species similar to humans which he called Venusian. According to Gruithuisen, The Ashen Light was caused by these Venusian people as an act of their tradition. Gruithuisen also proposed that

Earth's moon was inhabited by Moon Men.

Gruithuisen's theory sparked an interest in Venus and space in general. An American astronomer, Percival Lowell, discover branching spokes on Venus that bear resemblance with the markings on Mercury and Mars. While he thought the spokes on Venus as a natural occurrence, he believed the ones on Mars were artificial. He believed that these spokes were canals which created by intelligent beings and he dubbed these canals "The Martian Canals". He wrote three books in which The Martian Canals were analyzed and described. These books are *Mars* (1896), *Mars and Its Canals* (1906), and *Mars As the Abode of Life* (1908). Despite the skepticism, the idea that there were lives on Mars was more appealing and plausible than lives on Venus.

A British science fiction author, Herbert George Wells, wrote a science fiction novel titled *The War of Worlds* (1898) which was published in the USA by Cosmopolitan Magazine. The novel tells a story about the Martian people's invasion and occupation of Earth. The novel was inspired by Lowell's idea of intelligent life on Mars. However, Wells did not view Lowell's Martian people as a mere inspiration for his story; he believed that there were intelligent beings existed on Mars. In 1908, Wells wrote an article in Cosmopolitan magazine about Martian people including their illustration by William R. Leigh titled *The Things that Lived on Mars*. In the article, Wells stated that he believed that Mars was a habitable planet and inhabited by intelligent beings (Wells, 1908). The article was inspired by Lowell's *The Mars and Its Canals* (1906) and aimed to provide more convincing cases on Martian people. The article included several illustrations of Martian people themselves, their architecture, the flora and fauna of Mars, and so on. Such illustrations were provided since Lowell did not speculate on the appearance of the creatures. Within the article, the idea of Mars as a habitable planet was stated as a fact and scientifically proven with Lowell's books as the definitive proof.

Despite being scientifically disproven, the idea of intelligent extraterrestrial beings along with their civilizations is still appealing and has made a lasting impact.

The idea becomes the source of various science fiction works, such as *A Princess of Mars* (1912) by Edgar Rice Burroughs, and the aforementioned *The War of Worlds* (1893) by H.G. Wells. USA government agency, NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), launched two satellites in 1977, Voyager 1 and Voyager 2, as the part of Voyager Program. Barry H. Mauk, Edwin P. Keath, and Stamatios M. Krimigis (1990) explain in their article that the initial mission of the Voyager Program was to explore Jupiter and Saturn, and the mission currently is extended to explore the outermost edge of the Sun's domain and beyond. The most interesting part of these satellites are their Golden Records which contained sounds and images that portray the diversity of life and culture on Earth. These Golden Records serve not only as a time capsule but also as a way to communicate with extraterrestrial beings (<https://voyager.jpl.nasa.gov/golden-record/>).

The construction of the alien concept in Lovecraft's works is apparent. In some of his works, alien beings are presented as something supernatural in nature, such as Cthulhu in *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928) who can influence people in its dream. In *At The Mountains of Madness* however the Elder Things and Shoggoth have a more grounded nature though there is a supernatural element.

“Some of the sculptures suggested that they had passed through a stage of mechanized life on other planets, but had receded upon finding its effects emotionally unsatisfying. Their preternatural toughness of organization and simplicity of natural wants made them peculiarly able to live on a high plane without the more specialized fruits of artificial manufacture, and even without garments, except for occasional protection against the elements.”

“It was under the sea, at first for food and later for other purposes, that they first created earth-life...”

(Lovecraft, 1937:64)

The Elder Things shared similarities with humans and are well-explained, as stated in the novella the Elder Things underwent some sort of technological development in order to improve their quality of life and their colonization effort. Furthermore, it was explained that they have the need for food and housing, a method of interstellar travel, and their place of preference to live. Further in the

novella, the Elder Things were described to have their own culture and government. Shoggoths were created for the purpose to aid the Elder Things. Their role was akin to robots before they gained self-consciousness and rebelled. These descriptions of the Elder Things and Shoggoths portray aliens in scientific light hence why the novella falls into the science fiction genre.

Alien portrayal in *At The Mountains of Madness* and the entire *Cthulhu Mythos* is different than most other portrayals. Most aliens are portrayed either as mythological entities, such as primordial gods in Ancient Greek or simply as extraterrestrial beings from other planets with their own civilizations, such as the Martian people. These alien entities are viewed with wonders and curiosity as if discovering a new animal species, or with caution as if dealing with a foreign country. Though these views are present in *At The Mountains of Madness*, the alien is portrayed as an entity that is beyond humans, which is shared with the other *Cthulhu Mythos* stories. In *At The Mountains of Madness*, this portrayal can be seen when one of the characters saw the mysterious entity near the end of the story and went mad. This portrayal is from Lovecraft's own philosophy, cosmicism.

Cosmicism is a philosophy about the insignificance of human beings within the cosmos. This philosophy was present in Lovecraft's works which humans were presented as something so small compared to the monsters. In *At The Mountains of Madness*, it was explained that humans were a byproduct of the Elder Things' effort to make food. This implied that human existence in the novella, and to an extent the entire *Cthulhu Mythos*, was nothing more than an accident. There are other portrayals of human insignificance in the novella such as how the characters become obsessed about the symbols, descending into madness as they explored the city, and one of the characters went mad as he saw a mysterious entity. The mere existence of the monster and its creation is portrayed to be beyond human understanding. Lovecraft's portrayal of aliens as entities that are beyond human comprehension and how humans are nothing compared to them are what make his stories unique. This bleak portrayal of alien and human nature lead to the creation

of a new sub-genre in horror, which is cosmic horror also known as Lovecraftian horror. The central theme of cosmic horror is the fear of the unknown. This theme explores the human insignificance through the discovery of terrible knowledge. This knowledge usually takes the form of an alien entity that endangers human existence.

Cawelti (1976) mentioned that formula is a product of culture; therefore formula becomes a conventional way to represent symbols, images, and myths. *At The Mountains of Madness* uses the alien concept that is constructed in the United States of America. As explained before, around when the book was published, there were popular beliefs on the existence of alien civilizations. The belief in alien existence stems from phenomena in space and the lack of technologies and knowledge to provide proper explanations. Furthermore, there were several expeditions to Antarctica in order to map and study the continent. In the 1930s, Antarctica was largely unmapped; moreover expedition to Antarctica is dangerous due to its hostile environment which creates an otherworldly atmosphere for the continent. The *Elder Things* mirrors the belief in alien entities and their civilizations. They came from an unknown world with alien technology advanced enough to colonize other planets and even create lives on earth.

In his formula theory, Cawelti (1976) mentioned four interrelated hypotheses about the dialectic between formulaic literature and the culture that produces and enjoys it. One of the hypotheses is that formula stories affirm existing interests and attitudes by presenting an imaginary world that is aligned with these interests and attitudes. By confirming existing definitions of the world, literary formulas help to maintain a culture's ongoing consensus about the nature of reality and morality. The unique formula within *At The Mountains of Madness* is formed into two categories; its settings which are the mountains and the ancient city in Antarctica, and its characters which are The Elder Things, Shoggoths, and the mysterious entity. These two categories are adapted from the belief of alien civilizations. The novella entertains the idea that aliens are exist and more advanced



than humans. Furthermore, the novella affirms the view of fear of the unknown. This can be seen in the story when the characters approach the mountains, explore them, and find out that humans are created by alien beings.





## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

This research focuses on two research questions which are how does the formula structure within the novella constructed and how the culture in the United States of America shapes the concept of aliens. John G. Cawelti's formula theory is used in this research.

The first topic is answered by analyzing the formula structure through its intrinsic elements which are settings, characters and characterization, and plot. Analyzing these intrinsic elements, *At The Mountains of Madness* falls into a moral fantasy of Alien Beings or States which is connected to horror stories. *At The Mountains of Madness* takes place in Antarctica which was largely unmapped in the 1930s. H.P Lovecraft used this fact in order to create fictional places such as the mountains, the ancient city, and its inhabitants. The settings create fear and the plot revolves around the characters exploring these unknown regions and encountering the creatures that dwell within. The uniqueness of *At The Mountains of Madness* comes from the horror elements that come from the unknown and how it portrays the hopelessness of the characters within the story.

The concept of aliens has existed since ancient times, usually in the shape of mythological or supernatural beings, in cultures all over the world. In the United States of America, the concept of alien is constructed when there were several unexplained phenomena in space that cannot be explained at the time due to limited knowledge and technology. One of which is discovered by Percival Lowell with his Martian Canals. *The War of The Worlds* (1898) by H.G. Wells is also influenced the belief of alien civilization on USA. In addition, Wells wrote an article in 1908 with the help from Lowell about the existence of Martian people and their civilization.

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