



Universidad de Valladolid

FACULTAD de FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS

DEPARTAMENTO de FILOLOGÍA INGLESA

Grado en Estudios Ingleses

TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

The Gothic Tradition in H.P. Lovecraft: An Analysis of “The
Call of Cthulhu”

Olivia Fernández Ozores

Tutora: Marta Gutiérrez Rodríguez

2015-2016

VºBº:

ABSTRACT

Gothic Literature awakened in the eighteenth century. It first appeared in Great Britain as a rebellion against the Neoclassical period, which no longer satisfied the needs of the readers nor the wants of the different writers. The Gothic style arrived to the American continent in the last part of the eighteenth century. It was first rejected due to American pragmatism; however, writers soon began to adjust the Gothic literary characteristics to their own cultural features. One of the most recognized American Gothic authors from the twentieth century was Howard Phillips Lovecraft. His work “The Call of Cthulhu” is a clear exponent of the American Gothic trend. The purpose of this essay is to elaborate a detailed study of the previously mentioned Lovecraft’s short story and provide a thorough analysis of the main characteristics by which it is considered a key work of American Gothic literature.

Keywords: Gothic, American literature, literature of terror, H.P. Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu”, horror.

La literatura gótica emerge en el siglo dieciocho. Aparece por primera vez en Gran Bretaña como reacción contra los ideales del período Neoclásico que ya no satisfacían ni las necesidades de los lectores ni los requerimientos de los escritores. El estilo gótico llega al continente americano a finales del siglo dieciocho. En un principio es rechazado por el pragmatismo americano, sin embargo los escritores pronto comienzan a ajustar las singularidades de la literatura gótica a sus propias características culturales. Uno de los autores góticos americano más conocido del siglo veinte es Howard Phillips Lovecraft. Su trabajo “La llamada de Cthulhu” es un exponente claro de la corriente gótica. El objetivo principal de este trabajo es el estudio detallado del cuento de Lovecraft y el análisis de las principales características por las que es considerado un trabajo clave en la literatura gótica americana.

Palabras clave: Gótico, literatura norteamericana, literatura de terror, H.P. Lovecraft, “La llamada de Cthulhu”, horror.

INDEX

Introduction	1
1. State of the Art: Gothic Literature	3
1.1. British Gothic	3
1.1.1. Origin and Main Authors	3
1.1.2. Main Elements and Characteristics	4
1.2. American Gothic	8
1.2.1. Origin and Main Authors	8
1.2.2. Main Elements and Characteristics	9
2. Howard Phillips Lovecraft and “The Call of Cthulhu”	15
2.1. The Author and his Work	15
2.2. Style	16
2.3. “The Call of Cthulhu”	18
3. Gothic Elements in “The Call of Cthulhu” by H.P. Lovecraft	19
3.1. Textual characteristics	19
3.2. Setting	21
3.3. Characters	22
3.4. Main topics	26
4. Conclusions	33
5. Works Cited	37

INTRODUCTION

Literature has drastically changed throughout history. It was first created as entertainment for high social class' readers and used as a good behavior and manners' guide. However, both writers and readers wanted a literary change. The former reacted against logic and understanding of the previous literary movement. Whilst the latter did not want to read about ordinary life, morality, and reality any more. Writers started to leave behind Neoclassicism, based on real descriptions of the everyday life in favor of the Romantic Movement. It was at this point, the eighteenth century, when Gothic literature was developed (Hogle 23; Melani).

Gothic literature arose in the eighteenth century in Great Britain. However, it was not until the end of the century when this new literary trend spread to the American continent. American writers adopted the new literary movement by adapting it to their own cultural features. The United States did not have a wide history as the European, so Gothic writers had less material to work with, such as remote times and decaying settings. In contrast, the American tendency was to reflect the wilderness of the country or the harshness of the cities. The British Gothic was based on the fascination of the European past, the sublime, and the effect that those stories had on the readers. However, the United States Gothic literature dealt with the American past, obsession, and the psychological effect on the reader. One of the most distinguished Gothic American writers is H.P. Lovecraft, who would be classified as one of the most important writers in the twentieth century American literature (Hogle 167-187).

Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) was an American journalist and writer who became popular in the twentieth century. Despite of the illnesses he endured throughout his childhood and the misfortune his family experienced, he was a precocious child who started to read and write from a very early age. His job as a journalist was admirable; he was published in some of the most important newspapers of that time, but he also became a relevant figure in press associations as the UAPA and the NAPA. The latter period of his

life was the most prolific; he wrote more than sixty short stories and many novels as well. Lovecraft is considered to be one of the most important American Gothic writers due to his unique literary style (Loucks).

H.P. Lovecraft has a very distinctive and personal style that earns him a renowned name in the literary world. The use of archaic English vocabulary and the adoption of Latin, Arabic, and Jewish words allow him to build a sense of the past in his stories. Lovecraft's writing technique makes his work recognizable; he uses detailed descriptions, first person narration, and multi-meaning words to attain the desired effect on the reader that Gothic writing hopes to accomplish. He depicts the main characteristics of Gothic in both, short stories and novels, since he includes remarkable themes such as the knowledge of the forbidden, the influence of aliens on the Earth, the inability to escape from destiny, racism, etc. H.P. Lovecraft: "The Call of Cthulhu" is considered by most critics as one of his most important literary works. This novel is the representation of all the Gothic features that a terroristic story must have, such as gloomy atmospheres, cities with a special meaning, aliens, strange events, etc (Joshi 137-162; Loucks).

The main purpose of this essay is to present and closely analyze the short story "The Call of Cthulhu" as an example of Gothic writing. In addition, this essay claims this tale as a mixture between the two Gothic trends, the British and the American. This essay is divided into three different parts; the first one defines Gothic literature and depicts how it evolved over the years from Europe to the American continent. The second part is based on the author's life and his personal style. The last part analyzes Lovecraft's short story according to the previously mentioned Gothic characteristics. I decided to write this paper as an extension to what we learned about Gothic Literature in the different *Literatura en Lengua Inglesa* courses. American Gothic Literature grasps my interest and awakens something within me that keeps me wishing to learn more.

1. STATE OF THE ART: GOTHIC LITERATURE

1.1. British Gothic

1.1.1. Origin and Main Authors

Gothic literature or "literature of terror" awakened in Britain in the eighteenth century. It was born in the pinnacle of Neoclassicism and as the predecessor of the Romantic Movement. The eighteenth century changed the thoughts of the Western society; for that reason writers started to reject logic and understanding, two characteristics of the Neoclassical period. Moreover, morality, everyday life, and real descriptions -which were used until that moment, as in the case of Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*- were condemned. In addition, Gothic writers became Romantic precursors because of their sensibility, how they exalted the sublime, and how they appealed to the readers' imagination (Hogle 23; Melani).

Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) was considered the first Gothic novel. The author published this work as *The Castle of Otranto: A Story*; however, the term Gothic was not originally introduced until 1765, when Walpole's novel was reprinted under the name of *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*. The inclusion of the term Gothic in modern works was something new. Since Walpole rejected the neoclassical ideals, he established prophecies, supernatural events, death, horror, the importance of the reader's reaction, anger, and hysteria as the main characteristics of his writing, while he was creating the base for the Gothic (Hogle 21-24).

The Castle of Otranto (1764) changed the thinking in both readers and writers during that time. Readers were surprised by Walpole's novel because of its new elements based on a remote setting within a supernatural environment. The novel was enormously popular and it rapidly spread to other European countries; it was imitated by other novelists, initiating a new trend that was also transmitted to other literary genres as poetry (Hogle 41-45).

1.1.2. Main Elements and Characteristics

Traditionally, the Gothic novel is opened to criticism for its apparent lack of cohesion and formal unity. However, it is important to say that this literary genre has textual characteristics and a particular style. It uses some narrative techniques in order to create its suspenseful atmosphere like the use of plots within plots, multiple narrators (in most cases writers use different narrators telling different stories that converge at the same time, as in the case of *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley), and other stylistic characteristics such as the use of overt symbolism, negative connotations, special effects, ambiguity or ambivalence (Stevens 46- 57; Botting 14-16).

Besides these textual characteristics, there are some elements that also acquire a special relevance in the Gothic genre and present special features that are not found in other genres. This is the case of the setting, the type of characters, the events, and the themes that Gothic authors used in order to create their novels.

The setting is a significant feature in Gothic literature because it evokes the sense of fear and horror that is expected in this type of writings. Regarding the Gothic environment, it is important to talk about the space where the action is settled but also about the time when the action took place. Within place, we can distinguish between geographical and architectural features (Botting 21-28).

Geographical features include isolated locations and natural spaces in which the action took place. The most commonly used areas were cliffs, mountains, valleys, and haunted caverns. In addition, architectural features were used to establish an association between the building itself and darkness or isolation, but also to guide the plot of the story. Those locations encompass the idea of ancient abandonment where we can find gloomy atmospheres, horrifying sceneries and desolate elements such as ruins, graveyards, haunted houses or castles with secret passages, or mansions, towers, cathedrals, abbeys, monasteries, nunneries, cloisters, etc. All these elements framed the idea of Gothic literature; the idea of something which portrays the past into the present, the idea of

something representing a treasured element of the past that in current day is declining (Botting 21-28).

With reference to the time when the Gothic story occurred, we can say that the first Gothic stories were framed in a specific European age, usually based on remote eras such as the Middle Ages when we could find evocative landscapes (Botting 21-28).

In regards to the distinctive characteristics of the Gothic style, it is important to talk about the two types of characters¹ that Gothic literature introduced: the innocent character and the villain. Within the innocent characters we can talk about the virtuous figure, represented by a woman in distress or a child who suffered a dangerous situation, and the hero. The female character was represented by a juvenile, attractive, and pious, celibate maiden as in the case of Matilda in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) –who was a kind and sensitive woman- or Adeline –who was a celibate and virtuous character- in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) by Anne Radcliffe. Besides, the hero was the person who rescued the damsel and the villagers in distress by defeating the villain.

Nevertheless, the villain was always the character who instilled a sense of fear, danger, death, or violence within the other characters. The reader was able to detect this character's sense of horror by his description; he was described as a person with unpredictable behavior, lack of communication skills, and a violent demeanor. Moreover, religious characters such as monks are used as important figures in these stories because they represented the evil as it existed within the Catholic Church. In addition, members of the aristocracy with dark stories or behaviors were also used, as in the case of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) in which the protagonist, Earl Dracula, was supposedly based on Vlad Draculea, a legendary and bloody sixteenth century Romanian prince.

Gothic authors appealed to the individual psyche because it allowed them to experience something outside of the ordinary, the normal, the everyday life and common

¹ All the information about the type of Gothic characters was taken from the Literatura en Lengua Inglesa lecture notes.

consciousness, main issues in the previous literary movement, the Neoclassical period. Gothic writers garnered praise through the use of the supernatural, horror, immensity, violence, fascination for the past, the uncanny, and the sublime in their stories. These issues were an indispensable part of Gothic writings because they were symbolic topics that represented dramatic situations in which characters suffered. The main purpose of using this method of writing is to create an overwhelming emotion or frightening feeling within the reader (Stevens 51-53).

Through history, the word "supernatural" has been related to the idea of ghosts, mysteries, and unexplained facts and events; something beyond the natural and reality, something irrational or unexplainable. The supernatural was a repetitive emblem in Gothic literature; it could be presented through different methods: horrific events which had natural interpretations, horrifying landscapes, frightening creatures such as giants or dragons, etc. Despite the fact that it was presented through different tools, the main purpose of all of them was to create a sense of horror for the reader which could finally be explained by a natural clarification (Stevens 49-51).

Secondly, the word "horror" seems to be synonymous with gothic stories. It is important to distinguish between "horror" and "terror". The term terror refers to an extreme fear because of a specific event or situation, a real fact. However, horror is a feeling that a person experiences because of the presence of some elements that cannot be explained by reasonable elucidation. Horror, both in its nature and manifestations, is intrinsically linked to the Gothic since it is based on supernatural events –important element in Gothic- such as the presence of ghosts, the evil, and other creatures (Bloom 87).

One of the most important features regarding the reader's emotional response to Gothic Literature is immensity. It alludes to the sense of being nothing in comparison to the greatness of the world. Gothic novels narrate imaginative descriptions of natural or supernatural objects and events. Nevertheless, humans are far away from the comprehension of the immensity of those events (Botting 14-16).

Moreover, as we have previously mentioned, violence is an important characteristic when talking about the effect of Gothic novels on the readers. Gothic writings captured what was happening in the world; it is for that reason that Gothic authors used violence from wars against Catholicism, the Inquisition, the lack of reformation, murders, etc. It is also common to include sex when talking about violence because negative sexual behaviors, such as rapes, are surrounded by a dark atmosphere which makes the story even more Gothic. Furthermore, sex is related to the psyche; according to Sigmund Freud psycho-analysis theory, sexuality is a fundamental part of human activity, both conscious and unconscious. For that reason, Gothic novels include negative sexual encounters like kidnappings and rapes, in order to enforce the sense of horror on the reader (Stevens 51-53).

Regarding the fascination for the past, we can say that Gothic literature used the past in two different ways: antique architecture and time. The former refers to the use of the architecture from the past such as ruins, castles, monasteries, mansions, and cathedrals that Gothic writers chose as the adequate scenery to create the Gothic mood. The latter refers to the accommodation of antique cultures or old historical periods such as the Middle Ages because it alludes to the idea of mystery and superstition.

Another important element when dealing with Gothic literature is the uncanny; this term was defined by Sigmund Freud in 1919 in his essay "The Uncanny" as "nothing else than a hidden, familiar thing that has undergone repression and then emerged from it" (Freud 15) It refers to the feeling we have when people or things we know place a sense of instability on us due to uncertainty. Uncanny effects are highly used in Gothic novels; a past that should be over that comes into the present, a ghost from the past in the present, familiar settings with supernatural events such as ruined castles with strange passages (Botting 60-73).

The last important issue regarding Gothic Literature is the sublime; it was defined in the eighteenth century, when the Gothic novel arose, to describe those artistic creations which were able to cause the highest level of delight in the reader. Delight is a relative

pleasure; it is the opposite of suffering or danger, but at the same time, one could say they are related. A sublime writing can exist since it evokes the idea of pain and fear. When suffering directly affects the audience, it causes pain; however, when the idea of suffering or danger influences the reader, it causes delight. The main sources of the sublime are the effects of nature on someone's feelings, terror about death or darkness, power, infinity, and enormity of the antique architecture. The sublime becomes an important feature in Gothic works since terror and darkness are the key words in this literary genre (Botting 25- 28).

1.2. American Gothic

1.2.1. Origin and Main Authors

Gothic literature spread to the American continent in the last part of the eighteenth century. It was a paradox to include this new literary trend into an optimistic country which was set up on the Enlightenment principles of liberty and happiness. At the very beginning, Americans rejected this type of literature because they were very pragmatic; American readers disliked those novels because they were unreliable, there was no place for reason. However, soon after that, Americans adopted this literary genre renouncing the rationality that characterized the Enlightenment. Americans used this new literary trend, the Gothic, to talk about the dark nightmare behind The American Dream, to talk about their own feelings of shame. There was an opposition between dreams and nightmares; America was supposed to be a perfect society, but that society was built under a violent atmosphere surrounding the American history since the very beginning (Hogle 167-187).

Charles Brockden Brown is considered to be the first professional Gothic author in the American continent, but also one of the most important pillars in the creation of American Gothic literature. He wrote his first novel, *Wieland or The Transformation* in 1798. He tried to adjust the principal features of the British Gothic –horror, immensity, and violence- to the New World situation -religious evangelism, defense of the community,

murders, or superstition-. He also had to adjust the British Gothic setting and themes into the American possibilities; they could not frame Gothic stories into the different periods of the past, especially because the country did not have a long history (Hogle 172-174; Botting 75-77).

After Charles Brockden Brown, there are a huge amount of notable Gothic writers. Edgar Allan Poe is one of the most famous novelists because of his Gothic style and his prolific production; some of the most relevant compositions are "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) or "The Black Cat" (1843). Another important author is Nathaniel Hawthorne, who based his compositions on the American National Colonial past –Indians, puritans, witches, and memories- as in the case of "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), "The Minister's Black Veil" (1836), or *The Scarlet Letter* (1850). There are also important American Gothic women writers as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, who wrote feminist texts with Gothic elements by using madness and powerlessness, as in the case of "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892) (Hogle 176-187).

1.2.2. Main Elements and Characteristics

Before analyzing the American Gothic literature, it is important to highlight that because American Gothic literature evolved from the English, there are many differences between the two literary trends. Those differences are rooted on stylistic features, the election of the setting, the kind of characters that writers choose in order to create an adequate story, and the remarkable and recurrent topics that Gothic stories use to settle their plot. The joining of those features are the ones that define this trend as a literary genre. But in turn, those characteristics are what compose the difference between the British and the American Gothic.

As we have mentioned in the previous section, British Gothic uses particular textual techniques, such as plots within plots, multiple narrators, ambiguity, or symbolism in order

to confuse the reader and increase the sense of tension that Gothic readings produce. On the contrary, American Gothic employs strange tropes -metaphor and personification-, rhetorical techniques, and verbal devices -such as double meaning, confrontation between opposites (dark/light, evil/God, good/bad, etc.), or personification- providing Gothic writing with the ghostlike atmosphere those works need. Those stylistic elements are used in order to make the reader dive deeper into the remoteness of the American life and the Americans psyche (Lloyd-Smith 6; Hogle 195).

The second important feature is setting; the first Gothic stories are framed in a specific European setting, usually based on remote times where we could find evocative landscapes and decaying settings. In contrast, American Gothic does not use this type of setting, mainly because in America there were not Middle Ages, castles or monasteries. American Gothic fiction had to adapt this circumstance to the situation of the United States at that time, so they used the American landscape, wilderness and nature in order to create Gothic stories. The most common elements were the waste land, caverns, hollows, darkness, ruins, the frontier, puritan legacy, and slavery. Moreover, the most used feature was the nightmare which hides under the American dream; the ghosts from the past are constantly present. Finally, Gothic writers also framed their stories within a realistic context; they use cities and houses. The architecture of the Middle Ages was transformed into the domestic, urban and industrial atmosphere in order to create a sense of horror which characterized Gothic stories (Botting 80).

As previously detailed, British Gothic literature used to introduce two types of characters; innocent characters like the women in distress or children who suffer from any kind of dangerous situation and the villain. American Gothic literature also uses opposed characters²; however, it introduces a new figure, the anti-hero, as an innovation.

On the one hand, we can see innocent characters like the lady or child in distress as well as the hero; the same as in the British Gothic novels. Regarding the character of the

² All the information about the type of Gothic characters was taken from the *Literatura en Lengua Inglesa* lecture notes.

hero, it is important to say that this figure occupies an important role in American Gothic literature because he is the savior and one of the main characters within the plot. However, we can see how American writers use this figure with a totally different perspective. They transform the idea of the hero into the anti-hero; now it is the protagonist who incorporates no social skills, dark monstrous elements and grotesque characteristics.

On the other hand, the tyrant or villain is represented by people with unpredictable behavior. Both religious and aristocracy members used by British Gothic novelists are now replaced by criminals, or men who have some kind of malformation or physical and psychological disability. The main reason for this change is that America does not have the European past; they cannot use the royalty or religious figures since they never had a royal family nor a religious past. Another important kind of villain is the Indian character; Indians were seen as the reincarnation of evil. Different writers depict not only the picturesque way of life and culture of the Native Americans, but also the numerous fights between the Indians and the settlers.

American Gothic writers appealed to the individual psyche because they allowed these individuals to experience something different; they achieved their purposes through the use of strange events, violence, confusion, superstition, the national past, and obsession in their writings.

Strange events are one of the characteristics that both, British and American Gothic share. The main difference is that while British Gothic fiction focuses on the aspect of fear and terror, American Gothic places emphasis on mystery and skepticism. Whilst the British uses supernatural beings or monsters like ghosts, vampires, zombies or giants, the American uses other strange events such as special effects like the sound of the wind, doors closing, heavy rain, footsteps approaching, lights in abandoned houses, and characters trapped in rooms. American Gothic deals with psychological overlay; it is connected to the idea of how characters are affected by the atmosphere that surrounds them (Fiedler 120-125).

Violence represents an important characteristic in Gothic literature; it is used by the great majority of Gothic authors. The atmosphere that violence creates is important because it produces fear, damage or death, and it affects not only the characters, but also the readers. British Gothic uses physical violence; however, American Gothic also uses a kind of psychological violence. Aggression is represented in a wide variety of Gothic novels and short stories as in the case of "The Black Cat" (1843) by Edgar Allan Poe. Americans use violence in order to depict social traumas that deal with disturbances from the past as the frontier, race distinctions, slavery, Puritan inheritance, and the Native American extermination. Moreover, in a later stage, this social fear turns into terror because of possible revolutions, wars, and science development. There is also a social fear based on terror because of gender – oppressed women in a patriarchal society and slavery dealing with housework are the most common topics- or sexually transmitted diseases such as syphilis or AIDS (Lloyd-Smith 4-9; Fiedler 129).

American Gothic writers use dreams, nightmares, and dream-visions to confuse readers and make them unable to distinguish between reality and dreams. Nightmares are employed to reflect the dark side of life. On the contrary, dream-visions are usually applied to those situations in which the writer does not want the reader to know if it is a dream or reality until the end of the work, as in the case of Washington Irving's short story "Rip Van Winkle" (1819) (Fiedler 117).

Another important element, which helps the writer introduce the reader into the Gothic setting, is superstition. The different American authors used superstition to see how characters were affected by the surrounding atmosphere. Superstition can be based on the continued employment of different significant elements such as photographs, demonic objects or symbolism (Botting 77).

Furthermore, American Gothic literature is characterized by the use of the national past. American writers used Gothic literature to express Americans' feelings about what happened in the history of their country, their national past. They used the appearance of the past in the present, old buildings in a contemporary situation, ghosts from the past into a

present atmosphere, or some traumatic events from the past, which are still present in the American mind.

Moreover, in the United States, certain special guilts awaited projection in the gothic form. A dream of innocence had sent Europeans across the ocean to build a new society immune to the compounded evil of the past from which no one in Europe could ever feel himself free. But the slaughter of the Indians [...], and the abomination of the slave trade[...]provided the evidence that evil did not remain with the world that had been left behind-but stayed alive in the human heart. (Fiedler 127)

This quotation reflects the type of shame Americans felt for the way they treated Native Americans and slaves; it is also called the traumatic past. This shame is presented in Gothic literature. The history of the country was difficult due to the colonization, slave trade, racism, and puritan intolerance. Those themes were most commonly used in the American Gothic novels such as *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) by Nathaniel Hawthorne or "A Rose for Emily" (1930) (Botting 77).

The different authors played with appearances from the past into the present context; this is the case in *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) by Nathaniel Hawthorne. This story takes place in an old house with different antique ornaments and ghosts from the early days of colonialism. It is considered a haunted house because of the specters of two families. In addition, a prophecy dating back to the days of the Salem Witchcraft trials is the starting point for this story of family feuds and confrontation (Botting 77; Robinson 112).

The last important American Gothic issue is obsession; it is employed as the recreation of repetitive acts, feelings or thoughts that have been presented through American history. Obsession can be seen through both science and beauty; they are used to warn the people about the possible dangers of alchemy and scientific innovations. It is considered to be a European Enlightenment criticism, a reaction against reason. The most known story that employs obsession as the main theme is Nathaniel Hawthorne's

"Rapaccini's daughter" (1844) –a short story that confronts beauty, science and death (Botting 78).

2. HOWARD PHILLIPS LOVECRAFT AND "THE CALL OF CTHULHU"

2.1. The Author and his Work

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born on August 20, 1890 in Providence, Rhode Island. He belonged to an English-descended middle class family; his parents were Sarah Susan Phillips Lovecraft and Winfield Scott Lovecraft, a traveling salesman. His childhood was marked by tragedy; his father suffered a nervous breakdown in Chicago and he died of paresis in 1898. When Lovecraft's father passed away, he was raised by his mother, his grandfather, and his two maiden aunts (Tenebrous 5-6).

Lovecraft suffered several illnesses throughout his childhood; some of them were psychological. For this reason, he spent many of his first years of school at home. Even with this infirm health, he was always considered a precocious boy; he was advanced in reciting poetry, reading, and writing by the age of six years old. He loved Arabian writing such as "The Arabian Nights"; consequently, he started to use the pseudonym "Abdul Alhazred" when he wrote some of his most famous works as in the case of *Necronomicon* (1922). Some years later, he was interested in Greek mythology, which led him to write *The Poem of Ulysses* (1897), based on the *Odyssey* (Loucks).

Lovecraft's love for science began as a child; he was especially interested in chemistry and astronomy. He began writing about these subjects and he published many articles in *The Scientific Gazette* and *The Rhode Island Journal of Astronomy* at the age of eight years old. Soon after that, he started writing a column for *The Pawtuxet Valley Gleaner*, and several years later he was published in other newspapers, such as *The Providence Tribune* (1906–08), *The Providence Evening News* (1914–18), and *The Asheville Gazette-News* (1915) (Loucks).

Lovecraft became a member of the UAPA – United Amateur Press Association- in early 1914; it was an amateur writers association that published their own magazines. He

published thirteen pieces of poetry and essays on his own paper, *The Conservative*, between 1915 and 1923; and he was also published in other papers during that time. Soon he became the president of both the UAPA and the NAPA –National Amateur Press Association. This experience inspired him to begin writing and publishing fiction pieces, such as “The Tomb” (1917) and “Dagon” (1917), “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” (1919), “The Cats of Ulthar” (1920), etc. (Loucks).

Lovecraft’s mother’s mental and physical health were both very fragile. She suffered a nervous breakdown and she went to the same hospital as her husband; she died in 1921 due to an unsuccessful operation. Two years later, Lovecraft attended a journalist congress in Boston where he met Sonia Haft Greene. They got married and they lived together for two years in New York, but the marriage failed. After the marriage ended, Lovecraft decided to move to Providence where he wrote some of his most famous tales (Tenebrous 7).

The later period of his life was the most prolific; he wrote more than sixty short stories and novels such as *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931), or *The Shadow out of Time* (1934–35). He continued writing numerous letters, poetry, literary criticisms, and philosophical and autobiographical works. It was at that time that the illness which ended Lovecraft’s life appeared. He died of intestinal cancer on March 15th, 1937 in Providence (Loucks).

2.2. Style

Lovecraft discovered weird fiction when he was a child; his interest for this genre was encouraged by his grandfather who inspired him to use this fictional style in his writing. His first Gothic story was called *The Noble Eavesdropper* (1897). He became one of the best American horror masters; his stories and tales included a sense of horror characterized by the amount of fantasy, mystery, and science that they included.

Lovecraft's style is very personal and distinctive; he used certain stylistic characteristics that earned him acclaimed recognition throughout the country. Since he was an erudite, he used archaic English vocabulary, which gave a sense of antiquity, as if the story was written in the past. His use of Latin, Arabic or Jewish words also made his writing appear to take place in the past, as seen in the name Primigenios Gods (their names ended with the suffix -ath or -oth). Other stylistic characteristics were the lack of irony or the use of the first person narrator in order to portray the reader and narrator as the same person. He created a sense of terror and psychological fear by using a lonely, suicidal, and mad narrator. Some of the most important Gothic stories were "The Statement of Randolph Carter" (1919), "The Temple" (1920), and "From Beyond" (1920) (Joshi 137-140).

H.P. Lovecraft also used a distinctive and serious tone. He was criticized for using so many adjectives, but he always ensured that the use of a lot of adjectives helped him to create the appropriate atmosphere. Moreover, multi-meaning words were also used in order to depict distance between the narrator and the reader. He used a slow tempo and the repetition of certain words related to the gothic genre; these two characteristics guide the reader through the terrifying environment that the author wanted to create (Loucks).

Lovecraft emphasized the same recurrent themes when writing his novels and short stories. Those remarkable themes are the knowledge of the forbidden, the influence of aliens on the Earth, the inability to escape from destiny, the civilization threatened by an external force, racism, women, and scientific risks. Furthermore, the author used all of the terror narrative tricks that had appeared previously; however, he added his own terror codes. Some of the most recurrent were the apparition of a door in a crypt, external revenges, invasions, music that was able to attract the attention of ghosts, mysterious islands, or sleepy monsters that are awakened by an unwary visitor (Loucks).

He was an innovative Gothic writer because he created his own mythology, as in the case of "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926). He refused the type of fear that ghosts, witches, and satanic ideas create because he preferred to incorporate elements from science fiction such as aliens, time travels, the existence of beings in other worlds, etc. Lovecraft incorporated

the idea of the human being as an insignificant entity with no capacity to understand the world in which he lives. Several aspects from Lovecraft's life can be extracted from those Gothic writings, his suffering in life, his tendency to suicide, and his psychological pathology (Joshi 143-162).

2.3. The Call of Cthulhu

"The Call of Cthulhu" by Lovecraft is one of his most well-known Gothic stories; it was written in 1926. The main purpose of Lovecraft's tale is to convey the meaninglessness of human supremacy. The story compares humans at an astronomical scale surrounded by a terrifying and hopeless atmosphere. It is composed by three different storylines; they all start in a different time and place; however, they converge in a brilliant final.

The story begins when Professor George Gammell Angell dies due to strange circumstances. After his death, the narrator of the story discovers that the Professor was working on some documents regarding the attacks committed by a beast called Cthulhu. This creature came from the stars millions of years before human existence and is now sleeping in an underwater city by the name of R'lyeh.

The second storyline introduces the reader to the second part of the manuscript that the Professor was working on. In this text, the inspector, John Legrasse, investigates a violent cult in New Orleans.

The last storyline of the story introduces the reader to the first official's logbook that helped to discover R'lyeh. The city emerged in the Pacific Ocean because it was the moment for Cthulhu to awaken.

3. GOTHIC ELEMENTS IN "THE CALL OF CTHULHU"

3.1. Textual Characteristics

Regarding textual characteristics in "The Call of Cthulhu," it is important to highlight that Lovecraft is famous because of his perfect style, personal and distinctive, as we have previously mentioned. The use of numerous adjectives, repetitive words and expressions, multiple details, metaphors, multi-meaning words and ambiguity characterized him as an important Gothic writer.

Lovecraft's writing style is defined by the use of a specific horror lexicon which makes the reader feel a sense of dislike or outrage is commonly used in this story; for example when Lovecraft describes the extraterrestrial geometry that the Primigenios used in order to create their habitat, the putrid odor of these creatures, Cthulhu's apparition, etc. Some of the most remarkable examples are "slobberingly" (Lovecraft 23), "gropingly" (Lovecraft 23), "gelatinous" (Lovecraft 23), etc. Moreover, the sense of horror is also marked by the repetition of words or expressions, such as "odd" (Lovecraft 3), "weird" (Lovecraft 6), "horrible" (Lovecraft 7), "obscure" (Lovecraft 23), "shrilly" (Lovecraft 24), "monstrous" (Lovecraft 8), "terrible" (Lovecraft 8), etc. Adjectives related to the savage and sects or voodoo are also used; the author chooses those words to give a negative connotation to supernatural characters. Therefore, Lovecraft's style is characterized by itemized descriptions in which he specifies in an exhaustive way what he wants to say (Acedo-Bravo 18-31).

Metaphors are also used in order to create a sense of horror and fear and express the mixture of consciousness and unconsciousness he wants the readers feel. One example of metaphor that appears in the text is "In the elder time chosen men had talked with the entombed Old Ones in dreams, but then something happened. The great stone city R'lyeh, with its monoliths and sepulchers, had sunk beneath the waves" (Lovecraft 15). If we analyze this quotation, we can see how Lovecraft refers to the underwater city, R'lyeh, and its emersion from the depths of the ocean. We can see a metaphor since the ocean represent

the unconscious of the earth, if we bear in mind that the earth is the conscious. Furthermore, the concept of the uncanny appears as there is a conflict between what used to be familiar -the world as we know it- and the new world with R'lyeh (Corbacho 1-15)

However, another important point of this tale is the fact that everything that the author states is a supposed confession of different characters creating a sense of ambiguity, as we can see in the following quote:

It may have been only imagination and it may have been only echoes which induced one of the men, an excitable Spaniard, to fancy he heard antiphonal responses to the ritual from some far and unilluminated spot deeper within the wood of ancient legendry and horror. This man, Joseph D. Galvez, I later met and questioned; and he proved distractingly imaginative. He indeed went so far as to hint of the faint beating of great wings, and of a glimpse of shining eyes and a mountainous white bulk beyond the remotest trees but I suppose he had been hearing too much native superstition. (Lovecraft 13)

The use of words such as "imagination", "fancy", "hint", or "glimpse" is what makes the reader think about the text as an illusion, as something that the reader does not know if it really happened or not.

Finally, we can see the use of some multi meaning words that causes a sense of misunderstanding and unreliability in the reader; for instance the word "dim." This word has two different meanings, dark or unclear. Firstly, the meaning dark reinforces the idea of the non-understandable, but also the opposite to white (this alludes to the racist thinking of the author). Secondly, this term refers to the sense of instability, the reign of those beasts conforms the center of the story.

It is important to highlight that textual characteristics are important features for Gothic tales as well as their particular style. These attributes give the story the suspenseful atmosphere they need but they also increase the sense of tension on the reader. The use of plots within plots and ambiguity come from the traditional Gothic, the British Gothic. However, the use of metaphors and double meaning are American Gothic characteristics.

Lovecraft combines the traditional and the American Gothic tradition in order to create his own Gothic style.

3.2. Setting

With regard to the setting where the tale "The Call of Cthulhu" is located, it is important to state the different locations of the story but also the way in which Lovecraft describes all the different places. Both features are considered a key point in order to classify this tale as a Gothic story.

With respect to the locations where the story is settled, we have to talk about three different settings, New England, New Orleans, and the ocean where the city R'lyeh is located. As we have previously state, the tale is divided into three parts; each part is settled in a concrete place. The story starts in New England, specifically in Providence, Rhode Island. Lovecraft chooses this city because he liked to incorporate aspects from his life in his writings; he was born in Providence. The second part is set in New Orleans. This city has been considered a mysterious and dark location because it was the base of voodoo for a long time; even nowadays this African religion has its presence in the city. The last part has not got a specific setting but the narrator travels around different places in order to clarify the enigma; those cities are New Jersey, San Francisco, Dunedin, Sidney, and Oslo. It is in this last part where Lovecraft makes an insightful description about R'lyeh, the underwater city.

Secondly, Lovecraft makes itemized descriptions when he is depicting the different places where the tale happens. He places the story within a mysterious and dark atmosphere, like the forests in New Orleans or the vast and forgotten city of R'lyeh. Moreover, Lovecraft relates the idea of darkness to the heathen temples. In the story, the Cthulhu cultists are considered to be Voodoo cultists; it is not a coincidence. The dark and grotesque rituals of this cult are empowered by the obscure surroundings of New Orleans.

Furthermore, the naturalistic setting in this tale is often depicted as something evil, dark, mysterious, obscure and full of secrets (Corbacho 1-15).

Lovecraft does not use natural spaces such as valleys or mountains, neither architectural features such as castles or monasteries; those are British Gothic characteristics. However, he uses the antique idea of caverns and ruins when he describes R'lyeh, the underwater city. He also uses the American setting since he employs the American wilderness such as the deep woods of New Orleans or the ocean. The setting chosen by Lovecraft creates the sense of horror and mystery which characterizes this Gothic story. He combines the old ruins in R'lyeh, the modern cities, and the wilderness of the woods in order to create a mixture between the different types of trends within the Gothic tradition.

3.3. Characters

Another important literary feature within Gothic stories is the type of characters. As aforementioned, in Gothic tales there are the innocent characters and the villains. Concerning the type of characters in "The Call of Cthulhu" it is important to emphasize that the innocent characters are the narrator, professor Angell, and the other archaeologists, and Inspector Legrasse, whilst the villain is represented by the figure of the beast, Cthulhu, and his followers, the members of the secret cult. Otherwise, we can also find a lot of figures who do not belong to any of these groups; they are defined as mere sufferers and perpetrators.

The narrator of this tale, Francis Wayland Thurston, is also the main character in the story. He appears as a mysterious character; the reader only knows his name but he does not say anything about his life. The narrator-character is the main figure in the tale since he is able to understand the story because he has all the information about the Cult of Cthulhu. He only participates in the events of the first storyline; he discovers and links all the

information he finds. However, he is also the link between this storyline and the other two even though he does not participate in their events.

Lovecraft uses a first person narrator in order to create the sense of doubt that characterizes the fantastic. As Todorov states in his book *The Fantastic*: "The first-person narrator most readily permits the reader to identify with the character" (Todorov 84). The use of a first person narrator allows a connection between the reader and the storyteller. However, it is the reader who has to think about what he wants to believe and decide what it is true or fake. Nevertheless, Lovecraft uses the main character of the story as the narrator because this helps to maintain ambiguity (Corbacho 1-15).

The second important character within the short story, "The Call of Cthulhu" is Professor George Gammell Angell, a renowned archaeologist. He dies at the beginning of the story but he is a significant figure since he made a deep research about the Cthulhu cults. The fact of being an archeologist is important because he had the required knowledge to solve the cult. Moreover, archaeology is considered an old science which tries to discover unknown facts; Lovecraft chooses this occupation to increase the sense of antique, mystery, and gothic. This tale also mentions other important archeologists such as Francis Wayland –Gammell's nephew and narrator of the story- or William Channing Webb – professor of anthropology at Princeton University who is familiar with the idol used by the cultists in the woods of New Orleans.

The last innocent character in this tale is John Raymond Legrasse; he is a New Orleans police inspector. He is defined as the only character who faces the unknown. He is considered brave because even though he does not know the meaning of the "Stone Table", he fears and takes it because it is his job. This fact reflects the human effort to do something in order to understand what is happening.

The villain in this tale is the monster, Cthulhu. Lovecraft invents an extraterrestrial creature as the essential character in order to create a horror narrative. Lovecraft describes Cthulhu as a creation which came from another planet before human existence. It is defined

as a dangerous creature: "If I say that my somewhat extravagant imagination yielded simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature, I shall not be unfaithful to the spirit of the thing" (Lovecraft 2) As stated before, its darkness creates an uneasiness which develops later into horror. Its body is composed by dragon scales and also by a special substance that is not findable in our planet; a kind of gelatin causing him to be indestructible. It is able to change his shape and quickly reconstruct his body in case of someone trying to destroy it. It was one of the first Earth conquerors and now it is the dominant in the depth of the ocean (Corbacho 1-15).

Moreover, we can talk about the Statuette; this is the unique female character in the tale. It can be considered one of the villains in this story since it is used by the Cthulhu cults to evoke the beast. Furthermore, this piece seems to be under the Cthulhu damnation. It is defined as:

A figure whose utter strangeness and air of genuinely abysmal antiquity [...] between seven and eight inches in height, and of exquisitely artistic workmanship. It represented a monster of vaguely anthropoid outline, but with an octopus-like head whose face was a mass of feelers, a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long, narrow wings behind. This thing, which seemed instinct with a fearsome and unnatural malignancy. (Lovecraft 8)

The figure appears in three different occasions: the first one made by Wilcox, the artist, after one of his dreams in which the figure of the beast appeared; the second one during the rites in the woods of New Orleans, and the last one in similar rituals in Greenland. In the three cases it is characterized with the same features. That means that even though they are three different statues, made by different people, and found in different places in the world, they represent the same mysterious idea.

Finally, we have to talk about the sufferers and the perpetrators who appear in this tale. On the one hand we have the sufferers; they are different characters under Cthulhu influence. In this section we include Henry Anthony Wilcox and Gustaf Johansen. Wilcox is an artist who suffers from strange nightmares in the timeframe when R'lyeh is

uncovered. He dreams about the creature and he makes one of the statues that appear in the story. Johansen is an illiterate sailor whose misfortune makes him bumped into the underwater city.

On the other hand, we talk about the perpetrators; in this group we include those people who act under the effect of Cthulhu -both intentionally and unintentionally. The cultists are defined in the text as: "Men of a very low, mixed-blooded, and mentally aberrant type. Most were seamen, and a sprinkling of Negroes and mulattoes, largely West Indians or Brava Portuguese" (Lovecraft 12). They are described in derogative terms; Lovecraft chooses Negroes, mulattoes, Indians or Portuguese people to be the wild and ferocious cultists. This leads us to think that the author had an attitude against other races because he uses them as members of the cultists except for the white educated Anglo-Saxon people. They are presented in opposition to the intellectual and well-educated characters previously categorized as the heroes of the story. Therefore, it could be said that the real "villain" in the tale is not the extraterrestrial creature but the cultists themselves who perpetrate the crimes (Corbacho 1-15).

British and American Gothic literature use different types of characters. Lovecraft does not use women or children in distress as the innocent characters; in this case he chooses an archaeologist as the hero of the tale because archaeologists can make researches and figure out information from the past, important features in order to solve the mystery about Cthulhu. Besides, Lovecraft does not use historical or religious characters, or criminals to represent the villain. He selects a beast to embody this role as part of the creation of his own mythology.

3.4. Main topics

Regarding the main topics in the short story "The Call of Cthulhu;" it is important to state that the supernatural, horror, immensity, violence, the uncanny, the sublime, confusion, superstition, and obsession are the most important features to highlight.

Firstly, "The Call of Cthulhu" is a short story based on the supernatural. Unexplainable events such as mysterious and surrounded-by-strange circumstances deaths, like Professor Angell's, unfamiliar dreams and both physical and mental diseases -like Wilcox high fever, the paranoias of the sailors, etc-, the appearance of a mythological beast, uncommon storms that stop those strange dreams, cults with the same pattern in different places, etc. Those events are always encircled in a mysterious atmosphere.

Moreover, the appearance of non-human creatures in the story reinforces the idea of a supernatural tale. Lovecraft does not use a human character as the figure of the villain nor does he allow it to relate to humanity; over and above he uses a hybrid being, such as Cthulhu, a grotesque and ambiguous character. The description of the animal, his movements, the place where he lives, his capacity to rebuild his body after an amputation, etc. make the story a supernatural text.

Subsequently, the use of dreams has an important role in this story. Dreams are considered to be part of the unconscious, the imagination, or even an alienation of the human mind. They are used by the author in order to confuse the reader; Lovecraft wants to break down the wall between the real and the fake, and let the reader distinguish between what he considers true or false:

What seemed to be the main document was headed "CTHULHU CULT" in characters painstakingly printed to avoid the erroneous reading of a word so unheard-of. This manuscript was divided into two sections, the first of which was headed "1925-Dream and Dream Work of H. A. Wilcox, 7 Thomas St., Providence, R.I." [...] The other manuscript papers were all brief notes, some of them accounts of the queer dreams of different persons, some of them citations from theosophical books and magazines [...], and the rest comments on long-surviving secret societies

and hidden cults, [...]. The cuttings largely alluded to outré mental illnesses and outbreaks of group folly or mania in the spring of 1925. (Lovecraft 5)

In this quotation, we can see how the author states that the story is based on Wilcox and some other different people's dreams about the beast, secret cults settled in different places of the world, and details about human's mental illnesses. All those facts are exposed to the reader since the very beginning of the tale; the main purpose is to create a sense of half consciousness and half unconsciousness. In addition, Lovecraft uses dreams throughout the whole story when talking about the figure of Cthulhu and everything that surrounds it. The influence of the beast reaches the different characters through their dreams. They suffer from nightmares with the appearance of strange events and the beast.

Secondly, the sense of horror is provided by the fear of inexistence because of the meaningless of human life. The narrator figures death is coming at the hands of Cthulhu and the cultists. He knows that human life does not mean anything; the Earth is under the menace of creatures which do not care about humanity. Moreover, horror comes from the sense of fear that Lovecraft's description of the beast produce on the reader. Both Cthulhu and the Statuette represent an octopus, a dragon, and a human figure with tentacles and wings. Furthermore, horror is also present because of the multiple murders and violent crimes.

The idea of immensity is represented through the conception of the meaninglessness of human life. Lovecraft does not believe in the supremacy of beings; he breaks with the idea of humans as individuals who are able to overcome everything in life. On the contrary, he creates faint, weak, hopeless people. The reader can see this idea in different sections within this tale:

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of

our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the light into the peace and safety of a new dark age. (Lovecraft 1)

This first paragraph foretells the story revealing the feeling of meaninglessness and absurdity of humanity. Another example would be when inspector Legrasse broke the ritual in the cult of Cthulhu. It is uncovered that many of the cultists are insane; they do not know what they are doing. This demonstrates that Lovecraft's intention is exhibiting the idea that everything humans do is useless; they do not participate in the process of achieving the final goal. In addition, the presentation of a world where people do not live alone supports the thought of the insignificance of human beings. Human history is nothing if we compare it with the existence of the universe or other civilizations subsistence such as the Primigenios, who exist waiting to recuperate the place that humans took them away because of their absence. The importance of the idea of immensity lies on the psychological effect it produces on the reader (Corbacho 1-15).

Violence is present through the whole tale, especially in the form of deceases. The term death is visible from the very beginning, when the narrator tells the reader about the strange circumstances of the Professor's demise: "My knowledge of the thing began in the winter of 1926-27 with the death of my grand-uncle George Gammell Angell, Professor [...] Locally, interest was intensified by the obscurity of the cause of death" (Lovecraft 4). Nevertheless, there are more allusions to the word death and to the idea it conveys, such as provoking death at a mere glance when someone looks directly at the beast, numerous cult murders, mysterious dead corpses found in a boat in the sea, sudden deaths with no reason, etc. All those mysterious and numerous assassinations and strange deceases are considered an important issue in Gothic stories. Its importance lies in the fact that violence produces a huge psychological impact on the reader.

As we have previously mentioned, the concept of the uncanny refers to the idea of a kind of fear that comes from something that was previously familiar. In "The Call of Cthulhu" the idea of the uncanny lies on the idea of R'lyeh, the sunken city that resurfaces from the depth of the ocean: "I suppose that only a single mountain-top, the hideous

monolith-crowned citadel whereon great Cthulhu was buried, actually emerged from the waters. When I think of the extent of all that may be brooding down there I almost wish to kill myself forthwith." (Lovecraft 22). The idea of something from the past reawakening into the present is the best representation of the idea of the uncanny in a Gothic text. It refers to the idea of the past that should be over but it comes into the present.

The idea of the sublime is connected to the idea of the terror imposed on a subject who beholds an object of great magnitude or power, but it is also related to the idea of time. The former refers to the fact of having an object difficult to control or understand; this instills a sense of awe in the reader when he wants to compare his meaningless and his insignificance with something as infinite as the universe. The latter –time- is also considered an important fact in the relation between the Gothic and the sublime. As we have previously seen, many gothic writers used old castles and ruins as banners of the decay of humanity. Lovecraft uses the underwater city R'lyeh as the tomb where Cthulhu is settled. In this case, R'lyeh represents the old ruined castles that previous Gothic writers used in their stories (Corbacho 1-15). Moreover, Lovecraft portrays the history of humans as something apparently new –if we compare it with the existence of the universe or other civilizations that are still alive: "They, like the subject and material, belonged to something horribly remote and distinct from mankind as we know it." (Lovecraft 8)

However, the idea of the sublime is not only associated with the idea of vastness, or immensity, but also with other two important concepts regarding gothic: terror and darkness. Both concepts are closely interlinked since darkness is imperative in order to create terror. Darkness is presented through the whole story since most of the events take place at night. Terror is contemplated through this short story since it uses the appearance of an extraterrestrial beast coming from the far stars a long time ago, the apparition of strange deaths such as Professor Angell's decease or the Cults of Cthulhu. The combination of the two elements is what increases the sense of the sublime in the tale since one of them involves the presence of the other one.

Another important Gothic topic recurrent in "The Call of Cthulhu" is confusion. It is presented in this text because Lovecraft writes it with the idea of creating confusion on the reader. While reading this tale, the reader does not know if what happens is real or not. The author maintains certain structures, expressions, and words that disorient the reader. Some examples are "I think" (Lovecraft 22), "I did so seemed" (Lovecraft 2), "my somewhat extravagant imagination" (Lovecraft 2), "strange stories and odd dreams he was in the habit of relating" (Lovecraft 3), "rambling tale" (Lovecraft 4), etc.

Fascination with the past is an important issue in American Gothic stories. We can see how this feature permeates the whole tale because of the main characters' occupations but also because of the old books they use and Cthulhu's cults. Most characters work as archaeologist; as we know archaeology is the science in charge of the study and interpretation of the antique civilizations. In the story, the characters study Cthulhu's history through different documents, newspapers, the Statuette, and some information about the ritual that they found. For that reason, we can see multiple references in the text about manuscripts, secret sects and cults, and mythology –such as the name of legendary cities and monsters like Babylonia, Tyre, Cyclops, and Odysseus.

Finally, the term obsession is presented through the idea of paranoia. We can talk about the paranoia that the archaeologists develop because of Cthulhu's story, its figure, the rites, cults, dreams and diseases it produces, etc. Moreover, the presence of paranoia lies on the sufferers due to the occurrence of those weird dreams. They dream about strange cities and beasts but when they wake up, they still think about what they have dreamt.

Starting from the idea that Lovecraft combines both types of Gothic, British and American, in order to create his own Gothic style we have to state that he employs important Gothic topics of both literary trends in this tale. The use of immensity because of the meaninglessness of human life, the uncanny, and the sublime come from the British Gothic. Nevertheless, the use of confusion between what is reality or a dream, the appearance of the national past that surrounds the whole story, and the obsession for the beast come from the American Gothic. Finally, it is important to say that both trends share

important Gothic features such as the supernatural through the use of strange events, violence, and the presence of horror.

4. CONCLUSIONS

After the study of Gothic literature –both the British and the American trends–, the figure of Howard Phillip Lovecraft and his work “The Call of Cthulhu” it is indisputable that this short story is a clear example of a Gothic writing because it assembles all the characteristics of this literary movement. In addition, the analysis of this tale proves that Lovecraft uses characteristics from both Gothic styles in order to create his own Gothic technique.

Gothic literature has been deeply analyzed by different literary critics. This literary trend has suffered numerous changes since it appeared for the first time in Great Britain in the eighteenth century until nowadays. The main reason for these changes is that Gothic literature deals with complex themes, and topics. Gothic literature is considered a link between the present and the past, between the rational and the irrational, between reality and imagination, between terror and desire. It is for that reason that different writers from different eras used this tradition.

“The Call of Cthulhu” is an exponent from the Gothic literary trend since the most characteristic elements from this movement appear on it. After the study of this writing, we can say that the appearance of ruins and wilderness as the setting, the innocent characters and the villain, and some of the most common Gothic topics incorporate this writing into the Gothic literary tradition.

Lovecraft has a clear predilection for the eighteenth century Gothic, the traditional Gothic. For this reason, even though “The Call of Cthulhu” is an American writing; the author also incorporates characteristics from the British trend. The combination between the British Gothic horror, the use of the common and familiar ideas from the American Gothic, and Lovecraft’s own invention of his mythological manifestations reform the idea of the Gothic.

Regarding the Gothic textual characteristics, Lovecraft takes the use the plots within plots and the use of ambiguous words and expressions from the British Gothic. Nevertheless, the author employs the use of metaphors and double meaning words from the

American Gothic trend. Moreover, Lovecraft adds his own literary style, not only in the use of numerous adjectives in his itemized descriptions but also in the inclusion of repetitive dark words that characterized him as an important author. All these elements provide the tale with the famous perfect, personal, and distinctive Lovecraft's style. They form a Gothic story because of the use of all these negative, dark adjectives which make the reader feel as if he is inside the narrative, so he can perceive the sense of horror.

Concerning the setting, Lovecraft does not use the common British setting such as castles, monasteries, cliffs or the Middle Ages. The main reason is that the American legacy has not got this cultural background; however, the author uses the idea of the antique when he describes the city of R'lyeh. Moreover, he uses the familiar American Gothic setting because he uses the forest from New Orleans as the frontier and the industrial atmosphere of some important cities that appear in the text as for example Boston, San Francisco, and Oslo. He mixed both Gothic literary trends in order to create his own style; it is the way he joins both characteristics what makes him a distinctive writer. Even though the woods, the ocean or R'lyeh are different places and different events took place in them, they are related in order to produce that sense of horror on the reader.

With respect to the type of characters, it is important to clarify that both literary trends –British and American Gothic Literature- use the innocent character and the villain. The former is commonly represented by a woman or a child in distress while the latter is known as the character who causes a sense of fear on the reader. In view of the innocent, Lovecraft does not use neither a woman nor a child in distress; however, he employs archaeologists. The writer chooses this occupation because it establishes a clear connection with the past and allows the character to make a research about the cults. In the case of the villain, Lovecraft invents the figure of the monster and the Statuette as the villains of the tale. He uses a mythological beast which represents the idea of darkness itself.

Another characteristic that makes this work a Gothic story is the use of common main topics in the British and the American Gothic Literary trends. In this short story, we can see numerous issues which provoke a sense of fear in the reader. Some of these topics come from the British trend, such as the idea of immensity –explained through the

conception of the meaningless of human life-, the uncanny, and the concept of the sublime. However, the idea of confusion between what is real or false, the appearance of a national past surrounding the whole tale, and the obsession because of the beast, Cthulhu, come from the American Gothic. Moreover, there are some topics that both literary trends share such as the use of violence, supernatural events, and the horror atmosphere that impregnates the whole story giving it the name of Gothic story.

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