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**THE LEGACY OF H. P. LOVECRAFT IN THE CONTEMPORARY AUDIO VISUAL
AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA**

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Content

Content	4
List of Used Abbreviations.....	6
Introduction	7
1 Lovecraft’s Biography – The Birth of the Great Old Ones	8
1.1 H. P. Lovecraft’s Early Life.....	8
1.2 The Dream Beckons.....	9
1.3 From Child to an Adult – The Literary and Scholarly Upbringing	10
1.4 H.P. Lovecraft – The Struggles of an Eccentric and the Birth of the Necronomicon	13
1.5 Lovecraft’s Death, Its Aftermath and His Legacy	18
2 Legacy In Motion Pictures	20
2.1 Horror in Motion Pictures.....	20
2.2 Adaptation is never easy	21
2.3 Lovecraftian Themes in Motion Pictures.....	22
2.3.1 Isolation and Fear of the Unknown	22
2.3.2 Dreams and Strange Nightmares	23
2.3.3 Cosmic Beings and Other Lovecraftian Monsters.....	24
2.3.4 Cthulhu Mythos and the Necronomicon.....	25
2.3.5 Other Films and Television Shows.....	25
3 Legacy in Video Games	26
3.1 Video Games that Can Be Called Lovecraftian.....	26
3.2 Lovecraftian Themes in Video Games	27
3.2.1 Isolation, Fear of the Unknown and the Importance of Sanity.....	27
3.2.2 Cosmic Horrors, Great Outer Gods and the Irrelevance of Humankind	28
3.2.3 Dreams and Other Nightmares	30
3.2.4 Other Lovecraftian Video Games.....	31
4 Conclusion.....	32
Bibliography	34
Print sources	34
Internet Sources	35
Video Games and Films	36

Abstrakt	38
Abstract.....	38

List of Used Abbreviations

HPL – Howard Phillips Lovecraft

UAPA - United Amateur Press Association

UA – The United Amateur

MP -Motion Picture

CGI – Computer-generated imagery

RPG – Role-playing games

VG – Video games

DLC – downloadable content

MMORPG – massively multiplayer online role-playing game

Introduction

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was a talented storyteller, poet, and avid letter writer whose complicated life and opinions (including his racism) make him one of the most discussed and analysed writers of his era. He could be further considered one of the quintessential writers of modern horror literature and his works inspired many authors, in many different media, ranging from written stories to 21st century video games and films. Even though he was unappreciated and unknown to the general population during his lifetime, thanks to his friends and colleagues his lifetime's work was later fully published. Lovecraft specialized in weird fiction and horror tales focusing mainly on themes such as the fear of the unknown, the boundaries of the human mind and understanding, cosmic indifference, and to a certain extent, body horror. His works ranged from unorthodox short stories e.g. "The Cats of Ulthar", to novellas e.g. "At The Mountains of Madness" where he masterfully describes the limitations of mankind's understanding and focuses on the outer space entities with unimaginable powers.

With the development of science fiction and horror genre in the latter half of the 20th century, it could be argued that Lovecraft was born into the wrong era, with the rise of prolific horror writers including Stephen King, Dean Koontz and others, whose works were not only a huge success in the literary world but were also adapted into the mainstream media like films, TV shows and others. Lovecraft's works were later also adapted into film, however, due to the lack of focus on horror and science fiction cinema, combined with, limitations of both budget and the lack of CGI at the time, these films are in most cases of low quality. It was only after creators stopped approaching HPL's works in their entirety and started using particular themes and ideas, such as cosmic horror etc., from his works, elevating them to another level, creating something original, when we were able to see just how influential and ahead of his time HPL was.

These themes and ideas, which inspired many films, video games and other popular media, are the central focus of this thesis and they will be analysed to find out just how influential H. P. Lovecraft really was.

1 Lovecraft's Biography – The Birth of the Great Old Ones

1.1 H. P. Lovecraft's Early Life

It is essential for all readers and researchers who wish to study and explore the works of H. P. Lovecraft to take a closer look at his life. It might reveal as to what motivated him to create such a complicated world of cosmic horrors, strange and unexplainable beings and even gods from outer space. His life was sad, full of mental problems and illnesses, either his own or those of his closest relatives. It is important to understand his life, which was full of despair, to fully understand and appreciate his works.

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born on 20 August 1890, at 194 Angel Street on what was then the eastern edge of the East Side of Providence. His parents were Winfield and Susie Lovecraft, who relocated to Dorchester, Massachusetts and later to Boston to raise their newly born. Their influence on his life and demeanour was extensive, but on that later. "Lovecraft's early residences and travels were dictated mainly by his father's business. It is known from his medical records that his occupation was 'a commercial traveller', or what could nowadays be called a travelling salesman. His interests kept him in the Boston area for the first three years of HPL's life."¹ During his life in this area, they stayed in the Guiney residence owned by the poet Louise Imogen Guiney who had to some degree impact on his future choices to become a writer. Her house was often visited by other writers and their conversations had an undeniable impact on his memories of early life.

The happy, or at least calm period of Howard's life ended in the year 1893 when his father Winfield succumb to mental illness and had to be hospitalized in Butler hospital until he died in 1898. The cause of his death sparked much speculation amongst HPL scholars, however the most likely illness that meant his demise was tertiary syphilis. "Doctor M. Eileen McNamara, M. D. studying Winfried's medical records concluded that the probability of him having tertiary syphilis is very strong. She stated that the length and symptoms of his sickness were pointing towards syphilis."² After his father fell ill HPL and his mother relocated back to Providence to her parents' home, where Howard kept growing up for the next several years. To a young child, the memories of his father must have been scarce, and HPL himself stated in one of his letters, that he did not know much about his sickness, however, it is beyond possible that this amount of psychological stress shown must have influenced him at least in

¹ JOSHI, S. T., 2001. *A Dreamer & A Visionary: H. P. Lovecraft in His Time*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 432 s. ISBN 978-0853239369.

² FAIG, Kenneth W., 1990. *The Parents of Howard Phillips Lovecraft*. West Warwick, RI: Necro-nomicon Press. ISBN 978-0940884335., p.14

some way. This period was especially difficult for his mother Susie, who lost her husband, and future and was forced to relocate back to her childhood home. Where she would live with your HPL for the upcoming years surrounded by her sisters and parents. The amount of physical a psychological damage caused by her husband's degrading state was most likely the starter of her own mental illness. "When Susie herself was admitted to Butler Hospital in 1919, her doctor, F. J. Farnell, "found disorder had been evidenced for fifteen years; that in all, abnormality had existed at least twenty-six years."³ During this time HPL got very close to his grandfather Whipple Van Buren Phillips, who provided the necessary father figure to Howard. Together with his grandfather he was able to overcome some of his fears like darkness, learnt about Europe and art and started writing Letters to each other during his travels. It is safe to assume that Whipple had a vast influence on the education and early writing practice of young Lovecraft. His grandfather provided the much-needed father figure in Howard's life and taught him many things, it can be argued from his later recollection of one of his dreams, that Whipple became the father young Lovecraft never had. His mother's decision to relocate back to her childhood home, became the happiest time of Lovecraft's early life, his grandfather was wealthy enough, and the whole family was able to spoil Howard and provide him with anything he wanted while living in an upper-class house. In some of his early recollections, HPL remembers the house specifically. "I was born in the year 1890 in a small town, & in a section of that town which during my childhood lay not more than four blocks (N. & E.) from the actually primal & open New England countryside, with rolling meadows, stone walls, cart-paths, brooks, deep woods, mystic ravines, lofty river-bluffs, planted fields, white ancient farmhouses, barns, & byres, gnarled hillside orchards, great lone elms, & all the authentic marks of a rural milieu unchanged since the 17th & 18th centuries ... My house, tho' an urban one on a paved street, had spacious grounds & stood next to an open field with a stone wall ... where great elms grew & my grandfather had corn & potatoes planted, & a cow pastured under the gardener's care."⁴ From this quote, we can take an educated guess, that Lovecraft had fond memories of the house and that the time he spent there was a happy one.

1.2 The Dream Beckons

"Dreams are a recurring theme in Lovecraft's work, particularly dream quests where the protagonist gains information from dreams. In 'In Defense of Dagon' Lovecraft mentions

³ CANNON, Peter H., 1998. *Lovecraft Remembered: His Own Most Fantastic Creation: Howard Phillips Lovecraft*. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House Publishers, 486 s. ISBN 0870541730., p.16

⁴ LOVECRAFT, H. P., 1998. *Selected Letters III (1929-1931)*. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House Publishers. ISBN 0-87054-034-3., p.317

that many of his stories came to him in his sleep.⁵ These dreams started influencing his youth starting with the death of his grandmother Robbie Alzada Phillips, who died on January 26, 1896. This time, even though not so difficult for HPL himself, put his entire family into everlasting darkness. The omnipresent black colour worn by every member of his family drove him mad, so much so, that he began to fear the night, thus letting the nightmares step into the forefront.

*“And then it was that my former high spirits received their damper. I began to have nightmares of the most hideous description, peopled with things which I called ‘night-gaunts’. In dreams they were wont to whirl me through space at a sickening rate of speed, the while fretting & impelling me with their detestable tridents. It is fully fifteen years—aye, more—since I have seen a ‘night-gaunt’, but even now, when half asleep & drifting vaguely along over a sea of childhood thoughts, I feel a thrill of fear & instinctively struggle to keep awake. That was my own prayer back in ’96— each night—to keep awake & ward off the night-gaunts!”*⁶

These dreams became a constant presence for young Lovecraft and during these periods, his imagination must have taken pieces of his favourite childhood books and transformed them into hellish nightmares. These nightmares, although surely horrific for HPL, stimulated his imagination to such an extent, that he was able to create amazing stories like “The Call of Cthulhu”, “At the Mountains of Madness” and to create the whole universe of horrific unimaginable monsters.

1.3 From Child to an Adult – The Literary and Scholarly Upbringing

Lovecraft’s education was, to say the least, complicated. As he likes to point out he was a bright child who could read since three; whether or not this is true cannot be said for certain. Lovecraft enjoyed exaggerating his abilities and capabilities in the letters he wrote to his friends. The consensus the scholars who wrote about his life agree on is that he could read from around four years old. This however does not detract from his prowess and the reach of his reading. As was already stated, one of the firsts literary works Lovecraft read were *Grimm’s Fairy Tales* and *Arabian Nights*. Later he moved on to *N. Hawthorne – A Wonder Book* containing myths like Pandora, Perseus and Medusa, and other classical myths followed by another Hawthorne’s book *Tanglewood Tales*, consisting of more Greek tales.

⁵ SMITH, Philip. 2011. Re-visioning Romantic-Era Gothicism: An Introduction to Key Works and Themes in the Study of H.P. Lovecraft. *Literature Compass*. 10. 830-83900838. 10.1111/j.1741-4113.2011.00838.x., p.836.

⁶ LOVECRAFT, H.P., 1965. *Selected Letters I (1911-1924)*. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House Publishers. Edited by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei. ISBN 0-87054-034-3., p.34-35.

From Hawthorne's works, Lovecraft moved on to the writings of Thomas Bulfinch and his *The Age of Fable*. It is important to keep in mind that many of HPL's earlier readings consisted of Fables, Myths, and or stories about old Greece and Rome since his grandfather kept memorabilia from his travels. Lovecraft's interest later came upon the "Metamorphoses" written by Roman poet Ovid, which influenced him greatly. His love for antique Rome and Greece was immense at his young age-however, another big influence on his later writings was 18th century England, theatre, and poetry. All these influences combined, caused HPL to start working on his own writings at around the age of six. Nonetheless, it should be mentioned that his earlier attempts to write were mostly focused on poetry. It would still take many years for the works he is most known for to materialise.

These classical writings were of a big influence on Lovecraft's early development, however, one more piece of the literary puzzle was still missing from the full set, that being tales of gothic, tales of weird and horror stories in general. It was around the age of eight when HPL found the holy grail of Science Fiction authors of that time, E. A. Poe. "Then I struck EDGAR ALLAN POE!! It was my downfall, and at the age of eight I saw the blue firmament of Argos and Sicily darkened by the miasmal exhalations of the tomb!"⁷ The influence of Poe's works was outstanding and sparked in him an immediate interest in the weird fiction-so much so, that he wrote a whole book about it called "Supernatural Horror in Literature", which focuses on the tropes, history, and authors of horror fictions.

As Lovecraft himself states in his letters (Selected Letters vol. 2), the discovery of E. A. Poe meant a milestone in his life. He was done with poems about ancient heroic deeds and started focusing on writing prose, or what could be called post-Poe writing. It was a genre so different from poetry, that he had to learn all of the necessary knowledge anew. Lovecraft turned into a little scientist and started learning about industrial instruments, chemistry and geography and later architecture and astronomy. The latter two show up in his works regularly and Lovecraft focused on them immensely.

Lovecraft's education could be summarized as a complicated journey without any satisfactory ending. He first started attending school in 1898, and right from the start, there were major issues with his mental health. His first nervous breakdown happened not long after his primary school enrolment, and another near breakdown followed in the next year, there might be a correlation with his father's death, and the probability of this is high, however as was already discussed, Howard did not have much of a relationship with, him,

⁷ LOVECRAFT, H.P., 1968. Selected Letters II (1925-1929). Sauk City, WI: Arkham House Publishers. Edited by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei. ISBN 0-87054-029-7., p.109

therefore the level of correlation between his breakdown and his father's death is uncertain. "It is, however, important to state, that headaches and different kinds of psychological issues ranging from exhaustion, breakdowns, issues with nerves, etc. ran deeply through both sides of his family, as HPL himself stated."⁸ These inherited afflictions accompanied Lovecraft throughout his whole life and he never managed to deal with them, but on that later.

His father's death was a much bigger influence on his mother Sarah. She was always overprotective of young Howard and the deaths in the family seemed to even deepen her focus on him, it could be said that during his youth, he was an extremely spoiled child. This also led to him being quite unpopular which might have had a clear connection to his school problems, which caused his breakdowns. "You will notice that I have made no reference to childish friends & playmates--I had none! The children I knew disliked me, & I disliked them. I was used to adult company & conversation, & despite the fact that I felt shamefully dull beside my elders, I had nothing in common with the infant train. Their romping & shouting puzzled me. I hated mere play & dancing about—in my relaxations I always desired plot."⁹ He was probably never taught to play with others. His mother did not let him. It might be even stated that Sarah preferred it when he read books or played with his historical toys over being outside playing with other kids, since the danger of getting hurt was minimal this way. Needless to say, all of these circumstances led to him being withdrawn from the public education system for another several years. How his tutoring was conducted is uncertain, there is evidence of him being home schooled, however, this was on a later date and the time from 1899-1902 is unclear. "S. T. Joshi speculates, that during this period Howard was left to his own devices and the only teacher he had, were the books he read, and his insatiable curiosity."¹⁰

Lovecraft returned to primary school in late 1902, but his time there was, again, very short-lived. He was soon withdrawn again for home schooling.

In 1904 - 1905 Lovecraft started attending high school, but as became the norm in the primary school, it seemed that he was not able to commit to any longer constant attendance the few months in a row. This break from school was most likely caused by another "psychological breakdown" caused by the death of Whipple Phillips his grandfather, who died of a stroke in 1904.

⁸ LOVECRAFT, H. P., 1998. *Selected Letters III (1929-1931)*. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House Publishers. ISBN 0-87054-034-3., p.368

⁹ LOVECRAFT, H.P., 1965. *Selected Letters I (1911-1924)*. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House Publishers. Edited by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei. ISBN 0-87054-034-3.,p.16

¹⁰ JOSHI, S.T., 2013. *I Am Providence: The Life and Times of H. P. Lovecraft*. New York: Hippocampus Press. EPUB Edition. ISBN 978-1-61498-077-3.,p.96

Whipple's death caused another turmoil in the family and affected Lovecraft much more than the death of his father, or his grandmother. His passing devastated Howard immensely, mainly because he viewed him more like a father figure than a grandparent and he was forced to take yet another year off to take care of his mental health. Furthermore, it is important to state, that with the death of Whipple Phillips, the family fortune was gone. In the last years before his death the business did not go so well. He lost almost all of his money and most of his business crashed. After his death, the family was forced to relocate out of their home to a smaller apartment located on the first floor of 598 Angel Street, because they could not afford to live in such a big property. The move out of his childhood home and family tragedy played primary role in him missing another year of school. Lovecraft returned to high school again for two years (1906-1908) without many absences. However, in the end, he did not graduate.

In 1908 Lovecraft was going to start his university studies at Brown University, however, in the summer of 1908 he had another one of his nervous breakdowns, Lovecraft himself never admitted that this particular episode occurred, mainly because he was afraid of the University, or perhaps, since he never finished high school, he would have to go back a finish it before going to Brown, however, his statements seem more like excuse why he will not attend university at all. "In 1908 I should have entered Brown University, but the broken state of my health rendered the idea absurd. I was and am a prey to intense headaches, insomnia, and general nervous weakness which prevents my continuous application to anything."¹¹ After the breakdown, Lovecraft pulled out of society for almost five whole years and his academic career ended there. He would never finish his high school education and University would remain only a dream.

1.4 H.P. Lovecraft – The Struggles of an Eccentric and the Birth of the Necronomicon

After his breakdown in 1908 Lovecraft complete pulled out of society and for the next five years until 1913 there are almost no records of both him and his mother. This behaviour was almost certainly caused by his mental breakdown and the downfall of his family wealth. Lovecraft would completely shut out of the outer world and when outside he would act as if he was invisible. There were two subjects which he continued to pursue during these dark times, that being chemistry and astronomy, however, nothing ever came out of it and

¹¹ LOVECRAFT, H.P., 1965. *Selected Letters I (1911-1924)*. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House Publishers. Edited by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei. ISBN 0-87054-034-3, p.10.

everything he wrote during this time remains lost. During this time, he was not attending school, nor was he working, his only employment became shuffling around the house like ghost, becoming poorer every day. The only real human contact throughout these five years was his mother Susie and the atmosphere in the Lovecraft household was slowly becoming unbearable. After the death of her father and Howard's constant failures followed by his breakdowns, made Susie become more and more apathetic. The inner struggle between her love for Howard and her disappointment with his life choices was slowly eating her up and the lead to her own breakdown and hospitalization in the same place her husband's life ended, in Butler's Hospital. During this time Lovecraft did not do much in terms of writing. He wrote several poems here and there, but that was about it in terms of his literary accomplishments. "It can only be guessed what he was doing during this period, however, he must have read an enormous number of books of different genres ranging from science to weird fiction and laid a foundation to his later literary universe."¹²

The major shift in Lovecraft's life, which ended his five-year-long withdrawal from society came in the year 1914, when he was approached by Edward F. Daas a member of the United Amateur Press Association, who was then publishing magazine "The United Amateur", focusing on the works of amateur writers in the UA. Daas then invited HPL to join their society and after weeks of consideration, Lovecraft finally decided to accept his invitation. "This the key turning point of Lovecraft's life as it marked his transition from failed scientist to amateur writer and set him on the rails of what was to be his future career, that of science-fiction, horror writer."¹³ Over the years HPL often contributed to the United Amateur as a critic for the Department of Public Criticism, where he would write responses to upcoming authors. Lovecraft's literary efforts thrived during this time, as many of the works he would write criticisms of inspired him to focus on his writings. The time spent as a member of the UAPA was critical for Lovecraft, he became more sociable, started conversing with people on regular basis again and even found new friends.

The first real publication of his works came from UAPA in the year 1916 Lovecraft published his story "The Alchemist" written most likely in the year of 1908, this publication was met with positive criticism and was urged by his fellow amateur writers to write more. Lovecraft's response to the inquiries was his first official tale about the Old Ones a story called "Dagon" marking another important milestone in what may be called "the birth of

¹² JOSHI, S.T., 2013. *I Am Providence: The Life and Times of H. P. Lovecraft*. New York: Hippocampus Press. EPUB Edition. ISBN 978-1-61498-077-3, p.184.

¹³ TYSON, Donald, 2010. *The Dream World of H. P. Lovecraft: His Life, His Demons, His Universe*. Woodbury, MI: Llewellyn Publications. ISBN 978-0738722849, p. 50.

Lovecraft as a horror writer". Over the years the HPL kept writing and publishing his stories in the UAPA. His first official paid publication came in the year 1918 when he managed to sell one of his poems "The Marshes of Ipswich", to the National Magazine, marking it as the moment he became a professional writer, however, this was not the only important event, that happened to him in that Year. His mother's mental health was declining and 1918 marked her descent into what may be called madness. Her constant stay in their dark apartment, her already shattered mental state from already going through three death in the family, and Howard's breakdowns would be enough to send any healthy person into disarray, "however the final piece in the puzzle of madness for Susie was the death of her brother Edwin."¹⁴ This was the tipping point which caused her to start seeing strange things and terrible beings whenever she went outside or stayed in the dark. She went on to stay with her older sister, in hopes that the change of scenery would lift her spirits. This was not the case and in early 1919 Sarah Phillips was admitted to Butler Hospital, the same place where her husband died and where she would few years later die too in 1921.

To Lovecraft, the hospitalization of his mother marked important milestone, for the first time in his entire life he was alone. His reactions to her absence were strange, immediately upon her hospitalization one would expect him to have another breakdown, if not for the shock that this happened to the closest person he had, then for his history, but this was not the case, as he was able to keep working. "I wrote an entire March critical report [i.e., the "Department of Public Criticism" for March 1919] one evening recently, & I am this morning able to write letters after having been up all night."¹⁵ With the reassurances from her doctors that her physical composition is in no evident danger and that her mental health is slowly improving Lovecraft was able to slowly take on more social conduct and became increasingly more active in the UAPA writers community. He started travelling, and even spent several nights in Boston, which has not happened since 1901.

His mother Sarah Susan Phillips Lovecraft died in early 1921 at Butler Hospital. To Lovecraft her death was shocking, and he once again considered suicide, however it is believed that without first her removal to hospital in 1919 and later her death in 1921 Lovecraft would most likely not be able to become more socially active, he would not write his famous tales. Her death, to a certain extent, set him free. Lovecraft continued working for the UAPA organization, and kept himself fairly busy after his mother's death, his aunts

¹⁴ FAIG, Kenneth W., 1991. *The Parents of Howard Phillips Lovecraft*. West Warwick, RI: Necro-nomicon Press. ISBN 978-0940884335, p.29.

¹⁵ LOVECRAFT, H.P., 1965. *Selected Letters I (1911-1924)*. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House Publishers. Edited by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei. ISBN 0-87054-034-3, p. 81.

encouraged him to travel, so that he would not think about her. The problems arising in the Amateur organization UAPA kept him busy, however, he was slowly starting to realize, that his time there might be approaching its end. In 1922 Lovecraft lost the editor position and the organization itself was slowly reaching its end, even though the “Lovecraft’s party” was voted back to the board with Sonia H. Greene elected the new president. The UAPA came to its inevitable death in 1925 and disbanded in 1926 leaving Lovecraft in search of new interests.

With all these events ongoing HPL managed to find the time to write his own prose in 1921 he was asked by a fellow amateur writer to write a series of horror stories for the “Home Brew” magazine, these stories were called “Herbert West – Reanimator” and were fairly successful, so much so that in 1922 he wrote another one for the same magazine called “The Lurking Fear”, the story was too published as a serial, however Lovecraft did not like the magazine and never enjoyed writing for it. It was in 1923 when a new magazine focused mainly on weird fiction and horror appeared, it was called “Weird Tales”. Lovecraft immediately submitted stories to be published there. His first story for this magazine was called “Dagon” and it must have been a success, because the editor shortly after bought another four stories from Lovecraft, however with the publication of stories like “The White Ship” and “The Quest of Iranon” readers were not so happy and demanded the magazine to print modern interesting and realistic stories, Lovecraft was not able to produce any of those. This was the prevailing problem of his whole “professional” career, his stories were too weird even for a magazine called *Weird Fiction*, but he was not willing to compromise and that dragged him down immensely. and he would keep writing his stories until his death.

The only important woman in Lovecraft’s life was his wife Sonia H. Greene, their marriage, even though not long, marked another important milestone in Lovecraft’s life. At first in 1921 Lovecraft seemed to be interested in her only on the intellectual side as he states in one of his letters. “Mrs. G. has an acute, receptive, and well-stored mind; but has yet to learn that impersonal point of view which weighs evidence irrespective of its palatability. She forms welcome addition to the United’s philosophical arena.”¹⁶ Their affliction for one another grew after his mother’s death. She first visited him in Providence and later orchestrated his first trip to New York. Over time the two of them started a real relationship. Lovecraft was extremely fond of Sonia, mainly because she was an excellent writer, but also

¹⁶ LOVECRAFT, H.P., 1965. *Selected Letters I (1911-1924)*. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House Publishers. Edited by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei. ISBN 0-87054-034-3, p.142.

because she was a beautiful woman. They stayed in a relationship until March 1924 when they got married and settled in Brooklyn New York marking it another milestone in his life.

Their married life was not a happy one, the cost of living in New York City was fairly high even in 1920s, however Sonia lost her regular job shortly after the wedding and Lovecraft was never really able to obtain a regular job. Their life turned into always ongoing search for economic survival. HPL kept selling his stories to magazines, did corrections and even ghost-wrote several stories, however, landing regular job seemed like an impossible task to him. After the loss of her job Sonia did not do much better than him, and issues arose. After her leave for Midwest Lovecraft was once again alone, and truth be told he may have preferred it that way. She would still bounce from one work to another, however, this could not be said for Lovecraft, who stopped looking for a job after her departure, she would occasionally spend time with him and provide him with money, but that was about it of their relationship. Lovecraft and Sonia decided to divorce him around 1929 and she would leave Howard, moving away, however, their divorce was never finalised because Lovecraft would never sign the final decree.

The life after his divorce, right until his death was fairly simple, except his original work, which was hindered by rejections and heavily affected by his declining mental health. Lovecraft would continue working as freelancer, revisionist and occasionally sold a story to a pulp magazine. He focused on enlarging his mythos and working on his *Necronomicon*. As his life was closing to an end there was at least slight justification accumulated for his lifelong work. “Late in 1936 Lovecraft finally saw something, he never thought he would see, a published book bearing his name. But predictably, the entire venture was, from first to last, an error-riddled débâcle. It is certainly little consolation that *The Shadow over Innsmouth* has, by its being the only actual book published and released in Lovecraft’s lifetime, become a valued collectors’ item.”¹⁷ His psychological health took a major blow in the year 1936 signaling the end of his productive career. His physical health kept worsening during 1936 and Howard Phillips Lovecraft died on March 15, 1937, in Providence. Terminal cancer of the small intestine was ruled a cause of death. Thus, ending the life of this great writer, whose fame was just about to begin.

¹⁷ JOSHI, S.T., 2013. *I Am Providence: The Life and Times of H. P. Lovecraft*. New York: Hippocampus Press. EPUB Edition. ISBN 978-1-61498-077-3, p.1209.

1.5 Lovecraft's Death, Its Aftermath and His Legacy

As is generally known amongst the critics and readers of HPL, he was not very popular during his lifetime. There are many reasons for this, one of which being the fact that Lovecraft himself did not believe his works could succeed and did not pursue publishing. Another reason could be simply that Lovecraft was born either too early, and the society was not ready for his stories such as “The Call of Cthulhu”, “At the Mountains of Madness”, or “The Colour Out of Space”.

There are several main reasons for Lovecraft's popularity in the 21st century. First and probably the most important one is the rise of popularity of horror and science fiction genres in general. Since the early 2000s both genres gained mainstream attention with films such as “Iron Man (2008)”, which started a revolution in the movie theatre industry, accelerating the fame and mainstream knowledge of comic books, weird fiction and others, which until 2008 were considered “nerdy, or unconventional literature” by the general public, and the works of HPL were part of this minority as well. However, the HPL's works were influential even before that, with films such as “Alien (1979)”, “The Thing (1982)”, and works from prolific horror writers such as Stephen King, who himself considers Lovecraft to be amongst his main influences.

The other reason for his popularity is the fact that HPL is now in the public domain, copyright-free in many countries. The history behind the ownership of his works after his death is somewhat complicated and controversial. After Lovecraft's death, all of his works and the rights to them were given to R. H. Barlow young writer and his Friends. Barlow was supposed to sort out all of his literary works and publish them. In many ways, it was Barlow who managed to bring HPL's works into mainstream and academic recognition. Barlow deposited part of the written estate into the John Hay Library, where he deposited many of his letters and essays. However, as it turned out Barlow was not able to achieve much more. “Barlow did not, indeed, manage to get much of Lovecraft's work into print: his edition of the Notes & Commonplace Book, published in 1938 by The Futile Press (run by Claire and Groo Beck in Lakeport, California), is full of errors, although less so than Derleth's various editions. Barlow, of course, did not have the means to undertake the full-scale publication of Lovecraft's major stories.”¹⁸ The publication of his works was later done by August Derleth, who is the controversial figure behind the publishing of almost all of his works. Derleth based his claim that Lovecraft named him the executor of his works on one of his letters and

¹⁸ JOSHI, S.T., 2013. *I Am Providence: The Life and Times of H. P. Lovecraft*. New York: Hippocampus Press. EPUB Edition. ISBN 978-1-61498-077-3, p.1238.

immediately started working on obtaining all of his works and preparing them for publishing. Many publishing houses did not agree on any terms with them, and it seemed that his works would never see the printing press again, however in the end Derleth decided to form his own publishing company The Arkham House, and put his faith into releasing small volumes of his prepared 3 volumes editions of Lovecraft's work. This surely admirable feat had several issues, the Arkham House, as already stated, was a small publishing house, and it did not have the necessary power and background for Lovecraft to reach mainstream attention. It could have been managed with a mainstream publisher, however, Derleth did not want that, furthermore, the first volumes of the works he published had many issues and were barely readable. Thus, causing the exact opposite of what Derleth wanted, and remained fairly unknown for the next few decades, with only negligible mainstream success.

The history of HPL's copyright is interesting on its own all thanks to the Arkham House publishing company led by August Derleth, who claimed to own the copyright to all of Lovecraft's works, even his letters. S. T. Joshi made a terrific job in mapping out the claims Derleth made about the ownership in his book "I Am Providence – The Life and Times of H. P. Lovecraft", however, the most important discovery was, that he most likely, and based on the available evidence never owned any rights. "Derleth from the beginning claimed de facto ownership of Lovecraft's work by virtue of publishing it in book form, but his control is almost certainly fictitious."¹⁹ In the end, Derleth tried to obstruct, and stop any publishing of Lovecraft's work, published by any other company, and or individual. This all came to an end when all of HPL's works went into the public domain in 2008 starting a revolution in Lovecraft inspired writings, board games and other visual media.

¹⁹ JOSHI, S.T., 2013. *I Am Providence: The Life and Times of H. P. Lovecraft*. New York: Hippocampus Press. EPUB Edition. ISBN 978-1-61498-077-3, p.1254-1255.

2 Legacy In Motion Pictures

2.1 Horror in Motion Pictures

“When the Paramount decision in 1948 legally separated film companies from their longstanding ownership of movie theatres, Hollywood faced the conundrum of how to maintain its economic livelihood. Evolving market forces dictated the necessity of reconsidering how to attract audiences, particularly the emerging body of teenage consumers whose rapacious appetite for shock and sensationalism distinguished them from their parents. More and more, garish advertising campaigns luridly suggested some kind of transgressive stimulation so as to jolt the public out of its lethargy. One genre that proved particularly potent in this new world of media mass marketing was the horror film.”²⁰ Horror films were and still are made with these rules in mind. The shock and sensationalism together with fear and terror are at the heart of every such film, even though the execution of such scenes evolved over the decades, the core remains the same. There is something about these movies that will always attract a certain kind of audience, and with each new generation it increases in size.

The horror genre can be found across platforms, from full-fledged novels such as Shirley Jackson’s “Haunting of Hill House” to today’s TV shows like the “American Horror Story”. It is universally used by many authors and a large fanbase hungry for each new TV show, film, and or book. According to Britannica “horror film is motion picture calculated to cause intense repugnance, fear, or dread. Horror films may incorporate incidents of physical violence and psychological terror; they may be studies of deformed, disturbed, psychotic, or evil characters; stories of terrifying monsters or malevolent animals; or mystery thrillers that use atmosphere to build suspense. The genre often overlaps science-fiction films and film noir.”²¹ The definition made by Britannica nicely summarizes the heart and souls of every horror movie, one could add that another undisputed piece of horror is the fear of the unknown and the fear of things human mind cannot comprehend and that is exactly what Lovecraft is all about.

There are many types of horror movies ranging from regular slasher movies such as “Friday the 13th” to full on ghost films for example *The Conjuring*. All of these types have their own categories, check marks if you will, which define the type of horror film they

²⁰ SANJEK, David, Ghouls, Gimmicks, and Gold: Horror Films and the American Movie Business, 1953–1968, *Journal of American History*, Volume 92, Issue 2, September 2005, Pages 677–678, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3659395>

²¹ Horror film, 2019. Britannica [online]. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 02.01.2019 [cit. 2022-05-28]. Dostupné z: <https://www.britannica.com/art/horror-film>

represent, however it is more difficult to define to which category H. P. Lovecraft's works would belong to. His stories on their whole are difficult to adapt into a feature film and that is why filmmakers and other creators use the themes his works embody and expand on them. "Which his best thing about Lovecraft. The contributions he made to his field, have been shaping the two genres of horror and science-fiction since the beginning."²²

2.2 Adaptation is never easy

As Lovecraft's legacy as a storyteller grew, the first signs of attempts to visualise his works on the big or small screen started. Due to his capability to describe indescribable and his extremely difficult to imagine sequences and beings, the earlier adaptations of his works were, to say it bluntly unwatchable. "Another aspect is Lovecraft's philosophical stance: pessimism and nihilism. Beyond the veil of reality, there is something threatening, coming from outer space or another space-time continuum or already there (buried in the depths of the ocean or the desert sands or the frozen immensities of the North Pole) which makes our world nightmarish."²³ It would take many decades to create believable Lovecraftian adaptation, and to no surprise technological progress in computer animation or CGI played a major role.

Technology aside, translating Lovecraft's works is not easy and requires tremendous knowledge of the source material. His stories are often extremely complex. Main characters are most often set in roles of scholars, researchers and other university personnel, who are put in unimaginable situations. Their unbelievable encounters occur when they are alone, left to their own devices and the lack of side characters in his stories may cause some trouble on the big screen because it is nearly impossible to create an entertaining and drawing story without the emotional connection with the characters. Far more complicated issue are non-existent female characters in HPL's works, he never wrote a story with a female character as a lead, furthermore this omission on Lovecraft's part severely limits the potential believability of higher stakes on the personal level.

Yet another problem surfaced from the basic time frame of films at that time. Standard movie ran around 90-120 minutes. The runtime of the picture can cause a problem in terms of "explanation periods", which would be necessary to anyone who is not well-versed

²² SMITH, Philip. (2011). Re-visioning Romantic-Era Gothicism: An Introduction to Key Works and Themes in the Study of H.P. Lovecraft. *Literature Compass*. 10. 830-83900838. 10.1111/j.1741-4113.2011.00838.x., p. 837.

²³ MENEGALDO, Gilles, 2019. H. P. LOVECRAFT ON SCREEN, A CHALLENGE FOR FILMMAKERS (ALLUSIONS, TRANSPOSITIONS, REWRITINGS). *Brumal: Research Journal on the Fantastic*. Barcelona: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2019(7), 55-78. ISSN 2014-7910. Available at: doi:<https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/brumal.591>, p.58.

in Lovecraftian fiction. “Mythos stories are complex, not easily perceived by the audience without any prior knowledge of Lovecraft or his works. The Cthulhu Mythos may be fascinating and captivating, but it is a difficult concept to grasp in a short burst, and without the traditional ‘suspension of disbelief,’ any adaptation would fail. This handicap has to be addressed early and effectively in the script.”²⁴ Writers who want to embark on this journey have to know the source material inside and out, understand how and why Lovecraft wrote his stories, which is a difficult task on its own, and understand Lovecraft’s philosophy: that humankind is insignificant or irrelevant to the Old Ones.

2.3 Lovecraftian Themes in Motion Pictures

At the centre of every adaptation is the source material used by the screenwriters. It is often very difficult to grade to what extent a movie or a TV series is based on his work. There can be the whole story translated from paper to the film, however, as the history of Lovecraftian movies shows, these films are usually below average. The reasons behind this problem are varied, sometimes the source material is hard to adapt, and this is the truth, especially for Lovecraft’s stories. The complexity and macabre in his writings make it difficult for full fledged adaptation. Another reason is deeply rooted in the genre his adaptations usually appear in. Horror movies, in general, tend to be low on budget. Historically and even nowadays the main purpose of a horror film is to generate as much profit as possible on as little budget as possible. Therefore, it is difficult to create a good Lovecraft adaptation. Similar problem is usually associated with Stephen King, who sold millions of books, but many of his adaptations are lacking in quality.

That is why creators, screenwriters, and producers tend to use Lovecraftian themes since it is easier than translating the source material as a whole and gives them the opportunity and freedom to use these ideas to their advantage to create fascinating tales, not only in the horror genre. Over the years there were many famous films inspired by some of his most used themes and their existence and success only underlines the success and influence of his stories and ideas after his death.

2.3.1 Isolation and Fear of the Unknown

One of the most important themes Lovecraft used in his works was seclusion, isolation and fear of the unknown. The film creators tend to use this idea in their films to its fullest and they manage to create a terrifying atmosphere, where the viewer is sitting on the

²⁴ MITCHELL, Charles P., 2001. *The Complete H. P. Lovecraft Filmography (Bibliographies and Indexes in the Performing Arts)*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. ISBN 0313316414, p.7.

edge of their chair waiting for what is going to happen to the hero of the film. This theme is amazingly utilized in the *Alien* (1979) where the main protagonist Ellen Ripley is forced to fight against a cosmic monster called “Xenomorph” who wants to kill her. The sense of isolation and dread is extremely impactful for the overall feeling of the film and the struggle against the monster only amplifies the importance of the battle against the unknown.

In *The Thing* (1982) a band of scientists is stranded in Antarctica hunted by an evil alien creature, which can change appearance. The Antarctica environment combined with the omnipresent creature makes for an excellent example of Lovecraftian isolation. Needless to say, the whole movie and the frozen setting is reminiscent of HPL’s “At The Mountains of Madness”.

Further examples of isolation and the fear of the unknown can be seen in films such as *The Mist* (2007) which is to be exact an adaptation of Stephen King’s novel *The Mist* (1980), however, it is clear that of Lovecraft was an inspiration for both the novelist and screenwriters. In the film, the city is covered by a blanket of blinding mist, in which terrifying creatures hide and hunt any human being they find. Group of survivors hides in the grocery store and tries to survive isolated from the outer world. This movie nicely represents both themes at its core and creates an atmosphere eerily similar to Lovecraft’s writings.

There are of course many others who used these themes to their advantage both on the big screen and in television shows. They are in general used in horror films of any kind to further underline the horror, danger and intensity of the situation and they can create an unforgettable atmosphere.

2.3.2 Dreams and Strange Nightmares

Dreams played a pivotal role in Lovecraft’s stories, or to be more precise, nightmares were the basis for many of his creations such as his outer, cosmic beings. It is no surprise that many film creators used this theme in their films. “Horror has been tied to nightmare and dream since the inception of the modern tradition. The assertion that a given horror story originated as a dream or nightmare occurs often enough that one begins to suspect that it is something akin to invoking a muse (or an incubus or succubus, as the case may be).”²⁵ One could argue that dreams and nightmares in movies, or at least the idea, predates H. P. Lovecraft. However, in certain films his influence is undeniable. For example, in *Babadook* (2014) the monster of the film first appears in the dreams of the child after being read about it

²⁵ CARROLL, Noel, 1981. Nightmare and the Horror Film: The Symbolic Biology of Fantastic Beings. *Film Quarterly*. Berkeley, USA: University of California Press, 1981(34), 16-25. Dostupné z: [doi:https://doi.org/10.2307/1212034](https://doi.org/10.2307/1212034), p. 17.

in a book of children's stories. Then after a certain time, one could argue that it needs to obtain power from the children's nightmares to materialize in the real world, and starts terrorizing the whole family. The construct of the monster combined with the nightmare world can be correlated with H. P. Lovecraft's writings. The *Donnie Darko* (2001) film is in its whole about dreams and reality. The main character of the movie is unsure whether he is dreaming, or in reality. This makes for a suspenseful viewing, where even the person becomes uncertain about what is going on. This dream-like quality and the disappearing boundaries between the dream world and the real one show how one idea can be played with, twisted, and otherwise used to create an entertaining motion picture.

Many movies focus or at least have dreams and nightmare sequences and it is important to state, that not all of them are Lovecraft-inspired. However, the usage of these sequences evokes HPL's influence. After all, even a small idea can create a terrifying nightmare.

2.3.3 Cosmic Beings and Other Lovecraftian Monsters

Lovecraft's fame in today's day and age is heavily connected to his creation of many cosmic beings and other monsters. When somebody says Lovecraft, the usual response is Cthulhu. However, filmmakers and TV show creators borrow heavily from Lovecraft when in need of a good monster. In the *Stranger Things* season 2 (2017) the Upside-Down shadow monster is heavily inspired by some of the famous Lovecraft's beings, whose origin is unknown. Duffer brothers, the creators of the show, admitted to the inspiration. "There's an H. P. Lovecraft sort of approach, this inter-dimensional being that is sort of beyond human comprehension. We purposely don't want to go too much into what it is or what it wants."²⁶ This monster throughout the second season terrorizes the main cast of the TV show, providing viewers with yet another Lovecraftian monster to fear. "Pennywise" the titular antagonist and monster from another world is another great example of Lovecraft-inspired monster. Similar situation can be seen in the new film adaptation of yet another Stephen King's book called "IT" (1986) was released in 2017. A whole new generation of viewers was introduced to the terrifying monster from outer space. The origin of IT (or, Pennywise the clown) is unknown, and almost all the information gained throughout the story is intentionally minimal, to the audience he seems unbeatable for the majority of the story. Overall "It" represents the theme of cosmic, outer beings and the inspiration in Lovecraft's works is undeniable.

²⁶ TRUMBORE, Dave, 2017. 'Stranger Things' Season 2 Villain Is a Lovecraftian Shadow Monster. Collider [online]. Quebec: Valnet, 27.9.2017 [cit. 2022-05-18]. Dostupné z: <https://collider.com/stranger-things-season-2-villain/>

There are many other films and tv shows that used Lovecraftian monsters. Several examples could be found in films such as *The Cloverfield* series where the monster terrorizes the world but is not shown to the viewer, or TV shows such as *Futurama* (1999 - 2003, 2006 - 2013) use Lovecraftian monsters like “Pazuzu” the daemon, or tentacle monster called Yivo and many others, In the *Simpsons – Tree House of Horrors XXX* Cthulhu himself makes an appearance. Lovecraft’s overall influence on modern movies and TV shows is undeniable.

2.3.4 Cthulhu Mythos and the Necronomicon

H. P. Lovecraft created extensive and complicated mythos with many outer beings. Because of this volume of creatures spread over many of his stories, he needed something to bind them into one universe, thus creating the famous book “Necronomicon”, It is in its essence a bible of the Old Ones with rituals and witchcraft-like formulas to summon them from their dimensions into ours. Many characters in his stories either know about this book or use it, making it essentially “The Book” of the Lovecraftian universe. The theme of this book or a book with similar content is used in horror movies to spawn evil things into the realm of men.

“If it’s a ghoul, a zombie, or is it set on cemetery it may be Lovecraftian. Many of Lovecraft’s early non-Cthulhu Mythos stories are set in graveyards and cemeteries, frequently plagued by supernatural creatures who live off decayed human flesh. It has been suggested that films such as *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) were also inspired by this aspect of Lovecraft’s work.”²⁷ It is important to note that Lovecraft did not write just stories with cosmic beings and unimaginable horrors. His earlier tales were of simpler nature.

2.3.5 Other Films and Television Shows

Lovecraft’s influence on modern television and film is undeniable and far-reaching, the themes discussed in this chapter are just the tip of an iceberg. Creators use many of his elements to build up their worlds. In *Locke and Key* (2020) there is a whole Lovecraftian universe hidden behind closed and locked doors. In a crime show called *True Detective* (2014) fans argue that the whole first season is based in the Lovecraftian Universe. This examples alone could fill in a whole bachelor thesis.

²⁷ MITCHELL, Charles P., 2001. *The Complete H. P. Lovecraft Filmography (Bibliographies and Indexes in the Performing Arts)*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. ISBN 0313316414, p.9.

3 Legacy in Video Games

H. P. Lovecraft's Legacy in the video game industry is undeniable, however, to fully understand how influential his works, ideas and themes have been on this medium, it is important to first discuss the history of the media briefly. "The first video game ever created was conceived in 1958 as a simple tennis simulator to entertain the public, its creator was scientist William Higinbotham."²⁸ This creation could be considered the first attempt at a video game, however, it would take many decades for games to reach the quality we see today.

As it is with almost everything in the world of electronics, technological limitations are kept many visionaries back in the past. The quality of video games changed drastically over the decades and so did the depth of their content. Back in the 80s, people would visit arcades to play simple fighting games with their quarters controlling their characters with an arcade stick and just several buttons. These arcade games were huge machines, which were fairly heavy, at that time this was the only way how to create games with the slightest hint of complexity. There were video gaming systems for playing at home for example "Atari", however, these systems were not capable of creating games even remotely similar in quality to those in arcades, and since gaming on computers was still far away, not to mention the extreme prices of such systems, arcade games were the best people could have. Not mentioning the fact that in the 80s and early 90s video gaming was still in its early stages.

Big shift in how society views video gaming came in the early 90s when two big companies released their home gaming systems first was Super Nintendo or SNES created by a company called Nintendo in 1990. Another milestone came with the release of Play Station created by company Sony in 1994 which is the leading authority on home-based gaming systems. Others contributed to the evolution of gaming, however, their quality compared to those already mentioned was negligible and they were slowly but surely forgotten. The evolution of computer-based gaming went hand in hand with consoles and the so-called "arms race" started together with constant improvement to video games.

3.1 Video Games that Can Be Called Lovecraftian

Since the release of the latest video gaming consoles and the overall coverage of computers and laptops per person, it is easier than ever to start playing games. To cover the demands of people video gaming companies are working hard to satisfy their demands.

²⁸ IVORY, James D., KOWERT, Rachel a Thorsten QUANDT, ed., 2016. The Video Game Debate: A Brief History of Video Games. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 208 s. ISBN 9781138831636. P. 1-2.

As a result of that, the variety and range of different types of video games are astronomical and there is a category for pretty much any genre nowadays, from first-person shooters e.g., *Call of Duty*, strategy games like *Civilization* and many other.

Lovecraftian games or video games inspired by his works, ideas and themes are usually found in a few categories. The obvious one being horror games in all possible variations, either 1st person or 3rd person. 1st person *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* is the best possible example of Lovecraftian video games ever made. “*Dead Space*” on the other hand is a clear example of the 3rd person horror games combined usually with shooting monsters and to no surprise, it works fantastically, but on that later. Then we have role-playing games to discuss: “these games are defined as games set in fictional worlds, where the player controls often self-created characters, who can be further improved. It is difficult to exactly define RPGs since they are extremely varied and there are no boundaries for the imagination.”²⁹ Thanks to the amount of freedom creators have in these games, they can be considered the finest category there can be, and creators usually work wonders with them.

Due to the fact that this medium is so flexible with its content and graphical possibilities it is much easier to translate pages and monsters from Lovecraftian mythology onto the player’s screen. The most used creature gaming developers use is, to no surprise, the infamous Cthulhu, however, it is not just the monster they translate. More often than not developers get inspired by his themes, and ideas, and the result is often an extremely captivating homage to Lovecraft.

3.2 Lovecraftian Themes in Video Games

3.2.1 Isolation, Fear of the Unknown and the Importance of Sanity

As H. P. Lovecraft himself wrote, “The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.”³⁰ This statement could summarize the essence of many video games which were inspired by his works. The first example where this theme is at the forefront of the video game is *Amnesia: The Dark Descent*. This 2010 horror game focused on the survival of its main protagonist who wakes up locked in a creepy old mansion in total isolation. The game focuses on overcoming complicated tasks, and puzzles, and to complete them you need to search the dark mansion,

²⁹ Role-Playing Game (RPG): What Does Role-Playing Game (RPG) Mean?, 2020. Technopedia [online]. Edmonton, 23.05.2020 [cit. 2022-05-31]. Dostupné z: <https://www.techopedia.com/definition/27052/role-playing-game-rpg>.

³⁰ LOVECRAFT, H.P., 2009. Supernatural Horror in Literature. Hplovecraft [online]. Phoenix, USA: Donovan K. Loucks, 20.10.2009 [cit. 2022-05-30]. Dostupné z: <https://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/essays/shil.aspx>

which only other inhabitant is a monster who wants to kill you. The player never feels safe and throughout his search for hints is constantly haunted by the monster and visions, draining his sanity which plays a big role in this game. “Furthermore, *Amnesia* wrenched weapons from its player’s hands, taking away even the minute amount of safety they might have offered.”³¹ This combination of no weapons and sanity meter creates an suspenseful atmosphere, straight out from one of Lovecraft’s stories. The isolation in combination with constantly pushing further into the unknown, so that player could progress the story is exactly how HPL makes his readers feel.

Further examples of this theme can be found in games such as *Alien Isolation* (2014) where similar gameplay mechanics as in *Amnesia* are implemented to evoke in the player the sense of isolation and constant fear of the infamous alien monster that wants to kill you and the unknown spaceship where its story takes place. “Once the xenomorph starts stalking you through the dark and creepy Sevastopol space station, *Isolation* hits its stride. It is an absolutely stressful game to play – by design.”³² This design is influenced by the original 1979 movie “*Alien*”, which in part was influenced by the theme of isolation Lovecraft loved to use. Another example of these ideas is *Outlast* (2013), however, *Outlast* takes a different approach and focuses purely on the scripted story with many “jump scares”. The sense of isolation and dread is still there and the overall feeling of the game checks all the boxes of Lovecraftian horror. The story is fairly simple: a journalist visits an asylum, or psychiatric hospital, where horrific things are happening to the patients. He makes footage with his camera to document the place and slowly unravels the history and mystery behind it.

There are many other VG focused on the themes of isolation, fear of the unknown and sanity. These themes are heavily used in the realm of survival horror games and their storytelling. There are, of course, games which are better than others, however, the overall inspiration can be seen in this whole genre.

3.2.2 Cosmic Horrors, Great Outer Gods and the Irrelevance of Humankind

“We are born of the blood, made men by the blood, undone by the blood. Our eyes have yet to open... Fear the Old Blood”³³ This famous quote is from one of the most Lovecraftian video games ever made *Bloodborne* (2015), which represents both of the

³¹ WILLIAMS, Hayley, 2021. The Legacy Of Amnesia: The Dark Descent. Kotaku [online]. New York, USA: G/O Media, 01.07.2021 [cit. 2022-06-01]. Dostupné z: <https://www.kotaku.com.au/2021/07/the-lasting-legacy-of-amnesia-the-dark-descent/>

³² MCCAFFREY, Ryan, 2014. Alien: Isolation Review: An Eternal Terror. IGN [online]. San Francisco, USA: Ign Entertainment, 03.10.2014 [cit. 2022-06-09]. Dostupné z: <https://www.ign.com/articles/2014/10/03/alien-isolation-review>

³³ *Bloodborne* [*Bloodborne*] [Video game]. Director Hidetaka Miyazaki. Japan, From Software Inc., 2015.

above-mentioned themes, and uses them to create an surprisingly deep action RPG with horror elements. “Thematically, *Bloodborne* is a very different beast. If *Dark Souls* was about dying, *Bloodborne* is about killing. It is so much more overtly a horror game than *Dark Souls*, a game about bloodlust and madness and transformation and the dark, awful things at the fringes of human understanding.”³⁴ The game starts simple, the player through his character wakes up after a horrible nightmare from a blood transfusion and is thrown into the dark city of Yharnam, which is overrun by terrible beasts. The main theme of the story is simple the player wakes up in a “Van Helsing” like city, where he kills beasts, monsters, and insane citizens. However, as players continue the story, what seems like a shallow simple design, becomes deeply disturbing, and the web of insanity, cosmic beings and the lack of interest with which they approach humans becomes clearer and clearer.

In *Bloodborne* the From Software focused on the cosmicity of HPL’s stories. The main antagonists of the story are not clear, and players are first led to believe, it is not beasts, nor monsters, as it turns out they are just ordinary people, who were changed thanks to some strange properties of blood obtained by a church from last surviving Old one, which they were administered. It is fairly difficult to describe the main antagonist of the story, however, upon deeper understanding of the story, the infamous church could be the most-obvious choice. Throughout the story we figure out that while exploring some old ruins people found relics of past civilization and later the Old One “Ebrietas”, and when they found out what they can do with its blood, several people started the so-called Healing Church, and ministered this blood to common people, gaining not only fame and power but also enormous amounts of wealth. These Old Ones are similar to Lovecraft’s cosmic beings such as “Cthulhu”, “Yog-Sothot” and others. They are indifferent to humans and their problems, and they do not partake in the core story of *Bloodborne*, they do “their own things”, just as in Lovecraft’s stories.

Video game developers love to use these 3 themes in their games immensely for example in *Dead Space* (2008) and its subsequent sequels the main hero is a spaceship engineer who is in the first game forced to battle alien creatures on a spaceship in deep cosmos trying to survive, and subsequently becomes connected to the alien race called “Necromorphs” and have to stop them to save the humanity. In *Call of Cthulhu* (2018) “the main protagonist tries to survive not only physically, but also tries to keep his sanity while delving deep into the world of Cthulhu mythos filled with unimaginable horrors whilst

³⁴ MACDONALD, Keza a Jason KILLINGSWORTH, 2015. *You Died: The Dark Souls Companion*. Glasgow, UK: BackPage Press; First edition, 300 s. ISBN 978-1909430228, p. 277.

investigating his new case.”³⁵ This game is more focused on the atmosphere than the action, however, the influence is undeniable, the game’s name speaks for itself and if it is not enough “Dagon” makes an appearance.

There are many more video games inspired by the themes of this chapter. It could be argued that Lovecraftian cosmic beings are often used for boss battles in any genre of video games, from single-player action games like *Dead Space*, all the way to massively multiplayer online role-playing games, or MMORPG like *World of Warcraft* (2004), where the use of “Old Gods” is clear reference and inspiration from HPL’s works.

3.2.3 Dreams and Other Nightmares

Dreams and nightmares were always an important part of Lovecraft’s life and many of his works were influenced, or downright taken from his nightmares. It is no surprise that authors like to use these themes in their creations. *Bloodborne* plays once again prim in this regard. The story of this game was already briefly discussed in this thesis, however, the significance of dreams and nightmares was omitted on purpose, solely for this chapter.

In the story these two themes play very important roles because from the beginning we are not certain if we are dreaming or awake. The player’s character wakes up after the blood transfusion and is immediately attacked by a werewolf, if killed, he will be transported to a location called The Hunters Dream which becomes the only safe zone for the player and sort of a hub for future expeditions. This is the first of many references and uses of dreams in this game. Throughout the story, the player visits many places and kills many bosses, however, after a slaying the last boss players get a message “Nightmare slain” completing his journey and is given the option to wake up from his nightmare. This cliff-hanger of sorts gives the player the ultimate answer of this game If it was all just a dream.

While *Bloodborne* uses these themes to their fullest potential and plays constantly with the gamer’s perception, there are other games which try a similar approach, however, with limited range and importance. *Dead Space* plays with the idea of nightmares and reality too from its second installation, nevertheless the scope is significantly limited and is seen only in the main character’s visions. This can be attributed to the connection between Isaac, who is the game’s protagonist, and the alien race, further building on the Lovecraftian themes. Further examples of these nightmares are found in *Bloodborne* DLC called *The Old Hunters*

³⁵ PARQUET, Karen, 2022. The 18 Best Video Games Inspired by H. P. Lovecraft. Gamerant [online]. Utah, USA: Gamerant, 12.03.2022 [cit. 2022-06-02]. Dostupné z: <https://gamerant.com/best-lovecraft-inspired-video-games/>

which expands on the Idea of nightmares, with an additional story that focuses on the nightmares of earlier hunters and the horrors they have done.

3.2.4 Other Lovecraftian Video Games

There are many more video games which are inspired by H. P. Lovecraft's works, however, the influence might be on a smaller scale than the already mentioned examples. *Darkest Dungeon* (2016) opens with the player inheriting their family's estate, which has been abandoned following their ancestor's excavation of its deeper floors that unearths the Eldritch horror within. The player must put together a band of adventurers to fight their way through to the "darkest dungeon" and destroy the Lovecraftian abomination at its centre."³⁶ Amongst other gameplay mechanics included in this game, insanity plays an important role, which could be contributed to Lovecraftian Ideas.

Other games take a slightly lighter approach to the usage of HPL and take only a few Ideas to incorporate into their work. For example, *Prey* (2017) takes place on a spaceship which is overrun by aliens, taking the "cosmic" approach. Games like *The Quake* (1996) uses Lovecraftian gods as bosses. *Darkwood* (2014) takes more of a graphic approach and sets its game in New England woods setting. And the examples could continue. Needless to say, Lovecraft's influence is undeniable.

³⁶DODD, Kerry a , ed., 2021. Narrative Archaeology: Excavating Object Encounter in Lovecraftian Video Games. In: DODD, Kerry a Chloé BUCKLEY. *The Popular and the Weird: H.P. Lovecraft and Twenty-First-Century Adaptation: Studies in Gothic Fiction*. Volume 7 (Special issue). Cardiff, UK: Cardiff University Press, 10 - 19. ISBN 10.18573/sgf.v7i0. ISSN 2156-2407. Dostupné z: doi:10.18573/sgf.48 P.14

4 Conclusion

Lovecraft's legacy in modern media is undeniable and far-reaching. This would be unimaginable during his lifetime when his biggest success was the publishing of his stories serially in several small magazines focused on weird and strange tales, and he died almost forgotten by the general public. The big shift came after his death when his intellectual property fell into the hands of August Derleth who managed to get his works into print, although this chapter of his history is somewhat controversial and complicated.

Lovecraft's popularity was slowly rising over the decades in many audio-visual media ranging from motion pictures and TV series to video games and other media. The biggest boom in his popularity came in the year 2008 when his works officially entered the public domain in many countries including Europe, the United States and the United Kingdom and the flood of Lovecraft-inspired content started appearing everywhere.

The biggest Lovecraftian influence can be seen in two, arguably three, major categories of audio-visual media: film, television and video games. In the motion picture industry, the influence can be seen throughout the history of cinema starting with films such as *Alien* (1979) all the way to the recent release of *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* (2022). Motion pictures tend to take the best ideas or themes from his works and incorporate them, and/or build upon them, that is how films like *The Thing* (1982) could be made. The major influence on film industry can be seen in horror movies and dark strange independent tales. In TV series, the influence is much broader. The major ideas can be seen in the horror genre, just as in films, however, due to bigger freedom of the medium, creators can be much more playful with the original themes and characters creating an original and often funny characters, such as Yivo in the *Futurama* (1999 – 2003, 2006 - 2013).

The second major category of interest are video games. The developers are able to create fascinating stories heavily inspired by Lovecraft to entertain their audience. There are many examples of video games carrying out his legacy some of the best ones are games like *Bloodborne* (2015), and *Darkest Dungeon* (2015). Further Lovecraftian influence can be seen in the major themes game developers use in their creations: cosmic horrors in games such as *Dead Space* series and *Prey* (2017), isolation and fear of the unknown in the *Amnesia* series.

In conclusion, Lovecraft's influence rose each year after his death, gaining even more momentum after his works became copyright free in 2008. Over the years and decades,

Lovecraft inspired many creators across all kinds of media and only time will tell just how far-reaching his influence will really be.

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Abstrakt

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá životem a dílem jednoho z neslavnějších hororových autorů moderní doby H. P. Lovecrafta a způsobem, jaký vliv měl a nadále má na autory moderních audiovizuálních médií, jakož jsou například filmy, televizní seriály a videohry. První část této práce přibližuje život a dílo tohoto autora. Rozebírá, jak se v jeho dílech odrazilo dětství, dospívání, výchova, zájmy a rodinná situace. Dále se práce věnuje skutečnosti, že se tvorba tohoto autora stala populární, navzdory tomu, že za svého života byl v podstatě neznámým a neoceňovaným tvůrcem. Ve druhé části se bakalářská práce zaměřuje na to, v jakých směrech ovlivnil a ovlivňuje autory moderních audiovizuálních médií.

Klíčová slova

H.P. Lovecraft, Horor, Video hry, Hororové filmy, kosmický horor, mýtus Cthulhu, Necronomicon, Cthulhu, Bloodborne, Lovecraft.

Abstract

This bachelor thesis focuses on the legacy of the prolific 20th century horror writer and poet H. P. Lovecraft and on the influence he has had on the modern audio-visual media including motion pictures, television shows and video games. It explains how Lovecraft became so influential in the 21st century, even though he was barely known to the general public in his lifetime, and what led to his newfound fame. In the first part of the thesis, Lovecraft's life and work is analysed to identify what inspired him to write stories such as "The Call of Cthulhu", "At the Mountains of Madness" and other classics. In the second part, films, TV shows and video games are analysed according to Lovecraft's most used themes in order to find out why the influence of Lovecraft's ideas and themes on modern authors is so significant.

Keywords

H.P. Lovecraft, Horror, Video Games, Horror movies, Cosmic Horror, Cthulhu Mythos, Necronomicon, Outer Gods, Cthulhu, Bloodborne, Lovecraft.