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Gothic Archetypes and their Influence in
The Case of Charles Dexter Ward
by Howard Philips Lovecraft

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Abstract

Howard Philips Lovecraft is considered one of the most influential horror writers in literature, and since studies focusing on the author are already common, it might be interesting to take a literary approach. The aim of this dissertation is to point out how different archetypes of both traditional and North American Gothic literature influenced and/or are represented in his novel *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1941). In order to give some context, we will first delve into the author's life and the nature of his work. Then, we will provide a thorough and extensive typology of the most common tropes in both of the aforementioned Gothic traditions, quoting several examples from different well-known Gothic works. With said archetypes clarified, we will scrutinize in detail their presence on this specific novel as they appear in the plot, which will be divided in three narrative arcs, as well as how these Gothic tropes are portrayed and what their role is in the development of the story. Lastly, a conclusion will be presented underlining the major relevance of Gothic archetypes in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*.

Key Words: Lovecraft, Horror literature, Gothic, The Case of Charles Dexter Ward

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1. Introduction

In his essay *Danse Macabre* (1981), Stephen King referred to Howard Phillips Lovecraft as "The twentieth century horror story's dark and baroque prince" (31), and the role he played in the evolution of the horror genre makes him worthy of such epithet. With rationalism, even Shelley's scientifically resuscitated dead caused the same fear as the romantic ghost in chains, and authors like Arthur Machen attempted to cause fear not through the notion of "the dead" but through the unknown. Through the primal fear to that which the human brain cannot comprehend. But it was H. P. Lovecraft the one who perfected and popularized this kind of horror tales with his portrayal of a cosmos so vast, abject, and hostile that is meant to consume mankind, without even noticing us (Llopis, *Los mitos de Cthulhu* 16).

Despite his contribution to horror and the devotion of his fans, Howard Phillips Lovecraft is an author that has stayed out of the mainstream media. Different texts dealing with the psychological, and especially, social dimension of Lovecraft's work, such as those of Stephen A. Black (1979) and B. Philips (2013) are more visible than the literary ones. However, Lovecraft's work is fascinating in a literary way, though not form-wise. Llopis described this author's English as "baroque, unhinged, confusing and conglomerated" (*Viajes al otro mundo. Ciclo de aventuras oníricas de Randolph Carter* 20), but there is much to study about his works regarding its influences, and legacy in the horror tradition. There would be no King without Lovecraft and there would no Lovecraft without Poe.

The Case of Charles Dexter Ward is one of his very few novels. It was written around 1927, Lovecraft himself described his novel, in a letter to R. H. Barlow, as a "cumbrous, creaking bit of self-conscious antiquarianism" (Joshi 34), and it was not published until 1941, after the author's death. On the contrary, once published, New York Times reviewer William Poster described it as "a good story in the New England witchcraft tradition, well seasoned with alchemy, vampirism, ancient documents and mummy-stealing" ("Nightmare in Cthulhu" 14), and Baird Searles praised his knowledge of New England history ("On Books" 20). The aim of this paper is to point out the influences of Gothic literary tradition in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. In order to do so, we will first define the gothic tropes we will be working with and later on underline them in Lovecraft's novel. We will also see if the characters fit as the

standard gothic characters. Finally, we will conclude if this work can really be read as a gothic novel, and suggest further research.

2. Author and Work

H. P. Lovecraft was a living contradiction. The same rational man who declared himself an atheist and bore an absolutely materialistic view of reality wrote the most fantastic stories about forgotten alien gods. And the same completely antisocial man, a misanthrope who felt a complete stranger among people, maintained very active correspondence with a fair number of amateur writers and fans. People like August Derleth, Robert Block and Robert E. Howard –author of *Conan the Barbarian* (1932)– compounded a circle of writers that, first, set up the Arkham House publishing house with the purpose of collecting and publishing Lovecraft's work after his death, and second, compiled the more than 100,000 letters he wrote during his life. This letters are the reason that Lovecraft's life is so well documented, as well as his convoluted personality (Llopis, *Los mitos de Cthulhu* 22).

Howard Philips Lovecraft was born in Providence, Rhode Island, on the 20th of August, 1890, into a medium-high class family of British descent, "almost a Mayflower specimen", as described by Guillermo del Toro in the documentary "Lovecraft: Fear of the Unknown" (2008). But his father Winfield Scott Lovecraft, a travelling salesman, was barely at home and died of a mental condition –probably caused by syphilis– when Howard was 8 years old. He was raised by his over-protective and neurotic mother who it is believed to have projected all her frustrations on young Howard, making him dress as a girl and telling him he was hideous and that people were dangerous and stupid (Llopis, *Los mitos de Cthulhu* 18). He received an uptight and aristocratic education based on tradition and a sense of pride for his heritage. He was also a very precocious reader, and the greatest solace in his childhood consisted in visiting his grandfather's library. It was in that library where he fed his imagination with classical mythology, and where he became obsessed with the literature of the 18th century.

Maybe it was inspired by figures like Alexander Pope and the notion of Art for the sake of it that Lovecraft refused to work at anything that was not writing. He probably assumed that his family fortune would always be there for him, and it became

evident for him that it would not be the year his mother died. Still, all he did was to write for a living, which caused him to endure poverty and eventually caused his divorce, too. But his publications in amateur fiction magazines such as "Weird Tales" kept him going. He lived for a period of time in New York with his wife Sonia Greene. According to what Letterney exposes about Lovecraft's letters in "I Just Called to Say Cthulhu: Xenophobia and Antiquarianism in H.P. Lovecraft's Mythos" (2014), and what can be interpreted from the tale *The Horror at Red Hook* (1927), which was written in this period, his stay in the city only aggravated a xenophobia already present when he lived in New England. This is but another proof of Lovecraft's contradictory personality, since his wife was of Jewish descent.

Lovecraft returned back to the security of Providence where his literature flourished. It was time for him to apply all his talent for short tales on his first long novel, and in 1927, he wrote *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. Unluckily, he never saw the merit on his novel, since as we have mentioned; it was not published until his death. From this period are also some of his most successful short tales: "The Colour out of Space" (1927) and "The Dunwich Horror" (1929), which are also some of his better paid works. As his literature flourished, he also prospered as a person. He acquired a taste for travelling motivated by the idea of visiting his pen friends. His finances struggled to keep up with this new hobby, and in 1931, he published his second great novel *At the Mountains of Madness*, the crowning jewel of the Cthulhu Mythos. According to J. Zbořil's "H. P. Lovecraft and the Cthulhu Mythos" (2015), this novel supported the readers' generally accepted idea, that all of Lovecraft's work takes place in the same universe, in which a pre-human Earth, populated by primordial cosmic gods and strange civilizations, dissipated before the existence of mankind, but still echoes in our times.

It is at this point of his career where we can make the clearest distinction in between Lovecraft's two literary traditions. *The case of Charles Dexter Ward* together with *At the Mountains of Madness* and the tales aforementioned consolidated what Lovecraft himself considered his own style; detective-like stories in which the characters driven, often by curiosity, ended up facing evidences that confirm the existence of these eldritch entities. This encounter with a part of reality that the human brain is not even prepared to understand usually causes the character's death, madness or suicide. These tales set in modern times contrast strongly with many of his early

works, which emulating the oneiric works of Lord Dunsany (Llopis, *Los mitos de Cthulhu* 33), take place in the primal earth we have described earlier. The most representative tales from this tradition are those that narrate the dream travels of Randolph Carter, a recurrent character which is even mentioned in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*.

Lovecraft maintained this personal style throughout his latter works, being *The Shadow over Innsmouth* (1936) and *The Haunter of the Dark* (1936) some of the best known. Howard Philips Lovecraft died in March 1937, leaving many works for his circle to publish and an ineffable framework for future horror writers to build upon. Yet, it is not where the Lovecraftian tradition leads us what we will focus on, but where it comes from, and specifically, the trace of gothic tradition in his work. In the next section we will define thoroughly the gothic tropes we will be working with.

3. Gothic Literature

During the Enlightenment, the works of the classical Greek and Roman past were glorified as paramount of uniformity, proportion and order. In contrast, the more recent past of European nations seemed quite the opposite. This past, labeled "Gothic" in a demeaning way, was perceived as barbarous, superstitious, extravagant and wild (Botting 25-30), and it was strongly upheld by artists who found the extreme rationalism of the enlightenment dehumanizing. Eventually, Medieval romances would serve as inspiration for a new genre, the Gothic novel. As M. Mulver-Roberts states repeatedly in *A Handbook to Gothic Literature* (1998), this new genre became the way for writers to portray and explore their contemporary social taboos. This function is ultimately what consolidates the genre, and is a constant throughout the European and the American gothic traditions. We will now point out some of the tropes and characteristics of this genre in order to trace them later in Lovecraft's work. And to do so, we will use as reference some canonical Gothic novels such as *The Monk* (1796) and *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) among others.

3.1. Atmosphere & Scenery

In the Gothic novel, the atmosphere plays a remarkable role. Its typical somber settings were not only a direct opposition to the concept of Enlightenment, also, as Botting

would point out, "Night gave free reign to imagination's unnatural and marvelous creatures" (32). This ambience of gloom makes it possible for a reader to suspend his disbelief, and it is achieved in very different ways. The natural scenery is one of them; meteorology and topology are frequently used to create an oppressive and obscure atmosphere. Take as an example the depictions of the landscape surrounding the Château of Moiseur St. Aubert at the beginning of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), describing the Pyrenees covered in clouds or "exhibiting awful forms" and "Forests of gloomy pine" on their hills (Radcliffe 1). But architecture is also highly relevant. Gothic cathedrals, abbeys and monasteries from the Middle Ages –many of them already in ruins– stoop as a memory of that obscure past on which these authors take inspiration. Thus, these religious buildings alongside with castles are constantly the scenery of gothic novels. And the best examples can be found in Matthew Gregory Lewis' *The Monk*. Not only the abbey and the convent are the most relevant sceneries, but there is also a flashback in which Lorenzo de Medina visits the Castle of Lindenberg in Germany. Furthermore, towards the end of the novel, Agnes is kidnapped and kept within a sepulcher behind secret corridors.

The usage of these ideas of antiquity, decay, and nature taking over what once was men's would become within time in the most easily recognizable feature of Gothic literature, and also one of the most influential.

3.2 Passions

Another point we want to explore is the one related to Passions. Just as rationalism upheld the idea of objectivity, the authors of gothic novels were strongly interested in portraying the dark side of human soul, and how it can affect to one's personality. Gothic writers often trafficked with passion, "it was their signature, their prime selling point" (Davison 60). Characters in gothic novel are generally very passion driven rather than rational, and it is this incapacity to control themselves what brings their doom. Manfred, from *The Castle of Otranto*, cannot control his wrath, as his wife describes: "Every murmur struck her with new terror; yet more she dreaded to hear the wrathful voice of Manfred urging his domestics to pursue her" (Walpole 24). And going back to *The Monk*, the very cause of the fall of Ambrosius, from being the most pious man in Madrid to becoming an incestuous rapist and a murderer, is the fact that contrary to his own beliefs, he cannot control his passions: "Ambrosius could bear no more: His

desires were worked up to phrenzy. 'I yield!' He cried, dashing the mirror upon the ground: 'Matilda, I follow you! Do with me what you will!' (Lewis 271).

As we will explore in depth later, this notion evolved after the genre developed in America. 'The acuteness of senses', by which characters become intensely aware of their surroundings, became with time one of the pillars of gothic tradition.

3.3 Damsel in Distress

The trope of Damsel in Distress also became immensely popular within the Gothic tradition. In this genre, it is common to find the archetype of a woman deprived of her will by an authoritarian figure; locked away, forced to get married, and even raped. And it is generally up to a male character to save her. This trope can be clearly seen again in *The Castle of Otranto* where on the one hand, we find Matilda and Isabella, who are both soon to be unwillingly married by Manfred, while being in love with someone else. We see Isabella cry to his father: "What has thou done! what ruin has thy *inadvertent goodness* been preparing for thyself, for me, and for Matilda!" (Walpole 79). And on the other hand, we find the character of Hippolita, Manfred's wife. In the words of Ellis, Hippolita "epitomizes wifely submission" and explains that her inability to see the evil in her husband contributes to this abuse (58).

There are also two examples of the Damsel in Distress trope in *The Monk* in the characters of Agnes and Antonia, but the circumstances and events they endure acquire a cruel and deranged dimension when the first is thrown in a vault by nuns, and there she starves, gives birth and eventually witnesses his newborn's body rot until she is rescued, and the latter is kidnapped, repeatedly raped and killed by a cleric who happens to be her brother.

3.4. Family

The next point we want to explore is the one of the Family. The idea of family has an enormous amount of dimensions. It could be analyzed with a focus on the personal interactions of its members or maybe by pointing out how the traditional family structure is either preserved or broken. But our interest will be specifically the notion of "Inherited Sin". This idea of sons inheriting the sins of their father can be traced to the Bible and the original sin, by which all of Adam's descendants are doomed to carry the consequences of his misstep, and God himself states later on that he will be "punishing

the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 20:5–6). But in Gothic literature, and maybe influenced as well by folk tales, this notion of inherited sin acquired a secular, yet still supernatural tone and became what we understand as a curse. This notion of curse is manifest again, in *The Castle of Otranto* when we are explained that Manfred's hurry to have his son married derives from him being concerned with an ancient prophecy which augured that the lordship of Otranto "should pass from the present family whenever the real owner should be too large to inhabit it" (Walpole 103), and the unfolding of the events, as well as the apparition of the armored giant at the end of the novel, indicate that the curse was fulfilled over Manfred the usurper.

Another distinct manifestation of this phenomena can be found in the short tale "The Doom of the Griffiths" (2000) by Elizabeth Gaskell, where we not only presence the collapse of a rural Welsh family when Owen Griffiths fulfills the curse by killing his father, but also the very moment when their ancestor is cursed after committing treason.

3.5. The Supernatural and the Sublime

Obviously, the notion of curse we have just discussed is a supernatural notion. Yet, the relevance of the curses themselves and the inherent complexity of the notions of supernatural and sublime make them worthy of a separate analysis. In contrast with 'the beautiful', which we define as that which is proportionate, well-formed and aesthetically pleasing, 'the sublime' is related with the ideas of immensity and obscurity. If the first attempts to charm the soul, the second produces awe and horror by revealing that which cannot be processed by a rational mind (Botting 39). In a simpler way, the sublime could be defined as that with bother the power to compel and destroy us.

Except for some particular cases like the narratives of Ann Radcliffe who tends to give rational explanations for the mysteries which take place in her works, and *The mysteries of Udolpho* is no exception (Lovecraft, *El horror en la literatura* 24), most of the strange phenomena that take place in the gothic tradition have a supernatural origin. An origin that falls within the idea of the sublime. In *The Castle of Otranto*, we witness the culmination of the curse cast on Manfred in the form of the colossal apparition of Alfonso, the previous lord of the castle. This resolution might feel rather clumsy for modern standards but being Wapole's novel one of the first in the gothic tradition, it

created a tendency, and other authors would further develop this idea of the supernatural.

In *The Monk*, there is a more subtle insertion of the sublime in the plot. Except for the chapters involving ghosts that take place in Germany, at the beginning, the trigger of the plot seems to be the perfectly mundane –though incompatible with his position– urgencies of Ambrosious. Yet, as the story advances, the supernatural appears in the form of Matilda's spells, and gradually, we are revealed that the downfall of Ambrosious was the result of the Devil's elaborate plan. It is the horror and impotence the monk feels when he realizes that he has been a puppet of evil forces what makes said forces sublime.

4. American Gothic

According to Botting, elements such as the development of science and industrialization, the lack of contact with antiquity, and the development of the American novel had much to do with the changes the gothic images are underwent throughout the 19th century (114-115). Many of these changes would become extremely common throughout both the Gothic and the Romantic traditions. As an author heavily influenced by these traditions, it would be sensible to assume that these new notions also had an impact in H. P. Lovecraft's works –in a more obvious or subtle way depending on where the work belongs within the author's tradition–, as we will point out later on when we analyze thoroughly their presence –or absence– in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. In order to do so, again, our first step will be delimiting which features of American Gothic we will be working with. The ones we consider more relevant are The Human Psyche, the Balance between the Natural & Supernatural, Space/Time Displacement and Community.

4.1. Human Psyche

Although other authors such as, and especially, Charles Brockden Brown (Botting 115) had previously dealt with these ideas, the canonization as a gothic tropes of the depth of human mind and the nature of perception are considered to be caused almost exclusively by the works of Edgar Allan Poe. As Lovecraft stated, before Poe, writers of preternatural tales did not understand the potential behind the psychological nature of

horror (*El horror en la literatura* 52). According to him, other contemporary writers had to submit to this idea developed by Poe in order to compete in the literary world (52).

In *Wieland* (1798), by Charles Brockden Brown, we are told the story of a couple of siblings, Clara and Theodor Wieland. They and their respective partners encounter a mysterious disembodied voice that soon Theodor identifies as divine in origin, and ends up killing his wife influenced by said voice. Just as Radcliffe does in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Brockden Brown gives a rational explanation to an apparently supernatural phenomenon in the form of a ventriloquist able to project his voice and tricks Theodor. But our interest in this work comes from the way the author portrays the maddened mind of his characters. For example, when describing what he felt in the aftermath of murdering his wife, Theodor uses very powerful and violent imagery to portray his psychological pain: "The breath of heaven that sustained me was withdrawn and I sunk into MERE MAN. I leaped from the floor: I dashed my head against the wall: I uttered screams of horror: I panted after torment and pain. Eternal fire, and the bickerings of hell, compared with what I felt, were music and a bed of roses." (215), but furthermore, he immediately adds: "I thought upon what I had done as a sacrifice to duty, and WAS CALM." pointing out how his own fanaticism helped him justify his crime and underlining his utter madness. It is also worth pointing out how, in contrast, her sister Clara (the novel's narrator) describes her emotions in a much more serene way, even when under shock after discovering her brother's crimes, highlighting her sanity: "What I had read threw me into a state not easily described. Anguish and fury, however had no part in it. My faculties were chained up in wonder and awe" (220).

Edgar Allan Poe, on the other hand, had a very personal way of portraying the mental processes of a maddening mind. Poe's characters often suffer an 'acuteness of senses'. The very character eventually states this state of mind, as it happened in *The Telltale Heart* (1847), when the narrator declares: "have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the sense?" (2). It is not clear if it is the madness what caused the acuteness of senses or vice versa, but it's the latter what finally causes the mental collapse and the confession of our protagonist. In another popular work by Poe: *The Fall of House of Usher* (1839), this is also described as part of the condition Roderick Usher is suffering: "He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the senses" (5). And later on, it is this condition what causes him to hear his allegedly dead sister crawling out from her coffin and approaching the hall where he and the

protagonist are: "Not hear it?—yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am! —I dared not—I dared not speak! We have put her living in the tomb!" (13).

Poe stated in *Tales of the Grotesque and the Arabesque* (1839) "My terror is not of Germany but of the soul" (quoted from Groom 115) pointing out the importance psychology in his works. A position that Lovecraft would also declare to be fond of when a hundred years later described human mind as the "true source of terror" (*El horror en la literatura* 52).

4.2. Balance between Natural & Supernatural

According to Botting, uncanny disruptions of the boundaries between reality and delusion as well as between materialism and spirituality took place in the 18th century (113). And even though some authors such as the aforementioned Brockden Brown would choose to give their mysteries a rational explanation, as Radcliffe did, many other authors would choose to leave the natural or supernatural origins of phenomena unclear and for the reader to decide. This characteristic is particularly relevant because as D. Cavallaro explains, to some scholars, the difference between terror and horror is that the first is bound to reality, and the second lacks a rational explanation. Thus, in a way, the ambiguity between natural and supernatural is the same as between terror and horror (3). We will now look at some of examples of this Gothic trope.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, despite being more interested in portraying the dark side of social interactions in the colonial America, as he did for example in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), dealt with the issue of the supernatural in *Young Goodman Brown* (1835). In this story, Goodman Brown begins a journey towards the forest to meet a man with no name but surrounded of enough symbols and possessor of enough knowledge to make us to think of him as the Devil, such as the snake-shaped staff and the fact that he knows the sins of his father and grandfather (17), in any case, he later refer to him as "the wicked one" (25). But our interest towards this tale lies within the ending. After our protagonist discovers that many people that he considered pious from his puritan village are part of a sinister cult, he collapses and wakes up in the forest not knowing whether what he saw was a dream or not: "Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch meeting?" (26). The answer is irrelevant. Either

way, this personal descent *ad infernum* changed him: "A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate, man did he become" (26).

This idea can also be easily traced in *The Fall of House Usher*. From the beginning, we are explained that Roderick Usher is suffering from an affliction that could account for his physical decay in a reasonable way, but Roderick insists in coating his malady in a mystic aura by predicting that it will cause him to die out of sheer dread: "I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR" (5). And again, a regular disorder cannot justify the aforementioned acuteness of senses. Roderick's sister coming back to life could also be justified if she was buried in a catatonic state, but we cannot explain how a skeletal woman managed to crack open a coffin and make the "iron hinges of her prison" (13) move. We could also deem as natural the strange lights, and the collapse of the old building, but we must admit that the synchronicity of this event is mysterious by itself.

Anyhow, once again, the nature of the events is trivial. Curse or not, The Usher bloodline has disappeared forever and their manor has fallen with it. To sum up, the limit between the probable and the eerie becomes blurry, but also this difference becomes pointless, since in the end, horror has consequences, regardless of its natural or supernatural origin.

4.3. Space/Time Displacement

This is one of the most radical changes that Gothic tradition underwent when adopted by American literature, since it implies not an extension of an existing trope nor simply the addition of a new one, but almost the overwriting of an already existing archetype. This process, which I like to call "the passage from the castle to the manor" implies not only the replacement of settings so rooted in the gothic tradition as were the medieval castle or the abbey to more common –and more easily found in America– places such as the colonial manor –in many cases implying a loss of interest in the building itself–, or the newly settled village, but also a temporal dislocation: Gothic tales will no longer take place long time ago but in the very period they are written. As Botting explains: "The malevolent aristocrats, ruined castles and abbeys and chivalry codes dominating a gloomy and Gothic European tradition were highly inappropriate to the new world of North America. They were too far removed to have the significance or effects of terror"

(114), thus, this process was necessary in order to make the reader feel related to the story and convey fear.

The Fall of House Usher is not the best example of this change. On the one hand, there is nothing to take as a temporal reference, and on the other, the building the protagonist describes looks closer to an European castle than to anything likely to be found in America: "...I entered the Gothic archway of the hall. A valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and intricate passages in my progress to the studio of his master" (3). Yet, the building is not a single time called castle throughout the tale. The word the narrator insists on is 'mansion': "form and substance of his family mansion" (5), and "...from some very remote portion of the mansion" (12).

A clearer example can be found in *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, where we witness the downfall into madness of a woman, her enclosure in the colonial mansion being the cause of her obsession with the yellow wallpaper and thus her mental anxiety. The scenery is initially described to us with joy: "A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity (...) It makes me think of English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock, and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people" (1-2), yet she perceives "something queer" (1). The woman who plays the role of the narrator, mentions some other rooms, but in general the nursery room she is trapped in is given far more relevance than the house, and definitely not the importance that castles and other medieval buildings were given in the traditional Gothic.

The House of the Seven Gables (1851) by Nathaniel Hawthorne, in the other hand, is a tale where the physical house becomes the central theme of the story. Built on a land gained by accusing the previous owner of witchcraft, the colonial mansion that Colonel Pyncheonrose constructed was cursed by the culprit before dying. And its possession is the cause of all the misfortunes that fall on the Pyncheon family for a century.

His home would include the home of the dead and buried wizard, and would thus afford the ghost of the latter a kind of privilege to haunt its new apartments, and the chambers into which future bridegrooms were to lead

their brides, and where children of the Pyncheon blood were to be born. The terror and ugliness of Maule's crime, and the wretchedness of his punishment, would darken the freshly plastered walls, and infect them early with the scent of an old and melancholy house. (10)

Eventually, the remainder descendants leave the village and the family manor, which is abandoned to rot.

4.4. Community

Finally, it is also worth mentioning how this displacement from castles lost in the wilderness to manors within or in the outskirts of villages also increased the relevance of the local community in the American Gothic. As P. U. Bonomi explained in *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (1986), we generally find extremely religious, even puritan communities in which figures such as deacon were given political relevance, every public figure is expected to be an example of piety and every member acts as moral police (74).

Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is widely popular for dealing with this issue, but it can also be appreciated, again, in *Young Goodman Brown*, when the protagonist becomes shocked after discovering that both the deacon and the minister are heading towards a cult meeting: "Whither, then could these holy men be journeying so deep into the heather wilderness?" (21). And also when later falls in absolute despair upon discovering that many of the most religious people in his community are part of said cult:

But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. (23)

5. The Case of Charles Dexter Ward

After thoroughly describing the typology of Gothic archetypes we will be working with, we will now analyze how said tropes influenced or directly manifest in H. P. Lovecraft's novel *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. This novel is divided in five chapters but

essentially tells the story of three characters: Charles Dexter Ward, his ancestor Joseph Curwen and Dr. Marinus Willet, plus, a general introduction. This analysis of gothic tropes will be conducted following the order of these narrative arcs.

Charles Dexter Ward is a young man interested in genealogy and New England history who discovers he is the descendant of Joseph Curwen, a controversial figure involved in witchcraft and alchemy, responsible of the disappearance of several slaves which he could not account for, and suspected of crimes such as body snatching. Charles, who bears a remarkable physical resemblance to Curwen, becomes obsessed with his ancestor and his work, which involves some "essential saltes". This investigation leads Charles to resuscitate his ancestor, which was Curwen's plan all along. Curwen murders Charles and takes his place, but the flaws in Curwen's performance as Charles are perceived by Dr. Marinus Bicknell Willet, the family physician, who decides to investigate on his own and eventually discovers the abominable truth about Curwen's plans. This knowledge almost drives Dr. Willet mad but also allows him to learn how to kill Curwen. Willet then proceeds to meet the wicked necromancer, who was being retained temporarily in a mental hospital and, using a spell, kills Curwen, who transforms into bluish-grey dust.

5.1 Prologue

Lovecraft began his novel by presenting the character of Charles Dexter Ward, who entitles the novel. In this brief introduction, we are informed of Ward's mental state before his disappearance in a very descriptive but sober way. Then, through Willet's firsthand experience, we are told about both the circumstances of Ward's vanishing and the evolution of his dementia. And finally in a much more narrative way, we are accounted of Ward's youth in picturesque Providence and how his childhood interests lead eventually to the discovering of his dreadful ancestor.

Although they are the main topic throughout the prologue, madness and the portray of the human psyche are not dealt with in a Gothic manner. The text is far from focalized through Charles Dexter Ward, his inner lunacy is not described. Instead, the patient's physical and mental status, pictured in a highly descriptive but sober way, is presented as if it pretended to emulate a medical report:

(His father) watched his aberration grow from a mere eccentricity to a dark mania involving both a possibility of murderous tendencies and a profound and peculiar change in the apparent contents of his mind (...) Respiration and heart action had a baffling lack of symmetry; the voice was lost, so that no sounds above a whisper were possible; digestion was incredibly prolonged and minimized, and neural reactions to standard stimuli bore no relation at all to anything heretofore recorded, either normal or pathological. (8)

On the other hand, Howard Philips Lovecraft seemed to be paying homage to Poe's Roderick Usher with the affliction itself. Ward is suffering a condition that has affected both his body and mind in a way the psychologists cannot comprehend. "His madness held no affinity to any sort recorded in even the latest and most exhaustive of treatises" (8), and though not acuteness of the senses, it causes other unexplainable symptoms, in this case, a distortion of the memory. "He had, it appears, lost his regard for them through sheer familiarity; and all his final efforts were obviously bent toward mastering those common facts of the modern world which had been so totally and unmistakably expunged from his brain" (10). Ward is described as antiquarian and the alienists point at his obsession with history as the cause for the widening of his knowledge of the past and the loss of touch with the present. This is the way Lovecraft tries to make the reader doubt of the explainable nature of this affliction. Dr. Willet insists in not revealing to the scientific community those investigations, but those discoveries did have "left their mark upon him; so that his voice trembles when he tells them" (11). It is sensible to say that with this attempt of making the reader doubt, Lovecraft pretended to recreate this gothic trope for a brief moment. As we will see later on, science and supernatural intertwine in a different way, but the presence of the supernatural is soon heavily hinted in the same fragment with the mention of "some terrible invocations" (12).

Besides the undetermined nature of the disease, the other great Gothic trope we find in the prologue is the highly aesthetic and incredibly extensive description of Providence, where Charles Dexter Ward was raised. Past blends with present as our main character strolls throughout the city, making patent the gothic archetype of the temporal displacement. Passages such as "Charles could picture them as they were when the street was new, and red heels and periwigs set off the painted pediments whose signs of wear were now becoming so visible" (15), and "the little ancient lanes led off

down the precipice to the west, spectral in their many-gabled archaism and dipping to a riot of iridescent decay where the wicked old water-front recalls its proud East India days" (16), underline this passing of the time. Lovecraft evocates Providence's colonial past as dreamlike as if it was medieval, thus underlining, the transition to the less fabled 1920s where our story takes place.

But the highlighting of this spatiotemporal dislocation is not the only Gothic trope found in the description of the city. As we mentioned, this fragment is highly aesthetic. H. P. Lovecraft describes Providence as evocatively as Radcliffe would with the Pyrenees surrounding Chatéau of Moiseur St. Aubert:

One of the child's first memories was of the great westward sea of hazy roofs and domes and steeples and far hills which he saw one winter afternoon from that great railed embankment, and violet and mystic against a fevered, apocalyptic sunset of reds and golds and purples and curious greens. The vast marble dome of the State House stood out in massive silhouette, its crowning statue haloed fantastically by a break in one of the tinted stratus clouds that barred the flaming sky. (14)

It is the city of Providence itself, with its past still latent on every street, what triggers the passion of young Charles Dexter ward. As we explained, passions and the loss of control they lead to are another constant in Gothic literature, but this topic that more frequently revolts around lust, love, grief or ambition in traditional Gothic literature, in the case of Ward is manifested in the form of sheer antiquarianism, an obsession with the past. "One must look back at Charles Ward's earlier life as at something belonging as much to the past as the antiquities he loved so keenly" (13). Finally, it is made clear in this prologue that according to Dr. Willet, Ward's slow descent into madness began when he discovered he was related to Joseph Curwen, a controversial character erased from history. So in spite of the fact that the notion of a curse is still to prove, we are confirmed that Ward's condition is related to his family the same way Roderick Usher's.

5.2. The Alchemist

In the first arc of this novel, Lovecraft takes us back to the beginning of the 18th century to tell us the story of Joseph Curwen, Charles Dexter Ward's peculiar ancestor. Joseph Curwen is described as an "astonishing, enigmatic and obscurely horrible

individual" (20), he is also described as well educated, highborn and travelled. It is known that he fled from Salem to Providence, which is described as a safer place for odd people, when the witchcraft panic begun, fearing that he would be accused due to his solitary attitude and his alchemical experiments. There, Curwen thrives in shipping enterprises and builds a manor in the city known as Olney Court (named after the street). Everything seems fine until the people of the village start to notice that Curwen does not age, and that he seems to possess some advanced and secret medical knowledge. So the whispers around him begin.

Context-wise this part of the novel does not dwell in the spatial as much as the prologue did with 20th century Providence, which makes sense since it was the author's hometown. But by mentioning the witch trials in Salem, Lovecraft relates the action to a historic event giving to the versed reader a clear image of the temporal context. A time of opportunities in the soon-to-be-founded United States, as well as a time of religious Puritanism and community-minded people. The latter will eventually cause the downfall of Curwen, as we will see. But the remarkable idea about time-space context is that most of the novel is placed in the early 1920s in which Lovecraft grew, fulfilling the American Gothic archetype of placing the stories in a contemporary context, but this arc is placed in a distant past, thus also fulfilling the traditional Gothic trope.

Obviously, a character like Curwen has something between his hands besides not aging. And searching for intimacy, he moves to a farm he owns some miles outside Providence. A farm which has a peculiar stone building with narrow slits as windows. But his move does not silence the rumors. Even from a quarter of a mile away, his neighbors cannot ignore the howls coming from the farm at night, and his captains in the shipping business notice that sailors working for Curwen disappear now and then. All of this, plus the confirmation that he owns forbidden books, especially certain tome by Borellus, makes him realize that he needs to improve his public image if he wants to stay in Providence.

This leads us to the next gothic trope. Curwen's decision, besides donating to charity, is to marry a young woman named Eliza Tillinghast, one of his captains' daughters. Women in Lovecraft's work are a *rara avis*. They are extremely few and almost always secondary characters. This novel is no exception, but unlike many others of his female characters, her role is important for the development of the plot. She

represents the Gothic archetype of the damsel in distress. The forceful nature of this marriage is stated several times in passages as "Naturally he was aware of the horror and indignation with which any ordinary courtship of his would be received" (30) and "Capt. Tillinghast was completely under the domination of Curwen; and consented, after a terrible interview in his cupolaed house on Power's Lane hill, to sanction the blasphemous alliance" (31). This marriage motivates Eliza's former betrothed, Ezra Weeden, to destroy Curwen by discovering and making his activities public, making her the trigger of Curwen's fall.

Weeden's efforts on spying Curwen soon pay off. He discovers that Curwen often has huge amounts of chemicals, along with mysterious coffin-like boxes sent to his house. He hears weird chants and invocations coming from under the ground, confirming the existence of catacombs beneath the farm. He also hears Curwen interrogating people in many different tongues, and he sees an unnatural beam of light coming from the stone building. But the accidental discovery that one of Curwen's boats transported ancient mummies and the apparition of a recently deceased body of a man who the elders identify as someone dead 50 years ago were far more disturbing. At this point, the supernatural component is far more patent both for the characters and the reader. It is also progressively more evident that, whatever the alchemist is doing, it involves both science and the occult. Curwen's efforts to obtain social acceptance, which included him having a daughter, are worth nothing once Ezra Weeden shares these data with the authorities.

Weeden, along with his companion and eye witness Eleazar Smith inform the people of Providence about their investigation very carefully. They rely on figures of great authority such as university scientists, the rector Reverend Manning, the ex-governor, local tycoons, and a certain Captain Whipple, man of action, just in case "active" measure is needed. Eventually they all gather and decide, after listening to Weeden and Smith's testimony, that Curwen is a menace. What is relevant from this gathering, for us, is that we find, once again the Gothic Archetypes of the power of the community and the importance of social hierarchy, so common in American Gothic. The same way Hester Prynne is judged by her community in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Curwen is judged by the heads of his community, only involving much more direct and violent action.

The remainder of Curwen's story involves a raid against his farm in the middle of the night, of which details we are blissfully kept ignorant. As we observe the events from the neighbors' farm, a large number of armed men assault methodically both the farm and the stone building, and just in case, another group keeps an eye on the secret entrance to the catacombs by the river. So begins a nightmarish succession of explosions, shootings, light beams, inhuman screams, growling, an earthquake, red fog and finally a voice which "was deep and musical; powerful as a bass organ, but evil as the forbidden books of the Arabs" (55) performing a demonic chant. Followed by more screams and a diabolic and hysterical laughter which fades away signifying the end of Joseph Curwen.

This preternatural debacle cannot be considered gothic through any lens, but it leads to two different gothic tropes which close the narrative arc of Joseph Curwen. First, the psychological portray of the trauma that each survivor of the assault will bear after that night. Those who were just watching the secret entrance are informed that the mission was over by a man who looks as if "there was something obscurely lost or gained in his soul which set him for evermore apart" (53). And for most of them, it will take years of prayers, as well as the systematic destruction of every trace of Curwen's existence, to get over what happened that night. Second, the birth of a family curse. Even though the characters do not know it and the reader has been given almost no clue to guess this, the terrible chant Curwen mouths in his last moments is a spell meant to set up the coming of a descendant who will eventually bring him back from the dead. As Captain Whipple muttered to himself once "Pox on that—, but he had no business to laugh while he screamed. 'Twas as though the damn'd— had some'at up his sleeve. For half a crown I'd burn his — home" (59).

5.3. The Historian

This narrative arc is the briefest, and it portrays Charles Dexter Ward's discovery of his ancestor and the progress of his experiments. It is worth to clarify the reason for considering that this fragment ends with Ward's return to Providence after his journey through Europe, instead of Curwen's resurrection, Ward's death, or simply the end of the novel's chapter. And the reason is that, as we will see, as Ward's investigation advances, the narration is less and less focalized though him, and his thoughts on returning home are the last passage we read from his point of view.

Immediately after Ward discovers his connection to Curwen in 1918, he becomes interested in recovering as much information as he can. Probably motivated by the methodic effort in erasing any proof of his existence that Curwen underwent. His coevals were so efficient that the place where Ward finds the first clues is not in Providence but in the Salem archives, where some cryptic letters sent by Curwen to people named Hutchinson and Orne are kept, and which allow him to locate the manor of Olney Court, and eventually, Curwen's portrait. This portrait was painted directly on a wooden wall and now hidden under wallpaper, and Ward's father decides to have it restored as a present for his son. It is during this restoration process when we make two crucial discoveries.

The first one is Ward's unnatural resemblance to his ancestor, "The resemblance to the boy, despite an appearance of a rather great age, was marvelous; and it could be seen as though some trick of atavism the physical contours of Joseph Curwen had found precise duplication after a century and a half" (69). This kinship is the first evidence of what the alchemist had up his sleeve. And though she could not explain it, Ward's mother who "was not particularly pleased to own an ancestor like Curwen" (60), was also suspicious towards the portrait: "She did not relish the discovery, and told her husband that he had better burn the picture instead of bringing it home" (69), thus presaging, the curse that would unleash its restoration.

Yet, it is not the portrait itself what triggers the curse, the documents that the workers find hidden in a hole behind the wall, the second crucial discovery, do. Ward soon takes possession of Curwen's personal journal, his investigation notes, letters to Hutchinson and Orne (or their heirs) and most importantly a tome entitled "To Him Who Shall Come After, & How He May Get Beyond Time & Ye Spheres" (71). The importance of this discovery is not simply narrative. It also feeds in ward another relevant Gothic Trope, which is Passion. Up to this moment, wards interest in Curwen was historical and his attitude, though intensely devoted, was rational: "No spirited and imaginative genealogist could have done otherwise than begin forthwith an avid and systematic collection of Curwen data" (60). Nonetheless, now that he owns such relevant biographical data as his diaries, ironically enough, his interest turns from history towards Curwen's investigations. First, Charles Dexter Wards begins to study those documents with unhealthy devotion and only comes out to see some workers install the panel with Curwen's portrait in his study serving as the door for a hidden

cupboard, and soon after, he begins to frequent the library again but not in search of History books but books of occultism and demonology. Up to this point his family is already concerned about him: "Little by little grew upon the Ward family the conviction that something was wrong. Charles had had freaks and changes of minor interests before, but this growing secrecy absorption in strange pursuits was unlike even him" (74).

This exaggerated passion towards these obscure investigations becomes further evident when he begins to search for Curwen's grave and decides to spend three years studying occultism before he is able to travel through Europe for another three doing research and meeting some mysterious elders in Prague and Transylvania. This period of six years is compressed by the author in very few pages and yet his inner change is patent. He returns to Providence (in a boat very symbolically called the *Homeric* 81). and gazes at his hometown as if he had forgotten it. And as he remembers, he blames providence for his passion, offering the reader the last glimpse of Ward's psyche we will find in this novel.

Old Providence! It was this place and the mysterious forces of its long, continuous history which had brought him into being, and which had drawn him back towards marvels and secrets whose boundaries no prophet might fix. Here lay the arcana, wondrous or dreadful as the case may be, for which all his years of travel and application had been preparing him. (82)

5.4. The Doctor

In comparison with the previous two, this narrative arc is the longest and darkest. Most of the action will be from now on focalized through Doctor Willet's point of view as he investigates Ward's progressively weirder behavior attending his parent's request. Since he came back from Europe, a trip from which he returned prematurely aged, Ward spends entire days locked in the laboratory he built in the attic performing a series of experiments from which once again we are blissfully kept ignorant, but from the outside the reader can easily perceive they resemble those of Curwen used. When interviewed, he justifies himself to Dr. Willet, saying that his rituals are part of an investigation that will throw light over the world's great scientific mysteries. However, it is chartings, weird noises and especially stench, which are extensively described, what become frequent in the house of the Ward family.

Sometimes they were very noxious, but more often they were aromatic, with a haunting, elusive quality which seemed to have the power of inducing fantastic images. People who smelled them had a tendency to glimpse momentary mirages of enormous vistas, with strange hills or endless avenues of sphinxes and hippogriffs stretching off into the distance. (83)

It is evident by now that the trope of the supernatural is once again a major theme in the story since the death of Curwen. And this series of experiments and invocations would eventually show results on a Good Friday, after Ward engages in exceptionally long and loud chants that cause the neighboring dogs to howl and the very daylight to darken. The last thing Ward's mother remembers before fainting is his son's voice overlapping with another unknown voice. Ward's father decides to give his son an ultimatum, but surprisingly he finds him picking books in the studio. And after justifying the invocations with scientific language and swearing that his work from now on will only require his books, he lets his son go back to his studies, but notices two things. One: The books Charles has taken are not about occultism but about contemporary sciences. And two: the portrait of Curwen has crumbled and peeled from the wood. "Joseph Curwen had resigned forever its staring surveillance of the youth it so strangely resembled, and now lay scattered on the floor as a thin coating of fine blue-grey dust" (93).

This quote is tremendously significant precisely because of how wrong it is. Our characters are still oblivious about this, but the horror that Charles unleashed is far from over, and as a matter of fact, it has begun with the resurrection of Joseph Curwen. Let us not forget that Ward shows premature aging after his three year trip to Europe, so in a sense, what he has brought back from the dead is a *doppelgänger*. As M. Živković explains in the article "The Double as the "Unseen" of Culture: Toward a definition of Doppelgänger" (2000), the literary term *doppelgänger* encompasses all forms of the division of the self, and among them, the notion of an evil twin who aims to cause misfortune to the other half. Charles has summoned a particularly wicked *doppelgänger*, whose actions he soon fails to control and struggles to hide, like his getaways at night pretending to be Ward, and engaging in activities such as excavating the grave of Ezra Weeden and stealing his remains searching for vengeance.

So many strange phenomena eventually causes Ward's mother to suffer a mental breakdown, so Charles decides to buy a bungalow outside of Providence which is built in the place where the dreadful farm used to be and moves there together with a mulatto named Gomes and a mysterious man named Dr. Allen, who is plainly Curwen in a disguise. Instances of vampirism and strange cargos are reported in Providence, making Ward realize how gravely the situation has gone out of control, and making Curwen realize that he does not need his descendant anymore. Charles manages to send a letter to Dr. Willet confessing that he had "brought to light a monstrous abnormality" (103) and asking him to kill Allen in sight. But when Willet meets Ward, the latter retracts from the letter and insists everything is fine. By that moment, Charles Dexter Ward is already dead. As we mentioned, the notion of a *doppelgänger* causing someone's misfortune is quite popular in folk and literature, and Lovecraft took this idea to an extreme, as Dr. Willet will confirm when he finally unveils Curwen's secrets inside the farm.

The remainder of the novel is formed mainly of Dr. Willet's descent *ad infernum* which takes place after he manages to put Curwen in an asylum, and decides to inspect his farm together with Mr. Ward who faints after sensing the stench coming from the trapdoor hidden in the basement. So Willet descends on his own a dreadful staircase into the abyss as darkness surrounds him and strange howls become louder. The notion of secret tunnels is an archetype in traditional Gothic literature, and in this context they convey in a way a voyage to the past of that place: "This was ancient masonry, his torch told him; and upon the dripping walls he saw the unwholesome moss of centuries" (130). Moreover, the notion of this being Willet's descent to hell is conveyed by the howls.

It was a godless sound; one of those low-keyed, insidious outrages of Nature which are not meant to be. To call it a dull wail, a doom-dragged whine, or a hopeless howl of chorused anguish and stricken flesh without mind would be to miss its quintessential loathsomeness and soul-sickening overtones. (131)

The first place Willet finds in the underground is Curwen's "true" studio, and among Curwen's papers, he sees two formulae constantly repeated. These formulae are relevant not only for their function later but because they also mention the name of

Yog-Sothoth, thus connecting this novel with the traditional Lovecraftian cosmology. As we explained in the introduction, in Lovecraft's work, the fear to the unknown, this dread towards what our mind cannot comprehend, takes the form of eldritch and monstrous deities from other times, space or other dimensions. For example, the Great Cthulhu. This octopus-headed 8 km-high colossus is the first ancient god new readers come to know, and by far the most popular, mainly because it is said to live on Earth, slumbering deep under the Pacific Ocean and causing madness on sensitive people with its mere existence. The entity mentioned in this novel is more complex to describe, since it has no clear physical form, and it is thought to transcend space and time. In his novel *The Dunwich Horror* (1928), Lovecraft wrote: "Yog-Sothoth knows the gate. Yog-Sothoth is the gate. Yog-Sothoth is the key and guardian of the gate. Past, present, future, all are one in Yog-Sothoth. He knows where the Old Ones broke through of old, and where They shall break through again" (10).

This pantheon of beings beyond human understanding is the shape that the Gothic archetypes of the supernatural and the sublime take in most of Lovecraft's narrative. This was something completely new back in his time, and it left its print in both the genres of science-fiction and horror, and it is one of the main reasons his work became popular.

Dr. Willet soon experiences the peak of horror when his exploration leads him to an immense circular chamber with a sacrificial altar in the middle, which is directly under the stone building, and it also seems to be the place where the howls and the stench come from. Which he confirms after examining the floor. Some of the slabs are in fact trapdoors covering a series of wells. Willet will fail to describe what he sees dwelling in the water.

It is hard to explain just how a single sight of a tangible object with measurable dimensions could so shake and change a man; and we may only say that there is about certain outlines and entities a power of symbolism and suggestion which acts frightfully on a sensitive thinker's perspective and whispers terrible hints of obscure cosmic relationships and unnameable realities behind the protective illusions of common vision. (137)

To make things worse, the horror causes him to drop the torch into the well, to be soon destroyed by the creature. Willet is now in absolute darkness and paralyzed by panic

and on top of it, next to an open well with something unspeakable at the bottom. This is the summit of horror in the novel and Lovecraft portrays Willet's experience in a beautifully elaborated way.

He screamed and screamed and screamed in a voice whose falsetto panic no acquaintance of his would ever have recognised; and though he could not rise to his feet he crawled and rolled desperately away from the damp pavement where dozens of Tartarean wells poured forth their exhausted whining and yelping to answer his own insane cries. (137)

We must point out that except for the scenery itself, the underground ritual chamber and the tunnels, which are related to the Gothic tradition, the rest of the scene is rather related to the horror genre. Willet crawls away from this horror back to the studio, where he takes a lantern and continues exploring, which leads him to find the laboratory. The doctor already suspects, from reading Cuwen's mail, that he, Hutchinson and Orne are systematically resuscitating people from the past and forcing them to share their knowledge about the supernatural. This is confirmed with Willet's finding of the essential saltes, made with the remains of this people, and necessary for the summoning. As he finds in the wall the aforementioned formulae, he recites one of them bringing someone to life and losing consciousness.

The outcome of this trip *ad infernum* is not as relevant as the fact that, as he awakes in the farm the next day, the trapdoor has disappeared as if it had never been there. Once again, as it is common in the North American Gothic, he is unable to discern if the catacombs and what he saw were real. Only a piece of paper in his pocket suggests it was real: A note written in Latin with 9th century Saxon characters saying: "Curwen must be killed. The body must be dissolved in aqua fortis, nor must anything be retained. Keep silence as best you are able" (153). Whomever is that he summoned and wrote the letter, Curwen panics when Willet told him that person is free and out of control. The mysterious man destroys Hutchinson and Orne, and Dr. Willet, after finding Charles Dexter Ward's corpse in the cupboard that the portrait used to hide, destroys Curwen reciting the other formula and transforming him into blue-grey dust. The nightmare is over but Dr. Willet has changed forever.

6. Conclusion

We can understand now the reason why Howard Philips Lovecraft described his own novel as "cumbrous, creaking bit of self-conscious antiquarianism". The different Gothic archetypes we have described can be found in different measure throughout his many short tales and other novels. But as we have pointed out throughout this essay: In *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, Lovecraft methodically and systematically recreated as many Gothic tropes as he could, incorporating them to his style, his themes and, through the way he plays with the notions of past and present, adapting these Gothic tropes to his to his time and place, and exploring his contemporary taboos. We can infer that Lovecraft wrote this novel as if he was purposely displaying all of his knowledge about Gothic literature in a single novel, but also reshaping it to his vision, portraying the Gothic as he perceived it and probably felt it.

This novel is the perfect example of why Lovecraft's literature is so relevant. In my own conceit, this transformation of traditional Gothic into a modern form of horror is what within a century gave form to the Horror genre as we know it today regardless of its format; be it the literature of King, the cinema of Carpenter, or the graphic novels of Moore. Further research should be done in the future about how, parting from the hinge that Lovecraft's work represents, his horror continued its evolution up to becoming contemporary horror.

For all this reasons, it is sensible to conclude that *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* is not only a horror novel heavily influenced by most of the Gothic Archetypes, but it could also be considered a studio on Gothic tropes on its own.

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