

The Shadow Out of Berkeley Square:

Lovecraft and his favorite movie

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Introduction

Howard Phillips Lovecraft was born in the 20th of August in 1890, in the city of Providence, Rhode Island, in the United States of America. The only child of the merchant Winfield Scott Lovecraft with Sarah Susan Philips, both of his parents were of English ancestry, with his mother from an ancient family directly linked to the Reverend George Phillips who arrived on the Arabella ship in 1630 and the first American settlers who came to the country on the Mayflower ship. At the age of three, his father suffered an acute nervous breakdown and was admitted to the Providence psychiatric institution of the Butler Hospital, where he remained until his death in 1898.

The writer was eventually raised by his mother, his aunts Annie Emeline Philips and Lillian Delora Philips, and his maternal grandfather Whipple Van Buren Philips in the family home. During childhood, he was very lonely and fragile and found himself sick with some frequency and suffered “several apparently

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psychological illnesses” (JOSHI, 1996, p.8)¹, which made him drop out of school after, at the age of eight, pass almost a year without being able to attend classes. However, he always read a lot and ended up falling in love with Astronomy and Chemistry, and began writing in 1899 for *The Scientific Gazette*. He returned to school four years later, however, he never graduated.

With his grandfather’s death in 1904, the family’s previously comfortable financial situation changed, giving way to a scenario of difficulties and the necessity of moving from their house with its huge library to a smaller location. This fact, combined with his failure to complete his graduation from school due to a nervous breakdown and disapproval to enter Brown University, made him live isolated with his mother only writing poetry, without looking for a job or making any social contacts. In 1913, he wrote for a pulp magazine called *Argosy* about a publication by writer Fred Jackson, which caught the attention of *United Amateur Press Association* (UAPA) President Edward F. Daas, who invited him to join the organization in 1914.

As part of the UAPA, Lovecraft began to contribute with several poems and essays and released, in 1916, *The Alchemist*, his first published story. In 1917, he tried to join the National Guard, but failed to pass the physical exams. During this period, a vast exchange of correspondence began with other authors, friends and fans that lasted throughout his life.

In 1919, Lovecraft’s mother is admitted to Butler Hospital, after a long period of depression and hysteria, where she dies in 1921 from complications of gallbladder surgery. A few years later, he meets Sonia Greene, a widow seven years older and owner of a hat shop in New York, at a convention in Boston, and starts a relationship. They marry in 1924 and he moves to her Brooklyn apartment.

Initially, he likes the city a lot and starts writing for more amateur magazines and making a group of friends. Over the years, with his difficulties in finding a job or supporting himself through his writing, along with some financial problems of his wife that moved between jobs in other cities, leaving Lovecraft alone in New York in a smaller apartment, he decides to return to Providence in 1926.

He lives with his aunt on the brink of poverty in a small apartment until he was diagnosed with cancer and malnutrition at the beginning of 1937. He died in March of the same year, precisely at a time

¹ All translations in this text, when not otherwise indicated, are from our authorship “várias doenças de fundo aparentemente psicológico” (JOSHI, 1996, p.8)

when he seemed to reach his intellectual and literary maturity, rehearsing the beginning of recognition that pointed to his apex as a writer. In life, he did not become an artist of great repercussion and was always marked by a huge difficulty in getting a job or supporting himself through his writing, having only been an author of short stories and essays published in amateur magazines (such as *Weird Tales*, *Amazing Stories* etc). Even so, he had faithful followers of his work, who contributed to making some of his latest works reach the press. Not long after his death, the author's stories begin to take hold on the horror literature scene, highlighting him as one of the top names in the genre and winning growing legions of admirers among specific niche audiences.

Despite the importance of H. P. Lovecraft in our contemporary scene as one of the most influential authors of horror and his mythology being ingrained in our popular culture in various ways, his biography is still somewhat unknown to the general public. In recent years, the efforts of researcher S. T. Joshi to publish the author's materials, as well as a large number of books telling his life and death story, allowed a greater contextualization of this writer – essential for this article (especially in this introductory part). In this sense, we can highlight the works *H. P. Lovecraft, a Life* (1996), as well as *A Dreamer and a Visionary: H. P. Lovecraft in his time* (2001), translated into Portuguese as *A Vida de H. P. Lovecraft* (2014), as central theoretical references for this paper.

The article will focus on establishing the relationship between Lovecraft and a movie that, apparently, was his favorite. For this, an initial contextualization of his fictional universe and his rich literary mythology will be necessary to understand some of the writer's interests. Then, a brief analysis of his relationship with cinema (in a broader sense) will be presented. Finally, the work will develop the connexion between *Berkeley Square* (1933) and the author, highlighting some theoretical articulations with the modern thinking of the epoch and the notion of aionic time (or, in this case, aeons), famous terminology in some of his short stories as an indication of one of his creative obsessions – the conception of space-time and its complexities.

The Lovecraftian Mythology

Lovecraft is not recognized for a particular story, but for the creative and complex development of a mythology that we can find permeating most of his narrations. Even with more famous tales that can be

highlighted as *At the Mountains of Madness* or *The Call of Cthulhu*, the author has his greatest merit in his work as a whole, complementing and referencing the creation of a frightening universe. Nowadays, he has been established as a great name in horror and fantasy fiction and his mythology and perspectives have been incorporated into our culture and are continually re-elaborated.

His creations present us with indescribable creatures and universes that surpass the limits of rationality. His imaginary world represents the human being as a creature abandoned in a cosmos indifferent to its existence, giving form to a peculiar mythology that is not (or even anti) anthropocentric. Far superior alien species would have dominated Earth in the remote past and lie dormant for their return in an apocalyptic future. Here it is worth remembering the controversial Swiss writer Erich Von Däniken who became very famous in the 1970s through his theories about the supposed extraterrestrial influence on human culture since prehistoric times². The writer's claims are totally rejected by the scientific community and his supposed originality or pioneering spirit can be questioned. Jason Colavito's curious thesis *The Cult of Alien Gods: HP Lovecraft and Extraterrestrial Pop Culture* (2005) points to Lovecraft's influence on pop culture, especially in esoteric (and, in this case, pseudoscientific) literatures such as Däniken's.

In this way, the author presents a concept of divinity that dispenses men and inhabits other dimension(s), having notions of time and space far beyond the capacity of human comprehension. Such mythology evokes a monstrous religiosity of aliens and a vision of the human being as a mere insignificant insect in front of a cosmos that points to the immense power of the unknown.

Lovecraft produced a profound reformulation of the traditional notion of myth, elaborating a pantheon of monstrous gods entirely indifferent to humanity. This set of myths and narratives, which, moreover, could be qualified as a kind of collaborative work in the molds of current digital culture, received from August Derleth (a writer and faithful follower with whom the author exchanged correspondence, who, as well as others, also developed short stories from Lovecraftian creations) the designation of Cthulhu Mythos. "In creating his visions, then, Lovecraft has established the Cthulhu legends, one of the best-known and most popular of his imaginative creations." (KUTRIEH, 1985, p.41) The author brings the idea of mythology in modernity with a new face, that of inhuman horror. His myths are

² More famous in the book *The Gods were Astronauts* that approaches this subject. Pt: *Eram Os Deuses Astronautas?* (2010)

far removed from the classic narratives of hope and salvation that God (or the gods of polytheism) used to promise mankind. Rather, Lovecraft can probably be credited with inventing the first legitimately post- or anti-humanist mythology (Cf. LUDUEÑA, 2013).

“HPL succeeds in taking the notion of humanity’s insignificance relative to a nonconscious mechanic universe and localizing it in the life of a given fictional character.” (TAYLOR, 2004, p.54) In this way, Lovecraft’s conceptual universe presents us a post-humanist vision, a deconstruction of some traditional basis of classic humanism.

Lovecraft and Cinema

The author was a great lover of literature and, perhaps because of that, he was not very enthusiastic about most modern technological mediums such as cinema and radio. Furthermore, his eccentric quirks made him believe that the status of literary material was more classic and superior to the rest. An important detail in his biography is the curious (and not well-known) fact that Lovecraft worked as a movie box-officer sometime between 1929 and 1930. But he didn't like his job and the job didn't last long (JOSHI, 2014, p.361). Even so, he watched movies with a certain frequency and, in his various letters written to friends, he portrayed whether he liked what he was watching or not, making his small criticisms. “H. P. Lovecraft’s letters show him to be a frequent, albeit seldom enthusiastic movie-goer.” (SCHWEITZER, 1998, p.102) Cinema seemed to gain crescent space in the writer’s taste (although never equating to his beloved books)

As you surmise, I am a devotee of the motion picture, since I can attend shows at any time, whereas my ill health seldom permits me to make definite engagements or purchase real theatre tickets in advance. Some modern films are really worth seeing, though when I first knew moving pictures their only value was to destroy time. (H.P. Lovecraft to Reinhardt Kleiner, 6 December 1915)³

But which movies interested Lovecraft then? In fact, there is no evidence to point to a specific genre. S. T. Joshi's analysis of the rich Lovecraftian epistolary points to comedies and melodramas as apparent preferences, while horror and fantasy did not seem to please in film as much as they did in literature (JOSHI, 2006, p.5). This detail presents an interesting paradox by pointing out how a horror and fantasy lover, whose literary career was mostly marked by these genres, didn't like horror and fantasy film

³ Obtained in public domain in: <http://www.hplovecraft.com/life/interest/movies.aspx>

productions. Some of his letters talk about specific movies. “There are also a couple of stronger references in a letter to Farnsworth Wright dated Feb. 16, 1933 - to a disgusted HPL walking out of the Lugosi *Dracula*, “seeing red” out of “posthumous sympathy” for Mary Shelley upon viewing the Karloff *Frankenstein*.” (SCHWEITZER, 1998, p.102)

As seen in his reception of the cinematographic adaptations of *Dracula* (1931) and *Frankenstein* (1931) in some of his letters, we can conclude that Joshi’s deduction about horror and fantasy genre makes sense. The literary adaptations also seemed not to please the author very much. However, in a letter to J. Vernon Shea, in the 10th of February of 1935, he expresses a profound admiration for the cinematographic adaptation 1933 of *Don Quixote*: “The one really first-rate thing I’ve seen since last February is *Don Quixote* – genuine art from start to finish, without a false note.”⁴

Although his enthusiasm with *Don Quixote*, the movie is still one of the few cases that’s seems to thrill the writer. “In general, HPL had a low opinion of weird films and radio plays, particular ones based on published stories.” (SCHWEITZER, 1998, p.102)

Berkeley Square

In 1933, Lovecraft watched *Berkeley Square* (1933), a movie that called his attention in a greater way than the others he had seen yet. S. T. Joshi points it as the writer’s favorite film and a major inspiration for his story *The Shadow Out of Time* (1936). Other researchers of the author also agree with Joshi’s assertion. Darrell Schweitzer, for example, dedicates the essay *Lovecraft’s Favorite Movie* to this subject in his 1998 book called *Windows of the Imagination: Essays on Fantastic Literature*.

Berkeley Square is based in the theatre play of the same name by John L. Balderston, inspired in the unfinished novel *The Sense of the Past* of Henry James⁵. Balderston had already had a decisive part in other literary adaptation to theatre that had become film. In 1931, the famous *Dracula* by Tod Browning which presented Bela Lugosi as the vampire was based in the Broadway version made by Balderston (which was also starred by Lugosi) and not in Bram Stoker’s book (GARCIA, 2014). Although Lovecraft have not liked this

⁴ Obtained in public domain in: <http://www.hplovecraft.com/life/interest/movies.aspx>

⁵ James left some notes on how the novel would continue and, in this way, it was published for the first time in 1917.

cinematographic adaptation of *Dracula* (1931), the movie became a great box office and critique success, becoming one of the great horror productions of Universal Studios.

In this way, John L. Balderston had already become a well-known screenwriter in Hollywood. *Berkeley Square* was released in 1933, produced by Fox Film Corporation. The 84-minute film was directed by Frank Lloyd and stars Leslie Howard as Peter Standish and Heather Angel as her romantic partner Helen Pettigrew. Leslie Howard (as well as Lugosi) had taken on the same role before in Balderston's play

The story takes place in 1784, when Peter Standish, a young American arrives in England to visit his relatives, the Pettigrews and possibly marry one of his cousins. The family is overwhelmed with debt and see Kate's possible marriage to her wealthy cousin as a recommendable solution to their financial problems. The house where the family lives is located in Berkeley Square, London, where everyone is eagerly awaiting Peter's arrival.

Suddenly, the scene changes: the house is the same, but is now property of Peter Standish, an architect descendant of the other Peter, who is involved with com Marjorie Trent. Marjorie is worried about his behavior that becomes increasingly obsessed by his ancestor diaries. When Peter meets the American ambassador for a tea, he reveals his belief that when he arrives in his home at that night he will go back to 1784.

In fact, when Peter goes home, he finds himself at the Pettigrew house, where his cousin Kate welcomes him. He then meets Mrs. Ann and her two other children, Tom and Helen. Realizing that he has taken the place of the original Peter, and has his diary in his pocket, he decides to follow all the records so that history is not altered.

Initially, Peter is very interested in the simple life his ancestors are living, but he soon begins to feel uncomfortable with various aspects of life in the 18th century. Furthermore, Peter reveals several times (unintentionally) his knowledge of the future. The Pettigrews, who are initially amused by Peter's unconventional ways, soon become convinced that he is possessed by demons.

On the other side, Helen starts to like him more. They fall in love, but Peter still struggles with his feelings because he knows his ancestor married Kate. When the situation becomes intolerable, Peter and Helen confess their love for each other. Helen yearns to know her lover's secret, and she is able to see the

images of the future in his eyes. Peter is willing to stay with Helen, although it means a change in the course of history, but Helen convinces him to go back to his time.

Peter reluctantly returns to the present. Marjorie and the ambassador are relieved because they have been concerned about his behavior these past few days. Peter understands that his ancestor took his place during his absence. In the end, he goes to Helen's grave and discovers that she died in 1787, aged 23, 3 years after their meeting. He tells Marjorie that he cannot marry her: he will remain alone, grieving for Helen, who has ensured that they will be together "in God's time".

Leslie Howard's performance earned an Oscar nomination for Best Actor and was extremely claimed by the critics in the time, mainly Mordaunt Hall, the first specialized critic of the NY Times⁶. The film had been lost until the 1970 decade, when it was found. A recently restored copy of 35mm was made and exhibited for the first time in the 2011 H. P. Lovecraft Film Festival⁷.

The fact that it's first re-exhibition after several years was in a lovecraftian film festival just reinforces its importance to Lovecraft. In his own words: "But with all its defects this thing gave me an uncanny wallop. When I revisited it I saw it through twice—& I shall probably go again on its next return. It is the most weirdly perfect embodiment of my own moods & pseudo-memories that I have ever seen..." (to J. Vernon Shea, 4 February 1934)

Darrell Schwietzer indicates that in the letter to J. Vernon Shea it is evident that Lovecraft had not read the book or seen the play before watching the movie. The tale *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, published only after the author's death in 1941 (in a smaller version) and in 1943 (in its more complete form) could have been a probable link to the beginning of Lovecraft's relation with *Berkeley Square*. Both share some common elements; however, the author had written the story in 1927 (6 years earlier than the release date of the movie) and have never read the book in which the film was based. Also, Lovecraft's tale had not been published when the literary, theatric of cinematographic versions of *Berkeley Square* appeared. "Although he never mentions in any known letters, the Junguian synchronicity between manuscript and screen must have thrilled Lovecraft and made him even more receptive to the film."

⁶ Mondraut Hall critique is available in the Ney York Times website:

<http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9B07E6DC1631E333A25757C1A96F9C946294D6CF>

⁷ For further information see:

<http://www.hplfilmfestival.com/films/berkeley-square>

(MIGLIORE; STRYSIK, 2006, p.13) In this way, there is only the incredible coincidence that can relate the manufacture of both stories.

Lovecraft's story is about Charles Dexter Ward who had been imprisoned in an asylum charged with insanity. During this period, he exhibited small and inexplicable physiological changes. Somehow Ward manages to escape the asylum and most of the story is about an investigation conducted by the family doctor, Marinus Bicknell Willett, who seeks to understand the issues involved in the case, as well as the reason for the patient's madness and all its changes.

In the investigations, he discovers Ward's fixation with Joseph Curwen, an ancestor of his family accused of witchcraft and murder. Willett discovers that Ward was searching for Curwen's grave and somehow managed to recover his ashes to try to resurrect him through the use of a strange necromantic magic, which uses a product described as "essential salts" and formulas contained in documents that were found hidden in the family home.

Willett also discovers an incredible physical resemblance between Ward and Curwen and develops a theory that he had murdered his descendant and was impersonating him to conclude his activities. The investigation leads him to a bungalow Ward had purchased on a farm where Curwen had committed his crimes.

He discovers that Curwen had actually possessed Ward, being part of an ancient evil conspiracy to resurrect great necromancers, as well as other people who would be tortured to deliver knowledge that could make Curwen's group extremely wise and powerful. Willett accidentally summons an ancient entity and passes out, awakening much later in the bungalow, where he finds a note indicating that he kills Curwen and destroys his body. Back at the asylum, Willett finds Curwen and manages to reverse the spell, killing the sorcerer. At the end, he reads in the news that the other necromancers were killed and their lairs destroyed.

The tale of Lovecraft and *Berkeley Square* has as its backdrop the painting of an ancient ancestor as the central figure that reveals a lot about the characters. The protagonists are men fascinated by the past and who look very much like their ancestors physically. There is also a resonance between the works in the basic idea of the exchange of roles between people from different times.

Lovecraft saw this film four times in late 1933; its portrayal of a man of the twentieth century who somehow merges his personality with that of his eighteenth-century ancestor was clearly something that fired Lovecraft's imagination: he had written a story himself, the then-unpublished *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1927). (JOSHI, 2006, p.6)

With so much similarities between Lovecraft's tale and the movie, *Berkeley Square* also called his attention for other reasons, inspiring him to write *The Shadow Out of Time* between 1934 and 1935, published in 1936 in the pulp magazine *Astounding Stories*. Some issues intrigued the author in a way that he decided to improve them and present "his version", or "a better version" of the movie.

Lovecraft makes several interesting points in his letter to Shea, the most significant that when eighteenth-century Peter returned to the eighteenth century, he should have been changed by his experience. Yet he wrote his diary (which twentieth-century Peter uses as a guide) making no mention of his adventure, even though that diary clearly goes on for years beyond the period of the trans-temporal exchange. He seems to have just gone on as an ordinary eighteenth-century man.

Lovecraft wants to know what the eighteenth-century Peter was doing in the twentieth century, while our attention was elsewhere. (SCHWEITZER, 1998, p.105)

Lovecraft creates his story of time-travel in a complex way, exploring the elements of *Berkeley Square* that intrigued him the most and doesn't appear in the movie. It is divided in eight parts in the form of diary register made by the protagonist.

In the first part, Nathaniel Wingate Peaslee tells his story, starting with a brief presentation of himself, until reaching the moment in 1908 when, during an economics class he taught, he passed out for 16 and a half hours. Upon waking up, he suffers from a strange amnesia, in which he does not remember anything about his life, his own identity and person, the time he lives and the information about such. However, he knows things about other times, pasts and futures and some knowledge unknown to others. The narrator makes it clear that the person who wakes up is not himself but some being who took care of his body and who only knows what happened through others, research and fragments of memories and dreams (he returns to his body in 1913). This being that inhabited his body is endowed with extreme intelligence and curiosity and can read with incredible speed. Travels around the world, is interested in occult knowledge and reads forbidden books such as Eibon's book, the *Necronomicon* (grimoires from the fictional universe of H. P. Lovecraft that reveal hidden secrets), among others. When he returns home, he builds a small machine and, one day, dismisses all the servants. After reports of occurrences in his home and a strange appearance of a black car with an unknown man, he is found in his house in an unconscious state and breathing in a peculiar way. The machine was gone and there was no sign of the black car or the

man who had appeared in the middle of the night. After being awakened with an injection, he returns to who he was as if he were still teaching his economics class in 1908.

In the second part, Nathaniel begins to have a series of strange dreams of places he has never visited with buildings he has never seen before. He starts to investigate and try to find out everything that happened during the process in which this other being remained in his body (1908 to 1913) and to research other cases similar to his own. To his horror he discovers that some cases have already existed, all with reports of similar things happening and 3 of them involving the construction of small machines just like the one that the being that was in his body had built.

The third part is the account of the beginning of an investigation by the narrator about what happened in the period in which this being took possession of his body. He begins to read the profane books that were read before by the inhabitant of his body and realizes that many things seem extremely familiar to him, mainly myths about ancient species that inhabited our planet before us. In one of these myths, there is the story of the Great Race of Yith that came from another planet to avoid its extinction and possessed notions of space and time superior to any existing being. They had a way of exchanging bodies with other beings from any time and place, in order to gather all the information they could. Meanwhile, the host was trapped in the body of these beings under constant supervision, being studied and questioned about various things, and preventing them from doing anything bad with the body they were in. After a while, they would be allowed to study and learn if they wanted to, but nothing they learned about the Great Race could stay with them when they returned to their original bodies. However, some remnants of memories and dreams could remain due to some flaw in the process. Thus, the narrator believed that his problem (and many others like it) was due to the fact that he had made a connection between this myth and his amnesia, believing that this had happened to him on some unconscious plane. With that, he feels better and goes back to work, becoming a Psychology professor.

In the next part, Nathaniel describes his dreams and memories before he got better. In 1915, he begins to perfectly visualize the Great Race of Yith and, in his dreams, he constantly visits their cities, learning more about them and the history of their land. He discovers that before them there were other older species, including Flying Polyps that came from another planet and to whose mind the Yith do not have access. The Polyps prove to be an evil and rival race, and although the Great Race has managed to

keep them trapped beneath the surface of the earth, they are becoming more powerful and will likely take over the land again, forcing the Yith to flee to another time to avoid being exterminated.

In the fifth part, the narrator is recovered – at least as far as possible – from the trauma. He believes that he related ancient myths to his amnesia and continues to record his dreams for scientific analysis and publications in articles with an analytical nature about his case. However, in 1934, he receives a letter from Australia, from an archaeologist who says he has found stones similar to those he describes in his articles in an Australian desert and invites him to go on an expedition which he accepts. The whole event and the expedition begin to attack Nathaniel's nerves again, who becomes frightened and finds himself in an inner battle between the belief in his dreams and the rational and scientific perspective. One day he sees a larger rock in the desert while hiking alone and remembers that it looks like a rock attributed to where the Flying Polyps meet.

Then, on a strange night, with strong and haunting winds, Nathaniel disappears from the camp for hours and then emerges all exhausted, ragged and bloody. He tries to dissuade the group from continuing the excavations in a certain direction with bad excuses. After failing in his attempt, he asks to return home with his son. The son lets the father come back, but insists on staying. During the return trip, the narrator decides to write this letter/story explaining everything and tells what happened the night he disappeared. He walked to a part and entered a state of waking dream in which he saw and felt all of the past and present, with the Great Race, in a simultaneous time with his present. Then he wakes up (or comes out of that vision state) and keeps walking until he finds a very familiar area that shows an entrance to the Great Race library.

In the seventh part, the narrator describes his entry into the place that emerged in the desert and the familiarity that everything had for him. At one point he finds tracks in an open doorway that indicate something dreadful.

The final part describes Nathaniel's entry into the abyss, where he goes to the library and picks up a metal box containing a book. During his journey, he feels the presence of something in the place and on his way back he encounters the Flying Polyps. He runs and ends up leaving the book behind. In the end, he wakes up in the desert in fear, not knowing if it was a dream or reality, although the haunting feeling of reality was strong. In the end, he reports that one of the things that most terrified him was, when he saw

the book, realizing that it was written in English and in his handwriting, which would mean that all his dreams were a reality.

As is common in Lovecraft's tales, the ending causes an immense disturbance to the protagonist. In *The Shadow Out of Time*, Lovecraft delves into his mythology, drawing on its classic elements inherited from Poe and other writers with his complex notion of horror. However, here he goes deeper into a notion that is dear to him, the simultaneity of time

But Lovecraft's hero finds not "answers" but new uncertainties which link the mental unknown to unfathomable cosmic forces, his mental "distortion" perceived by the outside world as madness, allowing his perception of a Reality beyond day-to-day existence ("The Shadow Out of Time"). Thus, Lovecraft restated Poe's message at a higher level by adding the literary implications of scientific relativity, and proclaimed "the essentially intellectual wonder of one who looks out upon the whirling, grotesque, and unfathomable reaches which engulf the entire world." Of all the wonders, Time was the greatest. As his friends suggested, Lovecraft felt himself out of place in an apparently wonderless age, his protagonist and alter ego forming "chimerical notions about living in one age and casting one's mind all over eternity for knowledge of past and future ages" ("The Shadow Out of Time"). (BUHLE, 1976, p.123)

Despite this, Lovecraft had not been entirely satisfied with his story. Not knowing if it was good or ready, he made no attempt to publish it. "While Lovecraft was still alive, *The Shadow Out of Time* remained in manuscript; the author was so uncertain of its value that he didn't know whether to type it up or tear it up." (JOSHI, 2014, p.413)⁸

Not knowing what to do, he sent the story to August Derleth in February 1935, who shared the story with the other authors in Lovecraft's circle of friends. Donald Wandrei, one of these friends, sends the story to F. Orlin Tremaine, editor of *Astounding* magazine who publishes the story and pays the Providence writer 280 dollars. *The Shadow Out of Time* turns out to be the last fantastical, horror tale that Lovecraft writes himself.

While there are several common elements between *Berkeley Square* and *The Shadow Out of Time*, it is clear that Lovecraft seeks to take the central idea elsewhere. The most evident difference is the tone of both works. While the film is a romance and explores the love between the characters with the idea of time travel, the writer makes his horror story without female characters (apart from a quick mention of the protagonist's wife who leaves him). Darrel Schweitzer (1998), analyzing the aforementioned letter to J. Vernon Shea of February 1934, points out some great common factors and their differences:

⁸ "Enquanto Lovecraft ainda estava vivo, *The Shadow Out of Time* permaneceu em manuscrito; seu autor estava tão incerto de seu valor que não sabia se o datilografava ou rasgava." (JOSHI, 2014, p.413)

Many of the film's elements Lovecraft discusses in his letter are present: a modern man changing places a counterpart in the past, some mystery about what the person from the past has been doing in the twentieth century in the meantime, and even a specimen of writing discovered by the twentieth-century man which provides a crucial key. Of course, the logic-lapse of the diary is precisely the point which bothered HPL. He much improved on the motif, when his time-traveller finds writing from the remote past in his own handwriting. (p.106)

In a way, the protagonist experiences a kind of Deleuzian aionic time with a temporal simultaneity running through his life. The translation of the Lovecraftian term *aeons* would be *aion*, an essential concept in Deleuze's work addressing notions of temporality that are different from the chronological one. His opposition between the time of *Kronos* and the time of *Aion* makes a direct reference to the Greek deities, founding the epistemic development of the philosopher's proposal in a mythological anchorage, something that is permeated throughout Lovecraft's work. According to the philosopher:

Kronos is the present that only exists, which makes the past and the future its two directed dimensions, such that we always go from the past to the future, but insofar as the presents succeed one another in the worlds or partial systems. Aion is the future-past in an infinite subdivision of the abstract moment, which does not cease to decompose in both directions at the same time, forever eluding all present. For no present is fixable in the Universe as a system of all systems or an abnormal set. (DELEUZE, 1974, p.80)⁹

The above quote is from *Logic of Sense* (1974)¹⁰, a philosophical treatise by Deleuze that develops the idea of sense, permeating notions such as events, paradoxes, talking about structuralism and presenting the aion as an epistemic and artistic perspective on the notion of time. Although the concept is much more complex than Lovecraft seems to intend in his work when using the word *aeons*, the initial (and more superficial) proposal on the rupture of the notion of a non-chronological temporality allows an articulation with Lovecraft's proposal.

Deleuze sees the Aion as a straight line, where there is a simultaneity between present and future. Lovecraft's relationship with this issue is based more on an analytical bias on spatiotemporal notions. Not as a scientist himself, or as a great scholar of Einsteinian temporal relativity, but as a curious and attentive writer of a specific period when such issues were in vogue.

⁹ "Cronos é o presente que só existe, que faz do passado e do futuro suas duas dimensões dirigidas, tais que vamos sempre do passado ao futuro, mas na medida em que os presentes se sucedem nos mundos ou sistemas parciais. Aion é o passado-futuro em uma subdivisão infinita do momento abstrato, que não cessa de se decompor nos dois sentidos ao mesmo tempo, esquivando para sempre todo presente. Pois nenhum presente é fixável no Universo como sistema de todos os sistemas ou conjunto anormal." (DELEUZE, 1974, p.80)

¹⁰ *Lógica do Sentido* (1974)

Leo Charney's essay *In an instant: cinema and the philosophy of modernity*¹¹, from the book *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (2004)¹², edited by him in partnership with Vanessa R. Schawartz, talks about the new notion of time that moving images from cinema brought to modernity, the time in which Lovecraft lives. According to the author:

The film experience reflected the broader epistemological experience of modernity. Modern subjects (re)discovered their place as mediators between past and future by (re)experiencing this condition as movie spectators. Past and future collide not in a hypothetical zone, but on the terrain of the body. This alienation was founded and arose from the modern aspiration to apprehend fleeting moments of sensation as a protection against its inexorable removal. The quest to locate a fixed moment of sensation within the body could never be successful. (p.332)¹³

Thus, although the temporal relationship between past and present for Lovecraft took place on a fully conscious plane, based on the story of *Berkeley Square*, there was a modern symptom in which the cinematographic medium itself highlighted such issues. The era in which Lovecraft lived was marked by a flood of technological experiences and changes in people's daily lives. Modernity marked a period in which time was questioned and lived through images. Photography presented the possibility of reviewing the past and cinema of observing that past in motion. It also offered the possibility of creating future universes, as in the famous film *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (1902) by Georges Méliès.

This particular characteristic of this period marked the modern subject. The character Peter Standish, protagonist of *Berkeley Square*, presents himself as a faithful portrait of the mind of a man of modernism. His fixation with fluidity and temporal relativity is due to the period in which he lived. In an important phrase from the film, which, in addition to explaining how the narrative will take place, underlines his thinking about the simultaneity of time:

Suppose you are in a boat, sailing down a winding stream. You watch the banks as they pass you. You went by a grove of maple trees, upstream. But you can't see them now, so you saw them in the past, didn't you? You're watching a field of clover now, it's before your eyes, at this moment, in the present! But you don't know yet what's around the bend in the stream ahead of you, there may be wonderful things, but you can't

¹¹ *Num instante: o cinema e a filosofia da modernidade*

¹² *O Cinema e a Invenção da Vida Moderna* (2004)

¹³ "A experiência do cinema refletiu a experiência epistemológica mais ampla da modernidade. Os sujeitos modernos (re)descobriram seus lugares como mediadores entre passado e futuro ao (re)experimentar essa condição como espectadores de cinema. Passado e futuro confrontam-se não em uma zona hipotética, mas no terreno do corpo. Essa alienação fundamentou-se e surgiu da aspiração moderna para apreender momentos fugazes de sensação como uma proteção contra sua remoção inexorável. A busca para localizar um instante fixo de sensação dentro do corpo jamais poderia ser bem-sucedida." (p.332)

see them until you get around the bend in the future, can you?... Now remember, you're in the boat. But I'm up in the sky above you, in a plane. I'm looking down on it all, I can see all at once, the trees you saw upstream, the field of clover that you see now, and what's waiting for you, around the bend ahead! All at once! So, the past, present and future of the man in the boat are all one to the man in the plane. Doesn't that show how all time must really be one? Real time with a capital T is nothing but an idea in the mind of God.¹⁴

Berkeley Square explores this notion of simultaneous temporality between past, present and future, and stirs Lovecraft's dark mind to develop his haunting and cosmic perspective on the subject. The proximity between Deleuzian aionic time and Lovecraftian temporality appears as an almost accident. While the philosopher seeks to attenuate a more metaphysical and essayistic property through a notion adapted from Greek mythology, the Providence writer appropriates technological and scientific notions of the epoch, inserting his creations with his Cosmic Pessimism.

Deleuze brings religion to present an artistic and essayistic notion in an academic proposal. Lovecraft goes the opposite way, appropriating scientific and technological notions with his philosophical perspective and presenting them in a creation full of mythology in a literary product, that is, artistic. The curious process brings their perspectives closer and further apart in yet another Lovecraftian paradox. No wonder the philosopher presents Lovecraft, occasionally citing him in his long essay *Mille Plateaux* (Vol.1 - 1995, Vol.4. - 1997)¹⁵ with Félix Guattari.

Final remarks

Lovecraft's favorite film highlights some themes that were of extreme interest to the author and that were already explored in his rich mythology. The writer had a certain fascination for particular scientific subjects and had already mentioned matters relating to time in his various letters to friends. Despite this, there is no way to meticulously measure the participation of *Berkeley Square* in its fixation with spatiotemporal notions, since his work already dialogued with such issues previously.

What we do know is that *Berkeley Square* develops a relation between past and future and a reconfiguration of space that modernity brought and which cinema played a leading role. The amount of inspiration for Lovecraftian creations in general cannot be measured. The relationship between the movie

¹⁴ Excerpt from the film *Berkeley Square* in which the character Peter Standish (Leslie Howard) explains his perspective on the notion of simultaneity of time.

¹⁵ *Mil Platôs* (Vol.1 - 1995, Vol.4. - 1997)

and *The Shadow Out of Time*, on the other hand, can be easily proven. The writer recorded the importance of the film for the development of his story

Some elements that bothered him in the film were remade in *The Shadow Out of Time*. His tale can be seen as the reworked version of the issues he found most pertinent in *Berkeley Square*. The simultaneity of space and time is masterfully developed by Lovecraft in a story that was inspired by a film that addresses the same issues.

Lovecraft was a kind of “purist” of the arts. His opinion of literature was that it was a high form of expression and artistic manifestation. His relationship with cinema, in this regard, is intriguing. While he didn’t consider it a great artistic object, he watched movies to pass his time until he started to like more the products that were exhibited. Some of these works, he considered very good, and in his favorite film he saw great coincidences with a tale of his already written, but unpublished, and ended up inspiring him to write another story. *The Shadow Out of Time* is a much longer narrative than usual for the author and with a very dense development and complexity.

Berkeley Square was a film that marked its time, as well as marked all consumer supporters of Lovecraft’s work. Without it, we would not possibly have been presented with one of the author’s most brilliant stories in which Horror works in perfect synchrony with its brilliant references to space-time relationship and its paradoxes.

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Abstract

The present work seeks to analyze the relationship between the film *Berkeley Square* (1933) and the work of the American writer H. P. Lovecraft. Although he was not a great admirer of cinema, the film analyzed seems to have been a case in which the author was impacted by the story to the point of using it as inspiration for some of his ideas. The tale *The Shadow Out of Time* (1936) seems to have been the lovecraftian version of *Berkeley Square* and the relation between the works is, in fact, curious. Here, we will present a bit about the author and the movie quoted so we can better understand how this curious dialogue takes place. The rich mythology of Lovecraft is always a curious terrain to be investigated, and in this case, an unusual inspiration in a film provides us with interesting material about the writer.

Keywords: Lovecraft. Berkeley Square. Cinema. Literature.

Resumo

O presente trabalho busca analisar a relação entre o filme *Berkeley Square* (1933) e a obra do escritor americano H. P. Lovecraft. Embora não fosse um grande admirador do cinema, a película analisada parece ter sido um caso em que o autor se impactou com a história a ponto de utilizá-la como inspiração para algumas de suas ideias. O conto *The Shadow Out of Time* (1936) parece ter sido a versão lovecraftiana de *Berkeley Square* e a relação entre as obras é, de fato, curiosa. Aqui, iremos apresentar um pouco sobre o autor e o filme citado para podermos compreender melhor como se dá esse curioso diálogo. A rica mitologia de Lovecraft é sempre um curioso terreno a ser investigado, e nesse caso, uma inusitada inspiração em um filme nos fornece um interessante material sobre o escritor.

Palavras-chave: Lovecraft. Berkeley Square. Cinema. Literatura.

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Resumen

El presente trabajo busca analizar la relación entre la película Berkeley Square (1933) y la obra del escritor estadounidense H. P. Lovecraft. Aunque no fue un gran admirador del cine, la película analizada parece haber sido un caso en el que el autor fue impactado por la historia hasta el punto de utilizarla como inspiración para algunas de sus ideas. El cuento *The Shadow Out of Time* (1936) parece haber sido la versión lovecraftiana de Berkeley Square y la relación entre las obras es, de hecho, curiosa. A continuación, presentaremos un poco sobre el autor y la película mencionada para que podamos entender mejor cómo se desarrolla este curioso diálogo. La rica mitología de Lovecraft es siempre un terreno curioso para investigar y, en este caso, una inspiración inusual en una película nos proporciona material interesante sobre el escritor.

Palabras clave: Lovecraft. Berkeley Square. Cine. Literatura.

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