

Thesis abstract:

Howard Philips Lovecraft was an author of many horror stories who experimented with the most efficient way of how to invoke fear in the readers. This work focuses on determining the source of fear of the unknown which Lovecraft found to be the main cause of fear in his stories. The unknown is presented in them as an underlying reality that the protagonists partially reveal and come to realize the extent of the hidden hideous truth that only they are aware of.

The first chapter after the introduction deals with the influences on Lovecraft's work and frames the period in which Lovecraft was active. It starts with a comparison with the significant literary movement of the time, Modernism and highlights the common features, feelings and anxieties such as alienation and isolation, rapid scientific discoveries and post-war recovery. The chapter also reviews Lovecraft's own attitude to the prevailing changes in the world and his beloved New England.

The next chapter analyses how the element of unknown is produced and defines the overarching concept of 'cosmicism' and the prevalent theme of anti-anthropocentrism. There are other recurrent topics in his works that give rise to the fear of the unknown and alike emotions, namely the foreboding nature of cosmos, archaic style of writing and unearthly imagery. Lovecraftian horror is also briefly contrasted with the Burkean aesthetics of the sublime and the subjugation by religious awe in theory of Rudolf Otto.

In the third major chapter, Lovecraft's work is subject to examination in the theoretical framework of the fantastic literature and its impact on the unknown. The considered themes are the key elements of horror, the atmosphere of fear, the role of monsters and protagonists and the division of a horror plot. Three sources are taken into account: Lovecraft's own essayistic works, mainly "The Supernatural Horror in Literature" and "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction," Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, and Noël Carroll's *Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart*.