High and Low Intensity Mythology in the Pop Mediascape: H. P. Lovecraft's Case

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Introduction

This contribution considers a theme that calls into question the persistence of myth in the contemporary world. The contemporary pop mediascape[1] is characterized by a proliferation of contents and products that appeal to the imaginative dimension: literature, comics, movies, television series, and video games. This article presents Peppino Ortoleva's myths of high and low intensity,[2] which are greatly suited to account for this modern context. It will take into consideration the cultural references and the theoretical foundations on which his thought is based, connecting it with a broader dimension of media and historical-religious studies. From this point of view, there will be an examination of *A Study in Emerald* by Neil Gaiman and of the fourth season of the television series *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, allowing us to introduce the figure, the work and the thought of H. P. Lovecraft, one of the most important pillars of the mythopoiesis of the twentieth century, who continues to be an inescapable reference point for the religiosity of media products and pop consumption with continuous re-appropriation and reinterpretation.

Stories and Mythology

Stories have a great power to fascinate, to bewitch. As Jonathan Gottschall writes, we are much more like Peter Pan than we realize. We come out of our playroom because we have to work and take on adult responsibilities,

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[1] Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 7, nos 2-3 (1990), pp. 298-299.

[2] Peppino Ortoleva, *Miti a bassa intensità: Racconti, media, vita quotidiana* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 2019).

yet we only change the manner by continuing to practice fiction: "Novels, dreams, films, and fantasies are provinces of Neverland."[3] We must grapple with the great narratives on which historical religions are based, which have been one of the cornerstones of the culture of Western civilization, as well as urban legends or prosaic stories of everyday life. In addition, we consider the visual or interactive storytelling that characterizes video games that are increasingly narrative in nature, not to mention the image that we build of ourselves on social networks. Producing stories is a sort of categorical imperative of humankind and we consume them every moment of our lives in a direct or indirect way: we are immersed up to our necks.

John Boorman, director of the famous film *Excalibur* (1981), explains perfectly the yearning for storytelling:

> I have a theory about a good story. We know it already, we've heard it a thousand times, but it holds us, we listen, we want to know what happens next. Why? I think we're hearing echoes of some deep pattern of early happenings in the human race that is now being repeated. Listen carefully to the echoes of myth. It has much more to tell us than the petty lies and insignificant truths of recorded history.[4]

In *Miti a bassa intensità* ('Myths at low intensity'), Peppino Ortoleva offers a compass to orient oneself in what he calls the nebula of the mythical universe; that is, the way in which stories are articulated, thickened and rarefied within the consumer system.

Myth can be defined as a tale, a story: "All of the theories considered in this book deem myth a story [...] Theories that read myth symbolically rather than literally still take the subject matter, or the meaning, to be the unfolding of a story."[5] Mythology, Plato tells us, (through the locutions *mythologia, mythous légein*, and *mythologein*) is a genre of *poiésis* whose subject is tales about gods, divine beings, heroes, and descents into the afterlife. In fact, in the Homeric Odyssey, Alcinoo, king of the Phaeacians, asks Ulysses to reveal his identity, and Ulysses narrates, as his own bard-singer, the vicissitudes that marked his journey. Circe and the Sirens are examples of *mythologheuein*. To grasp myth in this theoretical way would be a nearly titanic undertaking since in transforming and adapting to

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[3] Jonathan Gottschall, *The storytelling animal: How stories make us human* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2012), p. 28.

[4] Marco Fraga Silva, 'The New Myths of Speculative Fiction Cinema: How Mythical Thought is Returning in the Contemporary World', *AÇÃO MIDIÁTICA*, no. 19 (2020), p. 21.

[5] Robert A. Segal, *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 18.

different settings, mythology escapes any attempt at definitive formulation. Unlike ancient mythologies, which are the majestic ones, the ones at high intensity, however, the myths of low intensity are set in free time. They are the object of personal tastes and choices, but they are still myths, great narratives to which one turns in order to interface with great themes and *vexatae quaestiones* such as the hyperuranion world, or the mysteries of death, but also values, contradictions and the restlessness of mass societies. Precisely for this reason, they are no less meaningful when they unfold in novels, films, television and even video games and through them the functions of representation, discussion and moral change, which once took place in the form of sermons and treatises, are being performed. Ortoleva himself tells us that the best metaphor to represent this mythical universe is the nebula,[6] an agglomeration without precise boundaries, but inside of which we can visualize non-hierarchical condensations in which much that is important remains in the background without losing its importance.

The Two Levels of Intensity
Ortoleva uses two adjectives 'high' and 'low' to explain the presence of two types-intensities of mythology. The first case, the 'high', evokes the most archaic myths whose which take place in a completely remote time, not identifiable; they are closely connected with ritual (inherent in the idea of the sacred) and characterized by the presence of beings endowed with supernatural powers "unimaginable for the ordinary anthropic condition."[7] In the dynamics of the media, genres such as the epic and tragedy are concrete manifestations of this high-mythical foundation, and in the contemporary age they influence the fascination for fantasy with the recovery of this dimension of dual temporal and spatial alterity.

In the second case, the 'low' intensity, the contemporary mythical forms are not placed in an ahistorical time or in a fairy tale 'Once upon a time', but in a recognizable temporality. They appeal to a dimension of the time of free choices, not linked to ceremonial occasions, and their protagonists are beings of our own species. However, it should be emphasized that this distinction is not at all rigid and radical, since the cultural industry—the forge of wonders of which Alexis de Tocqueville

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[6] Ortoleva, *Miti a bassa intensità*, p. 26.
[7] Ortoleva, *Miti a bassa intensità*, p. 13.

was the first to speak, defining it as a "literary industry"[8]—is capable of giving life to narrative universes that last over time, which requires turning to more archaic forms of mythology. Consequently, Ortoleva speaks of a "dual motion of attraction-repulsion" with regard to these different narratives where "the marvelous, the sacred, and the otherworldly continue to make themselves felt."[9] The tendency to de-intensify and refer to older mythic cores can be imagined as electrical poles between which passes a life-giving current. This contrast between plasma streams occurs between one that connects to people's ordinary lives and another that harks back to distant classical or archaic myths; images of evil, terrifying, but also heroic figures are sought: "to maintain the force of myth even in the universe of the new and always the same."[10] We can therefore identify two lines of tendency, of strength present in the works: on the one hand, those that we could define as levitating, in which the insertion of marvelous elements into modern life takes place, such as *American Gods*, and on the other hand, those that we could call thickening, or tending to absorb religious and sacral elements, bringing them to their own level. It is clear from what has been said both that the first line intensifies cultural productions and modern myths while the second one de-intensifies the classical *sacrum* lowering it to the world in which we live, and that the realms of high and low intensity animate each other.

The Mediascape: Hypermediality, Media Mixing, and Re-Mediation
The contemporary mediascape of popular culture is an even more saturated environment in which the presence of myth is increasingly pervasive. The magma of narratives from which myths emerge is made elephantine by this informational swelling (which in no way makes people less susceptible to being affected by the magical suggestions of legends), so much so that it can no longer be mastered, and people must curate their consumption in order to only engage with content that appeals to their tastes. However, while new tools have proliferated the means by which people can circulate

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[8] See Andrea Rondini, *Sociologia della letteratura* (Milano: Paravia Bruno Mondadori Editore, 2002), pp. 58 and ff.
[9] Ortoleva, *Miti a bassa intensità*, p. 165.
[10] Ortoleva, *Miti a bassa intensità*, p. 209.

material, perhaps nothing is more human than sharing stories, whether by fire or by 'cloud' (so to speak).[11]

Henry Jenkins discusses at length media convergence, participatory culture and collective intelligence. Convergence should be understood as the flow of content across multiple platforms, cooperation between different sectors of the media industry, and the migration of audiences in search of new forms and modes of entertainment. The concept of convergent culture recalls the type of spectator to which we can refer to as the active viewer, and it speaks of producers-distributors and consumers as if the two categories were merging.

As far as genre is concerned, we cannot say that it is dead and buried. On the contrary, it continues to frame a large part of cultural production, but with significant mutations within the dynamic. In the 2000s we witness the creation of hypergenres, "transversal and ubiquitous," which are recognizable in the magma. It will be clear by now that the prosumer does not simply 'follow' a story, but also undertakes a continuous action of re-elaboration, of individual reconstruction, whether guided or not, spreading the narrations on a multiplicity of forms and models.

The concept of media-mix signifies the dispersion of the content across multiple representations and means of media broadcasting (cell phones, videogaming, amusement parks and so on) and implies that "the real is being colonized by the virtual as technologies of the digital imagination become more pervasive in the everyday environment."[12] In the opening of *Understanding Media*, Marshall McLuhan states that, "the 'content' of any medium is always another medium."[13] This statement suggests the functioning of the concept of re-mediation introduced by Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin. Each medium can be simply transferred to a new one, as is the case with historical-mythological paintings or with photo galleries; it can take a more aggressive attitude trying to reshape the oldest; it can maintain a sense of multiplicity as it happens in music videos and, finally, it can make a real absorption in such a way that "the discontinuites

[11] Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating value and meaning in a networked culture* (New York/London: New York University Press, 2013), pp. 2-3.

[12] Mizuko Ito, quoted in *Structures of Participation in Digital Culture*, ed. Joe Karaganis (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2007), p. 92.

[13] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The extensions of man* (Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 1994), p. xii.

between the two are minimized."[14] At this point three essential characteristics emerge: the literary origin, the openness to constant re-narratives that go beyond the perimeter of the starting idea to be transferred into more popular forms, and the centrality of the characters.[15]

Magma and Genres: Neil Gaiman's *A Study in Emerald*

It seems appropriate, then, to introduce the concept of magma, a transversal image capable of giving an account of a characteristic of myths in their complexity. The 'mythical magma' indicates the perennial state of bubbling in which narratives are both in act and in power; in fact, they are characterized by extreme fluidity, and by a thousand rivulets that unravel from the central flow in the long run. Every myth starts from the magma, and eventually it returns to the magma that is the living environment of the myth itself. In this regard it does not seem out of place to point out that J. R. R Tolkien, father of *The Lord of the Rings* and tutelary deity of twentieth century mythopoiesis, in his text *On Fairy-Stories*, spoke in terms of a cauldron:

> For a moment let us return to the "Soup" that I mentioned above. Speaking of the history of stories and especially of fairy-stories we may say that the Pot of Soup, the Cauldron of Story, has always been boiling, and to it have continually been added new bits, dainty and undainty.[16]

Insofar as the treatment of the mythical dimension is intended to be applied to the contemporary mediascape, it is necessary to link it to the system of genres and cultural products.

Low-intensity myths circulate constantly around us, but they first burst onto the stage of 'culture' in the nineteenth century with the rise of the novel. It is thanks to the novel that *mythos* enters everyday reality and then further evolves with cinema and television in the context of leisure. Two centuries later we can talk about "not even sagas but universes."[17] Every story is now designed and planned as if it were a galaxy with old hero-protagonists or antagonists, be they prehistoric monsters, serial killers,

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[14] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 1998), p. 47.

[15] Andrea Bellavita, 'Personaggio, mito, icona: *A League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* e *Penny Dreadful*', *Ocula*, vol. 21, no. 22 (2020), p. 182.

[16] J. R. R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2012), p. 22.

[17] Arianna Finos, 'Dal cinema alla serie e viceversa la saga non ha fine', *La Repubblica Spettacoli*, 8 January (2021), p. 34.

wizards or secret agents, with deuteragonists or secondaries elected to become new main characters, especially with the phenomenon of spin-offs: "They leave the theatre, enter the small screen, return to the big one. With *Star Wars*, *Dune*, and *Indiana Jones* the industry expands and relaunches."[18] The total hegemony of the fantasy and sci/fi genres and subgenres in the movie theaters worldwide is now a matter of fact. This gives a new and at the same time reassuring perception to the medium of cinema: the upbeat longing for archetypes and role models.

> Films (and TV series) about superheroes, artificial intelligence, supernatural monsters, films about the beginning—new cosmogonies—and the end of the human species—new apocalypses—invade our screens on a regular basis. They are a part of our daily conversations and the way we perceive the world. They are the new myths.[19]

Neil Gaiman has been working on this peculiar magmatic dimension in *A Study in Emerald*,[20] a graphic novel set in a mash-up of the worlds of Sherlock Holmes and the Cthulhu myths. The debt of Lovecraft to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his mysteries has been deeply studied and lays surely in the fact that "Beyond question, a substantial number of the Holmes adventures may be classified as horror stories."[21] However the Holmes-Lovecraft medleys are becoming a huge phenomenon[22] and, as stated by Gavin Callaghan:

> Something else also is at work, something that goes far beyond and yet is also rooted in Doyle's influence upon the young Lovecraft: the horrific sadism of the Holmes stories enabling the youth to begin to express and formulate his own version of the unnamable, and, like a latter-day Watson, to reveal some of the familial horrors and anxieties that beset him.[23]

Gaiman's story revolves around a private detective who is asked for assistance in solving the case of the violent murder of a man who turns out

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[18] Finos, 'Dal cinema alla serie e viceversa la saga non ha fine', p. 34.

[19] Finos, 'Dal cinema alla serie e viceversa la saga non ha fine', p. 16.

[20] Neil Gaiman with Rafael Albuquerque, Rafael Scavone, Dave Stewart, *A Study in Emerald* (Milwaukie: Dark Horse Books, 2018).

[21] Philip A. Shreffler, 'Watson's Weird Tales: Horror in the Sherlockian Canon', *Baker Street Journal*, vol. 56, no. 2 (2006), p. 7.

[22] See, for example, Lois H. Gresh, *Sherlock Holmes vs. Cthulhu: The Adventure of the Deadly Dimensions* (London: Titan Books, 2017) or the Call of Cthulhu supplement *Cthulhu by Gaslight* by William A. Barton (Ann Arbor: Chaosium Inc., 2012).

[23] Gavin Callaghan, 'Elementary, My Dear Lovecraft', *Lovecraft Annual*, no. 6 (2012), p. 200.

to be Prince Franz Drago of Bohemia, nephew of Queen Victoria. When, alongside his friend/flatmate and Inspector Lestrade of Scotland Yard, he goes to the site of the murder, he notices a secretion, a liquid that "had sprayed and gushed from the throat and chest of the victim," that "in color it ranged from bile green to grass green." After viewing the place of death, the detective and his friend, a former soldier in Afghanistan (probably the second Anglo-Afghan war of 1878-1880), are led to Buckingham Palace at the request of Prince Albert. There they meet the Queen, one of the most interesting characters of the story. She is represented as a hybrid with the appearance of cephalopod that strongly recalls the figure of Cthulhu and seems to be able to communicate with the investigator in a language not understandable to all.

The climax of the story, however, is the chapter 'The Performance'. After introducing our Sherlock's skills of disguise, the detective goes with his friend to one of the worst theaters in Drury Lane to attend a three-part, one-act play. The third part, "a rousing historical narrative," is about the inhabitants of a village on the ocean coast who witness the arrival of the Great Old Ones: "The Queen of Albion, The Black One of Egypt, the Ancient Goat, Parent to a Thousand, Emperor of All China, The Czar Unanswarable, and He Who presides over the New World, and the White Lady of the Antarctic Fastness." Certainly some of these Ancients are of Gaiman invention; the Queen of Albion is Victoria herself, as Albion is the ancient name for Great Britain, but she has connotations that bring her close to Tsathoggua.[24] Others have strong references in Lovecraft such as 'The Black One of Egypt': "And it was then that Nyarlathotep came out of Egypt. Who he was, none could tell, but he was of the old native blood and looked like a Pharaoh."[25]

In the final chapter of *A Study in Emerald*, the detective, along with his friend and Lestrade, waits for the main actor of the company (self-styled as Sherry Vernant) who previously lured into a 'trap' with the pretext of being a theatre agent who would like to take the company on tour

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[24] This entity was originally created in 1929 by Clark Ashton Smith in *The Tale of Satampra Zeiros*, published in November 1931 in *Weird Tales* but had its first written appearance in Lovecraft's *The Whisperer in the Darkness* published in the August 1931 issue of *Weird Tales*. Despite the partially different descriptions it is a toad-like creature in a sort of eternal sleep.

[25] H. P. Lovecraft, 'Nyarlathotep', in *The United Amateur*, November (1920), at https://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/fiction/n.aspx. Accessed 05/03/2021.

in the United States. This important scene explains the motive of the so-called revisionists, like Vernant, who would like to see the ancient streets restored and "mankind in control of its *own* destiny, if you will." "They murder, they kill—in a vain efforce to force our masters to leave us alone in darkness," and it turns out that Prince Franz Drago (also depicted as a green tentacled creature) was killed in the room in Shoreditch where he believed he would find a young virgin from a Cornish convent by an accomplice of the self-proclaimed Vernant. Of course, Vernant does not show up at the appointment with the fake agent but has a letter delivered by a servant. The implicit idea is that the royals, princes, nobles and lords, "our masters," are the core of the established order, and the revisionists want to set the stage for the ancient ways.[26]

Gaiman's graphic novel is particularly interesting in that it allows us to observe those phenomena of re-mixing and re-mediation of, among other things, two central genres—such as the detective story and weird fiction—to generate something new. It challenges the theme of ignorance of the immeasurably superior that cannot be approached through the archetype of the detective who manages to solve every case and yet is mocked by a self-proclaimed theatrical performer revealed to be something greater: "tentatively identified as a former military surgeon, named John or perhaps James Watson…"

How to Read a Contemporary Re-Shuffled Myth

The fundamental problem in approaching the study of myth is that its life is traversed by a perpetual tension between the idea of narration that can only repeat itself, and its formation from the pulsating lava of the sea of stories with which our lives are brimming. The interesting methodological proposal is not to study the myths only as texts, as this risks quenching the spark of the phenomenon; but at the same time not to consider them only as changeable because this would mean abdicating the will to understand them. The Ortolevian method proposes to "respect both sides of the unresolved tension between myth as a narrative 'already told' and myth as a narrative that continues to be formed." These considerations apply all the more to low-intensity myths, which, because of their formation and re-

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[26] After having introduced the revisionists and having explained their methods: "Anarchists to a man, they would see the old ways restored…" Our Sherlock is stopped by a livid Lestrade who exclaims, "I will not hear this sedition spoken … I must warn you."

formation, often take the form of texts that are always transitional and may later take other forms.

"Mythology is not allegorical, it is tautegorical,"[27] argues Schelling, going against both the physicalist interpretation, in which myth is traced back to the relationship between man and natural phenomena, and against evemerism (a full-blown historicization that sees myth as a celebration of historical figures and events). He also goes against the allegorism of the Neoplatonists who alienated mythology from itself, interpreting it as a form of natural and unconscious philosophy. According to Schelling, myth should not be explained by taking it outside of itself and attributing external meanings to it: "In consequence of the necessity with which also the form emerges, mythology is thoroughly actual—that is, everything in it is thus to be understood as mythology expresses it, not as if something else were thought, something else said."[28] The tautegorical is that which speaks for itself, which expresses in its plasticity and physicality "visible signification in which signifier and signified coincide," writes Luigi Pareyson.[29] The tautegorical reading of a myth should proceed not by translating it into something else or by interpreting it, but by considering all the facets of its complexity while reading it: magma and story on the one hand, incompleteness of the stories themselves on the other.

This procedure inevitably requires a certain lightness in the operation, as Italo Calvino would say, "But I know that every interpretation impoverishes the myth and suffocates it: with myths we must not be in a hurry; it is better to let them settle in our memory, to stop and meditate on every detail, to ponder on them without leaving their language of images."[30] Therefore, in order to understand myths, which call into question very complex cognitive and emotional processes, it is necessary to listen to the stories, grasp the details and let oneself be transported by images and words. "Tutto vivido senso in sentir i particolari" says Giambattista Vico: a sensibility that certainly cannot be cultivated if not with a fine work that patiently considers all the connections. By so doing,

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[27] F. W. J. Schelling, *Historical-critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*, trans. Mason Richey and Markus Zisselsberger (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), p. 136.

[28] Schelling, *Historical-critical Introduction*, p. 136.

[29] Luigi Pareyson, *Ontologia della libertà. Il male e la sofferenza* (Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1995), p. 104.

[30] Italo Calvino, *Lezioni americane. Sei proposte per il prossimo millennio* (Milano: Palomar-Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1993), p. 9.

as Novalis writes, one creates an imagination: "If we also had an imagination like we have logic, the art of invention would be invented."[31] This is the art of connecting, of relating stories to many others and at the same time building a bridge between "the lived and the cosmos"[32] because it evokes and recalls the lived, the whole of human experience.

Connecting to the Outer Rim and the 'Gentleman From Providence:' Circles and Disillusionment

> Fantasy literature has now become a dominant force in modern fiction but also in film, television and computer games, such that a virtual tidal wave of stories embodying myths or set in mythical worlds has swept through the modern culture of the West. One can conclude from this that we now live in a mythopoeic culture, one in which stories about supernatural beings and events are being created… and eagerly consumed.[33]

This is how Colin Campbell describes the more general phenomenon within which low-intensity myths find their place. Such concepts require a connection with broader theoretical issues that call into question the religious dimension and what it can offer to the debate on a theoretical level. The discussion, and consequently tstudies of the relationship between religion and fantasy literature (or better, fantasy mediascape), has grown incomparably after the global success of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy directed by Peter Jackson. As Weronika Łaszkiewicz states: "The growing readership of fantasy and its recognition among academics can be treated as a sign that modern people, still want to read about good winning over evil, still want to experience the marvelous and other-wordly, and still want to find spiritual sustenance."[34]

Mythology and supernatural narratives are now extremely popular and successful;[35] fantasy series indicate the importance of religious expressions and mythical references considered fascinating, exciting and intellectually tickling. As Laura Feldt comments, "the contemporary boom in magical-religious popular culture is indicative of how religion can be

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[31] See Ortoleva, *Miti a bassa intensità*, p. 134.

[32] Ortoleva, *Miti a bassa intensità*, p. 134.

[33] Johan Roeland, Stef Aupers, and Dick Houtman, 'Fantasy, Conspiracy and the Romantic Legacy: Max Weber and the Spirit of Contemporary Popular Culture', in *Handbook of Hyper-real Religions*, ed. Adam Possamai (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012), p. 408.

[34] Weronika Łaszkiewicz, 'Finding God(s) in fantasylands: religious ideas in fantasy literature', *Crossroads: A Journal of English Studies*, vol. 1 (2013), pp. s.24-36.

[35] See Silva, 'The New Myths of Speculative Fiction Cinema', pp. 23-25.

thoroughly mixed with other domains, such as commerce, material concerns and entertainment, and still be religion."[36] Speculative fiction that mediates religion, mythology, and religious expressions may well be positioned at the margins of what we Western mean by institutionalized religions. But these books reflect a vast field in which the ultimate truths of faith and dogma are not at all important: they work on the ground plowed by Ingvild Gilhus and Lisbeth Mikaelsson for the concentric circle model of religiosity with porous boundaries.[37] The two Norwegian scholars (whose 2005 contribution has never been translated) classify with a capital 'R' those religions which they have defined as institutionalized, with their rituals and their clerical power structures at their core. In the outermost circles, by contrast, we find those who believe but do not practice or who follow courses in meditation, pseudo-Oriental disciplines or mysticism.

We then come to the outer edge, where we find that immense group of people who have a temporary, partial and multifaceted or even unconscious investment in a religious dimension consumed in leisure time content such as cinema, television series, literature, comics and video games. We have no precise boundaries between the secular and the spiritual, and there is a tendency to rediscover it, to search for it even in unexpected places. Popular culture certainly plays a key role for teenagers and young adults who rely on it heavily in their process of creating meanings and references; they use it as a repertoire of cultural sources: "I guess what I do is I kind of create my own cultural bubble."[38] Here, Park exemplifies seekers who incorporate the cultural environment around them (products of cultural industries and abundance of religious symbolism) to create their own cultural sphere. This brief discourse mentioning the still observable centrality of spirituality and the search for cultural reference points allows us to give an account of the low intensity myths within contemporary pop mediascape culture and, above all, to question and challenge Weberian disenchantment.

Not being within the scope of this article to deal with the mammoth question of our secularized age and the myth of a society without myths in

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[36] Laura Feldt, 'Contemporary fantasy fiction and representations of religion: playing with reality, myth and magic in *His Dark Materials* and *Harry Potter*', *Religion*, vol. 46, no. 4 (2016), p. 2.
[37] Feldt, 'Contemporary fantasy fiction and representations of religion', p. 3.
[38] Jin Kyu Park, 'Creating my own cultural and spiritual bubble', *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 6, no. 3 (2014), p. 407.

their historical development, we will limit ourselves to saying, following Jason Josephson Storm, that it could be observed that attempts at disenchantment have always backfired by generating further enchantment, so that the 'rationalist' front is not pushed that far forward. The question for us is not, at present, a free choice between one or the other front—between science and magic, between myth and rationality without myth—as much as it is "between different competing enchanted life worlds—even if people do not recognize them as such."[39] However it does make sense for Lovecraft himself.

'The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath' narrates the story of Randolph Carter's travels in the Dreamland in search of the secret through which he could enter in the wondrous city he descried three times in slumber. In the end, when he encounters Nyarlathotep face to face, he comprehends from him that his dream-city is nothing but the sum of what you have seen and loved in youth, and that, to find it back: "you need only to turn back to the thoughts and visions of your wistful boyhood."[40] As stated by Wouter Hanegraaff, what we find in Carter's sequence is a radical dualism between the enchanted world of dream, and the disenchanted world of reality; and hence the process of growing up is described as a painful process of disenchantment.[41]

The Losers Club in Stephen King's 1986 novel *It* re-adapt this concept of suffering in growing for contemporary times opening to the ethical-psychological dimension of the *Bildungsroman.* As a group of seven preteen misfit children who all live in the fictional town of Derry, the Club must deal with 'It', a kind of shape-shifting boggart-demon who takes the form of their innermost fears. In two chronological moments they unravel that childhood and adulthood are not so different in key points, and that they must confront the illusion of their wistful childhood sooner or later. There is a sort of split personality between a Lovecraft-adult who sees dream as completely illusionary, and a Lovecraft-child who describes the dream world as more real than mere reality. This is a conclusion that Lovecraft never fully encompassed but It surely shakes and fractures his phony total materialism. Lovecraft believed in a ordered universe but he

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[39] Jason Ā. Josephson Storm, 'Why Do We Think We Are Disenchanted?', *The New Atlantis*, Summer/Fall (2018), at https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/why-do-we-think-we-are-disenchanted. Accessed 11/01/2021.

[40] H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Dream Quest of the Unknown Kadath' [1943], in *The Complete Works of H. P. Lovecraft* (e-book, Delphi Classics, 2013), p. 637.

[41] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, 'Fiction in the Desert of the Real', *Aries*, vol. 7, no. 1 (2007), p. 92.

was also particularly concerned about the decay of civilization assuming a kind of anthropological posture; his great fear is the fragility of human condition, his real terror dwelt in humanity itself: "there is no difference betwixt those born of real things and those born of inward dreamings, and no cause to value the one above the other."[42]

Thus we return again to the involuntary consumption of media content in the broadest sense in the outer circle to which we referred earlier. There are groups of fans who have consecrated their lives to Lovecraft through forms of 'as-if' world-making, a "process that engenders boundaries making off a temporary sacred space populated by the fantastic world of Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos and esoteric knowledge about it."[43] These forms of fandom are in a number of ways very similar to structured religious groups, and Lovecraft is a fundamental point of reference both for the very content of his critics. These processes of as-if world-making lead to blurring the boundaries between groups of so-called geeks or nerds and traditional religious communities that performed the same functions that fandoms, now perform for their affiliates. Clearly the pastiches with which the content of these fandoms are constructed (starting with the reading of the Cthulhu Cycle), and the creations involving various forms of media and art, as well as the performance of ritualistic forms, can only go in the same direction of acute intelligence of the religiosity of the outer rim.

> We face then two peculiarities of play: (a) that the messages or signals exchanged in play are in a certain sense untrue or not meant; and (b) that that which is denoted by these signals is nonexistent. These two peculiarities sometimes combine strangely to a reverse a conclusion reached above. It was stated (4) that the playful nip denotes the bite, but does not denote that which would be denoted by the bite.[44]

In the question of fandom, Gregory Bateson's studies come to the fore: just as in a game of a carousel between two children, it is not at all important whether or not one believes in the actual reality of the horse on the broomstick; what counts are the actions. In other words, we are faced with a *mimesis* that implies the difference; one 'acts out' a non-carousel,

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[42] Lovecraft, 'The Dream Quest of the Unknown Kadath', p. 526.
[43] Justin Mullis, 'Playing Games with the Great Old Ones: Ritual, Play, and Joking within the Cthulhu Mythos Fandom', *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, vol. 26, no. 3 (2015), p. 512.
[44] Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc, 1987), p. 141.

Lewis Carroll's ritualized 'unbirthday', in the same way a porous border is constructed between the activities of leisure time, of play and religious commitment. This phenomenon must keep in mind Jonathan Z. Smith's idea that ritual constitutes the means by which we stage a desired reality that is hypothetical in that it does not exist and yet is in tension with what does exist.[45]

Recreational and ritualistic mimesis are the perimeter within which to read phenomena such as fandom in which actual belief is simply not a fitting category for the activities we encounter. For example, we have the Official Cult of Cthulhu with its Miskatonic University course of study "Helping students learn about The Cult of Cthulhu and rise through the Outer Circle," and the final graduation exam in "Cthulhu Cults."[46] All this must be considered without forgetting that a teenager could easily believe in fantasy or science fiction in ways that he meets through playing or watching films, since the subjective 'as if' scenarios are comforting, unifying, and lift the bubble. On the other hand, Lovecraft himself was an individual who, while self-describing as an atheist and rationalist, admitted to having created his own mythical pantheon: "probably trying to have my cake and eat it at the same time, to get the intoxication of a sense of cosmic contact and significance as the theists do […]."[47]

In *The Satanic Rituals* by Anton LaVey we can see the post-sixties occultist appropriations of Lovecraft, the 'Lovecraftian Magick' in the Ceremony of the Nine Angles:

> The Daemons are, the Daemons were, and the Daemons shall be again. They came, and we are here: they sleep, and we watch for them. They shall sleep, and we shall die, but we shall return through them. We are their dreams, and they shall awaken. Hail to the ancient dreams.[48]

The fact that all this demons and divinities are invented by Lovecraft himself has no power here, since it would imply the distinction between reality and pure invention that an as-if scenario dismantles. A similar concept could be applied to the Call of Cthulhu role-playing game designed by Sandy Petersen and originally published by Chaosium Inc. in 1981. Playing this game we are in the *hic et nunc* and, at the same time, we

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[45] Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, p. 516.
[46] The Miskatonic University, at https://www.theofficialcultofcthulhu.com/the-miskatonic-university. Accessed 08/03/2021.
[47] Mullis, 'Playing Games with the Great Old Ones', p. 524.
[48] Anton Szandor LaVey, *The Satanic Rituals* (New York: Avon Books, 1972), p. 184.

experience the sense of immersion in a character who needs to make his/her own choices according to the construction of the game session in constant fear of losing our sanity, or having to handle the use of magic or the corpses of alien creatures. Since the game's release, large communities have taken advantage of the online resources such as Reddit forums or Discord groups to share opinions on how to lead a play session or to deal with specific problems for the sake of setting and engagement.[49]

H. P. Lovecraft in the Low Intensity

> If Lovecraft finally finds the wide acceptance in which he had hoped so much, it is because imagination has been awakened in many of us [...] John Burdon Sanderson Haldene, a biology and genetics scholar of great merit and a realist of rigorous precision has recently written: 'Not only is the universe stranger than we imagine, but it is stranger than anything we can imagine' [...] beyond the range of our imagination lies an immense unknown.[50]

In these terms, Jacques Bergier describes the success finally achieved by the loner from Providence. Bergier, together with Louis Pauwels, co-authored *de Le Matin des magiciens*, the 1960 bestseller and initiator of the fantastic realism trend, a work that created quite a stir and generated discussions as "it puts on the same level science and what we are often not willing to consider as such, that is magic, occultism, esoteric and initiation-based traditions."[51]

    H. P. Lovecraft (1890-1937) was one of the greatest authors of fantastic literature ever, and yet his literary importance in and of itself proves secondary to how popular he is generation after generation to readers and "viscerally important to an imaginative hard core that continues to write fantasy and weird fiction stories."[52] Consider only that SpectreVision production house, founded by Elijah Wood, Daniel Noah

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[49] Cf. 'Magic; how prevalent is it for investigators?', *r/callofcthulhu*, 5 March (2020), at https://www.reddit.com/r/callofcthulhu/comments/lxz578/magic_how_prevalent_is_it_for_i nvestigators/. Accessed 05/03/2021.

[50] Jacques Bergier, 'Lovecraft, questo genio venuto da fuori', appendix in *Elogio del fantastico: Tolkien, Howard, Machen e altri demiurghi dell'immaginario* (Palermo: Il Palindromo, 2018), p. 258.

[51] Alessandro Tempi, 'L'Astrattismo e Pasquale Prencipe', *BTA - Bollettino Telematico dell'Arte*, 11 July (2000), at https://www.bta.it/txt/a0/01/bta00168.html. Accessed 15/02/202.

[52] Stephen King, *Il cuscino di Lovecraft*, afterword in Michel Houllebecq, *H. P. Lovecraft. Contro il mondo, contro la vita* (Milano: Bompiani, 2016), p. 164.

and Josh C. Waller is planning to film five movies based on the cosmic horror of Lovecraft[53]; a kind of Lovecraftverse to "help bring what Lovecraft did into the modern era in a way relays the power that it had during the time that he was writing it and published it."[54] Beyond what horror and weird literature historically means—its birth, evolution, affirmation and diffusion—Lovecraft is a king in the chessboard of low-intensity myths of the contemporary media landscape.

A key theme of the Lovecraftian universe on which we will focus is that of the merciful ignorance that leads the hero, or, more often, anti-hero, of his stories not to be enriched by their experiences, but to be inevitably overwhelmed to the point of dying or going mad. Since what one sees cannot be forgotten and what one learns one forgets, one's destiny is to take one's knowledge to the grave, to demonstrate humanity's futile struggle in the face of cosmic terror. "*Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie*,"[55] wrote Blaise Pascal.

In "Dagon", the second story Lovecrafy published (written in 1917 and published two years later), we are presented with the story of an ex-soldier taken prisoner on a German ship during World War I. He manages to escape on a lifeboat and drifts to a desert island where he wakes up covered with dead fish. After some exploration, he finds a fissure with a pool of oceanic water in which the moon is reflected and, on the opposite side, an immense black monolith engraved with a series of hieroglyphics:

> Then suddenly I saw it. With only a slight churning to mark its rise
> to the surface, the thing slid into view above the dark waters. Vast,
> Polyphemus-like, and loathsome, it darted like a stupendous monster
> of nightmares to the monolith, about which it flung its gigantic scaly
> arms, the while it bowed its hideous head and gave vent to certain
> measured sounds. I think I went mad then.[56]

Upon waking, the protagonist finds himself in a San Francisco hospital. Despite the morphine, he cannot find peace or relief from the tremendous visions of the being, the fish-god Dagon, and believes he can feel his hand

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[53] Beginning with *Color Out of Space*, directed by Richard Stanley (USA: SpectreVision, 2020), starring Nicolas Cage.

[54] Kylie Hemmert, 'Exclusive: Lovecraft Trilogy in the Works at SpectreVision!', at *CoomingSoon.net*, 6 November (2019), at https://www.comingsoon.net/movies/features/1108719-exclusive-lovecraft-trilogy-in-the-works-at-spectrevision. Accessed 20/02/2021.

[55] Blaise Pascal, 'Fragment Transition n° 7 / 8', *Les Pensées de Blaise Pascal*, at http://www.penseesdepascal.fr/Transition/Transition7-moderne.php. Accessed 26/01/2021.

[56] H. P. Lovecraft, 'Dagon', at https://www.hplovecraft.com/writings/texts/fiction/d.aspx. Accessed 08/03/2021.

grasping him: "It shall not find me. God, that hand! The window, the window!"[57]

Dagon was originally an ancient Babylonian god and then god of the Caananites, and specifically of the Philistines.[58] In Judges 16:23 (KJV) we read, "Now the chiefs of the Philistines gathered to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon, their god, and to celebrate," and the story allows us to explain the origin of the Great Old Ones. In *The Myths of Cthulhu*, we have this idea of divinities as extraterrestrial and superhuman beings who have a mastery over magical arts and technology and live hidden in the folds of time and space. They may vary greatly in size, physical characteristics and abilities but they have several qualities in common, such as telepathy, and millions of years ago they came down from the stars to take up residence on Earth.[59]

In this dimension the sacred and witchcraft appear profane and rational: the sense is in the human impossibility to reduce to the laws of hard sciences what is happening in other universes but only to try to communicate (almost always without success) with the pantheon of alien beings. Ortoleva discusses the Ancients with regard to the concept of chronotope, which was introduced by the Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin as a "place of fusion of spatial and temporal connotations in a whole endowed with sense and concreteness."[60] The genres and therefore the mythologies of our contemporary culture are placed in a time and space and through it they give sense to the second through the first and vice versa: these dimensions are two sides of the same coin.

The Lovecraftian Great Old Ones are a chronotope akin to that of the vampire and belong to the past of the past, another time entirely, different from ours—"That is not dead which can eternal lie. And with strange aeons even death may die."[61] The connection of the Great Old Ones to our world comes through the *Necronomicon*, a pseudo-bible of black magic written, according to the indications of Lovecraft, by the Arab Abdul Alhazred, who allegedly lived in Yemen in the eighth century. The connection is made through rituals that are essential to reach a level of intensity presented

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[57] Lovecraft, 'Dagon'.

[58] Joshua 19:27.

[59] See Daniel Harms, *The Cthulhu Mythos Encyclopedia. A Guide to H. P. Lovecraft's Universe* (Lake Orion, MI: Elder Signs Press, 2008), pp. 118-120.

[60] Ortoleva, *Miti a bassa intensità*, p. 169.

[61] H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Nameless City', *Weird Tales*, vol. 32, no. 5 (1938), at https://www.fadedpage.com/showbook.php?pid=20130220. Accessed 12/03/2021.

as higher than any other: in essence the myth can reappear, but only in monstrous forms and, as in vampire stories, having a dichotomy between spheres of intensity amid which a door is open whose threshold both separates and unites to us. It is on this union-separation that we build the reworking, the reshuffling of the myth in the contemporary world; the new weird, the contamination of media between genres and the post-genres are the "strong figure of the contemporary imaginary narrative [...] thus acting as a backdrop to the resumption of the instances of the sacred, of the magical in everyday life."[62] It is a magic that finds its strength in low-intensity myths, those monads with which we live every day and by which we continue to be kidnapped, albeit often unconsciously.

The chronotope/myth of the Ancients is also welcomed in the fourth part of *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, based on the comics of Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa, published by Archie Comics. While *A Study in Emerald* maintains classic elements of genres and characters, *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* is an evolution towards man, a return to humanity "sandwiched between the dead forgotten underworld and the cold, uncaring cosmos or higher level."[63] The third season of the series ended with Faustus Blackwood, fallen high priest of the Church of the Night of Greendale and pioneer of the arrival in the land of Eldritch Terrors[64] performing the final summoning ritual. Each of the eight episodes in the fourth season recounts the advent of one of the Eldritch Terrors, with the subsequent steps and plans that the Greendale witches, led by Sabrina (in her dual nature of Spellman and Morningstar) and aided by various other beings, find themselves having to make to deal with them.

The first terror is the Darkness, which is deeply rooted in Lovecraftian myths. Its will is to plunge all life forms into an annihilating

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[62] Adolfo Fattori, 'Narrazioni aliene. Da Innsmouth a *Twin Peaks*: tendenze transmediali e tentazioni postumane in Howard Phillips Lovecraft', *Mediascapes Journal*, vol. 14 (12020), p. 58.

[63] Dale A. Crowley, 'The Arcane and The Rational: Lovecraft's Development of a Unique Mythos', *Discussions*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2015).

[64] The adjective eldritch means something chilling and obscure, but at the same time bizarre and hateful to the senses; its etymological origin could be 'linked to the elves' considering that the Scottish variant *elprish*, according to Calvert Watkins, would derive from Old English following the root -el 'otherwise, other' (PIE al- 'beyond') + -rice 'realm, kingdom' (PIE reg- 'to move straight' from which 'to guide, command; Cf. 'eldritch', *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*, at https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/eldritch?q=eldritch; https://www.etymonline.com/word/eldritch#etymonline_v_32261. Accessed 05/03/2021.

and draining darkness; the two Sabrinas face it by shining their heavenly powers[65] from within. They are helped in their time of need by the goddess Hecate, worshipped by the witches of the coven since the end of the third season. The Darkness has the form of a power that unnerves the miners, who themselves act in a zombie-like manner, also reminiscent of the Dementors in the *Harry Potter* saga.

In the letter to James F. Morton of 27 April 1933 Lovecraft draws an imaginary family tree of the "Black Crawling Chaos" with the entity generically called "Darkness" or "Magnum Tenebrosum"[66] as the progeny of Azathot mentioned for the first time in 'The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath':[67]

> that last amorphous blight of nethermost confusion which blasphemes and bubbles at the centre of all infinity—the boundless daemon-sultan Azathoth, whose name no lips dare speak aloud, and who gnaws hungrily in inconceivable, unlighted chambers beyond time amidst the muffled, maddening beating of vile drums and the thin, monotonous whine of accursed flutes […][68]

The third terror, the Weird, appears as a parasite endowed with a 'hive-like' consciousness and aims to absorb Sabrina's powers from within to feed the Void (the last terror). This is clearly a direct reference to Cthulhu, the partly draconic, partly humanoid and partly tentacular creature that made Lovecraft famous. The latter entity first appears in 'The Call of Cthulhu' published in *Weird Tales* in 1928 as a malevolent entity hibernating in R'lyeh, an underwater city in the South Pacific. Apparently, this entity is the object of subconscious anxiety due to his imprisonment. Furthermore, he is worshipped by humans living in New Zealand, Greenland, Louisiana, and the mountains of China and by other lesser but still semi-divine beings such as the Deep-Ones.[69] "Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtagn," his worshippers sing, "In his house at R'lyeh, dead Cthulhu waits dreaming."[70]

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[65] Sabrina is the daughter of 'Lucifer Morning Star'.
[66] Harms, *The Cthulhu Mythos Encyclopedia*, p. 68.
[67] The story was completed on 22 January 1927 but remained unpublished until 1943.
[68] H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath', in *The Complete Works of H. P. Lovecraft*, p. 548.
[69] H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Shadow over Innsmouth', in *The Complete Works of H. P. Lovecraft*, pp. 1212-1273.
[70] H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Call of Cthulhu', in *The Complete Works of H. P. Lovecraft*, p. 482.

The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina is also interesting for another aspect that calls into question the concept of low-intensity myth that separates and unites Us and the Totally Other in a sort of triple opposition between Good, Evil and Indifference. In the fifth episode we discover that, due to the presence of two Sabrinas in the same timeline (one for the human plane and one for that of the underworld), a second cosmos is colliding with the one of the diegetic reality. At this point the celestial kingdom (defined as the "false God," but the references to Heaven and Paradise are clear) decides to intervene in the figure of the angel Metatron, called "the Cosmic," who demands the sacrifice of one of the two Sabrinas or their fusion into one to restore the disturbed order by mathematically calculating the probability of success.

There are plenty of references to Metatron in the tradition of Rabbinic and Kabbalistic Judaism, and this is not the place to address them. Suffice it to say that in Slavonic Enoch (or Secrets of Enoch) we find a continuation of what is stated in Genesis 5:24, "And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him" (KJV). Metatron reports to Rabbi Ishmael that God has reduced his manifestation before all the angelic hosts: "I have seventy names, corresponding to the seventy nations of the world and all of them are based upon the name Metatron, angel of the Presence; but my King calls me 'Youth' (Naar)."[71] Andrei A. Orlov points out that the designation to lower Tetragrammaton is closely related to his angelic duties and tasks and that he would be the divine vicar in the management of the universe:

> As the Angel of the LORD, Metatron functions as the celestial vice-regent who ministers before the Throne, supervises the celestial liturgy and officiates over the heavenly hosts. He sits on the throne which is a replica of the Throne of Glory and wears a glorious robe like that of God. He functions as the agent of God in the creation, acts as intermediary between heavenly and lower worlds, is the guide of the ascending visionary, and reveals the celestial secrets to mankind.[72]

The presence of this cosmic scale in the fifth episode of the television series is closely connected to the idea of the expanded universe of the Cthulhu myths, as Michel Houellebecq writes in *H. P. Lovecraft:*

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[71] Joseph B. Lumpkin, *The Books of Enoch* (Blountsville, AL: Fifth Estate, 2010), p. 307.
[72] Christopher Morray-Jones quoted in Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (Teubingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 2005), at https://www.marquette.edu/maqom/metatronyhwh.html. Accessed 02/02/2021.

Against the World, Against Life. Here, he refers to three circles of texts. The first, the outermost, is the letters and poems only partially published and even more partially translated into other languages; the second ring includes the stories Lovecraft has contributed to as well as those written by Derleth using Lovecraft's fragments or notes; and the third circle includes those actually written by the loner of Providence. August Derleth, personal friend of Lovecraft and main 'systematizer' of the Cthulhu myths had to write,

> Apparently the mythology springs from a common source with our own legendary Genesis, but only by a very thin resemblance; sometimes I am tempted to say that this mythology is far older than any other—certainly in its implications it goes far beyond, being cosmic and ageless, for its beings are of two natures, and two only: the Old or Ancient Ones, the Elder Gods, of cosmic good, and those of cosmic evil bearing many names, and themselves of different groups.[73]

In these words, there seems to be a kind of classical good-evil dichotomy opposed by Houellebecq, who believes that Derleth is trying to pigeonhole Lovecraft's otherwise profoundly amoral discontinuity.

Having reached this point, we will have understood that our author has had an immense impact on the consciousness of the reader. He is so brutal and imaginative as to make something happen that is rare even for the greatest masters of the history of world literature: "No one has ever seriously envisioned continuing Proust. Lovecraft, they have. And it's not a matter of secondary works presented as homage, nor of parodies, but truly a continuation. Which is unique in the history of modern literature."[74]

He is a great dream builder and in all the fields he has touched, even tangentially, there is a universe to be built. Lovecraft was, along with the circle of close followers, both an aesthete and a realist; an enthusiast for modern science and a lover of the occult. He used ironic imagination and secondary worlds to re-enchant the modern world without compromising the secular principles of modernity.

Arjun Appadurai explains that, until recently, social life was "largely inertial," and fantasy and imagination were residual practices, confined to specific or special moments. Now fantasy is a social practice, and more and

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[73] Robert M. Price (ed.), *The Hastur Cycle* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Chaousium Inc., 1976), p. 370.
[74] Michel Houellebecq, *H. P. Lovecraft. Against World, Against Life* (Paris: Cernunnos/Dargaud, 2018), p. 35.

more people "see their lives through the prisms of possible lives offered by the mass media in all their forms."[75] In *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* this can be seen at work in the relationship that binds Sabrina to her second boyfriend, Nicolas Scratch:

> 'Nick is like a lantern that was never turned on until Sabrina came into his life and since she brought that light, he's sort of saw the world in a whole new way', Leatherwood continued. 'Before, where lust was more of his driving factor — his lust for knowledge and being the best and his lust for power and strength —was all at the forefront until Sabrina flipped that world on its head. And as he went through it all, he discovered the power of love and how much more powerful love is than anything else'.[76]

A sort of *Amor vincit Omnia* takes shape in the will of Nicolas to sacrifice himself to spend all eternity in the afterlife with Sabrina, who in turn runs herself dry to collect the evil of the Void with the help of Pandora's box. Here, then, we see the series linger on the importance of relationships. This is demonstrated further by the rapports that bring back together Theo Putnam with the hobgoblin Robin Goodfellow, who had distanced himself so he would not see her suffer, and by Sabrina's two aunts, Hilda and Zelda, living together in the same house to reunite a family that has been so badly battered.

De te fabula narratur (This Fable is Speaking of You)

What I hope to propose in conclusion is to study in the future how the myth and low-intensity chronotope was formed at the genealogical and archaeological level by positioning Lovecraft in his historical environment and returning to the milieu from which he was able to arise. We would then investigate and describe the elements and techniques of assembly of his works (re-mediation, one could say) and how they have been received by his epigones (direct or indirect, conscious or unconscious) in the contemporary mediascape (transmedia storytelling).[77] We are right inside an "archaeology of media and narrative communication in the age of mass culture, of the ways in which a regime of exchange is organized [...] that feeds on an auratic headmaster."

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[75] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 54.

[76] Interview with Gavin Leatherwood by Kelvin Childs, 'Chilling Adventures: Nick's Love for Sabrina Runs Deeper than Physical Attraction', *CBR.com*, 24 December (2020), at https://www.cbr.com/chilling-adventures-nick-love-sabrina-deeper-physical-attraction/. Accessed 01/03/2021.

[77] One has no difficulty in including Stephen King among them.

What relationship is there between hypotext and hypertext? What forms of religiosity or spirituality of the outer rim do cosmicism and the Great Old Ones inform? Can it tell us something about our being human, about our most arcane fears? How do we read new individual narratives in relation to the aforementioned underlying mythos with its underlying unity of themes, images and constructions? These questions can be explored through an approach that takes into account both the necessary interdisciplinary nature, given the peculiarities of each means of expression, and the "comparative poetics of myths," according to which each mythical discourse enunciates in a different way. Not only would this enhance the pragmatic dimension of literary creation, but it would also "consider the work in its individual originality of (re)writing, (re)enunciation, (re)configuration."[78] As Pareyson has reminded us, "Evil and pain [...] are instead well present in myth, [...] that is, in art and religion, and it is there that philosophy must go look for them."[79]

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[78] Giulia Boggio Marzet Tremoloso, 'Mito e critica letteraria nel Novecento. Un percorso comparato', *EXTRA#1 – Mito. Mitologie e mitopoiesi nel contemporaneo*, vol. 1 (2016), p. 54.
[79] Pareyson, *Ontologia della libertà*, p. 156.