UNIVERSIDAD DE GRANADA

PROGRAMA: LENGUAS, TEXTOS Y CONTEXTOS

TESIS DOCTORAL

TÍTULO:

REVISING PAGANISM IN THE FICTION OF HP LOVECRAFT

Autor: Roberto C. Olavarría Choin
Directora: Miriam Fernández Santiago

"The strangest and maddest of myths are often merely symbols or allegories based on truth"
H. P. Lovecraft.

Editor: Universidad de Granada. Tesis Doctorales
Autor: Roberto Carlos Olavarria Choin
ISBN: 978-84-1195-732-8
URI: https://hdl.handle.net/10481/102875

CONTENTS

RESUMEN (SUMMARY)…..……5

I. INTRODUCTION…….6
I.1. Lovecraft and Paganism…….6
I.1.1. H.P. Lovecraft and Literature (1890-1937)……6
I.1.1.1 Lovecraft: The Master of Cosmic Horror……...…….6
I.1.1.2 Lovecraft and Horror. "Supernatural Horror in Literature"……..…12
I.1.1.3 Lovecraft and Science Fiction…….....21
I.1.1.4 Scholarship on Lovecraft……..…..33
I.1.2 Defining paganism. A confusing and changing concept...35
I.1.3 Lovecraft and religion: atheism, Protestantism, and paganism……..…..40
I.1.3.1 Lovecraft and the Protestant tradition in New England…….41
I.1.3.2 Lovecraft's fascination on paganism……..44

I.2. Objectives, theoretical framework and methodology …….48
I.2.1 Aims, characteristics, relevance and limits of this research……..48
I.2.2 Theoretical framework……..54
I.2.3 Corpus of research…….58

II. THE PAGAN ELEMENTS IN THE FICTION OF H.P. LOVECRAFT……62

II.1 The cyclical time framework. Pagan festivals……..63
II.1.1 May Eve (April 30th) and Halloween (October 31st)…..65
II.1.2 Midsummer Eve (June 23rd)……71
II.1.3 Candlemass (February 2nd)……..71
II.1.4 Lammas (August 1st)……...72
II.1.5 Yule (December 24th)……..73
II.1.6 Roodmass (May 3rd)……74
II.1.7 The meaning of the festivals……75

II.2 The spatial framework: Natural landscapes and megaliths……78
II.2.1 Mountains and hills……...79
II.2.2 Water…….80
II.2.3 Woods……82
II.2.4 Caves…….84
II.2.5 Megaliths……87
II.2.6 Altars……..89

II.3 The rituals……..92
II.3.1 Sacrifices……..93
II.3.2 Music and dance……...96

II.3.3 Rituals of passage and initiation: oaths and prayers….97
II.3.4 Magic spells and formulae in ancient languages…….100

II.4. Lovecraft and the tradition of the dwarf race of the witches……106

II.5 The Black Man in Lovecraft's fiction……...109

II.6 Familiars……..112

II.7 Divinities and mythical creatures from ancient, historical cults……114
II.7.1 Divinities, mythical creatures and cults from the Ancient Near East……..115
Dagon……..116
Cybele and Attis……...117
Moloch……121
Ashtharoth……122
Lilith……123
The Yezidis……..……124
II.7.2 Divinities and mythical creatures from the Jewish Tradition. Kabbalism……..……125
Kabbalism……126
Sefiroth……128
Ashmodai……129
Samaël……..130
II.7.3 Divinities and mythical creatures from Ancient Egypt..132
Bubastis……133
II.7.4. Divinities and mythical creatures from ancient Greek and Roman times……134
Demeter……137
Latona……..137
Artemis……138
Neptune……139
Plouton……140
Naiads……..141
Nereids……142
Tritons……143
Hecate……..144
Dionysus……145
II.7.5. Native American divinities and mythical creatures….147
Huitzilopochtli……148
II.7.6 Celtic divinities and mythical creatures……150
Nodens……150

II.8. Pagan and esoteric symbols in Lovecraft's fiction….153
The Swastika……154
The Pentagram……156
The Circle……....159
The Ankh……..160
The Christian Cross……163

III. ALIENS AND GODS: THE LIMINAL NATURE OF THE OLD ONES IN LOVECRAFT'S FICTION. FROM PAGANISM TO THE DARK PANTHEON. COSMOGONIES……168

III.1 Gods or aliens? The nature of the "Great Old Ones" in Lovecraft's fiction…….170

III.2 The religiosity of alien races in Lovecraft's fiction…181

III.3 The problem of the "Earth's gods" and the "Other Gods" ……..184

III.4 Lovecraft's Dark Pantheon…….193
Nyarlathotep……195
Azathoth……..202
Yog-Sothoth……206
Shub-Niggurath……211
Cthulhu…….215
Tsathoggua……...……223

III.5 Cosmogony and myth. Introduction and application to Lovecraft…….227
III.5.1 Ancient pagan cosmogonies and Lovecraft's fiction…231
III.5.2 Lovecraft's dark cosmogonies……..236
III.5.3 Evolution of Lovecraft's cosmogonies…….242

IV. MYTH-CRITICISM AND MYTH-ANALYSIS APPLIED TO LOVECRAFT'S FICTION…….247

IV.1 Theoretical framework for myth-analysis in Lovecraft……248

IV.2 Analysis and criticism of relevant myths in Lovecraft's fiction……...255
IV.2.1 Myth 1: The Visit of the Alien Gods from Outer Space……..258
IV.2.2 Myth 2: The Offspring of the Alien Gods…….265
IV.2.3 Myth 3: The Underworld in Lovecraft's fiction……275
IV.2.4 Myth 4: The Cycle of Water and Land……..285
IV.2.5 Myth 5: Possession and Mind Swap…….299
IV.2.6 Myth 6: Memory and Oblivion……..…310
IV.2.7 Myth 7: The Demiurge, Civilization and Decadence…324

IV.3 Conclusions…….……338

CONCLUSIONS……342

REFERENCES……..……350

RESUMEN (SUMMARY)

La obra literaria de H.P. Lovecraft, máximo exponente del horror cósmico, contiene numerosos elementos que remiten al universo mítico y religioso pagano, desde un marco cronológico espacial y temporal, hasta un marco ritual numinoso que incluye sacrificios, nombres de divinidades y símbolos esotéricos provenientes de los más diversos orígenes culturales. El estudio a tres niveles de dichos elementos parte en primer lugar de la clasificación, descripción y explicación detallada de dichos elementos y su origen en la antropología de su época como James Frazer y, muy especialmente Margaret Murray con su culto secreto de las brujas, en segundo lugar de la influencia que el paganismo supuso para la génesis de su panteón de deidades ficticias y su cosmogonía mitopoética, y en tercer lugar permite trazar la continuidad de una tradición mítica aprehensible desde el estudio del enfoque mitocrítico cultural a partir de siete mitos seleccionados. Todo ello permite descubrir, que el rol del paganismo en la ficción de Lovecraft va más allá de lo ornamental, o como se ha tratado de justificar de manera poco convincente, de una mera interpretación humana errónea de una realidad puramente material alienígena.

Esta tesis proporciona un nuevo enfoque que permite conocer las funciones del paganismo en la ficción de Lovecraft, tanto como contrapunto irracional al discurso científico racional, como en forma de elemento vertebrador que proporciona verosimilitud a su ficción intensificando la atmósfera de horror de su obra. Aplicando una metodología interdisciplinar que combina el estudio filológico con la historia de las religiones y la antropología desde una perspectiva mitocrítica y estructuralista gracias a los instrumentos críticos proporcionados por autores posteriores como Gilbert Durand, Carl Gustav Jung y Mircea Eliade entre otros, esta tesis llega a la conclusión de que el paganismo no es algo accesorio sino central al horror cósmico lovecraftiano. De esta manera, el paganismo en la obra de Lovecraft cumple tres grandes características, que subyacen a toda su obra. En primer lugar, la liminalidad ontológica de los primigenios en su obra que remite a una naturaleza

dual, en la que lo extraterrestre se yuxtapone con lo divino o demoníaco y lo sobrenatural, de manera que su constitución no excluye ni el aspecto material ni el aspecto numinoso de dichas entidades cósmicas. La segunda característica es la presencia de la circularidad temporal y simbólica que remite al tiempo cíclico dominante en el paganismo y al eterno retorno y que se expresa en múltiples elementos de su obra. Por último, la sincronicidad como coincidencia acausal de fenómenos disociados espacial y/o temporalmente, pero conectados por su significado, y que experimentan las mentes de los personajes humanos en su ficción como un elemento que da cohesión a la obra. Se demuestra así que el paganismo es un elemento insoslayable del horror cósmico en la ficción de Lovecraft.

I. INTRODUCTION

I.1. Lovecraft and paganism

I.1.1 H. P. Lovecraft and Literature (1890-1937)

I.1.1.1 Lovecraft: The Master of cosmic horror

Howard Philips Lovecraft (1890-1937) is considered one of the best writers in the history of horror literature. He wrote essays, poetry and an incredible amount of more than 100,000 thousand letters (Mosig, 1997:13), but he is credited as major figure in horror for his short stories as the creator of cosmic horror, a genre in which the smallness of man is contrasted to a vast, infinite universe.[1] His fiction ranges from traditional horror stories to the new genre of science fiction in the first third of the 20th century. The increasing interest in his fiction and life boosted the appearance of bulky biographies, such as Lyon Sprague de Camp's *Lovecraft. A biography* [1975] (2002) and Sunand Tryambak Joshi's *The Life and Times of H.P. Lovecraft* (2013).

[1] The term "cosmic horror" was first used by H. P. Lovecraft in his fiction. It is mentioned in stories such as "The Call of Cthulhu" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2. 48), "The Whisperer in Darkness," (Lovecraft [1930]2015:2.520) and "The Thing on the Doorstep" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015:3.343), although in his non-fiction essays, such as "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction" (1933), he preferred to use the term "weird fiction" to refer to the type of literature that he produced (Lovecraft [1933] 2008:113). This term is used by most of critics, such as for instance Steven Mariconda (2011:196), Timothy Miller (2011:122) and Vivian Ralickas (2007:364) to refer to the type of horror produced by Lovecraft. Ralickas defines "cosmic horror" as "that fear and awe we feel when confronted by phenomena beyond our comprehension, whose scope extends beyond the narrow field of human affairs and boasts of cosmic significance" (Ralickas 2007:364).

H. P. Lovecraft was born in Providence (Rhode Island) on 20th August 1890, the son of Winfield Scott Lovecraft and Sarah Susan Phillips (Sprague [1975] 2002: 55). Although he was brought up in a wealthy family, a series of unfortunate events such as his father's dementia, confinement in an asylum and death; the death of his maternal grandfather Whipple Phillips, intellectual, investor and the financial support of the family; and the loss of the family home involved a gradual worsening in the standard of living in his childhood and adolescence. This was the beginning of a life of ever-increasing poverty (Joshi 2013:130).

Born in a gentry family proud of their pure Anglo-Saxon ancestry, Lovecraft's childhood was relatively happy. A very intelligent child, he grew up fascinated by Greek and Roman authors, the *Tales of the Arabian Nights,* and horror literature, a genre to which he was introduced by his maternal grandfather Phillips, who was fascinated by Gothic horror. He was also very fond of eighteenth-century century British authors (Sprague [1975] 2002: 72). In addition, young Lovecraft was enthusiastic about science, especially astronomy and chemistry, but his list of interests also included geography, history, geology and anthropology among other fields, that he studied over his lifetime (Joshi 2013: 61). This background became the basis for many of the stories that he wrote, in which he provides a profound and accurate knowledge of the science of his times. However, Lovecraft never attended university or even finished his secondary education, which he dropped before graduation, allegedly because of a nervous breakdown he suffered in 1908 (Sprague [1975] 2002:122). This was a very traumatic experience that isolated him for five years.

Lovecraft was also a very imaginative young man who experienced strange dreams. From the age of six, he repeatedly dreamt with certain creatures that he called "night-gaunts," which took him through space at a sickening speed. Lovecraft offered a very precise description of these creatures as "black, lean, rubbery things, with bared, barbed tails, bat-wings and *no faces at all*" (Joshi 2013:34). Later, these creatures became characters in many of his stories and poems. As Joshi points out, "it is already evident that his boyhood dreams contain many conceptual and imagistic kernels of his mature tales" (2013:34). In his letters, Lovecraft provided very detailed information

of the circumstances when he had experienced these dreams, which proves that his fiction was not solely the product of his literary craftsmanship, but that it was also largely inspired by his dreams.

During his childhood and early youth, Lovecraft lived with his overprotective and neurotic mother, who exerted an extraordinary influence over him. Although she sometimes encouraged and admired his potential as writer, Lovecraft's mother also referred to his son as weak and hideous. In 1919, she suffered a nervous collapse and was confined to a mental hospital, where she died. The liberation of her influence was somewhat cathartic for Lovecraft, who emerged creatively, intellectually, and personally to become the writer and thinker that he finally turned out to be (Joshi 2013: 304).

Although Lovecraft had written many Juvenilia during his mother's seclusion, he destroyed many of these works. His fiction in the late 1910s and early 1920s shows the influence of Edgar Allan Poe and lord Dunsany, an Irish nobleman and writer (Joshi 2013:241). Stories from this period include "The Tomb" (1917) "Dagon" (1917), "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" (1919), "The Transition of Juan Romero" (1919)," The Doom that Came to Sarnath" (1919), "The Outsider" (1920) and "Herbert West-Reanimator" (1921).

Lovecraft's literary value was never acknowledged during his life, so he could only publish his fiction in pulp magazines such as *The Argosy* (1882-1978), *Weird Tales* (1923-1954), and *Astounding Stories* (1930-1960). Apart from pulps, Lovecraft published poems and essays in magazines for amateur journalists. He was an amateur journalist since his youth, as proved by his membership in two associations: the NAPA and the UAPA (National and United Amateur Press Association) (Joshi 2013: 160). Through these publications, Lovecraft met and became friend of many other authors, sometimes in person and sometimes by mail. Only a part of the huge number of letters written by Lovecraft have been published.

It was also through amateur journalism that Lovecraft met Sonia Greene, whom he married in 1924 (Sprague 2002: 369). Lovecraft and Greene lived in New York, a city which Lovecraft strongly disliked. The couple only lasted a few years because Lovecraft did not devote enough time

and attention to his wife and abandoned her to go back to his home in Providence. They finally divorced legally in 1929.[2] In this period, Lovecraft continued to write tales such as "The Rats in the Walls" (1923), "The Festival" (1923), and "The Shunned House" (1924). In 1926, he wrote one of his most famous tales, "The Call of Cthulhu." This tale set the beginning of the most productive period of his fiction, which lasted for the ten last phases of his fiction. The evolution of Lovecraft's style shows a progressive waning of the influence of Poe and Dunsany, as well as a reduction of supernatural elements. Conversely, the materialist and scientific explanations became more and more relevant in his fiction. Although Lovecraft was always a horror fiction writer, his work shows an evolution from supernatural fiction to science fiction. However, and as it will be demonstrated in this study, the supernatural elements in his fiction never disappeared completely. Another feature that can be noticed about the evolution of Lovecraft's fiction is that in the late 1910s and early 1920s, most of his stories were short, but their extension increased gradually in the late 1920s and particularly in the 1930s, when he wrote fewer but longer pieces of fiction.

In the last ten years of his life, Lovecraft produced some of his most relevant pieces of fiction, including "The Dunwich Horror" (1928), "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" (1931), *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931) and "The Shadow Out of Time" (1935), in which he mastered his technique of cosmic horror. In this last period, Lovecraft devoted his life to his literary and aesthetic interests as his inability to find a remunerated job increased his financial problems. These years were also characterized by his travels to different places in North America and by the emergence of a literary circle around him.

The list of places visited by Lovecraft includes, among others, Quebec in Canada, Charleston in South Carolina, Savannah in Georgia, Richmond in Virginia, Philadelphia in Pennsylvania, and Saint Augustine in Florida (Joshi 2013: 810). He was particularly fond of Charleston, because it had preserved its historical heritage, particularly its colonial architecture. Lovecraft used these trips to meet some fellow writers and friends and to study the history and

[2] Although Sonia Greene and Lovecraft started the process of divorce in 1929, it is not clear if it really finished. Joshi believes that Sonia's subsequent marriage to another man many years later could have been bigamous (Joshi 2013:727).

culture of these cities. Lovecraft wrote essays about some of these travels (to Charleston and Quebec), which remained unpublished after his death (Joshi 2013: 758).

The circle of writers who were friends with Lovecraft includes two major figures such as Clark Ashton Smith, the author of the *Hyperborea* (1929-1958) and *Zothique* (1932-1937) cycles, in which horror and adventure are masterfully combined; and Robert E. Howard, the author of the *Conan* (1932-1936) stories and other early 'Sword and Sorcery' fantasy. Lovecraft, who was extraordinarily fond of letters, had a fruitful, long-term epistolary friendship with both. At this time, he also friended young Robert Bloch, the future author of *Psycho* (1959). Other authors from Lovecraft's circle were Frank Belknap Long, Donald Wandrei, Henry Whitehead, Robert Barlow, and August Derleth. Although his interpretations of Lovecraft's works are nowadays considered wrong (Joshi 2013:644), Derleth recovered Lovecraft's legacy from oblivion, but he also appropriated the legal copyrights of Lovecraft's fiction for many years.

Although Lovecraft is known for his cosmic horror stories, this was only part of his production. Apart from his extensive correspondence, Lovecraft composed much poetry. Lovecraft’s poems deal with very different topics and most of them do not have any relation with horror. In fact, in most of them he tried to imitate the style and mode of eighteenth-century authors such as Dryden and Pope (Joshi 2013:192). However, a few of his poems deal with horror, such as those in the series of sonnets *Fungi from Yuggoth* (1929-1930), illustrate Lovecraft’s moderate skills in poetry (Sprague [1975] 2002: 614). His production of essays about many different topics such as history, literature, or science is also quite bulky. Among these essays there are two outstanding works, "Notes on writing Weird Fiction" [1933] (2008), in which he describes his literary technique, and "Supernatural Horror in Literature" [1927] (2008), a history of horror fiction that is still considered relevant as an introduction to the genre nowadays.

Lovecraft's political views changed from traditional conservatism in his youth to socialism in the times of Depression and F.D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Lovecraft always considered himself a gentleman that had been born outside of his time (Sprague [1975] 2002: 45). For instance,

Lovecraft rejected the American Revolution and the independence of his own country from Britain. A very controversial topic in Lovecraft's studies is his racist attitudes towards some minorities and his relations with other collectives, such as women and homosexuals. Although Lovecraft wrote many racist opinions in both his letters and his fiction, he married a Jewish woman and had many Jewish friends such as Samuel Loveman and Robert Bloch. However, as Joshi points out, Lovecraft's racism is not the central topic in his literary work and his ideas regarding this issue evolved throughout his life (2018b: 49). There is very little base for the other accusations. Lovecraft engaged in cooperative works with women, such as Winifred Virginia Jackson, Zealia Bishop, or Hazel Head. Some of his closest friends such as Samuel Loveman and Robert Barlow were homosexual, although it is not possible to determine to which extent Lovecraft was aware of their sexual orientation.

Throughout the last period of his life, Lovecraft survived financially thanks to the meager incomes of his publications in pulp magazines, the revision of works produced by amateur writers, and the diminishing remains of the family fortune. When Lovecraft died from small intestine cancer on March 15th, 1937, he was close to poverty (Joshi 2013:1005).

Lovecraft's literary style is distinctive, first, because of the richness of his language and the mastery of his vocabulary, a circumstance which has been sometimes criticized and diminished as an excess of adjectives or "adjectivitis" (Mosig, 1997:17). Second, his style is characterized by his preference on the creation of "atmospheres" and description of weird phenomena rather than on "action" or on "characters" in his stories. This feature, which has produced opposite reactions of admiration and rejection, significantly distinguishes his fiction.

Although generally considered as a minor, pulp writer during his life, after his death, Lovecraft was gradually vindicated as an important figure in literature. Nowadays, the debate about the "pulp writer" has been superseded and Lovecraft is a canonical author, published in classical collections such as Penguin Classics and Library of America, who is studied in formal academical contexts and universities around the world. Nevertheless, the apparition of Lovecraft and cosmic

horror was the culmination of a long literary and cultural tradition.

I.1.1.2 Lovecraft and horror. "Supernatural Horror in Literature"

In order to understand Lovecraft's work, it is necessary to understand the literary and cultural tradition of horror. When he wrote his first horror tales, this was a well-established tradition, since the history of horror literature had begun almost two centuries before with the outburst of Gothic fiction in the 18th century. Lovecraft was well aware of this fact, because he was not only a horror writer, but a meticulous literary critic and the author of one of the best essays on the genre, the aforementioned "Supernatural Horror in Literature" (1927), in which he analyzed the evolution of the genre from its origins to his own period (Joshi, 2013:45).

Although there were precursors of horror fiction even from Antiquity and the Middle Ages (Dixon 2010:1),[3] it is generally accepted that this kind of literature began in the second half of 18th century with the advent of Gothic fiction in Great Britain. The first Gothic novel was Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), which started a tradition that lasted for more than fifty years and has served as basis for later tendencies in horror fiction (Sanders 1996: 341). According to Sanders, Gothic fiction has elements that prefigure the Romantic Movement. Its main elements include a historical setting in the Middle Ages in which wild nature, old castles, ruined abbeys, dungeons, crypts, and graveyards become prominent. Among the most typical characters, there are wicked villains that chase and kidnap virginal heroines and the heroes who rescue them. In most of the early Gothic stories, horror dealt with a sense of oppression caused by the villain in the story and the unfortunate events in the life of the protagonist, but little by little truer supernatural elements were incorporated. This also led to new topics on Gothic fiction, which included, ghosts,

[3] As Wheeler Dixon points out, these precursors include excerpts of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (circa 2000 BC), Homer's *Odyssey* (circa 800 BC) and Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1310) (Dixon, 2010:1). These three texts, particularly the descriptions of the visits to the underworld as the place of the dead, are commented later in chapter IV of this study, as a possible influence in Lovecraft's fiction. In "Supernatural Horror in Literature," Lovecraft himself also mentions authors such as Petronius and Apuleius as precursors of horror (Lovecraft [1927] 2008: 23)

necrophilia and satanism.[4]

Within few years after *The Castle of Otranto,* there appeared different Gothic stories that ranged in extension from short tales to hefty volumes. These include Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777), with an intermediate extension and Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolfo* (1794), a huge book in which the more sordid and frightening aspects of horror are substituted by rational explanations at the end. This is not the case of Mathew G. Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), another Gothic novel which takes place in Catholic Spain. In this novel, Ambrosio, a monk who sells his soul to the devil, experiences a moral change from his initial virtue to utter depravity, necrophilia, and abomination, including crime, incest and murder. The Spanish setting is also essential in some of the chapters of Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), in which the tortures and injustices of the Inquisition play a relevant role. Maturin's novel also includes traditions such as the Wandering Jew and an episode where the main character sells his soul to the devil,[5] evoking Goethe's *Faust* (Sanders, 1996: 344).

Since most writers of early Gothic fiction were Anglo-Saxon Protestants, many of these stories take place in Catholic countries such as Italy and Spain, where the Catholic church (especially the Spanish Inquisition) becomes a sinister element (Sanders 1996: 343). Nevertheless, within a few years after this first group of writers, new authors who were not British (and sometimes not even Protestant) incorporated their own insights into the genre. This was the case of the German writer and musician E. T. A Hoffman, author of *Die Elixiere des Teufels (The Devil's Elixirs)*, an 1815 book inspired in Lewis' *The Monk*. He also authored many other Gothic and horror tales, including some master pieces such as *Der Sandmann* (*The Sandman*, 1816). Another example would be *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* (*The Manuscript found in Saragossa*, 1815) by the Polish Jan Potocki. This story was written in French with a Spanish setting that incorporated Gypsy and Moorish legends from southern Spain.

[4] Examples of all these topics can be noticed for instance in Mathew G. Lewis' *The Monk* (1796).
[5] As Mark Hennelly points out, *Melmoth the Wanderer*, focuses primarily on a man who has sold his soul to Satan for one hundred and fifty added years of life (Hennelly 1981:665).

The earlier British Gothic fiction in the second half of 18th century sometimes included other topics, settings and plots. This was the case of William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786) and his posthumous *Episodes of Vathek* (1909), which is set in Arabian countries. Although Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is mostly set outside the UK, the novel does not resort to Catholicism, but introduces moral dilemmas instead while replacing the supernatural in the typical horror fiction frame with science, which prefigured science fiction and anticipated posthuman concerns in the 20th and 21st centuries.

However, at a given time, the topics of Gothic fiction were almost exhausted and most of its typical elements had become so easily hackneyed and standardized that they could be easily mocked. This was the case for instance, in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1818) which uses some of the typical elements of Gothic fiction for a hilarious effect (Joshi 2013:46). As it became evident that a renewal in the horror genre was necessary, new proposals came from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean.

Two American authors, Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) and Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) renewed horror fiction with two different approaches. Poe's work exerted the strongest influence on the life and the fiction of H.P. Lovecraft, which can be noticed even from the latter's early childhood. Lovecraft was so enthusiastic about the moment when he discovered Poe's works that many years later he wrote in a letter:[6] "Then I struck EDGAR ALLAN POE!! It was my downfall, and at the age of eight I saw the blue firmament of Argos and Sicily darkened by the miasmal exhalation of the tomb!" (Joshi 2013: 44). Edgar Allan Poe was always a model for Lovecraft, as it can be demonstrated by the comparative study of some of their theoretical essays about literary criticism and composition. Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846) reveals some of his literary techniques that influenced Lovecraft's "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction" (1933). The influence of Gothic fiction on Edgar Allan Poe can be noticed in the settings of his tales. The decadent mansion of Usher for instance, evokes the castle in Gothic fiction, the chambers of the

[6] Letter to Bernard Dwyer, 3 March 1927 (Lovecraft 1968: 109).

Spanish Inquisition in “The Pit and the Pendulum” (1842) can be seen as a re-elaboration of an old topic in a much more sophisticated way through the detailed description of torture machines, while “The Premature Burial” (1844) clearly draws from previous Gothic stories set in graveyards. Nevertheless, as Lovecraft remarked in “Supernatural Horror in Literature” (1927), Poe’s main contribution to horror fiction was that for the first time, he provided “an understanding of the psychological basis of the horror appeal” (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:56). Lovecraft noticed that Poe based his horror fiction on the mind, and not on external, supernatural influences (Olavarria 2018: 17). In fact, to him, this was the main difference between Poe and previous Gothic writers: “Poe studied the human mind rather than the usages of Gothic fiction” (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:57). The type of protagonist in Lovecraft's stories is also influenced by Poe. Lovecraft noticed that, among other psychological attributes, Poe's protagonist is a “melancholy, intellectual, introspective, isolated and sometimes slightly mad gentleman” (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:57), a set of features that can be also applied to most of Lovecraft's main characters. Lovecraft also noticed that Poe used a “scientific attitude not often found before” (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:57), since he considered literary composition as an analytical problem. This deals with the technique that Poe elaborated and which he exemplifies in his poem “The Raven” (1845) which is based in his concept of “unity of effect,” which involves that everything must be carefully analyzed before writing. Poe wrote that “nothing is clearer than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its *dénouement* before any thing be attempted with the pen” (Poe, [1847] 2010:639). The result of this technique is not a complex plot, but a predetermined effect, which according to Poe, makes the work universally appreciable (Poe [1847] 2010: 641). Poe's concept of *unity of effect* in “The Philosophy of Composition” has a counterpart in the concept of *atmosphere* in Lovecraft's “Notes on Writing Weird Fiction,” where he explained that “atmosphere, not action, is the great desideratum of weird fiction” (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:118).

Although Hawthorne cannot be easily labeled as a horror fiction writer, he certainly brought certain innovations to the genre. His style sometimes has been ascribed to what has been

called “Dark Romanticism.” In this movement, the New England setting becomes crucial because of its Puritan past, which is imbued in an atmosphere of moral ideas that became strongly repressive and a certain obsession with sin (Donoghue 2003:217). Most of his works, including many of his short stories and his masterpiece *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) mainly deal with the moral dilemmas of the Puritan period, but they also include some supernatural elements, such as references to witchcraft and the Salem trials, that Lovecraft also incorporated into his fiction.

In the second half of the 19th century, horror fiction was marked by what has been called the Victorian Ghost story, with numerous examples not only in Britain, but in many other countries. Although there are many varieties in the literature of the period, in general, there was a return to some of the moralistic and religious views of Gothic fiction, including the belief in a god and a devil and the presence of intrinsically good and evil deeds and characters. However, unlike previous Gothic fiction, Victorian Ghost stories incorporate incorporeal spirits rather than wicked human villains. A huge number of writers of the Victorian period from different countries wrote supernatural fiction, including British authors such as Montague Rhode James, E.F. Benson, W.W. Jacobs, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Robert Louis Stevenson, and William Wilkie Collins. This feature also shows in American writers of this period such as Henry James and Edith Wharton as well as in the work of French authors like Claude Vignon, Guy de Maupassant, Alexandre Dumas father, or Charles Baudelaire. Although most of them did not even devote most of their production to horror fiction, their fiction incorporates a variety of topics in this line, ranging from Le Fanu's vampires, M. R. James and Henry James classic ghosts, and Stevenson's scientific horror in the tradition of Shelley's Frankenstein. Although Lovecraft read most of these authors,[7] they were not very influential for him, because he noticed that most of their fiction depended on the good/evil moralistic axis and they included so many supernatural elements that made them too implausible to produce horror.

[7]It must be noticed Lovecraft's classification of some of these authors is different from mine. This is the case for instance of M. R James, whom Lovecraft included in the section of “the Modern Masters,” but whom I consider a traditional writer of ghost stories.

The turn of the century introduced new topics in horror fiction, that had to do with the scientific findings about the age of the Earth and the Universe, the idea of an uncontrollable nature and the rediscovery of ancient pagan traditions from prehistoric times that superseded the scale of Biblical events. This time was also when Darwin's evolutionist ideas became finally accepted and the theories of anthropologists such as J. G. Frazer and M. Murray exerted a strong influence. Some relevant horror authors from the period include William Hope Hodgson, Ambrose Bierce, Robert Chambers, Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, and Lord Dunsany. In most of the horror fiction by these authors the good/evil axis is substituted by natural forces and pagan traditions that prefigure the alien forces in Lovecraft's literature. Some of these authors were only discovered by Lovecraft as an adult who was sometimes surprised by the similitude of some their ideas with his own. Each of them deserves a few words.

William Hope Hodgson was the author of weird stories that frequently take place at sea. However, one of his most important stories, *The House on the Borderland* (1908), is set in a rural Ireland where strange phenomena take place, including strange semi-human creatures and distortions in space and time. This story was very influential for Lovecraft. In his "Supernatural Horror in Literature," he affirms that the house in the story "forms a focus for hideous otherworld forces and sustains a siege by blasphemous hybrid anomalies from a hidden abyss below" (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:88). Lovecraft was also fascinated with the description of the solar system's final destruction.

Another influential author for Lovecraft was Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914). Bierce wrote tales like "The Death of Halpin Frayser" (1891), about the death of an uncanny man, or "The Damned Thing" (1893), about an invisible monster. The many adventures in the long life of this author, from the American Civil War until his personal disappearance during the Mexican Revolution,[8] are often the background of some of his fiction. Lovecraft devoted several pages to him in "Supernatural Horror in Literature," because his tales "form a leading element in America's

[8] Lovecraft considered Bierce's disappearance in 1913 "as great a cloud of mystery as any he ever evoked from his nightmare fancy" (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:70).

fund of weird literature" (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:71).

Robert Chambers (1865-1933) was the author of a collection of stories called *The King in Yellow* (1895). All of them feature an eponymous, fictional, and accursed book entitled "The King in Yellow," which turns its readers mad. In "Supernatural Horror in Literature," Lovecraft noticed that *The King in Yellow* contains "a series of vaguely connected short stories having as a background a monstrous and suppressed book, whose perusal brings fright, madness, and spectral tragedy, really achieves notable heights of cosmic fear" (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:75). The fictional book in *The King in Yellow* collection may have been inspirational for Lovecraft's *Necronomicon* and other fictional books of dark and forgotten lore (Joshi 2013:678). The *Necronomicon* is a fictional book that appears in many of Lovecraft's fiction, and which first appeared in his story "The Hound" (1922) (Joshi 2013:4333). As in the case of Chambers' "The King in Yellow," it is a fictional book whose reading can produce madness and devastation.

The authors above influenced Lovecraft, but in his "Supernatural Horror in Literature," he only labelled a few authors as the "Modern Masters" of horror: Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, and Lord Dunsany (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:91).[9] The first one, Arthur Machen (1863-1947) was a strong influence for Lovecraft. Machen, who was a native of Wales, used Welsh legends to create a world in which the Celtic and Roman tradition, fairy legends, and uncanny powers appear intertwined. He published different collection of stories such as *The Great God Pan* (1894) and *The Three Impostors* (1895). In "Supernatural Horror in Literature," Lovecraft analyzes some aspects of these stories. For instance, regarding *The Great God Pan*, Lovecraft notices that the evil protagonist, Helen Vaughan, is a hybrid woman since she is the daughter of god Pan and a mortal woman (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:94). In this way, she is quite similar to some hybrids in Lovecraft's fiction such as Wilbur Whateley in "The Dunwich Horror" (1928) and Innsmouth's inhabitants in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" (1931). Regarding *The Three Impostors*, Lovecraft notices that it mentions "a secret race" that dwells subterraneously under the wild hills and that

[9] Lovecraft also included M.R. James, mentioned aboved, as another "Modern Master," but James wrote conventional ghost stories and this is the reason why it has not been included as a major influence.

would be at the origin of common folks of fairies and elves (Lovecraft [1927] 2008: 97). This can have influenced Lovecraft's "The Very Old Folk" (1927), where a similar group of people is described.

The second "Master of Horror" for Lovecraft was Algernon Blackwood (1869-1951) (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:91). Blackwood was the author of short stories such as "The Wendigo" (1910) which is about a spirit or supernatural force in the woods of Canada and "Secret Worship" (1908) which deals with Satanism in a ruined monastery in Germany. His description of non-human uncanny forces was very influential to Lovecraft. Lovecraft affirmed that "no one has approached the skill, seriousness, and minute fidelity with which he records the overtones of strangeness in ordinary things and experiences" (Lovecraft [1927] 2008: 100).

Finally, there was Lord Dunsany (1878-1957), considered another "Master of horror" by Lovecraft, who believed that, after Poe, he was the second major influence in his writings. Dunsany wrote *A Dreamer's Tales* (1910), which included stories such as "Poltarnees" and "Bethmoora" in which both beauty and horror appear intertwined in oneiric worlds. These oneiric tales were very influential for Lovecraft's dream cycle, that included stories such as "The Other Gods" (1921), "The Silver Key" (1926) or the book *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1927). In "Supernatural Horror in Literature," Lovecraft wrote that Dunsany produced "a strange world of fantastic beauty, and pledged to eternal warfare against the coarseness and ugliness of diurnal reality (…). His point of view is the most truly cosmic of any held in the literature of the period (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:103).

The following period in the history of horror fiction is the time of HP Lovecraft himself, who stands out as the most relevant author of this time nowadays. However, the relevance of his contribution to the horror genre was not acknowledged during his life. His participation in amateur journalism, the publication of his stories in pulp magazines such as *Weird Tales* (1923-1954) and

Astounding Stories (1930-1960)[10] and his friendship with Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith and other authors have been already mentioned above. Lovecraft and some of the other authors that wrote in those magazines have been gradually recognized by literary criticism and readers. Lovecraft's friends Robert Barlow, who deposited Lovecraft's manuscripts at Brown University in 1937, and August Derleth, who founded Arkham House in 1939 as a specialized editorial in Lovecraft played a relevant role in this recognition (Joshi 2013:1014). In 1950 the first academic MA thesis on H. P. Lovecraft (1950) was submitted, just a few years before critical journal published different studies on his fiction.

If Edgar Allan Poe is widely recognized as the main horror writer in 19th century, equally Lovecraft has been gradually acknowledged as the main one in 20th century. Different generations of readers have enjoyed Lovecraft's works and his stories have boosted the apparition of many imitators in literature, art, and cinema throughout different generations. Although a good deal of these imitations have been considered "pastiches" with very little value by criticism, some other are well appreciated. This is the case, for instance of Thomas Ligotti, author of *Noctuary* (1994) and *The Factory of Nightmares* (1996), who goes beyond Lovecraft's cosmic indifferentism to a sort of cosmic pessimism. Another of these authors is Caitlin Kiernan, who introduced the gender perspective in the Lovecraftian universe with stories such as "Pickman's Other Model" (2008). Today, Lovecraft's works are considered part of the American literary canon. He has become a very influential author in modern horror fiction who is well-known by the masses and studied by critics. This includes the appearance of critical journals such as *Lovecraft Studies* (1979-2005), *Crypt of Cthulhu* (1981-2003) and the *Lovecraft Annual* (2007-). Some monographies and essays about Lovecraft include Michel Houellebecq's *H.P. Lovecraft, Contre le Monde, contre la vie* (1991), Robert Waugh's *The Monster in the Mirror: Looking for H.P. Lovecraft* (2006) and S.T. Joshi and David Schultz's *An H. P. Lovecraft's Encyclopedia* (2001).

[10]The title of the magazine was first changed in 1960 and later in 1965. Currently it is published as *Analog Science Fiction and Fact.*

I.1.1.3 Lovecraft and Science Fiction

In the previous section, I have described Lovecraft's fiction within the context of the history of horror literature. This section studies the relation between Lovecraft and science fiction. Although Lovecraft's works have been usually labelled as "horror" or "weird fiction," whose main purpose was to frighten or terrify (Joshi 2018a: 194), his literary production plays an important role in relation to science fiction as a literary genre as well. This is also relevant for my study, where I confront the influence of pagan religions and myths on Lovecraft's fiction with the relevance of science and materialism.. Some elements in Lovecraft's fiction, such as the role of alien species or the frequent use of different scientific disciplines (such as physics, astronomy, biology or geology) to provide verisimilitude, certainly connect his works to science fiction. Thus, in this section I will contextualize the role of Lovecraft's fiction, if any, within the history of science fiction before I discuss its religious components.

As Adam Roberts points out, although the term science fiction resists easy definition, it can be defined as “imaginative fiction based on postulated scientific discoveries or spectacular environmental changes, frequently set in the future or on other planets or involving space or time travel” (Roberts 2002:2). According to Farah Mendlesohn, it is a genre that deals with the relation of humanity with the world and the universe. Science fiction writing foregrounds great events such as moon landings, catastrophic wars and famines or great ideas, such as evolution, alien contacts or immortality (Mendlesohn 2003:9). However, literary genres are intertwined.

As Viktória Prohásková points out, there are three genres that form a fantastic triangle and which they often overlap and enrich themselves: science fiction, fantasy and horror (Prohásková: 2012: 132). Mario Martínez & Fran Mateu (2019:8) agree with her and consider that “the fantastic genre includes three subgenres, which are fantasy, science fiction (SciFi) and Horror” (Martínez & Mateu 2019:8). These authors provide definitions for each of them. Thus, horror is a subgenre

whose aim is to cause fear in the audience, while "science fiction is a fantastic subgenre whose stories necessarily have a scientific substratum" (Martínez & Mateu, 2019:9). Finally, fantasy is a subgenre that "focuses specially on the imagination, and in close connection with mythology and folklore" (Martínez & Mateu, 2019:10).

Before attempting the task of periodizing and classifying science fiction, it becomes necessary to determine what should and should not be labelled as such. Both historians and critics of science fiction have different opinions about this. Adam Roberts, for instance, whose *The History of Science Fiction* (2016) I have used as the basis of this section, does not hesitate to include within the category of science fiction works as heterogenous as Poe's spiritual dialogue of souls in "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion" (1839), the existential horror of Franz Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* (*The Metamorphosis*, 1915) and *Der Proceß* (*The Trial*, 1925), Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time* 1913-1927) and even some fantasy works by C.S.Lewis (Roberts 2016: 138; 238;247). Surprisingly, Roberts' very thick volume does not include the work of H. P. Lovecraft.[11] It is true that Lovecraft primarily identified his fiction with horror rather than fantasy (Lovecraft [1933] 2008:113),[12] and there is some consensus about it.[13] Nevertheless, in works such as *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931) and "The Shadow Out of Time" (1935), Lovecraft described alien societies, technification and space and time travels, while the aforementioned authors, Kafka and Proust, had focused on different topics. Lovecraft was influenced by previous science fiction writers and in turn he influenced later authors. This short section is intended to provide a brief history of science fiction.

As mentioned above,the difficulty in differentiating horror, science fiction and fantasy as literary genres is particularly present in the earlier stages of these three genres. An additional

[11]Roberts only mentions Lovecraft twice in pages 465 and 488, but only in reference to the group of writers called the New Weird. Lovecraft is not included in the index of authors at the end of the book.

[12] In "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction," Lovecraft explains that he writes weird stories, which frequently emphasize the element of horror because fear is the deepest emotion (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:113).

[13]Don D'Ammassa, in his *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* explains that "Howard Philips Lovecraft is, of course, better known as a writer of horror stories" (D'Ammasa 2005:238). As Aldiss points out, horror is Lovecraft's one permanent interest (Aldiss 1988:212). "The macabre, the Eldritch is Lovecraft" (212). As quoted above, Joshi argues that the aim of Lovecraft's fiction was to frighten or terrify his readers (Joshi 2018: 194a).

question deals about the period when science fiction appears. It could be argued that science fiction does not appear before the establishment of modern science, or at least until a little knowledge of the place of the Earth within the Universe was achieved.

Nevertheless, Roberts considers that certain elements in previous literary works since antiquity, such as curiosity about nature already anticipated the genre and boosted the writing of the first sci-fi stories, tales and novels. This is how Roberts has described the development of science fiction, including titles from Classic Antiquity, such as Lucian Samosata's *True Histories* from the 2nd century AD (31), which describes a travel to the Moon, the Sun and Heaven, even before the exact nature of these astronomical elements was known. Lucian Samosata was only one of the many authors who were interested in the visit to places outside the Earth, before an impasse that lasted since the establishment of Christianity as the main dominant religion in the last centuries of Roman History to the Middle Ages.

Roberts also notices that Thomas More had already written *Utopia* a few decades before 16th century's scientist Nicolaus Copernicus developed helliocentric theories implying the existence of a plurality of worlds beyond the Earth, (41). Moore's work takes place in the new territories recently discovered in America including the social criticism and geographical discoveries pervade the novel sometimes include some elements of science fiction such as the substitution of divine law by natural law and reason. As Brian Stableford points out, many of these earsly works included imaginary voyages (Stableford 2003: 15) where scientific details operate to endow the imaginary and the wonderful with a certain plausibility. Examples of these include Tommaso Campanella's *La Città del Sole* (*The City of the Sun,* 1602) and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1617). But perhaps the first work that can be considered science fiction proper was John Godwin's *The Man in the Moone: Or a voyage. Thiter by Domingo Gonsales, the Speedy Messenger* (1638) (Roberts 2016: 53), a novel that continued the old tradition of voyages to the moon but that included the presence of lunar inhabitants.

In the 18th century, the interest in science and reason that characterize the Enlightenment as

a cultural movement, also contributed to the development of science fiction. Examples of this interest include some aspects of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver Travels* (1726), and Voltaire's *Micromégas* (1730). But as some critics point out, these works deal primarily with moral and satirical concerns rather than with science fiction (Roberts 2016:92-97; Aldiss 1988:102), which plays an instrumental role in building the authors' arguments. The case of Voltaire's *Micromégas* moves from the previous visits of earthlings to other worlds into the first account of alien travel to Earth (Roberts 2016: 98).

In the early 19th century, science fiction was strongly influenced by Romanticism. It included stories about automata or clockwork devices such as Hoffmann's aforementioned *Der Sandmann* (*The Sandman*, 1816), and apocalyptic fiction about the last men on Earth, such as Cousin de Grainville's *Le Dernier Homme* (*The Last Man* 1805), which influenced different works both in France and Britain (Roberts 2016:123). Mary Shelley followed this apocalyptic tradition in her *The Last Man* (1826). Nevertheless, Shelley is better known because of her influential novel, *Frankenstein* (1818), in which the monster that the protagonist creates became an universal archetype in Western culture through the different adaptations in 20th century cinema(Roberts 2016:128). For critic Brian Aldiss *Frankenstein* is "the first real novel of science fiction" (Aldiss 1988: 64). Aldiss points out that *Frankenstein*'s remarkable contribution to science fiction includes aspects such as the dichotomy between the individual and society, the encroachment of science in that society, and the character of Victor Frankenstein as "the model of the irresponsible scientist" (65). Another subgenre that flourished in 19th century science fiction was alternate history[14], with Louis Napoléon Geoffrey's *Napoléon et la conquéte du monde* (*Napoleon and the conquest of the world*, 1836), a novel that describes a world that has been completely conquered by Napoleon Bonaparte (Roberts 2016:143).

As Roberts points outs, science fiction in the second half of 19th century was marked by two leading writers, Jules Verne and Herbert George Wells (Roberts 2016:183). Verne is the author

[14] The term "alternate history" is an English synonym for uchronia, a term coined in French as "uchronie" by Charles Renouvier in 1874 (Roberts 2016: 160).

of *Voyage au centre de la terre* (*Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, 1864), *De la Terre a la Lune* (*From the Earth to the Moon*, 1865), *Autour de la Lune* (*Around the Moon*, 1870), and *Vingt Mille lieues sous les Mers (Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*, 1870). H. G. Wells is the author of remarkable works in science fiction that include *The Time Machine* (1895), *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), *The Invisible Man* (1897) and *The War of The Worlds* (1898) (Stableford: 2003:24). The last one is quite interesting for the study of H.P. Lovecraft's fiction since for the first time, it includes the presence of hostile aliens that is so common in science fiction nowadays. Perhaps the main difference between both authors is that Wells describes a synchronic invasion of the Earth by aliens in late 19th century, while Lovecraft tends to place these invasions in a remote, past or future, period, millions of years before of after his own historical period. In his essay "Notes on Writing Interplanetary Fiction," Lovecraft mentions Wells as one of the few writers that describes flights from space with "artistic seriousness or literary rank" (Lovecraft [1933] 2008: 119). In the essay, Lovecraft also mentions that Wells' *The War of The Worlds* is a "semi-classic" (Lovecraft 1933[] 2008: 127), which probably involves that he had read it. As Joshi points out, it has frequently been assumed the influence of Wells' *The Time Machine* on Lovecraft's *The Shadow Out of Time* (1935), "but there is really little resemblance between the two works" (Joshi 2013:899).

In addition to these two leading figures, science fiction in the late 19th century includes many other authors, such as Nicolas Camille Flammarion and Robert Louis Stevenson, the author of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). As Roberts points out, Flammarion was an astronomer who also wrote non-fiction and who applied this knowledge in his fiction (Roberts 2016:163). For instance, in his tale *Lumen* (1872), Flammarion focuses on the finite speed of light and how it affects the cosmos, since observers in distant stars could see life on Earth as it was many light-years ago (163). The contributions of Stevenson to science fiction were completely different. As Aldiss points out, in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Stevenson analyzes the duality of man's nature, with 'angel' and 'fiend' in one nature, and the doppelganger relationship of Jekyll and Hydes parallels the relation between Shelley's Víctor Frankenstein and the monster

(Aldiss 1988: 139). A British prolific author was Bulwer-Lytton, who in his *The Coming Race* (1871) depicts a "technologically advanced subterranean utopia" (Stableford 2003:22).

Early twentieth-century science fiction (1901-1939) was characterized by the irruption of Modernism (Roberts 2016:229). This literary movement owes much to its historical context of scientific and technological advances, increasing materialism and mechanicism in philosophy, social tensions and major political events, such as Russian Revolution (1917), and the establishment of a communist system in that country. As Erdan Aydin points out, in art, all these events boosted the emergence of a movement called futurism, that affected all fields of art (Aydin 2006:188). Aydin argues that the term futurism appeared with F. T. Marinettis's *Manifeste du Futurisme* (1909), to design a movement that vindicated the inclusion of technological innovations on artistic field (188). In literature, all these historical changes influenced the appearance of two futuristic dystopias: the famous Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), and the work of the much less known Russian writer Yevgeny Zamiatin, author of *Мы* (*We*, 1920) (Roberts 2016:241). The former stresses the conflict between freedom versus happiness in a future characterized by social division in a hedonist, capitalist and consumist society, while the latter shows a socialist world in which there is no privacy and everything is controlled by a supreme leader, which was strongly influential for another famous dystopian novel, George Orwell's *1984* (1949). Slightly different from the dystopic genre, Czech playwright Karel Čapek's works were also influenced by social and political events. Roberts argues that his *Rosumovi Uměli Roboti* (*Rossum's Universal Robots*, 1921), is particularly relevant because it made the term robot famous (Roberts 2016:242). These robots are essentially different form 18th century automats, who have no will. Čapek's robots are enslaved and they rebel against humans. Roberts argues that they are not metallic, but fleshy, and "there is no doubt in "the essential humanity of the robots"" (243).

The development of popular media during this period, such as pulps and cinema, helped to popularize the genre in the Modernist period. Pulps were cheap magazines, frequently written by hack writers that reached a higher audience (Roberts 2016:254). These include magazines such as

Astounding Stories (1930-present), where Lovecraft published "The Shadow Out of Time" (1935), or Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories: The Magazine of Scientification* (1926-present), that contributed to the popularization of the term science fiction. Gernsback was an editor, author and scientist much concerned about providing a scientific background to the stories that were published[15] (Roberts 2016:258). One of the most influential pulp author of the period was Edgar Rice Burroughs, the famous author of *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912), who also contributed to science fiction with his books about John Carter's adventures in Mars. In *A Princess of Mars* (1917), Carter travels to Mars with the force of his mind, where he fights against different alien species and ends up marrying a Martian Princess (Roberts 2016: 264). As Joshi points out, young Lovecraft was very fond of Burroughs, and this influenced his interest on interplanetary travels, but later in life Lovecraft began to consider Burroughs's fiction as hackwork without any value (Joshi 2013: 142). For instance, Lovecraft disapproved Burroughs's depictions of extraterrestrials as humanoid in appearance, language, habits, emotions and psychology (Joshi 2013: 643). The film industry introduced visual representations of science fiction to the masses. Early films as Georges Méliès's *Le Voyage dans la Lune* (*The Voyage to the Moon*, 1902) produced the surrealist, popular icon of a humanized moon with a projectile piercing its right eye, while Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1926) popularized the iconic image of a female robot as the beautiful heroin of the story (Roberts, 2016:278).

Since Modernism is the artistic frame of H. P Lovecraft's narrative (Crowley 2017:4), it is adequate to wonder about first, his relations with modernism, and second, his role in the evolution of science fiction. Different critics have studied the influences of Modernism on Lovecraft. According to Crowley, Lovecraft's used modernist techniques that can be found in Lovecraft, such as "the impulse to de-centralize notions of reality, and experimentation of form" (Crowley 2017: 4).

[15] The main science fiction awards, the Hugo, are named in Hugo Gernsback's honor (Roberts 2016:254). The Hugo are annual awards for the best worldwide sci fi works since 1953. Other annual awards for sci fi include the Nebula, for the best science fiction published in the USA since 1965, and the BSFA for the best British Science fiction since 1970. Don D'Amassa's *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (2005) includes definitions of these awards, and a list of the Hugo and Nebula Awards from its origins until 2003 (D'Amassa, 2005: 438-444).

As Crowley argues, “it is important to make the argument that he (Lovecraft) is not part and parcel a modernist, but he was influenced by, interacted with, and showed modernist tendencies” (Crowley 2017: 5). Norman Gayford points out that Lovecraft was an antiquarian fascinated by past, but he was also a modernist (Gayford 2011:286). Gayford lists some of the main features of modernism, such the impact of Freudian psychology, Frazerian anthropology, anti-Victorian (or Edwardian) narrative techniques and the vindication of the poetic image and considers that there is “something familiar in Lovecraft’s fiction an letters (286). Sean Martin is more radical because he affirms that Lovecraft’s fiction “has more in common with Eliot, Joyce, and Kafka, than he has with Shelley, Stoker or Orwell” (Martin 2012: 82). Martin argues that Lovecraft, like modernists, combined the elements of what he calls ‘the literary grotesque’ and ‘absurdism’ (82).

Lovecraft’s role in the evolution of science fiction is not an easy question either. I consider that when Lovecraft was born in 1890, science fiction was not a fully developed genre, since there was not a clear separation between fantastic genres, and this can be noticed even in Lovecraft’s fiction. As Martin points out, Lovecraft’s “early publication in popular genre fiction venues such as *Weird Tales* has led to his fiction commonly being labeled as “horror,” “science fiction” and “fantasy” (Martin 2012:82). At that time, science fiction works typically dealt with automata, extraordinary technological advances, wonder travels below the oceans, inside the Earth or to the outer spaces, or even accounts of alien invasions, but there was not a clear separation from other fantastic genres such as fantasy and horror. There was not an specific term, since the name ‘science fiction’ was not coined until the 1920s (Roberts 2016:258), and there were not specific publications about it. However, by Lovecraft's death in 1937, science fiction had become a fully developed, mature genre. This maturity was reached when the separation with other fantastic genres, and science fiction became an autonomous genre that had reached his full potential, which an emergence of specific publications, and cinema. Roberts argues that “science fiction was now part of the mental furniture of most Americans -and most Europeans as well” (Roberts 2016:283). Although Lovecraft was essentially a horror writer he also contributed to this emergence of science

fiction. This happened because Lovecraft gradually became influenced by science fiction and, in his turn, influenced it. As Don D'Ammassa points out, several of Lovecraft's stories fall into this genre, such as "The Color Out of Space" (1927) and "Herbert West, Re-Animator" (1922) (D'Ammassa 2005:238). Both include typical themes of science fiction, the former is about a malign force from outer space that comes to Earth, and the latter is a retelling of Frankenstein's story (238). Some of Lovecraft's latest works, such as *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931) and "The Shadow Out of Time" (1935) focus on the description of the evolution of alien societies, more than in the horror that these can cause to mankind. While Huxley and Zamiatin were writing social dystopias, these two tales by Lovecraft can be described as alien utopias as much as horror fiction (Dutra 2012:101). Both describe the alien races of the Elder Things and the Great Race, who have achieved a greater social development, justice, equality, material progress and possibility of intellectual self-realization than any human society.

The decades following Lovecraft's death in 1937 have been considered "the Golden Age" of science fiction (Roberts 2016:287). However, very little influence of Lovecraft can be noticed in the main tendencies in Science Fiction in these years. Science-fiction writers after Lovecraft such as Isaac Asimov, author of the *Foundation* series (1950-1953) and *The Caves of Steel* (1954), used to portray moral dilemmas (Roberts 2016:290) that are utterly different from Lovecraft's philosophy about ethical arbitrariness. This influence is also absent from the most famous works of the period including Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* (1959), Frank Herbert's *Dune* (1965), Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968). And of course, Lovecraft's impact is absent in those writers, frequently women, who have explored gender issues such as Ursula K Le Guin, author of *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), James Tiptree (pseudonym of Alice Sheldon), author of the collection of stories *Warm Worlds and Otherwise* (1975), or Joanna's Russ *The Female Man* (1975). The last two of these authors have also explored lesbianism and queer theory in science fiction, reformulating new utopias (Hollinger 2003:128).

Again, there is very little, if any, influence of Lovecraft in most of the authors and stories

in the new science fiction magazines that appeared in the 1950s, such as Horace L. Gold's *Galaxy Science Fiction* (1950-1980). Instead of Lovecraft, in *Galaxy* most of the stories reflect the cultural influence of its time. As Brian Attebery points out, the central characters depicted in their fiction are similar to the denizens of New York in the period, and many of the stories begin with a man smoking, and drinking martinis in his office, before something weird happens (Attebery 2003: 42). Nevertheless, there were a few authors in which Lovecraft's impact can be noticed.

Thus, Lovecraft's influence on some other authors can be sensed, especially those whose writings depict uncanny aliens showing threatening attitudes towards mankind, then becoming a lurking menace closely to the horror genre. Such is the case of John Wyndham's *The Midwich Cuckoos* (1957), which describes a village where all women get pregnant by an unknown alien force producing an uncanny offspring with telepathic powers (Roberts 2016:310). The story evokes what happens tin many of Lovecraft's tales (e.g. "The Dunwich Horror;" (1926) and "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" (1932) in which there is miscegenation between humans and extra-terrestrials. According to D'Ammassa, Lovecraft also influenced some different science fiction authors in the 1960s and 1970s (D'Ammassa 2005: 238). This includes for instance Brian Aldiss' "The Saliva Tree" (1965) that would be a variant of Lovecraft's "The Color Out of Space" (1927). As D'Ammassa points out, in "The Saliva Tree" Aldiss uses the same plot that in Lovecraft's story, describing that after a meteorite falls in a farm, all the animals and plants become remarkably fecund, but all of them finally die. The oversize products in the farm prove unpalatable (D'Ammassa 2005:319). Another authors and works influenced by Lovecraft include Brian Lumley's *The Burrowers Beneath* (1974), and Robert Bloch's *Strange Eons* (1979), works in which Lovecraft's horror myths are readapted for science fiction (D'Ammassa 2005:238).

It can be argued that Lovecraft's influence extends to a lesser extent in other works such as Arthur C. Clarke *Childhood's End* (1953), which tells about the control of Earth by extraterrestrials who secretly infiltrate in our planet through children growing as alien and who finally destroy our planet (Roberts 2016: 313). Tentatively, this may have been influenced by Lovecraft's fiction,

particularly by the description of the birth and rising of hybrid alien children who later plan to destroy the Earth, such as Wilbur Whateley in “The Dunwich Horror” (1928). Some science fiction in the decades after Lovecraft's death also describes hostile aliens capable of producing horror in readers in a way that reminds Lovecraft's fiction. This can be noticed in films such as Don Siegel's *Invasion of Body Snatchers* (1956), a successful story about alien doppelgängers that are killing and replacing all the humans, substituting our violent society by a less emotional and more peaceful and utopian one (Roberts 2016: 323). Despite the apparent utopianism of this alien society, the aliens in *Invasion of Body Snatchers* induce readers to experience horror because of their monstruous, liminal position between the animal and the vegetal, and because their success involves human annihilation. It is precisely in this aspect that they seems to draw from two alien races described by Lovecraft in two stories: the semi vegetal Elder Things in Antarctica in *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931), and the alien Funghi of Yuggoth in “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1930).

Christian Nyby's and John Carpenter's filmic adaptations of John Campbell’s short story “Who goes There?” (1938) in *The Thing from another World* (1951) and *The Thing* (1982) respectively (Roberts 2016: 321) also evoke Lovecraftian semi vegetal aliens. Again, it is the restlessness that presence of hostile and creepy living forms cause on their audience which allows to place both films under the label of horror.

But perhaps the clearest filmic influence of Lovecraft’s horror science-fiction[16] can be found in Ridley Scott's *Alien* (1979), which portrays an extremely monstrous and hostile alien living form (Roberts 2016:404). The alien in this story is an unpleasant parasitic creature with an extraordinary biological adaptation that makes it a ruthlessly adversary capable of destroying life in entire worlds. The alien creature uses the bodies of other species, such as humans, to lay maggots, that later burst out of their bodies to rapidly infest other victims (Roberts 2016:404). As Roberts

[16] The fiction of H. P. Lovecraft combines characteristics of both horror and science-fiction. Greg Litmann calls this “science fiction horror,” even when he notices that Lovecraft never used this expression, but “interplanetary fiction,”“weird fiction,” and “supernatural horror” (Litmann 2018:94). According to Litmann. Lovecraft believed that science fiction (or “interplanetary fiction) must be weird fiction to be legitimate, and rejected what he called interplanetary "romantic literature” (Litmann 2018:98),

points out, the creature rapidly grows into a seven-foot alien carnivore, with sharped teeth that kills one by one all the members of the crew of the spaceship where the story takes place (404). If the creature reached the Earth, it would involve the annihilation of mankind. The monster was designed by Swiss artist H. R. Giger. Giger has acknowledged the Lovecraftian influence on his artistic representation of the monster that would later appear in this film in his *Necronomicon*[17] in 1977 (Giger 2007: 221). The original *Necronomicon* is a fictional book created by H.P. Lovecraft to add verisimilitude to his stories (Joshi 2013: 433), and which appeared in many of them. [18] As Roberts points out, in the film, the weird black organic shapes of Giger's designs for the alien show a sinister and twisted style (Roberts 2016: 404) that evokes the atmospheres described in Lovecraft's fiction. Also, Scott's portrait of an alien form of life that can threaten the existence of species in different planets already appears in Lovecraft's stories such as "The Dunwich Horror" (1928), which describes alien plans of clearing all terrestrial forms of life.

In conclusion, Lovecraft was influenced by former and contemporary works of science fiction and played some role in the evolution of the genre in the 20th century, but his influence was

[17] *H.R. Giger's Necronomicon* is a compendium of images by H. R. Giger. It includes some texts. The preface of the compendium explains "that the *Necronomicon* is one of the most mysterious spell books, which is kept only in a few, incompletely preserved copies at inaccessible places and can have devastating consequences in the wrong hands (…). The well-known writer H.P.Lovecraft was the first to report on this work in his "Cthulhu mythology. Many other science fiction and fantasy writers have quoted this work over and over again, but it wasn't until Giger's *Necronomicon* that it became a reality!" (Translation from the original text in German: "Das *Necronomicon* ist eines der geheimnisvollsten Zauberbücher, das nur in wenigen, unvollständig erhaltenen Exemplaren aп unzugänglichen Orten aufbewahrt wird und in falschen Händen verheerende Folgen haben kann. (…)Der bekannte Schriftsteller H.P.Lovecraft war der erste, der in seiner «Cthulhu Mythologie von diesem Werk berichtet. Viele andere Science-Fiction- und Fantasy-Autoren haben dieses Werk immer wieder zitiert doch ist es erst Giger's *Necronomicon* zur Realitat geworden!" (Giger 1977:4)

[18] The *Necronomicon* in Lovecraft's works is a fictional book of ancient lore written around AD 700 by a Abdul Alhazred, an Arab who was an indifferent Moslem and worshipped the Old Ones Cthulhu and Yog Sothoth (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2. 406). In "The History of the Necronomicon" Lovecraft described the history of this accursed book from its origin to its times and its translations into different languages, including references to many real historical events and characters, such as the wizard Dr. Dee in England or the Salem trials in 1692 (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2. 407). The texts from the *Necronomicon* suggest that the Old Ones really existed and populated the Earth in ancient times. The *Necronomicon* adds verisimilitude to Lovecraft's fiction because of the accuracy of its references, and because Lovecraft provides very specific and true historical information about the fictional book. At present time and in real world, different hoax Necronomicons have been published and many people even believe that it is a real book (Joshi 2013:1044). Examples of stories in which the *Necronomicon* is cited include "The Call of Cthulhu" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.40); "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward," (Lovecraft [1927] 2015:2.232); "The Dreams in the Witch House," (Lovecraft, [1932]2015:3.244); "The Dunwich Horror" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015:2.433); "The Festival" (Lovecraft, [1923]2015:1.41 0); "The Haunter of the Dark" (Lovecraft [1935] 2015:3.460) "At the Mountains of Madness" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015:3.40); "The Thing on The Doorstep" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015:3.340) and many other. There were other fictional books of ancient lore in Lovecraft's fiction with similar functions to the *Necronomicon*, such as the *Liver Ivonis*, the *Cultes des Goules*, the *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, and *De Vermiis Mysteriis*, which appear in several stories such as "The Haunter of the Dark" (Lovecraft [1935] 2015:3.460).

limited to some particular subgenres that are not only connected to scientific fantasy but also with horror. In this sense, his literary production would be described more appropriately as “cosmic horror” rather than as science fiction. As I argued above, Lovecraft's influence on both horror and science fiction has been widely acknowledged and he is now considered as one of the great American authors of 20th century and a canonical writer studied in academic contexts.

I.1.1.4 Scholarship on Lovecraft

When Lovecraft died from small intestine cancer on March 15, 1937, he was mostly known to the limited readership of “pulp” publications such as the aforementioned *Weird Tales* or *Astounding Stories* as a writer of horror fiction. Nevertheless, the situation gradually changed, and as the interest in Lovecraft's work increased, subsequently did the criticism on it.

Two major periods can be identified in the history of criticism on Lovecraft, each one marked by a relevant figure, August Derleth and S. T. Joshi. The first period began shortly after Lovecraft's death, when Robert Barlow and August Derleth, two young writers of the Lovecraftian circle, became interested in Lovecraft's legacy. Barlow deposited many of Lovecraft's manuscripts and letters in the John Hay Library at Brown University in Providence, RI (Joshi 2013: 1012). In 1939, together with Donald Wandrei, Derleth founded Arkham House, where they began to publish Lovecraft's works (2013: 1014). This period was marked by Derleth's attempts to systematize the *mythos* in Lovecraft’s work in order to interpret the monsters or “Great Old Ones” in the stories as elementals in the light of his own Christian ideas, which led to a general misconception in the understanding of Lovecraftian fiction. According to Joshi, Derleth, who held control over Lovecraft’s copyrights, “impeded the proper understanding of Lovecraft for thirty years, since he was looked upon as the “authority” on Lovecraft and as his appointed “spokesman” (2013: 1023). This situation changed after Derleth's death in 1971, which brought on a new stage of Lovecraft scholarship (Joshi 2013: 1034).

In this new period, L. Sprague de Camp’s published a bulky biography of Lovecraft under

the title *Lovecraft: A Biography* (1975), which was a quite detailed but demystifying work that was rejected by many young enthusiasts of Lovecraft. In the 1970s Maurice Lévy and Dirk Mosig wrote different essays that sketched the future scholarship on Lovecraft in the following decades based on the rejection of Derleth's interpretations of Lovecraft fiction. This new period is marked by the rise of new scholars such as Donald R. Burleson, David E. Schultz, Peter Cannon, Steven Mariconda, and Robert Price, who focused on the interpretation of Lovecraft's fiction as essentially materialistic cosmic horror, denying or diminishing the presence of supernatural and magic elements. The turn of the following decade saw the publication of journals specializing in Lovecraft's work such as *Lovecraft's Studies* (1979-2005) and *Crypt of Cthulhu* (1981-2001), which added new academic perspectives (Joshi, 2013: 1040). In the last forty years, the most prominent scholar in Lovecraft's fiction is Sunand Tryambak Joshi, who authored the monumental biography in two volumes *I Am Providence: The Life and Times of H.P. Lovecraft* (2013), which is even longer than the previous one by Sprague de Camp. Since the early 1980s, S. T. Joshi has published many books on Lovecraft, as well as a new journal from 2007, *The Lovecraft Annual* and Lovecraft's *Collected Essays* (2004-2007). At present, Joshi is working on the publication of the immense amount of letters penned by Lovecraft, which it is expected to take 25 volumes (Joshi 2013:1042). Nowadays, Joshi is the dominant scholar in Lovecraft. He is undoubtedly the author that has published more on Lovecraft and who has studied his life, his work and his insights in more in detail, with a special focus on Lovecraft's philosophical thought[19]. It is his view that "one's final picture of Lovecraft must be based largely upon the last ten years or so of his existence" (Joshi 2013:1040). Although I do not intend to contradict the current leading scholar in Lovecraft, my personal picture of Lovecraft is perhaps more holistic by taking into account not only the last ten years of his literary production, but also the period starting from 1917. In this picture, there is not such coherence in Lovecraft's thought, but his views on and treatment of paganism gain in relevance and perspective.

[19] Lovecraft was not "a philosopher," but his concerns about ethics, aesthetics, ontology, gnoseology, politics, society, science, art and literature, that he described in his letters and essays make necessary to investigate about Lovecraft's philosophical views and its evolution from his childhood to maturity (Joshi 1990:1).

Lovecraft and his fiction have become a referent in present day literary studies and criticism, as well as in more popular contexts. A clear example of this popularity is the adaptation of Lovecraft's fiction into films, comics, audio books, and role and video games. A recent example of Lovecraft's popularity in current academic discourse (not necessarily on Lovecraft) is feminist biologist and scholar Donna J. Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (2016). Although she includes a very obvious reference to "H. P. Lovecraft's misogynist racial-nightmare monster Cthulhu" (2016: 101) in the title of her work, she urged to explain that the term originally coined by Lovecraft had nothing to do with her use of this term. Instead, she claims that *her* term "Chthulucene," which she uses to describe a period of time that will supersede the Anthropocene, rather has to do with Chthonic or Earth-bound female powers akin to Gaia (Haraway, 2016: 174). In fact, Haraway refers at least three times to Lovecraft in her book just to deny his influence. If this was really her intention, Haraway could have simply called this period the "Chthonicene," from the Greek *khthonios* (relating to earth), which would have been more etymologically correct and would have saved her so many clarifications. Considering that she uses the trope of "tentacles" to refer to new relations among living creatures in the "Chthulucene" (2016: 32), her more than obvious evocation of the "octopus-like head" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015, 2.31) of Lovecraft's Cthulhu is suspiciously coincidental as a possible marketing strategy. Be it what may, that the lady doth protest too much is quite revealing of Lovecraft's current importance in both popular culture and academia.

I.1.2 Defining paganism. A confusing and changing concept

As stated above, the main object of my study is to assess the features, role, and functions of paganism within fiction of HP Lovecraft, which I intend to demonstrate that is a fundamental component in his literary production, but whose true importance has been frequently diminished or even overlooked. Contrary to the widespread opinion among Lovecraft scholars, I think that the importance of paganism can be noticed in a good deal of his stories and his poetry. But if I am going to study paganism in Lovecraft's works, it is necessary that I determine what paganism is first,

which is by no means, a simple question.

The notion of paganism started and developed in opposition to the different concepts of Christianity and the Judeo-Christian tradition. Classical philologist Christopher Jones points out paganism is a misleading term, devised by the in-group of Christians to denote an out-group, the *other*, the non-Christians, within the context of the decadence and fall of the Roman Empire (Jones, 2014: 6). The term was particularly used by the early apologists of the relatively new Christian faith. In this way, *a pagan was someone who believed in a religion other than Christianity and Judaism.*

The etymology of "pagan" derives from Latin *paganus*, meaning "villager," someone from a *pagus* or "village" (Jones, 2014: 4), which accounts for the fact that villagers and peasants preserved their old beliefs longer than the mostly Christian urban classes in the late Roman Empire of the 4th and 5th centuries. In this way, the term encompassed a huge number of religious practices in the countryside. Even in this early context of the late Roman Empire and early Germanic Kingdoms, the term "pagan" already had an imprecise and derogatory meaning. It was imprecise because of the diversity of religions which it encompassed, and derogatory because of its early connotations of "false" and "uncouth" religiosity especially when compared to the more neutral term of the period, *Hellenes*, which referred to those who still believed in the ancient Greek and Roman religions (Jones 2014:6). In general, the term "pagan" refers frequently to polytheistic religions, although pagans can be monotheists, and Christians can be sometimes accused of polytheism (Jones 2014:7). Jones provides a tentative definition of the term when affirms that, "paganism" can be applied to *those non-Jews from antiquity who remained outside Christianity* (2014: 7).

After Antiquity, this concept of paganism lasted both in the Christian church and in Western tradition with variations throughout the centuries as its meaning gradually changed. It is then necessary to consider the evolution in the concept of paganism to understand the way in which it was used in Lovecraft's times and by Lovecraft himself. It would be thus necessary to move chronologically and spatially throughout a long period of time, from the definition of the term in the

Mediterranean of Late Antiquity to Western civilization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I will skip the main particularities of this evolution, since they lay outside the scope of this study, and I will just focus on its main outcome. This outcome involved a major change of paradigm: from the paradigm and discourse of religion to the paradigm and discourse of science. It also involved a change from the discourse and regional domination of the Christian apologists of Late Antiquity, to the discourse and worldwide domination of Western countries, particularly the Anglo-Saxon countries which controlled huge colonial empires. It is my contention that the evolution of both science and colonialism contributed to a progressive change in the concept of paganism.

Colonialism involved an increase in scientific knowledge about ancient religions in different geographical areas such as East Asia, the inner territories in Africa, and the Americas or the Pacific areas, which were avidly studied by anthropologists, archaeologist and historians of religion. As Elleke Boehmer points out, in the colonial period“ it became habitual for Europe to approach other cultures as objects of study” (Boehmer 2005: 69). However, this also meant that some cults were set apart from the old definition of paganism in Antiquity above. The same biased colonial views that gave rise to the apparition to what Post-Colonial studies have broadly called “Orientalism” since Edward Said coined the term (Boehmer 2005: 48), implicitly acknowledged that there were some “oriental” religions that were at least as old, complex and “civilized” as the Judeo-Christian tradition (Smart 2000: 36). In the 7th century, Islam had appeared as a new Abrahamic religion that considered that both Jews and Christians had “perverted the true kernel of the true religion of Abraham” (Stroumsa 2015, 7) Western scholars had also discovered and studied the complexity of another extensive group of interrelated religions in East Asia and particularly in British India, in the very ancient texts of the Dharmic of Brahmanical religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism), which affected the way in which religions were classified. Now, there was no longer such a “spiritual” distinction of a true versus false religions, but the “scientific” distinction of “civilized” religions versus “primitive,” “uncivilized,” religions. Thus, the scholars from late 19th and early 20th centuries show a (biased) contrast between “complex”

or “instituted” religions, and “natural,” “primitive,” religions (Ward 1908, 556). There is no need to say that the concept of paganism was restricted only to that “natural” and “primitive” religions, which excluded the more “civilized” Abrahamic religions.

This period also witnessed changes in the way in which Europeans considered *their own* pagan past. In Western countries such as Britain, there was an interest in the non-Christian cults that had taken place in their territory before Christianization. The British, who at the peak of their imperial dominance considered themselves to be the epitome of civilization, only studied the ancient Greek and Roman religions in a quite superficial way. Although it shares many common features with *paganism*, British scholars then focused on the concept of *heathenism* in the Celtic and Germanic past of the British Isles. In the 19th and 20th centuries there was a Celtic Revival in those areas of Great Britain and Ireland where the Celtic influence was considered to be deeper: Ireland, Wales, Scotland and Cornwall. As Elisa Lima points out, the Celtic Revival gave consistency to political movements such as Irish nationalism in the end of 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, that influenced the establishment of the Republic of Ireland in 1922 (Lima 2018: 59). This could be seen in Literature, History and Anthropology. In Literature, Irish authors such as W. B. Yeats and John Millington Synge, Scottish authors such as John Buchan, or Welsh writers like Arthur Machen depicted an idealized Celtic past in which paganism was the main religion. Most scholars in the fields of History and Anthropology wrongly considered that paganism had continued to be the most widespread religion in the British Isles throughout all the Middle Ages into the Early Modern Period. As modern historian of paganism Ronald Hutton points out, there was such a magnification of the impact of paganism in British and Irish history that most historiography believed that it had been the dominant religion until recent times:

> During the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, it was commonplace among historians that the common people of medieval England had remained in their religious beliefs. Christianity, according to this view, was essentially the faith of the elite, with the popular embracing was at best, a dual allegiance to the new and old religions. This view has now disappeared (Hutton 2011: 235).

That was the case of anthropologists James George Frazer and Margaret Murray, whose influence on Lovecraft’s fiction I will discuss in detail below.

Before providing my own definition of paganism, I will focus on two different main approaches to paganism. The first one is the current perspective that rejects the classification of religions, or their consideration as categories. According to Joseph Walser the categorization of *any* particular religion apparently is fuzzy and unstable (Walser 2015:347). Instead of using closed categories, he proposes Bakhtin's concept of "utterance" as a way to describe what characterizes a particular religion. Thus, religions are classified by their own utterances or basic units of communication, which convey a particular meaning "only at its intersection with the surrounding context" (350). Following Bakhtin's ideas, Walser argues that the main feature of this context is dialogism or heteroglossia, that is to say, the meaning depends on the others' words and voices (351). This involves that any item (a prayer, a religious prop or a temple) can be considered to belong to a particular religion not in itself but depending on its context. Thus, it is almost impossible to classify religions in individual categories or even in broad categories such as Christianity or Buddhism. The difficulty increases in the case of paganism, which includes so many heterogeneous beliefs..

The second one focuses on some definition of the word paganism that I will definitely *not* use in my study. It is with the same sense as *profane*, meaning not concerned with religion or religious purposes. As Nandini Das argues, in 16th and 17th century England, Protestants and Catholics sometimes equated pagan and superstitious beliefs to the 'unbelieving other' (Das 2021:196). Thus, there were texts from the period that even referred to 'heathen and profane pagans' (2021: 198). Unfrequently, this definition appears in some present day dictionaries, such as the *Word Reference Random House Unabridged Dictionary of American English* (2023), that defines the word "profane" as "unholy; heathen; pagan" in its third meaning.[22] Since there are no doubts concerning Lovecraft's atheism in his personal life and how his mechanical materialism pervaded both his fiction and his philosophy of cosmicism, one might be tempted to consider the description of his use of pagan elements in his work as synonymous with the profane. Although there may be

[22] "Profane." (adj.) (def.3), *Word Reference Random House Unabridged Dictionary of American English*, https://www.wordreference.com/definition/profane. Last accessed 21/08/2023.

countless examples of “atheist” or “profane” features in Lovecraft’s fiction, when I refer to the *pagan* elements in his fiction I will be focusing on elements that he had taken from ancient religions and cults.

In this chapter I have summarized the evolution and meaning of the term paganism from its origin to present day time, including Lovecraft's times. I have warned about the ill-definition, ambiguity, imprecision, and derogatory connotations of the word. However, for practical reasons, in most of my study I will use my own tentative definition, which I consider the closest to how it was used by historians of religion in Lovecraft's period such as Theodor Mommsen (1817-1902), Max Weber (1864-1920), and Franz Cumont (1868-1947) [23] : *Paganism is the broad term that encompassed all “natural” and “primitive” religions or religiosity outside the major, instituted religions from the so-called Abrahamic tradition*. Thus, typical examples of pagan religions were the Greek-Roman religions, Ancient Near East and Ancient Egyptian religions of antiquity, the religious practices of Celtic and Germanic in Europe, the Native American and Pacific Islander religions, etc.

I.1.3 Lovecraft and religion: atheism, Protestantism, and paganism

Traditionally, scholars have analyzed religion in H. P. Lovecraft adopting two different positions; either highlighting the importance of religious aspects in his fiction or arguing that there is none and that in fact, he was not concerned with religion at all (Reynolds 2009: 96). Each one of these approaches had a particular period of scholarship. The first one was marked by August Derleth, who rescued Lovecraft's fiction and imposed his own Catholic bias on Lovecraft's mythology. A more recent approach focuses on the fact that Lovecraft was an atheist for whom religion was utterly unimportant and considers that religion was also unimportant in his fiction. This position can be noticed in scholars such as Dirk Mosig in 1997[24]. This second approach has become

[23] In addition to them, the contribution of anthropologists such as Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917) and James Frazer (1854-1941) was also very remarkable.

[24]Although this is Mosig’s view in his essay “H.P. Lovecraft: Mythmaker,” where he (correctly) highlighted Lovecraft's atheism and his rejection of Christianity, he also attempted to reconcile Lovecraft with Brahmanic religions such as

dominant on H.P. Lovecraft, and most scholars have insisted on “Lovecraft's lifelong hostility to religion,” as S. T Joshi explains in *H. P. Lovecraft: The Decline of the West* (1990), where he analyzes Lovecraft's philosophy (Joshi 1990:21). All biographical sources about Lovecraft have proved that he was a strong atheist throughout his life. Lovecraft even used the term “indifferentist” to describe his own way of thinking in which, at cosmic scale, men's life is not more important than mosquitoes' or horses' (Lovecraft [1929] 1965:3.39). Nevertheless, despite his hostility to religion as a cultural phenomenon, religious beliefs play an important role in his fiction, including Christianity, and especially the Protestant denominations (Olavarria 2023: 99), but this is clearly more relevant in the case of paganism. The sub-sections below discuss some aspects of both, Protestant and pagan religions in Lovecraft's fiction.

I.1.3.1 Lovecraft and the Protestant tradition in New England

As I have more extensively discussed in a previous publication, Lovecraft followed Nathaniel Hawthorne’s line of Dark Romanticism in including evil Protestant characters, such as clergymen and fanatic devotees from New England’s seventeenth-century colonial past (Olavarria 2023: 95-103). Lovecraft insights about Protestantism contain different elements about paganism, expressed through the concealed practice of a secret magic lore by the members of this community. Primarily, Hawthorne focused on the moral repression and hypocrisy exercised by local religious authorities in the British colonies in New England, but he also hinted at some elements related to wizardry and satanism (Olavarria 2023:97). This feature can be found in some of his works such as *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and "Young Goodman Brown" (1835). Lovecraft, who also used the New England settings and its protestant tradition in much of his fiction, superseded the religious morality and repression of Hawthorne’s Dark Romanticism while also overtly depicting his Protestant

---

Buddhism. In the same collection of essays that includes “H. P. Lovecraft: Myth Maker,” there is another entitled “Lovecraft, Buddhism, and Quantum Physics,” in which he established some correlation between Lovecraft's ideas and oriental spirituality (95). Mosig, who identifies himself as “a Lovecraftian and a Zen Buddhist” considers that the two can be reconciled, in spite of Lovecraft's atheism and his much more frequent and direct references to pagan religions.

characters as wizards and/or practitioners of pagan rituals who worship cosmic forces and acquire supernatural powers (Olavarria 2023:99).[26] Such is clearly the case of "The Shunned House" (1924) and "The Evil Clergyman" (1933), both analyzed in the aforementioned publication, and which will serve as the basis for the study of another case of evil Protestant in "Pickman's Model" (1926).

The plot of "The Shunned House" (1924) takes place in Providence, Lovecraft's native city, and tells the story of an old colonial house that is empty and feared because everyone who lives there becomes sick and dies within a few months.[27] As the protagonist of the story discovers that the house was inhabited by a French sorcerer of the 17th century called François Roulet, who is the cosmic vampire that adopts the shape of a giant insect, it is also revealed that Roulet is described as an extremely radical Protestant. More specifically, the Roulets are described as "Huguenots from Caude" (Lovecraft [1924] 2015:1.465),[28] who a few years after they settled in New England, became very unpopular (Olavarria 2023:100). The reasons why the family was so rejected "extended beyond mere rational and national prejudice" (Lovecraft [1924] 2015: 1.465), and included "their ardent Protestantism -too ardent, some whispered" (Lovecraft [1924] 2015: 1.465). Although it can be argued that the family was just exaggerating their Protestant faith as a strategy to conceal their actual beliefs, which probably involved witchcraft and some sort of vampirism, Lovecraft might be suggesting that as a religious practice, radical Protestantism was uncannily close to witchcraft (Olavarria 2023:100). In any case, the secret worship of this apparently radical protestant family was soon discovered by their neighbors in France, where one of them had been sentenced to death as "demoniac" (Lovecraft [1924] 2015: 1.466). People in New England also soon noticed that the Roulet were "less apt at agriculture that at reading queer books and drawing queer diagrams" (Lovecraft [1924] 2015: 1.465), and that their "prayers were neither uttered at the proper

[26] The presence of wicked Protestants in Lovecraft's fiction contrasts with the relative absence of a Catholic counterpart. In Lovecraft's writings, Catholics are described as inoffensive and naive, and related to a religious non-Anglo-Saxon "other." An example of this is father Iwanicki, described as "a good priest" in "The Dreams in the Witch-House" (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.248).

[27] The victims suffer from some kind of physical and psychical consummation similar to a vampire attack (Olavarria 2023: 100).

[28] The Huguenots were French Calvinists, and thus belonged to one of the most radical branches of Protestantism, quite similar to the English Puritan Colonists (Trim 2011:1).

time nor directed towards the proper object" (Lovecraft [1924] 2015: 1.466). It is finally revealed that these "ardent protestants" were wizards that practiced witchcraft and magic (Olavarria 2023: 101) and Roulet is destroyed by the protagonist.

"The Evil Clergyman" is an incomplete, sketchy fragment of a story that Lovecraft left unfinished around 1933. It was probably inspired by a dream that Lovecraft had about "a clergyman in a garrett full of forbidden books" (Joshi 2013: 866). In this story, the homodiegetic protagonist visits an old haunted house where he experiences some sort of supernatural vision of a clergyman who is burning books because he is been accused of witchcraft. After the protagonist prevents the clergyman's suicide, the latter uses supernatural powers to exchange his physical appearance with the protagonist's, who adopts the appearance of the evil clergyman forever (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.514). The clergyman's wickedness is already explicit in the very title of the story, but also in his description, which contrasts his common external appearance, with his evil inner personality (Olavarria 2023:101). Thus, although "his build and lower facial features were like other clergymen," he "was darker and more intelligent-looking, also more subtly and concealedly *evil*-looking" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.511). As Roulet in "The Shunned House," this evil clergyman is Christian in appearance only, and is more interested in authors such as "Paracelsus, Albertus Magnus, Trithemius, Hermes Trimegistus, Borellus" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015:1.511), who were considered practitioners of Esotericism and magic (Alexandrian 2014: 74; 199; 243; 371), than in Christian books.

"Pickman's model" (1926) tells the story of Pickman, a mysteriously disappeared painter who had specialized in the representation of weird images, such as monsters that come out from the underground and attack and devore people. The narrator of the story is a friend of the artist, who is looking for him. In one of the canvases there was a picture of a monster feeding on a man in a very realistic way. At the end of the story, the narrator explains that he had discovered a photograph taken from natural that proved that this monster was a real creature (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.72). As in the two other stories, Lovecraft also uses Protestantism as the frame to introduce wickedness.

There is an excerpt in which one of Pickman's pictures represents a Protestant family. A member of that Puritan family is described as a wicked creature, since this individual is the product of a changeling with the race of the underground monsters:

> It was that of an ancient Puritan interior -a heavily beamed room with lattice windows, a settle, and clumsy seventeenth-century furniture, with the family sitting about while the father read from the Scriptures. Every face but one shewed nobility and reference, but that one reflected the mockery of the pit. It was that of a young man in years, and no doubt belonged to a supposed son of a pious father, but in essence it was the kin of the unclean things (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.65).

In these tales Lovecraft depicts New England colonial Protestantism as a dark religious practice somehow connected with pagan beliefs involving witchcraft and magic. Although the literary type of wicked Protestant had previously appeared in Hawthorne's fiction, in these tales, Lovecraft reinterprets said type, not as true Christians who enforce religious and social repression, but as wizards who practice a kind of secret sorcery continuing previous pagan beliefs of some cosmic significance. However, these evil protestants play a minor role in Lovecraft's fiction if we compare them to the huge bulk of his more explicit references to paganism.

I.1.3.2. Lovecraft's fascination on paganism

Biographical sources show that although Lovecraft rejected Christianity (even in its Protestant variation), he experienced a fascination on pagan cults and traditions even from his early childhood. In a much-quoted autobiographical recollection, Lovecraft affirms:

> When about seven or eight I was genuine pagan, so intoxicated with the beauty of Greece that I acquired a half-sincere belief in the old-gods and Nature-spirits. I have in literal truth built altars to Pan, Apollo, Diana, and Athena, and have watched for dryads and satyrs in the woods and fields at dusk. Once I firmly thought I beheld some of these sylvan creatures dancing under autumnal oaks; a kind of "religious experience" as true in its way as the subjective ecstasies of any Christian. If a Christian tell me he has *felt* the reality of his Jesus or Jahveh, I can reply I have *seen* the hoofed Pan and the sisters of the Hesperian Phaëthusa (Joshi 2013: 42).

This quotation shows Lovecraft's childhood skepticism and rejection of Christianity, but at the same time, his "half-sincere belief in the old-gods" expresses that he was fascinated by ancient religions since a very early stage in his life. At this time, his references to paganism were mainly benevolent classical divinities, showing an "early fondness of fairy tales [and] Graeco-Roman mythology" (Joshi 1990:3). The adult Lovecraft, however, will focus on a different type of

paganism based on dark forces that he took from different cultural references, such as the gods from the Ancient Near East in stories like “Dagon” (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 1.58), or the cults of the druids among Celtic people in his poem “Yule Horror” (Lovecraft [1926] 2001: 140).

Brandon Reynolds has pointed that, although Lovecraft was an atheist and a materialist, a close look at the role of religions in his writings demonstrates that he was an author deeply concerned with the problem of religion, and that he was also fascinated with paganism, but that he tended more and more to atheism along his life (Reynolds 2009: 96). Adult Lovecraft's personal attitude towards religion was certainly characterized by materialism and skepticism, as proved by autobiographical evidence in his letters: “In theory I am an agnostic, but pending the appearance of rational evidence I must be classed, practically and provisionally as an atheist” (Lovecraft 1965: 4.57). Thus, Joshi concludes that despite Lovecraft’s childhood visions of Pan, “there is no evidence that Lovecraft was anything but a materialist for the entirety of his life” (Joshi 1990: 81). In his study of the authors and philosophical ideas that underpinned Lovecraft's atheism and materialism, Joshi (1990:81) claims that Lovecraft's materialism was shaped by the readings of two books, Ernst Haeckel's *The Riddle of the Universe* (1899), and Hugh Elliot's *Modern Science and Materialism* (1919). According to him, this kind of materialism involves the rejection of any form of spiritualism, and the rejection of any sort of immaterial god, soul, or spirit. However, there is plenty of evidence of the adult Lovecraft’s fascination for paganism.

For instance, a very frequent motif in Lovecraft's fiction that seems to contradict this materialistic negation of any spiritual reality is possession. Possession, which involves the passing of the mind from one body into another one, is one of the central issues in stories such as “The Tomb,” “Polaris,” “Beyond the Wall of Sleep,” *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*, “The Thing on the Doorstep,” and “The Shadow Out of Time.” However, for Joshi, the topic of possession in Lovecraft's fiction does not imply a contradiction with materialism:

> The notion that the mind or consciousness is logically separable from the body seems, on the face of it, like a naive dualism and hence a refutation of the monistic materialism Lovecraft espoused. This objection can, I think, be dealt with fairly easily: Lovecraft in fact never suggests that the mind is different from the body (…). Lovecraft *identified* brain function with human personality (Joshi 1990: 94).

I contend that possession in Lovecraft may be more complex than a mere identification of personality with the physical brain. Lovecraft's acknowledgement that the mental processes took place in the brain is implied in "The Whisperer in Darkness," which describes how the physical brains of people are transported to planet Yuggoth (Pluto) in metal cylinders (Lovecraft [1930] 2015: 1.522), suggesting an identification of brain and mind. However, in the possession stories listed above, Lovecraft does not imply that the organic brains of the invaders are surgically interchanged with the brains of the invaded, but that their immaterial minds are by some supernatural means.

Lovecraft's ideas about paganism were strongly influenced by the historical and anthropological ideas of his times (Joshi 1990:24). As I have argued above, the meta-narratives of the late 19th and early 20th centuries considered that paganism was a highly heterogeneous set of pristine beliefs outside the major "civilized" and "instituted" religions of the East and the West, and frequently surrounded by an aura of mysterious allure. In this historical and cultural context and as non-religious person, Lovecraft experienced a deep fascination for ancient cults that he expressed in both in his literary production and criticism. In "Supernatural Horror in Literature," he would explain that:

> Much of the power of the Western horror-lore was undoubtedly due to the hidden but often suspected presence of a hideous cult of nocturnal worshipers whose strange customs -descended from pre-Aryan and pre-agricultural times when a squat race of Mongoloids roved over Europe with their flocks and herds -were rooted in the most revolting fertility-rites of immemorial antiquity. This secret religion, stealthily handed down among peasants for thousands of years despite the outward reign of the Druidic, Graeco-Roman and Christian faiths in the regions involved, was marked by the wild "Witches' Sabbath" in lonely woods and atop distant hills on Walpurgis- Night and Hallowe'en, the traditional breeding- seasons of the goats and sheep and cattle; and became the source of vast riches of sorcery-legend, besides provoking extensive witchcraft-prosecutions of which the Salem affair forms the chief American example (Lovecraft [1927]2008: 21).

This belief in a secret religion from prehistoric times that lasts throughout later historical periods was Margaret Murray's central idea, which Lovecraft had internalized together with many of the geographical and anthropological discoveries, historical reconstructions, myths and misconceptions about paganism from his time. His fiction and criticism also show that he selected and reinterpreted many of them, focusing on some particular aspects such as the pagan festivals, the

natural and artificial place where these took place, the interpretation of Western witchcraft as the historical continuity of pagan practices of the incorporation of divinities and supernatural beings from different pagan religions, which will be analyzed in this study.

Thus, although Lovecraft was an atheist strongly influenced by the materialist ideas of Haeckel and Elliot, he was also fascinated by paganism. He played building altars to pagan gods as a boy and included paganism in his fiction as an adult. Therefore, a distinction must be made between the author and his fiction. Lovecraft's own creation of a "dark paganism" included many elements taken from different cultural traditions, such as the Graeco-Roman, the Ancient Near East, or the Celts. In addition, Lovecraft included Murray's central idea about a secret religion practiced by a prehistorical race of worshippers that would have lasted through later historical periods, in the form of witchcraft.

As this introduction has intended to demonstrate, Lovecraft's fiction is complex and reflects the influence of previous horror writers as well as, to a lesser extent, the evolution of science fiction. In turn, Lovecraft influenced later fiction in both genres. The type of horror that Lovecraft produced is known as "cosmic horror," and it shows the insignificance of man and his interests and emotions versus an indifferent cosmos. In the last few decades scholarship on Lovecraft has rightly insisted on this feature, but there are other characteristics that are also central to his fiction. For instance, Lovecraft's fiction is also pervaded by paganism, which is a fundamental component in his fiction. Lovecraft's ideas about paganism were influenced by different elements, such as the evolution of the term from antiquity to his period, the expansion of European colonialism in other countries, the re-discovery of "primitive" paganism in Western countries, such as the "Celtic Revival," and the ideas of the main anthropologists and historians of his time. Although current interpretations of paganism are different from Lovecraft's times, it is necessary to assess the importance and functions of paganism to interpret correctly his fiction.

I.2 Objectives, theoretical framework and methodology

I.2.1 Aims, characteristics, relevance and limits of this research

The main aim of my study is to assess the importance of paganism, in its multiple forms, in the fiction of HP Lovecraft. Although most scholars have noticed that there is a pagan influence throughout Lovecraft's fiction, the main trends among scholarship tend to ignore or diminish its importance. The dominant approach recognizes that Lovecraft used ancient myths from different cults, but only as something merely decorative and irrelevant. Recent research has focused on those works that were written at the end of his life, such as the novelette *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931) and the long story "The Shadow Out of Time" (1935). In them the "pagan" factor is almost absent and instead there are detailed descriptions of alien civilizations, which would demonstrate an absolute rejection of the supernatural. These latter, materialistic stories are closer to the genre of science fiction and they have been considered as the epitome of Lovecraft's literary production. On the other hand, those stories in which the references to paganism are overwhelming, such as "The Dunwich Horror" (1928), "The Very Old Folk" (1927), or "The Dreams in the Witch House" (1932) have been ignored or are simply underrated as not the best stories by Lovecraft, or not fully coherent to Lovecraft's philosophy of cosmicism. Joshi for instance, finds "serious flaws of conception, execution, and style" (Joshi 2013:716) in "The Dunwich Horror," and considers "The Dreams in the Witch-House" as a "failure" and one of the most disappointing or Lovecraft's later tales (Joshi 2013:824).

I want to highlight the fact that *any* canon is necessarily arbitrary since it is marked by the election of some literary works as significant and the exclusion of others as irrelevant. There is no objective reason why the "science fiction-like" Lovecraft should be considered as the better or the truest Lovecraft. In fact, if Lovecraft is primarily considered a horror writer, some of the stories that have been underrated because they are not "fully-coherent" with the literary tradition of science fiction because they include too many pagan elements, must be qualified as more effective in producing uncanny and eldritch atmospheres than the stories that focus on depicting alien races as a

way to diminish the importance of humanity.

According to the dominant approach in Lovecraft's criticism, the irrelevance of the pagan elements in Lovecraft's fiction would reside in considering human cults, superstitions, and legends as the reaction of ignorant humans towards an alien reality that they cannot explain otherwise (Mosig 1997:24). Here, the word "alien" does not only mean "unfamiliar" or "unknown," but also refers to extraterrestrial forces and powers from Outside[30] (Mosig 1997:24). Mosig considers that Lovecraft's employment of pagan religious practices would be consistent with the depiction of certain human beings from different ages as unscientific and irrational, which would explain that they would have considered the material, outside powers visiting the earth as supernatural entities. This interpretation has been accepted by other critics such as Robert Price (2011: 262) or Joshi (2018a: 195). However, if paganism played such an irrelevant role in Lovecraft, I think that it would have been much easier to erase any references to it and instead write stories without any religious elements at all. These pagan elements are relevant in Lovecraft's fiction because they contribute to produce horror through indeterminacy and fear to the unknown. It increases tension because the reader cannot easily distinguish what is a material and what is supernatural.

The following quotation from a letter that Lovecraft wrote to Farnsworth Wright, the editor of *Weird Tales* magazine, has been interpreted as Lovecraft's manifesto about his literary intentions:

> Now all my tales are based on the fundamental premise that common human laws and interests and emotions have no validity or significance in the vast cosmos-at-large. To me there is nothing but puerility in a tale in which the human form--and the local human passions and standards--are depicted as natives to other worlds or other universes. To achieve the essence of real externality, whether of time or space or dimension, one must forget that such things as organic life, good and evil, love and hate, and all such local attributes of a negligible and temporary race called mankind, have any existence at all (Letter to Farnsworth Wright, 5th July 1927; abridged by S.T. Joshi (Joshi 2013:642)).

This part of Lovecraft's letter has been exhaustively repeated and considered as a declaration of principles that reinforces the idea of cosmicism in his fiction: the insignificance and unimportance of mankind in a vast, indifferent universe. However, there are two aspects of this

[30] Mosig capitalizes and uses inverted commas in the word "Outside," explaining that it means "from beyond the sphere of conscious human experience: the unplumbed abysses of space, other dimensions, other universes, and the nightmare depths of the unconscious" (Mosig 1997:24).

quotation that deserve consideration. Firstly, that although it is true that this idea is central to Lovecraft's cosmic horror (as can be seen in the comparisons between human and alien races in different stories), the complexity of Lovecraft's fiction *does* include different ways to produce atmospheres of horror other than merely diminishing the significance of humans. The allure of paganism is one of these different ways. Secondly, although there was always coherence in Lovecraft's style, there was also an evolution in the themes and characteristics in his fiction, from a period in which there are more supernatural elements to a period which has been called "non-supernatural cosmic art" (Joshi 2013: 766). In this regard, the initial word "Now" in this quotation has been significantly overlooked. If Lovecraft's letter to Wright is contextualized within the last period of his literary production (from 1927 to his death in 1937), his claims would refer to this last period, when science fiction became more and more prominent in his narrative, and not to the previous period, which lasted approximately from 1917 to 1926. Finally, Lovecraft's claims in this letter do not account for the fact that the pagan elements continued to appear in his fiction even in its later period.

Although the "insignificance of humankind in a vast universe" is central to Lovecraft's cosmic horror, it does not suffice to produce horror on its own. This point is easily proved by a counter-example: the fact that the first episodes or chapters of non-fictional, popular science book and TV show from the early 1980s *Cosmos,* by Carl Sagan, portrays the insignificance of mankind versus a vast universe. As Sagan points out, "in a cosmic perspective, most human concerns seem insignificant, even petty" (1995:20). In *Cosmos,* Sagan explained that mankind is not anything special, that our galaxy cluster was one in many galaxy clusters, our galaxy was only one in that particular cluster, and our Sun one of the less relevant stars among the millions contained in the galaxy. Sagan also described alien civilizations more advanced than humans and predicted the death of our planet in some distant future. Although most of these concepts and ideas are accepted by most educated readers around the world, Sagan's *Cosmos* does NOT produce horror, only fascination about the universe. In Lovecraft's time, educated readers were also familiar with atheist

cosmovisions that did not regard man as the center of the universe. Thus, it would be wrong to attribute the effect of horror that Lovecraft's stories can convey in readers, to the cosmic insignificance of mankind *only*. In Lovecraft's literary production, this effect is the result of the combination of other elements, which also include his use of language in depicting its uncanny atmospheres and settings, the careful design of threatening situations, or his intelligent use of psychological frames, including madness and dreams. In this study, I will demonstrate that together with these elements, paganism is also essential to produce the effect of cosmic horror in Lovecraft's fiction.

This general objective will be supported by different kinds of evidence in the fiction by HP Lovecraft, including lexical, astronomical, religious, magical, and ritual evidence. The lexical evidence supporting the relevance of paganism in Lovecraft's cosmic horror lays mainly in his frequent use of the word "gods" to describe the powerful dark beings in the stories. Lovecraft's use of this word is more significant when he employs an omniscient, third person narrator and not just some group of the ignorant human characters who worship said beings. Such is the case "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Strange High House in the Mist." As an atheist, Lovecraft could have used the term "monsters," "aliens," or "extraterrestrials." His choice of the term "gods" instead obviously involves a religious dimension that adds a different layer of horror to these beings other than their mere superiority to insignificant human beings. The use of an omniscient narrator to voice this term, forces readers to focalize their perception of the dark beings through the irrational beliefs of human beings and their helplessness in facing realities beyond their comprehension as well as their own cosmic insignificance.

The lexical evidence accounting for the relevance of paganism in Lovecraft's fiction is reinforced by evidence establishing a connection between pagan rituals and astronomical events. In "The Dunwich Horror," "The Very Old Folk," and "The Festival," the dark beings that humans regard as deities can be summoned only in pagan festivals coinciding with astronomical events, implying that said events may convey some symbolism even for extraterrestrials. It could be argued

that extraterrestrials would set the dates of human pagan festivities to make them coincide with astronomical events that would induce awe in ignorant humans to better coerce them into submission. However, it could also be argued that given their intellectual and technological superiority, it would be unlikely that they needed to do so, and ridiculous to assume that they would do it just to get some food from sporadic sacrifices. Thus, Lovecraft's fiction suggests that specific astronomical events might also have some relevance for the dark beings.

Religious evidence adds to the lexical evidence in accounting for the relevance of paganism in Lovecraft's fiction. Although superior to humans in intellectual and technological skills, some aliens in Lovecraft's stories also have their own beliefs in the supernatural. The alien races that appear in some stories, such as the Deep Ones in "The Shadow over Innsmouth" and the Fungi of Yuggoth in "The Whisperer in Darkness," have their own gods and temples. This suggests that Lovecraft's fiction does not restrict religious practice to an exclusively human behavior, but extends its practice to a cosmic, universal dimension, implying a connection between the rational and the irrational, the natural and the supernatural, the material and the numinous.

In Lovecraft's tales of cosmic horror, alien belief in supernatural forces is validated by textual evidence showing that they appear to be afraid of certain rituals and magical spells that humans use to expel them back to the outer space, such as it happens in "The Dunwich Horror." The religious and the magical converging in paganism also imbue some pagan symbols such as the swastika with the power to expel aliens from Earth in "The Shadow over Innsmouth," while the effective use of the Christian crucifix to repel the witch in "The Dreams in the Witch House" suggests that aliens and other dark beings are somehow subject to supernatural influences.

All of this evinces that Mosig's explanation of the presence of paganism in Lovecraft's fiction as a superstitious expression of human ignorance in the face of rationally and technologically superior beings is insufficient and therefore requires to be completed with a deeper analysis into the identification, function, and significance of paganism in Lovecraft's work.

The presence of many references to pagan religions in the fiction of an atheist may be

explained in the light of a much-quoted letter to Rheinhart Kleiner where he describes his nature as a tripartite composite of the fantastic, the scientific-logical and the universal:

> I should describe mine own nature as tripartite, my interests consisting of three parallel and dissociated groups -(a) Love of the strange and the fantastic. (b) Love of the abstract truth and scientific logic. (c) Love of the ancient and the permanent. Sundry combinations of these strains will probably account for all my tastes and eccentricities (Joshi 2013: 30)

As he himself points out, although dissociate, Lovecraft's tripartite interests not only run parallel to each other, but also combine in his tastes in fiction. Their conflation may therefore obey to an aesthetic function that has been overlooked so far. Lovecraft's fascination for the strange in the fantastic certainly finds expression in the weirdness of his fiction. Because this weirdness is in overt contradiction with his love for scientific logic, it is aesthetically reinforced by it by means of contrast; that is, the more his fiction presses on importance of science (astronomy, chemistry, biology...), the bigger the effect of the irrational. The ancient and the permanent find expression in Lovecraft's evocation of ancient myths, beliefs, and traditions that Lovecraft ambiguously approaches by combining the historical, the anthropological, and the religious in the myths and legends from different cultures, including those of classical Greece and Rome, the Ancient Near East, the Judeo-Christian tradition, or the Celtic and Germanic influence in his loved England among other places.

In general, I aim to demonstrate that the presence of these pagan elements serves as a balance and a contrast to the atheism, scientism, and cosmicism that pervades his narrative. A more specific aim of this research is to assess the importance of those pagan elements in creating atmospheres that heighten the effect of horror in Lovecraft's fiction. It is my claim that the attractiveness of Lovecraft's writing lies precisely in this balance and contrast between scientism and paganism and not with the negation of the latter. Within this general frame, the specific objectives of my research include assessing the nature, abundance and frequency of pagan elements in Lovecraft's fiction, as well as the different cultures that originated them; identifying the sources where Lovecraft found information about them together with their scientific and cultural specificities; assessing the reasons behind Lovecrafts' choice of certain pagan elements over others

and the particular features he recreates in his myths and gods; and determining the narrative and aesthetic function of said pagan elements.

These objectives do not simply target the study of the Cthulhu Mythos and fictional gods by themselves, but as a product of the interaction of Lovecraft and his literary circle with the historical, archaeological, and cultural tradition to which they belonged. In chapter II, I will try to identify and analyze the sources of the most relevant pagan elements in Lovecraft's fiction. Then, I will proceed to analyze the characteristics of Lovecraft's own myths (and the nature of the Old Ones as aliens or gods) by focusing on identifying their most relevant pagan influences and how Lovecraft incorporated them to his particular recreation (chapter III). Later, I will try to demonstrate that the main function of paganism in Lovecraft's fiction is to produce atmospheres of horror through three narrative strategies: liminality as a means to produce indeterminacy, circularity or the periodical repetitions of events and elements to suggest unavoidability, and synchronicity or the coincidence of acausal relations to produce verisimilitude. Finally, in chapter IV, I will apply the methods of myth-analysis and myth-criticism to describe how old pagan elements and myths contributed to produce Lovecraft´s own myths as original composites specific of cosmic horror.

I.2.2 Theoretical Framework

The interdisciplinary nature of my research determines that my theoretical framework must also be interdisciplinary. Broadly speaking it combines the cultural references in Lovecraft's period (which include the literary sources of the period, and the historical, anthropological, and archaeological theories and interpretations about paganism that were more or less accepted at his times) with diverse critical instruments provided by the most widespread theories about myths and ancient religions of the 20th and 21st centuries. Among the sources and theories from Lovecraft's period, there are horror writers such as Arthur Machen and John Buchan, whose fiction frequently shows the continuity of ancestral pagan practices in societies contemporary to them, as well as

anthropologists such as Margaret Murray, James Frazer E. B. Tylor and historians as John Fiske, whose research accepted this continuity but as a historical fact. The critical instruments used also include the later classic structuralist definitions and approaches about the concept of myth by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *Myth and Meaning* (1978), which are still valid to some extent. Although his ideas had not been fully developed in the times of HP Lovecraft's times, Lévi-Strauss was influenced by the same pre-structuralist approaches in anthropology and cultural studies by Frazer and Murray. In Lévi-Strauss' structuralist approach, the main task of the researcher of myths is the "quest for the invariant, or for the invariant elements along superficial differences" (Lévi-Strauss 1978:8). To him, the "invariant" are those similar elements that appear in different narrations and cultural patterns, but which ultimately depend on a same, universal structure of the human mind. The ideas of Lévi-Strauss are interesting because they provide a plausible explanation to the similarities shared by myths from different cultures and different geographical areas as well as those that appear in different artistic and literary manifestations. This notion of the "invariant" in the mythical is similar to what Lovecraft did when he combined different myths in his fiction around their common features.

The general frame established by Lévi-Strauss structuralist approach is completed with more specific approaches provided by the comparative study of myth and religion developed by mythoanalysis, mythocritism, and analytical psychology. These studies were developed in the second half of the 20th century by the Eranos Circle, which originated upon the collaboration of such noted scholars such as Mircea Eliade (comparative religion and myth), Carl Gustav Jung (the relations between myths and universal archetypes) and Gilbert Durand (mythoanalysis and mythocriticism). Although their approach was different from Levy-Strauss', the members of the Eranos Circle were also heavily influenced by the same authors as Lovecraft, including the aforementioned Frazer, Murray, Tylor and Fiske.[31]

[31]Mircea Eliade was aware of the theories of Frazer and Tylor (González, 2008:94), as Lovecraft was, also including Fiske (Joshi 1990:24). Carl Gustav Jung also knew the theories of Tylor (Kenny 2015: 176) and Frazer (Kenny 2015: 176).

Mircea Eliade was a historian of religion who specialized in the study of myths across different religious traditions, the symbolism of these religions and about the personal processes of initiation in those myths through rituals, which he analyzes in works such as *Cosmos and History. The Myth of the Eternal Return* (1958), and *Rites and symbols of Initiation. The Mysteries of birth and Rebirth* (1958). A good deal of his research can be applied to the study of Lovecraft's fiction. As both adapted a previous idea of paganism, Eliade's notion of an "Eternal Return," which is based on a circular conception of time, is quite similar to Lovecraft's cyclical representation of time. In addition, Eliade studied myths across different cultures and analyzed initiation rituals in pagan religions, which is very productive to study Lovecraft's fiction, in which these elements play a very relevant role.

As stated above, I will also use Carl Gustav Jung's concepts of collective unconscious, archetypes, and synchronicity. Jung's synchronicity is very relevant for the study of Lovecraft, because quite frequently in his fiction, isolated individuals from different places experience simultaneously the same dreams and hallucinations, interpreting them as pagan revelations according to their cultural background. In addition, in Lovecraft's fiction it is also very common that different pagan religions and myths include very similar or identical features, as if the minds of the participants in these cults had access to a shared collective unconscious, or their gods were just representations of common archetypes, sometimes identifiable with the "Old Ones". As Mosig points out, Jung's concepts of collective unconscious, archetypes, and synchronicity have been considered "an excellent framework for the interpretation of the works of H. P. Lovecraft" (Mosig, 1997: 35). Mosig argues that "any writer will tend to express his psyche in his tales, even though few authors have done so as powerfully as H. P. Lovecraft" (35). Lovecraft mentioned Jung several times in his *Selected Letters,* and discussed psychoanalytical theory, which makes obvious that he was well aware of this psychologist and his work. It is then quite plausible that Lovecraft chose symbols akin to Jung's to express inner struggles of man (35). Thus, in this research I will use Jung's *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (2002) and "Synchronicity: An Acausal

Connecting Principle" (1955).

Additionally, I will also apply Gilbert Durand's theories of mythoanalisis and mythocritisim to Lovecraft's fiction for the first time. This involves the identification and analysis of the different myths that appear in his works, their classification in major types, the study of their relationship with other literary, cultural, and religious myths, their division into their mythemes or constituents, and the study of how these are articulated. This method is applied in Durand's *Figures mythiques et visages de l'ouvre. De la mythocritique à la mythalanyse* (2013). Durand was a French anthropologist and art critic, specialized in the field of mythology, and who, influenced by the structuralist ideas of Lévi-Strauss, developed the concepts of mythoanalysis and mythocriticism. Durand's approaches are coherent with Lévi Strauss', Eliade's, and Jung's, whose respective concepts of invariants, eternal-return and synchronicity are very frequently mentioned in the book above. The interrelation of these authors and concepts is very useful to study Lovecraft's fiction, because all of them tend to converge together.

A last component of my approach considers more recent studies on paganism and myths that have rejected the validity of some of the holistic approaches of Murray and Frazer. In this regard, the work of Ronald Hutton (from the archeological and anthropological perspective) and Simon Bronner (from the folklorist and historian perspective) do not focus on general similarities between myths, but on their differences. This apparent contradiction between the interpretation of paganism within the cultural discourses in Lovecraft' time and literary production and present-day interpretations of paganism that intend to be more historically accurate can be explained because science has advanced and diversified. Current approaches on anthropology and mythology, such as Hutton's and Bronner's, do not offer new metanarratives, but instead tend to focus on the co-existence of different interpretations, usually contradictory, at the same level. In this study their insights are useful because these provide an alternative critical counterpart to the other critic instruments mentioned above.

I.2.3. Corpus of research

Since my analysis does not only involve a close-reading of particular texts by Lovecraft where importance of paganism is most revealing, but also identifying the pagan elements of his fiction in general, it requires that I select an extended corpus. A primary corpus of analysis is made up of three groups of works, such as narrative, that constitute the bulk of it, poetry, and essays.

Narrative:

First, I will provide a classification of the stories that I have selected. A first group of them can be classified as the "tales of the Lovecraft's Mythos"[32] that take place in the "wakeful world," and in which paganism usually plays a relevant role. This includes some stories in which the number of references to pagan elements is overwhelming, such as "Dagon" (1917), "The Moon-Bog" (1921), "The Festival" (1923), "The Rats in the Walls" (1923), "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926), "The Very Old Folk" (1927), "The Dunwich Horror" (1928), "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930), "The Shadow over Innsmouth" (1932), and "The Dreams in the Witch House" (1932). The last story is particularly useful because of Murray's insights about witchcraft including elements such as the "dwarf race", "familiars "or the "black man" are found there. This group has proved to be the most productive to identify almost all types of pagan elements (chapter II). There is a second subgroup within these "tales of the Lovecraft's mythos," in which paganism is still frequent, but to a lesser extent. This includes stories such as "The transition of Juan Romero" (1919), "The Moon-Bog" (1921), "The Horror at Red Hook" (1925), the novella *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1927), "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930), "The Thing on the Doorstep" (1933), or "The Haunted of the Dark (1935). These stories contain fewer pagan elements, but these are still present, because quite frequently they deal with a different topic. A third subgroup of stories from the "Mythos," including the novella *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931) and "The Shadow Out of Time" (1935), are much closer to the science fiction genre, since these deal with the political and

[32] As Joshi points the term Lovecraft's Mythos has been more felicitous than the previous "Cthulhu Mythos", that was invented by August Derleth after Lovecraft's death (Joshi 2013:642). Lovecraft never used the latter term, but occasionally referenced to his "Cthuluism & Yog-Sothotery" (2013:642).

social analysis of alien societies described as non-supernatural, and in them the pagan elements are very few. Nevertheless, the three groups in this paragraph provide relevant insights for the comparative study of myth-criticism and myth-analysis of Lovecraft with other cultural and religious myths (chapter IV).

Another group of the selected stories deals with the so-called “Dream-Cycle,” including “Memory” (1917), “Ex Oblivione” (1917), “The Other Gods” (1921), “The Silver Key “(1926), “The Strange House in the Mist” (1926), the novella *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1927) and “The Book” (1933). In them, the events take place in a world of dreams, such as in Randolph Carter’s oneiric adventures. One of stories, “The Other Gods,” is particularly relevant for this research, since it demonstrates that apart form the dark Old Ones, there exists another group of gods or entities, the Earth’s gods with very different features from the Great Old Ones (chapter III). The importance of this “Dream-Cycle,” frequently diminished by readers and critics, should not be overlooked, because they complete the information that does not appear in the “Mythos” stories, such as information about Lovecraft’s dark pantheon. In addition, these tales also provide information for the application of myth-analysis and myth criticism in Lovecraft’s fiction (chapter IV)

A final group of stories, difficult to classify, includes “The Outsider” (1921), one of the best stories by Lovecraft, but closer in style to classic horror than to cosmicism, “Under the Pyramids” (1925), a tale of adventures in Egypt that Harry Houdini requested Lovecraft to write for him and “Nyarlathotep” (1920), an unclassifiable prose poem about decadence of the Western Civilization. These possess in variable degrees each one, the features that have been identified: pagan elements, references to the Dark pantheon and myths susceptible to be studied. Apart from these, and although they are not included in this list, I will also mention some other stories where decontextualized information about Lovecraft's insights on paganism and myths add up to provide information.

Poetry:

Fungi from Yuggoth (1929-1930) is a collection of sonnets in which Lovecraft includes many pagan elements, useful for the three functions (study of paganism, Lovecraft's Old Ones and myths and myth-criticism) commented above. As stated in a previous section in chapter I, Lovecraft produced lots of poetry, but only a small part of it can be ascribed to the genre of weird or eldritch poetry. These few weird poems are very relevant for the study of paganism.

Essays:

This includes "Supernatural Horror in Literarure" (1927), "Notes on Writing Weird Fiction" (1933), and "Notes on Writing Interplanetary fiction" (1935) Although Lovecraft's literary essays are not the place where his own use of paganism can be found, they are very useful to study Lovecraft's insights about other horror writers, and the techniques that he used to produce atmospheres of horror. For instance, "Supernatural Horror in Literature" includes other writers uses and insights about paganism within their fiction and Lovecraft's critical reception of them.

In this chapter the main characteristics of Lovecraft's fiction as cosmic horror and its relations to both the horror and science fiction genres have been analyzed, as well as the main contributions from scholarship into his cosmic horror, based on indifferentism, this is to say, the insignificance of mankind, its interests and emotions in a vast, infinite universe. However, this not the only element that Lovecraft used to produce his cosmic atmospheres of horror. He applied other techniques, such as the careful use of language, the settings, the atmospheres, madness and the presence of paganism. Paganism plays an overwhelming role in most of Lovecraft's fiction, and as suggested above, the presence of these pagan elements serves as a balance and a contrast to the atheism and scientism that pervades his narrative. This can be noticed in the overwhelming presence of pagan elements. These pagan elements will be identified and classified in chapter II. Chapter III will focus on how these pagan elements contributed to produce Lovecraft's own dark pantheon, and how paganism also contribute to create atmospheres of horror through three narrative

strategies: liminality, circularity, and synchronicity. Chapter IV will study how these paganism, narrative strategies and previous myths are used to produce Lovecraft's myths, and how the latter can be studied through myth-analysis and myth-criticism.

II. THE PAGAN ELEMENTS IN THE FICTION OF H.P. LOVECRAFT

As I argued above, Lovecraft's atheism was not an obstacle for the inclusion of pagan elements in his literary production. Despite their minimization by previous Lovecraft scholarship (Joshi 2013:1055), his fiction is pervaded by many religious elements that were classified as pagan in his time. In fact, this chapter will demonstrate that the presence of pagan elements in Lovecraft's works is both quantitatively and qualitatively overwhelming. In order to do this, I will identify, describe, and classify these pagan elements, relating them to each other and analyzing their textual function in Lovecraft's literary project. More specifically, I have used a close-reading analysis of these pagan elements in relation to their literary, anthropological, and cultural origin and development that is followed by an analysis of the specific characteristics that Lovecraft developed in his work for each of them. My analysis will show that the functions of these elements sometimes go beyond merely depicting humans as ignorant and superstitious creatures before an alien presence they can neither comprehend not control, and that pagan elements are a structural component of Lovecraft's fictional world.

The different sections and subsections in this chapter respond to the categorization of the extensive list of pagan elements in Lovecraft's fiction, which have been ordered from the more circumstantial to the more specifically supernatural or magical. In the first two sections, I have included the circumstantial elements that provide Lovecraft's stories with a temporal and spatial framework. Section one analyzes cyclical time frameworks and pagan festivals, such as May Eve, Halloween, Candlemass, Yule, Lammas and others. Section two focuses on settings, including both "natural" landscapes with pagan connotations, such as mountains, hills, woods, rivers, or caves and the more "artificial" locations of rituals, such as circles of stones, other megaliths, and altars. Section three focuses on ritual practices, including sacrifices, oaths, prayers, magic words, music, dance, and magic spells and formulae. The three following sections deal with characters that were depicted by Lovecraft as connectors between ancient forms of paganism and witchcraft. Thus, section four deals with the dwarf race of the witches; section five, with the character of the Black

Man; and section six, with familiars of the witches. In the two last sections, I have included elements more generally dealing with religion and magic. Section seven analyzes divinities and mythical creatures from ancient, historical cults, classified according to their different cultural origin. Finally, section eight analyzes pagan and esoteric symbols in Lovecraft's fiction, showing that sometimes, these can even determine the denouement of a story.

All these elements usually appear combined in most of Lovecraft's works. The combination of these pagan elements often occurs in the description of ceremonies that were inspired by Lovecraft's acquaintance with scholarly reconstructions of witchcraft rituals. Thus, in Lovecraft's stories, the prototypical ceremony takes place at particular days of the year, in settings such as the tops of the hills and forests, generally involving the use of fire, human sacrifices, chants, dances and magic words. The presence of other common elements typical of the folklore of witchcraft such as familiars, the Black Man, and exotic divinities contribute to reinforce the reconstruction of detailed pagan atmospheres as the suitable frame for the irruption of cosmic horror into the human sphere. These elements are more frequent in those stories where historical and traditional features play a more relevant role than in those where science fiction is more prominent, but in general, both of them appear intertwined in most cases.

II.1 The Cyclical Time Framework. Pagan Festivals.

The role of time in Lovecraft's stories, involves two aspects that are of utmost importance because they exemplify a pagan conception: dimension and circularity. Firstly, as Michel Houellebecq has noticed, the juxtaposition of events in human times involving hours and minutes with other cosmic times involving hundreds of millions of years in stories such as the "The Shadow Out of Time" induces a disproportion in scale (Houellebecq 2006:75) and contributes to the use of a style akin to a scientific report in which two scales of time are confronted and analyzed using the scientific language. Thus, the human perception of time is diminished through the comparison with longer cosmic scales of time. Secondly, the linear conception of time, which is typical of many

modern societies, is substituted in Lovecraft's fiction by a cyclical time framework. At least for a period of time, Lovecraft's philosophical ideas about the universe included the belief "that all entity evolves in cycles -that sooner or later everything occurs practically all over again" (Lovecraft 1965: 1.56-57). In his essay *In Defence of Dagon* (1921), he affirmed that "nothing but a cycle is in any case conceivable, -a cycle or an infinite rearrangement" (Lovecraft 1986:16). Joshi has interpreted this as evidence of the influence Nietzsche's concept of eternal recurrence on Lovecraft's worldviews, which he considers compatible with materialistic and deterministic philosophy (1990:8).

Although current theories in anthropology discard most of their research on ancient religions (including the survival of paganism in European folklore and witchcraft), Frazer and Murray, whose studies had a strong influence in their period,[33] argued that a hypothetical cyclical calendar of pagan origin would have been observed in European countries from Prehistoric times to the early Modern Period (16^{th}-17^{th} centuries). The pagan festivals and rituals they described in their work appear very frequently in Lovecraft's fiction, inspiring the temporal framework of said rituals, their invocations, sacrifices, or the birth of monsters.

Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1906-1915), which he republished as an abridged version in one volume in 1922, was a monumental treatise in twelve volumes about the religion and beliefs of different peoples of humanity. He suggested that ancient magic and religions were similar in different cultures around the world, because "primitive" men usually provided the same answers to the same questions (Frazer [1922] 1996: xxvii). His long section on a time of ceremony that he grouped under the label "the Fire-festivals of Europe" (Frazer [1922] 1996: 731), strongly resonates in many of Lovecraft's works that will be analyzed in this section. Murray's different treatises about witchcraft, including the celebrated *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921), postulated that the witch-cult was an ancient religion of Western Europe from Prehistoric times to the Early Modern Period, when it continued to exist as a concealed cult that she related to illiteracy and rusticity in

[33] Lovecraft even mentions them in one of his most famous stories, "The Call of Cthulhu" (Lovecraft [1926]2015:2.34).

contrast with the more urban, literate Christianity: “underlying the Christian religion was a cult practiced by many classes of the community, chiefly, however, by the more ignorant or those in the less thickly inhabited parts of the country” (1921: 7). These ideas are also common in Lovecraft’s fiction, as will be shown in different sections of this chapter.

The festivals that most frequently appear in Lovecraft's fiction include two major ceremonies: the May-Eve, which is celebrated in the eve of May 1st; and Halloween, in the eve of November 1st. Lovecraft’s choice of these specific festivals shows the influence of Frazer and Murray's studies. According to Frazer, these festivals were considered “the principal fire festivals of the Celts” ([1922] 1996:759), whereas for Murray, their dates would indicate the use of a pre-agricultural calendar “earlier than the solsticial division of the year” (1921: 7). Lovecraft attributed an outstanding importance to them in different stories, such as “The Shadow Over Innsmouth,” where the “main festivals or revivals, which fell twice a year on April 30th and October 31st” (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.178) were celebrated by the alien race of the Deep Ones.

The pagan calendar in Lovecraft’s fiction also comprised, although less frequently, other festivals that were based on astronomical events related to the succession of seasons such as solstices, equinoxes, and intermediate dates. These include Lammas, on the eve of August 1; Yule, on the eve of December 22nd or on Christmass Eve; Candlemass, the eve of February 2nd; or Rodmass on May 3rd; and Midsummer Eve or Saint John’s Day on June 23rd. A detailed study of each of these festivals in Lovecraft's fiction will also be provided below to analyze their interrelations and the functions that they fulfill within his narrative beyond the Frazer’s and Murray’s influence.

II.1.1 May Eve (April 30th) and Halloween (October 31st)

May Eve and Halloween are the two most frequent festivals in different stories by Lovecraft, where they usually appear together. Their connection suggests the influence of both Frazer and Murray, who also discuss them together as the religious manifestation of ancient pagan

cultures. According to the latter, “the dates of the two chief festivals, May Eve and November Eve, indicate the use of a calendar which is generally acknowledged to be pre-agricultural and earlier than the solsticial division of the year” (Murray 1921: 7). Frazer narrows this practice down to the Celtic inhabitants of the British Islands, who would have celebrated these festivals separated by an interval of six months “on the eve of May Day and the other on Allhallow eve or Hallowe'en, as it is now commonly called, that is on the thirty-first of October” (Frazer [1922] 1996:759). Frazer had also noticed that these two festivals did not have any relation to seasons of the sun, since they are not at the beginning or the end of any of the four seasons, but they were important because they marked two turning-points of the year (Frazer [1922] 1996:759). These festivals were earlier than the solsticial festivals and marked the beginning of the warmest and the coldest parts of the year. Frazes argues that Halloween was also the time when “the souls of the departed were supposed to revisit their old homes”, “witches speed their errands of mischief”, and “fairies, too, are all let loose” ([1922] 1996:761). He also refers to May Day as a “the notorious Walpurgis Night, when the witches are everywhere speeding unseen through the air on their hellish errands” ([1922] 1996:746). Thus, it is quite understandable that these two festivals played such a relevant role in some horror fiction, particularly in Lovecraft’s.

Many of the most relevant stories by Lovecraft allude to May Eve and Halloween. These include “The Shadow over Innsmouth”, “The Dreams in the Witch House”, “The Thing on the Doorstep”, “The Haunter of the Dark”, “The Very Old Folk” and “The Dunwich Horror”. The choice and frequency of these two festivals in Lovecraft's fiction may denote the Anglophile inclinations underlaying his claim of an “ancestry was that of unmixed English gentry” (Joshi 2013: 13) and its cultural heritage of Germanic ascendence. In several stories, Lovecraft makes the Germanic connection explicit by referring to was May Eve as “Walpurgis Night,” a festival in honor a Saint Walpurgis that had also been celebrated in Central Europe[34] (Frazer [1922] 1996:759-760).

“The Shadow over Innsmouth” describes the beliefs of the alien race of the Deep Ones and

[34] Frazer does not provide specific dates of the historical period where this festival was celebrated (1996:760).

their semi-human hybrid descendants. In the story, the protagonist of the story learns from a frightened clerk about "their main festivals or revivals, which fell twice a year on April 30th and October 31st" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.178). Later in the story, Zadok Allen, an old drunkard with a good memory but poor English skills refers several times to these festivals. The first time, Allen mentions the sacrifices "o' young folks to the sea-things twict every year -May-Eve and Hallowe'en-reg'lar as cud be" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.189). The protagonist in the story is a young man interested in Innsmouth as an accursed town, but the inhabitants of Innsmouth deny providing any information to strangers about what is taking place there, so Allen becomes useful for him because he is the only character that once drunk, becomes loquacious revealing. Allen reveals that the inhabitants of the city signed a pact with the alien Deep Ones, and substituted Christianity by paganism. Thus, his narration contributes to describe these celebrations as pagan, mentioning these pagan festivals, comparing the new pagan religion to the idols in the Old Testament and describing how pagan rituals substituted Protestant churches in Innsmouth ([1931] 2015: 3.193). Later, he also mentions the spooky sounds in these festivals when he affirms that "they all haowl on May-Eve, and agin the next Hallowe'en" ([1931] 2015: 3.194) and that it was terrible "to hear what comes from that awful reef every May-Eve and Hallowmass" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.199). To provide an atmosphere of horror to these celebrations, the practice of human sacrifices incorporates an animal-like sonorous setting that can be traced to Murray's influence, who relates witchcraft to animal transformation (Murray 1921:222). Although scientifically inaccurate regarding anthropological studies contemporary to Lovecraft, his blending of pagan rituals and witchcraft in this story contributes to create an atmosphere of horror around a vague notion of paganism that has more to do with literary effect than with scientific interest.

In "The Dreams in the Witch House," Lovecraft describes the madness of a student of Mathematics who rents an old house. The fact that the house had been owned by a witch in the past allows him to introduce many references to pagan practices that include the festivals of "May-Eve and Hallowmass" (Lovecraft [1932] 2015, 3.233). The order of events in the story makes it possible

to distinguish between the two festivals. The action takes place on the proximity of May-Eve festival which, in this story, is called “the Witches Sabbath.” Thus, the story explains that “May-Eve was Walpurgis-Night, when hell's blackest evil roamed the earth and all the slaves of Satan gathered for nameless rites and deeds” ([1932] 2015: 3.242-243). This festival was “dreaded” and “feared” especially within the immigrant population of the community ([1932] 2015: 3.257), since it involved the sacrifices of foreign innocent children. A Polish baby called Ladislas who had been kidnapped was going to be the victim “at the awful sabbat on Walpurgis-Night” (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.263). The story contains many elements regarding different aspects of the Sabbath ceremony including music, or the Black Man, as well as animals and familiars that will be analyzed in following sections and which closely resemble the insights of Murray's historical reconstruction of witchcraft in 15th to 17th centuries. In “The Haunter of the Dark,” the main events also take place in the last days of April, “just before the aeon-shadowed Walpurgis time” (Lovecraft [1935] 2015, 3.455). Although this reference to May-Eve does not seem to have a particular importance in the plot, it still has the function of conveying a particular aesthetic effect in creating a specific atmosphere.

In “The Thing on the Doorstep,” a story of possession and mind migration into different bodies, the main festival depicted is Halloween. A young man, Edgar Derby has married Asenath Waite, a strange woman who is possessed by her father's mind, the wizard Ephraim Waite. Since old Ephraim preferred to possess a masculine brain, he means to switch from his daughter's to Derby's, which can only happen at a specific date. Several anthropological approaches to paganism in Lovecraft's period regarded Halloween as the night when the souls of the dead were set free to revisit their old homes (Frazer [1922] 1996:761). In Lovecraft’s story, Ephraim's evil project to switch bodies cannot take place at any random date, but only on Halloween, which made it necessary to hold a Sabbat up “at Hallowmass” (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.346). Although Derby managed to interrupt this possession by smashing Asenath's head with a candlestick during the ritual (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.356), Asenath's buried corpse finally comes back from the dead to

possess Derby's body and mind a few months later, just before Candlemass. In this way, the timeline of the main events is adapted to the timing of pagan festivals, in which Halloween plays a central role.

The plot of “The Very Old Folk” is allegedly based on a dream that Lovecraft would have had around Hallowe'en time in 1927 inspired by a translation of the *Aeneid* by J. Rhoades (Joshi 2013: 695). Greatly excited by this dream, Lovecraft wrote the short story, which he sent attached to letters to some of his friends. His epistolary account of the dream sets it in the Basque area of the Ancient Roman Province of Tarraco, where Lovecraft adopted the persona of a Roman quaestor who was about to have a terrifying experience. As Joshi affirms, it is difficult to distinguish between the elements in the story that would have been in the original dream and the elements that Lovecraft later added for a greater aesthetic impact (2013: 696-697). Although this story has attracted relatively little interest compared with some of the longer ones, it might be one of his most interesting tales regarding paganism. The action takes place the first day “before the Kalends of November” (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 3.494), which is to say at Halloween, according to the Roman calendar. The story begins with a description of the incidents that take place on “All Hallows' Eve with its Witch-Sabbaths on the hills” (Lovecraft [1927] 2015, 3.494). This combination in the use of “All Hallows' Eve” and “the Kalends of November” involves a narratological shift from the perspective of the American narrator that provides the account of the story (Lovecraft) to the Roman persona that he becomes in the story and who experiences the frightful ceremonies through his own calendar. It also enhances the idea that this festival is a cosmic event that supersedes the short chronological scope of a single civilization. The Roman protagonist is also aware of the relation between the festivals in May and November, or “Kalends of Maius & the night before the Kalends of November” (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 3.495), when bloody sacrifices take place. By overlapping the perspectives of Lovecraft and his Roman persona, the story also includes some of the typical elements in the anthropological accounts of pagan rituals that were contemporary to the former, such as music, and fires around hills, which will be analyzed in the corresponding sections

below.

"The Dunwich Horror" tells the story of a wizard family in a decadent village in New England. As a result of an invocation, the albino daughter of the old wizard becomes pregnant from a god or monster from outer space. Wilbur Whateley, one of the resultant twin babies, grows at an abnormal pace and becomes adult in few years, but he is also a semi-monster who wants to destroy the earth with the help of his father. After his death, his gigantic monster of a twin brother with even less human genetics than Wilbur, escapes from the farm in which he had been raised. Although the monster causes huge death and destruction, he is finally expelled to the outside space thanks to the incantations of three university scholars. To a certain extent, "The Dunwich Horror" is an atypical Lovecraftian story not only because it is told by a third person narrator and the alien monster is defeated by humans, but mostly because the pagan elements in it become so important that practically every event in the story takes place during a particular festival. This has made Joshi consider "The Dunwich Horror" as an inferior story "not much more than a pastiche" (2013: 719) or even as "pulpish tripe" (2014: 176). A. Sperling regards the story in a similar way when he describes it as "one of Lovecraft's ludicrous use of white magic versus black magic" (Sperling 2016: 89). As the story which contains more allusions to different pagan festivals, "The Dunwich Horror" also emphasizes the importance of the festivals of May-Eve and Halloween, which once more appear closely interrelated in its plot. The Whateley family, for instance, celebrated "their May-Eve and Al-Hallow orgies" twice a year (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.429). It was "on May-Eve and Hallowmass" when they "used to build their hellish fires and chant their hellish rituals by the table-like stone" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.447). The frightened inhabitants of Dunwich noticed that in May-Eve 1915, there were tremors felt by many families in the villages while in Halloween, there was "an underground rumbling queerly synchronised with burst of flame" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.427). However, sometimes the two festivals are mentioned separately because of plot requirements. Such is the case in the references to the Halloween ceremonies celebrated by the semi-human Wilbur in 1926 (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.432) or in the posthumous disclosure of his

diary, where he mentions May-Eve (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.451).

Thus, “In the Dunwich Horror,” the association of these festivals of Halloween and May-Eve with the most remarkable events in the story, show how Dunwich occupies a liminal space in which paganism, witchcraft, and outsider, alien powers have become the hegemonical forces. This is similar to the situation described in the other stories above. Only one of them, “The Haunter of the Dark,” has been omitted since there is only a short reference to May-Eve as “the aeon-shadowed Walpurgis Time” (Lovecraft [1935] 2015: 3.455). Despite their frequency, May-Eve and Halloween are only two of the many festivals that appear in Lovecraft’s fiction. In the following sections, other relevant festivals are studied.

II.1.2 Midsummer Eve (June 23rd)

In *The Golden Bough,* Frazer explained that excepting western Celtic European cultures, the most widespread pagan festival for European peoples from the Middle Ages to 20th centuries[35] was Midsummer Eve, which was celebrated on the summer solstice (Saint John's Eve for Christians), (Frazer [1922] 1996:747). But while Frazer provided many ethnographic examples of the celebration of the festival throughout Europe and even northern Africa during the period, he also pointed out the scarcity of such religious practices in Britain. Frazer’s influence on Lovecraft’s vision of paganism might explain why Midsummer Eve is so marginal in Lovecraft’s fiction. I have only found one reference to the Midsummer Eve through his Christianized denomination as “St John's Eve” when “black cats go [to a secret place] at midnight” in the story “The Outer Gods.” This story is not set in the USA, but in a fictional, oneiric setting[36]. (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.274).

II.1.3 Candlemass (February 2nd)

Candlemass on the eve of February 2nd was a well-known pagan festival celebrated in

[35] These are the dates of the particular examples provided by Frazer, but he argues that “the celebration dates from a time long before the beginning of our era” (1996: 746).
[36] Lovecraft probably included “Midsummer Eve” just only in a story of the “Dream Cycle,” because, as an external tradition to the British Islands, he thought that it was not celebrated in the USA.

Western Europe during Pre-Christian times, in which people lit bonfires and burnt wheels. Murray explains about "the sun-charm of the burning wheel, formed by the whirling dancers, each carrying a blazing torch" (1921: 8). In Lovecraft's stories, the festival of Candlemass is relatively infrequent, although in "The Dunwich Horror" it plays a singular role, as the birthday of half-alien, monstrous Whateley twins.[37] Thus, "Wilbur Whateley was born at 5 a.m on Sunday, the second of February, 1913" and, "the date was recalled because it was Candlemas, which people in Dunwich curiously observe under another name; and because the noises in the hills had sounded" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.421-422).

Wilbur Whateley had been engendered by an alien god or monster and a human mother, nine months before, at May Eve, showing again that the main biological events in the life of the weird family are marked by the pagan calendar. Since Whateley twins' alien father, Yog Sothoth, was summoned by his mother and grandfather on May Eve, they are born during Candlemass nine months later, establishing a pagan frame for the temporal setting of the story. This pagan frame is reinforced by the fact that people in Dunwich do not use the Christian name of "Candlemass" to refer to this celebration, but a pagan name not mentioned in the story, which suggests the ancient European origin of this tradition. As mentioned above, the fact that despite their intellectual and technological superiority, aliens do respond to pagan incantations, challenges the view that pagan practices in Lovecraft are related to his cosmicism, his atheism, and his scientificism by way of depicting human beings as intellectually inferior to aliens because they believe in pagan deities.

II.1.4. Lammas (August 1st)

Murray's *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* also discusses the celebration of the minor pagan festival of Lammas, which was celebrated on August 1. Since she did not identify any special ceremony associated to Lammas Day, she concluded that the festival was introduced later than other pagan celebrations (1921:8). The symbolism of the festival has been studied by William Chaney,

[37]The fact that Wilbur Whateley has a twin-brother is not unveiled until the end of the story.

who contends that Lammas is an ancient harvest festival symbolically connected to death. As a harvest festival, Chaney argues, Lammas involves reaping, which is metaphorically associated to death as traditionally represented by the Grim-Reaper (Chaney 1964:188). Significantly, in "The Dunwich Horror," Lammas is depicted in association with death, since it is the day when Old Whateley, a relevant character, dies (Lovecraft [1928] 2015:2.430). Again, a main biological event is marked by pagan dates. The fact is dramatized by the whippoorwills, which try to catch the soul of the dying man.

II.1.5 Yule (December 24th)

In his work, Frazer describes the "old custom of the Yule log" ([1922] 1996:763) as an ancient pagan tradition of different European countries which involved burning logs to celebrate the winter solstice. Since, the winters solstice is the shortest day in the year as well as the date when the sun is weaker, pagan practitioners of the Yule log used to kindle fires to help the sun in its weakness, which was considered also a luminary of fire (Frazer 1996:763). Alla Sokolova has recently identified the pagan Scandinavian holiday of Yule as one of the sources of the Christian Christmass (2020:18). But Frazer already referred to it as Yule or Christmas Eve, and therefore dated on December 24th (1996:763). In fact, according to Sokolova, pagan Scandinavians celebrated Yule from December 21 to January 12 by burning logs (2020:18). Sokolova also argues that in 354 AD a Roman priest wrote that the Christians decided that the birth of Jesus should be celebrated on the day of December 25, because some Christians were prone to that holiday (2020:20).

In Lovecraft's fiction, Frazer's influence regarding Yule is sensed mostly in the references to fire that can be found in the short story "The Festival" and the short poem "Yule Horror." The participants in the Yule rituals of "The Festival," for instance, form processions in which they hold bobbling lanterns that make "eldritch drunken constellations" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.411), very similar to what Frazer describes as "processions or races with blazing torches round fields," typical from Yule and other pagan rituals that involve the use of fire (Frazer [1922] 1996:769). In

Lovecraft's story, these processions of torch-bearing cloaked figures descend into underground caves. The story starts with a reference to Yule as a pagan date that supersedes not just the Christian, but even the historical and human frames of reference: "It was Yuletide, that men call Christmas though they know in their hearts it is older that Bethlehem and Babylon, older that Memphis and mankind" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.406). As Joshi points out, in "The Festival" "the Christian holiday is a mere veneer for a much older festival that reaches back to the agricultural rhythms of primitive man -the winter solstice" (Joshi 2013:462). Thus, the cosmic dimension that Lovecraft adds to pagan cycles and the festival of Yule suggests a possible natural explanation to religious practices that include Christianity as much as paganism.

In the poem "Yule Horror," the snow that covers the ground and the cold on the valleys suggests the winter season, but the specific date of Yule is provided by describing the solstice as "the dead in their shrouds/ Hail the sun's turning flight" (Lovecraft [1926] 2001: 140). The presence of fire as the most common element in Yule festival also shows in "a light on the hilltops half-seen hints/ of feasting unhallowed and old" (Lovecraft [1926] 2001: 140). In the poem, fire becomes a symbol of the winter solstice, as propounded by Frazer's theories about the solar interpretation of the fire festivals.

II.1.6 Roodmass (May 3rd)

In *The Witch Cult in Western Europe,* Murray associated the Christian holiday of Roodmass with previous pagan traditions like the May-Eve, Beltane, and Walpurgis festivals that were celebrated on April 30th. She claimed that "on the advent of Christianity the names of the festivals were changed, and the date of one Roodmas was slightly altered so as to fall on May 3" (1921: 100). Thus, Lovecraft's inclusion of the Roodmass as another pagan festival in "The Dunwich Horror" and *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* suggests that he subscribed her hypothesis. As mentioned above, the hybrid Wilbur Whateley of "The Dunwich Horror" was conceived on May-Eve, which Professor Henry Armitage identifies as Roodmass when he describes "the queer

earth noises […that…] walked on the mountains that May-Night […and…] Roodmass horror" as the same event under two different names (Lovecraft [1928] 2015, 2.436) although May-Eve is celebrated on the night from April 30th to May 1st and the Roodmass holiday, on May 3rd. The fact that important cosmic events in the story take place during the celebration of a pagan festivity is significant because it shows again a correlation with the main events in human life.

Roodmass is also identified with May-Eve in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. In this case, it is the wizard Joseph Curwen who mentions Roodmass and Halloween as propitious dates for his invocations: After some astrological and esotericist formulae, he instructs: "With Sunne in V house, Saturne in Trine, drawe the Pentagram of Fire, and saye ye ninth Uerse thrice. This Uerse repeate eache Roodemas and Hallow's Eue, and ye Thing will breede in ye Outer Spheres."[38] (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.268-269). This demonstrates that, in this story, Lovecraft was again strongly influenced by Murray and Frazer consideration of both May-Eve and Halloween as the two main pagan festivals, and particularly by Murray, who identified Rodmass and May-Eve as the same one.

II.1.7 The meaning of the festivals

In this section, I have provided ample evidence that Lovecraft's representation of pagan festivals was strongly influenced by Frazer's and Murray's contemporary theories on paganism. However, the way in which these two authors interpreted the purpose of these festivals was different. Frazer offered two different explanations for these festivals and the role that fire played in them, which he took from previous studies on pagan mythology. The first one was inspired by the work of anthropologist Wilhelm Mannhardt on German mythology and folklore.[39] Mannhardt's solar theory considered that the participants in these ceremonies lit bonfires on the solstices so as to feed the sun

[38] The use of 17th century English provides an atmosphere of estrangement to the readers of the story, taking them to period of puritans and witch hunt in New England. Joseph Curwen uses this language because he is a wizard that had escaped from Salem to Providence in 1692 (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.225).

[39] Wilhem Mannhardt published *Der Baumkultus Der Germanen Und Ihrer Nachbarstämme* (*The Tree Cult of the Germanic and their neighboring tribes*) (1875), a work written within context of German Unification a few years before. This German folklorist was interested in the costumes of German and other peoples from central Europe.

and thus provide the needful supply of sunshine for men, animals, and plants (Frazer [1922] 1996:770). Frazer's views also draw from Eugen Mogk and Edward Westermarck's purifying theory.[40] This theory propounds that the objective of said fires would be to destroy supernatural harmful influences impersonated by witches, demons, and monsters, as well as natural ones such as some pervading taint or corruption of the air (Frazer [1922] 1996:770). Although contemporary to Frazer's, the fact that she focuses specifically on witchcraft makes Murray's interpretation utterly different from his. Instead of considering that pagan festivals were meant to repel the evil supernatural influence of witches, she identified that pagan festivals and witchcraft practices as part of an ongoing pagan tradition. Thus, she refers to said festivities with the name of "Sabbaths," which were celebrations performed by the witches themselves. In Murray's view, witchcraft was the last remnant of an ancient religion that came from the very old, prehistoric times, and which had survived in Europe and the English colonies in New England until times as recent as the 16th and 17th centuries. The possibility that Lovecraft represented pagan rituals underlying a dominant witch cult practiced by the ignorant masses in contrast to a Christian civilized elite completely coincides with Murray's theory (Murray 1921: 7).

In this sense, it can be argued that Murray's influence on Lovecraft was much bigger than Frazer's. Although we may not be able to ascertain to which extent Lovecraft would have believed Murray's argument about the pagan origin of witchcraft himself, the fictional account of the aim of the festivals in his stories is consistent with her explanation. The most evident difference between them would be that to Murray, witches' worship and their own god, sometimes identified as "the Devil;" while in Lovecraft's fiction, their sacrifices are offered to the Great Old Ones. Still, although said Great Old Ones are characterized as alien beings, they are also described as gods and demons sometimes, which is similar Murray's ideas and terminology. Also, in Lovecraft's fiction these

[40] Edward Westermarck published "Midsummer Ceremonies in Morocco," in *Folklore*, nº16 (1905), pp 27-47. Westermarck was a Finnish scholar who lived in Britain and Morocco and studied social institutions. Eugen Mogk wrote "Sitten und Gebräuche im Kreislauf des Jahres," ("Customs and Tradition in the Cycle of Years") in R. Wuttke's *Sächsische Volskunde (Saxon Folklore)* (1901), pp.274-292. Mogk was a German scholar who studied German and Scandinavian languages and mythology.

festivals take place only on dates when the contact between the Great Old Ones and humans becomes possible. At the time Lovecraft wrote most of his fiction (1920s and 1930s), Frazer's theories about pagan mythology were becoming old fashioned, while Murray's ideas relating paganism and witchcraft had been recently published. However, since Murray's rather sketchy *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* does not provide much information about pagan fire festivals, Lovecraft may have used Frazer's twelve-volume *The Golden Bough* as a source for more detailed descriptions. Still, Frazer's interpretations of fire-festivals were less suitable to convey an atmosphere of cosmic horror than Murray's connection between paganism and witchcraft. Combining the horror conveyed by the supernatural in witchcraft with the details about pagan celebrations of cosmic significance would thus make Lovecraft's combination in the creation of cosmic horror. A community of wizards and witches who adore uncanny entities (aliens, demons, or gods) is more terrifying than a community of good peasants who wants to revitalize the sun or to scare evil witches, but abstract descriptions do not work on readers as well as detailed visualizations of academically grounded work that can make them seem more plausible and therefore, more terrifying.

As mentioned above, different pagan festivals are used to mark crucial events in the plots of Lovecraft's fiction, such as the birth of Wilbur Whateley on Candlemass or the death Old Whateley on Lammas in "The Dunwich Horror." The fact that human life and death are determined by these pagan festivals does not only convey the smallness of mankind in the universe, but also suggests that said mankind cannot get around from the cyclical pace and cosmic patterns of this universe. The impotence of humanity in the face of cosmic forces adds depth and dimension to the supernatural treatment of horror in a universe that it is not only beyond human control, but also imposes its own control over mankind.

Fire-festivals in Lovecraft are rituals organized by human and/or alien witches to worship and satisfy the wishes of gods or aliens or even to feed them with human victims. Fire is a ritual element that deals with sacrifices in many of the stories and that usually appears in the same context

in which sacrifices do (see section II.3.1). In Lovecraft's fiction, these festivals show the influence of Frazer and Murray, particularly the latter's, enhancing the sense of cosmic circularity through its annual repetition.

II.2 The spatial framework: Natural landscapes and megaliths

The influence of paganism in Lovecraft's fiction does not only show in the pagan temporal framework of the rituals and ceremonies described, but also in the very specific spatial framework where these rituals take place, which he seems to have mostly borrowed again from the studies by Frazer sand Murray. In her work on witchcraft, Murray argued that the pagan members of the witch-cult worshiped elements of nature such as "the sun and the moon, fire or rivers, water-wells or stones of forest trees" (Murray, 1921: 17). Frazer argues that tree-worship is well-attested for all the European cultures (Frazer [1922] 1996:132) and explains that some fire-festivals took place "on a conspicuous mountain or hill" ([1922] 1996:736), or that some of them were "a festival of water as well as of fire" (1996:750). Lovecraft's fiction described natural elements such as hills, streams of water, forests, and caves, as well as artificial structures such as megaliths and altar stones as the settings for the rituals that take place in his stories.

Lovecraft was also following the well-established literary tradition of the *locus horribilis*. As Katrina Abad points out, the theory of *locus amoenus* and *locus horribilis* was first stated by Ernst Curtius (Abad 2017:1). Curtius defined the *locus amoenus* as a beautiful, shaded natural site, whose minimum ingredients comprised trees, meadows, springs or brooks, and, occasionally, birdsongs and flowers (Curtius 1963:195). The *locus horribilis* is the opposite, a place that can be interpreted as an incarnation of hell on Earth (Abad 2017:1). As Nathaly Mohamed argues, it is through the construction of *locus horribilis* that horror appears in Lovecraft's fiction (Mohamed 2021:32). According to Mohamed, horror writers use very specific spaces to produce fear, including abandoned places, forests, the oceans, deserts, ancient ruins, or even cities of real world (2021:32). In Lovecraft's fiction, many of the natural elements that would be considered as *loci amoeni* in a

different context, such as trees of water, are used to produce weird atmospheres through the presence of paganism, then becoming *loci horribiles*. In this section I analyze how these natural and artificial elements such as mountains and hills, water, woods, caves, megaliths, and altars, become terrible settings in Lovecraft's fiction.

II.2.1 Mountains and hills

One of the most typical settings for pagan rituals in Lovecraft's stories are hilltops, which he borrowed from different scholars from the period, particularly Frazer. In his analysis of the fire-festivals in Europe discussed above, Frazer identifies hills as the typical locations of these celebrations. Such is the case of some German pagan festivals, during which "the Easter bonfires still blaze simultaneously on the hill-tops," referring to early twentieth century (Frazer [1922] 1996:738), or the May-day festivals in eighteenth-century Scotland, ([1922] 1996:741). In festivals such as Halloween in the Highlands near the end of that century, he describes bonfires blazing at frequent intervals on the heights (Frazer [1922] 1996:761). Since Frazer related fire-festivals to a solar cult, the practice of rolling a burning wheel down a hill in imitation of the solar movement ([1922] 1996:772) would explain the location of said celebrations.

Some of Lovecraft's stories set fire-rituals and other pagan rituals on hills. The most relevant cases are perhaps "The Very Old Folk" and "The Dunwich Horror." In the first one, the mountains in which the Witch-Sabbaths take place in All-Hallows' Eve are the Pyrenees or more specifically, the Pre-Pyrenees hills near the ancient Roman city of Pompelo (Pamplona) (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 3.494). The story explains that infamous rites, including howlings and altar-fires that brought terror into the neighboring villages (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 3.495) took place on the peaks of these hills every spring and autumn. It was the "horror that brooded on the hills" (Lovecraft [1927] 2015, 3.495) what frightened inhabitants of this area. The setting in the hills together with

the other typical elements in the collective imaginary[41] about paganism in the story (the fire, music, and altars) evokes the prototypical representation of pagan rituals in the anthropological, historical, and literary approaches at the turn of the century.

The rituals performed by the Whateley wizard-family in "The Dunwich Horror" usually take place on Sentinel Hill, at the top of which the Whateleys lit fires on May-Eve and All-Hallow (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.429) and other "great rounded hills" that had been used for the "unhallowed rites and conclaves of the Indians"[42] (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 3.420). The horrible noises suggesting that such rituals involved human sacrifices are described as "hill noises," which "sounded louder than ever […as…] fire burned on Sentinel Hill" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.432) in the Halloween festival. As in the case of "The Very Old Folk," the combination of the setting of the stories in the hills with other elements typical of pagan practices such as sounds, megaliths and altars reinforces the visual aesthetic effect conveyed by paganism in Lovecraft's cosmic horror, which coincided with the way it was represented by the Western scientific discourse of the early 20th century.

II.2.2 Water

The representation of water as an element in pagan rituals encompasses many symbolic connotations and plays an outstanding role in Lovecraft's fiction. In his stories, water appears represented as a natural element, be it as the ocean and sea water that play such a relevant role in "The Call of Cthulhu," "Dagon," or "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," or as the "fresh" surface water of rivers and the underground streams of water, ponds, and bogs of stories such as "The Festival," "The Moon Bog," and "The Call of Cthulhu." In Lovecraft's fiction, oceans and sea water are the

[41] Apart from Frazer and Murray these elements can be noticed in literature in authors such as Arthur Machen and John Buchan.

[42] Lovecraft's sources about this reference to Native-American paganism are not easy to identify since Murray only focuses on Europe and Frazer identifies the fire festivals with this continent (1996:731). I think that Lovecraft wanted to highlight the idea that the same settings in which non-human beings practiced pagan rituals thousands or millions of years ago, were later used for the religion of Native Americans, and later by Puritans who secretly practiced pagan beliefs. However, Native Americans do not frequently appear in Lovecraft's works. As James Goho points out, Native-Americans are "removed, effaced, overwritten by a legion of monsters, who are portrayed as previously occupying the lands" (Goho 2012: 56).

natural environment for amphibious alien species that live on Earth like the "Deep Ones," and who to some extent, are more related to the materialistic dimension of his fiction than to the supernatural one. Landscapes including freshwater, however, appear more frequently in the stories that describe pagan rituals usually including sacrifices. The relation of freshwater and ancient pagan rituals was described in Murray's work, where she argued that the Sabbath had to be "held near a lake, stream or water of some kind" (Murray, 1921: 98).[43] Frazer argues that ancient Greeks and Romans performed pagan rituals in honor of the water-nymphs in lakes, springs, and wells, where votive offerings have been found (Frazer 1996:177). This idea shows in several stories by Lovecraft, such as "The Moon Bog," "The Festival," and the Call of Cthulhu."

"The Moon Bog" tells the story of Dennis Barry, an Irish American who inherited a huge rural property in Ireland that included a bog. The legends told that there was a sunken city of stone under the bog's surface and that it was protected by the wraiths that hovered over its waters (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 2.257). Said bog was also the location where ancient Roman gods and goddesses with a symbolic connection to the moon had been worshiped. Disregarding the advice of the local community, Barry decides to drain the bog for agricultural use, which makes most of the population flee away in fear of some sinister supernatural outcome. Although he manages to bring new workers from another region to do the draining, Barry fails to complete it because he mysteriously disappears in the old bog, suggesting that the uncanny creatures that protected it had killed him. Most of the pagan deities that appear in the story, which will be analyzed in the corresponding section, are therefore related to water.

As explained above, the protagonist of "The Festival" descends into underground caverns where he hears "the insidious lapping of sunless waters" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.413). The rituals that take place in this subterranean world deal with both fire and water in what it could be interpreted as some sort of solstice rite for natural renewal. Thus, the participants in the cult "throw into the water handfuls gouged out of the viscous vegetation" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.414).

[43] Recent research conducted by Edlund-Berry (2006:162) supports the notion that water was important for many ancient religions, and many rituals, such as sacrifices, took place by water.

In “The Call of Cthulhu,” Inspector Legrasse, one of the characters, discovers that the marshes in Louisiana are the setting of the hideous rituals of a voodoo cult of Cthulhu worshipers, in a place within the “swamp and lagoon country to the south” (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.34). The local legends about Cthulhu described him as a huge, formless polypous that dwelled in a hidden lake (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.35). Apart from the references to the swamp where the Cthulhu cult takes place, the sea is the natural setting for the last chapter of the story, that shows the identification of waters as a *locus horribilis*. In this chapter, the sunken city of R’lyeh where Cthulhu was buried, emerges from the Pacific Ocean (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.51).

In conclusion, the fact that Lovecraft chose water as the setting for so many of his fictional stories is not casual, but product of his knowledge about the location of pagan practices. Through the pagan rituals that take place in these waters, these natural spaces become hostile places of horror, the *locus horribilis.* This can be noticed in the rituals in the stories above, which produce atmospheres of horror, becoming the space where supernatural creatures from another world appear to be worshipped and bring destruction and death in stories such as the “The Moon Bog.” In “The Festival” rituals dealing both with vegetation and water take place in a cavern, which combines these three elements to produce horror. Finally, in “The Call of Cthulhu,” the place where voodoo ceremonies occur in the Louisiana marshes and the setting of Cthulhu in his sunken city of R’lyeh contribute to produce this felling of horror. As Mohamed argues, for Lovecraft the ocean is place with many hidden secrets for humanity, and the place where monstrous entities are lurking and waiting to control the Earth (Mohamed 2021:136).

II.2.3 Woods

Historical and anthropological studies of the 19th and early 20th centuries considered woods and vegetation to be critical places in ancient pagan cults by period (Tylor 1920:2.215; Nitze 1936:358; Tregear 1901:157). Frazer for instance, related some of the fire-rituals to a “fertilising tree-spirit or spirit of the vegetation” (Frazer [1922] 1996:780), while Murray was less specific

when she affirmed that witches performed fertility and anti-fertility charms that could affect people, their cattle, and their crops (Murray 1921:161). In Lovecraft's fictional depiction of pagan ceremonies, woods also play an outstanding role not only to symbolize the fertilizing power of nature, but also as the traditional literary setting signifying a detachment from civilization, which is a recurrent element in many works of literature. I will briefly comment on and discuss references to woods in different stories by Lovecraft, including "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926), "The Dunwich Horror"(1928), "The Thing on the Doorstep" (1933) and in the unfinished draft of "Of Evill Sorceries Done in New England, of Daemons in No Humane Shape" (1935) because these include the best examples of haunted forests in Lovecraft's fiction.

In some stories, woods appear frequently combined with other elements of nature, such as water or mountains. The rituals of the secret cult of Cthulhu in "The Call of Cthulhu," for instance, do not only take place in the Louisiana swamps, but also in the "black haunted woods where no dweller ventured" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.34). The woods hidden from the reach of civilized man are the places where horror lurks in the form of pagan rituals.

In "The Dunwich Horror" the forests are also one of several environments related to paganism and the supernatural through the witchcraft lore specific of New England. The tradition of witchcraft Satanic cults practiced in the New England forests are here ambiguously refurbished into alien cults to shape the new literary form of cosmic horror. In this story, the narrator makes this specific connection by recounting how "two centuries ago, when talk of witch-blood, Satan-worship and strange forest presences was not laughed at" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.419). Terror is suggested by the presence of "strange forest presences" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.419), which adds other features typical of the *locus horribilis* such as the description of "the trees of the frequent forest belts seem too large, and the wild weeds, brambles and grasses attain a luxuriance nor often found" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.418). This vegetation, that frequently an element of the *locus amoenus*, becomes a sinister setting in Lovecraft's fiction.

In "The Thing on The Doorstep," the woods are relevant not only as the setting of the

witch cults brought to the Americas by the Europeans, but also of the pagan rituals celebrated by their native inhabitants. The combination of other pagan tokens or "certain Indian relics in the north woods-standing stones" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.343) that had been arranged for pagan ritual purposes with the witch cults seems to adhere to Murray's interpretation of the later as a development or continuation of the former. However, in this specific case, where the witch cult is a practice imported from Europe, the common setting of the forest suggests a cosmic explanation rather than an anthropological one: there is something in the woods themselves that triggers the worship of different pagan cults. Although Indian paganism is not specifically mentioned, the combination of woods and stones as the setting of ancient rituals and witch ceremonies also appears in the unfinished draft "Of Evill Sorceries Done in New England, of Daemons in No Humane Shape" (Lovecraft [1935] 2015, 3.516).

In conclusion, Lovecraft identifies woods as the place in which terrible pagan ceremonies take place, following the literary tradition of the *locus horribilis*. Vegetation, particularly the woods, were frequently associated with the *locus amoenus* in other literary genres but, in Lovecraft, these become an element that enhances cosmic horror, describing them as isolated places in which horror is lurking in the form of pagan rituals and the unknown creatures that participate in them. The narrators then underpin the relation between woods and paganism. As mentioned above, in "The Call of Cthulhu" the woods are described as black, haunted, and dangerous, in "The Dunwich Horror," in these forests there are strange presences, even Satanism was practiced, and in "The Thing on the Doorstep" they are combined with other pagan elements such as ancient stones. Thus, woods become the *locus horribilis* that contribute to produce atmospheres of cosmic horror, through the insignificance of mankind, versus the cosmos, in this case represented by the woods.

II.2.4 Caves

In his study of mystic symbols, Udo Becker points out that caverns were used for ritualistic

purposes since prehistoric times due to their symbolic connections with death[44] conveyed by the absence of light and with birth through their assimilation to the female womb (2008:91).[45] According to Becker, caves were gates accessing the subterranean kingdoms of the dead in which many ancient peoples believed, so they played a very important role in the rites of initiation and mysteries in many religions (2008:91). Following the tradition of the *locus horribilis* that place hell in the underworld, caves, chasms, and underground spaces appear very frequently in Lovecraft's stories. These caverns convey the effect of horror as the habit of the monsters and alien races that populated the Earth in a distant past. Except for the cases where Lovecraft adhered more strictly to science fiction, such as *At the Mountains of Madness* or "The Shadow Out of Time," where caves do not necessarily imply any relation with paganism, most of his stories establish this connection. Lovecraft probably borrowed this pagan element from ancient Roman and Greek cults, which according to Peter Krämer, he had extensively read about (Krämer 2017:93). Jan Bremmer has studied this tradition of the underground spaces in ancient literature, including the example of Gilgamesh in Mesopotamian tradition, Orpheus and Ulysses in classical literature and Dante's in the Middle Ages (Brenner 2017:292)[46]. In addition, the use of subterranean areas as the setting for horror stories had been a constant in previous horror writers, for example in the frequent use of vaults and tombs in the stories of Poe such as "The Premature Burial" (1844) and "The Cask of Amontillado" (1846).[47] These traditions focus on the underworld as a *locus horribilis*, the place of the dead. I will only analyze two cases in stories by Lovecraft in which there is a clear connection of caves and pagan rituals: "The Rats in the Walls" (1923) and "The Festival" (1923).

"The Rats in the Walls" tells the story of an American millionaire who inherited a ruined

[44] Cornell and Mathews also argue that many ancient pagan religions had underground temples and shrines for their rituals. The subterranean location of the Roman temples of Mithra, a god from Persian origin (1992: 96) is justified by the fact that the god had died in a cave.

[45] In *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (2002) psychologist Carl Gustav Jung explains that the cave is one of the typical representations of the Archetypes of the Mother (78).

[46] The influence of these authors in the creation of Lovecraft's myths of the underworld are analyzed in chapter IV of this study.

[47] As Gerald Kennedy points out, "living entombment remained a persistent and horrifying motive in Poe's fiction" (Kennedy 1977:165). This includes not only the stories above, but also "Morella," "Ligeia," and "The Fall of the House of Usher." Kennedy argues that "prevalence of the theme has inspired lengthy biographical speculation about Poe's necrophilia and his longing for the maternal womb (1977:165).

castle in Britain called Exham Priory which he decided to restore in order to give it the former aspect of ancient splendor that it had in the times of his British ancestors. As the American gradually discovered that these ancestors had been priests of a cruel cult and practiced uncanny rituals that included human sacrifices, he organized an exploration of the house with the aid of some scholars. Under the house, they found some caves with archaeological artifacts from different historical periods that confirmed the legend. Under an altar, they also found "a twilit grotto of enormous height, stretching away farther than any eye could see; a subterraneous world of limitless mystery and horrible suggestion" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.392). The archaeological stratigraphy found in the cave showed that some pagan cult has been practiced there since prehistoric times that continued under the Celtic, Roman, Saxon, Norman, and finally modern period. However, it is the pagan gods from classical antiquity Cybele and Attys that the millionaire invoked once the cave turns him so mad as to attack and try to cannibalize the scholars. Lovecraft's depiction of pagan practices in this story agrees with Murray's theories connecting the witch-cult to the different civilizations that would have flourished and collapsed in Britain since ancient times.

The setting of "The Festival" is an underground system of subterranean caves. Combined with the pagan element of water discussed above, the caves themselves gain relevance as a *locus horribilis* characterized by darkness, terrible strangeness, death, and unnatural creatures. In one of his invented quotations from the fictional Necronomicon of the mad Arab Alhazred, Lovecraft describes:

> "The nethermost caverns […] are not for the fathoming of eyes to see; for their marvels are strange and terrific. Cursed the ground where dead thoughts live new and oddly bodied and evil the mind that is held by no head (…). Great holes secretly are digged where earth's pore ought go suffice, and things have learnt to walk that ought to crawl" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.417).

The terms used to describe the caves suggest the influence of different pagan cultures from classical antiquity where the underworld was identified as the location the dead as detached from the living (Coleman 2019: 347).

In conclusion, Lovecraft follows the literary tradition of the cave as a *locus horribilis*, the underworld as the place of the death, sometimes identified with hell. Lovecraft associates the space

of the cave with pagan rituals that take place there, reinforcing cosmic horror. This can be noticed in the underground secret cults that transcends different historical periods, described in “The Rats in the Walls,” and in the rituals concerning water and vegetation that take place in “The Festival.” Thus, caves and the underground become an isolated space, unnatural for alive humans who experience a feeling of vulnerability, and insignificance in contrast to the powerful cosmic horror.

II.2.5 Megaliths

Megaliths are archaeological monuments that were built with huge blocks of stone from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. Ronald Hutton argues that in the Early Neolithic, megaliths were chambers of large stones, usually formed of uprights holding up one of more big rocks serving as a covering (2013:40). Many scholars before and after Lovecraft's times (Wilson 1888: 574; Cunliffe 2002:24) have considered that they were built for religious purposes, serving as collective tombs and/or ritual sites (Hutton 2013:41). Those that were arranged in a circle were called *cromlechs* or *henges*. Murray also described stones, particularly a dolmen, as the place where witchcraft ceremonies were held (Murray 1921:99). Lovecraft's fiction reproduces these opinions by depicting megaliths as the places where pagan rituals (especially human sacrifices) took place. Unlike the previous elements discussed in this section, megaliths are not natural, but artificially constructed. Although at Lovecraft's times, the fascination with megalithism was mainly focused on European sites such as Stonehenge, most of his stories including these monuments are set in America. In these stories, there are usually no clear specifications about who put up these megaliths: sometimes the texts suggest that these were built by the Indians, but in other cases, they are the work of the European witches or wizards of colonial New England or even of some monsters. Lovecraft’s deliberate ambiguity regarding the origin of these megaliths in America points to his intention to reinforce the idea that different cultures shared a secret cult and practiced similar rituals. The most frequent type of megalith in his stories is a circle of stones, reinforcing the symbolism of the circle, and suggesting a ritual component that was common to both in historical and literary representation

of magic spells and incantations from Lovecraft's time, such as Adrian Ross' *The Hole of the Pit* (1914) or W. H. Hodgson's *The Gate of the Monster* (1910). The circle also suggests a pagan cyclical conception of time[48] that relates the shape of these monuments with the periodicity of the annual festivals discussed above and is different from the linear Judeo-Christian tradition.

Obvious examples in the use of megaliths in Lovecraft's fiction include "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Rats in the Walls." In "The Dunwich Horror" the hills used for pagan ceremonies are topped by "hill-crowning circles of stone pillars" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.420). The New England setting and the similarities of these stone circles with the best-known henge in Stonehenge suggest that white people from British ancestry might have constructed these megaliths following some ancient tradition of wizardry. Apart from reinforcing the sense of antiquity and the connection with paganism and witchcraft, the circles of stones in Lovecraft's stories also convey a particular aesthetic effect adding to the *locus horribilis*. The gloomy landscape described by the three professors from Arkham university who are to fight Wilbur Whateley's monster-brother is completed by the gauntness of the stone circles at the tops of mountains (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.454).

In "The Rats in the Walls," a circle of stone is located in the underground caves, making the protagonist "deduc[e] that Exham priory stood on the site of a prehistoric temple; a Druidical or ante-Druidical thing which must have been contemporary with Stonehenge" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 1.378). The fact that this subterranean circle of stones is considered a temple, suggests Lovecraft's familiarity with the scientific theories that ascribed a religious purpose to Stonehenge.[49] The combination of these pagan megaliths with archaeological evidence from different periods subscribes Murray's argument regarding the existence of a pagan cult continuing across different ages and cultures. Among the different ruins that the protagonist discovers under the house, he "saw

[48] This pagan conception of time as cyclical has relevant implications in Lovecraft's cosmogony that will be analyzed in the corresponding chapter below.

[49] These include William Stukeley's old theory that Stonehenge was a temple for the druids (Stukeley 1740: 66), William Flinders-Petrie's theory that suggested that it could be a monumental tomb (Flinders-Petrie, 1880:31), or Vere Gordon Childe's one, who considered that it had been erected by invaders who had brought new celestial cults into the British Islands (1925:331).

a weird pattern of tumuli, a savage circle of monoliths, a low doomed Roman ruin" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 1.392) and human bones from different historical periods. Despite the Roman components, the narrator guesses that the ruins in the cave under the castle would have been Druidical or ante-Druidical, which agreed with the ancient Roman belief that the British Celts sacrificed humans in their rituals (Tacitus 2012:289).[50] The sacrificial nature of the pagan rituals suggested by the circles of stones adds to the effect of cosmic horror not just because of their bloody nature and their astronomical dimension, but also by conveying a sense of continuity of these practices that would reach the narrative present of the story, as shown in the raving madness and murderous, cannibalistic lead of its protagonist at the end of the story. The outcome of the story shows how the irrational produces madness because of the impossibility of the human mind to assimilate and understand its insignificant position within the cosmos.

Thus, megaliths in Lovecraft's fiction constitute another example of the tradition of the *locus horribilis*, in this case not as a natural environment, but as a construction erected by humans or extraterrestrials. The ambiguity about the real builders and antiquity of these structures contributes to produce horror through uncertainty, a feeling which is increased through the possible presence of non-human creatures lurking in the venue and looking for victims for sacrifice. In addition, the combination of these pagan structures with natural elements, such as hills and caves, contributes to increase the atmosphere of estrangement and cosmic horror.

II.2.6 Altars

Like megaliths, altars, usually named "altar-stones" in the stories by Lovecraft, are artificial constructions used for the practice of pagan invocations and sacrifices. The main difference between them is probably that megalithic circles of stones are the settings that surround the place were these rituals are taking place, whereas altars are stones placed at the center of these

[50] Those druids would be the organizers of these sacrifices (Simón 1999: 156). As Simón points out, the discovery of the corpse violently killed in Lindow (England) provides archaeological evidence that he was the victim of a human sacrifice (199:155).

circles where human victims were sacrificed. Altars contribute to enhance horror in Lovecraft's fiction by adding extreme violence to pagan religious practices. The fact that these sacrifices are offered to the aliens or gods that come from outer space builds on the cosmic dimension of horror.

The pagan inspiration of Lovecraft's fictional altars is suggested by their similarity with the descriptions provided in the anthropological studies of his time as well as biblical descriptions of the barbaric practices of gentile religions. In the 16th century Bernardino de Sahagún already recounted that the Aztecs laid human victims upon their backs on sacrificial stones used as altars (Carrasco 2013:222) while Jean L'Heureux, described the altars used by Northwestern Tribes in Canada as sacrificial stones (1886:163). In Europe, nineteenth-century excavators in Stonehenge interpreted that the central stone in the monument was meant to be used as an "Altar Stone" (Ixer 2019:1). Although sparsely described, the specific shape and material of altars in stories such as "The Dunwich Horror," "The Rats in the Walls," "The Very Old Folk," "The Thing on The Doorstep," and "Dagon" evoke the archaeological findings available at Lovecraft's time.

The altar in "The Dunwich Horror" is similar to Carrasco's and L'Heureux's descriptions of pagan rituals. In the story, it is described as a "table-like stone" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.447) that was used in "hellish rituals," and is qualified as a "sinister" stone placed on the summit of a peak (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.454). The fact that it is made of stone implies their duration for a long period of time, evokes a connection with enduring pagan traditions, while its flat shape suggests that human victims were made to lie on the altar during the sacrifices. Similarly, the underground altars of "The Rats in the Walls" are "rectangular blocks of stone" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.387) and the idea of antiquity and continuity between different pagan traditions is also stressed by the fact that "these altars had merely been adopted by Roman priests from some older and perhaps aboriginal temple" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.387).

In other stories, pagan altars are combined with other pagan elements such as fire or forms of prayer that are dehumanized by their comparison to animal sounds, all of which contributes to create a vague pagan atmosphere of horror. In "The Very Old Folk," the word "altar" is frequently

associated with fire. The Roman characters in the story can glimpse “altar fires” (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 3.495) burning in the mountains. The “altar-flames” are depicted as “horrible” (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 3.500) by suggesting that they were used for human sacrifices evoking the Canaanite worship of Moloch in the Ancient Near East in which the victims were burnt, as described in the Bible (II Kings 23:10)[51].

In “The Thing on The Doorstep” the word is spelled “altair,” by character Edward Derby when he describes that a “shape rose up from the altair and there were 500 that howled” (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.337-338) right after he recovers from a possession by the spirit of old Ephraim Waite. Derby’s incoherent discourse contributes to depict an atmosphere of horror not just because it is the effect of a supernatural possession that threatens his personal identity affecting his speech, but also by conveying a notion of the irrational in the supernatural. This sense of supernatural and the irrational is reinforced by placing the “altair” episode in the same paragraph as Old One Shub-Niggurath. Shub-Niggurath, the Goat with a Thousand Young, is not only an animal-like goddess, but is also worshipped by the 500 hundred creatures that howl like animals, probably her own offspring. Thus, the confluence of the altar for pagan sacrifices with the cosmic outsideness of Shub-Niggurath and the creatures participating in the ritual, contributes to produce an atmosphere of cosmic horror in which both the alien and pagan elements become intertwined.

In “Dagon” the statue of the old Philistine God is described as a “monolithic shrine” (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 1.56). Although the term “shrine” is used in this case, it also refers to something identifiable as an altar that is only used for a cult or adoration instead of sacrifice. Again in this case, its presence contributes to produce atmospheres of horror, through the description of the irruption of an outside construction emerged from the bottom of the oceans into the surface where human lives. This outside construction includes this dual nature, both as the space for pagan cultus and as the place where a subaquatic entity dwells.

In conclusion, in all these cases, Lovecraft's description of altars is similar to the dominant

[51] Lovecraft knew about Moloch and mentions him in “The Horror at Red Hook” (Lovecraft [1925] 2015:1.499).

historical and anthropological descriptions of pagan religion at his time regarding the shape and material of the altars as well as their use as recipients of human sacrificial victims. It is not easy to distinguish the specific pagan religions from which Lovecraft took them, probably because Lovecraft wanted to show again that different cultures share similar practices. The presence of these altars in Lovecraft's stories contributes to enhance atmospheres of cosmic horror, because these pagan traditions are not described as ancient practice, but as something connected to a lurking threat that comes from outer space or other dimensions and that is characterized by its indeterminacy.

II.3 The rituals

The rituals that appear in Lovecraft's fiction include a set of different elements that are usually combined to display the main characteristics of the cultural, historical, and ideological framework of "pagan, primitive religions" as they were understood in his times. These include not only the details provided in Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1922) and Murray's *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* (1922), but also Edward B. Tylor's *Primitive Man* (1871) and John Fiske's *Myth and Myth-Makers* (1872)[52]. My reconstruction of the prototypical ritual in Lovecraft's fiction would be a ceremony that:

(1) takes place within the framework of the festivals and venues that have been already described in the two previous sections.

(2) involves the violent sacrifice of some victims, frequently young people who are burnt alive or stabbed with a ritual knife.

(3) includes some spectators, which can range from the few witches and wizards that perform the ritual to a multitude of people. In the second case it involves an organized cult, and the

[52]Joshi considers that Tylor's influence on Lovecraft was more important than Frazer's (Joshi 1990:24). I have focused on Frazer and Murray instead of Tylor and Fiske in my study not only because Lovecraft mentions them in his fiction, but because the pagan elements in his fiction seem to show their insights regarding their interpretation. Tylor focuses on what he calls "primitive culture" (for instance the origin of language, numbers, and animism) in different societies and Fiske provides a comparative study among different myths (about folklore, werewolves and swan-maidens or the ghost world), but none of them analyze in detail the two main elements from anthropology that Lovecraft incorporated into his fiction: Frazer's fire festivals and Murray's hypothesis of a secret witch-cult.

participants usually experience some sort of ecstasy or frenzy.

(4) frequently involves music and sometimes dance, which contribute to cause and express the altered state of consciousness of the participants.

(5) is performed for the sake of some powerful, uncanny creatures, who are invoked and are the recipients of the sacrifices.

In this section I will focus on the ritual performances in Lovecraft's fiction, which include sacrifices, music, and dance. I will only discuss the participants very briefly because they mostly show the sociological features of the characters only. The identity and role of the fictional gods or alien monsters that receive the sacrifices will be studied in chapter III, while those historical ones are described in section II.7 in this chapter.

However, the purpose of this section goes beyond the mere identification and analysis of the different elements that can be identified in the pagan rituals and ceremonies in Lovecraft's fiction, and their original sources in previous authors. These pagan elements in rituals appear combined together and with external, outside, alien or numinous elements that contribute to produce atmospheres of horror through indeterminacy, and uncertainty, proving the impossibility of the human mind to understand a cosmic reality that supersedes rational explanation.

II.3.1 Sacrifices

Human sacrifices take place in many of the stories by Lovecraft within the context of pagan rituals. These can be understood as the act of killing people who are offered as victims to alien monsters or gods. The victims are taken to the sacrificial altars by human wizards and witches who perform as priests and lead the sacrificial ceremony. Lovecraft's prototypical sacrifices are inspired by different actual religions that have been explained by psychoanalytical, cultural-anthropological, and ethological theories (Baumgarten 2002: 3). Although recent criticism argues for a "materialistic" interpretation of sacrifices in which the alien deities would only foster them as

a human delusion for their own advantage, while rituals are important for the human wizards only (Price 2011:262; Mosig 1997:24), textual evidence from certain stories such as “The Dreams in the Witch House” (1932) and “The Shadow over Innsmouth” (1931), shows that sometimes these alien creatures or gods encourage these practices.

The victims sacrificed in these rituals are usually described as young people. In “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” the victims that are offered to the “sea-things” (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.189) or “some kind of god-things that lived under the sea” (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.187) are described as “young folks” (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.189) “young men an' maidens” (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.187). Allen's account involves that they are “sacrific[ed] in' heaps” not to the Deep Ones as an alien race in general, but to specific monsters (or gods) that are individually mentioned as “Mother Hydra an' Father Dagon” [53](Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.197).

In “The Dreams in the Witch House,” the victims are as young as little babies. The use of babies in the sacrifices of the witch cult was documented by Murray influence in her description of witch rituals in seventeenth-century France: “the child victim was usually a young infant, either a witch's child or unbaptized” (1921: 148). Murray's account of these practices also underlines the significance of baby blood as a mockery of the Christian mass (1921: 143). In “The Dreams in the Witch House,” childish cries were heard near May-Eve and Hallowmass (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.233) and the celebration of their pagan festivals involved that “a child or two would probably be missing” (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.243) from the community, suggesting that the sacrifices performed during those festivals involved babies. In this story there is the most explicit description of human sacrifices in Lovecraft's fiction, which are only hinted for aesthetic propriety in many of the other stories that indirectly allude to them. The narrator in “The Dreams in the Witch house” explains how a Polish baby is prepared for sacrifice: “little Ladislas must be naked for sacrifice at the awful sabbat on Walpurgis-Night” (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.263). But then, the story provides further details about how the baby would be killed, adding fire to the unspecified use of a

[53]These deities will be analyzed in detail in section III.7

“grotesque knife” that the witch would raise over the unfortunate child (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.267), while a pale metal bowl is arranged (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.265-266) to hold the baby’s blood.

Indirect implicature rather than direct testimony is also Lovecraft’s strategy to describe pagan human sacrifices in “The Very Old Folk.” In this story, the performance of human sacrifices by an ancient tribe in the Pyrenees in All-Hallows' Eve and May Day is inferred from the fact that “townsfolk would disappear just before these nights & never be heard of again” (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 3.495) as reported by the Roman and Basque townsfolk whose friends or relatives disappeared, which increases tension to the narration. Even the fact that nobody disappeared on the autumn where the main action develops was considered to be “too good to be normal,” and rather foreshadowed an impending massive sacrifice, the disappearance of a whole Roman army in the past. Rather than describing the ritual in its morbid details, Lovecraft has the narrator to wake up to human screams that imply the horrid nature of its occurrence.

Very frequently, Lovecraft seems to blend detective narrative strategies with the archaeological report by describing human sacrifices that happened in the distant past through the evidence they left behind, such as the bones of the victims found near altars and megalithic structures. In “The Dunwich Horror,” for instance, the circles of stones in the mountains contain “deposits of skulls and bones” (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.421), suggesting the messy remains of human sacrifices rather than the location of a burial place. Similarly, in “The Rats in the Walls” the explorers of the caves under Exham Priory discover an altar that was surrounded by “a ghastly array of human or semi-human bones” (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.391), suggesting not just human sacrifices, but also implying the cosmic dimension of the ritual in the sacrifice of semi-human, monstrous creatures. They also discover some cells with skeletons and old inscriptions in Latin, Greek, Phrygian and English from different historical periods, since Prehistory to 1610 (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.394) adding to an unspecified sense of the pagan origin (in this case, Cybele and Atys) and continuity of the witch-cult propounded by Murray. Although the frequent allusions to

gnawed bones suggest the possibility that, instead of human sacrifices, the rats in the story could have attacked and devoured most of the victims, the continuous reference to pagan religious practices supports the evidence that they were sacrificed.

Thus, the description of human sacrifices in Lovecraft's fiction contributes to produce atmospheres of cosmic horror through the combination of a remarkable element of the rituals of pagan religions, such as said sacrifices, with a new cosmic dimension, since the recipients are not the traditional gods of paganism, but indeterminate entities. The indirect account of sacrifices produces uncertainty and indeterminacy, increasing the effect of horror and alienation. Indirection deflects action, forcing readers to draw from their own fears the missing content and suggesting that the narrator's propriety is hiding further horror beyond the explicitly narrated.

II.3.2 Music and dance

Music and dance are a typical complement to the pagan rituals described in Lovecraft's fiction. Although chants and hymns are a common component in the ritual practices of virtually any religion, the way in which Lovecraft describes the ritual use of music and dance in his fiction seems to be particularly influenced by the anthropological and historical research available to him at his time. In *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* for instance, Murray devoted several pages to the music and dance described in the archival records of historical witch-trials, where she reports the existence of different types "music [played] at the assemblies" (Murray 1921:128) as well as of ritual dances (1921: 122), the the most typical of which was a "ring-dance" that sometimes took place "around a stone" (1921:122). Other historians and anthropologists from Lovecraft's time such as Henri Frankfort and Franz Cummont contended that music and dance in ancient pagan rituals could have been used to induce hypnotic trances (Frankfort 1993:336) and altered states of consciousness (Frankfort 1993:336; Cumont [1906] 1987:37) in their participants.

As in the case of human sacrifices, Lovecraft's depiction of music and dance during pagan rituals in his stories does not include much detail, but rather add to convey a vague sense of

primitiveness and irrationality to a general atmosphere of horror. Some examples of pagan rituals that include dance and music appear in "The Call of Cthulhu" and "The Very Old Folk." In the first one, the narrative describes how the cult of Cthulhu was practiced in different geographical areas, generally involving music and dance. These included an Eskimo tribe from Western Greenland, whose members "danced when the aurora leaped high over the cliffs" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.33). In the swamps of Louisiana, the ritual dancing is described as "ecstasies," which were accompanied by the music of "muffled beat of tom-toms" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.35) and some singing or screaming in the form of "howls and squawking" performed by "a well-drilled chorus of hoarse voices" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.36). In "The Very Old Folk," the strange tribe lurking in the hills played "a hideous beating of strange drums" that "floated in a terrible rhythm" (Lovecraft [1927] 2015:3.498). The prominence of drums in Lovecraft's depiction of pagan ritual music in these stories suggests not only that he was acquainted with nineteenth-century archaeological findings and anthropological interpretations that considered percussion as the most primitive instruments,[54] but that he used these views to suggest a sense of primitiveness to said rituals. This primitiveness is signaled by a sense of irrationality that is inferred from the "rudimentary" nature of the musical instruments of percussion as well as from the incomprehensibility of the chants, which suggestively combines with evolutionism by assimilating primitiveness to the animality implied in howling. Lovecraft's combination of rational scientific discourse with supernatural and animal irrationality in the depiction of pagan practices works to polarize both positions to intensify the sense of wonder that both discursive frames would cause in his readers at his time. The use of further detail in his descriptions would be detrimental in conveying this effect, which explains the intended vagueness of his style as an addition to the general atmosphere of cosmic horror.

II.3.3 Rituals of passage and initiation: oaths and prayers

The great anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep studied rituals of passage and initiation,

[54] John Rowbotham, for instance, pointed out that "the first stage in the development of instrumental music was the drum stage, in which drums and drums alone were used by man" (1881:380).

which are rituals that mark the changes in a person's life, involving the border and the transition from one group into another through specific ceremonies (Van Gennep [1908] 1960:3). In *Rites of Passage*, Van Gennep classified these rituals into three groups: preliminal rites of separation from a previous group, liminal rites of transition into a new group, and postliminal rites of incorporation into a new group ([1908] 1960:11). Among initiation rites, he included the ceremonies that reveal the secret mysteries of pagan and Judaeo-Christian religions, transferring the neophyte from the profane to the sacred world, placing him/her in direct and permanent communication with the latter ([1908] 1960:89)[55]. This process can be seen in some stories by Lovecraft, in which initiatory ceremonies into alien cults provide a secret knowledge that includes oaths and ritual secrets, marking the border from the group of non-initiated people into the initiated.

As in previously studied constituents of rituals in Lovecraft's fiction, the depiction of rites of initiation does not provide much detail, but instead evokes ambiguity through the combination of primitiveness, irrationality, and uncertainty to produce fear to the unknown. This can be noticed in the vague description of oaths and prayers, as part of rituals of initiation suggested in stories as "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," "The Dreams in the Witch-House and The Transition of Juan Romero." In the first one, the village of Innsmouth has adopted the alien religion of the Esoteric Order of Dagon, a cult vaguely described by Zadok Allen, the horrified old man who provides an account the history of this accursed place. Allen reports the use of a first "Oath of Dagon," followed by a "second and third oaths" and some other "secrets" in the cult (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.197), admitting that he had to take some of these oaths, but not the last ones, anxiously suggesting that these must be something terrible. The story does not include a proper description of the cult, instead reinforcing the dichotomy between the rational discourse of science and the irrational primitiveness

[55] Although posterior to Lovecraft's period, the scholar of ancient cults and religions, Mircea Eliade provides an explanation about rituals of initiation that can be illustrative. In *Rites and Symbols of initiation. The mysterires of birth and rebirth*, Eliade argues that the term "initiation involves and existential change in the novice that turns him into another person." As Eliade affirms for any religion:

> The term initiation in the most general sense denotes a body of rites and oral teachings whose purpose is to produce a decisive alteration in the religious and social status of the person to be initiated. In philosophical terms, initiation is equivalent to a basic change in existential condition: the novice emerges from his ordeal endowed with a totally different being from that which he possessed before his initiation; he has become another (Eliade 1958b: XI).

of the cult, to encourage the prototypical uncertainty and indeterminacy of cosmic horror. Thus, the vague reference to oaths and secrets suggests a pagan religious practice requiring rituals of initiation, this is to say, a type of cult involving mysteries which are only revealed to a few initiates, who in turn must keep secrecy of these practices. The way in which Allen behaves in the story clearly shows that he had sworn these oaths only as a way to protect his life. Through these rites, he became a member of a protected or allied human community that accepted the presence of the alien race of the Deep Ones, so that he will not be killed or sacrificed by them. The order in the oaths (first, second, third) deals with the initiatory character of the religion because the mysteries are gradually unveiled to the neophyte.[56]

Prayers are also mentioned in "The Shadow over Innsmouth," as another expression of rituals of initiation and passage. In the story, the Deep Ones are even described "praying monstrously at their evil sea-bottom temples" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.228). Although again we have to rely in Zadok Allen's account, who is not always a very accurate narrator, adding ambiguity and uncertainty, this quotation involves that religions and cults are not exclusive of humans, but are sometimes practiced by alien races, reinforcing the atmosphere of outsideness through the cosmic component and involving that religion may be more important and universal in Lovecraft's fiction than it seems. I will analyze this question in more depth in the next chapter.

Examples of praying in some other stories include "The Dreams in the Witch House" and "The Transition of Juan Romero." In the former, the witch that appears in the dream of the protagonist is described "intoning some croaking ritual" (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.267), which exemplifies again the primitiveness of the act through dehumanization, assimilating her sounds to those of animals. In "The Transition of Juan Romero" the main character is a Mexican that performs strange rituals whose meaning he does not know. Every day he "would rise in the early morning and

[56]This was a typical fact in ancient mystery religions, such as Mithraism and the Cybele and Isis cults in the Roman Empire, and Lovecraft was familiar with at least some of them. As Robinson Krämer points out, Lovecraft "knew the strange and not very famous deities Attis and Cybele" (Krämer 2017:110), as evinced by its role in "The Rats in the Walls" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.386). This story and the role of said divinities are analyzed in section II.7.1 in this study.

gaze in fascination at he sun as it crept above the eastern hills, meanwhile stretching out his arms to the orb as if in the performance of some rite whose motive he did not himself comprehend" (Lovecraft [1919] 2015: 1.97). In the context of the story, this is clearly a ritual of adoration of the sun. There is some innate instinct in Juan Romero related to his Indian ancestry which inadvertently makes him perform rituals in honor of the sun god Huitzilopotchli. Romero's behavior shows that he is affected by the setting of the story, inducing him to experience some sort of solitary self-initiation into the unknown mysteries of an indefinite pagan cult. Although these practices may seem "primitive" and "irrational," he turns to be the only character aware of a hidden lore and reality veiled to the other characters.

Thus, the description of rituals of passage and initiation, exemplified by oath and prayers in the stories above, evinces the conflict between the irrationality and primitiveness of ancient pagan cults and the rational discourse of science that intends to elucidate materialist explanations. These irrationality and primitiveness are again emphasized through the animality implied in croaking, in the case of the prayers of the witch in one of the stories. In turn, rationality is compelled to evolve from the sheer negation of the weird phenomena, to admit the existence of unknown explanations beyond its reach. The conflict of both rational and irrational discourses contributes to accomplish atmospheres of cosmic horror, in which the vagueness and secrecy in the allusions to these oaths and prayers increase the sensation of uncertainty and wonder.

II.3.4 Magic spells and formulae in ancient languages

There are a few pagan rituals in Lovecraft's stories that include specific magic spells and formulae taken from ancient languages or translated from the originals into English, because its use increases the sensation of antiquity, wonder, indeterminacy, and fear to the unknown. In Lovecraft's fiction, three of them can be identified, one in "The Shadow over Innsmouth" and two more in "The

Horror at Red Hook." The text of the one in the first story is "*Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin!*"[57] (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.193). The first one in "The Horror at Red Hook" is "O friend and companion of night, thou who rejoicest in the baying of dogs and spilt blood, who wanderest in the midst of shades among the tombs, who longest for blood and bringest terror to mortals, Gorgo, Mormo, thousand-faced moon, look favourably on our sacrifices!" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 1.492). The second one in the same story is a graffiti in capital letters whose text is "HEL. HELOYM. SOTHER. EMMANVEL. SABAOTH. AGLA. TETRAGRAMMATON. AGYROS. OTHEOS. ISCHYROS. ATHANATOS. IEHOVA.VA. ADONAI. SADAY. HOMOVSION. MESSIAS. ESCHEREHEYE" (Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 1.494)

I have included them in this separate section because they are not an account or description of the practices of spells, oath or praying, but of the particular, specific words that are uttered. In general, these were fragments from real ancient texts that Lovecraft took for his fiction, although he did not always used them properly, understanding their sense or transcribing them accurately, which contributes to increase the cosmic dimension of horror through vagueness and fear to the unknown. In any case, the use of such magic formulae conveys the idea that some words can be strongly powerful. Lovecraft uses them in a fatalistic way, as a premonition of disaster. These magic spells do not only include examples taken from paganism but also other that were originally from the Judeo-Christian tradition, showing that Lovecraft decided to consider the latter as another pagan tradition. Lovecraft's use of them can be compared to the Hebrew tradition in which some words were considered to have an inherent power in them or even to be considered taboo, including the name of their god Yahweh, which was kept in secret by the religious authorities in biblical times[58] (Unterman 1991:198).

The one in "The Shadow over Innsmouth," is uttered by old Zadok Allen, as the transcription of an old sentence that comes from the Judeo-Christian tradition, appearing in the

[57] Lovecraft's italics.

[58] Unterman argues that today the correct pronunciation of the tetragrammaton, the name of God, has been forgotten (Unterman1991:198). The name was revealed to Moses and the rabbis would teach it only to those students once in seven years, but they threatened those who made public use of it (1991:198).

Bible, in the book of Daniel 5.[59] Zadok Allen mentions it as a premonition of what he considers a catastrophe, in this case the end of the Christian faith in the city of Innsmouth, with the substitution of all the ministers of the Protestant Churches (Congregational, Methodist and Baptist) by what he believes is a restoration pagan cult as they appear in the Bible. He names these cults as "Dagon an' Astoreth-Belial an' Beëlzebub-Golden Caff an' the idols o' Canaan an' the Philistines -Babilonish abomination" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.193). Thus, Allen's words in the story contribute to produce horror, foreshadowing Innsmouth's catastrophe in a similar way to the condemnation by the prophets of Old Testament of pagan divinities and the societies that worshipped them. Again, the irrational discourse of religion contributes to produce horror through its vagueness and indeterminacy, which is increased by Allen's nervous and incoherent speech.

The first one of the two that are found in "The Horror at Red Hook" is repeated three times. In the story, detective Thomas F. Malone is looking into an apparently Christian church in the decayed neighborhood of Red Hook in New York City, in which hideous rituals are taking place, where he finds out a Greek inscription on the wall over the pulpit containing the ancient incantation transcribed above. Armen Alexanyan explains that Lovecraft copied this incantation from an article in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *by* E. B. Tylor who in turn had copied it from an earlier Christian writer, Hyppolitus of Rome, the author of *Refutation of All Heresies (Philosophoumena,* circa 226 CE*),* and which can be found in Book 4, chapter 35 (Alexanyan 2017:37). Contrary to what it seems from the context of its use in Lovecraft's story, Hyppolitus was not writing any sort of treatise of magic, but refuting divination, which he considered was both a fake and against the Christian

[59]In Daniel 5 king Belshazzar of Babylon celebrates a feast using the stolen gold and silver vessels that his father Nebuchadnezzar had stolen from the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Then, a mysterious hand appeared and, using his fingers, wrote an unknown inscription in the wall of the palace. The king asked the Chaldean magicians of the court to translate the inscription, but they could not do so, so he asked the Hebrew prophet Daniel for its meaning. Then Daniel interpreted it and said that "the writing that was written was Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin. Mene; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. Tekel; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. Peres; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Daniel 5, 25-28). Thus, the prophet Daniel foreshadows the ruin and conquest of the Babylonian Empire. Donald S. Polaski affirms that the meaning of the mysterious words is just a list of weights with coinage value, being *mene* or minah the more valuable, then comes *tekel* or shekel which is only a sixtieth part of it, and then *parsin*, which is half a minah. This means that Belshazzar was such a bad king that was worth only a sixtieth part than his father Nebuchadnezzar, so Belshazzar would be defeated by the Medes and Persians, who at least were worth half than Nebuchadnezzar (Polaski 2004:657).

doctrine. The specific type of divination that he was criticizing was performed using water and invoking the goddess Hecate. Hecate was a three-bodied goddess of darkness,[60] who was also called Bombo. The other names that appear in the incantation, Gorgo and Mormo, refer to two of the three bodies of the goddess, while the third one is "thousand faced moon," which appears in some other translations of the same text as Mene, Selene or Moon. The three epithets of the goddess have a particular meaning, Gorgo refers to the three Gorgons or just to the most famous of the three, Medusa (Coleman 2019: 226). Mormo was a female spectre which the Greeks used to frighten children (Smith 1884: 526), while Selene was a Titaness or female Titan who was the goddess of magicians (Coleman 2019: 301).

The second text that appears in "The Horror at Red Hook" is found by inspector Malone while he is investigating some houses in New York City owned by an old wizard called Robert Suydam, where the members of the ominous cult meet (Lovecraft [1925] 2015, 1.493). When Malone enters these houses, he finds out different Arabic, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew inscriptions with writings in red on their walls. The combination of different ancient languages is parallel to the use of different pagan traditions in Lovecraft's fiction, which intensifies anxiety through vagueness and indeterminacy, since the cults shared by those different traditions may be based on the real existence of an unknown horror. The frequently repeated motto written in "Hebraised Hellenistic Greek […] suggested the most terrible daemon-evocations of the Alexandrian decadence" ([1925] 2015, 1.493).

As Krämer points out, Lovecraft did not make up this incantation either, but also copied it from yet another article that E. B. Tylor published in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* entitled "Magic" that in his turn, Tylor had copied it from Georg Conrad Horst's book *Zauber-Bibliothek oder von Zauberei, Theurgie und Mantik, Zauberern, Hexen und Hexenprocessen, Dämonen, Gespentern, und Geistererscheinungen,* published in 1821 (Krämer 2017: 111). Krämer also believes that although originally, the words were just an incantation to find treasures, Lovecraft used them to

[60]See entry for Hecate at section III.7.4 in this paper.

suggest they were a spell to invoke the devil. The meaning of the message does not contain any references to "daemon-evocations" as the narrator in the story affirms, but to different names and concepts developing within the Christian tradition. Some of the names in this incantation have a Judeo-Christian origin, combining their Hebrew origin with Christian theological formulas in Greek (Alexanyan 2017:39). Hebrew and Greek were languages frequently used in treatises of magic in the European tradition, very frequently associated with the Jewish Kabbalah and witchcraft. Thus, Lovecraft used a magic text from a previous context for a different purpose, stressing the irrationality caused by the versatility of the words, and subverting the message for its new use within the context of dark cults. I will provide my own translation and comment on the words in the formula based on both Alexanyan and Krämer's interpretation:[61]

The first word that appears in the inscription is "Hel". It is Hebrew and is one of the seven Hebrew names of God, meaning "god," although it is normally written without "h." It was used by ancient Hebrews, but also by polytheistic, Canaanite religions in the area. The second one, "Heloim," is also Hebrew, refers to another of the seven Hebrew names of God and also means "god." Next, it appears "Sother," which is Greek, meaning "savior," but with an extra "h." I think that it refers to Jesus Christ. Next comes "Emmanuel," which in Hebrew means "God is with us." "Sabaoth" is also Hebrew word, another of the seven Hebrew names of God, meaning "the god of the armies." Next appears "Agla," which means "shining" in Greek. Next, "Tetragrammaton" is Greek, meaning "four letters," referring to the four letters of the name of God. The four letters of the name of God were YHWH, which represents another of the seven Hebrew names of god, "Yahweh," "Jehova" or "Iehova." Next appear the four words "Agyros Otheos Ischyros Athanatos," which are Greek. According to Alexanyan, these four words are a Christian formula called Trisagion from the Greek Orthodox Church, whose meaning is "Holy God, Mighty one, Immortal." Next is "Iehova," from Hebrew, another of the seven names of God, represented by the Tetragrammaton, and meaning

[61]I am definitely not a philologist in classical languages, and I do not intend to be pretentious by disputing Alexanyan's and Krämer's opinions in this topic. However, I think that I can add some historical and cultural contextualization to their good approaches.

"God" again. Next is "Va," which is a Hebrew conjunction meaning "and". Next is "Adonai," that is Hebrew, another of the seven Hebrew names of God, and means "my lord." Next is "Sadday," in Hebrew, another of the seven names of God, which means "the Almighty." Next is "Homovsion," which in Greek means "one in being." It was used in the theological discussions in the Catholic Church, since the Nicene Creed in 325, to explain that Jesus had been engendered, but not created by God Father, so it was "one in being with the Father." Using this formula, they rejected the doctrines of Arius who believed that Jesus and the Father were different (Escribano 2011: 427). A very similar formula "homoiousian," represented another interpretation in which Jesus was not "one in being with the Father" but "similar to the Father" (Escribano 2011: 437). Next is "Messias," a Greek term from the Hebrew Messiah, meaning "the anointed one." Finally, "Eschereheye" is Hebrew and means "I am that I am."

My tentative translation is "God, God, Savior, God is with us, the God of the Armies, the Shining One, the One whose Name has four letters, Yahweh, the Holy, Mighty, Immortal, And My Lord, the Almighty, One in Being, the Anointed one, I am that I am." The text is not coherent or cohesive, and many different alternative translations may be provided. As my translation intends to demonstrate, there is nothing alien or devilish in the formula, but mostly Judeo-Christian names. The text apparently addresses Jesus Christ as savior and messiah, but at the same time insists on the Jewish tradition of the seven names of God. It is possible that Lovecraft decided to use this magic formula because he knew that some of the traditions in witchcraft have been inspired by the Jewish tradition, including the Kabbalah. As he points out in "Supernatural Horror in Literature", Jewish folklore preserved much of the terror of the past, exerting considerable influence in weird fiction ([1927] 2008: 55). Thus, it can be inferred from my textual analysis that he used Judeo-Christian lore as another pagan tradition productive to re-create atmospheres of horror.

In conclusion, Lovecraft reused for his fiction previous magic texts and formulae taken from different traditions, including a plurality of ancient languages and religions, both pagan and Judeo-Christian, which also establish a relation with the traditions of witchcraft and esotericism.

Through the uncertainty about the meaning of the messages, the original context and purpose in which these were originally written, and the magic power of words, in contrast to the scientific discourse, Lovecraft contributes to produce a sensation of irrationality and vagueness that is so typical of cosmic horror.

II.4 Lovecraft and the tradition of the dwarf race of the witches

Lovecraft underpinned his fiction with anthropological and archaeological theories that not only involved the continuity of pagan cults, religious practices, and cultural traditions, but also of the ethnographic populations that would have practiced these rituals. Much has been written about Lovecraft´s insights about the concepts of ethnicity and race in his fiction (Houellebecq, 2006:99; Joshi 1990: 74; Joshi 2018: 48) that add to the old debate about the extent and relevance of his alleged racism, but which falls beyond the scope of this thesis. Regarding the specific issue of race, however, I contend that Lovecraft did nothing different from the use he made of other anthropological findings on paganism available at his time. The anthropologists from whom Lovecraft borrowed these theories, such as Murray and Tylor, classified these populations under the label of a particular race based on physiological evidence (Murray 1921:7; Tylor [1871] 1920: 385). Thus, following a well-established tradition that included historical, anthropological, and literary works, he added these theories to his fiction by relating specific pagan practices to ancient human races with specific physical features that would have endured since prehistoric times to the advent of Christianity and farther ahead. In doing so, Lovecraft was following the tradition of the scholar Margaret Murray, and the writers Arthur Machen and John Buchan, who included them in tales such as “The Shining Pyramid” (Machen [1895] 2010: 103) and “No Man’s Land” (Buchan [1902] 1997: 191).

In her work, Murray contended that witchcraft in Northern and Western Europe was the product of an ancient, pristine race that would have populated some areas of the continent before they mixed with the races of later invaders. Her description of this peoples as “a race which had not

reached the agricultural stage" (1921:7) fits within the later classification of Paleolithic hunter-gatherers, with the particularity that she matched their alleged wizardry and practice of magic to dwarfness, which she regarded as a "racial" feature (1921: 8-9). Murray even linked the short height of this dwarfish race with "the fairy folk" tradition (Murray 1921: 188). According to her, these people who have maintained their pagan religious tradition throughout centuries in the unfavorable context of the spread of Christianity in the Middle Ages and of humanism in the Early Modern Period.

Arthur Machen used the idea of a hidden dwarfish race in stories such as *The Three Impostors* (1894), *The Shining Pyramid* (1895), and *The White People* (1904). In *The Three Impostors* (1894), one of the characters is a Professor Gregg who is investigating a "little people," whom he identifies with the fairy folk of legends, stressing the analogy of the term with the description of their appearance and manners (Machen [1894] 1995:74). Although the legends usually describe them as "fair" and "good," Professor Gregg discovers that they are an evil race that substitute changelings with peasant's children, and who are frequently at the origin of the darkest myths about witches, wizards, and the Sabbath ([1894] 1995:74). In *The Shining Pyramid,* Machen tells the story of the of a girl in who is kidnapped by "the little people," a term that he associates with the "old name of the fairies" and with a "tradition of the prehistoric Turanian inhabitants of the country" (Machen [1895] 2010: 109). The search of the girl proves to be unsuccessful because the "little people" have taken her "to the underworld, to the places beneath the hills" ([1895] 2010: 110). In *The White People,* the protagonist is another girl who from her earliest infancy can see "the white people," whom she describes as the little white faces that used to look at her when she was lying in her cradle ([1904] 2010:126). In "Supernatural Horror in Literature," Lovecraft expresses his fascination about Machen's fiction in general and about his "little people" in particular, remarking the relation between them and the "noxious witch-cult" in *The White People* (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:95), underlining their evil substitutions in *The Three Impostors* ([1927] 2008: 97), and qualifying "the little people" as "demoniac" in his brief analysis of *The Shining Pyramid* ([1927]

2008: 100).

In Buchan's "No-Man's Land" there is a quite similar description of a dwarf race of prehistoric people living under the Scottish hills in early 20th century, who have survived the different invasions in the British Isles, such as those who speak Gaelic and Saxon languages, to continue practicing their ancestral pagan religion (Buchan [1902] 1997: 208). This race is at the origin of the legends about the Brownie, described as a "little man" ([1902] 1997:191), whose hill is also known as the "Place of the Little Men" ([1902] 1997: 197). Although Buchan's depiction of sacrifices in a midsummer festival ([1902] 1997: 227), including a flat altar stone and an iron knife ([1902] 1997: 229) are very similar to their equivalents in Lovecraft's fiction, there is no certainty that Lovecraft ever read the story. However, Lovecraft knew the author, to whom he devotes a paragraph in "Supernatural Horror in Literature," remarking the "cosmic adumbrations" of Buchan's account of the survival of the Sabbath in Scotland ([1927] 2008: 83).

In some of Lovecraft's stories the wizards that practice these cults are described in terms that suggest Murray's influence. In "The Very Old Folk," for instance, the performers of the rituals that include human sacrifices not only live apart and speak a different language from the Romans and the Basque tribes of the area, but the "*little*[62] yellow squint-eyed messengers (who looked like Scythians)" (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 3.495) are also described as physically different. As quoted above in section I.1.3.2 in this study, in "Supernatural Horror in Literature" Lovecraft shows his attraction of Murray's theory of a secret religion of nocturnal worshippers "handed down among peasants for thousands of years" despite the outward reign of other religions in Europe (Lovecraft [1927] 2008: 21-22).

Thus, Lovecraft uses the scientific discourse of previous anthropologists of 19th and early 20th centuries to produce horror through the existence and hypothetical survival of a prehistorical dwarfish race in isolated places, who practice a mysterious secret pagan religion. This scientific discourse was pervaded by racist prejudices, that were incorporated into fiction by such authors as

[62]My italics.

Machen and Lovecraft himself, since in the period when they wrote their stories, racism was, to a certain extent, accepted as a scientific fact. However, in Lovecraft's fiction the main element that contributes to produce atmospheres of weirdness, more than racism, is again indeterminacy, through the vagueness of the description of the members of the dwarfish race, whose physical appearance, customs, and cults are only ambiguously hinted, since they hide from "more civilized" societies. This importance of uncertainty can be noticed in next section, about the Black Man Lovecraft's approach to the Black Man of witches' tradition, in which the ambiguity and cosmic outsideness supersede any kind of racism.

II.5 The Black Man in Lovecraft's fiction

The European tradition of witchcraft often represents the character of the "Black Man" as an archetypal image of the Devil in Western culture that has been identified in the tradition of some parts of the British Islands (Miller 2008:144). In the USA, the presence of the "Black Man" in literature can be traced back to Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and other stories (Hawthorne [1850] 2016: 171) before it reached Lovecraft and some other authors of supernatural horror such as Arthur Machen ([1904] 2010:136) who included the cultural heritage of the "Black Man" in their fiction.

Lovecraft's use of this tradition has also been subject to criticism from a postcolonial approach arguing that the association of the figure of the "Black Man" with Satan morphologically and culturally assimilates black people to the satanic on the basis of color (McMillan, 1994:113). However, Lovecraft's description of this character in "The Dreams in the Witch House," specifically points out that despite his "black colouration," the Black Man did not show "the slightest sign of negroid features" (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.254). Instead, the blackness of Lovecraft's Black Man rather suggests death very specifically when he is described as a "lean man of *dead* black colouration" (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.254), which is reinforced by the "shapeless robe of some heavy black fabric" that made "his only garment" (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.254).

Brief mentions to the "Black Man" appear in different stories by Lovecraft such as the short novel *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* ([1927] 2015: 2.252), but it is "The Dreams in the Witch House" which provides much more detailed information that allows to relate Lovecraft's depiction of this character to Murrays' work. In this story, the Black Man is first mentioned in a historical document about the witch-trial of Keziah Mason ([1932] 2015: 3.233), which is clearly a reminiscence of Murray's discussion of this type of reports. In the following passage, the "Black Man" is physically described in detail as he appears in the dreams that Gilman, the protagonist, experiences under the influence of said witch, who is the "beldame" leading him to sign some pact with the devil:

> A tall, lean man of dead black colouration but without the slightest sign of negroid features; wholly devoid of either hair or beard, and wearing as his only garment a shapeless robe of some heavy black fabric. His feet were indistinguishable because of the table and bench, but he must have been shod, since there was a clicking whenever he changed position. The man did not speak, and bore no trace of expression in his small, regular features. He merely pointed to a book of prodigious size which lay open on the table, while the beldame thrust a huge grey quill into Gilman's right hand (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.254).

Although this description of the "Black Man" is clearly influenced by Murray's use of Christian witch-trials reports where "the devil [appeared] as a Black Man in many testimonies" (1921: 26-28), Lovecraft's treatment of the Black Man tradition seems to be somehow detached not only from any association with black people, but also from Eliphas Levi's horned depiction of the Christian Devil as Baphomet. Instead, Murray's influence is sensed in Lovecraft's assimilation of the Black Man to former pagan deities that would have continued to be worshipped in different traditions as part of an ongoing "witch-cult" that is specifically mentioned in "The Dreams in the Witch House." In this sense, Lovecraft's "Black Man" is analogous to the mythical creatures and alien powers that he created in his fiction. In the same story, the Black Man is presented within the same alien category as Nyarlathotep, which is a fictional character of Lovecraft's own invention within his myths:

> Old legends are hazy and ambiguous, and in historic times all attempts at crossing forbidden gaps seem complicated by strange and terrible alliances with beings and messengers *from*

> *outside*.[63] There was the immemorial figure of the deputy or messenger of hidden and terrible powers -the "Black Man" of the witch-cult, and the "Nyarlathotep" of the "Necronomonicon" (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.260).

Another difference between Murray's and Lovecraft's representation of the Black Man is that while in Murray's reports from the real historical testimonies about witchcraft, this figure is central, the Lovecraftian Black Man is described as a secondary figure, a messenger of more powerful gods or entities such as Azathoth, the ruling entity at the center of ultimate Chaos (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.260). Through the context of the story, it can be inferred that the gaps that he can cross as a messenger are space and time. The way in which the narrator of "The Dreams in the Witch House" associates the Black Man with Nyarlathotep, the messenger of the gods in his fictional cosmic mythology, intertwines traditional culture and Lovecraft's myths. In this sense, Lovecraft is detaching himself from the Christian identification of the Black Man with the Devil, and rather connects him to the pagan messenger deities, such as Hermes in Greek mythology (Coleman 2019: 161). In contrast with other "powers" in Lovecraft's fiction that remain hidden from human sight such as the Old Ones, as a secondary deity, the Black Man sometimes contacts humans, particularly witches.

Lovecraft's representation of the "Black Man" combines again the scientific discourse that suggests his alien origin as a cosmic messenger from unknown realms, with the irrational discourse of religion, that stresses his identification with the devil. The vague description of his unexpressive face, devoid of any hair, his shapeless garment, the absence of his voice, contribute to dehumanize him, depriving him of any individuality expressed through people's particular features. Again, in the case of the "Black Man," the use of further details would be detrimental in producing horror, which justifies the ambiguity in his characterization. In addition, his indistinguishable feet resemble a spectral figure, which also increase the uncertainty about this entity. Thus, Lovecraft contributes to produce cosmic horror more through the omitted than through the specified information. This ambiguity can also be noticed in familiars, as other characters that Lovecraft probably took from

[63] My italics.

Murray, familiars, analyzed in the following section.

II.6 Familiars

Historical documentation about witchcraft in the Western tradition (Murray 1921:201) describe familiars as companions to the witches that could take the form of little animals or diverse characters with peculiar powers. Murray's *The Witch Cult in Western Europe* contains detailed information about their size, the way they fed, and their alliance with witches. According to Murray, "the domestic familiar was always a small animal, was fed in a special manner on bread and milk and blood" (1921: 201). The most common familiars appearing near the beds of witches are rodents like rats and mice. As Murray quotes from the Essex witch trials that took place in England in 1645, those familiars looked like "imps which came into the bed to her in the likenesse of mouses" (1921: 208). In one of testimonies of the Huntingdonshire trials in 1646, the familiar is described as "a thing some-what bigger than a Mouse, of a brown colour" (Murray 1921: 211). This creature sometimes fed on the blood of some victim or the witch herself, who would willingly let the familiar suck blood from her body, which therefore showed the marks of its teeth (Murray 1921: 211).

In "The Dreams in the Witch House," the familiar, the witch and the "Black Man" form an inseparable trio. For this story, Lovecraft created the witch Keziah Mason's familiar Brown Jenkins, whose physical appearance and behavior evidently resonates with Murray's descriptions. When townspeople saw it in 1692,[64] it looked as a "small, furry, sharp-toothed thing" (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.233), no larger than a good-sized rat known as "Brown Jenkins" by the locals because of his color (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.236). Still, unlike the familiars described by Murray's, but as many other Lovecraftian mixed descendants of the Deep Ones and humans in "The Shadow Out of Times" or Wilbur Whateley in "The Dunwich Horror," Brown Jenkin is a semi-human hybrid creature, which contributes to make it more disgusting and horrific. Its bearded face is described as

[64]A date chosen by Lovecraft to suggestively coincide with the actual Salem's Witch Trials.

evilly human, while its paws are little, tiny human hands (Lovecraft [1932] 2015, 3.236). The hybrid nature of Brown Jenkins is also remarked by the physical resemblance existing between witch Keziah and her "familiar" (Lovecraft [1932] 2015:3.266) suggesting the origin of its hybridization, which together with the alien-human mixed breeding present in his fiction, is a common resource to create an atmosphere of cosmic horror in his work.

Like Lovecraft's Black Man, his familiars are minor messengers between the witch and the devil or more powerful entities such as Azathoth, while in the historically documented cases described by Murray, witches identified both the Black Man and the familiar with the Devil himself (Murray 1921:198).[65] Instead of avatars adopted by the Devil or just disguises used by the priests of the "Witch Religion" as Murray believed (1921:219) [66] in Lovecraft's story, these "lesser messengers or intermediaries [were] the quasi animals and queer hybrids which legend depicts as witches' familiars" (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.260). But the specific way in which Brown Jenkins "nursed on the witch's blood -which it sucked like a vampire" (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.236) and the marks it leaves on the protagonist's skin after attacking him ([1932] 2015, 3.270) draws clearly from Murray's description of familiars.

Although restricted to a single example, Lovecraft's detailed description of Jenkins evinces the author's particular adaptation of the old myth of familiars from paganism and witchcraft into his fiction. Jenkins monstrosity is based on his combination of human and animal features as a hybrid creature, occupying a liminal position between these two states, which can be noticed through the combination of rodent and human parts in its body, as well as through its behavior, contrasting its brutal feeding instincts to its evil intelligence. Furthermore, the narrator refers to Jenkins as "it" and "thing," even though the creature is given a human name, increasing the uncertainty about its real nature. This border situation generates fear through ambiguity suggested by the animalization of the human (or the humanization of the animal). Moreover, the analogies with other hybrids in Lovecraft

[65]Murray also distinguished between divining and domestic familiars (1922:197), but this distinction is of little interest for the study of familiars in Lovecraft's fiction.

[66] Murray describes a dance in the Pyrenees in which familiars appear in human form and dance with the witches suggesting that they were people disguised as animals (1921:219).

fiction, like those who are a combination of aliens and terrestrials, contributes to produce an atmosphere of horror through their liminal condition. This contrast of heterogeneous, sometimes antithetical features is paradigmatic of Lovecraft's fiction, as it exemplifies the diversity of pagan deities and mythical creatures from many different traditions that appear in his works, which are analyzed in next section.

II.7 Divinities and mythical creatures from ancient, historical cults

In his fiction, Lovecraft often included pagan gods, goddesses and mythical creatures that were actually worshipped in different cults throughout history. Sometimes these deities are merely named in his stories to convey a sense of antiquity and estrangement or identified with the "Old Ones" of his own invention, but in other cases, they can play a more relevant role. These divinities come from a wide variety of chronological periods, geographical areas, and cultural and religious traditions. My aim is to offer an overview of how Lovecraft incorporated elements from different pagan religions into his fiction as a way to increase cosmic horror, through the contrast between the irrational discourse of these pagan religions, but that confront and sometimes supersede the rational discourse of science, a dichotomy increased through the inherent indeterminacy, liminality and synchronicity attributed to these deities. Their indeterminacy is a consequence of the scarce information available about their specific role in Lovecraft's fiction, suggesting that some terrible facts about remain hidden, making difficult to discern their real nature, which increases horror to the unknown. In turn, the liminal position of many of these deities can be noticed from the coexistence in them of opposite characteristics, frequently combining the attributes of animals, forces of nature, alien forces, or even, to some extent appearing as humanized, which blurs their identity and brings them closer to concept of the monstrosity. Synchronicity involves that unconnected human civilizations from different times and distant geographical areas represent very similar divinities showing almost identical characteristics, suggesting that these deities are the particular cultural representations of pre-existing unknown but real entities, increasing horror

through uncertainty.

Therefore, this section does not include the fictional Great Old Ones created by Lovecraft, such as for instance Cthulhu or Nyarlathotep, which will be analyzed in a chapter III. In this section I classify and review the general characteristics of these divinities according to their origin and how they fit into Lovecraft's fiction, as an expression of the irrational discourse that confronts and sometimes supersedes the scientific rational discourse to produce atmospheres of cosmic horror. This tentative classification, however, does not intend to be exhaustive, but to provide examples of the diversity of pagan (and even Abrahamic) religions that appear in Lovecraft's fiction, which contribute to produce cosmic horror. Although some of the gods could have been incorporated to different groups because of syncretism and cultural influences, which can be noticed in the identification of the Greek and Roman divinities, the similitudes of these classical deities with those of other geographic areas, and the cases in which a group could be included into a bigger groups, such as the Hebrew into the Ancient Near East. However, I have broadly classified them into the following: Ancient Near East, Hebrew/Jewish, Egyptian, Classical (Greek and Roman), Native American and Celtic.

II.7.1 Divinities, mythical creatures, and cults from the Ancient Near East

The way in which some of gods and goddesses from the Ancient Near East were condemned in the Judeo-Christian tradition probably allured the anti-Christian Lovecraft to include them in his stories. The inclusion of these deities contributes to produce cosmic horror through their concurrence with other pagan elements of his fiction such as the festivals, the spatial framework, and the rituals. Lovecraft's adaptation of these deities into his fiction also includes the adding of monstrous and alien characteristics to the previous devilish features assigned by the Judeo-Christian tradition, widening the scope of the horror that they can inspire to cosmic dimensions. Nevertheless, their importance varies significantly, and while he devotes significant space to Dagon and Cybele, many other deities such as Moloch are only mentioned without any context. This difference in the

importance and consequently, the extension devoted to them is a consequence of narrative requirements, since for instance Dagon is central to the eponymous story, while the intended effect of decontextualized items such as Moloch can be explained because of their connotations, Moloch implicitly suggesting the practice of human sacrifices, although both examples are used to produce horror. I have also included a section about the Yazidis, a religious community which cannot be properly called ancient, since it is relatively modern, because of its geographical situation in the Near East and its historical roots in the area.

Lovecraft's literary style includes references to Ancient Near East paganism because they combine a sense of wonder and alienation that produce fascination. Lovecraft's style has been subject to different labels by critics such as Martin, who classifies it within a "modernist grotesque" whose commonalities include alienation, subjectivity and absurdity (Martin 2008: 18), or by Joshi, who defines his style as "Asianic," intending to produce a sort of "incantation, whereby the atmosphere generated by language creates an awed sense of the strange reality of the unreal" (Joshi 2013: 1055). In this context, the references to deities from the Ancient Near East illustrate this alienation and fascination about ancient religions classified as the epitome of idolatry and sin by the still predominant Christian religion in his times and as the epitome of exoticism, barbarism, and cruelty by the educated society of the same period. Thus, even the isolated references to deities from this area contribute to produce atmospheres of horror through their implicit cultural connotations.

Dagon

According to Reynolds, the fish-god Dagon was originally a biblical deity of the Philistines (2009:99). This deity is perhaps the god from the Ancient Near East that was most profusely used by Lovecraft in his fiction, including an eponymous story "Dagon" (1919) where this deity becomes central, as well as some mention in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth." In Dagon, the only survivor from a shipwreck arrives to a portion of the ocean floor thrown to the surface" (Lovecraft [1917]

2015:54), where he discovers a monolith with carvings representing what are called “damnably human” creatures, despite their “webbed hands and feet, shockingly wide and flabby lips, glassy, bulging eyes” ([1917] 2015:57). Then, a “stupendous monster,” similar to those in the carvings emerges from water to produce horror and madness. Although the protagonist manages to escape to the civilized world, the visions of the monster, identified with “the Philistine legend of Dagon, the Fish-God,” ([1917] 2015:58) perturbate his mind, inducing him to commit suicide.

In “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” the local protestant churches have been substituted by the “Esoteric Order of Dagon” (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.175), which worship both Dagon and his feminine counterpart Hydra as their main deities in Innsmouth (Reynolds 2009:102) and whose members become immortal. Although Dagon does not appear physically in the story, Zadok Allen, the aforementioned drunkard narrator of Innsmouth’s decline, often refers to him, including at least three ceremonial oaths to the fish-god (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.197).

Thus, the intersection of this deity with other pagan elements in Lovecraft’s depiction of paganism, such as the spatial framework of the ocean as a locus horribilis associated to its fish nature, as well as the secret rituals of initiation including successive oaths, increases the atmosphere of wonder and horror. In addition, as a fish-god, Dagon is a liminal creature that combines a dual nature, both as an animal and as a deity, in which bestiality coexists with its consideration as a divinity within the historical records of the ancient people of the Philistines, which is also intended to intensify said atmosphere of uncertainty and horror to the unknown.

Cybele and **Attis**

The goddess Cybele and her son Attis are Phrygian divinities that appear in different stories such as “The Rats in the Walls” and “The Horror at Red Hook.” Cybele was a goddess of vegetation and fertility from the region of Anatolia whose cult extended as a complex mystery religion in the times of the Roman Republic and Roman Empire (Cumont [1906] 1987: 49). The cult involved the renewal of nature in spring, and it was complemented by the cult of Attis, Cybele’s

dead lover who represented not only sensual love, but also the death and rebirth of vegetation. The rituals in this religion included the eunuch priests known as "galli" and the baptism or aspersion of people with the blood of bulls and lambs in violent sacrifices called "tayrobolion" and "kriobolion" (Cumont [1906] 1987: 63). As a pagan religion characterized by secret rites of initiation, sacrifices and the symbolism of cycles of vegetation, it is not surprising that Lovecraft made use of this uncanny cult for his weird fiction. The use of this cult in Lovecraft's fiction contributes to produce horror and wonder through the contrast of the irrational discourse of pagan religions to the scientific discourse of science, providing verisimilitude to its fiction because of the inclusion of accurate historical data, such as Roman inscriptions. Furthermore, it illustrates again the influence of Murray's theory of the succession of different religions that hide an ominous secret cult, which in Lovecraft's fiction adopts a cosmic dimension, suggesting that the object of said religion is some hidden horror whose nature occupies a liminal position between the numinous and the alien.

In "The Rats in the Walls," Lovecraft syncretizes previous Prehistoric cults and the new Cybele cult that was brought to Britain after the Roman conquest (Lovecraft [1923] 2015, 1.394). In the story, the cult of Cybele is one of the cults practiced along time in the haunted mansion of Exham Priory as one of the succession of evil and strange cults that range from the Prehistoric times to the 17th century, when the rebellion of an incorrupt member of Delapore put an end to the tradition.

> That indescribable rites had been celebrated there, few doubted; and there were unpleasant tales of the transference of these rites into the Cybele-worship which the Romans had introduced. Inscription still visible in the sub-cellar bore such unmistakable letters as "DIV... OPS...MAGNA MAT..." sign of the Magna Mater whose dark worship was once vainly forbidden to Roman citizens. Anchester had been the camp of the third Augustan legion, as many remains attest, and it was said that the temple of Cybele was splendid and thronged with worshippers who performed nameless ceremonies at the bidding of a Phrygian priest. Tales added that the fall of the religion did not vanish with the Roman power. (Lovecraft [1923] 2015, 1.378)

While this quotation contains a minor mistake, [67] it shows that Lovecraft had a non-negligible knowledge about the goddess. The inscription is quite plausible regarding the use of

[67] The quotation contains a mistake about the Roman legion that was established in Britain, which was the second and not the third (Molina Foix, 2006: 1.797).

Roman epigraphy, with capital letters, typical abbreviations, and the use of the dative case in Latin, which is common of votive inscriptions dedicated to divinities. A possible reconstruction of the inscription would be "DIV(inae) OP(u)S MAGNA MAT(er)," which can be translated as "Dedicated to the Divine Work of the Great Mother,"[68] Which was the most typical epithet for the goddess Cybele. However, since the abbreviation OPS could even not be an abbreviation at all, but a mention to another goddess called Ops, who is a well-known Roman goddess of abundance (Miano, 2015, 98), an alternative, slightly different transliteration of the inscription would be DIV(inae) Ops MAGNA MAT(er), which translates as "Dedicated to the divine Ops, the Great Mother" involving an identification in substance or hypostasis between both goddesses Ops and Cybele. Whereas the use of the rational discourse of historians through a plausible inscription provides verisimilitude to the story, the literary discourse of the excerpt contributes to produce horror using adjectives such as unpleasant and dark, which evokes that these cults are hideous.

As Lovecraft points out in his text, Cybele was a Phrygian goddess whose cult had extended under the Roman Empire but whose priests were mainly Phrygian. Lovecraft was also historically right when he comments that the religion was once forbidden to the Romans. As Franz Cumont points out, the cult to Cybele had been introduced in Rome in 205 BC in the times of the Second Punic War, but it was forbidden for common Roman citizens for a long period of time, until the times of emperor Caligula, and the priests had to be Phrygian (Cumont [1906] 1987: 53). Lovecraft's use of a goddess that was considered impure by Roman authorities for his stories is significant because he tries to reflect the uneasiness that this religion inspired in Romans and in historians such as Cumont (Cumont [1906] 1987: 63) to produce horror in his fiction. In addition, as a goddess related to the death and rebirth of vegetation, there is a connection with the symbolism of circular time as a recurrent topic in Lovecraft´s fiction.

Lovecraft's fictional account of the cult of Cybele is historically accurate when he writes

[68]The transliteration and translation of the inscriptions in the story are my own. I have used my previous experience in Roman epigraphy and Roman religion and solved my doubts with the Roman inscription database provided by the University of Heidelberg (https://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/home?lang=en) and the online dictionary Didacterion (https://www.didacterion.com/esddlt.php).

that it “did not vanish with the empire.” Although in doing this, he seems to align with Murray’s theories about the origin of witchcraft in Europe as he did with other pagan deities, given his interest in this Phrygian religion, he was probably acquainted with the fact that the cult of Cybele and her son Attis also had a continuity in the cult of Virgin Mary and Jesus, which is coherent with the theory of the persistence of hidden cults “despite the outward reign of other religions” that he used in his fiction, as he explains in “Supernatural Horror in Literature” ([1927] 2008: 21)

“The Rats in the Walls” also include other inscriptions referring to Cybele and Attis, such as “L. PRAEC.... VS...PONTIFI...ATYS” ([1923] 2015: 1.386). The transliteration of this inscription may be L(ucius) Prae(clarum) V(otum) S(olvit) PONTIFI(ce) ATYS, which translates as “Lucius, notable man, fulfilled his vows with the priest of Attis.” Despite the ban on the worship of Attis by Roman citizens, the inscription provides fictional evidence that sacrifices to Attis were taking place in the setting of Exham Priory during the Roman period. The narrator’s learned acquaintance with the “rites of the Eastern god, whose worship was so mixed with that of Cybele” frightens him as he deems them to be “hideous” (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.386-387) in a way that remains unspecified for readers. Whatever these rites consist of, the contribution of their hideousness to the protagonist’s final madness is suggested by including an invocation to these deities in his ravings: “Magna Mater! Magna Mater!...Atys...” (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.396). The Cybele cult is described as hideous in the story not only because of its forbidden rites that include human sacrifices, but also because it hides the continuity of an unknown, darker religion, an idea which to some extent deals with Murray’s secret cult, but also with the possibility that there is some material (presumably alien) reality behind the succession of different religions that had practiced its rituals behind the castle. Thus, the uncertainty about the real significance and extent of the Cybele cult, which occupies a liminal position between the supernatural explanations of religion, and the suggestion of the presence of a material being, causes this outcome of horror and madness.

In “The Horror at Red Hook,” Lovecraft briefly mentions Cybele as the Magna Mater again as a goddess that is bleated or praised by headless moon-calves (Lovecraft [1925] 2015:

1.499). The fact that these calves are headless suggests the practice of animal sacrifices, but considering that headless and faceless creatures are a common place in Lovecraft's fiction (such as Nyarlathotep and Night Gaunts), their function can be to produce horror through deadly mutilated bodies of animals that should be inert.

In conclusion, the presence of the Cybele cult in Lovecraft's fiction contributes to produce horror through the irrational discourse of paganism, which includes violent sacrifices and circular time, as well as through the madness and anguish that causes to some characters. Said discourse is combined with the historical and anthropological ones, which provide verisimilitude to the narration, respectively, with the use of plausible Roman inscriptions, and Murray's concept of the succession of different cults concealing a secret belief that transcends them. In addition, the references to decapitated animals that should be dead but are animated and rational to praise the goddess, contributes to produce a nightmarish atmosphere of horror. All this confers a liminal character to the cult in Lovecraft's fiction, in which, vaguely delimitated, a dual numinous and alien nature seem to coexist.

Moloch

Coleman's description of Ammonite god Moloch depict him as an ox-headed, or ram-horned deity holding a scepter (2019: 232) who was offered children in ritual sacrifices involving fire (2019: 232). This Ammonite god is named many times in the Bible (Lev 18:21; 1Kings 11:7). These historical and Biblical accounts include elements that Lovecraft would have borrowed, such as sacrifice of children by fire, or its association with depravation. Lovecraft uses Moloch in "The Horror at Red Hook" as part of inspector Thomas Malone's dream that includes different divinities while he was investigating a secret cult in the undergrounds of New York City (Lovecraft [1925] 2015, 1.499). In this story, Lovecraft is consistent with the historical accounts of the cult of Moloch by suggesting the relation of the disappearance of young children and fire sacrifices with the practices of the cult investigated by inspector Malone (Lovecraft [1925] 2015:1.497).

Although the brief mention of Moloch together with other deities in “The Horror at Red Hook” does not allow to provide many conclusions, the reference to a pagan cult that practiced human sacrifices illustrates how Lovecraft used exotic religions to produce an atmosphere of weirdness. The fact that Moloch is mentioned in a dream reinforces the uncertainties about the whole excerpt in which is mentioned, while the liminal nature of these “unhallowed rites” can be noticed because they are called “cosmic sin” (Lovecraft [1925] 2015:1.497), combining the scientific and religious discourses to cause horror in the reader.

Ashtharoth

Ashtharoth is named in “The Horror at Red Hook,” within the context of inspector Malone's dream (Lovecraft [1925] 2015, 1.499). As in the case of Moloch, this deity is only mentioned without any further details. Ashtharoth (sometimes also spelled Ashtaroth or Ashtoreth) was initially one of the spellings of the Phoenician goddess Astarte. Coleman argues that there is an equivalence or continuity between Astarte, the Sumerian Innana, and Babylonian Ishtar. In all these cases, she was a goddess of fertility and shepherds, as well as Baal's consort and mother (2019:30). However, in Christian Europe in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age, Astaroth became a different figure, sometimes depicted as a masculine evil spirit or as a demon. Ashtoreth became then one of the seventy-two spirits of Solomon. King Solomon of Israel put these demons in a brass vessel and threw them into a lake, where the Babylonians recovered and opened it, so that the demons escaped (Coleman 2019:314). In the Bible she is mentioned as Ashtoreth (1 Kings 11:5) as one of the goddess that Solomon adorated.

Again, the isolated mention of the goddess does not allow to provide particular conclusions about this deity. As a divinity that was successively related with a goddess of fertility that caused idolatry among ancient Jews, and later with evil masculine spirits and demons, Ashtharoth brief inclusion in Lovecraft’s story suggests the idea of sin and perversity in this cult, which collectively with the other deities are called “the quintessence of all damnation” (Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 1.499).

Thus, the confluence of the irrational discourse of all these deities from pagan religions in the excerpt are combined together with the "cosmic sin" that comes from "unsealed wells of night," to transmit "daemon-lore" (Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 1.499). Thus, use of language, with particular references to religious damnation, darkness and sin, combined with the refences to the vast universe contributes to intensify horror.

Lilith

Lilith was a well-known female mythic figure from Mesopotamian origin, but her myth was later incorporated into Jewish folklore and Western culture, including Rossetti's famous painting, as well as literary representations before Lovecraft's times such as Robert Browning's poem "Adam, Lilith and Eve" (1883) and George MacDonald's novel *Lilith* (1895), that explain why her main characteristics evolved throughout different cultural contexts. Originally, she was a Babylonian goddess, depicted as a winged demon-woman who attacked men while they slept (Coleman 2019:211). Later, in the Jewish tradition, Lilith became Adam's purported wife before Eve (Unterman 1991:120). According to Coleman, Lilith refused to obey Adam, was expelled from paradise and had sexual intercourse with the devil, producing the jinn. Sometimes she is identified as a vampire or as a black cat, preying on new-born babies (2019:211). She is mentioned several times in Lovecraft's "The Horror at Red Hook," where her name first appears written in red Chaldean letters in the walls of the cabin of a ship where wizard Robert Suydam's young wife was murdered (Lovecraft [1925] 2015, 1.495). Later, Lilith also appears in inspector Malone's dreams, her phosphorescent limbs covered in the blood of stainless children sacrificed to her (Lovecraft [1925] 2015, 1.499) with the aim to rejuvenate old Suydam and his followers. Her contextualization in the frame of a young woman's death and the sacrifice of young children is in line with Lilith as a destructive feminine force connected to maternity and fertility. In the final part of Malone's dream, the corpse of Suydam is taken to the underground grotto, where she is praised by a multitude who scream the words "Lilith, Great Lilith, behold the Bridegroom!" (Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 501), as if

she were going to be Suydam's real bride. In general, the Lilith that appears in "The Horror at Red Hook" does not seem an extra-terrestrial creature, but a supernatural being that is summoned because of the magical practices of Robert Suydam.

Thus, Lovecraft uses the ancient legends about Lilith to produce horror through the irrational discourse of legend and religion that underline her destructive role for the children who are victims of sacrifices and even for men and women, as the death of Suydam and his wife exemplify. Lilith's unnatural phosphorescence, the way she uses blood to write her name, and her participation in a ceremony to marry Suydam's animated corpse, add weirdness and necrophilia to the pagan horror rituals that are central in "The Horror at Red Hook." These rituals are complementary to the cosmic elements that appear in the story which can "threaten the very integrity of the universe" (Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 483).

The Yezidis

The Yezidis are a religious community from Mesopotamia, Kurdistan, Turkey, and other countries in the Middle East, who have been unfairly accused of adoring the devil by Muslims and Christians for centuries. This syncretic religion that believes in seven angels, the most important of whom is Tawusi Melek ("Peacock Angel"), who is the manifestation of God on Earth but not the Creator himself (El-Moursi, 2017: 513). The fact that Tawusi Melek disobeyed some orders by the creator God is one of the reasons why some Christian and Islamic theologians consider him analogous to Lucifer. The Yezidis are mentioned in "The Horror at Red Hook" as one the communities that detective Thomas Malone considers suspicious of practicing their cult and doing evil deeds. The narrator refers to "a very unusual colony of unclassified slant-eyed folk who used the Arabic alphabet but were eloquently repudiated by the great mass of Syrians" (Lovecraft [1925] 2015:1.488). Although the quotation may refer to different communities, real or fictional, later on, "Malone could not help recalling that Kurdistan is the land of the Yezidis, last survivors of the Persian devil-worshippers" (Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 1.489). Lovecraft probably included the Yezidis

as “devil-worshippers” just because of the apparent difference with the object of veneration with other cults, but they do not play any significant role in the plot of the story.

The characterization of the Yezidis in the story suggests that there is something intrinsically different and evil in them, which ranges from their physical differences, since they are described as “slant-eyed,” which its evident racist connotations, to the adjectives assigned to this population as “unusual,” and “unclassified.” The Yezidis are also identified as an evil *other* because they are considered “devil-worshippers.” The repudiation even by the other Syrians stresses this alterity since the ethnic groups that are supposed to know about them reject their company, suggesting that there must be chief reasons to exclude them.

Thus, Lovecraft exploits the peculiarities of the Yezidis, and the quite probable unfamiliarity of his readers with this ethnic group and their religion as another element to produce atmospheres of horror and estrangement. This is accomplished by means of the occult characteristics of their religion, the apparently irrational behavior of their members, and the unknown of this religion, which hides a terrible secret, the adoration of the devil. The language that Lovecraft uses, particularly the adjectives that attribute sinister to the community, together with the significative silence about their real participation in the ritual that are taking place, contribute to produce ambiguity and uneasiness “The Horror at Red Hook.”

II.7.2 Divinities and mythical creatures from the Jewish tradition. Kabbalism

Since the Christian definition of paganism intrinsically excludes the Judeo-Christian tradition and Abrahamic religions (Jones 2014:6), they lay beyond the scope of my study. Still, the European assimilation of Judaism to witchcraft in the Middle Ages classifies some Jewish religious practices such as the Kabbala, as magical and divinatory. This association explains the presence of Jewish religious practices in the literary tradition of horror fiction, including Shloime Anski’s *The Dybbuk* (1914) and Gustave Meyrink’s *The Golem* (1915), both cited by Lovecraft in his essay “Supernatural Horror in Literature” ([1927] 2008:55). Despite Judaism is at the origin and core of

the Christian faith and tradition, in said essay Lovecraft likened the religious practices of Jews with other religious traditions that he deemed to be pagan: "the Semitic mind, like the Celtic and the Teutonic, seems to possess marked mystical inclinations" (Lovecraft [1927] 2008: 54). As in other cases involving racial difference in Lovecraft's fiction (i.e. The Black Man and the Yezidis), in this quotation, Lovecraft's racial approach to spiritual thinking denotes an intention to create an atmosphere of strangeness in the occult that would reinforce the effect of cosmic horror, rather than signify a racist approach to horror.

In this sense, Lovecraft's use of Judaism is not so different from the use he makes of other religions from the Ancient Near East, except for its strong historical and popular connection with witchcraft, especially regarding the use of grimoires or old books of magic of Judaic inspiration. Like in previous cases such as the use of Latin in inscriptions suggesting ancient Roman paganism, Lovecraft's recourse to Hebrew as a language incomprehensible to most of his readership, contributes to creating an atmosphere of fear for the unknown that pervades his cosmic (and non-cosmic) horror. This is the context in which the reference to Kabbalism appears in "The Horror at Red Hook" together with the names "Sephiroth," "Ashmodai," and "Samaël," which are vaguely described by old wizard Robert Suydam as mystical words (Lovecraft [1925] 2015, 1.487).

Kabbalism

Unterman defines the Kabbalah as general term for the Judaic mystical tradition and esoteric traditions that explores the inner workings of the divine in its relationship to man and the theurgic influence of man's action on God (Unterman 1991:110). As Sarane Alexandrian points out, the word "Kabbalism" means "tradition" and it refers to a kind of Jewish mysticism which appeared in the Middle Ages in France and Spain (Alexandrian 2014: 112). It is a method for the interpretation of the Bible [69](Alexandrian 2014:113), to understand the nature of the creation and the role of man in it. Kabbalism assigns numerical values to the Hebrew words in the Bible and

[69] The Hebrew Bible or Tenakh is the central scripture of Judaism and consists of twenty-four books divided into three sections: the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings (Unterman 1991:38).

these combines the different words and sentences in the text to produce new ones (Alexandrian 2014:114). In this way, it unveils a new "hidden" knowledge in the sacred texts, using a hermeneutics that allows to get the secret names of God, of the angels and the demons. In this context, when it can be correctly spelled or pronounced, a sacred word becomes extremely powerful. The sacred book from Kabbalism is the *Sefer ha Zohar* which preserves traditions as ancient as the 2nd century by Simeon ben Yohai, but it was probably written much later around 1290 by Moshe ben Schemtob from Leon (Alexandrian 2014:125).

In "Supernatural Horror in Literature," Lovecraft described religious tradition of Kabbalism, which Lovecraft sometimes spelled "Cabbalism," as "philosophy" or esoteric practice rather than a religion itself. Significantly, he underlines its relevance during the Middle Ages, subscribing medieval conceptions of the Kabbalah that related it to mysticism and magic. As he does in his fiction, Lovecraft's description of Kabbalism in his literary treaty does not rely on anthropological knowledge as much as it does on its implied or associated meaning. Thus, he qualifies the spiritual realm of the Kabbala as "strange," while the knowledge it provides is not only reduced to "glimpses" that are somehow "dark" but also about undetermined "beings" that are not invisible, but "apart from the visible world," suggesting the existence of different dimensions beyond the physical reality ascertainable through the senses. But most significant of all, is Lovecraft's interest in the esoteric properties that the Kabbala gives to the letters of the Hebraic alphabet, as it seems to be transferable to a literary effect of "spectral glamour and potency" contiguous to or constituent of horror:

> Cabbalism itself, so prominent during the Middle Ages, is a system of philosophy explaining the universe as emanations of the Deity, and involving the existence of strange spiritual realms and beings apart from the visible world of which dark glimpses may be obtained throughout certain magic incantations. Its ritual is bound up with mystical interpretations of the Old Testament, and attributes an esoteric significance to each letter to the Hebrew alphabet—a circumstance which has imparted to Hebrew letters a sort of spectral glamour and potency in the literature of magic (2008:54)

Kabbalism in "The Horror at Red Hook" becomes the background where the other Hebrew names are cited by wizard Suydam. Suydams owns a library whose walls are packed with "tattered books of ponderous, archaic and vaguely repellent aspect," suggesting that some of them may have

been the basis for his own writings on the Kabbalah (Lovecraft [1925] 2015, 1.486). While adjectives such as “tattered,” and “archaic” underline the ancient lore of the Kabbalah,ponderous stresses that the enormous amount of knowledge and “repellent” evokes the horror that they can cause. Using these books, Suydam produces a brochure containing a treatise of unspecified kabbalistic content written by the old wizard himself, whom detective Malone admired.

The significance that Lovecraft assigns to the Hebrew language and alphabet explains that the names of many creatures in Lovecraft's cosmic mythology sound somewhat Hebraic, such as two of the most powerful Old Ones, Yog Sothoth and Azathoth. Although he regarded himself as a convinced skeptic and a materialist, Lovecraft also acknowledged his fascination with the power and secrecy of words in the Hebraic tradition, which he certainly believed in when hinting at an aesthetic dimension. The recourse to languages other than English to convey meanings somehow connected to pagan supernatural practices and identities evokes a sensation of secrecy in their incomprehensibility and invokes a considerable suggestive power. The cultural prohibition of pagan practices by Christianity and other religions not only justifies their secrecy, but also their dangerousness, thus contributing to the atmosphere of cosmic horror in Lovecraft’s fiction.

Sefiroth

The Sefiroth or Sefirot that appears in “The Horror of Red Hook” is a concept taken from the Judaic tradition of Kabbalism that refers to the ten entities or divine attributes that make possible to know God and which were used by him to create the world (Vileno 2014:61). They are like emanations or intermediaries between God and his creation through which the divine influx reaches everything in the material world. They are represented as the different spheres in the diagram of the tree of life of Kabbalism, in which every sphere is a Sefiroth. According to Anna Maria Vileno, their names are Keter (“crown”), Hokhmah (“wisdom”), Bihah (“understanding”), Hesed (“kindness”), Gevurah (“power”), Tiferet (“beauty”), Rakhamin (“mercy”), Netsakh (“glory”), Yesod (“foundation”) and Malkhout (“kingship”). Alan Unterman points out that the male

Sefiroth, which convey the energy of God in an undifferentiated way are placed on the right side, while the female ones, which receive and shape that flow of energy are placed on the left (1991: 175). Although related to Jewish Kabbalist mysticism, the Sefirot are divine emanations. However, in "The Horror at Red Hook" the name appears juxtaposed to the devilish Ashmodai and Samael as indistinguishable from them in this respect. This suggests that Lovecraft was less interested in providing an accurate account of the actual meaning or significance of these Judaic notions than in implying the magical properties emanating from their suggestion of mysticism as a pseudo-magical practice related to witchcraft. In fact, the intended incomprehensibility of their meaning adds to the sense of the occult and the supernatural that instils horror in his readers' minds, intensifying the "spectral glamour and potency" that Lovecraft alludes in the quotation above, which can also be noticed in the use of "Ashmodai" and "Samaël."

Ashmodai

According to Coleman, Ashmodai or Asmodeus is a Judaic evil spirit of lust and vengeance that led the clawed tribe of demons known as the *sheedem*. Some versions of this mythical figure explain that he was originally a prince of the seraphim angels who fell from heaven and one of the seventy-two spirits that king Solomon had captured in the vessel (Coleman 2019:30). Unterman explains that king Solomon captured this mischievous demon to appropriate his book of magic and the king build his Temple. Asmodeus' tricks to usurp Solomon's throne were discovered and frustrated by the king (Unterman 1991: 27). I will add that this is a mythical figure that appears in some other literary works by other authors. For example, it is the demon that appears in Algernon Blackwood's story "Secret Worship" (1908) under the spelling Asmodelius (Blackwood [1908] 2000, 155). In Blackwood's story, it becomes the evil spirit worshiped by a community of wicked, spectral monks that appear in the ruins of a German monastery. Lovecraft knew the story and he briefly summarized its plot in "Supernatural Horror in Literature" (Lovecraft [1927] 2008: 97). This suggests that this could be one of the sources that he used for the Ashmodai, while the 9th edition of

the *Encyclopedia Britannica,* which Lovecraft used for the magic texts in "The Horror at Red Hook" could be another one, defining Asmodeus as "an evil demon who appears in in later Jewish tradition […] familiarly called the genius of matrimonial unhappiness and jealousy ("Asmodeus" in *Encyclopedia Britannica*: 1875 :2.714). In the apocryphal book of Tobias, this demon also slays in succession the seven husbands of Sara, daughter of Raguel, on their bridal nights.

In Lovecraft's "The Horror at Red Hook," Ashmodai is just mentioned in a sentence by Robert Suydam together with other names of ancient Judaic lore, when wizard Robert Suydam repeats "with knowing leers such mystical words or names as "Sephiroth," "Ashmodai," and "Samaël"" (Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 487). Although with so little information no much more can be said, the words seem to function as a device used by Suydam to intimidate or frighten other people. For the reader, this word adds spectral allure to the story, because of the aesthetic and power of the words, particularly those from Hebrew origin that seem to have a mystic or religious significance. Furthermore, although it is Lilith that kills them, the presence of Ashmodai as a genius of matrimonial unhappiness can be put in relation to the death of the couple formed by Suydam and his young wife on their bridal night.

Thus, Lovecraft uses Ashmodai to cause fascination and horror through the power of Hebrew words and the connotations about death and unhappiness in marriages that it foreshadows. The uncertainty about the meaning of the words also favors this feeling of uneasiness and glamour, especially because of its combination with other Hebrew knowns, which are deemed to be interrelated in a context in which the power of the wizard is expressed with his look, that leers the other while he pronounces these words, qualified as mystical, which contributes to produce that sense of fear and wonder in the reader.

Samaël

Samael, who is sometimes identified with Satan himself, was originally a mythical figure

from the Jewish tradition, but it was later incorporated to the Gnostic tradition.[70] In the Judaic mythology, Samael, whose name means "poison of God," is the prince of demons who led angels to rebelled against God and married Lilith after he was expelled from heaven. In order to control him, the Kabbalah recommends to bribe him by performing certain rituals (Unterman 1991:70), which might explain why Lovecraft decided to include him in "The Horror at Red Hook", where it appears in the aforementioned quotation when Robert Suydam utters "with knowing leers such mystical words or names as "Sephiroth," "Ashmodai," and "Samaël"" (Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 487). As noted above, Lovecraft may have used the 9th edition of the British Encyclopedia to get information about Samael, as he did for the magic spells in the story. The article about the "Kabbala" explains that the prince of the region of darkness is "Samael, the evil spirit, the serpent who seduced Eve. His wife is the Harlot or the Woman of the Whoredom. The Two are treated as one person and are called "the Beast"" ("Kabbala" in *Encyclopedia Britannica* 1875: 812). However, it is in his Gnostic development where Samael shows certain characteristics that allow Lovecraft to assimilate him to his own fictional myths. In some Gnostic doctrines, Samael is one of the three names of a creator demiurge, who is blind like Lovecraft's Azathoth. It appears in some texts from the Gnostic gospels, such as in *The Aprocryphon of John* and *On the Origin of the World*. In *The Apocryphon of John,* Samael or Yaldabaoth is an archon, minor god or spirit who is equivalent to "the god" in the Old Testament, but who is different from the highest deity, the supreme God in some of the Gnostic doctrines, and who is not the creator of the universe (Robinson 1990:127). From this supreme god, emanate a series of light-beings, including Sophia (wisdom). Sophia is the mother of Yaldabaoth/Samael whom she produces without the approval of the supreme. This is why the creator god Samael is monstrous and weak. This minor god Samael is the real creator of this world and man, and this is why both are imperfect. The text in *The Apocryphon of John* explains who

[70]Gnosticism (from the Greek *Gnosis*, knowledge) was a very heterogeneous philosophical-religious movement that appeared in the ancient world (roughly around 1st -5th centuries CE) and which was sometimes considered as an heretical movement inside early Christianity. Some of the apocryphal gospels, such as those from the 4th century that were found in Nag Hammadi, Egypt in 1945, show that some of the gnostic sects believed that both Jewish and Christians believed in an anthropomorphic. minor god, who had created the world but who was not the original, almighty God (Alexandrian 2014: 51-54).

Samael is and how he believes that he is God:

> Now the archon who is weak has three names. The first name is Yaldabaoth, the second is Saklas, and the third is Samael. And he is impious in arrogance which is in him. For he said, "I am God and there is no other God beside me" for he is ignorant of his strength, the place from which he had come (Robinson 1990:127).

I will also focus on the typical suffix -el which comes from one of the names of Yahveh, the Hebrew god, as Elohim or El. It is a typical suffix in the name of angels, and subsequently after their rebellion in the JudeoChristian tradition, also in demons. The similarities between Lovecraft's cosmogonies and the Gnosis will be studied in the following chapter.

Thus, although Lovecraft used the spectral sonority of this Jewish name to produce wonder in his readers exert through the sound, the wonder and uncertainty about the meaning of Judaic religious names, he was very probably aware of the connotations of Samael as a blind demiurge that creates the world but then ignores it. This concept is at the very core of cosmic horror, since by introducing a creator that abandons its creation, reinforces the insignificance and helplessness of man in a vast universe, in which this blind stupid demiurge symbolizes that even the existence of his creator is futile for man.

II.7. 3 Divinities and mythical creatures from Ancient Egypt

Despite Western Egyptomania in the 1920s, the ancient Egyptian religion plays a relatively minor role in Lovecraft's fiction. However, and probably under Harry Houdini's influence, who co-operated in the composition of the story, this pagan religion is central in "Under the Pyramids" (1924)[71]. In the tale, Houdini, the first-person narrator and protagonist, explains an adventure while visiting Egypt, when he is kidnapped and imprisoned into a subterraneous temple under Khephren's pyramid, where hybrid monsters chase him until he manages to escape. In his narration, the accurate references to the Egyptian religion, such as the gods Re, Amen (or Amon), Isis and Osiris (Lovecraft [1924] 2015: 422), Osiris's judgment, the process of mummification, the *ka* or life-

[71] As a co-operation tale, a detailed analysis of each one of the pagan elements in the story is out of the scope of this study, whose aim it to focus on these exclusively produced by Lovecraft.

principle ([1924]:2015:439), are superseded by “cosmic panic” ([1924]:2015:434) when he is taken to “incalculable gulfs of inner earth” ([1924]:2015:438). Thus, the story includes many elements of the ancient Egyptian religion such as “phantom processions of priests with the heads of bulls, falcons, cat and ibises offer unnamable sacrifices to indescribable gods” ([1924]:2015:424), that turn to be real when Houdini discovers what he calls armies of the hybrid dead, mummies “made by the artificial union of human trunks and limbs, with the heads of animals in imitation of the elder gods” ([1924]:2015:439). Although the liminal, teratological nature of these creatures play a role in the genesis of horror, the narration reaches its climax when the protagonist realizes the existence of an “Unknown One” before the known gods were worshipped ([1924]:2015:439, adding a cosmic dimension and uncertainty to the spooky atmosphere. As Joshi argues, “Lovecraft had done considerable library work on Egyptian antiquities in preparation for writing the tale and had with him *The tomb of Perneb* (1916), a volume issued by the Metropolitan Museum of Art” (Joshi 2013: 500). In addition to Joshi’s remarks, it can be added that the story reflects the context of the Egyptomania produced after the finding in 1922 of Tutankhamen’s tomb, which is cited several times cited in Lovecraft and Houdini’s tale (Lovecraft [1924] 2015:427). In spite of this profusion of Egyptian pagan elements in this tale, there are very few of them in the rest of his stories, such the allusion to goddess Bubastis in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath.*

Bubastis

Coleman describes Bubastis, also called Bast, as a cat-headed goddess of fertility and fire who was consort of the god Ra (2019: 41). She was sometimes identified with the lion-headed goddess Sakhmet and with Isis. Bubastis appears in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, although she appears quite isolated in context. Randolph Carter, the protagonist is helped by a group of cats because he has been trapped by alien monsters described as toad-things. The cats are described as having “that profound and inviolate sanctity which made their goddess great in the temples of Bubastis” (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.118). Thus, Lovecraft relates the cats in the story

with a goddess who is partially a cat. The excerpt humanizes cats by providing them a goddess, not as a divinity of ancient Egyptians, but as a deity of cats, which to some extent, dehumanizes and diminishes mankind, while stressing Lovecraft's admiration of cats. Bubastis is characterized by a "profound and inviolable sanctity" that underline the numinous and religious characteristics, demonstrating that although her divinity makes her inaccessible, she is qualified by some positive connotations such as sanctity. However, Lovecraft was aware of the association of cats with witchcraft and the devil, which he indirectly uses to cause horror. Furthermore, the most influential authors for Lovecraft, both from the literary and anthropological perspective established a relation between cats and an ominous supernatural, such as Poe's "The Black Cat" [1843] (2004), or in Frazer's identifications of cats with the devil (1996:787), or in Murray's quite frequent mention of cats as familiars of witches (1921: 201).

Thus, Lovecraft combines the religious discourse of Egyptian paganism that contraposes Bubastis as a goddess with a hybrid body combining a woman and a cat, with the traditional prejudices, fears that associate cats with the devil and witchcraft, and finally to his own fondness on these animals, to produce a complex sensation of allurement and cosmic horror in the reader. Although Egyptian paganism plays a minor in Lovecraft's fiction, this is not the case of Classic, Greek, and Roman deities, studied in next section.

II.7.4 Divinities and mythical creatures from ancient Greek and Roman times

Compared to Lovecraft's use of other pagan divinities in his fiction, divinities from the Greek and roman classical periods are significantly abundant. This abundance may deal with Lovecraft's familiarity with classic religion and with the needs of narration, but there are no especial differences in the kind of deities that he chose for his fiction, that are usually dark divinities which can inspire horror as in the other groups commented above. Lovecraft's fascination with paganism in his childhood was, more specifically, a fascination with ancient Greek and Roman

mythology. Krämer contends that Lovecraft's rejection of Christianity[72] throughout his life was the result of this fascination (Krämer 2017:94). As Krämer argues, young Lovecraft's rejection of Christianity and his admiration of classic paganism are closely related (2017:95), as his adulthood letters illustrate:

> I felt that one good Roman pagan was worth any six dozen of the cringing scum riff-raff who took up with a fanatical foreign belief, and was frankly sorry that the Syrian superstition was not stamped out…When it came to the repressive measures of Marcus Aurelius and Diocletianus, I was in complete sympathy with the government and had not a shred of use for the Christian herd (Lovecraft [1931] 1971:431-432).

Lovecraft's exaggerated reaction against Christianity can be noticed through the xenophobic rejection of this religion, qualified as "Syrian" and "foreign," external to the Roman culture, but particularly because of its implications of irrationality, considering it as "fanatical" and "superstition." The description of ancient Christians as a "herd" deserving the persecutions of Roman emperors, obviously involves de-humanization and animalization, but it also implies the consideration of Christianity as an acritical mass opposed to rationality and science. Krämer argues that young Lovecraft even imagined that he tortured Christians in amphitheaters (Krämer 2017:95; Lovecraft [1931] 1971:313). As Joshi points out, young Lovecraft's interest in Classical antiquity aroused from reading books such as Hawthorne's *Wonder-Book* (1852) and Thomas Bulfinch's *The Age of Fable* (1855), together with the stories, ancient coins, and objects of arts that his grandfather Whipple Philip had brought from his travels in Italy (2013: 36-37).

In "The Moon-Bog" (1921), Lovecraft condenses many of these Classical references and divinities in a short excerpt, which is relevant since it demonstrates the remarkable influence of Greek and Roman paganism in his fiction. Juan Luis Pérez de Luque affirms that the story combines a general Gothic tone while it raises interesting questions about Classic Mythology in Lovecraft's fiction (Pérez de Luque 2014: 186). In "The Moon-Bog" Lovecraft makes an obscure connection between an Irish story and Greek mythology rather than using the Celtic, local folklore

[72] Lovecraft's confession that he was "a genuine pagan" as a child was discussed in section I.3. In his personal letters, adult Lovecraft defined himself as an atheist: "In theory I am an agnostic, but pending the appearance of radical evidence, I must be classed, practically and provisionally, as an atheist" (Lovecraft [1932] 1976a: 57).

(Pérez de Luque 2014: 186), which he justifies through some legend about a Greek invasion of Ireland. Thus, Lovecraft's story mentions the "Book of Invaders" or Lebor Gabála Erenn and the legend of the invasion of Ireland by the Greek sons of Partholan (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.258), who were buried at Tallaght and at a hidden city protected by a patron moon-goddess. As Lionáin points out, the Lébor Gabála is a pseudo-historical narrative that explains the mythical origin of the Irish, within a biblical framework linking the Irish to Japhet and Noah (Lionáin 2012: 34). The sources of said narrative are long historical poems from the tenth and eleventh centuries, which explain the peopling of Ireland through a series of six successive invasions (2012:34). The leader of the second one is a Greek called Partholon, showing a slightly different spelling from the one used by Lovecraft. Thus, although the Lebor Gabála mentions an invasion of Partholon "from the East, from the land of the Greek" (MacAlister 1939:2.213), there is no historical evidence that any of these occupations took place. Lovecraft used this legend to produce wonder and mystery in the readers, exploiting a well-known legend to produce uncertainty.

As commented on above, "The Moon Bog" explains the story of Denis Barry, an American millionaire who returns to Ireland, the land of his ancestors where he owns a house and a rural property including a mysterious bog. Declining the advice provided by the locals, he decides to drain the bog for agricultural use. But Barry soon experiences strange dreams in which he participates in ancient ritual involving classical deities. Thus, the narrator explains that "I believe I did ridiculous things such as offering prayers to Artemis, Latona, Demeter, and Plouton" (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.263), which underlines the importance of classical deities to produce horror, underlining how the irrational discourse of pagan religion has invaded the rational discourses of science and economy, that focuses on evidence and profit. In addition, the quotation also involves a biographical remembrance of Lovecraft's worshipping of classical divinities in his own infancy which has been previously commented (Joshi 2013:42). Although all the divinities in this quotation had a Greek and Roman equivalent, Lovecraft alternates both nomenclatures when he uses the Greek Artemis (Roman Diana) and Demeter (Roman Ceres) and also the Roman Latona (Greek

Leto) and Plouton (Hades) names, suggesting either that they belong to the same religion or that there is a continuation and/or equivalence between them. The fact that Lovecraft alternates both denominations could be interpreted as carelessness on his part, but rather is a device that increases horror, through ambiguity in the nature, stressing the liminal position of entities whose unknown nature can transcend the scope of the Greek or Roman mythologies.

Demeter

According to Coleman, Demeter, who is frequently identified with the Egyptian Isis and the Phrygian Cybele, was the daughter of the Greek gods Cronus and Rhea and the goddess of agriculture, corn, and fertility in Greek mythology. As a goddess of agriculture, she is connected with telluric forces, which is consistent with the important of earth and the underworld in Lovecraft's fiction. In classical paganism, Demeter taught king Celeus of Eleusis the mysteries of Eleusis, festivals in her honor that took place in Ancient Greece (2019: 87), which is also consistent with the kind of deities and ceremonies that Lovecraft uses in his fiction. Within the context of Lovecraft's "The Moon-Bog," the dream with Demeter, the goddess of agriculture suggests that there are numinous, irrational forces oppose to Barry's project to drain the bog for agricultural use, as if the goddess herself denied permission to drain it (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.264). Thus, the story establishes relations between Demeter, agriculture, and the moon, referring to dances to "Demeter in the old days under the harvest moon" (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.260), stressing a relation between fertility agriculture and the moon, connected to the bog as a pagan space.

Latona

According to Coleman, Latona was the Roman name for the the Greek titaness Leto. She was the incestuous daughter of the Titan Coeus and his sister Phoebe. Although she is considered a goddess of darkness, she had a relation with Zeus/Jupiter and gave birth to Apollo and Artemis (Coleman 2019: 209). Abandoned by Zeus and pursued by jealous Hera she escaped with her two

offspring to the island of Delos. Although Lovecraft's reference to the goddess in the short excerpt in "The Moon-Bog" does not provide many information, as a titaness and a goddess of chaos she represents the forces of chaos and the irrational that are freed at the end of the story, causing the ruin of Denis Barry's and his disappearance (Lovecraft [1921] :2015: 1.264).

Artemis

Coleman describes Artemis as a virgin goddess of fertility, hunting, and the moon who was the daughter of Leto/Latona and Zeus (2019: 26). The symbolism of the moon in the story as an astronomical body establishes a liminal connection of the cosmic spaces reflecting on the waters of the bog, as the very title "The Moon-Bog" shows, which makes Artemis significant as moon-goddess, contributing to produce horror in Lovecraft's story, in which the outcome is produced when "the moon had risen" (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.264). Sallmann has argued that there was also a relation between Artemis/Diana/The Moon and witchcraft (1991:29), which is relevant for Lovecraft's fiction, in which the moon appears as a commonplace bearing cosmic significance in almost any story, but where witchcraft very frequently appears in many of the stories, as commented on above. Apart from the previous quotations mentioned above, Artemis is also named in a narrator's nightmare, in which a pestilence descends from space and covers what it seems a classical city with temples, letting the temple of Artemis as the only unburied element after this. Said temple is located "on the high peak, where the aged moon-priestess Cleis lay cold and silent with a crown of ivory on her silver head" (Lovecraft [1921] 2015, 1.259). The description of this dream shows the combination of horror produced by this "pestilence" that descends destroying everything but the temple of Artemis, suggesting some ambiguous, liminal relation between the descending cosmic forces with the rituals of the priestess venerating the moon. The color of the attributes of Artemis' priestess, such as the ivory of her crown and her silver, white as the moon, reinforce the lunar symbolism, while the fact that she lies "cold and silent" suggests that she pays with her own death her invocations.

Neptune

Neptune was the Roman name of the Greek god Poseidon, who was a sea god, one of the Olympians, son of Cronos and Rhea and brother of Zeus, Demeter, Hera, Hestia and Hades (Coleman 2019: 277). This god appears in the plot of "The Strange High House in the Mist" (1926), written in period characterized by the gradual transition from traditional to cosmic horror in Lovecraft's fiction, which takes place in a coastal town in New England called Kingsport, combining this setting with oneiric elements of the dream-cycle. In the story, the protagonist, Thomas Olney, is fascinated with a mysterious house than can be seen at the top of a cliff, where he experiences a hallucination, consistent with dreams, featuring classical deities related to the sea including the "trident-bearing Neptune" and the god Nodens, who behaves as the real leader of a group of nereids and tritons (Lovecraft [1926] 2015. 2:94). The whole excerpt is some kind of homage to the characters of classical mythology that deal with the seas and who participate in a sort of strange cacophony:

> Trident-bearing Neptune was there, and sportive tritons and fantastic nereids, and upon dolphins backs was balanced a vast crenulate shell wherein rode the grey and awful form of Primal Nodens, Lord of the Great Abyss. And the conches of the tritons gave weird blasts, and the nereids made strange sounds by striking on the grotesque resonant shells of unknown lurkers in black sea-caves. Then horary Nodens reached forth a wizened hand and helped Olney and his host into the vast shell, whereat the conches and the gongs set up a wild and awesome clamour. And out into the limitless aether reeled that fabulous train, the noise of whose shouting was lost in the echoes of thunder (Lovecraft [1926] 2015. 2:94).

The excerpt shows Lovecraft's fascination with the darkest aspects of classical mythology, combining the cultural tradition of paganism with cosmicism to produce a hideous atmosphere of horror. This can be noticed with the vocabulary used in the description, that belong to the semantic fields of darkness, strangeness, infinity, and noise. Neptune is briefly described holding a trident as an identifying attribute, but the spooky features of the characters that accompany him underline the alienness of the whole group. Although they are called as "tritons" and "nereids," the real identity of these characters is unknown, since they are called "lurkers" of "black sea-caves," which increases horror through the ambiguity of their nature. Again, the sea is described as a pagan space qualified as "black" involving darkness and suggesting that it is a venue connected with horror and the

presence of unknown creatures that dwell in the depths involving a concealed threat for humans. The shells and gongs of the tritons that accompany produce sounds that are qualified as "strange," "grotesque" and "weird," which combined produce some sort of sinister chorus of mysterious sounds, similar to "thunder," The resulting sound deals more than brutal noise than with anything closely related to music. The text also contraposes the depths of the sea with the cosmic infinity as a sidereal abyss called the "limitless aether," in which the noises are lost in space. Nodens is a god that belongs to a different cultural tradition and will be analyzed later, but who is also described with as terrific, with an awful form and as an ancient, primal identity.

After Olney is left safe and sound in the downhill town of Kingsport, he will never be the same man. However, Neptune does not seem the protagonist of the mythical figures that appear in the excerpt, but just the figure that links Nodens to other maritime characters such as the tritons and Nereids. Thus, Lovecraft associates the gods from classical mythology such as Neptune with the horror to the sea as a *locus horribilis* in which ancient entities may be lurking. The real nature of the god and his companions is described ambiguously combining the names of Greek and Roman mythological deities with other features that evoke the maritime monsters so frequent in his tales, which increases uncertainty. This description of Neptune as a liminal entity is similar to Plouton, analyzed below.

Plouton

Plouton is a transliteration of the Greek spelling of Pluto, Πλούτων (Liddell 1883:1230), the Roman equivalent to Hades, who was the ancient Greek god of the underworld, the realms of the dead (Bulfinch 1856:16; Coleman 2019: 151). In Greek mythology, he abducted and married Demeter's daughter Persephone, a fact that interrelates the gods of the underworld and a goddess of nature and vegetation, as Lovecraft does in the excerpt from "The Moon-Bog" quoted above (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.263). The connection of the spaces of the underground and vegetation in Lovecraft's fiction is frequent, as two spatial frameworks connected to fear, which appears

contextualized in this story as two liminal spaces in which human world is prone to intersect with cosmic horror. Since subterranean settings abound in Lovecraft's fiction, Pluto is a deity that symbolizes the importance of chthonic forces, that are central to many stories that happen in said settings, such as "The Rats in the Walls" (1923), "The Festival" (1923), and "The Shadow Out of Time" (1935). Although Pluto or Hades himself is not specifically cited in these stories, the description of Lovecraft's horrific underground spaces are frequently named using Greek such terms as "Stygian" in "The Festival" ([1923] 2015: 1.414) and *At the Mountains of Madness* ([1931] 2015: 3.110), or the "Tartarus," in "The Rats in the Walls" ([1923] 2015: 1.395) or the references to the underground abysses in "The Shadow Out of Time" as "hellish" ([1935] 2015: 3.421). A further analysis of the significance of this classical infernal terminology goes beyond this section devoted to the specific god Pluto, but it serves to illustrate how frequently Lovecraft recurred to said terms in his fiction.[73] This use of elements from classical mythology and their relationship with magic spaces appears with other deities, such as naiads, analyzed below.

Naiads

Naiads are a particular type of nymphs, a category in Greek Mythology that broadly refers to female divinities with a particular connection with nature, such as water, mountains or vegetation, in which naiads are the nymphs of fresh water (Coleman 2019: 249), presiding over brooks and fountains (Bulfinch 1856: 230). Some creatures in the story "The Moon-Bog," who play a significant role in the narration, are described as similar to naiads: "strange airy beings in white, half-indeterminate, but suggesting pale wistful naiads from the haunted fountains of the bog" (Lovecraft [1921] 2015:1.260). The indetermination about the real nature of the creatures provides mystery and uncertainty to the story, while the fact that they are described as "wistful" suggests that they are beings that were present in the past, a lost position that they want to recover, lurking as a concealed threat. In addition, the fountains of the bog are qualified as "haunted," involving that they

[73] Section IV provides a more detailed analysis of the relation of the classic myths of the underworld in the genesis of Lovecraft' horror.

belong to a landscape that is eerie, as water is frequently characterized in Lovecraft's fiction.

But these beings are not merely ornamental in the story, because they play a role in the failure of Barry's plans, the American millionaire who wants to drain the bog. These creatures dance at night with the sleepwalking laborers of the magnate, who end up transformed into frogs. Thus, naiads or not, these mysterious creatures contribute to this project that would have involved a human intromission into the realms of the numinous and the cosmic. Pérez de Luque argues that the naiads in "The Moon-Bog" were probably daughters of the "patron moon-goddess" who is mentioned in the story (Pérez de Luque 2015: 191), which establishes a connection with the other goddesses named in the story, such as Artemis and Demeter.

In conclusion, Lovecraft uses naiads as minor goddesses from the classical tradition, whose uncertainty in their descriptions suggests vague connections with the maritime monsters that are so frequent in his fiction. Said ambiguity stresses the pagan component of the creatures, in which the material or the extraterrestrial does not exclude necessarily a numinous or religious component, but it involves the liminal coexistence of both. This liminal nature has a relation with waters, as the also liminal spaces inhabited by them, which are qualified as a haunted place. The description of other nymphs of Greek and Roman traditions, such as nereids, which are studied in next section, seems to support this interpretation.

Nereids

Nereids were sea nymphs attendant on the Greek sea god Poseidon. They were the daughters of god Nereus and the nymph Doris (Bulfinch 1856:237; Coleman 2019:243). Nereids are mentioned in "The Strange High House in the Mist," as "fantastic nereids" who "made strane sounds by striking on the grotesque resonant shells of unknown lurkers in black sea-caves" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.94). They appear in the same sentence with Neptune, Nodens and tritons, which involves that they are interrelated as inhabitants of the seas. Nereids are qualified as "fantastic," a term can be interpreted as belonging to the realms of the supernatural, the strange or

the alien, adding mystery and wonder to these members of the group described in the story.

The strange sounds that they produce are a typical characteristic of "nereids," producing a noise that is qualified as "strange," which contributes to produce oddness to the scene, while the adjective "grotesque" clearly reinforces this sense of strangeness, suggesting a sense of ugliness, distortion, and indetermination. This characterization contributes reinforce the atmosphere of weirdness that surround the description of the whole group. Thus, the strangeness of the description of "nereids," together with the uncertainty about their real nature, numinous or monstrous, suggests again a liminal position as a resource to produce cosmic horror.

Tritons

In ancient Greek mythology, Triton was a sea god, the son of Poseidon and his wife Amphititre. This god could cause sea storms by blowing his conch-shell trumpet. Thus, Triton can be named in singular to allude to a single god, that is frequently described as blowing on his shell to produce sounds (Bulfinch 1856:30). However, "tritons," are sometimes mentioned in plural to refer to the attendants of Poseidon, who were the sons of Phorcus and Ceto (Coleman 2019:340). As, in the other members of the strange group, the characterization of tritons included in the excerpt of "The Strange High House in the Mist" increases mystery. They are described as "sportive tritons," whose shells "gave weird blasts" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.94). While Lovecraft is using the plural concept of tritons in the story, he still refers to the fact that they have some power to produce a perturbation that deals with sound and the sea.

The fact that Lovecraft qualifies the sounds that they produce as "weird," stresses the feeling of an unearthly origin, signaling the cosmic horror produced by their sounds, that are again described are "blasts," which defines explosion with an unpleasant sound. Thus, the vague description of tritons in the excerpt illustrate again how Lovecraft uses characters from Greek mythology to produce fear and mystery in his fiction, through vagueness and the use of adjectives with eerie connotations.

Hecate

Hecate was as a mysterious deity in Greek mythology, the goddess of the underworld, representing the darkness and terrors of the night (Bulfinch 1856: 186). According to Coleman, "Hecate is the three-headed or three-bodied goddess of darkness, fertility, moon, streets, the underworld, and witchcraft; a Titaness" (Coleman 2019: 155). The name of goddess Hecate appears in "The Horror at Red Hook," as part of inspector Thomas Malone's dream (Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 1.499), where she is praised by the howls of incubi and succubae. The inscriptions to Hecate (calling her Gorgo and Mormo) in the story have been already analyzed in this chapter, involving that she is portrayed as a sinister goddess that received bloody sacrifices in exchange for her favors, remarking the appropriateness of this deity for Lovecraft's fiction. As Coleman argues, the goddess is also associated with Artemis on earth and has close relations with the goddess of agriculture Demeter in the latter's search for her daughter Persephone in the underworld and with Cybele. All these characteristics are coherent with Lovecraft's depiction of the goddess in his fiction. Thus, the role that Hecate plays stories suggests that she and the other deities correspond to different interpretations of a same archetype of a Mother Goddess, probably inspired by Frazer's ideas (Hutton 2013: 458).[74]

The attributes of Hecate also deal with other relevant topics in "The Horror at Red Hook," such as the underworld, fertility, and the moon, suggesting terrific connotations to this deity. The underworld is central to the story, since the strange rituals that are described in honor to undetermined mysterious entities take place in underground grottos under the streets of the city. The importance of Hecate as a goddess of fertility is stressed through the references to uncanny children in the story, who are a product of fecundity, but bearing obvious sinister connotations, because they are described as "infants of disturbingly strange appearance," who died soon after exposure to light

[74]Most of modern scholars reject this identification of Hecate, Cybele and Artemis. Hutton explains that there is no evidence of a single maternal Great Goddess who represented the entire natural world. For instance, in Asia Minor, there were different Great Goddesses who protected kingdoms and peoples and sometimes provided fertility, but they were particular to specific regions and not interchangeable (Hutton 2013: 393).

(Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 1.503). These adjectives, “disturbing” and “strange,” stress the horror produced by merely looking at them, while their death when exposed to light underlines that they are creatures of darkness and underworld, which are Hecate’s realms. In addition to her relationship with the underworld and fertility, the goddess is associated to the moon in the story, as it shows the expression “thousand faced moon” addressed to her, used in one inscriptions containing magic spells previously analyzed. The common relationship of the moon with other goddesses such as Cybele or Demeter stresses the relationship in Greek mythology, suggests uncertainty about the real deity while the identification with the moon as an alien astronomical object, adds a cosmic dimension to Hecate, as an external entity to our world.

Therefore, as many other deities, Hecate is used to produce horror in Lovecraft’s fiction, through eerie connotations that supersede her own attributes as the goddess of darkness and the underworld. These include her association with fertility, which becomes an uncanny feature capable through the offspring of spooky children that inspire repulsion, and the symbolism of the moon, which connects her to other goddesses while adding uncertainty and a cosmic dimension to her. Again, this ambiguous characterization of the goddess suggests a liminal position of Hecate between the numinous and the alien, adding mystery and weirdness to create a general atmosphere of cosmic horror.

Dionysus

Dionysus (Bacchus) was the Greek god of wine, son of Zeus (Jupiter) and Semele, representing both the intoxicating power of said drink, and the social connotations of its use (Bulfinch 1856: 19). Some versions of the myth explain that Dionysus was also a god of vegetation, since his mother could be Demeter instead of Semele (Coleman 2019: 90). In the history of philosophy and culture, since the times of Friedrich Nietzsche, the Dionysian has been frequently contrasted to the Apollonian, the former representing uncontrolled force of nature and passion, the latter, rationality, and a control of impulses. There is an indirect allusion to Dionysus, in “The

Horror at Red Hook," when the story explains that in the undergrounds of the neighborhood there were men dancing with "Dionysiac fury" (Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 1.500). The "Dionysiac fury" in Lovecraft's story evidently refers to a literary device dealing with the Dionysiac festivals, which took place during the Bacchanalia, in which the god was accompanied by a band of satyrs and frenzied women known as the Maenads (Coleman 2019: 90).

Thus, Lovecraft recurs again to a pagan divinity to produce an atmosphere of weirdness in his fiction, as a cultural references that frames horror, while their connotations as a god of vegetation connects him with the spatial frame of woods as a *locus horribilis*, and with fertility as a source for the genesis of monsters. In addition, the association with the fury and ebriety that take place in the ancient ceremonies in honor to the god, establishes a relation with the irrational as a force that plays a role to produce fear.

This study of Lovecraft's use of divinities and mythical creatures from Greek and Roman origins in his fiction suggests some tentative conclusions for this section. The first one is that although these deities are quantitatively more abundant than those taken from other cultures, they are not particularly different from the rest of deities from other cultural backgrounds that he chose for his fiction, portraying them as sinister and mysterious as he did with the rest. Lovecraft could have chosen amicable divinities such as Aphrodita, the goddess of love, or Apollo, the god of light and truth, but instead he chose deities of darkness and the underworld such as Hecate and Pluto, since Lovecraft was writing horror fiction and wanted to inspire fear in his readers. This relationship with horror can be noticed for each one of the deities analyzed above, portrayed as the numinous powers of the uncanny spaces of the supernatural and the eldritch. Thus, there is a connection between these divinities and each one of the horrific spaces as *loci horribiles* described above. In this way, vegetation and woods are the disturbing space of Demeter and Artemis; water the dangerous realms of Neptune, the Tritons, the Nereids, and the Naiads; chaos, the pristine realms of Latona; while darkness and the underworld are represented by Pluto and Hecate, and

indirectly, by all of them.

In addition, ambiguity about their real nature pervades the characterization of these divinities, which is intended to produce horror. The vague allusions to them, in which the absence of details is paramount, suggests that sometimes they can be assimilated to alien entities, as the hidden dwellers of said hostile spaces, providing a cosmic dimension to horror. However, considering their frequent presence in the stories, the allusions to them of omniscient narrators, and their relevant role in rituals, it does not seem reasonable to deny any "supernatural" characteristics to them, reducing their role just to a wrong human interpretation of extraterrestrial beings. If we apply Occam's razor to the question, it would have been easier just to avoid any allusion to them if Lovecraft had wanted to underline their alien origin. Instead, this vagueness serves to illustrate that said divinities, like some many other pagan elements in Lovecraft's fiction, occupy a liminal position in which the numinous and the monstrous appear intrinsically intertwined. This is a common feature in the divinities analyzed in previous sections, as it is the case of these from native American origin, studied below.

II.7.5 Native American divinities and mythical creatures

Although most of Lovecraft's fiction takes place in America, there is a relative scarcity of references to Native American culture, which includes their diversity of religions. As James Goho argues, his fiction "displaces American Indians […] as if New England is cleansed fictionally of any remnant of their original inhabitants" (Goho 2012: 66). Thus, although there are some references to Native American paganism in Lovecraft's fiction, these are usually uncertain about their real origin such as the megaliths "more generally attributed to the Indians than to the settlers" in "The Dunwich Horror" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.421), the vague allusion to "certain Indian relics in the north woods, -standing stones" in "The Thing on the Doorstep" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.343), or the reference to "a curious lone altar older than the Indians" in "The Colour Out of Space" (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.371)

It can be argued, in Lovecraft's defense, that the setting of most of his fiction in the New England of the 1920s and 1930s, was a territory that had been mostly depopulated from its original inhabitants earlier in the 18th and 19th centuries. For instance, the Narragansett tribe local to Lovecraft's native state of Rhode Island, had lost both their original language and religion long before Lovecraft wrote his fiction. Moreover, my thesis is that Lovecraft's apparently absence[75] of references to indigenous native American religions was not so aimed to diminish their culture, but to create atmospheres of horror through deliberate ambiguity. This ambiguity about the real builders of their remnants, said megaliths that they left on our world, stresses the idea that such different human groups, such as the old Native Americans and the witches infiltrated within the new Puritan colonizers shared some pagan beliefs that corresponded to a previous reality, superseding the "Indian-European" dichotomy. In this way, Lovecraft created a historical and archaeological argumentation to provide verisimilitude to his fiction, leading the reader to the conclusion that such coincident but originally dissociated beliefs should depart from a common origin, whatever its real nature, religious, alien, or liminal as I argue in this study. In this way, the allusion to an altar older than the Indians in "The Colour Out of Space" (1927) is very illustrative of this apparent scarcity of references to Native American paganism. Thus, although there are indirect references to Native American paganism, only a divinity is mentioned in a story, Huitzilopochtli in "The Transition of Juan Romero," analyzed below.

Huitzilopochtli

As Lucien Biart points out, Huitzilopochtli, sometimes spelled Huitzilipochtli, was one of the Aztec gods that existed before the creation of the universe, physically described as a skeleton covered with a yellow skin (Biart 1887: 104).This Aztec sun god and god of war was represented as a humming-bird magician (Coleman 2019: 168). His mother had given birth to other 400 children

[75] Native American religion and culture play a much more relevant role in stories such as "The Curse of Yig" (1929) and "The Mound" (1930) in which these are even central, but these stories were collaborations of Lovecraft with Zealia Bishop, which are out of the scope of this study.

when he was born as a completely formed and armed warrior. There was a fight between Huitzilopochtli and his brothers and sisters and in the struggle, his sister Coyolxauhqui was beheaded either by Huitzilopochtli or the other siblings. Then, Huitzilopochtli threw the head of his sister into the skies, which became the moon. In the Aztec kingdom Huitzilopochtli was also associated to Xochipilli, the war god that was given human blood to drink (Coleman 2019: 168).

Lovecraft used the "scary" characteristics of this deity to produce horror in "The Transition of Juan Romero" (1919), where the Aztec divinity is named (Lovecraft [1919] 2015: 1.102). The eponymous character in the story is a miner with Hispanic name and a strong Native American ancestry, who innately knows how to perform strange rituals to the sun and subsequently to Huitzilopochtli. One night, a terrible cataclysm takes places, collapsing the mine where he works and opening a chasm, which is explored by many workers of the mine. Then Romero hurries from the group as if some strange forces were urging him to descent into the opened underground. As Goho argues, it is as if Romero were returning to his ancestral roots, while he repeats the name "Huitzilopochtli" (Goho 2012: 63). Although the narrator explains that everything, including collapse of the mine, appeared to be a dream, Romero's lifeless body is found in his bunk next morning (Lovecraft [1919] 2015:103). The story is quite indeterminate about the nature of the forces that produced the cataclysm, or the changes into something, if any of these really occur in the story.

Thus, as in the case of other pagan traditions, Lovecraft uses Native American's religion to produce horror through the uncertainty about the real forces that explain Romero's irrational behavior, whether these are numinous, cosmic or share a liminal position between them. Therefore, the only presence of this Native American deity, Huitzilopochtli, is quite illustrative of how Lovecraft combined the irrationality of the religious discourse with the rationality of the materialist, scientific discourse. This is also the case of Celtic divinities, that are represented only by a deity, analyzed below.

II.7.6 Celtic Divinities and Mythical Creatures

In the period when Lovecraft wrote his fiction, the influence cultural and political movement of the Celtic revival, including reconstructions about the primitive Celtic religion of some territories of the British Islands. This could be noted in two Lovecraft's favorite writers such as Arthur Machen (Lovecraft [1927] 2008:92) and John Buchan ([1927] 2008:83), to whom he devoted some pages in "Supernatural Horror in Literature" (1927). Although Lovecraft only names one divinity from Celtic religion, it contributes to the idea that the diversity of religions in Lovecraft's fiction is aimed to produce horror through uncertainty, to confront the irrationality of religion to the rationality of the material explanation. This provides verisimilitude to his fiction since many different religions from very distant traditions are coincident to underline the presence of unknown forces that frame his universe.

Nodens

Although there is only a god from Celtic origin in Lovecraft's fiction, he plays a very prominent role in his stories. Nodens was a British healing god that was praised at least during the Roman domination of Britain, whom the Romans identified him with Mars (Hutton 2013: 249). This Celtic deity was documented archaeologically in different excavations from the 19th century to the 1920s by two statuettes found in Lancashire and a temple in the village of Lydney (2013: 249). Lovecraft probably learned about Nodens from books, journals or news, such as William Bathurst's *Roman Antiquities at Lydney Park* (1879) and Robert Mortimer Wheeler's *Report on the Excavations of the Prehistoric, Roman, and Post-Roman site in Lydney Park* (1932), which provide information about the god in said archaeological site. According to Bathurst, Nodens was a British divinity adopted by the Romans, whose features included his characterization both as a god of healing and the alleviation of pain (Bathurst 1879:13), and as a deity of the sea and rivers that was called "god of the abyss" (1879:39). All this information is compatible with Lovecraft's

characterization of Nodens, explaining its apparently benevolent protection of human characters, his relation to other water deities from the Roman pantheon, or his capacity to travel through spaces. As Hutton points out, Nodens was also probably connected with a hero called Nudd who appeared in Irish medieval literature (2013: 367). But in Lovecraft's fiction, Nodens plays a different role. The god appears several times in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1927) and "The Strange House in the Mist" (1926). In *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath,* he is described as the "hoary" lord of the night-gaunts, the mindless guardians of the great abyss ([1927] 2015: 2.174), and repeatedly qualified as "immemorial," "potent," and "archaic" ([1927] 2015: 2.193). While "immemorial" and "archaic" stress the antiquity of the god, "potent" underlines his power. The epithet "hoary" is the most interesting of all, since it demonstrates that it is referring to an anthropomorphic creature, probably with some resemblance to an old man. At the end of *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath,* Nodens helps Randolph Carter, the human protagonist to escape from Nyarlathotep, but this deity still bears some sinister features like his title as "lord of the abyss," or the devilish aspect of his servers, the black, horned, bat-winged creatures called "night-gaunts" (Lovecraft [1927] 2015:2.213). Although Lovecraft's text does not allow to make Nodens' protective attitude towards the protagonist extensive to all mankind, he is certainly portrayed as the enemy of Nyarlathotep, the crawling chaos and messenger of the Other Gods, whose "formless hunting-horrors" Nodens sears "to grey dust" (2015: 2.213) after the former's night-gaunts fight the later's shantak birds. August Derleth, who first published Lovecraft's work in book format and considered himself Lovecraft's legitimate successor as a writer, regarded Nodens as one of Lovecraft's "Elders Gods" that protected mankind from dark forces (Mosig 1997: 24; Joshi 2013:644). Although Joshi has questioned Derleth's interpretations of Lovecraft's myths arguing that they are based on Christian analogies (2013: 645), denying any proper evidence to said interpretations in Lovecraft's fiction, Nodens helps the protagonist against Nyarlathotep in this story. While Mosig and Joshi seem to be right that in Lovecraft's universe there are not any powerful benign deities interceding for man (Mosig 1997:25; Joshi 645), a plausible explanation for Noden's help to human can be attributed to

his own feuds against other fictional deities of Lovecraft's fiction, opposing his plans, whose failure he even celebrates (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.213).

In "The Strange House in the Mist," Nodens visits the protagonist together with a group of mythical figures that include Neptune, tritons, and nereids.[76] In the excerpt, Nodens is described as a water powerful entity who apparently behaves friendly to a particular human character, whom he helps to travel from the house on the top of the cliff to the town, which would have been a dangerous descent. The rest of aquatic figures from the Graeco-Roman pantheon, while appearing in company of Nodens, do not seem particularly hostile or helpful to the human character. This can be explained because Lovecraft was probably more interested in underlining the religious syncretism between the two religions, with Nodens as a British divinity adopted by the Romans, who erected inscriptions and temples in his honor (Bathurst 1879: 13). Thus, the weird aspect of the whole group and their inscrutable behavior contribute to add wonder and mystery to the narration.

In conclusion, Lovecraft's uses Celtic tradition to produce wonder and mystery through the use this pagan tradition, represented only by a deity, Nodens. The fact that this god is sometimes helpful to human characters does not involve a general commitment in defense of humanity but can be explained through some sort of cosmic enmity with other forces, such as Nyarlathotep. As in many cases the vagueness in his description, contribute to produce mystery and horror.

The diversity of gods from many different pagan traditions that has been illustrated in this chapter demonstrates how Lovecraft used such culturally distant traditions (the ancient Neart East, the Judaic, the Egyptian, the Graeco-Roman, the Native American and the Celtic) to produce mystery and horror. The aim was to provide verisimilitude to his fiction, by using specific historical information about these deities, suggesting the idea that if these traditions shared the same fears to the unknown, these fears may have a common origin in the real existence of dark forces, lurking beyond human comprehension. This idea of a shared, common knowledge with no apparent causal

[76]See quotation of the story in the section devoted to Neptune, on the section of divinities from the Classical world in this paper.

reasons, deals with the concept of synchronicity, analyzed in chapter IV, as it underpins Lovecraft's fiction. Furthermore, Lovecraft's ambiguity in the description of these divinities poses the question about their real nature, as deities, alien or indetermined, liminal entities, while stressing the incapacity of the human mind to correlate the information to provide the proper answers. Thus, as in the rest of the pagan elements studied, the concepts of heterogeneity, uncertainty, and liminality are at the basis of Lovecraft's use of paganism to create atmospheres of cosmic horror.

II.8 Pagan and esoteric symbols in Lovecraft's fiction

In his horror stories, Lovecraft often confers pagan symbols and diagrams with some sort of supernatural power that has a role in determining plot development and outcome. He took these symbols from different historical and cultural traditions that dealt with well-established religions as well as esotericism such as the aforementioned Kabbala. His treatment of these pagan elements, however, does not involve any distinction between them regarding their narrative function as adding to the effect of cosmic horror. Lovecraft sometimes describes the "queer geometries" of these symbols (swasticas, pentagrams, crosses...) to suggest both their apparently magic attributes and provide a possible materialistic explanation based on their mathematical properties (Look 2016:102). In his fiction, the frequent references to advanced mathematics stress the outsideness in the description of the form of both spaces and objects, such as for instance, the non-Euclidean geometry of the alien city of R'lyeh in "The Call of Cthulhu" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.51), non-Euclidean Calculus applied to space-time in "The Dreams in the Witch House" ([1932]: 3.232), or Riemannian's equations in the latter story ([1932] 2015: 3.240). The magical properties of the traditional symbols of paganism now depend on their geometry, such as the "angles" or "spheres" that shape them, which reinforces the effect of cosmic horror through the combination of the rational and supernatural discourses. Thus, taking advantage of the scientific theories in his time, these symbols become liminal spaces in which the material and the numinous coexist.

The Swastika

As Jacques Gossart argues, the swastika is a well-known symbol documented in primitive cultures, such as in Hinduist and Jainist India (Gossart 2002: 18), China (21), Japan (22), Ancient Greece (31), Sub Saharan African peoples (35), Native American peoples (46) originated in Prehistoric societies (68) from all around the world. This symbol depicts a cross with four arms of the same size that are extended in right angles or arches (Becker 2008:172). As Becker points out, the symbol has sometimes been interpreted as a Sun wheel with generally positive connotations (2008:172). In Western Culture, the most known use of the swastika is the representation of the national-socialist political party, superseding even its symbolism in some Eastern religions, such as Jainism. The narrator of "The Shadow over Innsmouth" (1931) describes the swastika as a magic sign used by some Micronesian islanders in the Pacific Ocean against the alien race of the Deep Ones, who were worshipped by a rivalling group from another island. As the character Zadok Allen explains, said natives used "somethin' […] like what ye call a swastika naowadays" is painted on "little stones strewed abaout, -like charms" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015, 3.191).

Critics such as Bennett Lovett-Graff and Mattias Petterson have underlined this citation of the swastika to stress what they consider the central, racist aspects of "The Shadow over Innsmouth."[77] According to them, the symbol would be allegorical of Nazism, the Deep Ones representing the presence of immigrants and minorities in America (Lovett-Graff 1997: 182), which involved an eugenics problem that could only be solved through concentration camps (Lovett-Graff 1997:185). Nevertheless, a close-reading analysis of the story demonstrates that this interpretation is utterly

[77] This affirmation would be underpinned in Lovecraft's frequent racist and antisemitic insights (Joshi 2013:212). Lovecraft's racism is a shameful fact that cannot be denied, but his portrayal as a coherent racist is more dubious than it seems to non-specialized readers. Lovecraft was married to a Jewish woman, Sonia Greene (Joshi 2013:498), while some of his closest friends such as Samuel Loveman (2013:290) and Robert Bloch (2013:866) were also Jewish. Lovecraft was fascinated with Judaic fiction, as he reveals in "Supernatural Horror in Literature" (Lovecraft [1927] 2008: 54). While in some letters Lovecraft shows a moderate admiration for Hitler ([1933] 1976a: 257), whom he defends as a "lesser evil," he also portrayed the nazi leader as "an unscientific extremist" (Lovecraft [1934] 1976a:247). Lovecraft soon noticed that Hitler was "wrong" about the Jews ([1933] 1976a: 206), recognizing the "ridiculous features of Nazism" and its "bobmoustachio saviour" ([1933] 1976a: 257). In the period when Lovecraft wrote "The Shadow over Innsmouth," in 1931, Lovecraft was an impoverished writer who did not consider himself a Nazi but a socialist. For instance, he wrote that "ethical idealism demands socialism on poetical cosmic grounds, involving some mythical linkage of individuals to one another and the universe (Lovecraft [1931] 1971:271).

wrong since Lovecraft's text provides just the opposite information. First, the hybrid human-deep one population of Innsmouth, Massachusetts, is not described as immigrant, or made up of minorities, but as New Englanders from old-Yankee stock who have not miscegenated with foreigners, but with aquatic creatures. There are no immigrants in Innsmouth because the locals impeded their settlement, as the text affirms: "foreigners seldom settled there, and there was some discreetly veiled evidence that a numbers of Poles and Portuguese who had tried it had been scattered in a peculiarly drastic fashion" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.166). The description of Innsmouth's inhabitants is clearly of typical Anglo-Saxons with English names, as the detailed depiction of one of them, Joe Sargent, shows. In addition to his frog/fish-like features, said character is described as having "watery blue eyes that never seemed to wink," and was "beardless except for some sparse yellow hairs" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.170). The inhabitants of Innsmouth are bombed and imprisoned not because of racism, as Lovett-Graff argues (1997:185), but because they have murdered other American citizens since the Deep Ones demanded to "yield up enough sacrifices" (Lovecraft [1931] 2016:3.197). Thus, the story suggests that from the rational perspective of the American government, Innsmouthers are considered a fanatic sect of murderers, but from the perspective of national security they even constitute a more challenging threat, since said population is planning to attack "a city greater than Innsmouth next time" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015).

Thus, although the "nowadays" in Zadok Allen's discourse does refer to the events in Germany, where the Nazis were close to seize power, the swastika seems to play a quite different role, not as an allegory of Hitler's regime, but as a magic object of power to expel the Deep Ones. It seems as if Lovecraft, had used the turbulent political situation in Germany to use their symbol as a red herring, probably because he also knew his symbolism in the context of Asian religions, such as Hinduism and Jainism. The fact that this is the only thing that frightens the alien race of the Deep Ones demonstrates that non-human species in Lovecraft's fiction can experience some superstitions or religiosity because they are more afraid of symbols and incantations than from a violent response

from humans, including the military attacks by the American Navy that they suffer at the end of the story.

In conclusion, Lovecraft used a symbol that had had different meanings in different contexts to, but which had become the symbol of the Nazi's brutal aspirations when the story was written. While some authors have understood it as an allegory of racism and Nazism, an identification that is more problematic than it seems, it is particularly revealing that paganism and magic are effective against monsters, showing that Lovecraft's cosmic horror does not exclude completely religion as a powerful resource.

The Pentagram

A pentagram is a five-point star, designed with a single stroke, which was used in the Middle Ages to invoke or enclose devil powers and nocturnal ghosts (Becker 2008:331). As Miranda Bruce-Mitford argues, if a pentagram is pointed upwards it symbolizes aspiration, the spiritual world and education and some Christians see it as a symbol of Christ, but when inverted symbolizes the devil (Bruce-Mitford 2008:22). This is a very ancient symbol that has been found in contexts from different historic periods. Archaeologist Fernando Coimbra points out that pentagrams were carved in the rock art from 4000 BC to the post-medieval period in Western European countries such as Portugal Spain, France, and Italy (Coimbra 2008:8). Said carvings were considered by medieval superstitious mentality as "the work of witches or of the Devil himself" (Coimbra 2008: 12). There were special connections of pentagrams which Judaic magic, which is relevant for the context of Lovecraft's "The Horror at Red Hook" (1925), in which some inscriptions are in Hebrew. As Mark O'Connnor argues, pentagrams were engraved on discs to create magic seals called pentacles, in which Hebrew letters and Kabbalistic signs were sometimes added (O'Connor 2009:129).

Pentagrams and pentacles were well-known symbols in esotericism in Lovecraft's times, appearing in grimoires such as Samuel MacGregor's *The Key Of Solomon the king (Clavicula*

Solomonis) (1889), which underlines the capacity of said symbols to strike terror into the spirits and redeem them to obedience (MacGregor 1889:56). Another example is Edward Waite's *Éliphas Lévi's Transcendental Magic, its doctrine and rituals* (1896), which explains this symbols' capacity to enchain all sorts of demons, ghosts and spirits (Waite 1896: 60). In general, these treatises of magic stress the connection of pentagrams and pentacles with Judaic magic.

In literary fiction, pentagrams were very frequently used as esoteric symbols to represent magic and witchcraft, appearing in canonic classics such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, written circa 1400 by an unknown author, and Goethe's *Faust* (1808). In the former, the shield that Sir Gawain uses shows a pentangle in his shield, described as "a sign that Solomon set formerly as a token of truth, by its own right, for it is a figure that holds the five points, and […] it is endless" (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* [c.1400] 1917:24). Although an analysis of the symbolism of the pentangle in this work is beyond the scope of this study, this excerpt shows that the symbol was known in literature at least from the Middle Ages, underlining its connection with Solomon and Judaic lore in a positive way. In the latter, Faust uses a pentagram to take Mephistopheles prisoner (Goethe [1808] 1870:64), which exemplifies how the use of this symbol to invocate and imprison demons and spirits was common in mainstream literature before Lovecraft's times. Thus, both *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Faust* exemplify that, when Lovecraft produced his fiction, pentagrams and their symbolic connotations had been well-known symbols for centuries in literature.

The pentagram appears in Lovecraft's "The Horror at Red Hook" as one of the decorative motives that were found by Malone and the policemen at Suydam's Parker Place Houses, where wizard Suydam and his followers celebrated their rituals. Malone discovers that "circles and pentagrams loomed on every hand, and told indubitably of the strange beliefs and aspirations of those who dwelt so squalidly here" (Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 1.494). The way in which said pentagrams are put in relation "strange beliefs" underlines the otherness of the practitioners of the pagan cult in the story, who practice their secret cult in the underground. The narrator refers to them

as “those who dwelt,” combining the distance and alterity of the demonstrative pronoun and the ambiguity about their real identity. Moreover, “squalidly” clearly refers to the poverty and dirtiness of the inhabitants, which clearly bears racist connotations associating poor immigrants in New York City with the practice of an eldritch cult. As Joshi points out, “The Horror at the Red Hook” is “nothing but a shriek of rage and loathing at the “foreigners” who have taken New York away from the white people to whom it presumably belongs” (Joshi 2013:589). The association of a strange symbol frequently associated with magic is aimed to clearly aimed to produce horror in the reader.

Furthermore, pentagrams, as elements (partially) taken the Judaic tradition of esotericism, in “The Horror at Red Hook” seem to be interrelated with many other examples from this tradition analyzed above, such as Ashmodai, Sefiroth, Kabbalism, and the magic formula in the inscription in “Hebraised Hellenistic Greek” (Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 1.493). This suggests that Lovecraft wanted to integrate pentagrams with the other elements from Judaic magic to provide coherence and verisimilitude to his description of magic rituals. Thus, said pentagrams would be used to invoke mysterious entities such as Ashmodai, whose names would be uttered together with the formulae of invocation in the inscriptions by the participants in the ritual. In addition, the pentagram as the magic symbol of Solomon to contact spirits would be combined with Kabbalism and the Sefiroth, that deal with spirits as divine emanations. However, Lovecraft’s use of Judaic lore in the story cannot be easily exemplified as a case of antisemitism, since there is no connection between Judaism and the performers of the strange rites in the underground. Neither Robert Suydam, the wizard that leads the strange rituals nor his foreign pagan followers are Jewish or have any interest with this culture beyond magic.

Thus, Lovecraft used pentagrams are a symbol easily recognized by his readers, identified with the practice of magic, particularly with the invocation of demons and spirits. The indeterminacy in the nature of the rituals in which these pentagrams are used, the combination of these traditional signs of magic with the references to cosmic forces, the fear to the foreigner as an “other,” and the presence of other elements from different pagan traditions, increase horror. In

addition, pentagrams as magic symbols are connected to liminality and circularity as two major concepts that underpin the description of paganism in Lovecraft. Pentagrams are liminal spaces because they connect our world to the realms of other, outer entities. In addition, as "endless" signs, as *Gawain's* author explained, pentagrams are connected to infinitude, a concept that can be assimilated to Lovecraft's concept of circular time. This relationship with circularity also appears in the case of circles, to which next section is devoted.

The Circle

Circles are one of the most frequent pagan symbols, often used to represent perfection, infinitude, and the absolute, but they were also used as a protection against bad spirits and demons (Becker 2008: 104). The historian and archaeologist of paganism R. Hutton considers the circles as one of the great primal units of nature because "it reflects the horizon, the sun and the moon, the cycle of seasons and the concept of eternity" (Hutton 2014:81). Bruce-Mitford considers that the circle was an important symbol in Prehistory, which can be noticed in Stonehenge's shape (Bruce-Mitford 2008: 284). As I have explained in detail in section II.1, Lovecraft also used cyclical time in his stories and this can be noticed because of the repetition of the different pagan festivals in the year than appear in them, which might be explained by his belief in Nietzsche's concept of Eternal Return at some period of his life. In this context, the circle adopts a paramount symbolism to represent the unavoidable continuity of cosmic cycles everywhere in Lovecraft's fiction. In Lovecraft's fiction circles typically represent the pagan conception of cyclical time but they are also used for invocations because they seem to have some protective power. This protective power is used for instance, by Suydam and his followers in "The Horror at the Red Hook" (1933) against the uncanny creatures summoned in their cult. In "The Book" (1933) the main character makes "five concentric circles of fire on the floor" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.360) suggesting a similar protective function. In Lovecraft's times, the protective use of the circle was well documented in the magic of different cultures, as it is described in the introduction of Reginald C. Thompson's *Semitic:*

Magic: its origin and development (1908). Thompson argues that in the Middle Ages, magicians always used a protective circle so that no spirit could be able to break its boundaries (Thompson 1908: lx), a function that was also documented both in ancient Assyria (1908: lviii) and India (1908: lvix). As it has been discussed above, the most typical distribution of megaliths in Lovecraft's fiction is also circular, in which the circle both contributes to the invocations and rituals that take place within them, while the wizard is apparently protected within it. As Timothy Evans argues, Lovecraft took this idea about hills topped with stone circles in stories such as "The Dunwich Horror" (1928) from oral and written legends of New England (Evans 2005:117).

In conclusion, the symbolism of the circular shape underpins Lovecraft fiction, which can be noticed explicitly in the magic circles drawn by wizards, to invoke hideous entities while protecting from them, or implicitly through the circular time of pagan festivals, and the stone-circles in megaliths in which said festivals and rituals take place. Moreover, the sign of the circle adopts a cosmic dimension, since it is the shape that symbolizes the periodical but ineluctable return of undetermined alien forces, lurking to regain the space now occupied by mankind. As a quotation from the *Necronomicon* in "The Dunwich Horror" states, "the Old Ones were, the Old Ones are, and the Old Ones shall be […] man rules now where They ruled once; They shall soon rule where man rules now" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2. 434). Thus, the circle symbolizes circularity and cycles as a pagan concept that added wonder and horror to Lovecraft's fiction, confronting the linear-time discourses of both the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition (from creation to doom), and Western science (from the origin to the end of universe).

The Ankh

Becker describes the Ankh as a looped cross that frequently appears in ancient Egyptian papyri and monuments to symbolize the fertilization of the earth by the sun and eternal life (2008: 32). In funeral rites, it was used as the key that opens the gates of the kingdom of the dead (Becker 2008:32). Bruce-Mitford agrees with Becker, because the ankh "signifies life and immortality

(Bruce-Mitford 2008:138). As Joshi points out, Lovecraft had read different books about ancient Egypt, such as Albert Lythgoe's *The Tomb of Perneb* (1916), and Lafcadio Hearn's *One of Cleopatra's Nights and Other Fantastic Romances* (1882) (Joshi 2013: 500). In Lovecraft's period, the ankh was a well- known symbol in both the scientific and esoteric areas of knowledge, including archaeologists such as Ernest Budge, anthropologists such as Margaret Murray, and occultists such as Helena Blavatsky. In *Egyptian Magic* (1901), Budge argues that the ankh represented life, becoming a very frequent amulet among ancient Egyptians because it was a symbol carried by all the Egyptian gods (Budge 1901: 58). Murray, very influential in Lovecraft's fiction, describes it in *The Tomb of the two brothers* (1910), where she affirms that the hieroglyph of the ankh represented life (Murray 1910: 44). In *The Secret Doctrine* (1893), Blavatsky provides the same meaning of "life," adding that the ankh or ansated cross is "another form of Venus (Isis) and meant esoterically, that mankind and all animal life has stepped out of the spiritual circle and had fallen into physical male and female generation (1893: 34).

In Lovecraft's fiction, the ankh can be found in "The Haunter of the Dark" (1935), an homage story to Robert Bloch, who appears in the story under the name Robert Blake.[78] In "The Haunter of the Dark" a monster from outer space has been summoned to an abandoned old church in Providence, killing Blake while he was investigating it. In this church, the protagonist finds a skeleton with different notes, a "shining trapezohedron," and a cobwebbed cross that "resembled the primordial ankh or crux ansata of shadowing Egypt" (Lovecraft [1935] 2015: 3.460). The presence of the Ankh in this church suggests the continuation of the ancient Egyptian religion through different pagan cults across history, which is a device that Lovecraft also uses in the churches of the Esoteric Order of Dagon in "The Shadow of the Innsmouth" or the church in "The Horror at Red Hook," which were originally Christian churches that become pagan temples under the action of pagan sects. This continuity can be inferred from use of a pagan symbols as the ankh

[78] Previously, Bloch had written "The Shambler from the Stars" (1935), in Lovecraft's honor, in which a character resembling the latter is also killed. Both writers were happy with their respective literary murders. When Lovecraft wrote "The Haunter of the Dark," Bloch was a young, relatively unknown author, but later in life he became famous because of his novel *Psycho* (1959), adapted to film by A. Hitchcock (1960).

from ancient Egypt used many thousands of years before the advent of Christianity, within the context of a church of this newer religion, suggesting the continuity of a secret religion. Said continuity of concealed pagan cults was a very attractive idea for Lovecraft, described in his "Supernatural Horror in Literature" ([1927] 2008:21), as analyzed in section I.1.3.2 in this study, an idea taken from Murray about the secret practice of witchcraft as a secret cult underlying the Christian religion (Murray 1921: 7). Duncan Norris has explained the symbolism of the ankh and other Egyptian elements of the cult of "the Starry Wisdom" in "The Haunter of the Dark" within the context of eternal life because "in funerary depictions it is this symbol that bestows life over of the deceased" (2016:42).

The context in which the ankh appears in Lovecraft's story, described as "primordial," underlines both the antiquity of the symbol and the power of the object. This idea of antiquity is reinforced by the cobwebs that cover it, suggesting that the devotees of the cult had abandoned it long ago. Egypt is described as "shadowy," which involves uncertainty and fear to this country as a place of wonder and mystery, but it also expresses Lovecraft's prejudices towards foreign cultures. The presence of the ankh in the story can relate to Lovecraft's fictional god Nyarlathotep, of which the mysterious creature that is summoned is believed to be as an avatar (Lovecraft [1935]: 3.476). This suggests the idea that Egyptian esotericism, including the ankh itself, plays a role within the cult that transcends paganism, adopting a cosmic dimension. Said cosmicism is reinforced by the shape of the ankh, in which the circle and the cross coexist, adding the idea of time circularity so inherent to Lovecraft's fiction to the form of the cross, in which the latter is considered a symbol of space and the four cardinal directions (Becker 2008:122).

Thus, Lovecraft used a popularly known symbol from Egyptian paganism to produce horror, through uncertainty about the real entity summoned in the church, whether an Egyptian god, an extraterrestrial or an indetermined being occupying a liminal place within both concepts. Originally a positive symbol representing life within the context of ancient Egypt, the ankh adopts negative connotations in its brief appearance in "The Haunter of the Dark." These negative

connotations were probably known by many of his readers because the ankh was profusely used in esoteric books from the period, as part of the typical paraphernalia of occultist sects. The case of the Christian Cross, analyzed in the following section, is different since it preserves positive connotations from its original religion.

The Christian Cross

The cross is one of the most ancient and widely spread symbols, generally representing the number four of the cardinal directions. In some pagan African tribes, it is considered as the place where the way of the dead and the living meet representing the whole cosmos, humans, spirits, and gods (Becker 2008: 121). As a Christian symbol, it represents the passion and victory of Christ over sin (Becker 2008: 122). Bruce-Mitford considers the cross "the supreme symbol of the Christian faith, being worn by followers […] to signify their belief, and reflected in the shape of many of its churches" (Bruce-Mitford 2008: 176). Surprisingly, the Christian Cross proves to be a powerful object in Lovecraft's story "The Dreams in the Witch-House" (1932), where it is successfully used to repel the witch Keziah, who "at the sight of the device […] seemed struck with panic" (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.267). The protagonist even manages to strangle her with the chain of the crucifix. Although the crucifix does not seem to be useful against the Old Ones, but just to the witch, it is used as a powerful magical object, in the same way as the swastica was used against the alien race of The Deep Ones in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth." Witch Keziah may know about hyperspace-travels through space and time applying advanced mathematics (Joshi 2013: 823), but she is still afraid of the symbol of the dominant religion in the New England of her times. In this way, she is frightened of the crucifix because of her own understanding and cosmovision of the universe. This universe has a liminal, ambiguous nature because its material, scientific properties are intrinsically intertwined with the numinous, in which gods, sacrifices and magical objects also play a relevant role.

Thus, the presence of the Christian cross in Lovecraft's fiction can be explained as a

counterpart to the scientific, material dimension of horror. Furthermore, although "Christianity" is outside the traditional definition of paganism, Lovecraft uses the Christian cross as another pagan symbol, which justifies its inclusion in this study. Nevertheless, the use of the cross in the story has been considered something puzzling by many critics, who do not accept the utility of the supernatural of magic and religion as something effective against horror. S. T Joshi wonders that Lovecraft the atheist allows Keziah to be frightened off by the sight of a crucifix (Joshi 2013: 823), while Steven Mariconda has dealt with the apparent contradictions in the story by labeling this story "Lovecraft's Magnificent Failure." (2011: 200) Although Joshi praises some aspects of the story, such as the scientific descriptions of hyperspace-travel, he considers that it has many inconsistencies. Joshi concludes that in "The Dreams in the Witch-House," Lovecraft "lapses into hackneyed and overblown purple prose and sounds like a parody of his own style" (Joshi 2013: 823).

Joshi is imprecise in his appreciation of the quality of the story because the fact that Lovecraft includes religious symbols that do work against the dark forces does not diminish its credibility but intensifies the atmosphere of horror, through the ambiguity produced by the contrast between the material and the religious. Thus, the complexity of the plot and the unexpected use of a crucifix in a work by Lovecraft makes the story to seem more flawed to the aforementioned critics than it really is. If we consider Christianity and its symbols not as the opposite system of beliefs to Lovecraft's materialistic philosophy of "the insignificance of man versus a vast, indifferent universe, but just simply as another religion, with its own lore and traditions, the "crucifix" in "The Dreams in the Witch House" is not so incoherent and it does not diminish the quality of the story. Simply, Lovecraft is using Christian myths in the same way as he used other, "pagan" religions and myths *many times* in other stories, because these provide a counterpart to the scientific, material weird phenomena. He produces deliberate indeterminacy through the combination of both dimensions of reality, material on the one hand, and mythical and symbolic on the other, which enhances the aesthetics of his fiction and contributes to intensify the atmospheres of horror. This is what I call

liminality in Lovecraft's fiction, a concept that will be expanded in next chapters.

Thus, Lovecraft uses the Christian cross as a powerful object that contributes to produce cosmic horror, stressing indeterminacy by the contrast of both the scientific and religious discourses, through a symbol that proves to be effective within the story where it appears. In this light, the Christian cross is not very different from the other symbols and elements that have been commented on in this study, contributing to generate uncertainty and liminality as central elements of weirdness.

The analysis of the pagan elements used by Lovecraft in his stories, such as the different festivals, settings, rituals, deities, and symbols within the period of his literary production (1917-1935) illustrates how he incorporated real historical tradition into his fiction. The presence of these elements in combination with Lovecraft's own imaginary cults show the influence of the anthropological and archaeological theories of his times (Frazer, Murray) about ancient paganism, and witchcraft, such as the importance of fire-festivals, or the historical continuity of a secret witch-cult underlying the dominant cultures. These elements also demonstrate that, despite Lovecraft's materialism and atheism, pagan symbolism is overwhelming in his fiction and its role goes beyond a pretentious ornamentation of non-supernatural horror with cultural references, but these contribute to intensify the atmospheres of horror. Thus, the exactitude of the scientific information from anthropology, history or archaeology provides verisimilitude, but always within a context or uncertainty and liminality. This means that in Lovecraft's fiction the horror is real, but its exact nature cannot be ascertained because the limits between the natural and the supernatural have been vanished.

In addition, paganism, its ceremonies, and symbols are sometimes effective within Lovecraft's fiction, which can be exemplified in the contrast of pagan time versus linear time typical from Judaeo-Christian conception, and the power of pagan symbols and rituals to (temporarily) stop the intentions. For instance, rituals performed by witches are only effective on particular dates of the year, and these dates coincide with the most relevant events in the life of

these characters, such as births or deaths. Alien races such as the Deep Ones can resist the attacks of the American Army of the 1920s, but they fear symbols like the swastica, in the same way that Keziah, the witch who can travel throughout space and time is frightened by a crucifix. Alien monsters like Yog-Sothoth and his hybrid sons threaten to destroy mankind and the universe, but at the same they are expelled back to the outer spaces by the incantations and spells of a group of scholars in ancient folklore and myths. All these examples do not diminish the validity of the idea, inherent to cosmic horror, of the insignificance of mankind versus a vast, indifferent universe, but intensify it with the concepts of ambiguity and liminality. This involves that this indifferent universe has a liminal nature in which the material and the numinous are intrinsically intertwined, suggesting that the horrors that lurk in the spaces beyond mankind are inapprehensible to human understanding.

Lovecraft combines the historical pagan elements studied in this chapter with new ones from his own creation, to which next chapter is devoted. These new elements update the older tradition to produce atmospheres of horror, through the assimilation of the ancient religious discourse to the new scientific one, both becoming interlaced into an ambiguous, liminal position that blurs the limits of said spheres of knowledge. Thus, Lovecraft's cosmovisions, cosmogonies, pantheon and cults have very similar parallelisms in other historical, literary, and artistic traditions., as a literary device to produce weirdness by reinterpreting the diversity of previous lore into his own artistic frame, cosmicism. The depiction of the nature of his Great Old Ones, the great alien monsters in his fiction, sometimes gods or simply extraterrestrials, shows that said ambiguity and liminality are fundamental in his fiction.

The following chapter analyzes the liminal nature in Lovecraft’s own deities to assess the importance of paganism in the genesis of Lovecraft’s dark cosmogonies and myths as a source of cosmic horror. Through a close-reading study of the description and attributes of these divinities in comparison to historical deities from ancient paganism, a tentative identification of possible influences on Lovecraft’s dark pantheon is provided. This analysis also includes aspects such as Lovecraft’s distinction between “the Earth’s gods” versus the “Outer gods” in some of his stories, or

the question of the religiosity of alien races, showing that the role of paganism in his fiction goes beyond the “erroneous” human interpretation of an alien reality through superstitious cults. On the contrary, said aspects pave the way to a new interpretation based on liminality, a concept that explains how a divine and extraterrestrial nature may coexist in his Great Old Ones, and by extension, in his fictional universe. Thus, this chapter is intended to discern the influences and role of paganism in Lovecraft’s fiction, which are the central objectives in this study.

III. ALIENS AND GODS: THE LIMINAL NATURE OF THE 'OLD ONES' IN LOVECRAFT'S FICTION. FROM PAGANISM TO THE DARK PANTHEON. COSMOGONIES

In the previous chapter, the elements from real historic pagan religions have been identified and described, analyzing their main function within Lovecraft's fiction as the irrational counterpart to the material, scientific aspects of the narrative. Furthermore, the scientific account of this historical pagan lore provides verisimilitude to the narration, adding the perspective of historical and anthropological data, rational elements, while these also provide an irrational frame for the narration, producing indeterminacy. Thus, the nature of horror in Lovecraft's fiction appears to be in the sphere of the undefined, occupying a liminal position between the rational and the irrational.

Through a methodology that combines close-reading and interdisciplinary studies, the present chapter analyzes how Lovecraft applied this technique to produce his own fictional pantheon of dark divinities, creating his own deities or adopting other from different authors without any real existence in historic societies but that were inspired by them. Thus, this chapter is necessary to analyze the role of paganism in Lovecraft's fiction, as a mandatory intermediate section, a second step after the previous chapter which analyzed the pagan elements taken from real historic sources, and before the last one that analyzes from the perspective of myth-criticism the structure, meaning and role of Lovecraft's myths as a revision and reinterpretation of previous myths.

The chapter begins with a section about the nature of the "Great Old Ones" and their liminal condition between the divine and the alien, as a starting point to tentatively affirm that they share a dual nature. The next section focuses on the religiosity of the alien races, providing many examples of religion among extraterrestrials, which are portrayed praying, celebrating pagan festivals, and having specific spaces of their cult, such as temples and shrines. This section provides evidence that the scope of religion in Lovecraft's fiction goes beyond the sphere of mankind, which involves that its role supersedes human's interpretations of an alien reality through cults and

superstitions. After that, a particular case of Lovecraft's deities is studied, the case of "earth's gods," with their "humanized" particularities such as their weakness and their ability to express feelings, so different to the weirdness inherent to his cosmic Old Ones. These anthropomorphized features, as well as their minor scope of action, restricted to human dreams, underpin a new interpretation that rejects August Derleth's tendency to include his own inventions and misinterpretations, such as the Elder Gods into Lovecraft's fictional universe (1963:13), but which also suggests reconsidering Dirk Mosig's (1997:27), Robert Price's (2011:263), and S.T. Joshi's (2013:645) reduction of the Old Ones just to extraterrestrial beings. On the contrary, this study provides new insights about them that are again based on the idea of liminality and indeterminacy as discursive resources to produce atmospheres of horror. Once determined the discussion about the liminal nature of the Lovecraft's Old Ones, assessed the real importance of religion in his fiction, and analyzed the particular group of the "earth's gods", the next section entitled "Lovecraft's Dark Pantheon" analyzes the nature of each one of his Old Ones, providing tentative evidence of the influence of ancient pagan religions in their creation. A careful selection of these beings in Lovecraft's fiction has been undertaken, excluding those that were produced by other authors than Lovecraft.[79] Each one of them exemplifies said liminal nature between the numinous and the material, as a way to produce uncertainty and horror. Last part is entitled "Cosmogony and myth," which serves as the logical progression of an aspect of Lovecraft's fiction described in the previous chapter, such as cyclical time taken from paganism, inherently linked to a new one introduced in the present chapter, the return to a mythical origin as a recurrent narrative device in Lovecraft, which in turn marks the transition into the final chapter that will focus on myth-criticism. This last section includes different subsections, such as a brief review of historical cosmogonies, some examples of Lovecraftian cosmogonies and a chronological evolution in his production, from those that incorporated more supernatural elements to those in which the scientific narration and description became the

[79] The only exception is Tsathoggua, originally a deity from Clark Ashton, but fully adopted and reinterpreted by Lovecraft, which justifies its inclusion in this study. The case of Hastur, a god produced by Ambrose Bierce, used by other authors such as Robert Chambers is different, because Lovecraft's only mentions once without adding new information.

dominant discursive element.

The analysis of the aspects commented on above shows that paganism in Lovecraft's fiction goes beyond the ornamental, becoming relevant to the production of atmospheres of cosmic horror. The uncertainty about the essence of the hideous entities lurking beyond the human realms in which the alien and the supernatural appear intrinsically intermingled intensifies this feeling of weirdness. In addition, the religious behavior of the alien "minor" creatures and the ambiguous identification of the Great Old Ones with deities allows to establish comparison with the historical pagan religions in which individuals from different human societies worshipped their gods. This interpretation does not diminish the futility and insignificance of the human species compared to a vast, indifferent universe, but reinforces this unimportance, providing evidence that even the cultural aspects inherent to the mankind are not exclusive of mankind.

Thus, this part of this study corresponds to a second level of analysis of paganism in Lovecraft's fiction, after the study of pagan elements from previous religions, focusing on the author's own insights about the nature of his own fictional elements, and before applying myth-criticism as the deeper level of study in the last chapter. As in the case of the pagan elements studied in the previous chapter, in which the numinous appeared intermingled with the rational to produce uncertainty, when the issue about the real nature of the "Great Old Ones" is raised, the ideas of indeterminacy and liminality also prove to be crucial to produce atmospheres of horror.

III.1 Gods or aliens? The nature of the "Great Old Ones" in Lovecraft's fiction

Lovecraft's Old Ones are the powerful entities who came from outer space to our planet, sometimes coinciding in the cosmic infinitude of space-time with our irrelevant species, a situation in which their reaction towards us ranges from hostility to sheer indifference. The weirdness and ambiguity inherent to their characterization is intensified through a teratological physiology that combines a juxtaposition of features akin to different animals, as well as with the frequent references to them as "things." All these rhetoric devices contribute to generate a feeling of mystery

and loathing around them to increase horror and alienness. In addition, these Old Ones are frequently qualified as "Great," to stress the feeling of cosmic horror by diminishing mankind in contrast to them. They play a central role within the so-called "Cthulhu Mythos," an imprecise term created by August Derleth that Lovecraft never used himself (Joshi 2007:97). For the creation of said myths and entities, Lovecraft sometimes adapted beings from other authors such as Ambrose Bierce's Hastur and Clark Ashton Smith's Tsathoggua, but most of them, such as Azathoth, Nyarlathotep, Yog-Sothoth, Shub-Niggurath, or Cthulhu, were exclusively a product of his creation. In turn, other writers during and after Lovecraft's life produced their own Old Ones, generally with a detrimental effect in the capacity to produce horror and wonder. The Old ones had an impact on posterior literature, not only in those authors who decided to continue with Lovecraft's fictional universe, such as August Derleth, Ramsey Campbell, or Brian Lumley, but were also inspirational for the monsters and aliens of those who decided to start their own narratives of Cosmic horror outside the Mythos, such as John Campbell's *Who goes there?* (1973),[80] Thomas Ligottis's *Noctuary* (1994), and Caitlin Kiernan's *To Charles Fort, with Love* (2005). The importance of paganism in Lovecraft's fiction is evidenced through the characterization of the Old Ones, since these were inspired by deities taken from the history, legends, and folklore from different traditions.

The Old Ones in Lovecraft's fictional universe is a general category referring to alien beings who came from the stars to establish on Earth, which they transformed and ruled for millions of years through their intellectual and biological superiority.[81] Intellectually and biologically inferior human beings regarded alien superiority as supernatural because they could not understand it and therefore worshipped the Old Ones accordingly. As Joshi argues, Lovecraft's fiction departs from the idea of the incursion in ancient times of immensely powerful forces from outer space to Earth who were considered "gods" by the human beings that combated or worshipped them (Joshi 2007: 98). This is the basic concept that underpins the "Cthulhu Mythos," the series of narrations

[80] Adapted to film by John Carpenter as *The Thing* (1982).

[81] In addition to their intellectual and biological superiority, a technological superiority can be also inferred. However, there is very scarce description of technological devices in most of Lovecraft's fiction, including a practical absence of spacecrafts and only "projectile-like airships" ([1935] 2015: 3.401) are briefly described in "The Shadow Out of time".

that recount the ancient events dealing with the arrival, dominion, and contingent return of said beings. Although this kernel idea remains a constant throughout his fiction, Lovecraft changed the specificities that described them in his stories, creating a particular context and history for each of them that adapts to the characters, plots and universes of each story. There is a certain evolution in Lovecraft's different uses of the term Old Ones and the chronological production of his fiction, from a broader term including all the alien creatures, to a narrower case of a particular species.[82] Thus, in some stories like "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926), Lovecraft refers to the "Great Old Ones," who are described as individual, gigantic, long-lasting, powerful creatures that visited the Earth and ruled it for eras ([1926] 2015: 2.37). In other stories such as *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931) and "The Shadow Out of Time" (1935), the Old Ones are an alien race known as the "Elder Things*"* who lived in Antarctica ([1931] 2015: 3.45; [1935] 2015: 3.405). Occasionally, they are also differentiated from the "Other gods," which is the expression used to refer to the Old Ones in the tales from the oneiric cycle (1918-1932). I will use the term Great Old Ones to refer indistinctly to the last two groups (*Great Old Ones* and *Other gods*), since their common characteristics can be more relevant than their differences to determine the specifities of their nature, which I contend that is liminal because it shares both alien and numinous, deity-like features. Still, the similarities between these different creatures across stories not only suggests the repetition of a common motif that Lovecraft would be exploiting in his narrative to convey a particular effect on readers, but also establishes a sense of continuity between them that is not dissimilar from Murray's interpretation of witchcraft as the continuity different pagan cults throughout different cultures in history. When considered as a narrative whole, Lovecraft's imaginary universe conveys the sense that the reality of the same Old Ones was understood and represented in different ways by different peoples and cultures, or at least, that these different creatures have a common origin that may have developed not just culturally, but also biologically, in different ways. These two possible interpretations, which

[82] A notable exception is "The Shadow over Innsmouth" written in November and December 1931, in which he used again the term generically ([1931] 2015:3.229), while in *At the Mountains of Madness*, composed before in February and March in the same year he had devoted it specifically for the particular Antarctic species ([1931] 2015: 3.95).

rely on religious and evolutionary arguments respectively, are not only not incompatible with each other, but in combination, follow a consistent strategy that Lovecraft used to convey the particular atmosphere of cosmic horror.

Currently, dominant scholarship on Lovecraft led by Joshi and Price agrees on dismissing the godly nature of the Old Ones in Lovecraft's stories, while underlying their exclusively extraterrestrial nature:

> Robert M. Price has established that the Necronomicon -and the religion of the Old Ones generally is misguided in asserting the divinity of the Old Ones, who are -right from the beginning of Lovecraft's introduction of them -mere extra-terrestrials (Joshi 1990: 106)

In his biography of Lovecraft, Joshi insists on this argument and remarks that the "gods of the Mythos are not really gods at all, but merely extraterrestrials who occasionally manipulate their human followers for their advantage" (Joshi 2013: 645). According to him, the members of the human cults that worship the Old Ones are incapable of understanding that what they deem "gods" are only extraterrestrials who have no intimate relation with people or anything on Earth (2013: 646). He supports this argument by contending that the absence of “standard ghosts, vampires and werewolves” in Lovecraft's tales is quite significant and that even “the most titanic of his gods (if that is what they are) are material after a fashion” (Joshi 1990: 83). Thus, through the extraterrestrial character of the entities in his pseudomythology, Lovecraft wanted to stress that “humanity is *not* at centre in the cosmos (Joshi 2013:645). Although reluctant to recognize the Great Old Ones as gods, Joshi sometimes identifies them as part of what he refers to as Lovecraft's “imaginary pantheon,” which includes Azathoth, Nyarlathotep and Yog-Sothoth (2011: 29). Contradictory as it seems, by referring to this group of particular Old Ones the “pantheon” of Lovecraft’s fiction, Joshi seems to be establishing a distinction between what the Old Ones actually were and what human regarded them to be, and forcing a particular interpretation on a representation of creatures that Lovecraft may have planned to render intentionally ambiguous. In his discussion of what he calls Lovecraft's “artificial mythology” of “Yog-Sothothery” (a term used by Lovecraft in his letters to refer to his mythical universe (Lovecraft [1931] 1971:294), Price affirms that Lovecraft’s intention was misunderstood by readers and critics who identify the

supernatural character of the Old Ones as a source of horror in his fiction (2011:261). Instead, according to Price, Lovecraft would be representing the Old Ones as extra-dimensional and extra-terrestrial entities, "utterly unknown life-forms" (2011:260) who are called "gods" and "devils" by humans who worship them as divinities or exorcise them as devils because they cannot understand them (2011: 259-261). This idea was first stated by Dirk Mosig, who affirmed that it was only through the contacts between humans and the forces from Outside, that men wrote books of forbidden lore and created superstitions and cults (Mosig 1997:24). The horror conveyed by this representation would thus not rely on the supernatural, but on the removal of the *limits on human perception*[83] to provide a full view of an empty cosmos (Price 2011:260).

Recently, Benjamin Zeller has added some nuances to these ideas, arguing, that while not religious, Lovecraft never quite left the shadow of religion, the author and his fiction becoming profoundly affected by overwhelming feelings to the numinous (Zeller 2020:4). Although a materialist, his fiction is fundamentally about gods, demons, religious groups, and apocalyptic expectations, blending elements of the natural and the supernatural (2020:3). Zeller concludes that Lovecraft's fiction encapsulates a sort of intensive awareness in something greater than himself and his stories harnesses concepts and language taken from religion (2020:17).

While acknowledging that the cosmic dimension of Lovecraftian horror is certainly based on the distinction between the limited human perception of the cosmos and a wider vision beyond human comprehension, I would like to contend that Lovecraft's cosmic horror also relies on the indeterminacy about the real nature of these forces as a narrative strategy to produce fear to the unknown in his readers. Thus, although it is true that the different cults described in different stories are described as the human interpretation of an alien reality which intersects with mankind by chance, Lovecraft also uses omniscient narrators to refer to the Old Ones specifically as gods or devils. In this sense, Lovecraft's use of narrative voice and perspective becomes particularly significant in determining the interpretation of the terms "gods," "devils" and "aliens" across

[83] Emphasis in the original.

different stories, which must be distinguished from Lovecraft's personal beliefs beyond his fictional world. I contend that it is precisely this distinction which might allow to determine Lovecraft's intention behind his narrative strategies.

Although Lovecraft was undoubtedly a materialist atheist who did not confess any religion, both homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators in his fiction frequently choose words such as "god", "daemon," and "devil" to refer to the Great Old Ones. This is particularly significant in the cases in which there is an omniscient, heterodiegetic, third-person narrator in stories such as "The Dunwich Horror" (1928), "The Strange High House in the Mist" (1926), and *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1927). In the latter, for instance, this type of narrator refers to the Old Ones as "Ultimate gods, the blind, voiceless, tenebrous, mindless Other Gods" (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.101). The same narrator also uses the word "daemon" when he mentions the "boundless daemon-sultan Azathoth" as the most powerful of these gods (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.100). The fact that he uses both the terms "god" and "daemon" quite interchangeably (for instance to refer to Azathoth) implies that these terms do not involve any moral connotation but rather suggest that their sometimes destructive cosmic power was so outstanding as to be compared to or even considered as supernatural. In any case, the use of these terms goes beyond a simple description of the Old Ones as merely powerful extra-terrestrials. Critics who mean Lovecraft to be consistent in his fictional and real-life regard of the supernatural seem to imply he would not be able to distinguish between the two. Yet when Lovecraft chose to be ambiguous in the description of the Great Old Ones using the terms "gods" or "demons" interchangeably to refer to "aliens" instead of using other terms like "extraterrestrials" or just "ancient monster," there was an aesthetic angle to that decision that would not apply to real life.

In fact, Lovecraft lived in a period in which the previous and contemporary advances in Darwinism, quantum physics and relativity, psychoanalysis and philosophy made possible to write horror fiction without any reference to the supernatural. However, Lovecraft not only chose NOT to exclude it from his stories, but even used overtly religious terms extensively in many of his stories

throughout his literary production, from the early short story, prose-poem “Nyarlathotep” (1920) to later stories such as “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1930). In “Nyarlarthotep,” the decadence and destruction of Western Civilization in 20th century is marked by the arrival of the powerful Nyarlathotep, described as a sinister magician whose presence unleashes the supernatural. The changes that the world experiences upon his arrival are described alluding to cosmic forces that are presented both as synonymous with and different from deities (more specifically, the plural “gods”) through a remarkably ambiguous use of the disjunctive: “the universe had passed from the control of known gods or forces to that of gods or forces which were unknown” (Lovecraft [1920] 2015:1.202). While the use of the word “gods” in plural involves an affirmation of pagan polytheism, the fact that there is a change from the control of known to unknown gods evokes the cosmogonic variations in the hegemony of deities described in pagan mythologies. Moreover, the agents that cause said changes are described in ambiguous terms, combining the scientific discourse represented by the word “forces,” with the irrational or religious discourse represented by “gods,” as a narratological device that intensifies horror and wonder. In “The Whisperer in Darkness,” the Old One Tsathoggua is described as an “amorphous, toad-like god-creature” (Lovecraft [1930] 2015: 2.519) by Akeley, a human character whose mind is controlled by members of the alien race of Yuggoth. The combination of the words “god,” related to the supernatural with “toad” and “creature” dealing with animality evince that in Tsathoggua the divine and the animal are intrinsically intertwined into a liminal nature. Said liminality is intensified by the adjective “amorphous,” which underlines monstrosity as a descriptive resource to produce weirdness and horror. The examples above demonstrate, one more time, the use of terminology and traditions taken from mythology and pagan religions into Lovecraft's fiction, providing evidence that his texts are sometimes very explicit using these terms taken from religion.

In addition to calling them “gods” , throughout Lovecraft’s fiction, the description of the Old Ones incorporates characteristics that do not pertain to an empiricist, scientific description of any living-form, terrestrial or extraterrestrial. One of the features of some of the Old Ones that

appear in his fiction is immortality, or at least a long-lasting longevity, sometimes for periods of millions of years, which is a typical attribute of deities, cited for instance in Bulfinch's *The Age of Fable* (1856: 427), a book present in Lovecraft's library (Joshi 2013:36). Moreover, the titanic dimensions of some of them, exceeding the biological limits,[84] makes them similar to gods. This is for instance the case of Cthulhu in "The Call of Cthulhu," who is an immortal entity that came from the outer space in a remote past millions of years ago. After dominating the Earth for a long period, it was imprisoned in the sunken city of R'lyeh where he waits to escape. The cosmic scale of the life of Cthulhu, measured in hundreds of millions of years, seems to transcend mortality. Furthermore, this Old One is described as immense, mountainous monstrosity awakes (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.53), causing the horror, madness, and destruction of the unfortunate human witnesses. The irruption of Lovecraft's monster emerging from the abyss with its fabulous dimensions clearly evokes the supernatural, as a reminiscence of Satan in Milton's Paradise Lost (Cuccia 2021:102). Other stories such as "The Dunwich Horror" (1928) also insist on the cosmic length of the existence of the Old Ones compared to the transience of mankind, as a quotation from the fictional Necronomicon states: "the Old Ones were, the Old Ones are, and the Old Ones shall be" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.434). Although this excerpt can be interpreted only just as an allusion to the presence of different alien races before, during and after the existence of mankind it could also refer to the immortality of the Old Ones, whose lives transcends the duration of human life.

Furthermore, as discussed above, these alien creatures are sometimes afraid of symbols and rituals, which prove to be useful for humans to expel them, as in the case of the swastica for the alien race of the Deep Ones in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth." But even the powerful, quasi-immortals, big ones such as Yog-Sothoth or his hybrid son can be expelled to the outer spaces using an incantation, as the outcome of "The Dunwich Horror" shows (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.464). "The Dunwich Horror" uses an omniscient, third person narrator to explain that this incantation

[84] Although scientists do not agree about the limits in the size of animals, they agree that these limits exist because of biomechanics reasons based on movement (Hutchinson 2021:11). Land animals can be as big as dinosaurs or elephants and water fauna as big as a blue whale. However, a creature as big as a mountain, as Cthulhu is described would not be able to move or find food.

functions to expel the Great Old Ones. It can be argued that incantations are a way to stop the cosmic forces which involve a threat to mankind are exceptional in Lovecraft's fiction, and that they only appear in some stories that are considered flaw by dominant criticism (such as the "The Dunwich Horror"). However, a close-reading study demonstrates that they are more frequent than it seems. For instance, in "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward," the evil wizard Joseph Curwen is also defeated by an incantation. Again, the presence of an omniscient third person narrator in the story shows that this is not the interpretation of any character, but that magics incantations can be really useful in Lovecraft's fiction. All this demonstrates that Lovecraft's universe, materialistic as it is, still reserves some space for the supernatural, magic, spells, and religious symbolism as powerful forces.

Along with the references to the Old Ones as gods, their immortality and colossal dimensions and some vulnerability to the power of religious symbols and incantations, there is another reason that supports a certain importance of the supernatural in Lovecraft's fiction. As Reynolds points out, some of Lovecraft's stories have been interpreted as pagan utopias, in which a part of mankind gets some profit through the relation with powerful entities that can be assimilated to gods (Reynolds 2009:99). According to Reynolds, these pagan utopias require (1) the reawakening of dormant pagan deities, (2) the tangibility, visual and physical of these deities, (3) that people assimilate them in their belief system, and (4) the absence of any opposing religion (2009:99). This can be seen in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," where the inhabitants of Innsmouth decide to breed with the alien race of the Deep Ones to achieve immortality, which involves the replacement of the local Protestant churches by the "Esoteric Order of Dagon."

> By rejoining Dagon and Mother Hydra beneath the surrounding ocean, the members of the Esoteric Order of Dagon enjoy immortal life and simultaneously establish their fish-god as Innsmouth primary deity. The physical return to Dagon's undersea kingdom by the newly transformed member of the order is a tangible reward for religious worship (physical in the act of transformation, visual in the return to the ocean that allows them to behold their god (Reynolds, 2009: 102).

Another example in the same line as Reynolds' argumentation about immortality as a reward in exchange for their worship can be found in "The Call of Cthulhu.". The human leaders of

the cult of Cthulhu are described as “undying,” “deathless” (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:38), which can be inferred that is also a recompense for their services. This kind of privileges to human worshippers reminds an echo of the tradition of pagan gods that conferred immortality to their followers, with many examples in the Greek and Hinduist traditions, usually through the drink of a beverage (Bulfinch 1856: 282; 331; 427). In Lovecraft’s fiction this pattern suggests that both his fictional universe and his Old Ones must be analyzed not only through the rational discourse of science, but also through the numinous discourse of the supernatural, since both spheres seem to be intermingled into a liminal whole.

This dual discourse allows to shed new insights to the question about the nature of the Great Old Ones : Are they merely aliens as Mosig (1997:24), Joshi (2013: 645) and Price (2011:261) suggest, or deities instead, as Derleth (1963:13), Reynolds (2009:99), and Zeller (2019: 18) defend to a certain extent? This debate is central to assess the real relevance of paganism in Lovecraft’s fiction, since an exclusive extraterrestrial nature would reduce the role of paganism to a wrong human reaction through superstition, whereas an exclusively divine nature would fully involve that the Old Ones would be “the true” pagan religion. My tentative answer would be that whether we call them “gods” or “demons,” using an antithetical human moral dichotomy irrelevant at a cosmic scale, both terms denote that in addition to their extra-terrestrial nature they have numinous powers. The terms “gods” and “daemons” are not only used by illiterate characters in Lovecraft's writings as Mosig pointed out (Mosig 1997:24), but also by characters who are scholars, by the members of the alien races, and by third-person narrators, sometimes omniscient. This suggests a revision and, at least, a partial refutation of those critic interpretations that deny any supernatural features to the Old Ones, diminishing those who believe in it as intellectually inferior characters and narrators dominated by unculture, superstition, and subjectivity. Moreover, the use of said terms dealing with the supernatural together with their quasy-immortality and supernatural powers, paves the way to tentative explanations in which the Old Ones continue to be extra-terrestrial, but at the same time they share some of the more representative features of pagan gods in ancient religions. I call this

concept *liminality* and it is a term that interweaves both the concept of alien and god, because it transgresses the *limes* or border between science and religion.

Clemens Ruthner has applied the concept of liminality to the literary genre of the fantastic (which includes cosmic horror). He defines liminality as a threshold state in which individuals or groups find themselves in a condition of ambiguity, displaced into a state of no-more and not-yet (Ruthner 2012:40). According to Ruthner, the fantastic can be conceptualized either as a visualization or literalization of rhetoric, or as a staging of liminality or the liminality of representation. In this second approach, the fantastic plays with the concept of transgression as the crossing of ontological, social and cultural boundaries, which involve the existence of a threshold state. This threshold state involves liminality or a state of bordering or betweenness, which hovers on the demarcation line between the two fields separated by the boundary (Ruthner, 2012:41). In this sense, liminality would be the habitat for the monstrosities of the fantastic and it operates on the level of themes, characters, and plots, but also on a semantic, narrative, and epistemological level (2012:43). It is at this epistemological level where I think that the liminal nature of Lovecraft's Old Ones is paradigmatic of the threshold separating the scientific and the supernatural, since they share the characteristics of *aliens* studied by science fiction and speculative exobiology and of *gods* studied by mythology, mythoanalysis, and mythocriticism.

This duality of alien/material and divine characteristics produces is key to produce atmospheres of horror, in which the supernatural becomes the necessary counterpart to the scientific to produce liminality in Lovecraft’s literary technique. In the next section of this chapter, I will demonstrate that some of the minor alien races (such as the Fungi of Yuggoth, Deep Ones and other) that appear in some stories sometimes display religious attitudes, which again demonstrates that the supernatural plays a relevant role that supersedes the explanations reducing its role just to a human superstitious response to a material alien threat. On the contrary, in Lovecraft’s fictional universe both historical paganism and Lovecraft’s own (pseudo)mythology are not the opposed to cosmic horror, but an inherent part of it.

III.2 The religiosity of alien races in Lovecraft's fiction

As I have advanced in previous section, dominant criticism has tended to interpret the cults that appear in Lovecraft's stories only as the reaction and interpretation of ignorant humans to an alien reality. Robert Price argues Lovecraft's fiction seems to imply that the alien races noticed that humans believed that they were gods instead of aliens and used it for their own benefit in appropriating the earth from the inferior human species (2011:262). Thus, according to Price, the religions developing around the Great Old ones would be a mere delusion on the part of the human worshippers that is fostered by these Great Old Ones. Price uses a quotation from "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926) in which the Old Ones speak to the first men moulding their dreams, forming a cult around said Old Ones that would never die until Cthulhu would resume His control of earth (Price 2011:263; Lovecraft [1926] 2015:39).

Nevertheless, a close reading of Lovecraft's writings shows evidence that alien species in Lovecraft's fiction also upheld a belief system in the supernatural themselves that could be qualified as religion. This evidence can be found in at least five of Lovecraft's stories: *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*" (1927), "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930), "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" (1931), "The Festival" (1923) and "The Horror at Red Hook (1925)." The first two stories even provide a detailed description of their ritual practices, while in the second there is an alien character who acknowledges his religious beliefs, but in the last three the evidence is weaker since we have to rely on the account of humans. In any case, the dates of production of the stories provide evidence that throughout the years Lovecraft considered the existence of alien religion compatible with cosmic horror.

In *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, an omniscient, heterodiegetic third person narrator describes an alien race called the "almost-humans" who are the slaves of another alien race called "the moon-things," whom they worship as gods (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.173). Whereas the type of narrator prevents the reader to interpret their religious behavior as the opinion of an inferior

human being about this superior alien race, their physical description, -with horns hidden under their turbans and extraordinarily small feet,- is intended to stress differences rather than similitudes with mankind, which prevents the reader to wrongly attribute this religious behavior to a partial human nature. Moreover, the narrator makes it clear that "almost-humans" do not have anything in common with mankind because, before being enslaved, they ruled their own alien city, millions of years before the advent of the first humans (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.174). The importance that this alien race devotes to religion is attested by the careful description of the spaces required for their rituals: "The upper part of the rock held more temples than private homes, and in numerous hewn chambers were found terrible carven altars and doubtfully stained fonts and shrines for the worship of things more monstrous than the mild gods atop Kadath" (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.188). While terms such as "temples," "shrines," "altars," and "worship," belong to the semantic field of religion, the previous description of the moon-things as a race of "toad-like" aliens who live in the moon does not seem to match the "things more monstrous than the mild gods" in this quotation, perhaps suggesting that the almost-humans do not worship them but other superior beings.

In "The Whisperer in Darkness," a member of the alien race of the *fungi* of Yuggoth disguised as a human, discusses his pretended abduction by aliens with the human narrator of the story. His description of the planet Yuggoth (Pluto) includes the presence of extraterrestrial "temples" (Lovecraft [1930] 2015: 2.519), which implies the existence of religious practices among this species of aliens.

In "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," the first-person narrator claims to be a hybrid descendant of the alien race of the Deep Ones in the process physically transforming himself into one of them. He describes a dream where he visits underwater places of worship where the Deep Ones "pra[y] monstrously at their evil sea-bottom temples" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.228). While the hybrid nature of the narrator makes his account of the Deep Ones unreliable because his inferior human reason would be prone to consider aliens as divine creatures, his partially alien superior reason would justify the accuracy of his report regarding the actual religious use of the buildings he

describes. This ambiguity contributes to intensify weirdness by stressing the contrast of the rational and the irrational, which is one of the main literary devices in Lovecraft's fiction. Similarly, the fact that the narrator is reporting a mere dream and not an actual experience contributes to the unreliability of his account. Nevertheless, as Price has rightly pointed out, in Lovecraft's fiction, dreams are often depicted as one of the means used by extra-terrestrials to communicate with humans (Price 2011:261), which in this case, would suggest that the dream is induced in the narrator by the Deep Ones to contribute to his transformation. However, the extremely fantastic nature of the events described, together with the homodiegetic character of this narration also contribute to make his story unreliable by suggesting the possibility of his madness. As noted above, this intended ambiguity of the protagonist is stressed through narrative techniques to express the horror that the narrator experiences because of his changing, liminal situation, to enhance the feeling of weirdness and horror in the reader.

"The Festival" and "The Horror at Red Hook" also instrumentalize unreliable narrators in ambiguously suggesting the existence of religious practices among aliens. In the former, the homodiegetic first-person narrator recognizes that the festival of Yuletide is even *older than mankind* (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.406), which although it might mean that it was performed by pre-human species, considering that as animals, they might be unable to sustain beliefs in the supernatural, rather seems to suggest that the festival it was celebrated by alien races. However, the fact that this account is provided by a human practitioner of the cult also involves relying on received human indoctrination that would be conditioned by the inferior intellectual capacities of humans. In "The Horror at Red Hook," the also homodiegetic third-person narration of detective Thomas Malone refers to "cults and ceremonies *older than mankind*" (Lovecraft [1925] 2015: 1.485) with implications similar to the ones found in "The Festival". In case, however, information provided is questionable because it comes impressions that the narrator "felt inwardly" (citation).

In all of these stories focalization plays a relevant role in ambiguously suggesting alien religiosity in different Old Ones, which provides some ground to put Joshi and Price's views on this

issue in cautious brackets. Since intentional ambiguity between the strictly rational and the supernatural (be it in the form of mere belief systems or as physical or spiritual presence) is a pervasive literary device in Lovecraft's fiction, I would like to argue that his use of narrative ambiguity to imply that even the intellectually superior aliens might believe in the supernatural is also instrumental in constructing the atmosphere of cosmic horror by way of liminality not only between human and alien species, but between the terrestrial and the extraterrestrial, the rational and the irrational, or the natural and the supernatural. Thus, liminality as the intersection of the material through science, and the numinous through paganism and myths, makes Lovecraft's literary style unique, superseding the traditional classification of fantastic genres, specifically of science fiction. As Maurice Lévy argues, it is because Lovecraft underpins all his work over this irrational, mythical base, that he should not be considered a science fiction author (Lévy 1972: 117). This use of paganism as an irrational counterpart of science also appears in the "Earth's gods," to whom the next section is devoted.

III.3 The problem of the "Earth's gods" and the "Other gods"

As I have argued above, for a convinced atheist as Lovecraft, the pervasive use of the term "god" in his fiction is apparently weird. This has led to the question of what Lovecraft referred to when he used the term. Most scholars agree that Lovecraft used this term mostly to allude to "space aliens" (Joshi 2018a: 195). As an atheist writer, he would have used the term "god" as a literary device to point out to very material "Old Ones," who would be merely extraterrestrials (Joshi 2013: 645; Price 2011:262). In the two previous sections in this chapter, I have provided evidence that disputes these insights, suggesting instead the concept of liminality to describe the essence of said "Old Ones". In this section I analyze a case in which "gods" is used in a different way to the employment of the term to allude to monstrous, cosmic entities by Lovecraft. My purpose is to show that although the unimportance of mankind in a vast and indifferent universe is a central theme in Lovecraft's fiction, sometimes this fiction also includes "minor" *humanized* deities, who

become some sort of link between the darker dominant cosmic forces and the weak humanity affecting the way in which the latter conceives his own myths and cosmogonies. These minor divinities are called the “earth gods,” which demonstrates that the presence of pagan deities in Lovecraft's stories is not restricted to the Great Old Ones, establishing a connection between mankind and the myths and cosmogonies that underpin his fiction

The story “The Other Gods” it is not only useful to notice the relevance of polytheistic pagan religions in Lovecraft's fiction, but also to provide some nuances about a different type of “gods” in Lovecraft. Scholarly tradition about the notions of god in the first thirty years after Lovecraft's death were dominated by the ideas of August Derleth, ideas that have been strongly criticized and rejected in the subsequent decades. As commented above, Derleth's interpretation of the myths and the philosophy that lies beyond said myths in Lovecraft's fiction was strongly influenced by his Catholic ideas (Joshi 2013: 644). According to Derleth, Lovecraft’s stories depict two kinds of gods, the “Old Ones” representing evil forces would in conflict with an allegedly “Elder Gods” who representing good forces to protect mankind (Joshi 2013: 643). In addition, Derleth wanted to associate some of the Old Ones with each one of the four elementals of water, air, earth, and fire (Joshi 2013: 644). According to Joshi, Derleth had based the presence of these Elder Gods in Lovecraft’s fiction in a brief episode in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (Joshi 2013: 644).

Current scholarship on Lovecraft’s fiction considers Derleth to be misled in his interpretations (Mosig 1997: 24-25) about said protective Elder Gods with their consequent implications regarding a central role to mankind in Lovecraft’s fiction over indifferent cosmic forces. Derleth's interpretation of a cosmic antagonism between “evil” and “good” forces clearly contradicts Lovecraft's philosophy about the absurdity and insignificance of mankind, including all its moral values, in contrast to a vast and indifferent universe, which Lovecraft himself briefly but

accurately described in his famous letter to Farnsworth Wright on 5th July 1927[85] (Mosig 1997: 27).

My thesis is that although I completely agree with the interpretation by D. Mosig, S. T. Joshi and most scholars who deny any evidence of the existence of these allegedly "Elder Gods" behaving as good and protective forces for humanity, I think that the concept of "gods" by H. P. Lovecraft sometimes goes beyond the reductionist concept of the powerful but "merely alien creatures." Still, his concept of gods even goes beyond my own reconsideration of them as liminal entities in previous sections of this study, since it has to be completed with the exceptional but very significative case of the "earth gods." Of course, most of the times in which the word "god" is used in Lovecraft's fiction, it is applicable to the group of Great Old Ones who represent cosmic forces completely alien to mankind and the earth. Nevertheless, the concept of "gods" that appear in some stories such as "The Other Gods" is substantially different. In this story there is a clear distinction between a group of gods that are called "the gods of Earth" and another group called "the other Gods."

"The Other Gods" is a short story that introduces some problems regarding to the nature of the gods that appear in Lovecraft: the distinction between the aforementioned two types of gods in at least some the stories in his oneiric cycle. As commented above in section I.1.1.2, the oneiric cycle or dream cycle (Spaulding 2015: 182)[86] is a group of stories that primarily take place in a dreamland, as Lovecraft himself called it in his letters (Lovecraft [1926] 1968: 94). Daniel Harms describes said dreamland in Lovecraft's fiction as an alternate dimension accessible only through one person's dreams (Harms 1998: 89). Although there will never be an undisputed, definitive list of the stories that should be included in this dream cycle, it is appropriate to include in it at least a first group of early stories such as, "The Doom that came to Sarnath" (1919), "The Cats of Ulthar" (1920), "Celephais" (1920), "The Quest of Iranon" (1921), or the aforementioned "The Other Gods"

[8585]An excerpt of this letter has been reproduced in chapter I of this study.

[86] As Todd Spaulding argues, criticism has divided Lovecraft's fiction into a "Dream Cycle" and "Cthulhu Mythos" as two different kinds of texts (Spaulding 2015: 182). However, the use of both terms is problematic since this is a simplification. As commented above in this study, even the term "Cthulhu Mythos" is an imprecise creation of A.Derleth.

(1921). Some of the stories have in common a protagonist called Randolph Carter, a character that appears in “The Statement of Randolph Carter” (1919), “The Silver Key” (1926), *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1927), and “Through the Gates of the Silver Key” (1932). Although the classification of these stories together can be considered arbitrary, they share some common features, such as the narration of “impossible adventures” influenced by “fairy-tale wonder-spirit,” as Lovecraft explained in a letter (Lovecraft [1926] 1968: 95). Furthermore, their more evident distinctive characteristic is the presence of fantastic, impossible geography and characters, noticeable through the toponymy and anthroponymy, completely different to those that take place in real or fictional places inspired in our world. This dream-cycle was strongly influenced by the fiction of Lord Dunsany (Joshi 2013: 338), whose insights about paganism, such as the references to ancient gods influenced Lovecraft’s fiction.

“The Other Gods” tells about old wizard or magician Barzai and his helper, the young priest Atal, who decide to climb the highest peak on earth to meet what the story calls “the earth's gods” (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.275). After a terrible ascension into this mountain, Barzai can see the gods, but he soon becomes frightened because there also appear some a different kind of “gods” which are called “other gods” (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.278) and whose only vision is terrifying. Barzai disappears forever. Atal, who was lagging behind him climbing the mountain, heard his panicked, decides to climb down the mountain and survives to tell the story of the disappearance of his master. Joshi has pointed out Dunsany's strong influence in “The Other Gods” (Joshi 2013: 351), an influence that I consider that involved Dunsany's “Poltarnees, Beholder of the Ocean,” a short story of similar plot, with a protagonist that also climbs a high mountain to discover something unknown, in this case the vision of the sea (Dunsany [1910] 2007: 9). Moreover, both stories seem pervaded by very similar concepts taken from paganism, such as a polytheist plurality of gods and a fatalist force of destiny.

“The Other Gods” makes clear that there are two different types of gods that have very different features. On the one hand there are these “gods of earth,” who are described holding some

human or humanized attributes but reject any contact with humans. These gods might be “homesick” and experience such significant emotions as to produce the “sighs” and “the tears of the gods” (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.274). In addition, they are described as “the proud gods, the secret gods of earth who spurn the sight of men” (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.277). These gods sometimes travel in “their ships of cloud, casting pale vaporous over the slopes as they dance reminiscently on the summit” (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.275). These ships of cloud transmit an image of purity, which is similar to the second generation of gods that appear in many pagan religions, such as the second generation of Olympian gods that appear in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (Hesiod 1988:30), or the new generation of gods that appear in the *Enuma Elis*, the Babylonian account of creation (Peinado & Cordero 1981: 43). Similarly to many deities in pagan religions, Lovecraft’s earth’s gods carved their image on a mountain (Lovecraft [1921] 2015:273), which contrasts dominant aniconism in Judaeo-Christian tradition. On the other hand, the “other gods” described by the panicked Barzai are “the gods of the outer hells that guard the feeble gods of earth!” (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.278). These also have equivalents in the first generation of gods of chaos in many pagan religions such as the Titans (Hesiod 1988: 9), or the gods of chaos Apsu and Tiamat in the Babylonian religion (Enuma Elis 1981:23). In Lovecraft’s story, the contrast between the sensibility of the gods of earth and the hellish, devilish attributes of the other gods, whose irruption is described as an “unrelatable nightmare” that produces “horror” and “anguish” is huge. This demonstrates again that the gods in Lovecraft fiction are not simply extraterrestrials, because the category of the earth’s gods is described as weak, but humanized beings. The distinction of the two groups is made clear when Atal manages to climb down he reaches a lower part of the mountain “without sight of earth's gods or of the *other* gods” (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.278). This is Lovecraft's italics. In a period in which the debates about alterity had not developed yet, Lovecraft seemed to highlight this alienness or outsideness of these “other” gods, clearly identifiable with the “Old Ones.”

As in the case of the “Old Ones,” Lovecraft decided to be deliberately ambiguous about the nature of his “earth gods,” whose origin and names are never mentioned. While their real existence

outside human dreams is uncertain, these gods sometimes seem archetypal entities common to the psyche of all mankind. In spite of their human sensibility, it can be affirmed that said "gods of earth" are essentially different from Derleth's "Elder Gods." Thus, although the "gods of earth" are capable of displaying emotions, they cannot be protective to humans against the Great Old Ones because they are specifically categorized as "feeble" and therefore are long away from being powerful enough to be their cosmic counterpoint. In addition, there is nothing in the story that suggests that they would have any conflict with the "other gods" or any desire to protect mankind. Quite the opposite, they seem even happy about the opportune visit of these "devilish" other gods that prevent Barzai's uncomfortable intrusion in their old dwelling atop of earth's peaks. This is not the case of the "other gods," who are marked by their outsideness and weirdness to mankind. Although this is an early story, in my opinion, the attributes of these "other gods," who are "devilish," "hellish," and coming from "outer hells," are easily identifiable with the Great Old Ones/outer gods. Thus, the "other gods" would just be the term that Lovecraft used for them when they appeared in stories from the oneiric cycle.

Some of the ideas that appear in "The Other Gods" in 1921 were reformulated again in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* six years later. The latter owes much to the former in terms of the description of fictional characters and settings in the dreamlands, completing the description of the "gods of earth" by adding more details. In *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath,* Carter's interest in the physical aspect of these gods lies in identifying them so they can lead him to the city of Kadath. When Carter has the opportunity to see the carved face of one of them, he determines that they belong to "a race that is not of men, but of gods" (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.129). Carter describes a chiseled face with "long narrow eyes and long-lobed ears, […a…] thin nose and pointed chin" (Lovecraft [1927] 2015 2.129). The description of the "gods of earth" in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* includes their physical appearance and behavior, reveals the influence of different pagan societies from the past. Norris has pointed out that this description accurately mirrors the images exhibited in artistic portraits of Akhenaton, an Egyptian pharaoh of the New Kingdom

(Norris 2016: 6). Lovecraft would have been familiar with said representations because he was interested in the history and culture of ancient Egypt (Joshi 2013:500). I consider that he would have borrowed the figure of Akhenaton to shape his gods of earth because of the important religious reforms that Akhenaton had introduced around the new cult of the god Aton, explained and illustrated for instance by Donald Mackenzie (1913:337) and Alfred Wiedemann (1897: 37). In the same way that Akhenaton, although a man, was akin to his god Aton, the description of the gods of earth in the pharaoh's features would reinforce their aspect as divinities.[87] The story informs that some of these earth gods not only live concealed among humans, but even "espouse the daughters of men" (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.106) resulting in their hybrid offspring, quite similarly not only to the birth of demigods in pagan religions, but even to a biblical quotation from the book of Genesis:

> And it came to passe, when men began to multiply on the face of earth, and daughters were borne on to them: That the sonnes of God saw the daughters of men, that they were faire, and they took them wives, of all which they chose (Gn 6: 1-2).

In my opinion, the fact that women are called "the daughters of men" in both texts, and the way in which they become the wives of powerful beings, gods in Lovecraft's tales and some mysterious "sons of God" different from men in Genesis, prove that Lovecraft was aware of this biblical account. Despite Lovecraft's undisputed atheism and rejection of Christianity, some of his writings are likely to have been inspired even by the Bible. As suggested above, a tentative explanation is that Lovecraft considered Christianity another pagan religion and he used its traditional lore as a source for his fiction.

These "gods of earth" that are human enough to depart from the concept of powerful cosmic alien forces only appear in the stories of the oneiric cycle. As Randolph Carter notices in The *Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath,* these gods are only *"*earth's gods, ruling feebly our own

[87]I also think that this appearance (long narrow eyes, thin noses, pointed chins), influenced in turn the prototypical depiction of an alien face in the decades after Lovecraft's death. According to some later popular beliefs and ufologists, this is the appearance of the aliens that would be visiting earth. In fact, some of the early proposers of these pseudo-scientific theories were familiar with Lovecraft's fiction. This was the case of Jacques Bergier, a French author who wrote two letters to *Weird Tales* in 1936 and 1937, in which he stated his fascination with Lovecraft (Joshi, 2013: 997). Bergier later became both an early enthusiast who divulged Lovecraft in France, and one of the first French ufologists.

dreamland, and having no power or habitation elsewhere" (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.105). Although the two stories analyzed in this section do not confirm Derleth's assumptions about "Elder gods," they introduce the new category of the earth's gods, who would be humanized in appearance and weaker than the outer gods since their realm seems limited to human dreams. While in Lovecraft's fiction it is apparently easy to distinguish between those stories set in the "real" universe in which a god communicates to humans through dreams, and those "dreamland" stories in which the reality of the whole account including both kind of deities can be even denied, the division between both worlds sometimes seems blurred into a liminal continuum. Said liminal transition is characterized by the presence of the outer gods that can be found present in both, as the cosmic forces linking these realms. To some extent, the debate about the earth's gods that only appear in the oneiric cycle versus the "Outer Gods" that appear more generally in the stories is a reflection of the debate about the characteristics of this oneiric or dream cycle versus the more general range of Lovecraft's fiction. Although it is out of my scope to analyze the specific features of the stories of the dream cycle, the great importance that Lovecraft attributed to dreams must never be dodged, so that the importance of the earth's gods in his fiction should not be diminished. These humanized gods seem relevant not only because they reflect the insignificance of mankind in a vast universe, as their submission to the more powerful outer gods seems to, but because they are likely to imply a connection of the unconscious human mind with this vast universe.

Thus, although restricted to the dream-cycle, the presence of the "earth gods" in Lovecraft's fiction demonstrates that his concept of deities supersedes the characterization of the powerful, outsider Old Ones. These "earth gods," described as humanized but weak entities, echo many features from paganism, such as their plurality akin to polytheistic religions, their similitude to the second generation of pagan gods in some ancient religions, and their physical resemblance to the artistic representations of Akhenaton. Lovecraft's uncertainty about them does not allow to produce categorical affirmations, but they seem to represent some sort of archetypal connection between the common human psyche of all mankind and the numinous. Furthermore, the other

category of the powerful “outer gods” from the dream-cycle are easily identifiable with the Old Ones that appear in the stories set in the real world, blurring the division between these two kinds of stories into a transitional continuum. Hitherto, this chapter has analyzed the liminal nature of said Old Ones, the religiosity of the minor alien species associated to them, and the different category of the “earth’s gods,” all of which prevents about the risks of oversimplifying Lovecraft’s fiction by denying the numinous in it. This leads to a next step, the analysis of the dark pantheon formed by these Old Ones, to whom next section is devoted.

III.4. Lovecraft's Dark Pantheon

Whether they are considered gods or just aliens, the presence of a Dark Pantheon of Gods in many of Lovecraft's works is, for many readers, one of the most attractive elements of his fiction. Throughout time, scholarship on Lovecraft has changed opinion about the importance of the Great Old Ones in his works. As noted above, the two main relevant periods of hegemonic scholarship on Lovecraft's fiction, from the late 1930s to the early 1970s and from the late 1970s to present day,[88] were marked by the works of August Derleth and S. T. Joshi, who provided different insights about these beings. While for Derleth, alien gods were paramount in Lovecraft fiction and it was therefore necessary to study and classify them, S. T. Joshi and more recent scholarship consider that such classification is unnecessary because it was contrary to what they consider to be the central ideal Lovecraft's fiction: to diminish the importance of mankind in a vast and merciless universe characterized by indifferentism. Both approaches also involve differences about the deities that should be truly attributed to Lovecraft, which in Joshi's case involves the exclusion of some of them, such as Derleth invention of Cthugha (Joshi 2013:644).

While Lovecraft borrowed some of the gods or Old Ones that appear in his fiction such as Hastur or Tsathoggua from the fiction of previous fiction writers (Ambrose Bierce and Clark Ashton Smith's respectively), most of them were the product of his own invention or created in literary collaboration with other authors throughout his life. After Lovecraft's death, his fictional pantheon was considerably expanded by other writers who modified the characteristics of Lovecraft's gods in their own fiction or even incorporated new ones. This is the case, for instance, of Yig, Ghatanatoa, Rhan-Tegoth, Gnoph-keh, Byagoona or Nyothga (Price 2011:265-266), which were developed by Lovecraft's followers into many variations that fall outside the scope of my research. In order to avoid the possibility of stylistic contamination from other writers, I will focus on the analysis of the Old Ones that were created by Lovecraft only. The minor alien-races that represent examples of

[88] These periods are approximate, as well as not mutually exclusive. Derleth founded in 1939 his own editorial, Arkham House to publish Lovecraft's fiction, exerting a strong influence from this firm until his death in 1971. The leading scholar present day is Joshi, who in 1981 published *H. P. Lovecraft and Lovecraft Criticism, An Annotated Bibliography*.

alternative civilizations, such as the Old Ones from Antarctica, the Deep Ones from the oceans or the Great Race of the cones in the Australian desert have also been omitted because it is obvious that they were never intended to be deities, since the author is describing alien societies made up of millions of individuals instead of overpowerful entities. I will also omit here the references to the fictional places that Lovecraft sometimes enumerated together with his gods, such as R'lyeh (the sunken city of Cthulhu) or Yuggoth (planet Pluto), as if these were equivalent concepts because the author makes clear the difference between them, using this kind of mixed enumeration only to produce an aesthetic effect. The purpose of this section is to provide a comprehensive list and analysis of Lovecraft's pantheon and to identify the mythical traditions that shaped them from a historical and cultural point of view. This should allow to assess the contribution of Lovecraft's Old Ones in the literary composition of an atmosphere of cosmic horror through their liminal characteristics. In turn, this study illustrates how Lovecraft's literary style produces these liminal characteristics through a kind of language that generates both horror and deliberate ambiguity, such as the selection of adjectives with negative connotations.

The analysis of Lovecraft's Old Ones will demonstrate that they were influenced by different pagan traditions, such as those from Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Greek deities, whose attributes can be hinted in the creation of these fictional gods. While this inspiration provides some historical verisimilitude to their existence, Lovecraft's introduces new elements to reinforce the liminal and the ambiguous in them. Thus, the liminal characteristics of said divinities can be noticed not only through the coexistence of extraterrestrial and numinous features, but through the monstrosity of their bodies which combine features from different animal species with other human and unknown characteristics. Moreover, said liminality is reinforced because some of them can adopt different avatars changing his external appearance, whereas the ambiguity in the selection of the language in their description combines the irrational and the rational, the ancient and the modern to intensify horror and weirdness.

The order in which the deities from the pantheon are presented has been chosen for

illustrative purposes in this study, through links of analogy, because it is not possible to establish proper relations of hierarchical power or kinship for most of them, while chronological order would have obscured said similitudes. Thus, the list starts with Nyarlathotep, followed by Azathoth, Yog-Sothoth, Shub- Niggurath, Cthulhu and Tsatthoggua. The first one, Nyartlathotep can be found in both Lovecraft's poems and prose, including the stories from the dream-cycle and mythos, becoming the most ubiquitous figure in Lovecraft's fiction. But he is not the most powerful deity, since he is a subordinated to Azathoth's, the god from ultimate chaos external to our world. Azathoth bears some resemblance to Yog-Sothoth, who is also an entity from extraterrestrial or extradimensional origin. In turn, Yog-Sothoth, capable to engender offspring with women is related to male fertility, similarly as the following one, Shub-Niggurath, who is a female goddess of fecundity. Apart from her, Yog-Sothoth also bears a different kind analogy with Cthulhu, the next in the list. As explained below, both were placed at the same level by Lovecraft, his readers and criticism,[89] becoming central figures in the plot of "The Dunwich Horror" and "The Call of Cthulhu" respectively. Tsatthoggua, a god taken from Clark Ashton Smith that Lovecraft included into his own fiction has been left to the end of this section, while Hastur, mainly adscribed to other writers such as A. Bierce, R. Chambers and A. Derleth has been deliberately omitted.

Nyartlathotep. He was probably the first god that Lovecraft created for his fictional pantheon. While the deity experiences an evolution in his external physiognomy, from an anthropomorphic figure in the prose-poem "Nyarlathotep" (1920), to a faceless monster in "The Rats in the Walls" (1923), the powerful emissary of god Azathoth in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1927), and the Black Man of the witches in "The Dreams in the Witch-House" (1932), he always preserves his role as a messenger god who announces catastrophe and madness. In addition to the previous the god also appears in "The Whisperer of Darkness" (1930) "The Shadow Out of Time" (1935), and "The Haunter of the Dark" (1935) in which he is also cited, whereas the 1929

[89] While Derleth coined the expression "Cthulhu Mythos" expanding the name of this Old One to all Lovecraft's myths, Mosig claimed to call it Yog-Sothoth's cycle of Myth (Mosig 1997: 25)

poem “Nyarlathotep” is a retelling of the previous prose-poem.

In the 1920 eponymous prose-poem “Nyarlathotep,” a mysterious Egyptian character arrives in a modern American city, fascinating the masses that follow him, but bringing madness, ruin and destruction to the whole world (Lovecraft [1920] 2015: 205). Later, Lovecraft retold the story in a shorter poem under the same title, narrating again how this figure initially came from inner Egypt, again attracting the crowds from all nations, while cataclysmic upheavals take place, emerging sunken lands from the seas and extend chaos and devastation to the cities of the world (Lovecraft [1929] 2001:58). Duncan Norris’ analysis of the name Nyarlathotep identifies the Egyptian suffix *hotep* (peace or satisfaction), which must have been at least phonetically familiar to a large number of Lovecraft's Western readership at a time when Egyptology was extremely popular. However, according to Norris, the name is not only etymologically false, but Lovecraft would have even slightly fictionalized it by adding the sound “l,” which did not exist in ancient Egyptian (2016:12). In a letter to his friend Reinhart Kleiner dated on 14 December 1920 Lovecraft affirmed that, before writing the story, he experienced a vivid dream in which the name occurred (Norris 2016:12), which is a common claim he used to account for the origin of many other fantastic creatures such a night-gaunts, described below, and other elements, such as landscapes and pagan rituals which were frequently incorporated into his fiction.

The prose-poem “Nyarlathotep,” situates the god in the context of a decadent Western civilization, illustrating his own approach to the narrative of apocalyptic fiction, which includes the materialization of dark prophecies through the combination of political and social upheavals with natural cataclysms to generate a widespread feeling of fear and horror. As evidenced in the following quotations, the decadence of this civilization is directly related to the display of Nyarlathotep’s techno-scientific knowledge:

> 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. The fellahin knelt when they saw him, yet could not say why. He said he had risen up out of the blackness of twenty-seven centuries, and that he had heard messages from place not on this planet. Into the lands of civilisation came Nyarlathotep, swarthy, slender, and sinister, always buying strange instruments of glass and metal and combining them into instruments yet stranger. He spoke of the sciences -of electricity and psychology- and gave exhibitions of power which sent his spectators away speechless, yet

> which swelled his fame to exceeding magnitude. Men advised one another to see Nyarlathotep, and shuddered. And where Nyarlathotep went, rest vanished; for the small hours were rent with the screams of nightmare (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.203).

While the use of language in Nyarlathotep's description above is intended to produce weirdness through different rhetoric devices of poetry, the contrast of antithetical features in him contributes to produce uncertainty and horror. These devices include hyperbaton such as in the sentence "into the lands of civilisation came Nyarlathotep," that focalizes the impact of his arrival, and alliteration of the "s" sound in "swarthy," "slender," "sinister," and "strange." These adjectives adopt bad connotations in which the foreign, the deform and the alien intensify the alterity of the character. In turn, his ambiguous behavior increases the aura of mystery around him. Whereas he is twenty-seven centuries old, at the same time his technical inventions supersede the knowledge of 20th century America, suggesting perhaps that Ancient Egyptians were more advanced. While a foreigner, he looks like a Pharaoh who receives messages from other worlds. Thus, the rational and the irrational are intrinsically intertwined in him as an eldritch, liminal figure that causes extreme horror after their visit because men shudder, rest vanishes, and the nights get filled with the screams of nightmare.

However, the plot of "Nyarlathotep" first depicts him as a human entertainer performing some sort of theatrical magic show that included visions of an apocalypse triggered by strange cosmic forces. When his spectators left the theater, they discovered that the show had become real and that they were entrapped in its post-apocalyptic aftermath (Lovecraft [1921] 2015:1.204). Nyarlathotep's role in this catastrophe is merely to unveil this reality for humans, not to cause it. This does not mean that Nyarlathotep is a minor figure in Lovecraft's fiction, since the knowledge he brings to humans terrifies them, adding madness to apocalypse.

Nevertheless, Nyarlathotep is not a man but an entity "risen up out the darkness of twenty-seven centuries" (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 203) and his physical appearance is not always human in the other stories where Lovecraft includes him. Two years after "Nyarlathotep," the same character is described in "The Rats in the Walls" as a mad faceless god that howls blindly to the piping of two amorphous idiot flute-players in some caverns at the Earth's center (Lovecraft [1923] 2015:1.395).

Facelessness is a feature that Nyarlathotep shares with the "night-gaunts," who are different creatures from Lovecraft's fiction that would have also originated in the dreams he reports in his letters. His correspondence describes that from his early childhood, he had "nightmares of the most hideous description," peopled with "things" that he used to call "night-gaunts," and pictured as "black, lean, rubbery things with bared, barbed tails, bat-wings, and *no faces at* all" (Joshi 2013: 34). According to Joshi, the ontological undefinition of the night-gaunts (signaled by their facelessness and well as their thinginess) may be related to internal fears about the loss of identity that would be directly related to the changes that were taking place in the America of his times. Joshi argues that Lovecraft's sociopolitical worldview favored the values of aristocracy, racial homogeneity, and agriculture-based economy, which were being challenged by historical forces led by American democracy, capitalism, immigration, and mechanization (1990:138). In any case, the role of indefinition, indeterminace, vagueness, and ambiguity in Lovecraft's fiction has been discussed above in relation with the construction of Lovecraft's atmosphere of cosmic horror. In this sense, Nyarlathotep's facelessness, while involving teratological features consubstantial to the author's nightmares, may represent the dissolution of American identity, threatened by the melting-pot, the loss of American aristocracy and values, and the tensions created by a techno-scientific, dehumanizing capitalism.

In several stories from 1927 to 1932, Nyarlathotep will be related to the outer space as Azathoth's messenger. This illustrates the evolution in the myths created by Lovecraft. In *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1927), he is not only Azathoth's messenger, but also the emissary of some of the other Great Old Ones, described as "the blind, voiceless, tenebrous, mindless Other Gods whose soul and messenger is the crawling chaos Nyarlathotep (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.100-101).

In this quotation, Nyarlathotep's role as a messenger is paired with the chaotic properties the already showed in Lovecraft's early prose-poem. As a messenger of the gods, he can communicate and interact with human beings, which he opposes and deceives as he already did in

“Nyarlathotep.” But unlike the previous representation in Lovecraft’s fiction, in this particular story, Nyarlathotep not only has a face, but the pleasant “young face of an antique Pharaoh” (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.209). However, this human appearance is only one of the thousand terrifying forms he can take as some sort of fallen archangel or dark divinity that very much echoes the Christian devil in general or Milton’s Satan in particular (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.209). In addition, his characterization as the Other Gods’ messenger, particularly Azathoth’s, suggests not only that he can travels to “outside the ordered universe,” into realms “beyond time” (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.100).

Nyarlathotep also plays a relevant role in Gilman's dreams in “The Dreams in the Witch-House” (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.244), where he is compared to the Black Man as a messenger of hidden and terrible powers (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.260) discussed above. Through this association, Lovecraft links his own fictional deity to the cultural tradition of Murray’s witchcraft as a secret pagan cult. Nyarlathotep is called “the Crawling Chaos” (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.269) and as a god of chaos, he appears associated to Azathoth. While his identification with chaos implies that the universe is essentially disordered and ruled by irrational forces, this assumption connotes that human desires to explain the universe through order and rationality are also futile. Thus, Nyarlathotep represents idea of the insignificance of mankind versus a vast, meaningless universe, which is inherent to cosmic horror.

In other stories in Lovecraft’s fiction, Nyarlathotep plays a minor role. In “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1930), he is named together with other Great Old Ones by the protagonist of the story Albert Wilmarth, although he does not seem to play any specific role (Lovecraft [1930] 2015: 2.483). Later, in one of the recordings that Henry Akeley took from the alien-race of Yuggoth (Pluto), in a conversation between human and alien voices, Nyarlathotep is called “Great Messenger, bringer of strange joy to Yuggoth through the void, Father of the Million Favoured Ones” (Lovecraft [1930] 2015: 2.487). The capitalization of the epithets suggests that the narrator considers him a deity, whereas their variety reinforce his changing physiognomy. Furthermore,

“strange joy” combines antithetical expressions of pleasure and weirdness, while the reference to the void stresses his cosmic dimension as an entity that can cross outer spaces. The last epithet, as a “Father of the Million Favoured Ones” expresses some relation to masculine fertility, but also involves the existence of some undetermined privilege for his offspring.

In “The Shadow Out of Time,” the captive mind of Nathaniel Peaslee meets other alien and human prisoners, one of whom is Khephnes, an Egyptian of the 14th Dynasty, who told him “the hideous secret of Nyarlathotep” (Lovecraft [1935] 2015: 3.399). The protagonist of “The Haunter of the Dark”, Richard Blake, wonders if the monster that he has summoned by accident is an avatar of Nyarlathotep (Lovecraft [1935] 2015:3.476). Norris has interpreted these two last stories as if that “secret of Nyarlathotep” is just that he can adopt the form of the Haunter of the Dark (Norris 2016: 43), but this is just a supposition because Nyarlathotep is such an eldritch entity that any of his other avatars or deeds could be that hideous secret. Thus, uncertainty about the real nature of Nyarlathotep as a liminal figure that can adopt different physical aspects, contributes to produce an atmosphere of mystery and horror.

Although he is a completely fictional character, the Nyarlathotep of Lovecraft's fiction shows multiple similarities with different pagan gods from different historic cultures. Many pagan religions incorporate the figure of a divine messenger who behaves as an emissary between other deities or supernatural beings and mankind. Examples of this figure include the Olympian Greek Hermes (Nösselt 1885: 159), the Mesopotamian Isimu (Langdon 1916: 199), and the Egyptian Thoth (Boylan 1922:12), all of whom act as a liaison between supernatural forces and men. However, although Nyarlathotep is also the divine messenger of the outer gods, he only represents the forces of chaos. As a god from inside the earth, he shows certain similarities with pagan Cthonic deities such as Gea, Persephone, Demeter, and Hecate, who are also related to the underworld. But unlike most Cthonic deities, who are almost exclusively female, Nyarlathotep is always male when represented anthropomorphically. In this sense, Nyarlathotep would only evoke the Egyptian Cthonic god Geb (Frankfort 1993: 203), who, as a male god, was different from the mother

goddesses of other ancient religions, such as the Greek or Mesopotamian. The possible influence of Geb in Lovecraft's fictional creation might also be justified by another similitude between Geb and Nyarlathotep, who has an Egyptian name, because both of them are gods related to an early state of chaos. In the case of Nyarlathotep, he is called the Crawling Chaos, while Geb, was a god who preceded the generation of gods of order and civilization such as Isis or Osiris. This is why Geb was sometimes considered the equivalent to Chronos and why the laughter of this Egyptian god was believed to cause earthquakes (Coleman 2019:138). As noted above, another Egyptian god who could have inspired Lovecraft's Nyarlathotep was Thoth, a messenger of the other Egyptian gods, and the god of writing (Coleman 2019:331). Nevertheless, there are also differences between them since Thoth in general was considered a positive deity in the Egyptian pantheon while Nyarlathotep causes madness and destruction to humans. Thus, while Nyarlathotep shares Geb's characterization as a deity of chaos, he also resembles Thoth as a messenger god. In Nyarlatothep Lovecraft seems to have combined different historical myths and deities with the other faceless entities from his nightmares and his fears of the disappearance of Western civilization.

In conclusion, Nyarlathotep is a liminal figure in Lovecraft's fiction in which the rational and the irrational are intrinsically intertwined to produce mystery and fear through deliberate ambiguity. In Nyarlathotep the tradition of the magic of ancient Egypt represents the irrational, whereas his rational dimension is symbolized by his scientific knowledge and inventions. His power to travel "outside the ordered universe" and "beyond time" seems to evoke the importance of scientific theories in Lovecraft's times such as relativity and quantum mechanics. As a supernatural figure, Nyarlathotep is also an immortal deity came from twenty-seven centuries in the past, whose divinity is stressed by the epithets that allude to him, and who bears some similitudes with the Egyptian gods Geb and Thoth. While his changing physiognomy reinforces his liminal character in which both an alien and a god nature intersect, in some stories his facelessness may express some of the author's personal obsessions, such as his perception of the decline of Western civilization. Nyarlathotep is closely related to Azathoth, another divinity dealing with chaos, who is analyzed

below.

Azathoth. Azathoth, the "Lord of All Things" (Lovecraft [1935] 2015: 471), is the mindless entity which rules all time and space from a black throne at the centre of chaos ([1932] 2015: 255). While Azathoth does not play a prominent role in Lovecraft's stories[90], it is the most powerful of all the deities in his fictional dark pantheon. Thus, the main role of this deity is to indicate that the essence of existence and the universe is chaotic, whereas it does not play a relevant narrative role in the same way in which other Old Ones become central in some stories. The destructive forces of chaos represented by Azathoth (which would involve the immediate destruction of any world in contact with it), foreclose its contact with humans in Lovecraft's fiction. However, Azathoth is essential to understand the metaphysics of Lovecraft's fictional cosmicism in which the importance of mankind is diminished designing as the most powerful deity an entity that bears some resemblance with the demiurge in the Gnosticism. Azathoth is the Chaos that involuntarily produces creation (Price 2011: 264; Harms 1998:17)[91] and destruction from the vortex of its aimless motion.

Although the etymology of the name is unclear, it seems to combine the name of the fallen angel Azazel described in Milton's *Paradise Lost* ([1667] 1900: 24), with the Egyptian god Thoth (Coleman 2019:331). Lovecraft never completed an unfinished novel that was meant to be entitled "Azathoth" (Joshi 2013:434), where Azathoth itself is not even mentioned in the fragments he did complete. But the fact that he thought of writing a novel about this character is significant of its importance for Lovecraft's fictional cosmology. In the rest of his writings, Azathoth is sometimes called a god, and sometimes a demon. The best descriptions of this character are found in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (1927), as a daemon that rules over chaos in outside universe, and in the homonym poem "Azathoth," from the lyric collection entitled *Fungi from Yuggoth* (1929)

[90] Azathoth plays a minor role compared to the one Nyarlathotep plays in his eponymous story, or the ones played by Yog-Sothoth in "The Dunwich Horror," or Cthulhu in "The Call of Cthulhu."

[91] According to Price, Azathoth recalls the "theology of Gnosticism with its blundering creator" (2011:264). Harms argues that this divinity "gave birth to the universe" (1998:17)

which adds relevant information about its realms and the relation with other deities. Said poem and the story "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930) establish some connection between the deity and concepts from modern physics from Lovecraft's times, whereas "The Dreams in the Witch-House" (1932), illustrates a certain evolution in the character because it also becomes the cosmic equivalent of the figure of the devil within the witch-cult. "The Haunter of the Dark" (1935) confirms the importance of the god, who is called "the Lord of All Things". Azathoth's description in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* bears a strong resemblance to the passage used to introduce Nyarlathotep, including the same adjectives and the same relation between these Great Old Ones:

> [...] Abismal nothingness and shoot through the empty spaces toward other worlds and other stars and the awful voids outside the ordered universe where the daemon-sultan Azathoth gnaws hungrily in chaos amid pounding and piping and the hellish dancing of the Other Gods, blind, voiceless, tenebrous, and mindless, with their soul and messenger Nyarlathotep (Lovecraft 2015:2.112)

The story includes different variations of the same text, incorporating other elements such as Azathoth's throne, or the fact that nobody dares to speak his name that identifies his rule as a destructive and tyrannic entity even compared to a "sultan."[92] Although the verb "gnaws" may suggest that he is feeding in a way that reminds some episodes of cannibalism in Lovecraft's fiction (Norris 2019:28), the description of the entire scene rather seems intended to stress the suffering of the god causing sadness, pain and destruction because this is its nature. The fact that Other Gods use dance and music in ways similar to the human pagan rituals described in Lovecraft's fiction not only shows how his fictional pantheon is pervaded by concepts taken from the historic tradition of paganism, but also identifies Azathoth as the higher god that draws the attention of minor deities in something that resembles an orgiastic cacophony of mutual suffering. The ontological dimension of the excerpt implies that Lovecraft's fictional cosmos is divided in two separate dimensions: the

[92] Isli Çirakman argues that Westerns observers from the 16th to the 19th centuries considered the Ottoman empire, ruled by a sultan, as a tyranny characterized by a regime that was unlawful, cruel, and arbitrary (Çirakman 2001:51). The fact that Lovecraft uses this term to address Azathoth clearly has to do with this conception. However, Lovecraft's use of the term sultan as a tyrannic rule does not seem to involve any prejudices against Islam, a religion that he even preferred to Christianity since he read the *Tales of the Arabian Nights* when he was a child. Lovecraft was so enthusiastic of Islam that many years later he expressed this admiration in these terms: (I) made my mother take me all the oriental curio shops and fit me up an Arabian corner in my room (...)I still (…) feel a certain homelikeness in Saracenic art and ways. In the crusades, I find myself often siding with the Saracens instead of my own blood ancestors-for were not the Saracens the kin of my old friends Ali Baba […]" (Lovecraft [1932]1976a: 8).

ordered material universe and a chaotic "nothingness" of "empty spaces" that is depicted as irrational ("mindless") and aimless ("blind"). In this context, Azathoth can be identified as the source and highest exponent of the same nothingness, emptiness, voids, and chaos he inhabits.

I contend that Lovecraft's description of Azathoth and the Ultimate Chaos (the void) in the story reflects the influence of Quantum Mechanics and Relativity in Lovecraft's scientific and philosophical thought since the god and its surroundings are placed outside the space-time continuum in the model of the universe described by the advances in Physics in the early twentieth century. Joshi has analyzed the effects of the new discoveries of relativity and quantum mechanics in Lovecraft's thought, such as the abandonment of his earlier determinism based on certainty in favor of probability (Joshi 1990:21). While he remained a materialist, one of the consequences was that he acknowledged dimensions in the continuum space-time were not absolute (1990:18). In Lovecraft's own words this involves that "there are no values in all infinity (…) for all is chaos, always has been, and always will be" (Lovecraft [1918] 1965: 231).

This connection between Azathoth and the new scientific insights in the period can be also identified in "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930), in which the god is described as the "monstrous nuclear chaos beyond angle space" (Lovecraft [1930] 2015: 2.521). This shows again the influence of modern physics and concepts of advanced Mathematics in Lovecraft about the curvature of the space-time and the existence of an uncanny geometry (Look 2016:106), depicted by the "angle space" that would characterize our universe, but which is only the precursor of further horrors. In the poem "Azathoth" the realms inhabited are also described using terms of physics, since there are placed "past the bright clusters of dimensioned space, till neither time nor matter stretched" (Lovecraft [1929] 2001: 60). Hence, "Azathoth" dwells outside our universe, which is identified using concepts such as dimension, space, time, and matter. The combination of the god's extremely alienness with the uncertainties about these realms produces an atmosphere of utter estrangement and cosmic horror. Thus, through this outsideness in his fiction, Lovecraft outlines a nihilistic ontology that even supersedes in the skepticism, determinism and materialism that framed

Lovecraft's convictions.

In "The Dreams in the Witch-House" the god's outsideness is connected to the tradition of the witch-cult, which opens a new dimension to its role within cosmic horror. Like in previous stories, the Azathoth of Gilman's dreams is also depicted sitting on a throne at the center of an ultimate chaos and the mindless piping of flutes (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.244). However, this time its characterization is slightly different, because from said cosmic distance, the deity exerts its hideous influence by means of the witch who appears in Gilman's dreams. The sorcerer urges him to sign in his own blood a book of Azathoth (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 244), that shows that Lovecraft to some extent considers him as the equivalent of the devil in the historical records about the prosecution of the witches.

As pointed out above, apart from the witchcraft tradition, the attributes of Azathoth link it with the Gnosticism, as Price (2011:264) and Harms argue (1998:17). Blindness is one of the attributes of both Azathoth and the Gnostic Demiurge, or creator of the universe. Although for the Judeo-Christian tradition, creation is equaled to order, the Gnostic Demiurge is a secondary god who, like Azathoth, is completely mindless (Alexandrian 2014:72). Azathoth's movement is qualified as "idiot vortices" (Lovecraft [1929] 2001: 60), which resembles the Gnostic Demiurge because it involuntarily creates through his motion. As commented in chapter II, the Demiurge in Gnosticism was identified with Samael/Ialdabaoth, who were known by Lovecraft. However, since the texts that explain the blindness of the Gnostic Demiurge were found eight years after Lovecraft's death, his similitudes with Azathoth remain a mystery. In Lovecraft's fiction, the fact that the universe is cyclically created and destroyed by an idiot god involves that its creations are also nonsensical, which involves that mankind's effort to understand them are futile, which is central to cosmic horror.

While the most powerful, Azathoth's relation with other deities is characterized by the irreverence of the latter, which exemplifies Lovecraft's intention to subvert any kind of religious system, even his own's. Although Azathoth is called "the Lord of All Things" in such stories as

"The Haunter of the Dark" (1935), its status as the most powerful deity in the pantheon does not prevent other gods such as Nyartlathotep to treat him disrespectfully. For example, in the poem "Azathoth," from *Fungi of Yuggoth*, a demon takes a human prisoner to Chaos, where the "Lord of All" reigns surrounded by dancing entities. The poem concludes with the lines: "I am His Messenger, the demon said,/ As in contempt he struck his Master's Head" (Lovecraft [1929] 2001: 60). The messenger alludes to Nyarlathotep, while the Master is Azathoth since these are the same roles played by them in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* and "The Dreams in the Witch House." While the capitalization of the epithets "Messenger" and "Master" underlines the divinity of both, the fact that the allegedly dominated strikes his dominator subverts hierarchies to stress that chaos supersedes any order.

In conclusion, Azathoth embodies the prevalence of Chaos and irrationality versus order and rationality. The god and his realms are represented using concepts that illustrate the advances in the science of Lovecraft's times, particularly modern physics' theories that underlined probability and indeterminacy in contrast to predictability, which in the case of the deity implies that the universe is essentially chaotic. While influenced by these discoveries, Azathoth is also related to the numinous pagan tradition, exemplified not only by its association with the devil in the witch cult in from anthropological theories, but particularly also with the idea of the Gnostic demiurge, as an irrational entity that creates and destroys aimlessly. Hence, the fact that the most powerful divinity in Lovecraft's pantheon is a blind and idiotic god of Chaos is fully coherent with his ideas about a universe dominated by cosmic forces that are indifferent to human moral and values. As noted above, among these cosmic forces there are relations, such as in the cases of Nyarlathotep as Azathoth's messenger. As an extradimensional entity, Azathoth also bears some similitudes with Yog-Sothoth, studied below.

Yog-Sothoth. Yog-Sothoth is an Old One that represents male fertility, whose feminine counterpart is Shub-Niggurath, with whom he has produced monstrous offspring, "but who has also

begotten hellish hybrids upon the females of various organic species" (Lovecraft [1936] 1976b:303). As the father of two of these hybrids through a woman from Earth, he is the central figure in "The Dunwich Horror" (1928), but he also appears in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1927), "The History of the Necronomicon" (1927), "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930), *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931), "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" (1933) and "The Haunter of the Dark" (1935). Like Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth is one of the main and most recurrent Great Old Ones in Lovecraft's fiction. Some scholars who reject Derleth's concept of "the Cthulhu Mythos" as a distorted version of Lovecraft's mythology even prefer to use the term "the Yog-Sothoth Cycle of Myth" (Mosig 1997: 22). Price has argued that by describing Yog-Sothoth as a mountainous mass of tentacles, eyes, and mouths Lovecraft intended to horrify his readers by sheer alienness (Price 2011: 264). However, the alien monstrosity of these features actually corresponds to the hybrid twins he engenders with Whateley's daughter in "The Dunwich Horror" and not to Yog-Sothoth himself, who is never physically described in Lovecraft's stories. Although Yog-Sothoth comes from outside the earth, he is regarded as extra-dimensional rather than extraterrestrial. Like Azathoth's, his origin also lies in "some vague realm or dimension outside our material universe" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.465). Still, "The Dunwich Horror" is ambiguous in this because while he shows divine attributes, he is also depicted as the leader of an alien race. In this story, Wilbur Whateley's plans to extirpate all life from the earth require the collaboration of "some terrible elder race of beings from another dimension" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.452), who are likely, aliens from the same species of Yog-Sothoth, since the god knows where they shall break through into our world ([1928] 2015:434). But Yog-Sothoth's superior knowledge and power to control and travel space, time, and access to other dimensions evoke omniscience and omnipresence as features that typically characterize divinities in all religions. In Lovecraft's *Necronomicon*, "*Yog-Sothoth* knows the gate. *Yog-Sothoth*[93] is the gate. *Yog-Sothoth* is the key and the guardian of the gate. Past, present and future, all are one in *Yog-Sothoth*. He knows where the Old Ones broke through of old, and where

[93] Italics in the original.

They shall break through again (...) *Yog-Sothoth* is the key to the gate, whereby the spheres meet" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015:2.434). The use of italics in the text stresses the importance of the god, not only as an extradimensional portal, but as the entity that allows to cross that portal. Thus, through the reification of an animate being and the animation of a thing, the author adds deliberate ambiguity to stress the atmosphere of cosmic horror. This uncertainty is intensified by the sonority and the mystery of the name Yog-Sothoth, that is intended to produce estrangement to the reader. Christopher Robinson argues that both the root "Yug-" (or "Yog-") root and the "-oth" ending in some Lovecraft's names including Yog-Sothoth, were aimed to stress the idea of Arabic or Jewish influence, underlining the similitudes with the magical formulae used in Moorish and Jewish manuscripts through their relations to Kabbalism and black magic (Robinson 2010: 131). Another analogy with the Jewish tradition is that like in Yahweh's case, the name of the god cannot be uttered, because as Lovecraft wrote in his letters it is not "even safe to speak the name of Yog-Sothoth aloud" (Lovecraft [1936] 1976b: 302). As noted above, said cultural influences of pagan and Abrahamic religions reach their highest extent in "The Dunwich Horror."

Yog-Sothoth's impregnation of a mortal woman in "The Dunwich Horror" resounds with ancient pagan myths of male celestial powers that impregnating a female Earth to give birth to divine or semi-divine descendants. Lovecraft, who was aware of the anthropological theories of his time such as Murray's, Frazer's, Tylor's, Lubbock's, and Quatrefages', knew of such myths as the Phrygian god Attis, the Persian Mithras, the Greek Hercules, and Adonis, the Mesopotamian Dumuzi, the Egyptian Horus, and many other gods from an outer realm who engender young gods or demi-gods. Like Yog-Sothoth's monstrous twin in "The Dunwich Horror," some of them may be mothered by mortal women, die and resurrect or be snatched away to the realms of their divine fathers. Krämer endorses the opinion that Yog-Sothoth is a deity by underlining the similarity between the birth of the Yog-Sothoth's twin sons and the Nativity of Jesus. These coincidences include the location of their birth (outside a small village), the celebration of this birth with a religious festival (Candlemass in the case of the Whateley twins and Yule in the case of Jesus), their

divine conception, their hybrid nature, and their unusual powers. Krämer also affirms that the last words that the monster twin brother utters before he dies make "a dark parody of […] the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ, as well as a parody of the source text" (Krämer 2017: 113): "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matthew 27.46; Mark 15:34). Although some of the words of the dying monstrous twin belong to an unknown language and are therefore incomprehensible, other key words that are capitalized to suggest they were screamed, are in English, which allows Lovecraft's readers to establish an obvious intertextual connection with the last words that Christ addressed to his father before he died: "E-ya-ya-ya-yahaah- e'yayayayaaa... ng'haaaa... ng'haaaa... h'yuh...h'yuh.. HELP! HELP... ff- ff- ff -FATHER FATHER! YOG-SOTHOTH!" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.465). Although his obvious intertextual reference could suggest that Lovecraft considered Christianity at the same level as other pagan religions, the parodic component underlined by Krämer rather suggests they evoke the Satanic rituals performed by witches, which would be consistent with Murray's thesis.

Although "The Dunwich Horror" is the main source to study Yog-Sothoth, other works also shed information about the god, such as "Through the Gates of the Silver Key." While this story is often considered outside the canon of Lovecraft's fiction because it was a collaboration with E. Hoffmann Price, it has sometimes been included in this canon as the culmination of the cycle of Randolph Carter's adventures in the world of dreams. Carter, the dreamer who wants to travel in time to the world of his infancy meets the mysterious entity Umr at-Tawil, who serves him as a guide in the oneiric world.[94] Umr at-Tawil is described in terms that are very similar s to the description of Yog-Sothoth in "The Dunwich Horror" regarding interdimensional mobility and gatekeeping, which suggests that he would be one Yog Sothoth's embodiments: "He Who Guardeth the Gateway, He Who will guide the rash one beyond all the worlds into the Abbys of unnamable

[94] This atypical interaction of the Old One with a human evokes the end of another story, "The Haunter of the Dark," when the protagonist Robert Blake mentions Yog-Sothoth as a god who can save him from the monster that he has summoned (Lovecraft [1935] 2015: 3.477). This is a peculiar use of one of Lovecraft's Great Old Ones as a protective divinity explained through the biased vision of an unreliable character about the real destructive characteristics of the Old Ones. This unreliability can be noticed because of the incoherent language of the character who even addresses Azathoth ("Azathoth, have mercy!) in a similar way (Lovecraft [1935] 2015: 3.477).

Devourers. For He is UMR AT-TAWIL-, the Most Ancient One, which the scribe rendereth as the PROLONGED OF LIFE" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.289). That Umr at-Tawil offers Carter the possibility to renounce his mortal body to become a figure that may exist in different bodies, spaces, and times simultaneously also implies that Umr At-Tawil has the same powers as Yog Sothoth in "The Dunwich Horror," including omnipotence (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.312). Carter's later discovery that some cults of the earth had worshiped Yog-Sothoth as a deity under other names (Lovecraft [1933] 2015:3.300) supports the thesis that Umr at-Tawil would be one of his embodiments. Still, even as a physical embodiment, Umr at-Tawil's remains similarly indefinite in appearance under the form of a glowing quasi-sphere covered by a potent nimbus (Lovecraft [1933] 2015:3.300), and the many other undescribed forms it can adopt.

In the novelette *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1927), the eponymous protagonist is possessed by the mind of his ancestor, Joseph Curwen. Although Yog-Sothoth is mentioned several times in this story, he does not play a relevant role in its plot beyond its mere presence in invocations and mystic formulae through the mysterious name Yog-Sothoth (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.366). However, its use together with other unknown words, which employ a phonetics that seems alien to any language native to this world, contributes to add darkness to the atmosphere of cosmic horror.

Yog-Sothoth bears some relations with other Old Ones, who, as noted above, include Shub-Niggurath, as his "wife"[95] or rather his feminine counterpart, with whom he has two monstrous offsprings called Nug and Yeb, whose names Lovecraft once cited in a letter (Lovecraft [1936] 1976b: 303). According to Robinson, these names are derived from the Egyptian pair of gods Nut and Geb through a phonetic pattern (Robinson 2010: 131). In a more indirect way, Yog-Sothoth is

[95] The term "wife" should not be interpreted literally, because of the humoristic tone of Lovecraft's letter, in which Yog-Sothoth is compared to Lovecraft's domestic animal ("I generally try to chain him outside" ([1936] 1976b:303). The text from *Necronomicon* quoted in "The Dunwich Horror" in which Cthulhu is called "cousin" does not refer exactly to Yog-Sothoth, but to a collectivity of Old Ones ("They") (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 434). This suggests that the human author of the *Necronomicon* wanted to stress the idea that both are alien gods who have in common their external origin in outer space rather than being relatives from a family. In any case, Cthulhu's and Yog-Sothoth physical descriptions show that they are utterly different.

also related to Cthulhu, who is called his “cousin” in “The Dunwich Horror” (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 434), probably dealing with narratological purposes, because both were central to Lovecraft’s more relevant stories. Thus, sometimes Yog-Sothoth appears together with Cthulhu as the two main sources of mythical lore in Lovecraft's fiction. For instance, in “The History of the Necronomicon” (1927) Abdul Alhazred, the author of the eponymous book is described as an indifferent Moslem who worshipped Yog-Sothoth and Cthulhu, which involves not only that these two creatures were regarded as deities by humans, but also evidences Lovecraft’s use of paganism as a source of his fictional pantheon (Lovecraft [1927] 2015:2.406). Thus, Lovecraft, who admired and preferred Islam to Christianity (Lovecraft 1932 [1976a]:8), by placing the author of the “Necronomicon” within a Muslim context, seems to be also considering Islam as another pagan religion as he had done with the other Abrahamic religions. In “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1930), Yog-Sothoth is mentioned by Henry Akeley, together with Cthulhu, as the protagonists of two cycles of fearful myths before the existence of man (Lovecraft [1930] 2015: 2.478). This provides evidence that from the narratological point of view Lovecraft was aware that both deities had adopted a central role within his fiction.

In conclusion, Yog-Sothoth is a liminal, extradimensional deity with multiple, monstrous forms that represents a principle of male fecundity capable to produce teratological offspring with human mortals. While the name Yog-Sothoth has apparent Hebrew and Arabic roots, his role as the father of the Whateley twins has some parallelisms with the account of Christ’s passion. Hence, through the ambiguous role of the god, the myths of Abrahamic religions also become part of a wider pagan tradition with multiple examples that also includes witchcraft, but which is only the human interpretation of a more transcendental horror with cosmic dimensions. This uncertainty is increased by the god’s obscure relations to other deities, such as Shub-Niggurath and Cthulhu, studied below.

Shub-Niggurath. Although this goddess is named several times in Lovecraft's stories, in

fact there is very little information about her. Shub-Niggurath appears in “The Dunwich Horror” (1928), “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1930), “The Dreams in the Witch-House” (1932), and “The Thing on the Doorstep” (1933). Lovecraft provided a description of the goddess in a letter where he explains that “Yog-Sothoth’s wife is the hellish-cloud like entity Shub-Niggurath, in whose honour nameless cults hold the rite of the Goat with a Thousand Young. By her has two monstrous offspring -the evil twins Nug and Yeb” (Lovecraft ([1936] 1976b: 303). While her blurred, shapeless, cloud-form intends to produce horror through indetermination, her association to “nameless cults” connects her to Murray’s idea of the continuity of pagan traditions so terrible that cannot even be named, particularly to satanism through the adjective “hellish.” As Paul Wood points out, the reference to the “Goat with a Thousand Young” suggests unrestrained fertility and procreation, and the wildness of nature (Wood 2023:142). Wood also argues that the name derives from the god “Sheol-Nugganoth,” invented by Lord Dunsany in his story “Idle Days from the Yann” (Dunsany [1910] 2007:53), from whom Lovecraft merely blunted the Sheol (“underworld” in Hebrew) to Shub, while preserving the -oth, Hebrew-like phoneme (Wood 2023:142).

Within Lovecraft’s literary production, “The Whisperer in Darkness” is probably the story that renders more information about Shub-Niggurath. Its plot describes how a Richard Akeley sends the narrator a recording of a conversation between a human and members of the alien-race of the fungi of Yuggoth. The human voice mentions some of the most remarkable Old Ones as well as the following ritual formula addressing Shub-Niggurath and other deities, that includes “the Lord of the Woods, [...] and the gifts of the men of Leng [...] so from the wells of night to the gulfs of space, and from the gulfs of space to wells of night, ever the praises of Great Cthulhu, of Tsathoggua, and of Him Who is not to be Named. Ever Their praises and abundance to the Black Goat of the Woods. Iä Shub-Niggurath! The Goat with a Thousand Young! (Lovecraft [1930] 2015: 2.486-87).

There are many points of interest in the excerpt. First, it must be noted that *abundance* is put in relation with the goddess, which involves that she is a goddess of fertility. The mysterious “Lord of the Woods” could be her masculine consort, a sort of god of vegetation similar to those

that appeared in many examples of ancient religions.[96] The fact that she is the mother of a thousand young reinforces the idea of fertility, while the election of a "black goat" in her characterization is another example of the influence of ancient religions and widespread anthropological interpretations of Lovecraft's times. Thus, criticism seems to accept unanimously her characterization of as a goddess of fertility (Harms 1998:275; Price 2011:264; Sirangelo 2019:22; Wood 2023: 142). These authors have provided different hypothesis about the pagan goddess that would have inspired Lovecraft's Shub-Niggurath. For instance, Daniel Harms has established the influence of Artemis of Epehesus, the Norse Heid and the Greek Hecate as possible influences (Harms 1998: 276). In turn, Valentina Sirangelo points out that the goddess was called "a kind of sophisticated Astarte," in the novella *The Mound*, that was cowritten by Zealia Bishop and Lovecraft (Bishop & Lovecraft ([1930]1989:145; Sirangelo 2019:24). Sirangelo believes that this identification of Shub-Niggurath and Astarte deals with the relation of both with the symbolic connections of the moon with fertility (2019:29). While Paul Wood agrees with Sirangelo the identification with Astarte as the great goddess of the Phoenician port cities, he also stresses the influence of other deities on Shub-Niggurath such as Cybele, the *Magna Mater* mentioned in "the Rats in the Walls" and again the connection with the moon through Hecate and Selene (Wood 2023:155).

Once again, the capitalization of the pronoun "Their" in the excerpt involves that the members of the group are considered divinities for the narrator. In this case, the excerpt suggests the influence of Murray's studies on witchcraft where she identifies the horned gods and goddesses worshipped by witches (1921: 59). Although Murray in general considers that the black goat in the witch cult was a masculine deity and Lovecraft's Shub-Niggurath is a female one, Murray also described horned goddesses. This can be noticed in another book, *The God of the Witches,* in which

[96] Although Lovecraft's use of the word "wife" to address Shub Niggurath makes clear that she is a goddess, some authors (wrongly) consider her a god (Sirangelo 2019:27). These authors tend to associate the epithet "Lord of the Woods " to Shub-Niggurath, overlooking that other divinities such as Cthulhu and Tsatthoggua are named before the goddess. Thus, this masculine "Lord of the Woods," cannot refer to the goddess but can be put in relation to her as one of her masculine counterparts, different from Yog-Sothoth. Pagan goddesses of fertility such as Astarte or Cybele, with whom the goddess has been identified, had a plurality a consorts.

she analyzed different goddesses such as Astarte in Assyria depicted as horned to display her divinity, a fact that Murray considers that was quite common in ancient civilizations such as Mesopotamia and Egypt (Murray [1931] 2006: 25). Thus, while Murray only mentions this goddess in contrast to a variety of Mesopotamian (Asur) and Egyptian horned male gods (Amon, Khnum, and Osiris), she suggests that there were other horned goddesses. Although Murray does not mention her, the Egyptian goddess Hathor is a paradigmatic case of a horned goddess, sometimes represented as a cow (Mackenzie 1913: XXVI).

According to Price, the presence of "Iä" in this final invocation to Shub-Niggurath as a horned deity indicates that Lovecraft meant to suggest that her fictional cult would have originated in Ancient Greece, since this was the ecstatic cry of the ancient Bacchantes (2011:264). He has also studied the description of Shub-Niggurath in Lovecraft's letter above as a "cloud-like entity," which Price relates to a fertility goddess worshiped by primitive people (2011: 264).

Just after this excerpt in "The Whisperer in Darkness," the alien voice in the recording repeats the invocation with its buzzing voice. This is quite representative as an example of an alien creature uttering what it seems a religious formula. This poses again the question about the attitude of some alien races towards religion. Although it can be argued that aliens are only taking advance on humans by repeating what the latter want to hear, there is also the possibility that in Lovecraft's fiction the reasons of the invocation to Shub-Niggurath go beyond ancient human civilizations such as the Greek and their Bacchantes and belong to a sort of a cosmic cult. In "The Dreams in the Witch-House," the same invocation is part of a ritual including Christian prayers, a distant chant of a Sabbath, and a "wilder whine from unknown depths" that culminates again with the invocation: "Iä Shub-Niggurath! The Goat with a Thousand Young! (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.269). The way in which this chant comes from "triumphant shriek-worlds of sardonic actuality" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.269) not only stresses the existence of some religious practice among aliens from other worlds, but also that their actual nature somehow implies paganism as the grim mockery of Christianity. The same invocation is mentioned in "The Dunwich Horror" (Lovecraft [1928]

2015:2.434), and in “The Thing on the Doorstep” (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.334), likely because of the powerful sonority of the words, but without any further information about the characteristics of the goddess. As Wood argues, no doubt Lovecraft found it convenient to peeper these mysterious utterances in his fiction for effect, but they were suggestive of his grounding in pagan classics (Wood 2023:143). As a common element that traverses Lovecraft’s fiction as a mythopoeia, this narrative device provides narrative coherence and cohesion to the different stories which contributes to intensify cosmic horror.

Thus, as a goddess of fertility identified with a goat with a large offspring, Shub-Niggurath is described through deliberate ambiguity and omissions to intensify cosmic horror. While the debate about the tentative inspirations for the goddess includes pagan divinities such as Astarte, Diana, and Cybele suggests a syncretism that reveals a plurality of influences, her identification with the goat and the use of adjectives such as “hellish” seems to evoke satanism. Both paganism and satanism also hint Murray’s theories about the continuity of pagan cults under witchcraft, identifiable through the study of horned deities, similar to Shub-Niggurath as a goat. Lovecraft’s use of a same quotation about Shub-Niggurath in different stories illustrates the importance of sonority of words to produce weird atmospheres, but this reiterative formula also provides coherence and cohesion to his fiction as a mythopoeia stressing the narratological continuity. Shub-Niggurath maintains obscure relationships with other deities of Lovecraft’s pantheon, such as with Yog-Sothoth, who, in turn, has some distant relation to Cthulhu, studied below.

Cthulhu. Derleth’s decision to refer to Lovecraft's myths as “The Cthulhu Mythos” lies behind the popularity of this particular Old One. He is the central creature in “The Call of Cthulhu” (1926), but is also mentioned in “History of the Necronomicon” (1927), “The Dunwich Horror” (1928), “The Whisperer in Darkness” (1930), *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931), “The Shadow over Innsmouth” (1931), and “Through the Gates of the Silver Key” (1933). While in the first story the god becomes a central figure, his main role in later stories is to provide cohesion and

verisimilitude to Lovecraft's fictional universe through his interrelation with other Old Ones and alien races. Although different narrators across stories use the pronouns "he," "his," and "him" to refer to Cthulhu, indicating that they regard Cthulhu as male, this character is also sometimes referred as "it," which would not only involve an asexual or indeterminate sexual condition, but also reinforce its liminal ontology not only between genders, but also between the human and the non-human, and the animate and the inanimate. As in the case of other Old Ones, this "thinginess" stresses a liminal condition to produce horror through ambiguity and the blurring of the classifications established by human rationality. In addition, some narrators in the story tend to capitalize the pronouns that refer to him/it, which involves that they consider him to be a god.

Unlike almost the rest of the Old Ones in Lovecraft's fiction, Cthulhu's physical depictions are not vague, but rather accurate. Cthulhu's physical appearance is best described in "The Call of Cthulhu," through different artistic sculptures that appear in the story. In the first one, which the fictional artist Henry Wilcox made after a nightmare, Cthulhu is depicted as a sort of monster, which looked like simultaneous pictures of an octopus, a dragon, and a human caricature (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.23). In the tale, inspector Legrasse describes the sculpture in the following terms:

> A monster of vaguely anthropoid outline, but with an octopus-like head whose face was a mass of feelers, a scaly, rubbery-looking body, prodigious claws on hind and fore feet, and long, narrow wings behind. This thing, which seemed instinct with a fearsome and unnatural malignancy, was of somewhat bloated corpulence, and squatted evilly on a rectangular block or pedestal covered with undecipherable characters. The tips of the wings touched the back edge of the block, the seat occupied the center, whilst the long, curved claws of the double-up, crouching hind legs gripped the front edge and extended a quarter of the way down toward the bottom of the pedestal (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.31-32).

The text shows the liminal characteristics of Cthulhu, characterized by the combination of different sets of opposed features to produce estrangement and horror. While anthropoid, it is described using animal characteristics, such as scales, claws and wings like birds and bats. These parts of its teratological body are compared to specific animal species from utterly different realms such as the octopus, a cephalopod living in the seas, with the wings typical from flying animals living in the air. His attitude also combines features that are typical from animals, such as the word "instinct" connoting uncontrollable innate behavior, with the presence of adjectives that include a

derogatory, moral evaluation of the creature as if the scale of human values was applicable to it, such as “malignancy” and “evilly”. Although it is described as a living creature, it is also called “thing,” stressing his position in the boundary of the animate and the inanimate. Whereas described as an animal or a thing, the pedestal suggests that it is a very powerful entity, like the human gods in the pagan religions. All these contradictory, liminal characteristics the monstrous characteristics seem intended to produce alienness and horror.

“The Call of Cthulhu” contains information about this Old One that underline this liminal position, in which both alien and supernatural elements appear intrinsically intertwined in a combination that stresses human inferiority. Cthulhu is “miles high” (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:27), and the sculpture found by Legrasse is made from a material “nothing familiar to geology or mineralogy” (32). The colossal size of the sculpture and the fact that it stands on a pedestal suggests it was carved to be worshipped, while the material it was made of points to its alien origin. Cthulhu is described as almost immortal; he had come from the stars when the sun was young and his age is counted in “vigintillions of years” (53), which is typical from gods. But he is also described as a “green, sticky spawn of the stars,” stressing his alien nature (53). However, his tissues also have the power of recombining if he is divided or scattered (54). In this tale, Cthulhu lies dead and dreaming in the sunken city of R’lyeh, where he was buried with his hordes (50). This paradoxical situation in which lifeless creature is capable to dream subverts the human rational classification of inert bodies as having no thoughts in contrast to living creatures. As a result, his human followers chant in a strange language, “Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgah'nagl fhtgn”, which means “In his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming” (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.34). Some authors such as Price have rejected this information as unreliable, since it would be only mythical lore provided by the human members of the cult (which includes Abdul Alhazred, the author of the *Necronomicon*). However, if the chant is taken literally, it means that Cthulhu has some power of resurrection and to overcome death.

As a dead god, Cthulhu shares some similarities with Nietzsche's concept of the dead god,

which this philosopher adopted to describe the Christian god in *The Joyful Wisdom* (Nietzsche [1882]2003: 168). In Nietzsche, his death symbolizes that the Christian God has become unworthy of belief ([1882]2003:275), just as Cthulhu is only worshipped by some insane fanatics in Lovecraft's fiction (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 38). While in Nietzsche's case the death of God symbolizes the definitive crisis of Christian morality, the resurrection of Cthulhu involves the abolition of any moral rule because then "mankind would have become as the Great Old Ones; free and wild and beyond good and evil, with laws and moral thrown aside and all men shouting and killing and reveling in joy" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 39-40). Thus, even the words in Lovecraft's text even seem to echo the title of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), while subverting the idea of resurrection of a dead god not as the restoration, but as the abolition of Christian values. As S. T. Miller argues, "the brutal nihilistic apocalypse that will arrive with the awakening of Cthulhu and his kin enacts a kind of reverse Second Coming of Christ" (Miller 2011: 136). While in the case of Cthulhu a succession of cosmic cycles has killed him, the same cosmic cycles will bring him to life again (Lovecraft [1926]2015:39). This idea is similar to Nietzsche's concept of the eternal recurrence, which was very influential for Lovecraft (Joshi 1990:8).

Cthulhu's relations with other Old Ones and other alien races show how Lovecraft's mythopoeia is consistent as an interrelated fictional universe based on cosmic horror. In "The Dunwich Horror," a passage from the accursed book of the *Necronomicon* describes Cthulhu as "the cousin" of Yog-Sothoth (Lovecraft [1928] 2015:2.434), although this could be considered just an unfounded opinion of the human author of this fictional book. Furthermore, this relationship seems more allegorical than literal, as the two gods came from outer space in ancient times, to stress their absolute alienness to mankind. In "The History of the Necronomicon," Cthulhu and Yog-Sothoth are the two of the gods worshiped by Abdul Alhazred, the Arab author of this accursed volume (Lovecraft [1927] 2015:2.406). This seems a narrative device by Lovecraft to place the two gods at the same level, because they are central figures within books of his fiction and, while less powerful than Azathoth, their accidental impact in human culture is similar. Another example of this can be

found in “The Whisperer in Darkness,” in which Cthulhu and Yog-Sothoth are the protagonists of two cycles of fearful myths (Lovecraft [1930] 2015: 2.478). Later in “The Whisperer in Darkness,” Cthulhu is named together with other Old Ones and mythical elements taken from Lovecraft (such as the aforementioned Yog-Sothoth, R'lyeh and Yuggoth), Ambrose Bierce (Hastur), Robert Chambers (The Yellow Sign), Clark Ashton Smith (Tsathoggua) and Dunsany (Bethmoora), and the coming of the alien race of Yuggoth in the story is placed at a time were Cthulhu still ruled the Earth and his city had not sunken. This illustrates again how Lovecraft used the sonority of names into his mythopoeia as an integrated fictional universe from different sources, providing verisimilitude to his narration to produce atmospheres of cosmic horror. Moreover, the use of a fictional chronology of events such as the synchronous coincidence of the coming of Yuggoth race and Cthulhu’s city contributes to provide coherence and cohesion through a fictional history. In *At the Mountains of Madness*, the Cthulhu cult is mentioned together with other “primal myths” (Lovecraft [1931] 2015:3.72), but there is also a description of a war between Cthulhu and his spawn against another alien race, the starfish headed Old Ones:

> Another race -a land race of beings shaped like octopi and probably corresponding the fabulous pre-human spawn of Cthulhu-soon began filtering down from cosmic infinity and precipitated a monstrous war which for a time drove the Old Ones wholly back to the sea -a colossal blow in view of the increasing land settlements. Later peace was made, and the new lands were given to the Cthulhu spawn whilst the Old Ones held the sea and the older lands. New land cities were founded -the greatest of them in the antarctic, for this region of first-arrival was sacred. From then on, as before, the antarctic remained the centre of the Old Ones' civilization, and all the discoverable cities built there by the Cthulhu spawn were blotted out. Then suddenly the lands of the Pacific sank again, taking with them the frightful stone city of R'lyeh and all the cosmic octopi, so that the Old One were again supreme on the planet (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.101-102).

The excerpt above shows that Cthulhu behaves as the leader and founder of an alien species that, despite their octopi aspect, is described as a “land race.” This is exceptional since in the rest of stories (both previously and latterly written) Cthulhu is always related to water, which more than an evolution in the character may show some inconsistencies in Lovecraft’s mythopoeia. Said octopi are also put in relation to mankind as “pre-human,” to diminish the existence of our species to a transient episode compared to the cosmic duration of alien races. The text also

describes the political interaction between alien species not only through violence and war, but also by means of a peace treaty, which again provides rationality to both species while denying the importance of mankind as the only one capable to use diplomacy. After this treaty, the other species must remain in Antarctica, an almost unexplored continent in the period when the story was written (Amundsen's expedition had taken place twenty years before), whose remoteness and isolation provides verisimilitude to the continuity of extraterrestrial presence. While the adjective "sacred" evinces again the presence on religion in alien species, the sinking and raising of the lands by violent upheavals represent the cosmic cycles as ineluctable forces that rule the universe, even transcending the will of the powerful Old Ones.

In "The Shadow Over Innsmouth", Cthulhu establishes a different relation with another alien race, the Deep Ones, whereas the repetition of other contents provides cohesion to Lovecraft's mythopoeia. First, old Zadok Allen utters the same chant in the unknown language about a Cthulhu who is dead but also dreaming that appears in "The Call of Cthulhu." Later the protagonist mentions that the alien race of the Deep Ones would raise again for the tribute that Great Cthulhu demands (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.229). Although again both narrators offer their subjective perspectives, it suggests that there is some sort of alliance between Deep Ones and Cthulhu, even that the former consider the latter as one of the gods who is worshiped in their underwater temples. Thus, these narrators describe the relation of the alien-race of the Deep Ones and the powerful Cthulhu in a very similar way to the relation of human societies with their gods, as complex civilizations that worship their own divinities. A quite interesting fact is that in the story both the Deep Ones and Cthulhu are related to water, which would explain their alliance, in contrast to *At the Mountains of Madness* in which Cthulhu's spawn was a land-race.

While Cthulhu is basically a product of Lovecraft's imagination, some cultural influences have been identified, which include both literary and religious sources. According to Miller, the representation of Cthulhu's appearance can be assigned within the literary tradition of the tentacle monster that confronts us with the horror of distinctly body change (Miller 2011: 123). Miller

identifies this tradition in works such as Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774), Robert Browning's *Caliban upon Setebos* (1864), and H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898). Whereas the analysis of these works is out of the scope of this study, Miller argues that Cthulhu represents cosmic horror by means of a more visceral physical horror as a loathsome many-appendaged thing (2011:149). Miller concludes that within a pantheist vision the universe itself becomes a malevolent god, characterized by his unstable creations, bound fast by the restless formless of the tentacle monster (2011:150). Nevertheless, the main objective of this study is not previous literary sources, but to assess the relevance of pagan religions in Lovecraft's fiction.

I think that the study of historical religions does not allow to establish proper parallelisms between Cthulhu and pagan gods. Lovecraft's ambiguities and contradictions about Cthulhu (sometimes Cthulhu is a "he", sometimes a "it"; he is allied to creatures of the Oceans such as the Deep Ones, but at the same time his spawn is described as a land-race) do not allow to assert very objective facts about the creature. Some ancient religions include dead-gods like Cthulhu, as for instance the Egyptian Osiris, but the differences supersede the coincidences. A tentative hypothesis would be that Cthulhu was inspired by Dagon, who has been described in a previous chapter, and who shares some common features with Cthulhu because both of them have an underwater existence that comes to the surface after some geological movements at the bottom of the sea. This can be noticed in both the stories "Dagon" and "The Call of Cthulhu". The Lovecraft scholar David Schultz even considers that the former story is recast larger, more profoundly and convincingly in the latter (Schultz 2011:220). However, in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," Zadok Allen mentions "Dagon" and "Cthulhu" as separate entities, and the alien-races of the Deep Ones that are descendants of Dagon and the Cthulhu spawn are described as physically different. Thus, Cthulhu and Dagon seem to be different gods within Lovecraft's fiction.

There are other deities from ancient civilizations who may have inspired Cthulhu, such as the Greek Oceanus, the Scandinavian Kraken, the Hebrew Leviathan and the Mesopotamian Apsu. I will only focus on the last one, because it is the one that more resembles some of Cthulhu's

characteristics. Apsu was a Mesopotamian god of Chaos represented by fresh water and Cthulhu is and Old One that shares both characteristics, as it can be noticed in the orgiastic rituals (described below) in the swamps in Louisiana described in "The Call of Cthulhu" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.35). In Mesopotamian mythology, Apsu represents the male principle of fresh-water that fecundates Tiamat, the female principle of salt-water (Coleman 2019:332). In this religious tradition, Apsu and Tiamat are described as a sinister couple of gods who are associated to the fresh water of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates and the sea at the Persian Gulf, whose mixing of waters engendered most of the gods, but they were finally defeated by a new generation of gods (Frankfort 1993: 256). There are some similarities between Apsu and Cthulhu because both are gods of Chaos that end up defeated and dead, but who, to some extent are revived in cosmological conceptions that involve cyclical time. Although associated to the Oceans or even to land, Cthulhu is frequently related to fresh water, as in the example above in "The Call of Cthulhu". Nevertheless, it must be considered that there is not a female counterpart of Cthulhu as it is in the case of Apsu, which is a remarkable diffence with Apsu.

While the study of the pagan influences on Cthulhu does not provide a definitive conclusion, the study of the human cults revolving around this deity seems more productive. Dennis Quinn has studied "The Call of Cthulhu," particularly the episode entitled "The tale of Inspector Legrasse," in the swamps in Louisiana, reaching the conclusion that the account of the suppression of the Roman Bacchanalia in Livy (Titus Livius) had a profound influence in Lovecraft's story (Quinn 2011: 189). Lovecraft, who possessed Livy's *History of Rome,* describes both cults in similar terms (Quinn 2011: 204), that included "promiscuous intercourse" and "secret murders" in Livy 39.8 (Livy [c.27 BC]1936: 11.241), and the mad cacophony of an "orgy" characterized by "animal fury and orgiastic license" in Lovecraft's story (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.35-36). Lovecraft even uses the word Bacchanale (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.36) to describe the ritual that is taking place, which evinces that Livy was his original source. Furthermore, both in Livy and Lovecraft's the cults are described as foreign, subversive cults that threaten rationality, moderation, and the

established order. Whereas this shows both authors' xenophobic prejudices, in the end of both accounts there is some return to rationality and order when the most dangerous leaders of the cult are put to death or imprisoned (Quinn 2011: 208).

In conclusion, Lovecraft uses the ambiguous and the liminal to describe Cthulhu, by means of different narrative devices, that include the use of contradictory pronouns and opposing characteristics that simultaneously suggest alienness, animality, thinginess and anthropomorphism. Although in Cthulhu's case there is an accurate physical description that is only vaguely hinted for the other Old Ones, this only adds more horror and mystery to the creature. Cthulhu exemplifies the liminal characteristics of the Old Ones as both aliens and gods, whereas his interactions with other divinities and alien races contribute to the cohesion and verisimilitude of Lovecraft's fictional universe. In addition to liminality, Cthulhu's cyclical death and resurrection also symbolizes circularity as another basic concept that pervades Lovecraft's cosmic horror. While the description of Cthulhu as a dead god echoes Nietzsche's death of the Christian god, its resurrection through cosmic cycles also subverts the resurrection of Christ. Although there are different pagan gods that may have influenced Cthulhu such as the Mesopotamian god of fresh water Apsu, Lovecraft's creature still has specific features that make him different. The detailed description of Cthulhu's cult may have been influenced by Livy's account of the repression of the Bacchanalia in ancient Rome, which evinces how Lovecraft incorporated elements from different religions and deities, historic or literary into his own fiction, as he did with Tsathoggua, studied below.

Tsathoggua. Tsathoggua was originally a god invented by Lovecraft's friend and writer Clark Ashton Smith, who included it in some of his stories in his Hyperborean cycle (Price 2011: 265). It had appeared in Smith's stories "The Tale of Satampra Zeiros" (1929) and "The Seven Geases" (1934). In "The Seven Geases," a comic story about sacrifices, a member of a prehistoric tribe is under the influence of different curses or spells that made him to be condemned and offered as a sacrifice to different deities, including Tsathoggua, described as god who had come from Saturn

and that resembles a hybrid between a furry toad and a bat with big, sleepy eyes (Smith [1934] 2014:35).

Lovecraft asked Smith for permission to use it in other stories, both in collaborations with other authors such as "The Mound" (1930, co-written with Zealia Bishop), or in stories completely written by him, such as "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930), *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931), "Through the Gates of the Silver Key" (1933), and "The Shadow Out of Time" (1935). While in all these stories Tsathoggua appears as a monstrous, liminal character in which the alien, the animal, and the numinous are intrinsically intertwined to produce vagueness and uncertainty, the god gradually becomes the object of adoration of alien races, using words that belong to the semantic field of religion, such as "worship," and "devotees." Whereas this shows one more time the importance of religion in Lovecraft's fiction, the repetitive allusions to this deity combined with other fictional gods and cosmic events, provide cohesion to Lovecraft's mythopoeia as an interrelated fictional universe, thus providing verisimilitude to cosmic horror.

This use can be illustrated in "The Whisperer in Darkness," where Tsathoggua is named several times together with other Great Old Ones (Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, Azathoth) and fictional elements from Lovecraft and other authors (Lovecraft [1930] 2015:2.483). The following quotation in this story explains the origins of Tsathoggua: "it's from N'Kai that frightful Tsathoggua came- you know, the amorphous toad-like god-creature mentioned in the *Pnakotic Manuscripts* and the *Necronomicon* and the Commoriom myth-cycle preserved by the Atlantean high priest Klarkash-Ton" (Lovecraft [1930] 2015:2.519)[97]. While the contrast of the animality and the divinity of the entity produce horror, his amorphousness contributes to intensify mystery and horror through indeterminacy.

Later stories gradually introduce the topic of Tsathoggua as the object of adoration of alien races, to diminish the importance of mankind as the only species capable to experience religion,

[97] N'Kai is an underworld fictional place in "The Mound", Commoriom is a fictional city in several stories by Clark Ashton Smith from his Hyperborean cycle, and Klarkash-Ton is a nickname of the latter author.

while indirectly involve that human religions are a transient and recent phenomenon at cosmic scale. Thus, in *At the Mountains of Madness* the narrator, an explorer in Antarctica has read different books of forbidden lore and knows that "a few daring mystics have hinted at a pre-Pleistocene origin for the *Pnakotic Manuscrips* and have suggested that the devotees of Tsathoggua were as alien to mankind as Tsathoggua itself" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015:3.51).[98] Later in the same story, the same narrator explains about "the Hyperborean legends of the formless Tsathoggua and the worse than formless spawn associated to that semientity" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015:3.72). This means that, as other gods and Great Old Ones in Lovecraft's dark pantheon, the monster had produced its offspring. In "Through the Gates of the Silver Key," the god is there is a brief allusion to the god when the protagonist Carter loses his individual identity and becomes "one of these earlier entities which had dwelt in primal Hyperborea and worshiped black, plastic Tsathoggua" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015:3.306). In "The Shadow Out of Time", among the different alien races that Peaslee meets while his mind is prisoner of the members of the alien Great Race, there were "three from the furry pre-human Hyperborean worshipers of Tsathoggua" (Lovecraft [1935] 2015:3.398). The fact that they have been taken prisoners involves that these worshipers are members of an intelligent race, since the members of the alien Great Race only exchange their minds with individuals with advanced cognitive capacities.

There are differences between the Tsathoggua in Clark Ashton Smith and in Lovecraft. Although it preserves some of Smith's description of a gigantic hybrid of toad and bat, Lovecraft calls it "amorphous, "plastic" and "formless," which is something less definite. Said undefinition increases since Lovecraft seems more interested in describing Tsathoggua's worshipers rather than in Tsathoggua itself. Under these circumstances is difficult to analyze any influences from pagan religions. One of them could be the god of dreams "Hypnos," to whom Lovecraft devoted a story. The way in which Tsathoggua is indolent and lazy, with closed eyes, even when it is going to

[98]These alien worshipers are briefly described in another story that will be commented in this section. Once again, they reveal the fact that religions in Lovecraft's fiction are not just a creation of humans, but a widespread fact throughout the universe.

receive a sacrifice in Smith's fiction echoes Hypnos. Hypnos was the Greek god of sleep, who is brother of Thanatos ('death') and who lives in the underworld during the hours of daylight (Coleman 2019: 171). Thus, Tsathoggua's drowsiness and impassibility may have been inspired by representations of the oneiric Hypnos. A very different source of inspiration could have been the frog-gods in the Egyptian account of creation (Frankfort 1993: 176). This account of the creation includes an Ogdoad, a group of eight gods including four masculine divinities described as frog or toads, who lived with a of chaos identified with primordial waters. As Frankfort points out, some of these gods were "named "Darkness," the "Boundless," and so forth, merely rendered with the concreteness to which mythopoeic thought is prone a chaos such as Milton conceived" (Frankfort 1993: 254). Although there is not direct relation between Lovecraft's Tsathoggua and water, the characterization of Clark Ashton Smith's Tsathoggua as a hideous batrachian explains its assimilation by Lovecraft, who was aware of the symbolic analogies of the god with the divinities of pagan cults. Furthermore, it must be taken into account that Lovecraft had included toad-like deities or monsters in some other stories, such as in "The Moon Bog," "The Doom That Came to Sarnath," or *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, so that although it was originally from other author, it fitted well into his fantasies of cosmic horror, in which the physical appearance of batrachians are used to produce horror.

In conclusion, Lovecraft incorporated Smith's Tsathoggua into his fiction, not only as an homage to his fellow writer Clark Ashton Smith, but because he considered that this would be productive within his own imaginary universe of cosmic horror, establishing dialogical interrelations with his own creations. As in the case of other Old Ones, the liminal characteristics of the god include the animal, the alien and the numinous converging into a monstrous nature, whose real essence is only vaguely hinted to intensify fear. While the cult of Tsathoggua mocks the importance of more recent, human religions, the specific pagan cults that may have inspired the deity includes tentative examples such as the Greek Hypnos or the Egyptian frog-gods in the Ogdoad. Still, a common feature that strengthens the relation between Tsathoggua and the rest of

deities in Lovecraft's dark pantheon with the gods of ancient paganism is their purported reference to very ancient cosmogonies, to a mythical lore at the beginning of times.

III.5 Cosmogony and myth. Introduction and application to Lovecraft

In their *Dictionary of Creation Myths* (1994), David & Margaret Leeming argue that a cosmogony or creation myth is a narrative that describes the original ordering of the universe (1994: vii). As they point out, the word cosmogony derives from the Greek words kosmos, meaning order, and genesis, meaning birth (1994: vii). Since these narratives also contain other elements, I will provide my own tentative definition, to affirm that cosmogonies are accounts of the origin of the universe and the living creatures in it that involve the passing from chaos to cosmos, this is to say from disorder to order. The concept of cosmogony is closely related to the concept of cosmology, which does not only explain the origin, but also the evolution and end of the universe. These two words have been used both in mythical and scientific explanations of the origin of the cosmos. As Frank Leslie Cross argues, while cosmogony is a term addressed to doctrines or myths about the origin of the universe, like those of the early Greek philosophers and pagan mythologies, the term cosmology is the part of metaphysics which deals with the world considered as a totality of phenomena in space and time (Cross 1958: 347). The list of religious cosmogonies is almost as extensive as the list of religions since one of the latter has its own accounts of creation, which can be illustrated by the Egyptian (Frankfort 1993: 176), Mesopotamian (Frankfort 1993:254), Hebrew (Randall 2004: 84), Greek (Mondi 1989:1), Norse (Kozák 2021:106), Chinese (Leeming 1994:47), Japanese (Rambelli 2009: 235), or Mayan (Leeming 1994: 186) examples. Conversely, scientific cosmogonies have evolved from the early accounts of Greek philosophers, through Einstein's static universe model (Hawking 2005:58), to the most accepted theory of an expanding universe that began with the Big Bang explosion (2005: 84). As Hawking argues, this model explains "that the universe began with the Big Bang, a time when the density of the universe and the curvature of space-time would have been infinite" […] "what mathematicians call a singularity" (Hawking 2005:

84). While this scientific cosmovision is the most widened accepted, as a part of the so-called Standard Cosmological Model, several alternatives, Non-Standard Models, challenge this vision (Di Valentino 2022: 1), whose insights go beyond the scope of this study.

Thus, from the epistemological point of view, cosmogonies can be classified as scientific, such as the Big Bang theory commented above, or religious/mythical/literary, such as the Biblical account of the Creation, John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), *William* Blake's *Book of Urizen* (1794), or the account of the Creation in Tolkien's *Silmarillion*[99] (1977). However, some narrations combine the mythical and scientific explanations to different extents, which is the case of many of Lovecraft's stories, which are not purely scientific fantasy, but also include a mythical component. This involves that Lovecraft, by creating his own fictional accounts of the original times in his fiction, was following a historical and cultural tradition, because in the history of culture and folklore, as well as in literature, cosmogonies about the origin of everything have usually relied on myths (Prat 2020:52).

According to Juan José Prat, the myths that explain the origin of the universe can be divided in different classes: creation *ex nihilo* , procreation, manufacturing, detachment, or search (Prat 2020: 54). The creation *ex nihilo* involves a god that creates everything from nothing, like Yahweh in the Jewish account of creation. Creation by procreation requires different gods who engender other gods in a succession of divine couples, which is typical in ancient mythologies such as the Greek (Solmsen 1982:3), the Mesopotamian (Frankfort 1993:176), and the Egyptian (Ib. 1993:176). In the case of manufacturing, a deity produces the universe or living creatures from a primitive material, such as Yahweh using dust to create man in the Jewish account (Gen 2:7). As the biblical account illustrates, most cosmogonies combine elements from several of these classes, as it has been demonstrated. In Lovecraft's fiction, we will notice that he also combines some of them.

As Mircea Eliade (1958a) and Prat (2020) have noted, cosmogonies have their particular

[99] Both Tolkien's *Silmarillion* and the Lovecraft's mythos evince the fascination on ancient myths of their authors in early 20th century, but the cosmogonies in them are opposed in the sense that the former was clearly influenced by Christian monotheism and morality and the Genesis ("there was Eru, the One, who in Arda is called Ilúvatar" (Tolkien 1977:15)), while the latter was fascinated by pagan polytheism and indifferentism.

features which differ from other type of narrations. Cosmogonies take place in a mythical time, which is circular, outside history, and based on eternal return in contrast to the historical[100] time founded on a linear scale. For Eliade, archaic societies revived these cosmogonies every year through rituals, which involved a regression to this mythical epoch and the abolition of the profane time of history (Eliade 1958a: 35) According to him, the function of these rituals is to recreate the events that took place in the original myth:

> In many cultures cosmogony rituals take place periodically. There is a renewal which adopts generally the form of a festival. But this religious calendar keeps a cyclical nature: year after year the same ceremonies will be repeated and the same texts will be read aloud (…) A myth was a fact that had happened once, but which, in some sense, will continuously happen (Prat 2020:47-48).[101]

Cosmogonies involve a period of destruction that marks the transition between different eras. In this way, cosmogonies are a central element in Lovecraft's fiction because his literary universe is based on the idea of cyclical periods of destruction and creation marked by the arrival of powerful gods or alien races to the earth and who exert their dominion over vast areas of the universe. The cosmogonic model in Lovecraft's fiction shows two main features. Firstly, in Lovecraft's fiction, creation does not occur *ex nihilo*, but as the result of change or recombination in the balance of cosmic forces. This feature is instanced in "The Dunwich Horror," which describes some alternation of periods of alien domination that do not involve *new* creation, exemplified by the sentence in the *Necromicon:* "the Old Ones were, the Old Ones are and the Old Ones shall be" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015:2.434). "The Call of Cthulhu" emphasizes the same idea when the members of the eponymous cult explain the Old Ones would revive when the stars had come to right position in the cycle of eternity (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.39) This is like the account of many pagan religions, described by Macleod as cyclical creations, often depicted as a struggle between order

[100] Arthur Schlesinger defines History as a word with at least two meanings. It may refer to the events which have taken in the past; or it may refer to the written record of those events (Schlesinger 1963:491)

[101] My translation from the original: En muchas culturas los ritos cosmogónicos se presentan de forma periódica. Hay una renovación que generalmente toma la forma de un festival. Pero todo este calendario religioso conserva esta naturaleza cíclica: año tras año se repetirán las mismas ceremonias y se recitarán los mismos textos […] Un mito era un hecho que había ocurrido una vez, pero que en cierto sentido ocurrirá continuamente.

and chaos in a perpetual cycle of creation and destruction, which can be exemplified by the Hindu, Norse, and Greek traditions (Macleod 2001:313). Secondly, that the Cosmos at large is not only constituted by the perceivable ordered universe, but also by voids of chaos outside this universe, as it is described in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (Lovecraft [1927] 2015:2.112). Thus, Lovecraft's cosmogonies are never absolute as in monotheist religions, but always show some balance of cosmic forces separated by spatial, temporal, or dimensional abysses.

Thus, cyclical cosmogonies are a central element in Lovecraft's fiction because his literary universe is based on the idea of periods of destruction and renewal marked by the arrival of powerful gods or alien races to the earth and who exert their dominion over vast areas of the universe, not only to stress a plurality of powers typical from pagan polytheism, but also the pervivence of chaos outside the ordered universe. Hence, the cyclical rituals and festivals that appear in most of Lovecraft's stories and which have been analyzed in detail in section II of this paper are not just an ornamental device to embellish the uncanny atmosphere of the phenomena in these stories, but (at least for the human who perform them) they are part of a renovation of the mythical events that took place. While the literary and the anthropological discourses are epistemologically different, Lovecraft's decided to include in his fiction the cosmovision of primitive peoples based on periodical cosmogonies and rituals that re-create them. Thus, the bloody sacrifices that took place periodically can be understood as a commemoration of the arrival of the Great Old Ones from outer space in the time of the Cosmogony. Lovecraft's fiction resembles what happened in archaic societies in the real world. As Eliade has theorized, sacrifices reproduce an initial sacrifice revealed by a god at the origin of times (Eliade1958a: 35). These sacrifices do not only repeat the initial sacrifice, but even take place at the same primordial mythical moment, coinciding with it in the cyclical succession of order and chaos, which implied that they had to be repeated every year, because there was a yearly return to chaos (Eliade 1958a: 58). Furthermore, many of the pagan elements in Lovecraft's fiction that were studied in chapter II dealt with circles (megaliths, magic circles and pentagrams pictured on the floor), as geometrical figures that

symbolize cyclical cosmogonies.

Still, the are some differences between the archaic cosmogonies described in ancient religions and those that Lovecraft invented for his fiction. Cosmogonies in pagan societies generally involved a dark element in their very definition since they recognized a previous chaotic state, which was substituted by order and cosmos. The cyclical rituals involved the repetition of the mythical moment of the passage from chaos to cosmos (Eliade1958a:54). Nevertheless, Lovecraft's cosmogonies are essentially darker, since their outcomes do not necessarily involve a defeat of the forces of chaos, which are always lurking to regain power and destroy mankind incidentally. In fact, the period of the dominion of an ordered cosmos in Lovecraft seems ephemeral, and a consequence of chance, decadence, or the departure of the Great Old Ones from our planet. To some extent, the Cosmos in Lovecraft is inherently chaotic, while the apparent order of the perceivable universe is just a delusion product of human's ignorance.

In conclusion, cosmogonies are accounts from the beginning of times that have influenced literature both from the mythical and scientific discourses. In Lovecraft’s mythopoeia, there are many conceptions from paganism that deal with the concept of circular time and ineluctable cosmic cycles, but he even added darker connotations because in Lovecraft chaos even the ordered universe is superseded by chaos. In the next section there is a comparison between specific pagan cosmogonies and those in the Lovecraft’s fiction to discern the possible influences on the latter.

III.5.1 Ancient pagan cosmogonies and Lovecraft’s fiction

The introductory section above has defined the term cosmogony while classifying the different subtypes of them according to their specific epistemological origin, their agents, and the means of creation, to establish how these have influenced literature and, specifically, Lovecraft’s fiction. While establishing a theoretical frame (Prat, Eliade) with its own potentialities and limitations, said introductory overview has shown the importance of cyclical, ahistorical patterns of

time taken from paganism as the common starting point for the study Lovecraft's cosmogonies. This new section is devoted to specific comparatives of both types of cosmogonies, which is necessary to assess the influence and role of paganism within Lovecraft's fiction as the aim of this study. The methodology used includes close-reading analysis and comparative cultural studies through an interdisciplinary approach (literature, history, anthropology). Hence, the section is divided into two main parts, one devoted to a brief description of some particular pagan cosmogonies that seem to have been particularly influential, such as the Greek, the Mesopotamian, the Egyptian and Gnosticism, and second a comparative with specific accounts in Lovecraft fiction. The tentative conclusions evince that although there is certainly such pagan influence, Lovecraft cosmogonies are never absolute creations of a whole cosmos and never bring true quietness or stability, but are intended to produce horror.

Cosmogonies in different cultures involve a succession of violent and dark processes that takes from a period of chaos to a period of order or cosmos. According to Prat (2020:57), Eliade (1958a: 18) and Frankfort (1993:254), some general characteristics can be inferred for each one of these two phases: While the state of chaos is characterized by disorder, violence, darkness, and water, the state of cosmos is characterized by order, stability and dry land. Most of the cosmogonies that lie at the basis of the cultural background of Western civilizations, that were the intellectual referent in Lovecraft's times, such as Bulfinch's *The Age Of Fable* (1856) or Frazer's *The Golden Bough* ([1922] 1996)[102], have their roots in ancient cultures. Among said cultural references the case of the Greek, Egyptian, and Mesopotamian accounts of creation were particularly relevant, as it is illustrated by the profuse use of divinities from those origins in his fiction. It is also the case of the Hebrew or Biblical account of creation, which Lovecraft vehemently rejected (Lovecraft ([1929]

[102] As noted above, both books were known by Lovecraft, as works that included pagan cosmogonies such as for instance the Greek by Bulfinch (1856:24) and the Egyptian by Frazer ([1922] 1996:436). Although it is more difficult to distinguish the sources that Lovecraft may have used for the Mesopotamian creation, in their time there were many books available that included this cosmogony, such as Morris Jastrow's The *Religion of Babylon And Assyria* (Jastrow 1898:411) or the article "Cosmogony" in the 9th edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1877: 6.446), an extensive reference work that he had used for the "Magic" and "Demonology" articles in his story "The Horror at Red Hook" (1925).

1968: 271) and this why I will not consider it a direct influence in his cosmogonies.

In Coleman's analysis of the different variations of ancient Greek cosmogonies, the initial phase is always characterized by chaos, violence, and the presence of dark divinities (2019:71-72). In the most common account of Greek creation, based on Hesiod's *Theogony* (Hesiod 1988:6), there was initially a void of Chaos that was the origin of everything (Coleman 2019: 71-72). From this void emerged Erebus (Darkness), Gaea (earth) and Nyx (night). Through the procreation of Erebus and Nyx appeared Hemera (day) and Aether (air). Gaea also had a son Uranus (heaven), and having an incestuous relation with him, she produced the early gods such as Cronus, Rhea, the Titans, and the Cyclopes. Cronus was the god of time who castrated and killed his father, becoming the new ruler. Later Cronus was dethroned by Zeus, who established a period of some order (Coleman 2019: 78). Thus, in Greek cosmogony the early stages of creation revolve around concepts such as chaos and darkness, in its very form of Chasm, Erebus or through night (Nyx), as well as in Lovecraft's fiction these concepts can be exemplified by Nyarlathotep as "the crawling chaos" (Lovecraft [1920] 1.202), Azathoth's throne at the center of Ultimate Chaos (Lovecraft [1932] 2015: 3.244), or Cthulhu's realms are described as a "dark house" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.38). The gods in the initial stages from Greek Cosmogony are monster-like, including Gaea, and her sons Cronus, the Titans, and the Cyclopes (Hesiod 1988:7), similarly to the teratologic bodies of all Lovecraft's Old Ones. Incest and violence in the birth of the gods in the Greek cosmogony echo the rumors about incest and inbreeding of Yog-Sothoth's twin sons in "The Dunwich Horror" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 436). Hence, the first stages of this Greek account of creation include darkness, violence, and monstrous creatures even before the existence of time represented by Kronos (Hesiod 1988:7), which resemble mythical cosmogonies in Lovecraft's fiction.

As noted in a previous section, the main original source for the Mesopotamian cosmogony is the poem *Enuma Elis*, which describes creation of by a succession of divine couples that begins with the chaotic, dark, aquatic divinities the goddess of saltwater Tiamat and the god of fresh water Apsu (Peinado & Cordero 1981:91). These earlier deities enter in conflict with their own

descendants, and when Apsu is killed by them, Tiamat creates an army of monsters which include dragons and snakes to avenge him. However, Tiamat is defeated and killed by the god Marduk, who uses parts of her body to create earth, oceans, and heaven (Peinado & Cordero 1981: 119). Thus, the role of chaotic, monstrous, aquatic divinities in the Mesopotamian Cosmogony echoes the role of Lovecraft's aquatic monsters in fiction such as the creature in "Dagon" (Lovecraft [1917] 2015:1.57) and Cthulhu. The latter is even compared to a dragon with tentacles that may evoke the form of snakes, who dwells in the fresh waters in Luisiana (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.36) and the saltwater of the Pacific Ocean ([1926] 2015: 2.53). There is also some cosmogonic reminiscence in the violent submarine upheavals that release Dagon and Cthulhu in Lovecraft fiction, that echoes the violence of the confluence the waters in the Mesopotamian account. Similarly to the aggressive Apsu and Tiamat, Cthulhu is also a conflictive deity in war with other alien species, such as the Elder Things (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.101). But perhaps the most striking coincidence is the concept of circular time that pervaded the Mesopotamian cosmogony, which required the celebration of an annual festival repeating the events in the creation to stop the cyclical return of Tiamat and chaos (Eliade 1958a: 56; Frankfort 1993: 339). Otherwise, their return would be as unavoidable as in Lovecraft's fiction the action of the cosmic cycles of eternity that would revive dead Cthulhu (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.39).

The Egyptian cosmogonies also influenced Lovecraft's cosmogonies, who could have read about them from his library work on Egyptian antiquities (Joshi 2013:500). The Egyptians did not have a single account of the creation, but a plurality of them whose main original sources are the "Pyramid Texts" (Allen 2007:7). Nevertheless, these different Egyptian cosmogonies shared some common elements, such as common origin for all things in the waters, from which a primeval mound emerged (Leemings 1994: 82). This mound has a parallelism in Lovecraft's accounts of the city that emerges from the water, such as the "gigantic piece of stone" that comes out from the water in "Dagon" (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 1.55), or Cthulhu's prison city of R'lyeh as a "great stone pillar sticking out of the sea" in "The Call of Cthulhu" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 1.50). In Egyptian

cosmogonies, after said mountain emerges, the sun also rises as the first god followed by a succession of couples of deities that continue the creation, highlighting the one formed by a male earth god called Geb and a female heaven goddess called Nut (Leemings 1994:83). As commented above, this couple of sibling deities probably inspired Lovecraft's Nug and Yeb as Yog-Sothoth's and Shub-Niggurath's offspring (Lovecraft ([1936] 1976b: 303). Still, another versions of the Egyptian creation contain the Ogdoad representing chaos as four couples with monstrous bodies half men, half batrachians the male, and half women, half water snakes the female (Frankfort 1993:176), which echo Lovecraft's obsession with frogs and frog-hybrids in some of his stories such as the Deep Ones in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" ([1931] 2015: 3. 168), or the frogs in "The Moon-Bog" ([1921] 2015: 1.264). While preserving many of the elements from the Egyptian cosmogonies, such as water identified with abyss, the primeval mound or the aquatic monster Lovecraft's expurgated them from all the elements that involve order and light, such as the presence of the sun to stress darkness and chaos to intensify horror.

Gnosis also influenced Lovecraft's cosmogonies. The cosmogonies of Gnosis generally involve the idea that the universe was created by a minor god, a demiurge who usually does not even know that he has been also created by a more powerful, original god (Alexandrian 2014:72). This demiurge is also called the god of matter because he participated in setting the matter of cosmos in motion (Leemings 1994: 104). In Lovecraft, this is for the case of Azathoth, but the idea goes beyond this particular god, because all cosmogonies in his fiction are an indirect consequence of contingent, pre-existent creatures, who frequently (and unwillingly), produce new species or even change the aspect of worlds, such as in the coming of Cthulhu (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.39), the creation of earth-life life by the Elder Thing ([1931] 2015: 3.95), or the dominion of our planet by the Great Race ([1935] 2015: 3.385).[103] This is different not only from the account of creation by incontinent, immanent, everlasting gods in many religions, but also from the scientific discourse in which the origin of universe and living creatures is caused by inanimate processes such as

[103] These examples can be found in "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926), *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931), and "The Shadow Out of Time (1935).

evolution in Biology (Hawking 2005:84) or physic theories that describe the universe (2005:14). This can be noticed for instance in the sheer materialist and scientific description of the origin of life by the Elder Things, who behave as the intelligent engineers of life on Earth, creating "earth-life -using available substances according to long-known methods (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.95). Thus, as in the Gnosis, Lovecraft's cosmogonies rely on transformations of pre-existent realities rather than in ex-nihilo creations.

In conclusion, the influence of pagan cosmogonies in Lovecraft's fiction can be evinced not only by the examples of the Greek. Mesopotamian and Egyptian paganism, but through the parallelisms with the indirect creation of the demiurge in Gnosticism. While these ancient religions explain the origins of cosmos from chaos, violence, darkness, water, and monstrous deities to an ordered universe, Lovecraft's cosmogonies seem to have borrowed these ingredients to produce a different outcome. As studied below, in his fictional cosmogonies there is always space for chaos and dread, which are at the basis of cosmic horror.

III.5.2 Lovecraft's dark cosmogonies

As noted above, one of the reasons why cosmogonies are so relevant in Lovecraft's stories is because they deal with circular time, which is one of the central elements in Lovecraft to produce horror by stressing that the universe is ruled by inexorable forces. In general, Lovecraft's references to fictional cosmogonies in his stories follow a tripartite scheme originating in a state of chaos that lasts throughout geological ages. After this original chaos, there would be a delusive period of apparent order in which the narrator tells his story and in which the brief period of humanity takes place. Finally, this illusion of harmony vanishes into a new dominion of the dark forces of chaos, which have freed or revived. This broad scheme is usually complicated by different cosmic periods of chaos that diminish the importance of mankind in the universe. As in many pagan societies in history, where "the mythical visions of the "beginning" and the "end" of time are homologues--eschatology at least in certain aspects, becoming one with cosmogony" (Eliade 1958a:73), in

Lovecraft's tripartite scheme, the first and third periods of chaos are merged into a same synchronous event.

This use of cosmogonies in Lovecraft did not only reinforce the idea of the futility and meaninglessness of mankind at a cosmic scale to intensify cosmic horror, but also establishes an extradiegetic, narrative dialogue between Lovecraft's myths and ancient paganism. Again, Mircea Eliade's distinction between ahistorical primitive cultures, based on cyclical times, and which regenerate periodically; and modern, historical cultures that are based on linear and finite time (Eliade 1958a:112) are useful to understand circularity in Lovecraft. This second type of cultures involved what he called the "terror of history," because in them there was not an underlying cosmic order and as a result mankind became subject to the arbitrariness and capriciousness of their own impulses (Eliade 1958a:160). The order of the Cosmos would not be a result of periodical cycles and eternal return, but of the erratic decisions of men. Said terror of history can explain Lovecraft's rejection of the culture of his time, of his own historical period, which he considered grotesque (Lovecraft [1934] 1976a:361). In *H.P Lovecraft: The Decline of The West* (1990), S. T. Joshi has analyzed Lovecraft's philosophical thoughts and inner fears about his own period, which include his concerns about foreign immigration and miscegenation in the USA (1990: 64;74), the fear of both Bolshevism (1990: 63) and conversely of the abuses of capitalism (1990: 66). This rejection of his own historical times stood in contrast with his fascination with former times, in particular "a sense of immediate personal kinship with the 18th century, its costume, architecture, literary style, thought" (Lovecraft [1933] 1976a: 152). It is in this sense Lovecraft experienced the "terror of history" as Eliade defined it, and searched solace, at least in his literary fiction, in the pagan ancient mythical conception of cyclical time and eternal return. Thus, his stories suggest a departure from the arbitrariness of men and their history through a connection with a cosmos ruled by dark forces which fascinated him.

This cyclical concept of time contributes to intensify alienness and horror in Lovecraft's fiction while diminishing human rationality, which can be exemplified in "Dagon" (1917) and "The

Call of Cthulhu" (1926). In "Dagon," the references to a period in which gods and creatures of chaos ruled the earth in the past imply that Lovecraft was inspired by the model of a dark cosmogony. Unexpectedly for human observers, the parenthesis of the apparent natural order of the world is interrupted by geological movements from the bottom of the ocean that foreshadow the return to chaos and darkness. In this story, the transit from order to chaos and vice versa is achieved partly through the contrast between land symbolizing order and water epitomizing chaos. Hence, the rise of the ocean platform represents the primeval chaos, which protrudes into the apparent natural world "through some unprecedented volcanic upheaval, […] exposing regions which for innumerable millions of years had lain hidden under unfathomable watery depths (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 1.54). While the use of scientific concepts such as vulcanism represent the futile attempt of human mind to rationalize the event, the adjectives "unfathomable" and "watery" underline the chaotic and numinous components of the cosmogony. The return to chaos and darkness in a future is represented by the dominion of waters versus land:

> I cannot think of the deep sea without shuddering at the nameless things that may at this very moment be crawling and floundering on its slimy bed, worshipping their ancient stone idols and carving their own detestable likeness on submarine obelisks of water-soaked granite. I dream of a day when they may rise above the billows to drag down in their reeking talons the remnants of puny, war-exhausted mankind -of a day when the land shall sink, and the dark ocean shall ascent admist universal pandemonium (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 1.58).

The excerpt above shows the identification of waters with chaos as primeval waters, in which mysterious monsters lurk in the bed ocean, praying to "ancient stone idols" that echo the deities of pagan religions. While these creatures are qualified using the adjective "nameless" which suggest vagueness and ambiguity, the noun "things" reifies them to stress alienness and horror. The ocean itself is qualified as "dark," which evinces again the influence of pagan cosmogonies in which obscurity represented the forces of chaos. The apocalyptic dream about the rise of ocean constitutes a synchronous cosmogony and eschatology that epitomizes the victory of said forces of chaos represented by water. Although the social problems of humanity such as war seem to contribute to the success of darkness, the whole process is ineluctable for men, which is similar to Eliade's description of the inescapability of cosmic cycles in pagan thought. According to Eliade, the ideas

of destruction and creation/renewal through water with deluges that periodically destroy and regenerate the world are typical of aquatic cosmogonies (Eliade 1958a: 63). In Lovecraft's “Dagon,” however, the aquatic cosmogony does not involve a regeneration, but the beginning of a new period of chaos, the end of the delusion of historical time.

In “The Call of Cthulhu,” the references to a mythical period in which the dark forces ruled the Earth and the universe are present in the famous quotation at the beginning of the story. This quotation has also been considered as an example of Lovecraft's consideration of the insignificance and futility of mankind versus a vast and indifferent cosmos:

> The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little, but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.21-22).

The excerpt establishes a correlation between knowledge and horror because rationality provided by human sciences may unveil the “frightful position” of mankind, which is lurked by horrors that are not specified to intensify fear through uncertainty as a narrative device. Hence, the excess of human rationality may lead to irrationality, represented by madness or by ignorance as “a new dark age.” While the human world is called “a placid island of ignorance,” the reference to universe as “black seas of infinity” echoes the tradition of some pagan religions such as Mesopotamian and Egyptian that represented the original chaos with water (Leeming 1994: 25; 82). Thus, the idea that underlines the text is that the true essence of the universe is chaotic and primitive.

The story continues with a reference to “the awesome grandeur of the cosmic cycle wherein our world and human race form transient incidents” (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.22), which is a reference to a cyclical cosmogony of both creation and destruction. Later, in the account that the worshipers of Cthulhu in the swamp in Louisiana provide to inspector Legrasse, there is a short summary of the cosmogonic cycles of creation and destruction, through the extraterrestrial visit of alien races, a topic which is central to much of Lovecraft’s fiction:

> They worshiped, so they said, the Great Old Ones who lived ages before there were any men,

> and who came from to the young world out of the sky. Those Old Ones were gone now, inside the earth and under the sea; but their dead bodies had told their secrets in dreams to the first men, who formed a cult which had never died. This was that cult, and the prisoners said it had always existed and always would exist, hidden in distant wastes and dark places all over the world until the time when the great priest Cthulhu, from his dark house in the mighty city of R'lyeh under the waters, should rise and bring the earth again beneath his sway (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.38).

This involves the tripartite account of the cycles of creation and destruction. First the visit of the Great Old Ones from the outer spaces to a world that is qualified as "young" can be identified with a period of creation/destruction. Second, the period in which the Old Ones were gone, the time of humanity, in which the dead aliens communicate with humans through dreams. Apparently, this time can be considered a period of some stability. Third, the period when Cthulhu will rise and control the earth again, which ends the cyclical process with a new destruction/creation. The rising of the city or R'lyeh echoes the rising of the primitive mound in the Egyptian account of creation (Frankfort 1993: 173) or the conflagration of primitive gods of water and chaos in the Mesopotamian cosmogony (1993:257). Cthulhu is even called "great priest," as if he was a leader of ancient pagan religions, while his cult is equated with ancient pagan sects. The cycles involve the sinking and rising of the bottom of the ocean because "what has risen may sink, and what has sunk may rise" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.34). Thus, as in the Egyptian and Mesopotamian cosmogonies, water is the place where each cycle ends and begins.

Cthulhu is dead but at the same time dreaming, or dead but capable to revive, and this involves that he is immortal, as the gods in pagan religions, which can be noticed in in the famous quotation in an alien language whose meaning in English is *"in his house at R'lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming"* (Lovecraft's emphasis and inverted commas; Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.34). This is an argument against the approaches that only consider it as an extraterrestrial being but deny any supernatural ontology, since immortality is a common feature of gods in traditional cosmogonies (Eliade 1958a:36). Furthermore, in ancient pagan religions sometimes the gods communicated with humans through dreams in a similar way to Cthulhu, "sending out at last, after cycles incalculable, the thoughts that spread fear to the dreams of the sensitive" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.50).

Thus, "The Call of Cthulhu" includes a reflection about the cyclical nature of time which

supersede human formulations about the universe. After the physical and moral description of Cthulhu's statuette, the narrator explains that "the subject and material, belonged to […] something frightfully obsessive of old and unhallowed cycles of life in which our world and our conceptions have no part" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.32). The presence of the Old Ones that had once populated the Earth and who would allegedly revive again in the future is inextricably intertwined with this concept of cycles. As Old Castro, one of the members of the cult of Cthulhu explains in "The Call of Cthulhu:"

> There had been aeons when other Things ruled on the earth, and They had great cities (…). They all died vast epochs of time before men came, but there were arts which could revive Them when the stars had come round again to the right positions in the cycle of eternity. They had, indeed, come themselves from the stars, and brought their images with them (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.38-39).

While the word "aeons" in the excerpt alludes to events that happened *in illo tempore*, in turn their scope also extend into "the cycle of eternity," which illustrate the use of circular time as a concept taken from mythical cosmogonies into Lovecraft's fiction. Moreover, the capitalization of the pronoun "they" stresses the similarity of Old Ones and pagan gods, which combined with their thinginess in a liminal nature produces horror through deliberate ambiguity. The term "arts" refers to magic, as another numinous element which functions as a counterbalance to the scientific and rational elements in the story. Fundamentally, "The Call of Cthulhu" exemplifies the influence of pagan accounts of creation in Lovecraft's fiction to produce both horror and wonder.

In conclusion, Lovecraft reuses and updates the tradition of pagan cosmogonies such as the Mesopotamian and the Egyptian accounts of creation, transformed by the rational discourse of 20th century's science, to produce atmospheres of cosmic horror. Lovecraft's fiction preserves common elements of paganism, such as circular time, the identification of water with chaos and darkness, monstrous aquatic deities, or the rising of sunken lands, but his fiction still has a distinctive feature, since their outcome is not order and stability, but a dark and hostile universe. In the next section I will focus on the evolution of Lovecraft's cosmogonies to analyze how these changed, from the accounts highly influenced by paganism exemplified above, to stories in which scientific discourse

becomes more relevant.

III. 5.3. Evolution of Lovecraftian cosmogonies

As studied above, Lovecraft combined both mythical elements taken from pagan historic religions and rational elements taken from science to generate his own fictional cosmogonies. While both elements can be traced in different proportions throughout his works, Lovecraft's fiction experienced some evolution from the examples studied above, such as "Dagon" (1917) or "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926), to later ones such as *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931), and "The Shadow Out of Time" (1935). Thus, the mythical and magical elements had a more decisive importance in the cosmogonies that appeared in Lovecraft's earlier fiction than in later ones in which science becomes more relevant. Dominant criticism, led by Joshi, considers this late period as Lovecraft's "most characteristic work," in which there is "very little to criticize and very much to praise" (Joshi 2013:1050). Nevertheless, I cannot agree with this opinion since the unbalanced, excessive weight of rationality involves a decrease in ambiguity, mystery and, consequently, in horror. Stories such as *At the Mountains of Madness* and "The Shadow Out of Time" include scientific accounts of the appearance and evolution of life through alien agents to such an extent that these even exclude the mythical, magical, supernatural power of gods. Although a deep study of these scientific cosmogonies is out of the scope of this study, devoted not to science but to paganism, a brief description of them is necessary to provide a holistic vision of Lovecraft's cosmic horror.

Even in this late period Lovecraft was always aware of the analogies between his fictional cosmogonies and the cultural frame provided by paganism. This can be exemplified in a 1933 letter to James Morton (Lovecraft [1933] 1976a: 183) in which Lovecraft mocks the origin of his Old Ones in a very similar way to the parent creations in pagan religions such as the Mesopotamian, Egyptian and particularly the Greek[104] cosmogonies. The letter includes a genealogy of divine

[104] The personification of concepts such "The Nameless Mist" and "Darkness" in Lovecraft's letter as primeval deities, the offspring of Azathoth as chaos ([1933] 1976a: 183) as primeval deities is almost identical to the Greek cosmogony, which includes deities such as Erebus (darkness)" and Nyx (night) as the offspring of Chaos (Coleman 2019:72).

couples and individuals that starts with Azathoth to continue with some of the Old Ones such as Nyarlathotep, Yog Sothoth, Shub Niggurath, and Tsathoggua, while Roman and Welsh human lines of the family comically end up in both Lovecraft himself and his friend Clark Ashton Smith ([1933] 1976a: 183). While Lovecraft was reinforcing the presence of pure science in many of the stories that he was writing in the 1930s, he could mock but not deny his debt with pagan cosmogonies.

Nevertheless, in Lovecraft's fiction from the period, the role of singular powerful entities as the central figures in cosmogonies through mythical accounts was being gradually substituted by collective alien species who create life through advanced technology described using scientific discourse. Hence, in *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931) the Elder Things created life in our planet as they had previously done in other worlds:

> It was under the sea, at first for food and later for other purposes that they first created earth-life, -using available substances according to long-known methods. The more elaborate experiments came after the annihilation of various cosmic enemies. They had done the same thing on other planets; having manufactured not only necessary foods, but certain multicellular protoplasmic masses capable of moulding their tissues into all sorts of temporary organs […] They allowed other cell-groups to develop into other forms of animal and vegetable life for sundry purposes, extirpating any whose presence became troublesome (Lovecraft [1931] 2015:3. 95-96).

The text above exemplifies a scientific cosmogony in which creation is produced using materialist terms taken from sciences such as chemistry such as "substances" and particularly, from biology, which includes "multicellular," "protoplasmic," "tissues," and "organs." According to Peter Walker's *Cambridge Dictionary of Biology* (1989) the terms "substance" (substantia) means "matter" (Walker 1989: 288), while "multicellular" alludes to living creatures made up of many cells, which are the "units, composed of nucleus and cytoplasm of animals and plants" (1989: 48). "Protoplasmic" is an adjective derived from protoplasm, which is defined as "the living material within a cell" (Walker 1989:239), whereas "tissue" is an aggregate of similar cells forming a definite and continuous fabric […] having a comparable and definable function (1989:303), and "organ" is "a part of the body of an animal or plant adapted for the performance of a particular function" (1989:205). Furthermore, the excerpt alludes to scientific methodology since the creation of life involved "long-methods" and "experiments," terms that contrast with the absence of religious

terminology.

Later in *At the Mountains of Madness*, the appearance of other creatures is explained through evolution from the cells created by the Elder Things, which includes mankind:

> Vertebrates, as well as an infinity of other life-forms -animal and vegetable, marine, terrestrial, and aerial -were the products of unguided evolution acting on life-cells made by the Old Ones but escaping their radius of attention […]. It interested us to see in some of the very last and more decadent sculptures a shambling primitive mammal, used sometimes for food and sometimes as an amusing buffoon by the land dwellers, whose vaguely simian and human foreshadowings were unmistakable (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.100).

Thus, the excerpt combines the initial creation of life by the alien race, with evolution as the scientific mechanism that produces the rest of life-forms. While indirect creation evokes the role of demiurges in pagan cosmogonies, the narration and terminology belong to scientific discourse. This can be exemplified by words such as "vertebrates" defined as having bony skeletal elements called "vertebrae" (Walker 1989: 314), "evolution" as the gradual development of more complex organisms from simpler ones (1989:105), and "mammal" as "mammalia," a kind of vertebrates covered by hair and nourished by milk (1989: 172). Such scientific discourse contributes to diminish the importance of mankind as an unwanted product of indirect creation, whose insignificance is stressed by human ancestor's role as food and buffoons for amusement of the dominant aliens.

In 1935, four years after *At the Mountains of Madness*, Lovecraft wrote "The Shadow Out of Time," in which scientific discourse is again the frame of a cosmogony. While both stories are based on the description of alien species that ruled our planet many millions of years ago, respectively the Antarctic Elder Things and Australian Great Race, in the later work the role of aliens as agents of creation is less defined because they do not really create life, but psychically possess other species projecting their minds through space-time:

> The mind of the Great Race was older than its bodily form. The beings of a dying elder world, wise with the ultimate secrets, had looked ahead for a new world and species wherein they might have long life; and had sent their minds en masse into that future race best adapted to house them -the cone-shaped things that peopled our earth a billion years ago […] Later the race would again face death, yet would live through another forward migration of its best minds into the bodies of others (Lovecraft [1935] 2015: 390-391).

The text stresses opposite concepts, such as a “dying elder world” in past versus a “new world,” and “body” versus “mind.” The death of the “elder world” of the Great Race implies an eschatology, while for our world the arrival of their minds involves a cosmogony, a sort of symbolic re-creation through the transformation of our planet into their new home. In turn, it also becomes a horrific eschatology for the minds of the possessed species, expelled from their bodies and times to die in a remote past and distance. Thus, Lovecraft describe a process that involves a succession of synchronous cosmogonies and eschatologies as he did in previous fiction, but now from the rational, scientific perspective. Still, the travel of the minds of the Great Race looking for a new place has a strong parallelism with the mythical account of creations through search, since as Prat argues, creation through search and travel is one of the models of ancient cosmogonies (Prat 2020:52). As noted above, the excerpt also stresses the dichotomy of mind and body, in which the conic, teratological appearance of the Great Race is intended to intensify estrangement while their superior minds who know “the ultimate secret” supersede human parameters. Such differences with our own species intensify the scope of events at cosmic scale while stressing the insignificance of mankind.

In conclusion, in some of his latest stories Lovecraft explored cosmogonic accounts in which the scientific elements replaced the previous balance of numinous and rational elements. This resulted in less ambivalent stories that use the scientific discourse, but which I consider that are less effective to produce horror at the same extent. Still, even in this later stories Lovecraft was aware of the influence of paganism as a source for his fictional universe, as the letter above illustrates. But both in his earlier, mythical and in his later, scientific cosmogonies, the main objective of Lovecraft’s fiction was not to provide an accurate, relevant account of the beginning of times, or the origin of life on Earth, but to produce fear. As a result, the different accounts in his stories that resemble pagan cosmogonies are never exhaustively detailed, but images that contribute to produce atmospheres of cosmic horror.

Chapter III has intended to illustrate how Lovecraft produced his own fictional universe,

such as gods and cosmogonies inspiring them by many of the ancient pagan religions, whose elements in his works were detailed in chapter II. I have argued that said fictional universe or mythopoeia is not at materialist as it seems, since alien species in Lovecraft's works are religious, while the presence of supernatural entities depicted as gods pervades most of his works. These gods have been classified into two groups, the weak earth gods from the dream-cycle and the more powerful other gods or Great Old Ones that appear throughout Lovecraft's fiction. The latter form a dark pantheon that have a liminal nature that intertwines the alien and the numinous to produce horror, and who were inspired by different deities from paganism. Moreover, the liminal condition of the Lovecraftian monster combines the bodies of different species animals and thinginess to produce uncertainty as one of the main ingredients in cosmic horror. The interaction of these liminal Great Old Ones with our planet re-creates primordial events like those described in the historic accounts of some ancient pagan cosmogonies characterized by a cyclical time frame and the synchronous coincidence of unavoidable cosmic events beyond that supersedes explanations of human mind. While the last part of the chapter has analyzed Lovecraft's fiction in relation to cosmogonies as a particular type of myths, next chapter extends the study to the rest of the mythical lore from paganism that this author incorporated into his fiction. For this purpose, chapter IV applies the methodology of myth-criticism to illustrate how Lovecraft produced his own myths, which demonstrates again that Lovecraft readapted and updated ancient pagan myths to produce his own ones, characterized by said features of liminality, circularity, and synchronicity. This readaptation of previous myths provides evidence of the importance of paganism not only as a source, but as an inherent component of cosmic horror.

IV. MYTH-CRITICISM AND MYTH-ANALYSIS APPLIED TO LOVECRAFT'S FICTION

Previous chapters in this study have been devoted to the identification and analysis, firstly of the pagan elements (II), and second a study of Lovecraft's new deities and cosmogonies (III) in his fiction. In this chapter, I will try to provide an interpretation for his work by applying the theories of myth-criticism and myth-analysis by which I intend to identify and interpret the role of the pagan myths that underpin Lovecraft's fictional universe. Thus, the methodological framework exposed in chapter I discussed the general critical instruments I used for the whole of my study drawing from the theories of C. Lévy-Strauss, C. Gustav Jung, Mircea Eliade and G. Durand. These allowed me to explore the analogy of their respective concepts of the invariant, circular mythical time, collective unconscious, and myth-criticism with the literary techniques that Lovecraft's used in his fiction, that evince a similar use of these notion. Still these approaches fall short in providing a systematic analysis of the mechanisms used to adapt and update previous pagan myths into Lovecraft's own myths. For this final chapter, I have selected and adapted some of Durand's theories about myth-criticism and myth-analysis to apply them to Lovecraft's fiction as a critical instrument that can shed light about the identification, classification, structure, and features of said myths in Lovecraft's fiction.

The first part of this chapter begins with an introduction to said theories that will help identify their interpretative potential as well as their limitations, including basic concepts about myth-criticism and the model of myth-critic analysis that I will apply to the work of H.P. Lovecraft. In the second part of the chapter, I will conduct a practical myth-analysis of seven of the myths in the selected works of H.P. Lovecraft. I have called these seven-myths as "the visit of the alien gods that came from outer space," "the offspring of the alien gods," "the underworld," "the cycle of water and land (deluge)," "possession and mind swap," "memory and oblivion", and "the rise and decline of civilizations: the demiurge." While the inherent problems to the selection, number, limits

and intersection of said myths remains a methodological question that I explain in section IV.2, the application of myth-criticism contributes the general objectives in my study, such as to assess the importance of paganism in Lovecraft's fiction, the balance of numinous, pagan elements with the scientific and the rational elements, or the specific religions that influenced this author. Thus, while chapter II focused on pagan elements in Lovecraft's works and chapter III on Lovecraft's own fictional universe as inspired by ancient religions, this chapter focuses on the adaption and updating of entire myths from paganism within a literary concept.

IV. 1 Theoretical framework for myth-analysis in Lovecraft

According to Gilbert Durand, the word myth-criticism can be defined as a method of literary and artistic criticism that focuses on analyzing the mythical account that is inherent to the meaning of any work of art. He describes myth-analysis as a method for the scientific study of literary myths considering the psychological motivations that underpin them. Broadly speaking, myth-analysis is influenced by Jungian psychoanalysis, sociology, and Lévi-Strauss' structuralism (Durand 2013: 347-350). To him, a myth-critical approach to a literary work encompasses different literary theories such as positivism, psychological criticism, and the analysis of the linguistic structure of a text (2013: 341-342). This analysis is particularly appropriated for the analysis of Lovecraft's fiction, in which positivism as an approach to science, psychology as an element that pervades most of his fiction through dreams and madness and the present of invariants in the form of coincidences underpin the masses. Although this approach has been applied successfully to other authors, it has not been done before for Lovecraft's fiction, so that I hope my research has an academic interest and significance to offer new insights about Lovecraft's myths.

This method deals with the distinction between myth and mythologemes, and the division of these categories into minor constituents called mythemes, which makes necessary to provide tentative definitions for all these concepts. Daniel Brzenski has traced the etymological origin of the word "myth" back to the Greek word "mythos," which means "word" of "story" (Brzenski 2015:13).

However, nowadays the term has at least three possible meanings: a tale in which characters are supernatural beings; an archaic world-view, and a universal form of consciousness (Brzezinski 2015: 16). Losada has defined myth as a symbolic story describing an extraordinary event that would have taken place in times so ancient that there are no historical records left. Typically, the mythical story involves transcendent referents that incorporate a series of constant or invariable cultural semantic elements (2015: 930). According to Lévi-Strauss and Durand, a myth is a metalanguage used to explain symbols that are considered universal (Lévi-Strauss 1955: 430; Durand 2013: 104) because they are shared by different cultures and times. Psychologists, anthropologists, and historians of religion have attempted the task of classifying myths within different categories. Brzezinski's discussion of B. Mondin and W. Lengauer's models of myth classification include different kinds of myths that sometimes overlap, such as cosmogonic, theogonic, anthropogenic, etiologic, soteriological, and eschatological myths (Brzezinski 2015: 22). Thus, cosmogonic myths explain the origins of the universe and the world; theogonic myths explain the origins of the gods; anthropogenic myths concern the beginnings of man in the world; etiological myths explain the origin of human institutions and customs such as feasts, rituals, and sacrifices; and soteriological myths explain the intervention of supernatural beings to save man. Finally, eschatological myths explain how at the end times, the universe and the world will be destroyed by catastrophes, sometimes involving a renewal of cosmos. Not all these six groups of myth are equally represented in Lovecraft's fiction. Most of myths in Lovecraft are cosmogonic and eschatological, dealing with the origin and the destruction of the universe, and the appearance of human life through the action of extraterrestrial forces. This is compatible with the importance of time in his fiction, particularly the cyclical patterns that have been analyzed above in sections II.1 and III.5 which pervade most of his fiction. Some myths in Lovecraft's fiction have an etiological component, such as the pagan festivals and sacrifices discussed in this study. There are fewer allusions to theogonic myths, since the origin of outside gods or aliens that appear in his fiction is not frequently described and the account of their deeds usually starts with their visit to planet Earth in past geological eras.

Anthropogenic myths are even more scarce in Lovecraft's fiction and are only used to demystify the importance of mankind versus a vast and indifferent universe. There are no soteriological myths in Lovecraft, since once of the most pervasive ideas in his fiction is that there is no "salvation" or hope for mankind.

The term "mythologem" was coined by Károly Kerényi, who defined it as the original ancient lore transmitted in stories (1942:15), prefiguring later myths and mythology. According to Kerényi, a mythologem is a set of raw mythical material common to different traditions that adumbrates specific myths as they appear in literature, folklore, and religions in different cultures. Since Kerényi collaborated with Jung in several studies about mythology,[105] his notion of mythologem as the primary material transcending particular myths is closely related to Jung's concept of archetype[106] (Kerényi 1942:42). Thus, one or more mythologems can be the base of different myths with specific features. In Lovecraft's fiction, for instance, the mythologem of "the revelation and visit from gods" such as the visit Old One Cthulhu from Outer Space is a common pattern evoking intertextual similarities, for instance, with the myth of the visit of the angels in the Old Testament. In Lovecraft's narrative, the same mythologeme would also appear in different cultures with specific features across different stories, suggesting an uncanny continuity between his fictional world and myths in the real-world that evidence the permeability of contingent human cultures to transcendental cosmic horror.

As explained by Ramos, the terms "mythopoeisis" and "mithopoeia" refer to the creation of literary myths and are therefore frequently used to refer to fictional unitary and cohesive universes with their own mythology (2021: 500). These fictional universes are produced by one or more authors through fictional intertextuality. Examples of mythopoiesis include the fictional worlds created by William Blake, J.R.R Tolkien, Lord Dunsany, Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E. Howard, and H. P. Lovecraft himself, as well as more recent popular multimedia phenomena such

[105] These include *Essays on a science of mythology; the myth of the divine child and the mysteries of Eleusis* ([1949] 1989) and *Prolegomeni Allo Studio Scientfico Della Mitologia* ([1942] 2021).
[106] To Jung, an archetype is the original pattern appearing in the form of collective representation in different cultures (Jung 2002:41).

as the Marvel universe or the Star Trek or Star War franchises.

According to Bronner (2007: 145), mythemes are the basic units of myth. This neologism was created in 1958 by Lévi-Strauss in *Anthropologie Structurale* (1958:236), who claimed that said basic units are based on binary oppositions such as male/female, light/dark, or life/death, that are inherent to the operations of language and thought (1981: 559). Mythemic oppositional binaries are inspired by the definition of minimal pairs in different linguistic areas such phonemes in Phonetics, semes in Semantics or morphemes in Morphology. According to Durand, mythemes are the sequences that make possible the synchronic coherence of mythical discourse (2013:36). My tentative identification of mythemes in Lovecraft's fiction is not intended to be exhaustive. The aim of this catalog is to recognize the basic constituents that repeat in Lovecraft's myths to study the inner structure of said myths and the cultural sources of them. I have preferred not to be exhaustive because of the inherent risk of overinterpretation of the text through dubious matches that its intrinsic to the hermeneutics of literature, and particularly of the myth-criticism approach. Thus, I have identified eighteen mythemes: the outside place, the outside (parent) god, the travel of the god, the human parent, birth, the hybrid god, deeds of the god, the return of the god, the madman as a prophet, the apprentice, the city of the gods, water, land, sacrifice, dreams, revelation, oblivion, and death.

My approach to a structuralist study of Lovecraft's fiction through myth-criticism in this chapter is influenced by the theories of Vladimir Propp ([1928] 1968: 25) and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1958: 235). Propp was a Russian folklorist who published *Morphology of the Russian Folktale* in 1928, in which he delineated a syntagmatic sequence of thirty-one functions which defined the Russian fairy tale (Bronner 2007: 145). These functions were based on the dramatis personae, so that for each one of the thirty-one the author provided a brief summary of them, an abbreviated definition in one word, and a conventional sign (Propp [1928] 1968: 25). Conversely, Lévi-Strauss studied the myth in as the product of the interrelation and combination of isolated constituents that are repeated to constitute them both synchronically in a particular period and diachronically through

their evolution (Lévi Strauss 1958: 235). Thus, as Bronner points out, Lévi-Strauss also believed that myths were also constituted by the repetition of minor elements, but his study was based not on syntagmatic relations but in paradigmatic structure, forming a kind of comparative method (Bronner 2007: 145). Lévi-Strauss divided the myth into sequences that he related to paradigmatic sets capable of giving them a meaning (2007: 146). In my analysis I will combine both approaches, particularly Lévi-Strauss' because I consider them more appropriate for my study than Propp's since the latter's thirty-one functions refer to the characters in the story, are not always applicable to Lovecraft's fiction, in which atmosphere and strange phenomena, rather than characters, are central to the way in which he elaborates the myths that underpin his fiction. Hence, some of the mythemes that I have identified are related to the spatial framework (such as the outside, water, land, the city or the gods), instead of a character. However, when necessary, I have identified it with characters (the outside god, the hybrid god, the human parent, the apprentice). Still, a more numerous group combines processes in which places, characters and actions are combined (such as the travel of the god, the deeds of the gods, the return of the gods, birth, dead, revelation, and oblivion). The complexity and inherent limitations of the application of both models can be exemplified by the controversy that both Propp and Lévi-Strauss held about their respective approaches. Lévi-Strauss criticized Propp for analyzing folktales instead of myths, while Propp noticed that Lévi-Strauss did not base his studies on empirical data in such a systematic way as he had done in his study of the thirty-one functions of the Russian folktale.

In this chapter, Lévi-Strauss approach seems more useful than Propp's because the latter studied "the tale according to the functions of its dramatis personae" (Propp 1968: 20). Lévi-Strauss' analysis based on oppositions is also very productive for the study of hybrids in Lovecraft's fiction because their teratological bodies combine opposite features from different species. Bronner has pointed out that the occurrence of these oppositions are a major occurrence in epic composition where they can often be found in the hybrid depiction of a single character, such as half-man/half-human, like mermaids, and combinations of god and man or god and animal (Bronner 2007: 135).

In Lovecraft's fiction these hybrid creatures are extremely frequent. This is the case of the Whateley twins, or the Deep Ones that share alien and human blood, or the descriptions of the bodies of the Great Old Ones as composed by the parts from different animals, such as Cthulhu with an octopus-like head typical from animals from the seas, but with narrow wings typical from animals that can fly (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.31-32), or the mixed animal/vegetal characteristics of the Elder Things from Antarctica (Lovecraft [1931] 2015:1.40). The co-existence of opposed features within a same creature is characteristic of Lovecraftian monstrous hybrids. According to Calabrese, liminality is a typical characteristic of monstrosity (1992:173-176) that prevents their identification with a specific category such as species or animate/inanimate. As discussed in chapter III, Lovecraftian hybrids often combine the oppositional categories of terrestrial/extraterrestrial and natural/supernatural as a sign of monstrosity aiming to suggest horror. Although these features in Lovecraft's hybrids can be usually classified as oppositional, such as in Cthulhu's octopus head and narrow wings (water/air) or the Elder Things (animal/vegetal) they may also include a plurality of them such as characteristics from more than two animals.

Thus, I will use a method that includes some of the features of structural analysis, which typically involves three steps: the identification of minimal structural units, the investigation of the relations and combinations of these minimal units, and cross-cultural comparisons that explore how these appear within different contexts (Bronner 2007: 124). Still, although structural analysis is a theoretical approach that may shed light into the research of myths, it also has inherent limitations. It can be questioned, for example, whether minimal units and their relations actually exist in myths, or if they may rather be mere hypothetical, heuristic constructs unconsciously projected by imaginative researchers. In fact, while the structuralist theories by Jung and Lévi-Strauss argue that said units and relations do not appear consciously in myths, but as unconscious projections of a universal collective mind (Bronner 2007: 131), one may wonder about their real presence at all.

My personal adaptation of structuralist methodology to approach the study of myths in Lovecraft's fiction, thus involves six different phases with the aim of reducing said limitations by

providing a consistent, systematic framework. The first one targets identifying and describing Lovecraft's fictional myths as they appear within his narrative within the context of the works in which they appear. The second phase includes their classification within one of the five main groups proposed by Brzezinski: cosmogonic, theogonic, anthropogonic, etiologic, and eschatological, since there are not soteriological myths in Lovecraft's fiction. The third phase is an identification of mythologems underlying said myths including examples from ancient religions, folklore, art history and literature. A fourth phase involves the identification of mythemes, or minor units or constituents in every specific Lovecraftian myth, that may (or not) be elements of the more general mythologem. Fifth, the particular features of Lovecraft's myth, including the liminal, synchronous and cyclical aspects that are characteristic of his fiction, that relate it to the mythical circular time typical from paganism. Finally, I will provide some conclusions about why the information provided by the analysis of every particular myth in Lovecraft's fiction is relevant for the study of his work as a whole. The following schedule summarizes the method and provides specific examples:

A. Myth Identification	i.e. The visit from Gods/Aliens that came from outer space in Ancient Times. The different occurrences of this myth in Lovecraft's fiction .
B. Type of Myth	Cosmogonic, theogonic, anthropogenic, etiologic and eschatological myths (or combined)
C. Mythologeme	i.e The wider, cultural or archetypical expression of this myth in culture, including ancient religions, art history and literature,
D. Mythemes: 1..... 2..... 3..... (etc.)	Minor units or constituents in every specific myth in Lovecraft: The outside place; The outside (parent) god: The travel of the god; The human parent; Birth; The hybrid god; Deeds of the god; The return of the god; The madman as a prophet; The apprentice; The city of the gods; Water; Land; Sacrifice; Dreams; Revelation, Oblivion, and Death.
E. Features of Lovecraft's myth, which are usually: 1. Liminal aspects (a: space, b:time; c:body (hybridism) 2. Cycles in the myth (principles of periodicity, Synchronicity and acausality).	e.g. Hybrid creatures such as Wilbur Whateley e.g. Paradoxes. Cthulhu death dreams e.g Relations between minor scales of time and larger scales of times
Conclusions	Why the analysis of this myth is relevant to the study of Lovecraft's fiction

In conclusion, the study of paganism Lovecraft's fiction demands to delve into a deeper level of analysis, that goes beyond the scope of study of both untransformed paganism and of his own dark pantheon, through the application of myth-criticism to study the structure of the myths that underpin his fiction. With this aim, I have devised my own methodological approach to myth-criticism by combining the theories of Propp's formalism, Lévi-Strauss' structuralism, and Jung's psychology. While this section has been primarily devoted to the definition of the concepts of mythologem, myth, mythopoeia, and mytheme, next section introduces a tentative selection of seven myths in Lovecraft's fiction. These myths will be later analyzed through the application of said concepts and methodology will be later applied.

IV.2 Analysis and criticism of relevant myths in Lovecraft's fiction

In the previous section, I have discussed the different advantages and limitations inherent to myth-criticism as a critical instrument to analyze the myths in Lovecraft's fiction. In this section, I intend to explore the ways in which myth-criticism can shed light into their inner structures and their relations with mythologems, which could be useful for future in-depth analysis of said myths in each of his stories. The type of analysis commented above has been applied to identify and study Lovecraft's myths as his readaptation and updating of transcultural mythologems from previous pagan myths into 20th century cosmic horror, a task that I have intended to accomplish through the methodology explained above. In order to do this, I have identified a total of seven categories of myths that are intended to be representative of the whole or, at least, of the most part of Lovecraft´s fiction. These categories display a symbolic correspondence with the seven main pagan festivals that so frequently appear in Lovecraft's fiction, and have been listed from those involving the most external outer cosmic forces in the vast infinitude of universe, to those representing the most inner insights and feelings taking place inside human mind:

(1). The visit of the Alien gods from Outer space.

(2). The offspring of the Alien gods

(3). The underworld

(4). The cycle of land and water; the deluge

(5). Possession and mind swap

(6). Memory and oblivion

(7). The rise and decline of civilizations: the Demiurge

Myth 1 deals with the arrival of extraterrestrials, assimilated to gods or alien races to our planet, that has many parallelisms in previous pagan myths. Myth 2 involves a first interaction between alien gods and mankind resulting in the procreation of hybrid creatures that display features of demigods. Myths (3) and (4) deal with the liminal realms inhabited and/or ruled by alien gods and their descendants, identified mainly with the underworld and the waters. These two realms are the most typical from Lovecraft's fiction, but they do not exhaust the possible landscapes where the alien or supernatural presence is placed, since it includes other desolated areas such as forests, mountains, deserts or glaciers. Nevertheless, I have chosen the underworld and the underwater because very frequently these two landscapes enshroud the others. Myths (5) and (6) deal with the reaction of the human mind to cosmic forces, mostly as possession of human minds in (5), but also through the cognitive mechanisms of memory and oblivion in (6). Finally, myth (7) connects the privacy of human mind to the cosmic outside forces that affect both aliens and humans and produce the cyclical rise and decline of civilizations under the impassivity of the Demiurge.

This classification of Lovecraftian myths do not exhaust other possible classifications such as "the wise old man" and its associations with the "traditional myth of Faust," or myths about "death and resurrection," "innocence and experience," or "the succession of chaos and order," among others. But to some extent, most of these myths can be included in the broader classification of the seven I proposed. The wise old man, for instance, appears in most of them through the mythemes of the prophet and the wizard. Death and resurrection, as well as chaos and order can be identified with the cosmic cycles of water and land and the rise and decline of civilizations. In addition, two remarkable factors such as time (especially cycles) and liminality have been

considered as common circumstances to all myths, instead of as myths themselves or part of these myths.

The task of identifying and categorizing Lovecraftian myths, however, has presented some challenges related to some particularities of his narrative composition. The question about the limits between myths remains elusive to some extent. While some myths could be divided into simpler mythical categories for instance, they can also combine together into more comprehensive or holistic myths. In fact, the most typical situation in Lovecraft's fiction is that a particular story, or excerpt from a story, does not necessarily suit one myth only, but to several myths at a time. As Lovecraft arranges them, myths do not appear isolated from each other, but combined following cyclical patterns, which means that every myth connects with and influences the rest of them and vice-versa. This cyclical temporality is complicated by a sort of mythical synchronicity whereby events from different myths affect events from other myths, even if they are detached by infinite spatial or temporal distances.

Thus, Lovecraft readapts the cyclical conception of time typical from ancient pagan religions into his myths in a way that departs from the linear conception of time both from Judeo-Christian accounts and from the prevalent discourse of the science in his period. While in Lovecraft's fiction said conception has unequivocal mythical roots in mythical lore, his reformulation of ancient myths also re-uses some elements of that scientific discourse to provide verisimilitude to his atmospheres of cosmic horror. This is noticeable in the description and analysis of every one of the seven myths below, in which circular time and synchronous events are a common frame that provide coherence and cohesion to the narration.

The first one of these myths is the visit of the Alien-gods from outer space, in which the liminal nature of these gods, discussed in chapter III, appears intertwined with the cosmic time of their descent, *in illo tempore*. Whereas this is a myth that intersects with the rest of the selected myths, because sometimes these Alien-gods will produce offspring, sometimes dwelling, lurking, and ruling in the waters or in the underworld, sometimes causing possession, madness, oblivion and

decline to mankind, the myth still has its own specificity to underline that the history of our planet goes beyond the human scale into the wider cosmic dimension of a dark universe. This centrality of the "visit of the Alien-gods" in comparison to the rest of myths justifies their presence at the beginning of the list.

IV. 2.1 Myth 1: The Visit of the Alien Gods from Outer Space

This is one of the most prevalent myths in Lovecraft's fiction. According to this myth, many millions of years ago, long before the existence of humans, different aliens-gods who came from outside the Earth, visited and ruled the planet. This type of myth is mainly cosmogonic since it describes the origin of life on Earth and/or the foundation, evolution, and ruin of early alien civilizations. Following the Lovecraftian conception of cyclical time, this myth may also include an eschatological component whereby foundational events in a far past have some correspondence with consequences in the distant future. The structural pervasiveness of cyclical time in Lovecraft's fiction also shows in the etiological component that he often embeds in this myth, through which he explains the origin the pagan rituals through which humans celebrate and re-enact these early events. This Lovecraft's myth functions as a particularization of the mythologem identifiable as "the visit of the god/s from the sky." The visit of aliens in Lovecraft's fiction sometimes involves individual Great Old Ones that can be assimilated to gods as I have discussed in section III.1, and a plurality of members of an alien race, that in turn can be associated to angels or mythical creatures from pagan lore. Stories such as "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926), "The Dunwich Horror" (1928), "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930), *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931), and "The Shadow Out of Time" (1935) exemplify this myth in Lovecraft's mythopoesis. In "The Call of Cthulhu" the character of old Castro, provides the kernel of this myth in the following terms:

> They worshipped, so they said, the Great Old Ones who lived ages before there were any men, and who came to the young world out from the sky. Those Old Ones were gone now, insider the earth and under the sea; but their dead bodies had told their secrets in dreams to the first men (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 1.37-38).

Lovecraft's myth of the visit from Gods from Outer Space falls under the broader mythologem known as the "Revelation and visit from gods," which is common to many religions and legends from different cultures. This mythologem becomes particularized as specific myths such as the visit from angels in the Old Testament, the visit of Quetzalcoatl in Mesoamerican Pre-hispanic cultures, or the visit of Zeus and his (frequently amorous) adventures on Earth. In most of Lovecraft's stories, the myth includes at least the following mythemes: (1) the outside place where the alien gods come from, (2) the outside god(s) that visit our planet, (3) the travel of the god to Earth, (4) the deeds of the gods in our planet, (5) the return of the gods, (6) the madman who tells the story.

In real-life religions, the first mytheme (1) can take the form of similarly outer spaces like "heavens" (Judaeo-Christian tradition), or geomorphic elements, such as Mount Olympus in ancient Greek Mythology. In "The Call of Cthulhu" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 1.37-38) and *At the Mountains of Madnes*s ([1931] 2015:3.92) the outside place from which the alien-gods come from in Lovecraft's mythology somehow combines the vagueness ethereality of the former with the physicality of the later in the cosmic formulation of "the stars." While Lovecraft's adaptation of a religious mytheme to the traditional model in horror fiction seems to offer an alternative scientific explanation to religious cosmogonies that are rendered as superstitious in comparison, he still manages to retain a similar effect of wonder that largely rests on the incommensurability of cosmic time and space, as well as the superiority of alien species.

The outside god itself is the second mytheme, intrinsically intertwined with its hybridity. This god has liminal characteristics, as it has been explained. First, there is the liminal aspect between a god and an alien being that has been discussed in chapter III. His hybrid nature, combining features of different animal species has been commented on, such as in the case of Cthulhu in "The Call of Cthulhu" (Lovecraft [1926]: 2.25). This hybridization also involves the fact that the aliens are called "Things," in capital letters. While the word "thing" involves that they are not considered humans and occupy a liminal position between the animate and the inanimate, the

capitalization of the word evokes a similar way in which sacred and religious names are transcribed in Christian texts. This is relevant for the case of the Christian God, who is usually referred to, as "He", "Him". This duality shows a liminal aspect of the Old Ones, ontologically at the very extremes of being, whose nature involves things and gods at the same time. But as Losada points out, the teratological essence of monsters not only deals with the hybrid fusion of different species, but also with their social exclusion (Losada 2022:546). Although the expression “social exclusion” does not seem appropriate to describe pre-human gods such as Cthulhu, it describes its situation of cosmic outsideness of a monster that spatially occupies the liminal position. In “The Dunwich Horror” this outsideness of the alien-god can be exemplified in the Yog-Sothoth, who is described as a cosmic gate and the key that gate (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.434).

The travel of the alien god from outer space to Earth is the third mytheme where the travel itself is never described in detail beyond its interstellar nature and the fact that it took place in a distant cosmic past. Thus, in "The Call of Cthulhu," the members of the cult of Cthulhu in Louisiana believe that the Great Old Ones could “plunge from world to world through the sky” (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.39) and that they "came to the young world out of the sky” ([1926]2015:2.37), “aeons” ago ([1926] 2015: 2:33). In stories in which the scientific narration supersedes the mythical aspects, such as "At the Mountain of Madness" and "The Shadow Out of Time," the means used by alien gods to travel throughout cosmic space is described in more detail, suggesting that this ability is part of their superior nature rather than their superior technology. In "At the Mountain of Madness," for instance, Elder Things living in Antarctica are described as "able to traverse the interstellar ether on their vast membranous wings" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015:3.94), while in "The Shadow Out of Time," the cone-shaped alien race travelled through space by projecting their minds. However, as discussed in chapter III, the subsequent visits of alien gods is often triggered by the practice of specific pagan sacrifices performed by humans at very specific dates , such as described in “The Dunwich Horror,” where "the strange things that are called out of the stars [come to Earth] when a bullock is sacrificed at the proper time to certain heathen gods"

(Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.428). Although the sacrifices themselves are described as strictly religious or spiritual in nature, the tale suggest that there is also an undefined rational explanation to them that supersede the capacities of human mind to correlate both discourses. Thus, narrative focalization through humans brings the supernatural element to this Lovecraftian motive, while readers are prompted to speculate on the rational explanation that a narrative focalized through aliens would render. The fact that Lovecraftian mythemes are inspired by real-life religious practices from different cultural traditions allows for a vaguely universal perception of the supernatural as the only explanation of cosmic events allowed by the limited intellectual capabilities of human beings. Since the corresponding scientific explanation from a wider alien focalization is not provided by his narrative, Lovecraft manages to sustain the effect of wonder in the face of unexplainable events by endorsing agnosticism rather than atheism. Instead of envisioning the future outcome of human technoscientific development as either utopian or dystopian, Lovecraft's particular instantiation of horror fiction imagines the past leading to a dystopian mythical account of pre-human history.

A fourth mytheme of the myth of the visit of the alien-gods to Earth describes the deeds of these gods in our planet, which typically involve the paradoxically Promethean and dominating dimension of Imperial rule. For instance, aliens assimilated to gods are responsible for the foundation of the alien stone city of R'lyeh in "The Call of Cthulhu," (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:38) or the city of Irem in the "History of the Necronomicon" ([1927] 2015: 2.406). The same mytheme explains the foundation of real historical cities such as Tenochtitlan by the aztec god Huitzilopochtli, the foundation of Rome by Mars' son Romulus and Remus, or the foundation of Babylon by the Mesopotamian god Marduk. Similar mythemes also explain the foundation of legendary cities in different cultures around the globe, such as Irem, Cibola, Eldorado, Avalon, Asgard or Hyperborea. A crucial difference between Lovecraft's fictional development of this mytheme and the foundation of cities in real-life mythologies is however, that while the later were founded for the sake of humans, the cities in the Lovecraftian version of the mytheme remains populated by their founders,

who rule the Earth from them.

The fifth mytheme in Lovecraft´s myth of the visit of the alien god is their return to their original realms. This can be noticed for instance in "The Dunwich Horror," in which Yog-Sothoth is summoned on May-Eve by old Whateley to produce offspring with his daughter Lavinia (Lovecraft[1928] 2015:2.436), but after that the alien-god does not appear anymore in the story, which indicates that it is back into its outside dimension. Again at the end of "The Dunwich Horror," one of the two hybrid sons of Yog-Sothoth is expelled to his own realms using magic, which constitutes another example of the return of the gods to his own dimension outside our material universe (Lovecraft [1928] 2015:2.465). In this case, both the intradiegetic description of the expulsion of the monster by Dr. Artmitage as a cultivated character, combined with the approving silence of the extradiegetic omniscient narrator stress the idea that magic is effective against the Old Ones. In other stories the return of the gods to their own planets is expressed indirectly. Thus, in "The Call of Cthulhu," although Cthulhu is not expelled outside Earth, his imprisonment and death in sunken R'lyeh symbolizes the return of the god to his own realms (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.40). While this mytheme remarks the difference between the locus horribilis (outside space, or underwater) and the human world, it provides intertextual cohesion since it symbolizes the ending of a cyclical process that will begin again with the deity at the initial stage of the situation.

Finally, the myth of the visit of the alien god in Lovecraft's fiction may also include the mytheme of madman. This character is frequently described as a villainous old man who is knowledgeable about magic or an ancient lore that somehow lies behind his madness and/or his prophetic visions. The function of this mytheme is crucial in most stories as a facilitator of the visit itself, the focalizing subjectivity through which readers access the story, or the narrator itself. The mytheme seems to be inspired by the figures of the prophets or founders of ancient religions (pagan or not), who transmit a supernatural revelation from the divinity, such as Moses in the Old Testament or Muhammad in the Koran. The addition of madness to this mytheme, however, is

significantly Lovecraftian in apparently dismissing the supernatural as pathologically irrational while suggesting that madness is the human response to a superior knowledge that the species is unable to comprehend. Instances of this mytheme can be found in "The Dunwich Horror," where the character of old Whateley provides information about the Old Ones and summons Yog-Sothoth (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.422). In "The Call of Cthulhu," old Castro also narrates the revelations that he had experienced in different expeditions to China about the gods that came from outer space in ancient times (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.38). The mytheme may include some variation such as Zadok Allen's alcoholism of in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth." Allen is described as a "half-crazed, liquorish nonagenarian whose tales of old Innsmouth and its shadow were so hideous and incredible" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015:3.134). While alcoholism makes Allen's account of the information about the alien Old Ones he shares with the protagonist and he is unwilling to participate in the alien cult, which horrifies him, it is unclear whether alcoholism is the cause or the effect of his acquaintance with the knowledge he is revealing. This ambiguity between the irrational numinous discourse of the madman and the rational evidence provided by traditional science contributes to intensify the atmosphere of horror through heteroglossia. Thus, by the revelation of a concealed horrific truth, the intradiegetic narrative discourse of the prophetic madman establishes both intratextual and intertextual dialogues with other intradiegetic rational characters in the story and with the extradiegetic rational reader respectively, which challenge the assumption that the traditional scientific discourse supersedes the magic, irrational discourse.

The Lovecraftian myth of the visit of the alien-gods from Outer Space is structured around liminality and periodicity, which are two of the main features that are inherent to Lovecraft's fiction. Liminality is present in the coexistence of material and supernatural features in the alien/god duality of the interstellar, interdimensional visitors (Lovecraft [1928] 2015:2.465). The cyclical periodicity of this myth is present in the pagan rituals with which humans commemorate the coming and death/departure of the alien-gods, such as the yearly celebration of May-Eve and Halloween in stories like "The Call of Cthulhu" or "The Dunwich Horror" which re-enact the cosmic alternation

of periods of domination of the dark forces that rule on earth. In "The Dunwich Horror," there is a quotation from the *Necronomicon* that states that "man rules where they ruled once; they shall soon rule where man rules now. After summer is winter, and after winter summer" (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.434).

This circular structure of the Lovecraftian myth of the visit of the alien-gods evokes the pagan circular concept of time described in section II.1 of this study, but at the same time this also involves a relation to the human mind that interprets these events, separated by infinite distance and time but connected through cyclical, acausal, co-occurrence, which is like Jung's concept of synchronicity. Jung defined synchronicity as the occurrence of a meaningful coincidence in time (Jung 1955:145), and as the opposite of causality to explain identical events that take place in different space and time, with no relation among them (Jung 1955:136). As Main points out, Jung characterized scientific rationalism as triadic, based on the three principles of time, space and causality and his proposal was to introduce synchronicity or acausal connection through *meaning* (Main 2014: 176). Jung's concept of synchronicity can involve the simultaneity in time of different events (Yiassemides, 2011:452), but it can also involve to the coincidence of cyclical events that are separated by long periods of time. As Yiassemides points out, for the Western mind there exists an 'arrow of time,' where causes precede effect, but “Jung suggested that instead of a linear arrangement there exists a centre of meaning, around which dreams and events are not arranged chronologically” (Yiassemides 2011:465). Thus, Lovecraft's description of cyclical time, that has its origin in cyclical time in pagan myths, is also similar to Jung's interpretation of cyclical events in time as synchronicities.

In conclusion, the visit of the alien-gods in Lovecraft's fiction contains different elements that show a parallelism with the mythologem of the revelation of the gods that is common in many pagan religions. Hence, Lovecraft’s fiction updates this transcultural mythologem with a long tradition expressed in the pagan myths that include pagan gods that descend from the heavens to interact with human, whose deeds frequently involve the foundation of cities. The visit of the gods

and their deeds are frequently remembered and remembered by human prophets, since the return of the god to its realms prevents mankind to check the events, at least until their next coming in the cosmic cycle of time. In Lovecraft's cosmic horror, his particular myth adds the dichotomy tension of the rational and irrational discourses, while adding its own features such as the presence of synchronicity and liminality. But this characteristic of liminal adopts even a more paramount role in the myth of the offspring of the gods, discussed below.

IV.2.2. Myth 2: The Offspring of the Alien-Gods in Lovecraft's fiction

The prototypical myth in Lovecraft's fiction, in which it reinforces its cyclical and liminal connotations, is a development of the mythologem of the demi-god in real-life religions. This mythologem involves the birth and the deeds of a demigod or demigoddess who is the hybrid offspring of both a divine and a human parent. Mythology provides many examples of these demigods in different cultures. It is for instance, the case of Imhotep, a real Egyptian historical architect who lived in 26th century BC (Coleman 2019:175) who was believed to be the son of god Ptah and a mortal woman. In Mesopotamian mythology, Gilgamesh was considered by different ancient sources as a historical king (Finkel 1998:4), but in other traditions he was also regarded as the son of goddess Ninsun and an evil man who served as a high priest in the city of Uruk (Moss 2004: 154). In Roman mythology, the founders of the city of Rome, Romulus and Remus, were the twin sons of the god Mars and the mortal vestal princess Rhea Silvia (Coleman 2019:293). Greek mythology provides many examples of demigods, such as Herakles, who was the son of god Zeus and the mortal Alcmene (Coleman 2019:159). Similarly, Jesus Christ is believed to be the Son of God and the mortal Virgin Mary, boosting the emergence of multiple Christological debates about Christ's nature such as Arianism, Nestorianism, or Monofisism (Sotomayor 2011: 591; 598; 820).

In Lovecraft's fiction, this myth appears in some stories such as "The Dunwich Horror" (1928), "The Shadow over Innsmouth" (1931), and to a lesser extent in "The Thing on the Doorstep" (1933). Lovecraft's variation of the myth describes how alien-gods decided to produce offspring

with humans, usually with the aim to dominate planet earth. Since the myth explains the origin of (partially) human offspring it falls within the category of anthropogenic myths. Contrary to real-life myths, however, the liminal nature of Lovecraftian demi-gods is depicted as monstrous because its aim is to produce cosmic horror through alienness. Thus, Lovecraft subverts the myths of the demigod descendant of benign deities with teratologic hybrids who are the offspring of the dark divinities in his dark pantheon.

The most representative case is that of the Whateley twins in "The Dunwich Horror," who are the sons of alien Yog-Sothoth and Lavinia Whateley. Although both brothers have human and extraterrestrial characteristics, while Wilbur's more human features allow him to pass as a human, his brother is is described as a huge mass of tentacles. Significantly, the former is a central character in the story while the latter is not just nameless, but even his existence is only revealed at the end of the story.[107] As discussed in section II.1, the Whateley brothers were engendered and born in particular pagan festivals, making their lives associated with cyclical time, a characteristic that they share with other myths about son of gods whose main life events are marked by astronomical events, such as the mythic born of Jesus close to winter's solstice in the real-life Christian religion.

Despite he manages to pass as barely human, like the demi-gods in real-life myths, who show features of their divine nature since an early age, Wilbur Whateley grows up at an extremely fast pace, both in height and maturity, becoming a bearded, gigantic, seven feet-man at the age of fifteen. Although Wilbur Whateley is described as unattractive, uneducated, and uncouth, he is very intelligent, devoting his time to the books of ancient lore and the pagan practices that he has learnt from his human grandfather. But the liminality of his hybrid nature is only hidden by clothes.

A close description of his nude body on occasion of him being attacked by a dog reveals a combination of features from different animal species such as the skin of reptiles, the coarse fur of

[107] In "The Thing on the Doorstep," the liminal monstrosity of second-generation hybrid Asenath Waite's mother, is insinuated not by the detailed description of her body, but like in the case of Wilbur Whateley's twin, by the concealment of her features under a veil and even of her existence from public knowledge. This hybrid female is described as wizard Ephraim Waite's "unknown wife, who always went veiled" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.329).

some mammal, the cilia of unicellular animals, and the tentacles of many invertebrates. More than the radical otherness of his obscured twin, Wilbur's inter-stelar liminality whereby some of his organs such as mouths or eyes are "misplaced" out of his head, is meant to induce cosmic horror (rather than just awe) in readers.

> Above the waist it was semi-anthropomorphic; though its chest, where the dog's rendering paws still rested watchfully, had the leathery, reticulated hide of a crocodile or alligator. The back was piebald with yellow and black, and dimly suggested the squamous covering of certain snakes. Below the waist, though, it was the *worst*; for here all human resemblance left off and *sheer phantasy*[108] began. The skin was thickly covered with coarse black fur, and from the abdomen a score of long greenish-grey tentacles with red sucking mouths protruded limply. Their arrangement was odd, and seemed to follow the symmetries of some cosmic geometry unknown to earth or the solar system. On each of the hips, deep set in a kind of pinkish, ciliated orbit, was what seemed to be a rudimentary eye. (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.439).

In "The Shadow over Innsmouth," Lovecraft's myth of the offspring of the alien-gods stages ontological liminality between humans and the aquatic alien species of the Deep Ones. The resulting offspring of their cross-breeding are born human-like, but experience a progressive metamorphosis until they become amphibious creatures. Although in this variation of the mythologeme of the demi-god, the alien parent (typically, mother) is not a divine, but a common member of the alien species, the hybrid Deep Ones display alien features that may register as semi-divine from a human point of view, like the fact that they do not age and can only be killed violently.

My tentative enumeration of the mythemes that appear in Lovecraft's myth of the sons of the alien-gods includes: (1) the madman/sorcerer; (2) the god parent; (3) the human parent; (4) the birth of hybrid offspring; (5) the hybrid offspring; (6) the life and deeds of the hybrid offspring; and finally (7), the death of the hybrid offspring.

The mytheme of the madman is represented by Old Whateley in "The Dunwich Horror," by Zadok Allen and Captain Obed Marsh in "The Shadow over Innsmouth," and by Ephraim Waite in "The Thing on the Doorstep." Since the role of the madman has been explained in myth 1, I will only focus on the new information for this myth. In "The Dunwich Horror" old Whateley is the sorcerer who invokes the alien-god Yog-Sothoth and facilitates that his own daughter gets pregnant

[108] My italics.

by him. His madness can be noticed from his description of an “aged and half insane” wizard (Lovecraft [1928] 2015:2.422), who summons extraterrestrials to breed them with humans to destroy mankind. But he also plays the role of a prophet who predicts that, some day, one of his semi-alien grandsons would call his father's name on the top of a mountain (Lovecraft [1928] 2015:2.423), something that it really happens at the end of the story, when Wilbur’s twin brother utters the words “Yog-Sothoth” and “father” (Lovecraft [1928] 2015:2.464). In “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” this mytheme is represented by Captain Obed Marsh, who is the one who plans to summon the alien water race of the Deep Ones to trade gold and fish with humans, and ultimately to breed with them. In this way, he is similar to Whateley in "The Dunwich Horror." But in "The Shadow over Innsmouth" this mytheme is also characterized by Zadok Allen, whose more benign role has been discussed above. In “The Thing on the Doorstep” the madman is represented by the wizard Ephraim Waite, described as a “prodigious magical student,” who "had died insane"[109] (Lovecraft [1933] 2015.3.329).

The “god parent” is a second mytheme that appears in Lovecraft’s myth of the sons of the alien-gods. In “The Dunwich Horror,” the father of the two Whateley siblings is the Old One “Yog-Sothoth.” In “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” this role is played by the Deep Ones that breed with humans to produce the hybrid inhabitants of Innsmouth. Although the story mentions two specific Deep Ones as the mother (Hydra) and father (Dagon) of this hybrid offspring (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.197), the tale also suggest that other members of this alien species bred hybrid descendants with humans. In the last pages of the “The Shadow over Innsmouth,” the protagonist dreams with her great-great grandmother, a female Deep One called Pth'thya-l'yi. Although Pth'thya-l'yi is not a goddess, her radical longevity (eighty thousand years) vaguely suggests the god-like feature of immortality (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.228). These “god parents” produce an offspring that are hybrid monsters, but said progenitors also occupy a liminal place between two worlds, such as our world and the outer space in the case of Yog-Sothoth, and the emerged lands and the waters in the

[109]Although Ephraim Waite is associated with madness in this excerpt, the story later demonstrates that he had swap his mind with his hybrid daughter Asenath, so that it was her mind who really died inside her father's body.

case of the Deep Ones. In “The Thing on the Doorstep,” this mytheme is represented by the alien mother of Asenath Waite, but very little is said about her (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.329). While in the case of real-life religions the mytheme of the parent god is usually associated with a protective role towards mankind, in Lovecraft fiction this role is subverted, ranging from disinterest to sheer hostility towards humanity, which contributes to intensify cosmic horror.

A third mytheme I have identified in the Lovecraftian myth of the offspring of the alien-gods is the “human parent” which functions as the counterpart of the “god parent.” Like in real-life myths, the human parent in Lovecraft’s fiction can be a woman, as Lavinia Whateley in "The Dunwich Horror," or a man, as the men who take Deep Ones as wives, such as Obed Marsh in "The Shadow over Innsmouth" and Ephraim Waite in "The Thing on the Doorstep." In this regard, Lovecraft imitates ancient myths like Alcmene, the human mother of Hercules (Bulfinch 1856:200), Danae, the human mother of Perseus (1856:161), or Lugalbanda, the human father of Gilgamesh (Langdon 1923:1). However, Lovecraft’s characterization of the human partners of alien-gods seems to subvert said myths by turning the qualities that distinguish them into their opposites. In real-life myths, the human partners of divine entities typically match the superiority of the divine parent by excelling qualities that identify them as superior to common humans such as beauty or noble origins. In Lovecraft’s fictional version of the myth, however, the radical alterity of monstrous alien "god parents" is matched by some distinguishing feature in their human counterparts that deviates from average humanity in a weird or straightforwardly negative way. The case of Lavinia Whateley in “The Dunwich Horror” is paradigmatic in this sense. This character is not only physically described as “a somewhat deformed unattractive albino woman of thirty five” (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.422), but also as “a lone creature given to wandering amidst thunderstorms in hills” (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.422). That Lavinia’s physical deviation from the female beauty standard of the times in terms of sex-appeal, skin color, and age is matched by her asocial behavior ambiguously rests between a possible criticism of discriminatory prejudice against human otherness and its reinforcement through literary stereotyping. Whatever the case or precisely

because of this ambiguity, her uncanny dissonance with human normalcy adds to the effect of cosmic horror in Lovecraft's fiction. The examples of masculine "human parents" include wicked characters such as Captain Obed Marsh in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" and Ephraim Waite in "The Thing on the Doorstep." Marsh' description include physical features such as sharping reading eyes that could "read folks like they were books" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.188), but also a very negative moral behavior when he is depicted "driving bargains with the devil and bringing imps out of hell" ([1931] 2015: 3.162), using terms that clearly interpret his alliance with the Deep Ones to satanism. He destroys the traditional values of the community because "Obed he begun a-cursin' at the folks for bein' dull sheep an' praying' to a Christian heaven as didn't help" instead of praying to "gods that give somethin' ye reely need" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.192). While subverting the traditional moral and religious values of people, his anti-Christian, pro-heathen discourse also provides a negative moral portrait of the character, stressing his arrogance against those deemed "sheep" and his greed to obtain a material reward in exchange for his worshipping. Thus, Marsh, who embodies the worst sins of capitalism, becomes the founder of a dynasty of hybrid businessmen "richer'n Croesus" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.161). When Obed Marsh takes his mysterious Deep One "second wife" ([1931] 2015: 3. 198), he not only transgresses the natural limits between human and aliens but commits even a crime act of bigamy. The case of Ephraim Waite in "The Thing on the Doorstep" is similar, since his physical portrait as "wolfish, saturnine face with its tangle of iron-grey beard" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.329) is completed with a moral description of him as wizard "a prodigious magical student" ([1933] 2015: 3.329), who does not hesitate to psychically possess, first, his own hybrid daughter, and later his son-in-law. In conclusion, in all the examples above the description of the mytheme of "the human parent" departs from the generally attractive and virtuous description of analogous characters in historic and religious myths from "real-life," to uncanny people that stress their liminal alterity through features that even echo the cosmic outsideness of their partners.

Although the myth of the hybrid offspring of the alien-gods is mostly distinguished by

liminality, the cyclical component is also of relevance in the fourth mytheme of this myth. As discussed in chapter II of this study, the "birth of hybrid offspring" is often coincidental with the celebration of pagan festivals. This feature is also typical of this mytheme in many religions from different cultures, such as the case of the birth of Jesus in Yule (later known as Christmas), the birth of the god Mithras that also takes place on December 25th (Vermaseren 1951:287), or the birth of god Attis on March 21st (Frazer 1996:422). The birth of Wilbur Whateley in "The Dunwich Horror," on the second of February coincides with the pagan celebration of Candlemass in a night while mysterious noises sounded in the hills and the dogs barked (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.422). This way, the traditionally happy event of the birth of an infant in real life is subverted into a horrific event surrounded by an aura of malignancy that even causes fear in animals. In "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" the birth of the hybrid offspring is described briefly by saying that children with the mixed blood were born bearing a human appearance but later would turn like their alien parents (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 189). However, in some cases as in the case of two of the three children or captain Marsh, they disappeared young ([1931] 2015: 198), which suggests that they had to be hidden because they were born bearing more alien characteristics. Thus, Lovecraft's fiction describes the birth of alien hybrids using different techniques that range from the similarities between the birth of the Whateley twins and the birth of gods and demigods in paganism, to a more mundane approach in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth."

The fifth mytheme, the "hybrid son" (or daughter), is the central and most important one in this myth. This mytheme is characterized by liminality because he/she is not entirely human, but not entirely divine or extraterrestrial. While said liminality in cultural precedents such as Heracles (Coleman 2019:159), Gilgamesh (2019:140) or Romulus (2019:294) listed above in general involves good connotations as heroes, in Lovecraft's fiction this liminal position frequently involves quite the opposite, malignancy. This can be exemplified by the Whateley twins in "The Dunwich Horror." Wilbur Whateley is a teratological creature, a monster whose body occupies a liminal position between our physical humanity and extraterrestrial species. Although in "The Dunwich

Horror" this mytheme appears doubled with the Whateley twins, only Wilbur actually displays the hybrid features of the mytheme, in which his physical otherness converges with his evil plans to destroy mankind, establishing some kind of narrative correlation between monstrous physical appearance and derogative moral values. In "The Shadow over Innsmouth," it is represented by the offspring of humans and Deep Ones whose physical otherness, such as narrow heads, flat noses and stary eyes evoke a similitude with fish (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.163), whereas their moral description is characterized by indolence and alcoholism ([1931] 2015: 3.184). In "The Thing on the Doorstep" the mytheme is represented by a young woman, Asenath Waite. She is described as "dark, smallish, and very good-looking except for overprotuberant eyes; but something in her expression alienated extremely sensitive people" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.329). Asenath Waite is perhaps an exceptional case in Lovecraft's description of hybrid descendants, because she has to be physically attractive to fulfill the narrative requirements of the story, being pretty enough to marry to the friend of the narrator. In conclusion, the mytheme of the “hybrid offspring” is central to the myth, as descendants that combine and intensify the liminal characteristic of both their divine and human parents to produce sheer horror. Said horror is achieved using narrative devices that not only stress a physical otherness of their bodies, but through a negative moral characterization.

The sixth mytheme of the myth of the hybrid offspring of the alien-gods describes the"deeds of the hybrid son." While in “real-life” myth the deeds of demigods such as Herakles or Gilgamesh usually deal with brave actions in battle or with miracles such as in the case of Jesus, in Lovecraft’s fiction they are devoted to sorcery. The best examples are found in "The Dunwich Horror." In the case of Wilbur Whateley this can be seen first, by the pagan rituals that he celebrates every May Eve and Halloween, second through his plans of getting the book of the *Necronomicon* at any risk, even when the university authorities had forbidden to and finally through his plans to destroy mankind and clear up our planet of any of life. In the case of Wilbur's unnamed twin, the death destruction that he causes in Dunwich, together with his final invocation to his alien father constitutes his main deeds. In conclusion, the narration of the evil intentions is aimed to produce

wonder and rejection in the reader, reinforcing their otherness and subverting the traditional role of other demigods in “real-life” mythologies.

The last mytheme I have identified in Lovecraft’s myth of the hybrid offspring of the alien-gods is “the death of the hybrid offspring,” which strongly evokes the same mytheme of the violent death of the demigod in real-life myths such as the death of Heracles (Coleman 2019:161) or Jesus’s crucifixion (Matt. 27:50). Thus, Lovecraft appropriated from this mytheme from previous myths, in which the death of the demigod symbolizes a sort of sacrifice, to create some sort of intertextual dialogue with the previous particularizations in cultural tradition, that adds verisimilitude and wonder to Lovecraft’s narrative. This mytheme appears in "The Dunwich Horror" and in "The Shadow over Innsmouth." In the former, the significance of hybrid Wilbur Whateley’s death is signaled by the cyclical component as well as the prescience and intervention of diverse psychopomps. Both features are present in different religions from the pagan and Judeo-Christian traditions. Thus, the hybrid son of the alien-gods in this story is killed by a dog when trying to steal the book of *Necronomicon* from the University of Arkham (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.438). Wilbur's death is anticipated by the dog by "rais[ing] its head in a long, lugubrious howl," a few instants before Wilbur’s black eyes fell in (Lovecraft [1929] 2015: 2.440). Also, at the very moment of Wilbur’s death, a flock of whippoorwills surround him with the purpose of preying on his soul (Lovecraft [1928] 2015:2.440). Both dogs and whippoorwills were considered psychopomps in different pagan religions; while dogs were creatures that lead dying people from life to death (and afterlife) in ancient Greek and Roman religions (Gómez Casal 1998:400). In the death of Wilbur Whateley, the shrilling noise of whippoorwills (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.440) echoes the noise produced with the death of the son of gods in many religions, such as for instance in Jesus Christ's death, when "the earth shook, the rocks split, and the tombs broke open" (Matt. 27:51-52). Another pagan symbolism dealing with the cyclical element is represented by the date of Wilbur's death in relation with the pagan festival of Lammas (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.437). In "The Shadow over Innsmouth," the death of the hybrid son does not have the same importance, since the hybrid

creatures are descendants of humans and the minor alien race of the "Deep Ones," but is also represented by the suicide of Douglas, the uncle of the protagonist and narrator, who could not accept to be partially from alien ancestry. Douglas behavior represents the reaction of the human irrational mind that despises the gift of immortality by shooting himself when he discovers his true origin (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.225), which adds dramatic tension to the narrative when his nephew also finds out the truth, but he decides to live ([1931] 2015: 3.230).

In conclusion, Lovecraft describes the birth, deeds and death of hybrid beings resulting from the intercourse between human beings and alien-gods following the general mythemic pattern in pagan and Judaeo-Christian myths about the hybrid offspring of gods However, while hybridization between divine entities and human beings in real-life myths mostly shows in the exceptional beauty and physical superiority of divine offspring, in Lovecraft's fiction, the liminal position between species that is marked by monstrosity—rather than divinity—in their physical appearance. While their semi-divine nature does not grant them immortality, they do not age, and they surpass life-expectancy of humans by so far that a sort of immortality is almost suggested. Still, like in myths from real-life religions, the human component of the alien-god's offspring makes them vulnerable to a violent death. Finally, like in real-life religions, the myth of the alien-god's offspring in Lovecraft's fiction is structured around a cyclical temporality signaling natural phenomena as coincidental with their birth, deeds and death, as if their lives somehow ruled natural events or provided them with a narrative signification that is enacted and activated during annual festivals. Thus, the myth of the hybrid offspring becomes extraordinarily relevant in Lovecraft because they embody the anguish of undefinition, liminality and monstrosity, to stress the feeling of cosmic horror. While this liminal condition is closely related to the hybrid offspring's teratological body, other myths in Lovecraft stress liminality through uncanny spaces, such as in the case of the Lovecraftian myth of the underworld, studied below.

IV.2.3 Myth 3: The Underworld in Lovecraft's fiction

The common mythologeme that underpins the many variations of the myth of The Underworld in Lovecraft's fiction is the hero's descent into this same underworld. This mythologeme has been described in many religious texts and has become an artistic commonplace in western culture. The descent into the underworld or *katabasis* appears for instance, in the Mesopotamian myth of *Gilgamesh*, Homer's *Odyssey* and the Virgilian *Aeneid,* the many versions of the myth of *Orpheus,* Dante's *Inferno* (Bremmer 2017: 291-292), or *The New Testament* (Ephesians 4:9), among an endless list of other examples. In all cases, the myth of The Underworld involves the hero's *katabasis* from the world of the living human into some eschatological underworld inhabited by either the souls of the dead and/or some divinity or supernatural beings. The descent itself involves the idea of liminality between above and below, the human and the non-human, the natural and the supernatural, the living and the dead. The earliest example of *katabasis* in the western tradition is found in the Sumerian religious poem *Gilgamesh and the Netherworld*[110] (c.2100 BC). In the poem Gilgamesh sends his servant Enkidu after a ball that fell through a deep hole in the ground, with a warning against drawing attention from the shades or offending the dead people and demons who inhabit below the surface of the earth (Gadotti 2014: 154). The underworld is thus a dangerous place from which the living may never return since crossing its borders is banned for them. This was the case of Gilgamesh's servant, who neglected following his master's warnings. Still, thanks to Gilgamesh's intercession, god Utu allowed the imprudent servant out.

In the ancient Greek religion, the Tartarus was ruled by Hades and divided into three areas, the Asphodel Fields for the souls of the heroes, Erebus where the palace of Hades was placed, and Elysium, the place of the souls of the virtuous (Coleman 2019: 324). It was surrounded by River Acheron or Styx, which the ferryman Charon helped the dead cross on his boat (Coleman 2019: 61). The *katabasis* into the Tartarus is described in different texts. In the eleventh book of Homer's *Odyssey*, it is described as the place for the dead (Homer 1945: 176) where Ulysses descents

[110]The Mesopotamian author of *Gilgamesh, Enkidu and the Netherworld* is unknown. In my study I am using Alhena Gadotti's translation and notes.

seeking advice of the soul of Teiresias (1945:174). Following Circe's instructions to find the place, Ulysses must sail the deep-flowing River of Ocean in the frontiers of the world (1945:175), onto a confluence of infernal streams such as a River of Flamming Fire, a River of Lamentation and the Waters of Styx before he reaches River Acheron (1945:173). Circe also urges Ulysses to celebrate a pagan ritual that includes to pour offerings to the death (1945:173). In this place Ulysses meets the ghosts of different heroes and heroines from Greek mythology who tell him their melancholy stories (1945: 193).

The *katabasis* in the myth of Orpheus is triggered by his wife Eurydice's untimely death (Coleman 2019: 259), which led him to descend into Tartarus with the purpose of rescuing her. Orpheus's musical skills charmed god Hades into releasing her with the warning never to look back as he dragged Eurydice's shadow out after him. Since Orpheus could not resist doing so, Eurydice was forced back in Tartarus forever (2019:259). While Orpheus' punishment has been traditionally considered a consequence of his impatience (Bulfinch 1856: 256), I want to stress the importance of his glance as a symbol of the revelation of a hidden truth to human eyes. Thus, the figure of Orpheus was always related with the unveiling of unknown mysteries whose knowledge involve a severe penalty. In Ancient Greece, the myth of Orpheus boosted the appearance of the Orphic mysteric rites, which were celebrated to worship Dionysus (Coleman 2019: 260).

Dante's first part of the *Divine Comedy* describes the poet's *katabasis* into a Christian *Inferno* guided by the soul of the Roman poet Virgil, whom he meets at the beginning of his adventure (Dante 2000:5). Although Dante's underworld is a Christian one, it contains many elements taken from the ancient Greek and Roman religious and literary traditions such as the Acheron River and Charon (Dante 2000:19), the Styx River, Stygian Lake (2000:43), or the burning Phlegethon (2000:70) and the frozen Cocytus (2000:85). Dante's descent into the underworld unveils it as a frozen place of torture and sufferings divided into nine circles, each of which is devoted to the punishment of a particular kind of sin increasing in degree as the movement downwards develops.

The *katabasis* appears in many of Lovecraft' stories, typically involving the revelation of some hidden, disturbing truth. Unlike the *katabasis* in the real-life myths described above, the type of myth that prevails in Lovecraft's fiction is mainly cosmogonic. Thus, they deal with the origin of the universe, or the origin of life on Earth, and sometimes reveal the presence of an ancient alien species or its remaining in caves and chasms under the surface of the Earth. Sometimes, the myth is also etiological as it explains the origins of particular rituals. For my analysis of Lovecraft's use of the myth of The Underworld, I have chosen "The Festival" (1923), "The Rats in the Walls" (1923), the novelette *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931), and "The Shadow Out Time" (1935) as representative because in all of them there is a crucial revelation that takes place during a descent into the underground. Lovecraft's depiction of the Underworld in the first three stories includes the presence of underground rivers, suggesting the influence of the previous myths of the *Odyssey* and the *Divine Comedy* in real-life. For instance, in "The Festival," the protagonist is a participant in a collective pagan ritual that takes place under a church (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.412). Through an aperture in a tomb, he uses a staircase to descend into an underground system of corridors and chasms that also contains a column of fire and a river of oily water that bear strong resemblance to Dante's description of the Phlegethon and the Styx River or Stygian Lake in the *Divine Comedy*:

> As the steps and the passage grew broader, I heard another sound, the thin, whining mockery of a feeble flute; and suddenly there spread out before me the boundless vista of an inner world -a vast fungous shore litten by a belching columns of sick greenish flame and washed by a wide oily river that flowed from abysses frightful and suspected to join the blackest gulfs of immemorial ocean (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.413).

While Dante describes the Phlegethon as a boiling river of blood in which those who committed violence suffer a punishment (Dante 2000:70), Lovecraft's "belching columns of sick greenish flame" is described as stream of fire, but the parallelisms between them as hot, viscous, putrid, underground currents seem evident. The column of fire is a "cold flame" that provides a feeble light but not any warmth, similarly to the descriptions of a cold hell in Dante that includes hail, water and snow (2000:34) and flakes of fire compared to snow (2000: 82), or Homer's account of "perpetual mist" (1945:175). Lovecraft's "wide oily river that flowed from abysses frightful […] to join the blackest gulf of immemorial ocean" echoes both Dante's description of the Styx River as

a marsh, muddy place (Dante 2000:43) and Homer's "deep-flowing River of Ocean" (1945:175). The similarity between these descriptions is reinforced by the very explicit reference that Lovecraft makes to these previous sources such as Homer and Dante when he uses the expression "Stygian grotto" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.413) to describe the system of underground caverns that appears associated to this oily river. As in Homer's description of Ulysses' sacrifices in Hades, in "The Festival" a strange ritual takes place close to the oily river. This ritual deals with fire, water and fertility, and the participants "adore the sick pillar of flame, and throw into the water handfuls gouged out of the viscous vegetation which glittered green in the chlorotic glare" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.414), which again stresses the importance of infernal, chthonic, paganism in Lovecraft's fiction. There are more references to the representation of hell in previous authors, such as the "tartarean leagues," with the Greek Tartarus in the myth of Orpheus, or the vague allusions to "death and corruption," (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.414) dealing with the Greek myths of the underworld as the place of the dead in Homer's *Odyssey* and again, in the myth of Orpheus. Thus, in Lovecraft's "The Festival," this cold subterraneous place crossed by rivers of water and fire becomes the place of the dead and a liminal venue where mysterious pagan rituals take place.

In "The Rats in the Walls," Lovecraft's depiction of the myth of The Underworld is very similar to "The Festival." In this story, a group of researchers find the entrance of a system of caves under an altar, where a mechanism reveals a flight of steps that goes down into the earth (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.395). Lovecraft again uses the same words that deal with the ancient Greek underworld such as "sightless Stygian worlds" or "grisly Tartarus" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.395). The researchers find pits full of human bones that reveal the practice of the sacrifices of a pagan cult that had a continuity through thousands of years, as it has been analyzed in chapter II in this study. But, at the same time, these skeletons show that the underworld is the place of the dead, similar to the concept of Greek underworld. The first person narrator hears some sounds that are compared or described "as a stiff bloated corpse gently rises above an oily river that flows endless onyx bridges to a black, putrid sea" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.395). Although the quotation does

not necessarily involve the physical presence of an underground river, it associates again the underworld with rivers and water, as in the previous story, showing the influence of the cultural mythologeme of the underworld, through its evolution deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of ancient Mesopotamia, Greece and Dante in the Middle Ages.

In *At the Mountains of Madness*, that belongs to Lovecraft's later period, where scientific details supersede the presence of pagan elements, the references to a descent to the underworld are present in the exploration of the ruins of the lost civilization of the Elder Things in Antarctica. The two human explorers learn about these aliens through carvings that illustrate them with images, and find that "the best of the maps and diagrams were on the walls of a frightful abyss below even the ancient ground level, -a cavern perhaps 200 feet square, 60 feet height" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.93). Although the alien city was underwater when it was populated, the references to the underground and caverns are constant in the story, which stress again the importance of the myth of the underworld that underpins the scientific discourse that focuses on geological changes. Thus, the aliens had digged "networks of limestone caverns in the hollow hills to the neighbouring abyss of subterrene waters" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.112), that combines both the underground and the underwater as a liminal space for the monster. Like in "The Festival," in this story, Lovecraft describes the presence of an ancient river course (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.113), that was dry when the human explorers found it, but which continues with the tradition of hellish rivers of the underworld. Thus, even in the Lovecraft's later stories in which rationality and scientific discourse tends to supersede the irrational discourse of the pagan myths, the geography of horror still revolves about the same recurrent space of the underground.

In "The Shadow Out of Time" the protagonist Nathaniel Peaslee, after being possessed by the mind of an alien from a civilization that was established millions of years ago on Earth, travels to the Australian desert, where he finds the ruins of this alien culture. Again, in this story the protagonist descends into an underground described as a "a whole buried world of unholy archaism" (Lovecraft [1935] 2015: 3.429), with descriptions of chasms and abysses. As in *At the Mountains of*

Madness, the story is closer to science fiction and the elements of paganism or magic are less relevant for the narrative. However, this descent into the underground to experience a revelation about the existence of an alien culture, is another example of the cultural tradition of the myths of underworld, as a liminal place that intersects the spheres of the human and the extraterrestrial.

The examples provided clearly show how the mythologem of the underworld is reinterpreted in Lovecraft's adaptation of this myth into cosmic horror. Lovecraft's myth of the underworld in these stories consistently include a series of mythemes that can be traced in previous fictional versions of the myth, or religious accounts of the myth in real-life cultures. The most recurrent of these mythemes are the apprentice (1), the travel (2), the city of the gods (3), water (4) and revelation (5).

The mytheme of the apprentice who travels to a subterranean underworld is present in Gilgamesh in *Gilgamesh, Enki and the Netherworld*, Ulysses in Homer's *Odyssey* or Dante in his *Divine Comedy*. In Lovecraft's fiction, the figure of the apprentice is embodied by a first person narrator who experiences a *katabasis* that will change his life. In "The Festival," the mytheme of the apprentice is embodied by the young descendant of the people of the witches, while in "The Rats in the Walls," the mytheme is developed through the character of the American millionaire Delapore, the Antarctic explorer William Dyer in *At the Mountains of Madness*, and Nathaniel Peaslee in "The Shadow Out of Time." In all cases, the mytheme gains relevance in terms of focalization since the *katabasis* in all the stories is narrated in the first-person singular by the apprentice himself. Like in previous myths, the Lovecraftian *katabasis* in these stories has a radical impact in the character of the apprentice, who experiences a sort of pseudo-scientific revelation that Lovecraft describes as an initiation into some pseudo-religious mystery. This revelation alters the apprentice's knowledge about the world and the place of mankind in it, which affects his mental health with either severe mental suffering (in the cases of the anonymous protagonist of "The Festival," William Dyer and Nathaniel Peaslee in their respective stories), or even permanent madness (in Delapore's case). In this way it is very similar to the initiation experienced in pagan religions.

The mytheme of travel can be identified with the *katabasis* itself, that involves the transition from the upper world in the Earth's surface into the underworld below surface level. Like in previous myths, where the former is inhabited by the living and the later by the dead, in Lovecraft's versions of the myth, the *katabasis* involves transgressing the natural order that separates both spaces, even when Lovecraft explains it using rational scientific terms. While in previous versions of this mytheme, the threshold to the underworld is the gate of hell as a hole or cave opening, in Lovecraft's fiction, this entrance can be found below a building in a populated area, such as the church in "The Festival," or Exham Priory in "The Rats of the Walls." In such cases, the *katabasis* takes place along a series of stairs descending into the vast system of caverns and chasms that make the underworld itself. Sometimes, the threshold to the underworld is typically located at some ruins in a remote, depopulated area, such as Antarctica in *At the Mountains of Madness,* or the Australian desert in "The Shadow Out of Time." In those cases, the travel also leads to a similar system of underground corridors and caves, but instead of accessing them through a human building, the opening form parts of an alien archeological site.

While the first mytheme is embodied by a character and the second by the travel in the katabasis, the rest of mythemes relate to the underground place, which includes the mytheme of the city of the gods, and the mytheme of water as the river. I have chosen the expression "city of the gods" to describe the ruins that are found underground in Lovecraft's fiction as the remnants of the underworld kingdom of powerful beings, that relate to the cultural tradition of the kingdom of Hades and other infernal gods. As it has been discussed in chapter III, in Lovecraft's fiction the beings that built these ruins are alien, but in some cases, they are described as gods. In "The Rats in the Walls," this is made up the cells, megaliths, pits and underground system of galleries "chiseled from beneath" (Lovecraft [1923] 2015: 1.392), this is to say, not built by human hands. In *At the Mountains of Madness* and "The Shadow out of Time," the mytheme is represented by the alien cities of the Elder Things in Antarctica and the Great Race in Australia, detailly described.

Frequently, the mytheme of the river or underground waters also plays a relevant role. As it

has been discussed, this element plays a relevant role in “The Festival,” and it is mentioned in “The Rats in the Walls” and *At the Mountains of Madness.* In "The Festival," the underground river is also the place where pagan rituals are performed, showing the symbolic connotations of water for this kind of ceremonies. In the examples provided, the influence of the cultural representations of rivers in the underworld evinces the influence of a hellish geography conformed by previous myths.

Finally, the mytheme of the revelation usually constitutes the climax of the story. Said revelation is the unveiling of a hidden truth that is shown to the protagonist when after his travel, that is traumatic for him and faces him with madness. Symbolically, it represents the end of the initiatory travel of the apprentice, after he discovers the city of the gods. Although the apprentice’s *katabasis* does not usually involve a direct encounter with the Old Ones, said apprentice discovers that the underworld is a realm that was inhabited by them, which establishes a strong parallelism with previous myths, such as the imprisonment of the Titans in Hades in Hesiod’s Theogony, where they “live, on the far side of the gloomy chasm” (Hesiod 1988: 27). Unlike previous versions of the myth of The Underworld, the mytheme of the revelation in Lovecraft’s fiction adds a cosmogonic component to the myth, since the revelation itself typically involves the knowledge of the origin of the earliest stages the cosmos. In “The Festival,” for instance, the mytheme of the revelation is developed through the pagan ritual of Yule, where the apprentice discovers that some of its performers are not fully human, which involves that the rites were established before the existence of mankind. As discussed above, in “The Rats of the Walls,” Delapore finds the human remains of ancient cannibalistic sacrifices performed by his ancestors, which is a revelation that causes his insanity. In *At the Mountains of Madness* and “The Shadow Out of Time,” it is when the apprentice as a first person narrator suffers a psychic trauma because he discovers the rests of advanced alien civilizations insinuating the presence of possibly hostile extraterrestrials and evidencing the unimportance of mankind in an indifferent universe as a central issue in cosmic horror. In the “Shadow Out of Time,” the revelation confirms that the apprentice Nathaniel Peaslee is not mad, but possessed by an alien mind. In all cases above, those who experience these revelations, have

experienced some sort of initiation that open new terrific vistas abut cosmos, but, as a result, their minds become irreversibly affected. While in Lovecraft's fiction the effects of this initiation are usually negative, within previous religious contexts from real life the effects were positive, which shows a divergence between revelation in cosmic horror and previous myths.

The different variations of these mythemes, in Lovecraft's narrative give a composite picture of his myth of The Underworld, that are a reinterpretation of an ancient mythologem that contained all these elements with different names. But the two main characteristics of these myths, liminality and circularity, can be noticed both in Lovecraft's fiction and in the cultural traditions that constitute their background.

Liminality, both spatially and ontologically, is an important feature of the underworld because it is a border between mankind's world and a world of *the Other* characterized by an external perception based on alleged differences. In ancient cultural traditions this world of the Other was the world of the dead, the Mesopotamian underworld, the kingdom of Hades in Greek mythology, or hell in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. As Jean Brouillard argues, an example of said alterity are the dead, who as soon were identified in their identity as such, were banished to outlying cemeteries (Baudrillard 1990: 128). The Alien then becomes the "monstrous metaphor for the corpse-like, viral Other: the compound form of all the varieties of otherness done to death by our system" (1990:128). In Lovecraft's fiction the underground is the world of aliens, other non-human beings and, exceptionally, also the dead.[111] The buried alien cities that appear in stories such as *At the Mountains of Madness,* and "The Shadow Out of Time" are a liminal place, the outpost marking the border between our upper world and their original and distant, alien worlds. The travel of the apprentice then becomes a sort of initiation, in which the encounter with the buried alien city becomes a sort of epiphany that subverts religious revelation into horror. In other stories, such as "The Festival" or "The Rats in the Walls," this liminal position of the underground is the meeting place for humans and creatures from the inside of earth, where humans are sometimes invited to

[111] An example of animated corpse is found in "The Thing on the Doorstep" (Lovecraft [1933] 2015), in which the cadaver of Asenath Waite comes to life.

participate in hideous ceremonies. In these two stories this liminal position is stressed through the pagan rituals that take place there. Thus, the underground is a liminal venue because it is a place of transition and because extraordinary events take place there. In addition, the inhabitants of this underground are also ontologically liminal, since they are described as monsters whose nature is not human and therefore occupy an intermediate position between mankind and alien, sometimes supernatural creatures. Still, Lovecraft's underworld involves other dimensions for liminality, such as an epistemological one as a realm in which the limits between the scientific and religious tend to vanish, a gnoseological one through revelation that involves the passing from ignorance to knowledge, and even an extradiegetic, intertextual one between the discourses of science and fiction.

Circularity is another feature that can be noticed in Lovecraft's underworlds. The underground becomes the realm in which rituals take place cyclically every year in the inner caverns, exemplified by the pagan celebrations of Yule in "The Festival" or by the pagan sacrifices dealing with a religious syncretism around Cybele and Attis described in "The Rats in the Walls," that have been studied on in chapter II. But there are also another kind of cycles that can be noticed in the more "science-fiction like" stories of *At the Mountains of Madness* and "The Shadow Out of Time." This is the case of alien cities that had been in the surface of the earth millions of years ago, but that after geological processes became buried in our human period.

In conclusion, Lovecraft reinterprets and adapts into 20th century cosmic horror the ancient myths of the underworld in a loosely western cultural religious and literary tradition that includes the epic account of *Gilgamesh, Enki and the Netherworld* from the 3rd millennium BC Mesopotamia, ancient Greek sources such as Homer's *Odyssey* or the myth of Orpheus, and a medieval author such as Dante. While merely supernatural creatures of the underworld in said previous tradition are substituted by Lovecraft's monstrous entities in which alienness is not denying, but intrinsically intertwined with the numinous, his adaptation still shares a same common, transcultural mythologem with previous pagan myths. This mythologem about a *katabasis* into the netherworld is evinced through Lovecraft's particular underworld and its constituent mythemes that transcend the

discourse of previous pagan myths into a new horror narrative characterized by narrative ambiguity; spatial, ontological, gnoseological, and epistemological liminality; and circular time. Thus, Lovecraft creates atmospheres of horror, in which the trespassing of the border between our upper world and the underworld means the encounter with the uncanny and madness. Hence, these two worlds are characterized by respective pairs of opposed concepts, such as the human and the natural versus the alien and the numinous, life versus death, and reason versus madness.

IV.2.4 Myth 4: The Cycle of Water and Land

This Lovecraftian myth deals with the succession of periods of time in which waters and lands cover the surface of Earth. It is a cosmogonic myth that explains the origin of the planet, but at the same time it is eschatological since the arrival of a new period involves the destruction of the previous one. Sometimes is described as a cyclical process. The ancient cultural traditions that are at the literary basis of the Lovecraftian myth deal with flood as a transcultural mythologeme that transcends and permeates the local accounts of universal deluges. This includes the Judaeo-Christian tradition of Noah's Deluge in the Bible (Genesis 6:7), derived from older traditions such as Atrahasis and Utnapishtim in ancient Mesopotamia (Sävulescu 2005: 167), the Greek flood of Decaulion or the flood narrated in the book of *Popol-Vuh* from the Mayan pre-hispanic civilization. I will provide an analysis of each of them.

In the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition, the Hebrew deluge appears in the book of *Genesis*, because of Yahweh's initial decision to eradicate man from the face of Earth (Genesis 6:7), but He later decided to allow Noah to build and ark to save him, together with his family and the animals, classified in clean and not clean beasts. After this was done, "the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heavens were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights" (Genesis 7: 11-12).

As Sävulescu argues, most historians of religion consider that the Hebrew deluge was influenced by the previous myth of the Mesopotamian flood around the characters of Atrahasis and

Utnapishtim (Sävulescu 2005: 167). In this myth, the god Enlil, leader of the assembly of the Mesopotamian gods, sent a deluge to destroy mankind (Frankfort 1993: 301). At the time described in the myth, Atrahasis was the king of the city of Shurupak, a mythical character who is the Babylonian equivalent of Noah (Coleman 2019: 32). Atrahasis was warned of the deluge by the god Enki, and survived the flood in “his ship, Preserver of life, saving also his wife, animals, and plants” (2019:32). In other versions, Atrahasis is the father of Utnapishtim, who is the survivor of flood.

The main tradition of the flood among the ancient Greeks was the story of Deucalion (Coleman 2019: 88). According to the main Greek tradition, Deucalion was forewarned by his father of the coming flood, which allowed him to built an ark to save his wife Pyrrha and himself before Zeus flooded the world (2019:88). In other versions of the Greek flood, the hero of the account is called Dardanus or Ogyges instead of Deucalion (Coleman 2019: 89).

The *Popol-Vuh* is a Mayan book written around 1550-1555 that describes a cosmogony about the creation of the world and human beings by the gods (Garza 1980: XXXI). In the Mayan *Popol-Vuh*, the whole creation was destroyed and re-created by these gods several times. In one of the creations, the gods produced figures of wood who looked like men, talked like men, and reproduced populating the surface of Earth (Goetz 1954:6). However, these figures did not have soul so they forgot about their creator. As a result, they fell out of his favor and were destroyed by "a flood [that] was brought about by the heart of heaven; […and…] fell on the heads of the wooden creatures" (Goetz 1954:7).

Apart from the inundation of dry earth, the destruction of mankind and the hero who survives it, the mythologem of the flood frequently includes the presence of sea-monsters in different cultures. Thus, in Hebrew mythology, Leviathan is the serpent of the primeval chaos, sometimes described as a beast with seven heads as the Greek Hydra, sometimes described as emitting a light brighter than the sun (Coleman 2019:210). Later, Leviathan also came to symbolize hell. As commented in chapter III, in Mesopotamian mythology Tiamat and Apsu are also water monsters, representing forces of Chaos (Frankfort 1993: 254). Apsu symbolized the male fresh

water and Tiamat the female salt water.

This myth appears in Lovecraft's fiction in stories such as “Dagon” (1917), “The Doom that Came to Sarnath” (1920), “The Temple” (1920), “The Moon-Bog” (1921), “The Call of Cthulhu” (1926), *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931),) and “The Shadow over Innsmouth” (1931) among many others[112]. In Lovecraft's works, the influence of the mythologeme of the flood can be assessed by the abundance of periodic transgressions in which a place is covered by the water of the oceans and then it emerges again. However, there are important differences in Lovecraft's fiction from the myths of flood in real-life religions. The first one is that the process that makes the land to be covered by water and vice-versa, is not caused by massive rain, but usually through geologic or tectonic movements that rise or sink the lands, which provide some sort of scientific explanation as a counterpart for the numinous elements in the myth. As a consequence, there is a personified agent in the form of an angry god, nor a reason or motive (punishment) behind the event itself. Instead, the flood is presented as a natural process. Still, Lovecraft's development of the myth is similar to previous ones in that it explains the destruction of human civilization through water in very ancients times. Furthermore, the presence of maritime monsters in his stories shows the influence of cultural myths about these creatures, that involve a regression to a period when the water dominates land. I have chosen “Dagon,” “The Call of Cthulhu,” “The Shadow Over Innsmouth” and *At the Mountains of Madness,* because they best illustrate the process of the cyclical alternation of water and land and the role of the maritime monsters within the process.

The protagonist of “Dagon” is a member of the crew of a ship that was attacked and sunk by a German submarine during World War One. As he managed to escape on a boat, he discovered that it got stuck into a “slimy expanse of hellish black mire” that spread out all around him as if the ocean had disappeared (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 1.53). Then, he thought that a geological process

[112] Two of the stories above, “The Temple” and “The Doom that Came to Sarnath” are outside my canon to study paganism in Lovecraft fiction described in chapter I, because they are less recurrent for this aim. Still, the cyclical alternation of water and land also play a relevant role in both. “The Temple” is about a submarine that discovers the ruins of Atlantis, while in “The Doom that Came to Sarnath” the monstrous inhabitants of a sunken city take a just revenge on humans.

had risen the seabed:

> I realised that only one theory could explain my position. Through some unprecedented volcanic upheaval, a portion of the ocean floor must have been thrown to the surface, exposing regions that for innumerable millions of years had been hidden under unfathomable watery depths. So great was the extent of the new land which had risen beneath was that I could not detect the faintest noise of the surging ocean, strain my ears as I might (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 1.54).

The story shows a cycle in which areas of the earth that were covered by water emerge to the surface. As a result, the protagonist finds some ruins that been hidden for a long period of time. The story does not say if before this period under the water, these had also been emerged lands in an extremely ancient period, but the text suggests it, reinforcing the circularity of the process. The protagonist leaves the boat and walks towards a mound that rose far away. There he discovers carvings representing of gigantic monsters whose general outlines were human, but with webbed hands and feet and bulgy eyes (Lovecraft [1917] 2015:1.57). It is then that appears a creature that he later identifies with the pagan god Dagon, but who, as the same time is a sea monster described as “Polyphemus like,” “loathsome,” “like a stupendous monster of nightmares to the monolith, about which it flung its gigantic scaly arms” (Lovecraft [1917] 2015:1.57). This description shows the influence of paganism in the comparison with the cyclops and the teratological maritime creature. After the protagonist escapes from the creature and reaches the boat, while there is a great *storm*, before he loses consciousness and awakes in a hospital in San Francisco. I interpret this storm as the completion of the myth of the cycle, the waters have regained their position through rain. Like Noah, Atrahasis, Deucalion and all of the characters in the cultural myths of the flood, he saves his life on a boat picked up in the ocean after the storm ([1917] 2015:58). But the cycle will not end, because he foreshadows a future in which these ruins under water will rise again causing the end of mankind. He dreams of "a day when the land shall sink, and the dark ocean floor will ascend amidst universal pandemonium" (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 1.58). Again, this eschatology reveals an influence of the myths of the flood.

In “The Call of Cthulhu,” the mythologeme of the deluge appears intertwined with the myth of the gods who came down from the stars. In this story, Cthulhu, the alien-god from the stars, is the central character subject in a cycle of alternance of waters and lands, because his prison-home

at R'lyeh remains for long periods of time under water, but then it emerges again. The members of his cult in the story explain that there will a “time when the great priest Cthulhu, from his dark house in the mighty city of R'lyeh under the waters, should rise and bring earth again beneath his sway” (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.38). But if this city was under the waters in previous times, this was because R'lyeh, “with its monoliths and sepulchres, had sunk beneath the waters,” but high-priests of the Cthulhu said that the city would rise again, when the stars were right (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.40). These quotations show a cycle through three phases, first with the city emerged and the hegemony of the Old Ones like Cthulhu, second, the sinking of the city under the waters in the period of time that includes the insignificant existence of man, and finally when the city will rise again. Any of these phases is expected to last for millions of years, but at the end of the story, the narration describes the account of a sailor called Johansen, in which R'lyeh rises and Cthulhu is freed for a short period of time, from March 22nd to April 2nd 1925, but then the city sinks again, as a terrible foreshadow or prophecy of the definitive destiny of earth and man, because “what has risen may sink, and what has sunk may rise” (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.55). It is interesting to notice that in Johansen's account, the moment when R'lyeh sinks coincides with a *storm* on April 2nd, which I consider that is a clear influence of the flood myths and the destruction caused by rain. Thus, the story is deliberately ambiguous about the cause of this cyclical alternation, because the scientific geological explanation is intersected not only by the cosmic interpretation determined the position of the stars, but also by the symbol of the storm that represents an intertextual, extradiegetic dialogue with the previous flood myths, which adds mystery and wonder to Lovecraft’s version of the myth.

Two aspects are relevant within this cycle of flood: The presence of some synchronicity, or mysterious acausal relations that affect the narration of this cycle, and Cthulhu’s rise and sunk as the landmark event that causes the beginning and ending of this circular process. The cycle of water and land in “The Call of Cthulhu,” involves synchronicity in a very similar way to what was exposed by Jung.

The concept of Jung's synchronicity, as the occurrence of a meaningful coincidence in time without any causal relations, has been already explained in a previous section in this chapter. Two unrelated events seem to be connected despite the absence any logical relation between them. In "The Call of Cthulhu," there is a succession of cycles of prevalence of water and land that is very similar to synchronicity. But synchronicity can be also proven because there are many characters in this story who independently acquire knowledge about the eponymous creature, Cthulhu, and about its prison, the city of R'lyeh, in different situations. For instance, young artist Wilcox dreams with the monster and the city, without any previous knowledge or contact with them. There are no cause-effect relations. In "The Call of Cthulhu," these dreams, and nervous agitation are experienced by many other "sensitive" people such as artists, insane people and communities traditionally associated to pagan beliefs from all around the world, without being aware that other people are undergoing the same perceptions (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2. 29). This is quite like a particular type of synchronicity described by Jung as "the coincidence of a subjective psychic state with a phantasm (dream or vision) which later turns out to be a reflection of a "synchronistic," objective event that took place more of less simultaneously, but at a distance (Jung 1955: 145). Jung called the "psychoid archetype," to a mental situation that can be compared to what Lovecraft called "sensitive people." According to Jung, this "psychoid archetype" was "capable of relativizing space and time, and this quality became apparent via the principle of synchronicity" (Yiassemides 2011:452). As Lorenz points out, only people who are "intuitives" such as artists or schizophrenics can appreciate synchronistic events (Lorenz 2006: 9). This is quite similar to what happens in Lovecraft's "The Call of Cthulhu" when young artists, insane people and pagan communities experience the same visions and dreams (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.29), perceiving this alternation of dominion of water and land.

The appearance of the sea-monster Cthulhu has been described in detail in chapter III, but I consider worthy to focus again on his relationship with water. Its octopus-like head and his scaly rubbery-looking body are features that are typical from aquatic animals, even although there are

critics, such as Mosig and Joshi, who deny this relation with water[113] (Mosig 1997: 25; Joshi 2013:644). I think that the relation of Cthulhu with water is clear, not only because of its octopus head and scales, but because its cult is associated with water, for instance in the rituals in the swamps in Louisiana, and because it shares many characteristics with monsters from different mythologies, such as the aforementioned Apsu and Tiamat in ancient Mesopotamia,[114] and the Norwegian kraken. I will focus on some characteristics of the latter. The kraken is a cephalopod monster who lives in the sea, with such a large size that is measured in miles (Coleman 2019: 195), and Cthulhu is described as a "mountainous monstrosity" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.53). Thus, my conclusion is that Cthulhu is a sea-monster related to the mythical accounts of cycles of flood from cultural traditions, and whose imprisonment and release involves both a creative and destructive force, that marks the turning point within these cycles.

In the "Shadow Over Innsmouth" the references to a succession of periods where the ocean covers the land and vice-versa is not only hinted, but explicitly referenced to evolution and biological changes that make one maritime species become land animals. This Darwinian interpretation of the cycles of land and water is expressed through the account of Zadok Allen, the old drunkard who reveals this to the protagonist, using his poor English: "Seems that human folks has got a kind o' relation to sech water-beasts -that everything alive come aout o' the water onct, an' only needs a little change to go back agin" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.189). This means that mankind had its origin in species that lived under water, which makes possible for our species, or the descendant of our species to go back to live to the sea again. In the story, this is achieved through miscegenation with the Deep Ones that live under the sea. Thus, the children resulting from said miscegenation "shud never die, but go back to the mother Hydra an' father Dagon what we all come from onct" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.197). Besides these biological changes, Allen also

[113]Mosig believes that "the presence of wings, the extraterrestrial origin of Cthulhu, and the fact that he was imprisoned or trapped in his watery grave, the sunken city of R'lyeh, all militated against the hypothesis that Cthulhu was an aquatic being" (Mosig 1997:25). Joshi repeats Mosig's arguments to conclude that water is not Cthulhu's natural element (Joshi 2013:644)

[114]See chapter III in this study.

refers to geological processes that rise submarine ruins, mentioning the deluge, when he alludes to “when the sea-bottom throws up some island with ruins older'n the deluge” (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.191). I consider that this reference to the deluge is not a simple delirium of an illiterate character, but a reference to the flood as the mythical frame in which Lovecraft wanted to contextualize this story.

In “The Moon-Bog,” Denys Barry, an American millionaire from Irish ancestry inherits a property in Ireland where there is a bog that, against the advice of local people, he decides to drain. The bog covers the ruins created by an ancient race because "on a far islet, a strange olden ruin glistened spectrally" (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.256). It is also a place where monsters dwell, associated with mythical creatures from Greek paganism. The plans of the protagonist to drain the the bog can be interpreted as an attempt to alter the cosmic cycle of land and water, "disturbing the ancient bog" (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.261). This causes an inexorable reaction of these cosmic forces, causing the death of Barry and the interruption of his plans, showing that the eternal cycle of the waters and the lands cannot be interrupted.

In *At the Mountains of Madness*, a short novel from the last period of Lovecraft's fiction, the cycle of lands and water appears through scientific explanations. The Elder Things, the alien species that appears in the story and who built cities in our planet, first built them in the oceans, and "the small, low cities under the sea grew to vast and imposing labyrinths of stone not unlike those which later rose on land" (Lovecraft 2015: 3.96). It was also under the sea, when they first created earth-life (Lovecraft 2015: 3.95). Also, through geological processes some of the cities of the Elder-Things that were on the surface of the land became sunk and vice-versa. Thus, through this scientific discourse underpinned in rationalism, the mythic cycle of water as its irrational counterpart becomes relevant throughout the story.

The stories above provide abundant examples of the most relevant mythemes that make up the myth of the cycle of water and land in Lovecraft's fiction. These include (1) waters; (2) the hybrid god; (3) lands; (4) the apprentice; (5) revelation; (6) the city of the gods; (7) the sacrifice and

(8) the madman.

The mytheme of the waters describes the initial phase of existence, the primordial waters that existed in the origin, that has analogous descriptions in many myths and pagan religions. These include the aforementioned cases of Apsu (fresh water) and Tiamat (salt water) in the Mesopotamian cosmogony, or the biblical account of creation, where "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of water" (Genesis 1:2). This biblical cosmogony also describes how Yahweh divided "the waters which were under the firmament and the waters which were above the firmament" (Genesis 1:7), before it provides information of the flood commented on above. In Lovecraft's fiction, the mytheme of the primordial waters indicates the origin of life on earth. Thus, water is the place where the Elder Things created life in *At the Mountains of Madness* (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.95), or the original place where the ancient forms of life from which human species evolved, as old Zadok Allen explains in "The Shadow Over Innsmouth" (Lovecraft 2015: 3.189). The cosmogonic component of the mytheme situates these waters in a liminal position out of space and time in some stories as in the nightmarish irruption of submerged land in "Dagon," described "as a prodigious scenery" and as an "unending plain" (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 1.53), in which the limits of our world seem to have transversed into a scale of cosmic dimensions. Lovecraft reprises the topic in the description of a wrong geometry in which the sea and the ground are not horizontal in "The Call of Cthulhu" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.52), that subverts the human concepts about space. In both stories these waters stand at the beginning of each period in the cosmic cycle of water and land. Thus, these upheavals and risings of the ocean's floor in these two stories, more than the irruption of land into water, represent the intrusion into the upper world of water in which a hidden horror is lurking.

The second mytheme in the myth of the cycle of water and land is the hybrid god, which intersects with the previous myth of the alien offspring to provide thematic cohesion to Lovecraft's mythopoesis. While displaying the features of divinity, this hybrid god is represented in Lovecraft's fiction as a monstrous, threatening sea creature with animal-like features. Examples of maritime

monster include the monster in “Dagon” (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 1.57), the case of dead Cthulhu that “waits dreaming” as an oxymoron of his ineffable divinity in the eponymous story, the race of the "Deep Ones" in “The Shadow Over Innsmouth” or the aquatic creatures in “The Moon Bog.” The monstrosity of the hybrid god lies on its liminality, because as Kathy Nuzum argues, monsters are typically liminal in their physical appearance, “often displaying characteristics of more than one species, […] what makes them horrific” (Nuzum 2004:208). This is the case of Cthulhu, whose octopus head and scaly body arrange inside an anthropoid outline (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.31) blending human and animal features. In the case of Deep Ones, they are described as vaguely anthropoid, while having “heads of fish,” “bulging eyes,” and “palpitating gills that never close” (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.223). This description is intended to produce horror through the sheer alienness of their bodies, in which the adjectives have been chosen to produce repugnance. Although Deep Ones can breed with humans the monstrosity of the hybrid god does not seem to lie on its mere hybridization between the human and the non-human, but rather on hybridization itself, since the hybrid god resulting from animal inter-species configuration is also described as monstrous in Lovecraft’s fiction. Thus, they are described as “frog-fish monsters” (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.188). The monstrous liminality of the hybrid god in the myth of the cycle of water and land is also signaled by its amphibious nature, allowing it to somehow embody the cycle itself as it not only survives through the totality of this cosmic cycle of destruction and rebirth, but its imprisonment and release constitutes the turning points in the cycle of water and land itself.

The third mytheme in the myth of the cycle of water and land in Lovecraft's fiction is prevalence of the lands. This mytheme describes the emergence of land in the cycle and corresponds with the period when waters decrease in real-life flood myths. Its presence can be indirectly inferred in “The Call of Cthulhu” in the metaphor of human’s “placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity” (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.21). While this sentence expresses the idea of human insignificance versus an infinite universe which is inherent to cosmic horror, the trope of the island as a small spot of land besieged by hostile water cannot be overlooked. If the

dominion of the seas symbolizes the prevalence of dark forces, then the reference to land represents the intermediate periods in which mankind erroneously ignore its precarious situation. The mytheme is expressed in a much direct way, through the description the return of the human characters to firm land, such as when Olsen gets to Dunedin in “The Call of Cthulhu” (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.55), or when the anonymous protagonist of “Dagon” wakes up in firm land in San Francisco (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 2.57).Thus, the mytheme of land represents the time of human rule over the Earth, the duration of which as part of the cycle must be ephemeral. In this myth, Lovecraft’s use of a cyclical conception of time allows him to construct narrative tension by both delaying and anticipating the destruction of land by water and the sunken horrors lurking under it.

The rest of the mythemes that I have identified in the myth of the cycle of water and land (“the apprentice,” “revelation,” “the city of the gods,” “sacrifice,” and “the madman”) are not exclusive of this cycle but recurring in other Lovecraftian myths. Still, in this mytheme, they show specificities that require some discussion. The mytheme of “the apprentice” usually appears in this myth as the protagonists and first-person narrator of the stories, who discovers the sunken alien city emerging from water and faces the hybrid god-monsters who inhabit it. As in the myth of The Underworld, the apprentice of the myth of the cycle of water and land is the recipient of a revealed knowledge, which in this case, involves the cosmic cyclical nature of alternating water and land ruling the universe. In this myth, this revelation has a negative effect on the apprentice’s psychological wellbeing often resulting in madness. This is the case of the anonymous narrator of “Dagon,” who discovers an emerged monolith that is the dwelling of the sea monster in the story (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 2.56]. The impossibility of his mind to accept this revelation results in his delirium and subsequent suicide ([1917] 2015: 2.58). In “The Moon Bog," it is the first-person narrator, who realizes that the eponymous bog in Ireland is dominated by mysterious forces that he identifies with ancient pagan divinities (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.263). This ominous revelation affects his mental balance, which contributes to intensify the atmosphere of horror to the narration. In “The Call of Cthulhu” it is represented by the narrator (professor Angell's nephew) and his

research about the myth of Cthulhu from different sources (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.24). He is also the unnamed narrator in "The Shadow over Innsmouth," who discovers the truth about his own origins (Lovecraft [1931] 2015. 3. 227).

Also like in the myth of The Underworld, the mytheme of the revelation is a consequence of the search of the protagonist, both as an initiatory travel through a hidden or forgotten lore or through a geographical exploration. While initiation is a term that belongs to the religious field, in Lovecraft's myth of the cycle of water and land this concept adopts scientific connotations, which contribute to produce indeterminacy as a literary device to produce cosmic horror. In this case, it develops as the protagonist bears witness to the presence of monstrous entities lurking under the sea. In "Dagon," this revelation is the discovery of the ancient monolith and monster (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 1.56), that causes madness to the protagonist. In "The Call of Cthulhu" it is represented by outcome of the research of Professor Angell about the presence of Cthulhu and the inevitability of his rising as the consequence of ineluctable cosmic cycles. This revelation is shown to the apprentice through different testimonies that gradually unveil this disturbing truth. As Joshi argues, the use of a narrative-within-a-narrative device is undeniable effective to convey verisimilitude to the narrative (Joshi 2013:641). In "The Shadow Over Innsmouth," the gradual revelation of the alien origins of the narrator, incarnating the mytheme of the apprentice, by Zadok Allen, as the prophet involves a narrative progression in the discovery of the truth that contributes to increase tension and dramatism.

The mytheme of the "city of the gods" describes the ruins of an alien city that rises from under the waters, like the monolith in "Dagon," the city of R'lyeh in "The Call of Cthulhu," the ruins in "The Moon-Bog," or the city of Y'ha-nthlei inhabited by the Deep Ones in "The Shadow over Innsmouth." This mytheme appears in other Lovecraft myths, such as in The Visit of the Alien-Gods and The Underworld. As in these other myths, these ruins that rise and sink in the cycle of water and land, as well as the alien-gods who inhabit them can be also identified with the mytheme of "revelation" in many of the stories. Thus, in stories such as "The Call of Cthulhu," the discovery

of the city of the gods and the hybrid god, becomes itself the main revelation in the climax of the story.

The mytheme of the sacrifice in the myth of the cycle of water and land adds a supernatural dimension to the cosmogonic dimension of the myth by incorporating elements evoking pagan practices such as sacrifices celebrated in remote places by the water. This echoes the sacrifices described in ancient account of the flood, such as in the sacrifice and libation in the Mesopotamian flood (Budge 1920:37) or Noah's offerings of beasts and fowls in the altar in biblical deluge (Gen 8:20). This mytheme is present in "The Call of Cthulhu" and "The Shadow Over Innsmouth." In the first of these stories, the ritual per se takes place in the swamps in Louisiana, which includes human sacrifices. In the "Shadow Over Innsmouth" the sacrifice of young women and men contributes to intensify the atmosphere of horror because of the violence that they involve. As explained in chapter II, in paganism water is as a venue where sacrifices take place. While these rituals in Lovecraft's fiction echo the sacrifices in previous accounts of the deluge, the meaning of the ritual is subverted from the original the gratitude to the gods that have saved a group of humans from flood to an orgy of blood to satisfy the requirements of aquatic monsters.

The mytheme of the madman in the myth of the cycle of land and water is typically developed through characters who behave as the prophets who reveal the hidden truth in question. As a consequence, the mytheme appears more frequently in stories including pagan elements, such as "The Call of Cthulhu" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth." In these stories, the character of the madman is usually depicted as a very aged, almost illiterate man who nonetheless possesses a highly advanced knowledge about a particular lore and ancient myths, in particular those who have to do with the existence of hideous monsters that lurk under the water. In "The Call of Cthulhu," the mytheme of the madman is embodied by the character of old Castro, a devotee of Cthulhu committed to a mental institution who is acquainted with ancient stories about Cthulhu and the sunken city of R'lyeh (Lovecraft [1926] 2015:2.38). In "The Shadow over Innsmouth" the madman is Zadok Allen, the "half-crazed, liquorish nonagenarian" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015:3.184) who tells

the protagonist what is happening in the town, and why its inhabitants gradually become water monsters when they age. Apart from this knowledge, the characterization of both evinces their insanity caused by their obsession with the Old Ones and their grandiloquent discourse expressed with extreme nervousness. This mytheme is related to the mythemes of the "apprentice" and "revelation," since the "madman" reveals some terrible information to the character identified with the "apprentice," who, at the beginning, does not believe it. This is the case of the information that old Castro provides to inspector Legrasse (and through his testimony, to Professor Angell and his nephew), and Zadok Allen to the young man in Innsmouth, in such a way that all of them become to some sort "apprentices," or initiates in the mysteries of a concealed truth. But together with this ominous revelation, the "madman" also transfers some of his insanity to the "apprentice". Thus, the mytheme of the madman adds dramatic tension to the rhythm of the narrative through the gradual unveiling of horror, while establishing an intertextual dialogue with analogous characters in other myths that include a similar figure.

Thus, Lovecraft apprehends, reinterprets, and adapts different pagan and Judeo-Christian myths, as those of the deluge or flood which includes the sea monster taken from several cultural and religious traditions, to create his own myths, in which I have called his "cycle of water and land." These Lovecraftian myths have common patterns that include three common aspects: a circular time-frame characterized by the alternation of cycles of water and land; the presence of liminality through liminal spaces and liminal creatures such as the sunken cities and the creatures that dwell in them; and finally the presence of a recurrent narrative structure that includes the same constituents or mythemes. While these elements also appear in other myths in Lovecraft's fiction, whose narratives are closely intertwined, in the cycle of water and land they adopt specific features, as water not only becomes a realm for the aquatic monster, but a metaphor of a dark, infinite universe. The intersection of the horrors of this vast universe with insignificant humans is studied in the next section, devoted to the topic of possession.

IV.2.5 Myth 5: Possession and Mind Swap

The myth of possession of human characters by diverse entities is a common feature in many of Lovecraft's stories. In some cases, possession takes the form of mind swap between characters, shifting the approach to identity appropriation from the supernatural to the sphere of science-fiction. Perhaps the most evident instance of this myth is *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* (1927), but it is also present in "Beyond the Wall of Sleep" (1919), "The Whisperer in Darkness" (1930), and "The Shadow Out of Time" (1935). The entities that possess human characters are diverse, ranging from the spirit of some ancestor in "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward," to a sorcerer in "The Thing on the Doorstep," and to alien creatures in "The Whisperer in Darkness," "Beyond the Wall of Sleep," and "The Shadow Out of Time." In fact, the stories incorporating this particular myth are so common in Lovecraft's fiction that they almost constitute a subgenre in his narrative. While previous myths explored ontological liminality through the physicality of teratological body, the myth of possession explores said ontological border by means of spiritual and intellectual conflict. In this inner dispute the victim's own identity blurs into ambiguity, which causes extreme mental anxiety to the victim.

The myth of possession in Lovecraft's fiction has its origins in previous pagan and Judaeo-Christian religions and myths. These pagan traditions include both the Pythia in the sanctuary of Delphi (Fairbanks 1910:63; Smith 1965:413) and the maenads in Dionysus (Fairbanks 1910:241; Smith 1965: 411) in ancient Greece, the case of Ishtar priestess in Mesopotamia (Stuckey 2015:3), the possession of individuals in ancient Egypt (Szpakowska 2009:800), or the accounts of expulsion of devils by Jesus in the Bible (Matt 8:16; Matts 8:28-32; Mark 1:34; Luke 11:14). In them possession involves a supernatural power that takes control of the will of their human victims and can thus influence the actions of their bodies. The phenomenon is not easy to classify within the five types of myth established by Brzezinski (cosmogonic, anthropogenic, etiological, theogonic, and eschatological). Still, although possession does not explain the origin of gods or mankind, it involves an interaction between superior forces and humans that would allow to identify certain

theogonic and anthropogenic elements.

The common mythologeme that underpins Lovecraft's possession with previous mythical accounts of pagan myths, involves enforced occupation of the human body by external forces. Thus, as Arthur Fairbanks argues, ancient Greek pagans believed that humans could be possessed by a god (Fairbanks 1910: 57). This includes the temple of Apollo in Delphi the oracle of the Pythia in the temple of Apollo in Delphi that practiced divination (1910:56), and the case of the orgiastic rituals in the Dionysus cult that resulted in the oneness of the possessed man with the divine being (1910:241). In Roman tradition, examples of possession can be found in the skeptic author Lucian of Samosata, who ridicules the practice of exorcism (Teja 2016: 380). In Lucian's dialogue "The Lover of Lies," there is a description of the practice of exorcising the spirits who entered people's bodies, that "fall down in the light of the moon, and roll their eyes and fill their mouths with foam" (Lucian 1921: 3.345). As Johanna Stuckey argues, in ancient Mesopotamia, attested examples of possession normally involved oracles or prophesies by religious functionaries that were frequently devotees of the goddess Ishtar (Stuckey 2015:2). According to Katia Szpakowska, possession was also a common belief within ancient Egyptians, who believed that demonic entities threatened the living, producing the possession or invasion of individuals, which is attested in a number of spells whose purport was to thwart them (Szpakowska 2009: 800).

In the Christian tradition, possession was a frequent situation in the biblical accounts of Jesus, who exorcises the devils that cause it. Hence, people were brought up into him "possessed with devils; and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick" (Matt 8:16). This excerpt stresses this relation between possession and illness, which is also exemplified in the case of a possession of a man by a dumb demon who reproduced this condition in the victim (Luke 11:14). While the description of two possessed men near a graveyard in Matthew 8:28-32 underlines the relation of the accurse with tombs as the place of the dead, their expulsion into the bodies of swine demonstrates evinces the belief in possession as a consecutive process that could affect even impure animals in Judaism.

The myth of possession in pagan and Judaeo-Christian religions is intrinsically intertwined with concepts such as the transmigration of souls, reincarnation, and mind swap. The transmigration of souls is a process that after the collapse and disintegration of the body the soul again returns to the world of matter (Borzou'ee 2017:1). This notion is also called metempsychosis, whose origins can be traced back to Plato and Pythagoras (Cornelli 2016:4). In ancient Greek tradition, this involved that the soul of a deceased creature occupied a new body, even from a different species. The difference with possession is that the new body is empty of any soul, so that the process is not violent or traumatic. Transmigration of souls was described by Roman authors such as Pomponius Mela, Diodorus Siculus, and Ammianus Marcellinus, who considered it a belief among the pagan religion of the Celtic peoples (Simón 199: 177). In Brahmanic religions reincarnation is the equivalent to transmigration of souls, which can be defined as an infinite cycle of succession of births and deaths that affects all living beings and that can only be stopped through Nirvana (Smart 2000:54). Mind swap (or body swaps) involves that two minds exchange their living bodies (Abdel-Raheem 2018:377), which had a well-established tradition before Lovecraft's times, as it exemplifies Thomas Guthrie's novel *Vice Versa* (1882), about a father and a son who exchange their bodies.

Still, possession is even more complex process in the case of Lovecraft's fiction, in which sometimes the forces that cause it are occupying a liminal position between materialistic extraterrestrials and supernatural gods. The specific case of mind swap in the myth of possession is central to the plots of "The Shadow Out of Time," "The Thing on the Doorstep," and "The Whisperer in Darkness." In Lovecraft's fiction, mind swap involves that the mind of the possessor as an aggressor exchanges bodies with the possessed as a victim against the will of the latter. The mind of the victim does not disappear, but it is displaced. In other stories, such as the "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward," the victim of possession does not exchange body but disappears gradually. The agents of possession, who were usually spirits and demons in religious traditions and previous literature, are substituted in Lovecraft's stories by two kinds of more materialistic agents, such as

alien creatures and human wizards who have probably learned the technique from aliens. Thus, instead of demons and spirits, in “The Shadow Out of Time,” “Beyond the Wall of Sleep,” and “The Whisperer in Darkness,” the possessor is an alien creature, and in “The Thing on the Doorstep" and "The Case of Charles Dexter Ward” a wizard. This evinces a change of paradigm about the ontological nature of the possessor that involves a narrative shift from the religious to the scientific discourse. I will analyze it in each one of the stories.

In “The Shadow Out of Time,” Lovecraft explores a case of mind swap in which a member of the alien "Great Race," a gigantic cone-like alien race that came from outer space and lived in Australia millions of years ago, occupies the body of American professor Nathaniel Peaslee for five years (Lovecraft [1935] 2015.3.364), after which his personality changes weirdly. Later, the extraterrestrial exchanges their minds again, so that the mind of the professor is put back into his human body in the future again. As a result of this possession, the professor experiences amnesia, but through dreams, hypnotism, and the study of psychology, he discovers that during these five year his body was possessed by an alien mind, and that his own mind was living in the alien body of his possessor. The author uses this experience as narrative device to provide a detailed description of the history, society, economy, biology and other aspects of the alien civilization. Later, the ruins of the alien civilization are found in Australia, Peaslee travels there and finds the places that he had dreamed, finding a document that he had written while he was a prisoner in the alien body, but he loses it (Lovecraft [1935] 2015: 3.449-450). Some aspects have to be considered in the story. The first one is that this kind of mind swap involves time travel. The second, the importance of psychology in the story, that hints the possibility of an alternative interpretation to possession as the real explanation of the story in which everything takes place in the mind of the protagonist (Olavarria 2018:28).

The myth of possession and mind swap also underpins the plot of “Beyond the Wall of Sleep,” a short story from the first period of Lovecraft's fiction, in which both the scientific and supernatural discourses are more balanced than in later fiction. It is about the case of Jose Slater, a

denizen of the Catskill mountains (Lovecraft [1919] 2015:1.72). Slater is a coarse and illiterate man whose body is intermittently possessed by an extraterrestrial being, when he becomes a sensible and cultivated man. The narrator of the story is a psychiatrist who discovers that this is a case of mind swap with an extraterrestrial spiritual being who lives near the star Algol and who complains that he is the one possessed by the rude human Slater. The story shows Lovecraft's interest in possession and mind swap, although according to Joshi, it shows a poorer technique than in later stories, that for instance leads to "confusion in critical points of plot" (2013:260). For instance, it describes an electronic device as a telepathic radio to know about what is happening in other people's minds, but without providing a consistent explanation (Lovecraft [1919] 2015:1.82). Joshi has analyzed the possible literary influences in the story, including Ambrose Bierce, Jack London, and E.A. Poe (Joshi 2013:262-263). The influence of Poe is very clear in the way that the story considers the spirits of light floating on space outside a material world who provide some sort of revelation, that can be noticed for instance in "The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion" (Joshi 2013:263). I consider that "The Colloquy of Monos and Una" is another story by Poe that may have influenced Lovecraft´s story, since it is also quite similar in the account of conversations of spiritual beings without a physical body. Thus, in Lovecraft's story, Poe's tradition of spiritual dialogues intersects with the myth of mind swap as possession to produce horror.

Lovecraft's "The Thing of the Doorstep," describes a case of mind swap in which the mind of an evil wizard called Ephraim Waite first possesses the body of his own daughter Asenath. Later, and using her body, he later married and possessed a man called Edward Derby. The narrator of the story is Daniel Upton, a friend of Derby, who observes his changes of behavior and notices that he has learnt abilities that he had never known, such as driving, but who were known by Asenath and previously by Ephraim. All this suggests that Derby 's personality has changed. In one of the occasions in which the real Derby manages to escape from Ephraim's he explains Upton what is going on:

> Tell me, Daniel Upton -*what devilish exchange was perpetrated in the house of horror where that blasphemous monster had his trusting, weak-willed, half-human child at his mercy?* Didn't he make it permanent -as she'll do in the end with me? Tell me why that

> thing that calls itself Asenath writes differently when off guard, *so that you can tell its script from*... (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.341).

In the excerpt, the process of mind swap is described as a devilish exchange, an expression which combines the influence of the Judaeo-Christian myth of possession by demons with the most recent concept of minds who exchange of bodies from later literary fiction. This conceptual ambiguity produces horror, which is intensified by the successive possessions of people by the ruthless mind of the wizard. However, even the intentions of this evil character are conditioned by the pagan time frame. Thus, in "The Thing on the Doorstep" the permanent possession of Derby coincides with the festival of Hallowmass (Lovecraft [1933] 2015: 3.356), which again evinces that the cycles of circular time are at the basis of Lovecraft's myths.

In "The Whisperer of Darkness," a member of the alien race of the Fungi of Yuggoth takes control of an elderly man called Henry Akeley, because he has discovered a secret base of the aliens near his house in Vermont. In this story the method of possession is different from other stories because it is something mechanical using surgical means, which is a more materialist approach to the myth of possession and mind swap. The fungi of Yuggoth extract the whole brain of the victim and transfer it to a cylinder so that they can take it outside our planet in cosmic voyages. The imprisoned brains can communicate with the exterior through some electronic devices that allow them to see, hear and speak (Lovecraft [1930] 2015:2.522). When Robert Wilmarth, an initially skeptic man who had received correspondence with the victim, visits Akeley in his house in Vermont, he discovers that the latter's brain has been substituted by the mind of an alien from the Fungi of Yuggoth. He also discovers cylinders with the brains of humans and extraterrestrials from different planets (Lovecraft [1930] 2015: 3.523). Thus, Lovecraft combines the inherent anguish caused by the trope of mind swap with the violence and disgust produced by the surgical remove of the brain by aliens. While the separation of these organs from the rest of the body is aimed to produce a sensation of dehumanization, their imprisonment into metallic cylinders intensifies the claustrophobia and uncertainty about their final destine. Science and technology used by uncompassionate beings can be a source of horror, at least from the insignificant perspective of

mankind.

The Case of Charles Dexter Ward, one of the longest stories by Lovecraft, is quite the opposite since it is influenced not by science, but by the tradition and tropes of gothic horror. It describes a case of possession of a young man, Charles Dexter Ward, by the evil spirit of his ancestor Joseph Curwen, a wicked wizard from 17th century. Ward is fascinated with the character of his ancestor and starts researching that about him until he finds a portrait and a book with magic formulae and diagrams. Curwen takes these objects to his house. But the spirit of Curwen had remained all those years in the picture, as a witness noticed that "the eyes of the portrait had a sort of wish, if not an actual tendency, to follow young Charles ward about the room" (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.282). This echoes the animated picture in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), in which the portrait of an ancestor of the evil Manfred utters a deep sigh and heaves his breast (Walpole [1764] 2014:25). In Lovecraft's story, from his picture, Curwen gradually takes control of the body and the will of Ward, who finally disappears, but the evil wizard is destroyed by a friend of Ward using magical salts that can annihilate sorcerers. Thus, *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* shows a more traditional insight about the myth of possession that includes not mind swap or aliens, but instead the disappearance of the victim under the obnoxious influence of old objects that facilitate the evil plans of the wizard.

My tentative identification of the mythemes that frequently appear Lovecraft's myth of possession and mind swap includes (1) the apprentice, as the person that experiences possession; (2) the possessor (the madman/sorcerer or Outside God), and (3) revelation. The mytheme of the apprentice is represented by the person who experiences possession. It is generally a well-educated man, such as Nathaniel Peaslee in "The Shadow Out of Time," Edward Derby in "The Thing on the Doorstep," or Charles Dexter Ward in his eponym story. This can be interpreted because, whether aliens or wizards, the superior minds of the possessors are only interested in controlling intelligent individuals. The only exception to this feature in Lovecraft's fiction is Joe Slater in "Beyond the Wall of Sleep," in which Lovecraft explores some sort of victimization of the alien by the human,

with unconvincing results. Despite their education, the weakness of their will allows a more powerful intelligence to subdue their minds. These characters can be assimilated to the mytheme of the apprentice in other Lovecraftian myths because through the process of possession, they acquire knowledge through a gradual, initiatory process about a hidden truth (such as the existence of alien civilizations or the existence of wizards with terrible powers). Like in the possession by pagan deities exemplified by the Pythia in Delphi, the participants in the orgies of Dionysus or the priestess of Ishtar, the apprentice in Lovecraft's myth of possession must cope with the intrusion of an external powerful force into his body. While this experience usually confers the gift of knowledge to the apprentice, he must pay a terrible price for it, because the unveiling of new vistas shows the dark essence of a universe characterized by cosmic horror, affecting his mental balance forever.

The mytheme of the agent of possession includes the madman as a sorcerer and the outside god, who were treated as different mythemes in previous myths, but whose role within this myth can be equated because they are the minds that invade the bodies of the possessed. In the case of the madman, he is represented by characters such as Ephraim Waite in "The Thing on the Doorstep," or Joseph Curwen in *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. In all those cases, the main aim of the wizard or sorcerer deals with the search of immortality. Thus, typically, the sorcerer is an old man whose ageing body is going to die, such as Ephraim Waite, or who is already dead (Joseph Curwen). While there is some connection of the madman with knowledge, he does not play the role of a prophet, since revealing his plans would be against his plans to control the possessed. Their wickedness while they perform this possession evokes previous cases in Judeo-Christian tradition that were also performed by evil spirits called demons. In the case of the outside god as other possible agent of possession, it is represented by the alien creatures such as an extraterrestrial from the star Algol in "Beyond the Wall of Sleep," a member of the Great Race in "The Shadow Out of Time," and a member of the fungi of Yuggoth in "The Whisperer in Darkness." All of them exert their powers over a human victim, usually with the aim of getting knowledge about human society through mind

swap or possession which evinces that their intention is generally different from preserving life as in the case of sorcerers. However, both kinds of intrusive minds have something in common, the similitude with the role of previous possessors as the demons, spirits and deities that played an equivalent role in pagan myths. For instance, in the case of "The Shadow of Time" the alien that possesses Peaslee's body and the alien that control Akeley's body in "The Whisperer in Darkness" reveal lots of information. Thus, the role of these aliens echoes those ancient divinities that unveiled mysteries through possession such as god Apollo possessing the Pythia and god Dionysus possessing the participants in his festival in ancient Greece, or Ishtar when he occupied a human body in ancient Mesopotamia.

Finally, the mytheme of revelation deals with the gradual realization on the possessed human's part, that he/she is controlled by an external entity. Revelation unveils to the apprentice that he is not suffering from madness or any inner psychological situation, but that his will is controlled by an external force. To some extent, revelation also represents the conclusion of an initiatory voyage of introspection throughout the mind of the possessed. The influence of pagan religions can be also identified in this revelation, because said religions included the different degrees of a personal initiation through altered states of consciousness, such as the frenzy of the initiates in the cult of Dionysus (Fairbanks 1910:241;246), the gradual revelations to humans in the cult of Apollo (1910:30), or the extasis experienced by those possessed by Ishtar (Stuckey 2015:3). In Lovecrart's fiction, the victim of possession or mind swaps experiences a revelation also through altered states of consciousness that include dreams, hypnosis, and periods of amnesia. In "The Shadow Out of Time" the dreams experienced by Peaslee are qualified as "vague" ([1935] 2015:3.373) and "strange" ([1935] 2015: 3.382), which increases horror through ambiguity and estrangement. In the same story, hypnosis is used by the alien possessors to purge the information from Peaslee's possessed body ([1935] 2015: 3.389), while amnesia is qualified as "strange" and "queer" ([1935] 2015: 3.363). Additionally, in some stories there is an attempt to provide physical evidence of possession, such as the alien ruins in the desert of Australia that Nathaniel Peaslee finds

in “The Shadow Out of Time,” or the new star that represents the alien who possessed Joe Slater in “Beyond the Wall of Sleep.”

Once that the cultural influences, and the mythemes in Lovecraft's myths about possession have been identified, I will provide some insights about their main characteristics to analyze their role as a source of cosmic horror. First, one of the main features of Lovecraft's stories about possession is that the author sometimes plays with ambiguity as the possibility that everything in the story can be explained as a case of madness. Said madness is expressed through the multiple references to madness, double personality, hypnosis and psychology in Lovecraft’s development of this myth. As Snyder points out, “much of Lovecraft’s fiction wrestles with themes of sanity, often featuring characters that fall into madness as a result of their terrifying experiences” (Snyder 2017: 1). In addition, there may be some biographic component in these stories, because Lovecraft suffered different breakdowns in his life, particularly a long one in 1908-1913 (Joshi 2013:128), which has been compared (Setiya 2020:7) with those experienced by characters in his fiction, such as Nathaniel Peaslee in “The Shadow out of Time,” who suffers his possession in the same period from 1908 to 1913 (Lovecraft [1935] 2015:3.365;3.370)

In that way, Jung's concepts of the conscious, the unconscious and the process of individuation[115] can be useful to describe the apparent split personality that appears in Lovecraft's stories, because the narrator sometimes leaves open the possibility of ambiguity that the possession or mind swap happens in the mind of the victim (Olavarria 2018:21). Jung believed that there were two levels in the human mind called the conscious and the unconscious, and sometimes the unconscious was capable of assuming the role of the person (Jung 2002: 260). The consequences of this exchange were madness and confusion. According to Jung, the manifestations of the

[115]Jung provided definitions of these three terms, the conscious, the unconscious and the process of individuation. Jung called consciousness as “the function or activity which maintains the relation of psychic contents to the ego, in so far as this relation is perceived as such by the ego” (Jung 1975: 6.452). Thus, the conscious is the part of the mind that is fully aware of its situation, in contrast to the unconscious. For Jung “the uncouncious depicts an extremely fluid state of affairs: everything of which I know, but of which I am not at the moment thinking; everything of which I was once conscious but now have forgotten; everything perceived by my senses, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which involuntarily and without paying attention to it I feel remember, want and do” (Jung 1975: 8.199). Jung considered that the process of individuation is “the ultimate integration of conscious and unconscious, or better, the assimilation of the ego to a wider personality” (Jung 1975: 8.309).

unconscious also show some features of a dissociated personality (Jung 2002:265), which is something similar to what the victims of possession and mind swap experience in Lovecraft's stories. In addition, Jung called archetypes to the fragments of this dissociated personality in the unconscious. Among them, there was the shadow, that appeared projected in other personalities, but who was really a part of the unconscious, which Jung identified in horror stories such as Hoffmann's *Elixiere des Taufels*[116] (Jung 2002: 262). This archetype of the shadow is similar to all the evil possessors that control the will of their victims in Lovecraft's stories of possession. Finally, Jung's concept of individuation as the integration the conscious and the unconscious into a wider personality, is similar to what if happens in Lovecraft's fiction when the victims of possession become aware of the presence of another being inside their minds.

Another characteristic of Lovecraft's myth of possession and body swap is that the process sometimes involves the domination of someone by a will that is at an enormous distance in space and time. This is the case of the big distance between Joe Slater and the alien mind from the star Algol that has taken control from his body in "Beyond the Wall of Sleep." Lovecraft's ideas about cycles, and the circularity of space and time can explain how these distances can be overcome, but again this is quite similar to Jung's synchronicity.

Liminality, as another characteristic that pervades Lovecraft's fiction can also be noticed in the way in which there is a conflict of personalities. The body of the victim of possession becomes the border, the liminal space between the two wills that are fighting to control it. In most of Lovecraft's stories about possession there is always the possibility of an explanation only through madness and mental process, without a real possession. This interpretation reinforces liminality, in the way in which madness that causes the changes of personality reflects an intermediate possession between rationality and irrationality. The identity of the possessed tends to blur into a struggle

[116]Hoffmann's *Elixiere des Taufels* (*The Devil's Elixirs*, 1815) is a gothic novel that was inspired by Lewis' *The Monk* (1795) (Hernández 2003:16). In Hoffmann's work a monk called Medardus is chased by a doppelganger, or a double of him. As in many of the stories about doppelgangers (for instance Poe's “William Wilson), it can be argued if there is an evil spirit that takes the shape of the protagonist, or the protagonist changes his personality and does things that he cannot not remember later, which echoes the cases of double or split personalities and possession. As Hernández Arias points out, the author himself Hoffmann believed that someone was chasing him (Hernández 2003:20).

between said rationality represented by his old memories and the irrational impulses that he identifies with an external force.

In conclusion, Lovecraft reinterprets the myths of possession from different sources, taken from both pagan and non-pagan religions, and adapts them into his fiction combining the scienfitic and supernatural discourses to produce atmospheres of cosmic horror. This involves that the new agents of possession are no longer demons, spirits, or gods in the same, but extraterrestrials and wizards. Still, the myth of possession evinces that paganism and religion are not something peripheral in Lovecraft's fiction, but play a relevant role in it, as the necessary irrational counterpart of the more rational elements.

IV.2.6 Myth 6: Memory and Oblivion

The myth of memory and oblivion is closely related to the myth of possession and mind swap in Lovecraft's fiction because both myths describe the effects of the encounter of an insignificant and weak human mind with cosmic forces. However, while in the myth of possession and mind swap, these forces try to control the body and mind of a human victim in the myth of memory and oblivion there is not an intrusion from an external agent. This myth has to do with memory, oblivion, and other elements such as time, dreams and madness and it is distinguished from the "possession" myth above because there is not a external being that causes insanity. In the myth of memory and oblivion, a character experiences a traumatic experience that he cannot accept, which causes a loss of memory. Thus, forgetfulness becomes a defense mechanism to avoid getting mad because there is an unbearable painful truth. The myth of memory and oblivion appears as main or secondary element in stories such as "The Outsider" (1921), "The Silver Key" (1926), "The Call of Cthulhu" (1926), and the early short tales "Memory" (1917) and "Ex Oblivione" (1917). The development of this myth in each of these stories often changes its category. So, in some stories, the myth will be anthropogenic because it explains somebody's origin or the formation of his/her identity. Such is the case of "The Outsider" where the protagonist realizes his own identity after a

period of oblivion. In other cases, the myth is eschatological because it explains the end of an individual, such as in “Ex Oblivione” or the whole of mankind (in “Memory”) through death and oblivion. The common mythologeme underlying the myth of "memory and oblivion" in Lovecraft’s fiction and in previous cultural and religious representations of the myth in different pagan traditions can be tentatively called, “death, dream and oblivion.” As Mircea Eliade argues these elements are closely intertwined because “insofar as it is “forgotten,” the “past” [..] is homologized with death.[…] The dead are those who have lost their memories” (Eliade 1963:333).

There are many examples of oblivion in pagan myths that were known by Lovecraft and that may have influenced his works. In Greek mythology, Lethe is an infernal river, the reification of oblivion (Smith 1884:435). When the souls of the departed drank their water, they forgot all they had said or done in the upperworld. Although Lovecraft does not specifically mention Lethe in any of his stories, he was aware of the myth, as it is illustrated by his use of the derivative adjective Lethean in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (Lovecraft [1927] 2015: 2.204). In Dante’s Christian reinterpretation of the ancient pagan Greek myth in the *Divine Comedy* from a Catholic perspective, Lethe River is placed in the Purgatory instead that in hell, but it is still a river of forgetfulness. Those dead who drink from their waters forget their sins (Dante 2000:381). Oblivion also played a relevant role in the myths from other cultural traditions, such as ancient Mesopotamia and ancient Rome. For instance, in the Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, before fighting the demon Humbaba, the eponymous hero tells his friend Enkidu, the words “Forget death and seek life!” (George 1999:38). In Mesopotamia, death was associated with oblivion (Kovacs [1928] 1989: xvii) so these words can be interpreted as a tautological claim to forget forgetfulness as a means to defeat death. The practice of *Damnatio Memoriae* in ancient Rome punished certain crimes by condemning individuals to oblivion, which involved eradicating their images and inscriptions mentioning them as if he had never existed (Petersen 2011: 1). For instance, according to Suetonius, after the assassination of emperor Domitian in AD 96, the members of the Senate passed a law that his inscriptions should everywhere be erased, and all record of him obliterated (Petersen 2011: 1).

In the Jewish *Ecclesiastes,* there is also an association of death and oblivion because “the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten” (Eccles. 9:5)

Eliade studied the symbolism of oblivion in texts such Plato’s *Phaedrus* and Hesiod’s *Theogony*, particularly the connection of forgetfulness to death and dreams (Eliade 1963:333), which reveals that in Greek mythology the dead are those who have lost their memories in the fountain of ·Lethe” (1963:333). But those who preserve their memory after death, as Hermes' son Ethalidos, become immortal. This relation between oblivion and mortality can be also exemplified with other examples outside ancient Greece. In an Indian myth from the Middle Ages, the yogi Matsyendranath, who was immortal, falls in love with the queen of Ceylon and later is made prisoner by a tribe or women (Eliade 1963: 329). In this adventure the yogi enjoys the company of women, but he loses both his immortality and his memory. Later, the yogi is rescued by a disciple and gradually recovers said immortality and memory. The yogi forgetfulness is assimilated to death, and his awakening, or recovery of memory becomes a prerequisite for immortality (1963:330). Other examples of this association between oblivion and death are identified by Eliade in Buddhism, where the awakened one par excellence, the Buddha, possesses omniscience, because while other sages and yogis were able to remember a certain number of existences in the cycle of reincarnation, even a considerable number, only the Buddha was able to know them *all* (1963:332). But, as Eliade points out, in all these cases, the importance of remembering does not lie only with immortality or previous lives, but because of its relation to the primordial myths (cosmogony, theogony, anthropogony) that explained everything. According to Eliade, traditional societies find in myths the exemplary models for human acts, because "everything he [human being] tries to do has already been done, in the beginning of Time, *in illo tempore*" (1963:336). Finally, Eliade points out at the relationship between oblivion, death, and sleep in ancient Greek mythology, where Hypnos and Thanatos (gods of sleep and death respectively) were twin brothers connected with oblivion (Eliade 1963:336) because sleep represented “at once ignorance, forgetfulness and “death”” (1963:337).

This association of sleep, oblivion and death appears very frequently in Lovecraft's fiction, which can be epitomized in the famous quotation “in his house at R’lyeh dead Cthulhu waits dreaming” (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.34). While the phrase relates death and sleep in an apparent oxymoron for early 20th century readers who ignored its pagan connotations, the fact that Cthulhu waits for his awakening not only provides narrative tension but stresses circular time typical from heathenism.

Higinio Marin’s analysis of the relations about death, memory, and oblivion in different mythologies, particularly the Greek and Judeo-Christian (Marin 2006:309) explores Ulysses’ descents into hell and his conversations with the ghosts of the dead, who do not remember anything about their identity and wander in aimless dream (Marin 2006:311) But following the advice of goddess Circe, Ulysses performs a ritual in which he offers the ghosts to drink the blood of sacrifices, and after that they recover some of the color and warmth typical of living creatures (Marin 2006:312). And then they also recover their memory, so that they can speak with Ulysses. But this recovery of life is incomplete and ephemeral, because although they recover memory they do not revive and they are still prisoners in Hades. Thus, death becomes intrinsically intertwined with oblivion and sleep in a way that only pagan rituals can overcome. As Marin points out, oblivion is what causes death, because crossing the infernal river Lethe involves both the disappearance of life and memory (2006:312). Even the Greek word for oblivion, *lethe,* is the etymological origin of the adjective lethal, meaning mortal. Thus, forgetfulness is the way of it transit from the world of the living to the world of the dead. But oblivion and death also related to dreams, since as Marin argues, the dead are outside the reach of the living, who can only interact with them through dreams (2006: 310). As Marin points out, like in the case of Hermes' son Ethalides, these dead occupy an intermediate position between the living and the definitely departed, as if there were several degrees of life and death in a scale in which those who are dead but still preserve memory occupy a liminal position (Marin 2006: 312). Liminality between memory and oblivion, thus becomes an ontological, spatial and temporal condition that blurs the borders between the worlds of the living and the dead. This correlation between life/memory and death/oblivion as a

gradation can be identified within Lovecraft's fiction, because there are some characters in his stories that occupy both a liminal position between life and death, and a liminal position between memory and oblivion.

The myth of memory and oblivion in Lovecraft's fiction can be classified as eschatologic because it follows this tradition that assimilates oblivion to death and sleep, in a way that is clearly inspired by previous pagan tradition. As in the ancient Greek tradition illustrated by Homer's *Odyssey* and Hesiod's *Theogony,* the Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh* and Dante's *Divine Comedy,* oblivion becomes a symbol of death in the case of individuals who have forgotten his own identity, such as the protagonist of "The Outsider" or who cannot remember relevant facts in a period of his life such as Randolph Carter in "The Silver Key." However, in other stories, forgetfulness becomes a collective experience that affects whole human groups of people such as "sensitive artists" in "The Call of Cthulhu," or even entire societies such as in "Memory," as a trope of the passing of time that stresses insignificance of man at cosmic scale. I will start with the analysis of "The Outsider," because it is the story that best illustrates the importance of the myth of memory and oblivion within both the narrative and the aesthetics of the story.

Although "The Outsider "has been widely considered as prototypical of Lovecraft's work, and even emblematic of his life (Joshi 2013: 385), Joshi considers this interpretation wrong, underlining the differences between the story and Lovecraft's biography (2013:388). The protagonist of "The Outsider" lives completely alone in a castle surrounded by a mysterious forest and always in complete darkness. He has never seen the light of the sun or any people, and cannot remember anything about his own past, but has learnt about the exterior world through books and believes that is a young person. Desperate, the protagonist climbs to the tallest tower of the castle to see light, even if this means to die, but then, he discovers that most of the castle was underground, and he finds him in the ground of a graveyard. Then he goes to the external parts part of the castle where a celebration is taking place and sees people for the first time in his life. But for some reason they panic and escape the castle. Then he sees a horrible monster under an arch, which he

recognizes as his own reflection on a mirror. After this, the protagonist recovers parts of his memory, revealing his real identity. As a result, he realizes that he will always be an outsider, a completely different creature.

Memory and oblivion play a central role in the story, as it is advanced in the introductory sentence "unhappy is he to whom the memories of childhood bring only fear and sadness" (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.265). But, a few lines later, the same homodiegetic narrator considers that it is preferable to cling "desperately to those sere memories, when my mind momentarily threatens to reach beyond *the other*" (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.265). While oblivion involves relief, memory implies the awareness of his own monstrosity, increasing a feeling of hopelessness to intensify horror. The climax of the story, when he discovers his own monstrous nature, is also explained in terms of memory and oblivion:

> But in the cosmos there is a balm as well as bitterness, and that balm is nepenthe. In the supreme horror of that second I forgot what had horrified me, and the burst of black memory vanished in a chaos of echoing images. In a dream I fled from that haunted and accursed pile, and ran swiftly and silently in the moonlight (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.272).

Nepenthe is a mythical drug that provides oblivion to those who take it. It is a Greek term that appears in Homer's book IV of *Odyssey* as "a drug that has the power of robbing and anger of their sting and banishing all painful memories" (Homer 1945:68). In the moment when the protagonist realizes that he is a monster, there comes a glimpse of very ancient memories that had horrified him so that he forgot it, but immediately this vanishes and there is a second and complete forgetfulness. This oblivion can be interpreted as a second death, which involves the death of his second identity, that who lived in the buried castle and believed that he was a young, innocent, and attractive human. It is quite relevant that he flees "in a dream," that echoes the relation of oblivion, death and dreams commented above.

There are three significative analogies between "The Outsider" and the Greek pagan representations of the dead in the underworld. Like the dead in Greek Hades, the protagonist in "The Outsider" lives in underground, does not remember his identity, and his mind seems dominated by dreams. The story has attracted the attention of different scholars. Joshi believes that

“The Outsider” is implausible and makes little sense on the level of plot (2013: 385). Dirk Mosig has provided different interpretations of the story include, first, an autobiographical interpretation of the Outsider as Lovecraft himself,[117] and second, a Jungian interpretation of the story as an allegory of the psyche (Mosig 1997: 55). Mosig’s allegorical interpretation of "The Outsider" claims that the subterranean castle would represent the Collective Unconscious, the psychic ocean common to all mankind (Mosig 1997: 60). In Lovecraft's story the underground castle is full of books, that in Mosig’s view, represent unconscious archetypes. Paraphrasing Lovecraft's story, Mosig explains that from the point of view of the conscious ego of the narrator, "the contents of the unconscious are infinitely old" and "infinitely horrible" (1997:60). The tower that the protagonist climbs represents the process of individuation, since it links the underground (or unconscious) and the external (or conscious realms); and the image that he perceives in the mirror, represents the dark brother of the protagonist, everything that his conscious mind rejects, this is to say, his own Shadow (Mosig 1997:64). The final result of this mental travel is the annihilation of memory, oblivion and madness. To conclude with this story and with Mosig's interpretation, this study wants to underpin the importance of collective memory for both Jung and Eliade, in the form of the collective unconscious in Jung, and in the form of ancient myths in Eliade. Like Lovecraft, these two authors were also fascinated with pagan symbolism.

“The Silver Key” is a story that belongs to the Dream-Cycle, which continues in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* and “Through the Gates of the Silver Key.” The protagonist of the stories, Raymond Carter is a person who could dream captivating fantasies when he was young, but gradually lost this ability when he became an adult (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.73). His capacity of dreaming is symbolized by a silver key that he lost when he was thirty. In the story, Carter is a middle-aged man who dislikes the reality of waking life, and regrets having lost the path to his fantasies. However, through a dream, an ancestor shows him the lost silver key that gives access to

[117] The biographical interpretation is weaker. As Joshi affirms, although Lovecraft considered himself an outsider in 20th century American society, there is a notorious difference with the protagonist in the story, described as an unhappy and utterly alone boy, while Lovecraft described his own childhood as a happy one, in which he enjoyed the friendship of a small group of other children (Joshi 2013:388).

his world of fantasy. Carter gets the key and drives to the house of his family where he uses it, becoming again a boy, regaining the capacity of dreaming fantasies by traveling to a moment of the past more than forty years ago. After people in the period of middle-aged Carter find his abandoned car, they begin speculating about his disappearance.

Because Carter *forgets*[118] how to experience the wonderful dreams on his childhood, it is possible to interpret "The Silver Key" not just a story about fantasy and dreams, but about memory and oblivion. Desperate for the loss of his previous inner world of fantasy that contrasts the prosiness of life, he decides to commit suicide drinking "a curious liquid to take him to *oblivion* without suffering" (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.79). While this mysterious liquid evokes the ancient Greek myth of the Lethe in which the contact with their hellish waters involved both death and oblivion through dreams, the allusion to avoid suffering echoes Hedonism as ancient Greek system of philosophy that stresses pleasure and the absence of pain. When Carter's grandfather *reminded* him of the key (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.79) in a dream, he awakes and finds it inside a carven oak box hidden in the attic, symbolizing the intersection between the world of the dead, oblivion and dream into the world of the living, memory and the wakeful. The way in which he returns to his childhood and the past is analogous to Jungian synchronicity, as an acausal relation that links two moments that are detached in time. This kind of synchronicity relates events that are "widely separated in time," but conjoined in the broader temporality of the psyche (Yiassemides 2011:458). The narrator of the story is someone different to Carter, but who shares the same dreams about a wonderful city with him (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.86). This common world of dreams as a liminal space is also comparable Jung's concept of the collective unconscious. The story is also a metaphor of the circularity of time in Lovecraft´s fiction, because the result of Carter's travel into past is a sort of time-loop, in which old Carter travels to past become young Carter, that grows up again to travel back thirty years in time to become young Carter eternally. This is compatible with the attraction that Lovecraft felt towards the myth of "eternal recurrence" in some periods of his life (Joshi

[118]The three emphasized word in this paragraph are my italics.

1990:8).

In “The Call of Cthulhu,” memory and oblivion play the role of illustrating the interaction of human mind with the Old Ones through dreams and unconscious experiences. Since the plot of the story has been already summarized in this study, this section will only focus on the analysis of the references to memory and oblivion in the story. Thus, dreams give access to ancient, shared memory, while the cessation of dreams leads to oblivion. After young Wilcox and the sensitive people (artists, members of pagan religion) experience a period of dreams with the Old One Cthulhu and the city of R'lyeh, they forget said dreams in a way that echoes the connection of oblivion and the supernatural in ancient paganism. After ten days in which Wilcox experienced the most unusual nightmares, these hallucinations ceased, and he “sat upright in bed, astonished to find himself in bed and completely ignorant of what had happened in dream or reality since the night of March 22nd” (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.27). All around the world, people experience parallel dreams and mania in the same period, which includes the case of a sleeper who commits suicide in London, a theosophist colony in California whose members wear white robes, an artist that presents a “blasphemous” painting in Paris and groups of people in areas with pagan tradition such as practitioners of voodoo in Haiti or Celtic heathenism in the West of Ireland (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.29). The examples above illustrate a narrative strategy to produce wonder using such opposite concepts such as madness-genius, primitiveness-sophistication and millennialism-religious irreverence to produce wonder, while the acausal, common experiences of dream, memory and oblivion add verisimilitude to cosmic horror. Again, Jung and Eliade's insights are useful to shed light into these mysterious shared memory and concurrent oblivion, because a collectivity of isolated people experiences the same dreams synchronically, and these dreams are the expression of mythical memories of a primitive past when the Old Ones ruled as pagan, liminal deities. As he describes the Cthulhu cult in the damps in Louisiana, old Castro explains that performing the appropriate rites would keep alive the memory of the Old Ones and the prophecy of their return (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.40). These dead old ones could communicate with some chosen men

through dreams, because “memory never died” (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.40), which underlines again the persistence of memory as a central myth in the story. Thus, these dreams are the expression of an alien memory that transcends death as an expression of the relation of man with a mythical time of primitive cosmogonies.

The myth of memory and oblivion also underpins the whole significance of “Memory,” a very short story of the dream-cycle, that starts with an oneiric description of landscapes in which vegetation and animals, like little apes in the trees replace ruined palaces and broken columns to illustrate the passing of time (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 1.85). A dialogue between two characters, the Genie of the Valleys and the Daemon of the Valley, is used as an allegorical, dramatic strategy to describe the extinction of humanity as some kind of unavoidable destiny. The fact that the Genie introduces himself as a forgetful entity on account of his age (Lovecraft [1917] 2015:1.86) allow to establish this character as a personification of time and oblivion. The Daemon represents the counterbalance in this allegory by claiming that he is “memory.” This character unveils that he recalls dimly that those ruins were built by ancient builds called men, whose aspect was like “that of the little apes in the trees.” While the relation of death and oblivion in the story reinforces the connection with previous pagan myths, the fact that “Memory” deals not with the death of individuals, but with the whole human species provides a cosmic dimension to Lovecraft’s myth of memory and oblivion.

Memory and oblivion make the basis that establishes the story, which ranges from the title of the story to the personification of the characters in the dialogue. The dialogue of two ethereal characters, like the representation of souls in paganism, echoes Poe's dialogues of “The Colloquy of Monos and Una” and “The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion.” Both in Poe’s and Lovecraft’s stories, allegorical dialogue is used as a maieutic frame for philosophical debate as a tradition originated from the Socratic method in ancient pagan Greece. Thus, Joshi considers that this tale echoes Poe both stylistically and conceptually (Joshi 2013: 266). Another author that influenced the story was Dunsany and his oneirism. A possible interpretation of the story deals with the myth of

eternal recurrence and the cycle of time, that underpins the whole of Lovecraft's fiction. Thus, the small apes in the trees that are substituting man, represent the involution of man into the state of apes again, in a way that memory and oblivion, past and future become intrinsically intertwined with material, physical evolution.

The myth of memory and oblivion is also essential in "Ex Oblivione," another short tale from Lovecraft's dream-cycle from his first period of writing, in which the influence of Dunsany's oneirism can be noticed. The homodiegetic first-person narrator explains that he dislikes existence, because madness is affecting his mind in a way that he can only find solace in his dreams. In his dreams he walks through a valley where he reaches a wall with a gate of bronze. In other dreams, he is informed by sage men that behind that locked door there is a world of wonders and that if he took a drug, he would be capable of unlocking the gate. The protagonist takes the drug and finds that the door lies open, but when he enters it, he finds out that in this realm there is no people, land or sea, but a white void of unpeopled and illimitable space (Lovecraft [1921] 2015:1.220). Despite this, he is happy to dissolve again into the native infinity of crystal oblivion from which life was only an instant.

The main topics in "Ex Oblivione," are again dreams, memory, oblivion, time and death. Joshi considers it an "unusually bitter and cheerless fantasy" (Joshi 2013: 379). Oblivion represents death as something eternal versus life, which is compared to a desolate hour. The topic of the transience of life is a commonplace in literature, but in "Ex Oblivione," the importance of the human mind is emphasized through the references to dreams and the characterization of death as a liberating force. The void and white color used for the representation of death symbolizes inexistence, nothingness, demonstrating that although he was fascinated by paganism, atheism was also a very powerful reference in Lovecraft.

Many other stories include variations of the myth of memory and oblivion in Lovecraft's

fiction,[119] but the selection provided can be useful to select the mythemes or constituents that made up them and to provide some insights about the relevancy of this topic within his works.

The tentative identification of mythemes that appear in Lovecraft's myth of memory and oblivion includes (1) the apprentice; (2) dreams; (3) the prophet or madman; (5) revelation; (5) oblivion and (6) death.

Like in previous myths (the underworld, the cycle of water and land, possession and mind swap), the mytheme of the apprentice in this myth appears in "The Outsider" and "Ex Oblivione" as the protagonist of the story. In the "Call of Cthulhu" the mytheme of the apprentice is a composite of a community of characters including the sensible people who are experiencing strange dreams, such as young Wilcox, the other artists, members of pagan religions, and insane people in an asylum. This mytheme is not present in "Memory," in which the characters are well grown. The mytheme of the apprentice is an adrift character experiences alternative periods of memory and forgetfulness in which he is affected by successive cycles cosmic of forces to stress human insignificance.

The mytheme of dreams in the myth of memory and oblivion is intrinsically intertwined with the mytheme of revelation. In "The Outsider," apart from the aforementioned escape of the protagonist from the exterior part of the castle in a dream, the whole story has the blurred and undetailed appearance of dreams. As Joshi points out, a detail such as the underground "endless forest" suggest that the story is an account of a dream (Joshi 2013: 386). In addition to this item, I consider that the whole story is explained as if the protagonist was floating in a dream: the escape from the underground castle, the scenes of panic in the castle, the new existence of the protagonist accompanied by creatures of the night such as ghouls with whom he rides the night-wind (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.272). In "The Silver Key," the seek for the evanished dreams of youth is essential to the story, that materialize in the form of a key whose existence is unveiled through dreams (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.79). In "The Call of Cthulhu," there are many allusions to the "odd

[119]The myth of memory and oblivion also appears in some more tales from the early dream-cycle such, including short ones as "The Quest of Iranon" or long ones as in the continuation of "The Silver Key" in form of a longer novel, entitled *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath.* It is present in the Irish fantasy "The Moon Bog," and even in the longer and later stories closer science fiction such as "The Shadow Out of Time."

dreams" experienced by young Wilcox (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.25) and the other sensitive people. The protagonist of "Ex Oblivione" considers that dreams are fundamental to escape from the futility of life. Through his dreams the protagonist searches the beauty that he had vainly sought in life, and it is in a dream-city where he receives information from dream-sages (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.219).

The mytheme of the prophet or old man in the myth of memory and oblivion can be identified in these stories. In "The Call of Cthulhu," he is old Castro, who informs of how the dreams of Cthulhu have influenced the dreams of mankind. In "The Silver Key" it is represented by the grandfather of Randolph Carter, who reveals the existence of the wonderful token. It is also represented by the sage-men in "Ex Oblivione," who informs the apprentice how to open the gate. In all these cases the prophet acts as a facilitator of revelation.

Revelation is the mytheme that represents the unveiling of a concealed situation, through it the apprentice receives experience, but at the cost of his mental balance. In "The Outsider," revelation takes place when the protagonist discovers that he is the loathsome creature whose image is reflected in the mirror (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1.271). But this revelation is so unbearable that he decides to fall into oblivion again. In "The Call of Cthulhu," revelation relates to collective memory that recalls the existence of the eponymous deity, when Cthulhu himself reveals his existence in the island in the Pacific (Lovecraft [1926] 2015: 2.53). In "Memory," whose title alludes to the vanishing memory of man's presence on Earth, revelation is represented by the information that mankind has regressed into apes again, while in "Ex Oblivione" it is represented by trespassing the door in the wall of dreams, that ultimately leads the protagonist into oblivion and death as the vanishing of the self.

In the myth of memory and oblivion, the mytheme of oblivion is linked to the eschatological dimension of death and the psychological reaction of human mind against madness. The homodiegetic narrator of "The Outsider," for instance, has forgotten who he is, who has nursed him or why he lives in the buried castle. After briefly recovering his memory upon seeing his image

in a mirror, his memory gets weak, painful, and ephemeral, and he relapses into oblivion again, as a relief for the horror that his real identity produces to him. As noted above, oblivion appears personified as the Genius (or Genie) in "Memory." When the narrator in "Ex Oblivione" takes the drug, he dissolves into oblivion, because he prefers death to madness. While related to death, oblivion also involves some relief from a painful revelation for man, who must choose between madness or ignorance. Thus, oblivion stresses the hopeless situation of man within a vast meaningless universe, adding a new cosmic significance to a mytheme originally taken from paganism.

Finally, the mytheme of death in the myth of memory and oblivion becomes the last element in the structure, at least until the beginning of a new cycle of existence. Apart from its identification with forgetfulness, the mytheme of death appears in the story through many symbols, such as tombs and the white color. Death is even incarnated in “The Outsider” by the protagonist, who can be identified with “some long-dead ancestor” of the new occupants of the castle (Joshi 2013:386). The “castle” where he rests initially is a crypt with” vast shelves of marble, bearing odious oblong boxes of disturbing size” (Lovecraft [1921] 2015: 1. 268), using the Poesque trope of the oblong box to refer to coffins. In “Memory” it is the collective death and disappearance of human species that is stressed as with the allusion to man as “beings of yesterday” (Lovecraft [1917] 2015: 1.87), which establishes an analogy between past as the time of the dead. In "Ex Oblivione" death is represented through blankness, the white void at the end of the story, when the protagonist takes the lethal drug and dies (Lovecraft [1921] 2015:1.220). In all the stories death causes oblivion, or oblivion is the product of death.

After this tentative list of mythemes, and after the main characteristics of the myth of memory and oblivion have been discussed in each particular tale, it is time to provide some general conclusions about the significance of the myth. The presence of acausal relations or synchronicities in which groups of people who remember, forget or dream about similar situations show in Lovecraft's fiction that the mind of people can be connected among them and with cosmic forces,

denoting the existence of something analogous to a collective unconscious. Thus, Jung's theories are useful again to assess the importance of shared memory and oblivion in Lovecraft's myth, which supersedes the individual experience into an inter-species cosmic frame. Liminality in these myths appears not only through the duality of space and time, but inside the mind of the protagonists because their psyches suffer extreme tensions because are placed in the border between memory and forgetfulness, between wakefulness and the real world versus dreams, and between life versus death and inexistence. In this way, the protagonist of "The Outsider" occupies a liminal position between life and death, as Marin proposed above when he explained, using the pagan myths of different religions, that there are several grades of being alive or dead.

One of the main characteristics of Lovecraft's myths about memory and oblivion is the frequent absence of the extraterrestrial monster or god. Probably because in stories such as "The Outsider," the real monster is the protagonist, not only through his physical aspect, but particularly through his mind. But, as noted above, these representations of memory, oblivion, dreams, madness and dreams show Lovecraft's reinterpretation of previous pagan myths. In conclusion, Lovecraft's myth of memory and oblivion plays a very important role in Lovecraft's fiction, showing how cosmic forces affect the mind of individuals, while stressing the futility of human memory in comparison with the vast scale of time of the universe.

IV. 2.7 Myth 7: The Demiurge, Civilization, and Decadence:

The rise, maturity and fall of civilizations is a very frequent myth not only in Lovecraft's fiction, but also in many of the writers and intellectuals in the interwar period, both from the fantastic genre, such as Aldous Huxley's dystopia *Brave New World* (1931) and philosophy, such as José Ortega y Gasset's *The Revolt of the Masses* (1929). This myth evinces a rupture in the confidence of Western elites after the horrors of first world war and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Lovecraft's myth deals not only with the rise and evolution of human civilizations, but also of the alien societies described in some of his stories, which is relevant because it shows that

decadence is not only a human characteristic, but the consequence of inexorable cosmic forces. In some of Lovecraft's stories, human decadence is caused or at least accelerated by extraterrestrial forces. As Northop Frye argues, the myth of the decadence of civilization was enunciated by Oswald Spengler, who explained the evolution of civilizations in analogous terms of a biological organism, with a birth, growth, maturity and death (Frye 1974:2).

In 1922, Oswald Spengler's published *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (*The Decline of the West*, [1922] 1926), where he argues that the Western civilization is at the last stage of its life. Joshi has extensively discussed the impact that Spengler's work had on Lovecraft, who read the first part of this work in 1927 (Joshi 1990: 134). In his work, Spengler claimed that it was useless to study history outside "the methods of Darwinism -that is, of systematic natural science" (1926: 106). To him, civilizations behave as organisms because "every culture passes through the age-phases of the individual man. Each has its childhood, youth, manhood and old age" (Spengler 1926: 107). His determinist conception of history not only considers previous historiography as unscientific, but also disregards the impact of freewill in the historical development of human civilizations. But most importantly, Spengler's view of history situates humanity within the larger scope of evolutionism against previous theistic convictions. Spengler's insights about history also incorporate a cyclical conception of time, according to which, "the great cultures accomplish their majestic wave-cycles. They appear suddenly, swell in splendid lines, flatten again, and vanish, and the face of the waters is once more a sleeping waste" (Spengler 1926:107). I consider that Spengler's trope of cultures as cyclical waves in contrast to waste influenced Lovecraft's conception of circular time, in which the evolution of civilizations become only an ephemeral episode in contrast to death as a cosmic force. But Lovecraft's ideas about the decline of civilizations were also instigated by other modern historians as well as ancient pagan poets from the classical period, which evince a common transcultural mythologem that pervades them. Among the modern historians who studied this process was Edward Gibbon, the author of *The History of the Decline and the Fall of the Roman*

Empire (1776-1788), an influential author for Lovecraft[120] (2013:241). His work explains the decadence of Roman civilization. The influence of the literary tradition that focuses on this decline can be distinguished in the idea of decline inherent to Lovecraft's myth of the decadence of civilization. Previously, ancient pagan poets had divided history in the myth of the five ages focusing on an idea of progressive decadence (Griffiths 1956: 109). This is the case of Hesiod's cosmogonies and mythology in *Works and Days* (c. 700 BC) which narrates the history of mankind as a process of decline through five successive stages or races: the gold men, the silver men, the bronze men, the demigods, and finally, the iron men (Hesiod 1988:40). Each of these stages involved a worsening in the living conditions compared to the previous stage. Ovid divided the ages of man in four stages, golden, to silver, bronze, and iron (Ovid 1916:1.11). There are some examples of progressive decadence as from other cultures outside the Graeco-Roman world. In both ancient Mesopotamian tradition (Hartman 1972:26) and the Bible (Gen 5: 1-32;11:10-32), this idea of progressive historic decline is expressed through the shortening of human life expectancy, from more than nine hundred years to less than a century on the average. As Thomas Hartman argues, the Sumerian King List in which the mythical kings were extraordinarily lengthy inspired the listing of equally lengthy patriarchs in the Genesis (Hartman 1972: 26).

The myth of the rise and fall of civilizations appears in different Lovecraft's stories as well as in his prose poem "Nyarlathotep." In this poem, the topic of the decline of human civilizations is central to the story. This decadence is expressed through the ruins of a city, which is prompted by Nyarlathotep. In other stories such as "The Dunwich Horror," and "Beyond the Wall of Sleep," the decadence of isolated human communities is expressed through cultural regression experience in endogamous, close communities. The rise and decadence of alien species can be noticed in stories such as *At the Mountains of Madness* and "The Shadow Out of Time," showing the universal dimensions of the process at a cosmic scale.

[120]Lovecraft knew Gibbon and even cited him in his parody of historiography and academicism in *Ibid* (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2.411). According to Joshi, Lovecraft's writing style called "adjectivitis" (Mosig 1997:17) was greatly influenced by 18th century writers such as Samuel Johnson and Edward Gibbon (Joshi 2013:241).

"Nyarlathotep" starts with a period of political and social upheaval in a western city, probably American, with people going about with pale and worried faces, while some sort of climate change with a very warm autumn is taking place (Lovecraft [1920] 2015: 1.202). Then the story narrates the sudden arrival of Nyarlathotep from Egypt, "risen from the blackness of twenty-seven centuries" (Lovecraft [1920] 2015: 203). He is described as a "slender, swarthy and sinister" figure that had come from Ancient Egypt of the pharaohs into modern 20th century western civilization, but showing bigger knowledge of science, particularly electricity and psychology, than western people. As some sort of magician or illusionist, Nyarlathotep gives itinerant exhibitions of power in which the spectators become speechless fascinated and terrified, suffering terrible nightmares with the performance. At last, Nyarlathotep visits the city of the narrator, who cannot resist the temptation of assisting to one of the seasons of Nyarlathotep. There, the narrator describes how:

> Shadowed on a screen, I saw hooded forms amidst ruins, and yellow evil faces peering from behind fallen monuments. And I saw the world battling against blackness; against the waves of destruction from ultimate space; whirling, churning, struggling around the dimming, cooling sun (Lovecraft [1920] 2015: 1.204).

The protagonist then protests Nyarlathotep that he is using "static electricity," that he is trying to use tricks to frighten the attendees. But then Nyarlathotep drove all the audience outside of the room and into the streets and then they everybody could notice that the process of chaos was taking place. The frightened audience could see the electric bulbs begin to fade and there was something coming down from the greenish moon. The city was in such a process of decadence as if hundreds or thousands of centuries had taken place. The pavement showed the blocks loose and dispatched by grass, with only traces of rusted metal where the tramways had run. They saw "a tram-car, lone, windowless, dilapidated, and almost on its side" (Lovecraft [1920] 2015: 1.204). When they looked to the horizon, they could not find the third tower, by the river, and noticed that the silhouette of the second tower was ragged by the top. The audience of men disbanded into small groups that disappeared moaning or screaming of horror. The climate had also changed again, and now the floor was covered by "evil snows" (Lovecraft [1920] 2015: 1.204). The story then moves

from the narrator's city scale to a cosmic scale, with a description of some of the death of the whole universe, with "midnights of rotten creation, corpses of dead worlds with sores that were cities" (Lovecraft [1920] 2015:1.205). But, as the story concludes, there are some cosmic forces that even transcend the death of the universe:

> And through this revolting graveyard of the universe the muffled, maddening beating of drums, and thin, monotonous whine of blasphemous flutes from inconceivable, unlighted chambers beyond Time; the detestable pounding and piping whereunto dance, slowly, akwardly, and absurdly the gigantic, tenebrous, ultimate gods -the blind voiceless, mindless gargoyles whose soul is Nyarlathotep (Lovecraft [1920] 2015: 1.205).

As Joshi points out, “Nyarlathotep” is “plainly, an allegory on the downfall of civilization” (2013: 370). I consider that Lovecraft felt both terror and fascination with the decline of the West. The windowless tram described in the story symbolizes the futility and decline of western civilization. Joshi also claims that the character of Nyarlathotep in the story is very similar to a historical character, the inventor Nikola Tesla, because both of them performs experiments with electricity in front of an amazed audience by an ashamed audience. He affirms that “there are suggestive similarities between Tesla's and Nyarlathothep’s performances and the shock and disturbances they inspired” (Joshi 2013: 371). In his collection of poems *The Fungi of Yuggoth* (1929-1930) Lovecraft includes a poem entitled “Nyartlathotep” (Lovecraft 2001: 58), as a close retelling of the prose-poem of 1920 (Joshi 2013:741). Since Lovecraft wrote the original prose-poem "Nyarlathotep" in 1920 seven years before reading Spengler's *The Decline of the West*, other influences (Gibbon, Hesiod, Ovid or even Poe) should also be considered.

My analysis wants to highlight that the decline that is showed in “Nyarlathotep” goes beyond the decline of western civilization. The decline of the west can be noticed masterfully through the images of the aforementioned windowless tram-car, the broken towers, or the abandon city. But the scope of decline is a much wider one, as a cosmic force, from which it is impossible to escape, through the powerful description of dead worlds. The distortion of time and climate are a consequence of wider cosmic forces that transcend human scale. Thus, the causes of decline appear as a consequence of invasions by other peoples or even extraterrestrial forces, but even said cosmic forces become an abstract concept intrinsically intertwined with decadence, as a sort of mortal

entropy whose existence in Lovecraft's fiction can only be vaguely hinted through the resulting chaos. The cosmic dancers at the end of the story are representations of the Demiurge, whose movement creates and destroys aimlessly the universe, as the nuclear chaos ruled by Azathoth (Price 2011:264; Harms 1998:17). Although "Nyarlathotep" is identified with this demiurge, in other stories such as *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath* (Lovecraft [1927] 2015:2.211) this role is performed by Azathoth, whereas "Nyarlathotep" becomes only a messenger of the former. In conclusion, no civilization will last forever, not only because of the presence of inner forces of chaos, but because the ultimate nature of the cosmos is chaotic and will bring chaos, an influence of pagan religions that believed in these forces, such as the Gnostic (Alexandrian 2014:76).

In "The Dunwich Horror," the myth of the demiurge, civilization, and decadence is evinced through human decline. The story takes place in a rural settlement whose inhabitants are divided into two groups. While one remains culturally, morally, and psychologically healthy; the other shows low intelligence, moral degeneracy and crime as the most evident features of their decadence. Although in many other cases such as "The Horror at Red Hook," "The Lurking Fear" and "The Call of Cthulhu" the reasons of decadence include miscegenation with foreign ethnic groups, in this story, the degeneration of this part of the population is caused by rural isolation and endogamy ÷

> The natives are now repellently decadent, having gone far along that path of retrogression so common in many New England backwaters. They have come to form a race by themselves, with the well-defined mental and physical stigmata of degeneracy and inbreeding. The average of their intelligence is woefully low, whilst their annals reek of overt viciousness and of half-hidden murders, incests, and deeds of almost unnamable violence and perversity (Lovecraft [1928] 2015: 2. 419).

The excerpt illustrates the mechanism of decadence as a cultural regression whose ultimate causes seem more related to crime than to sin. The inhabitants are criticized as vicious, which was frequently associated with alcoholism in the times of prohibition when the story was written, but incest as a particular kind of immorality is specifically mentioned. Incest involves not only a subversion of the family structure and the whole social rules, but reveals the causes of decadence, since it produces genetic flaws in the resulting offspring, who suffer mental retardation. The extradiegetic omniscient narrator issues a terrible moral statement over this community when he

affirms that they are perverse and degenerate.

Inbreeding and isolation are also identified as the cause of collective decadence. in “Beyond the Wall of Sleep,” where the rural community of the “Catskill mountain region” is described as “those repellent scions of a primitive colonial peasant stock whose isolation for nearly three centuries has caused them [...] to sink to a kind of barbaric degeneracy […] Among these odd folk […] law and morals are non-existent” (Lovecraft [1919] 2015: 1.72). Apart from obvious Lovecraft's classist ideas about people from rural areas, it is interesting to notice from both excerpts from "The Dunwich Horror" and “Beyond the Wall of Sleep” that he believed that any community could suffer some sort of involution if it was isolated.

In *At the Mountains of Madness*, the civilization that the alien species of the Elder Things had founded in Antarctica undergoes a critical phase of social, intellectual and cultural decline after millions of years in our planet. In this case, their ruin was caused by the invasion of their territory by other extraterrestrials, such as the Cthulhu spawn and the Mi-Go, as well as geological processes such as the upthrust of mountains and seismic convulsions (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.104). Nevertheless, the main causes of their dawn also included radical climate changes and the rebellion of the slave race of the shoggoths, which definitely put an end to their civilization. However, it is the decadence of their artistic representations (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.115) what most significantly signals the decline of their civilization, hinting at some internal weakness that would have allowed external circumstances to precipitate their end. In this artistic decadence, Joshi identifies a common feature that according to him, allows to establish some parallelism between the decadence of the civilization of the Elder Things and the decadence of the Roman Empire under Constantine, which implicitly involves that this alien species is compared to the Romans, as the climax of Western civilization (Joshi 2013: 786). While the decadence of the Roman Empire was noted by its contemporaries in the ancient world as a sign of decadence that was known because of Hesiod’s myth of five ages, as Joshi points out, in Lovecraft’s story the influence of Spengler’s *Decline of the West* involves an updating of the inexorable fall of civilizations (Joshi 2013:786).

Joshi's analysis of the decline of the Elder Things suggests that " Lovecraft sees their decadence as an inevitable result of complex historical forces" (2013: 786).

While the final disappearance of the Elder Things is explained through the external causes above, the inner deep causes of their decadence are intellectual, physical and cultural. It is intellectual decadence because, the Elder Things, who were great scientists who had created life on Earth, with time lost the art of creating new life from inorganic matter, so that they had to "depend on the moulding of forms already in existence" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.102). The Elder Things at the peak of their civilization could also travel through interstellar space without any protection or any need of eating, breathing or warm conditions, because they used some chemicals, but with time they also forgot this method (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.98). The decadence was physical because even their bodies lost the possibility of any interstellar travel, so that they could not even leave the Earth's atmosphere (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.104). Finally, the decadence was also cultural cause of the aforementioned degeneration of their art and because they lost curiosity. They became confined in Antarctica and their interest in maps and the exploration of other areas of the Earth declined to zero (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.116). At some period, the Elder things even became "satisfied with their decadent art" (...) or had ceased to recognize "the superior merit of the older carvings" (Lovecraft [1931] 2015: 3.115). Lovecraft seems to suggest a parallelism with the avant-garde artistic movements in 20th century seems quite evident, diminishing its value in comparison to previous periods in human art history.

The decadence of the Elder Things is also shown in the loss of territories under their control. From being an interstellar race who can travel through different galaxies, stars and planets, first they became confined to planet Earth, later to Antarctica, then to two cities in this continent, one on the surface and another in a cavern under the waters, and finally only the underwater city resisted[121] before disappearing (Lovecraft [1931] 2015:3.116). To some extent, the decadence of the Elder Things can be compared to the historical empires of men where the territory that they can

[121]Section IV.2.4 in this study provides information about the land and water cycle in Lovecraft's fiction, for the mythical implications of these changes of habitat from the land to the oceans.

control is gradually diminished, like the Roman Empire, its successor the Byzantine Empire, or even the Spanish Empire, that progressively became reduced until they finally disappeared. In turn, the invaders that attack the Elder Things, such as the Cthulhu spawn ([1931] 2015:1.101), or the Mi-Go ([1931]2015:1.104), and who occupy part of their dominions, can be compared to the Germanic tribes such as the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Franks, Suevi or Vandals that invaded the Roman empire; or the Arabs, Slavs and Turkish that invaded the Byzantine empire. In his letters, Lovecraft provides evidence of his knowledge of the history of the decadence of both the Roman and Byzantine empires, that he compares with the Western World (Lovecraft [1929] 1968: 295), which makes plausible the comparison.

In "The Shadow Out of Time," the myth of the decadence of civilization appears in different ways in the story. Although the story is about a body swap between an alien from the Great Race who lived hundreds of millions of years ago and a modern human called Nathaniel Peaslee, the references to the decline of civilizations are constant throughout the story. The only thing does not seem to undergo any decadence is the mind of the Great Race, who can be projected to any time and any space. As Joshi points out, "unlike the Old Ones, they have suffered scarcely any decline from the prodigious intellectual and aesthetic heights they have achieved, perhaps because their goal is not so much the acquisition of territory and the establishment of colonies, as the pure exercise of study" (Joshi 2013.897). But even then, the bodies and worlds where they inhabit experience the inexorable cosmic laws of decline and have to be replaced. This can be identified for example because the original planet of the Great Race was a dying elder world and they looked for a new world, so that they sent their minds to Earth millions of years ago to occupy the minds of cone-shaped creatures (Lovecraft [1935] 2015:3.391). Their bodies will again die, so that they would occupy the bodies of a posthuman race of beetle civilization. Later, when life on Earth would not be longer possible, they would again transfer their minds of bulbous vegetable

entities of Mercury, and so on with other species[122] (Lovecraft [1935] 2015: 3.400). All this involved that many of these races, or at least their physical bodies would disappear with time. While this conception echoes the idea of succession of the five ages typical from Greek paganism, the dichotomy between body and mind also echoes the duality between body and soul typical from pagan Neoplatonism. In Lovecraft's story, mankind is one of the many species that would disappear in the future, which stresses Lovecraft's idea of the unimportance of humanity versus an indifferent universe. But the cosmic forces of decline supersede just the fact of the extinction of races (or intelligent species) and sometimes involve the death of planets, such as the original one of the Great Race or Earth. This produces an aesthetic effect in which decline foreshadows the horrific splendor of death as the cosmic destiny of everything.

When Peaslee's mind is imprisoned in an alien body, he has the opportunity to know other prisoners, both extraterrestrial and humans. The description of the latter involves references to real-life human empires that had disappeared in Lovecraft's times, such as the ancient Egyptians, the ancient Greeks, the ancient Romans and the Incas, but it also suggests the rise and decline of other real and fictional civilizations from the past and the future. These include an African civilization from 50.000 BC, a vanished Pacific Ocean culture called Yhe, the future empires of Tsan-Chan in AD 5000, and the dark conquerors in AD 16.000 (Lovecraft [1935] 2015: 3.398-399). While a part of criticism has insisted on Lovecraft's racism (Lovett-Graff 1997:182), this quotation clearly demonstrates that his cosmic horror is essentially antiracist, because it equals Western civilization with other civilizations from all around the world. While all these civilizations are brilliant to attract the demanding curiosity of the alien Great Race, after a period of rise and maturity all of them will experience decadence and will disappear. Thus, Peaslee's list of real and invented civilizations shows that all human civilizations decline and disappear, implying that the Western civilization will also be substituted by different civilizations in the future, as Spengler's *The Decline of the West* suggested.

[122]Frequently called "races" instead of "species" in Lovecraft's fiction.

By emphasizing the decline and death of both human and alien societies Lovecraft's myth of the demiurge, civilization, and decadence is clearly an eschatological myth. This decline is only the final stage of the evolution of civilization that involves previous steps such as the rise, youth and maturity. As it has been exposed, the causes for the decline and fall of human and alien civilizations in Lovecraft's fiction are complex and suggest the influence of modern theories of the period such as those of Darwin, Spengler and Gibbon. Still, the influence of the pagan myths described by classic authors such as Hesiod and Ovid on Lovecraft's development of this myth cannot be ignored. From these classical authors, Lovecraft borrows the common myth of human decadence through five ages, while from modern natural and social scientists took the rational explanation that compares the different stages from civilization with the phases of life in organism. Lovecraft was influenced by Spengler, who in turn applied Darwin's evolution theories to his organicist analysis of the rise and decline of civilizations. Gibbon, who had focused his historical study on the case of the decadence of the Roman and Byzantine empires, was also influential to Lovecraft, who alluded to the decadence of these empires in his letters and included a brief mention to emperor Constatine in one of his stories. His particular development of the myth of civilization and decadence: the demiurge, introduces the new element of the alien civilization, which goes beyond both the natural and historical forces analyzed by previous authors. While the scientific approaches provided the rational basis for his myth of decline, the pagan supernatural elements not only inspired his decadent aliens, but the figure of a demiurge. The intersection between both kinds of discourses, rational an irrational, intensifies the ambiguity and verisimilitude that are necessary to generate Lovecraft's atmospheres of cosmic horror.

The myth of the decadence of civilization in Lovecraft's fiction is typically developed through the mythemes of (1) the apprentice; (2) the madman or prophet; (3) revelation; (4) death, which correspond with the different phases of the cycle of civilization and decline. Like in previous myths, the mytheme of the apprentice is developed through individual characters, such as the first-person narrator in "Nyarlathotep," the narrator and his colleague in *At the Mountains of Madness,*

Nathaniel Peaslee in “The Shadow out of Time,” and Joe Slater and the doctors who assist him in “Beyond the Wall of Sleep.” Still, in this particular myth, the character of the apprentice displays a symbolic dimension as one of the phases of civilization, the gold stage in paganism. This apprentice can be identified collectively in some of the selected stories, such as the phase in which the alien race of the Elder Things come from the stars and start their civilization in *At the Mountains of Madness*, the moment when the alien minds of the Great Race take possession of the cone beings, or in the case of human decline in “The Dunwich Horror,” the moments when pioneers came from England to America.

The mytheme of the madman or prophet in the myth of the decline of civilization is embodied by a character that predicts or facilities the process of decadence. The best example of this mytheme in Lovecraft’s fiction is the character of Nyarlathotep in the eponymous story. Although Nyarlathotep is a god of madness and death, in this myth, he also displays some of the features of the human prophet in both pagan and Judeo-Christian religious traditions: he comes from a distant land (Lovecraft [1920] 2015:1.203), from Egypt into a Western city, which echoes the biblical phrase that “no prophet is acceptable in his own country” (Lk 4:24). I consider that the role of Nyarlathotep as a prophet evokes the figure of the pagan oracle, which have been studied within a different context by the figures of the Greek Pythia (Coleman 2019:281), the case of the Chaldean Oracles or in Roman Neoplatonism of Porphyry and Iamblichus (Nieto 2010:308). Thus, in the eponym story, he “prophesied things none but Nyarlathotep dared prophesy” (Lovecraft [1920] 2015: 1.203). As a prophet, Nyarlathotep reveals an unknown lore, described as both science and power, and, as the madman he causes insanity, because where “Nyarlathotep went, rest vanished; for the small hours were rent with the screams of nightmare” (Lovecraft [1920] 2015: 1.203). In “The Dunwich Horror” the mytheme of the madman or prophet can be assimilated to old wizard Whateley, because he plans to bring destruction and death.

The mytheme of revelation is central to the myth of decadence and civilization and the demiurge, intersects with the mythemes of the prophet and the apprentice as the conveyor and

recipient of the revelation respectively, a disclosure that involves the decline and fall of civilization. The apprentice experiences said revelation when he realizes the decadence of his civilization. In "Nyarlathotep" this revelation takes place when the spectators of the show are driven out by Nyarlathotep and they find that their city is deserted and destroyed (Lovecraft [1920] 2015: 1.204). While destruction and ruins symbolize the final stage of decadence in Lovecraft's fiction, biological and cultural degeneration illustrate the process that led to it. In *At the Mountains of Madness*, the Elder Things become aware of their decline through their carvings, because they cannot fly outside our planet anymore, realize that their art has become decadent, or notice that they cannot produce life from inorganic material. In "The Shadow out of Time" there is not a decline of the Great Race as a civilization, but the periods when they must escape projecting their mind massively into the bodies of a different species, evincing cyclicals crisis of survival. In "Beyond the Wall of the Sleep" and "The Dunwich Horror," the revelation of human cultural decline is expressed through narrative techniques, such as the description of ignorance through the transcription of their uneducated speech. Thus, as in the case of ancient Greek pagans who believed in the decadence of their iron age compared to the previous golden age, or the ancient Mesopotamian and Hebrews who thought that life expectancy had diminished in their times, in Lovecraft's fiction both aliens and humans can realize the effects of decline.

The mytheme of death, as the last consequence of the decadence of civilizations is the last element of the myth of the decadence of civilization is typically presented in Lovecraft's fiction as utterly inevitable. Like the men in each one of the five stages in ancient Greek myth of ages described in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, who were "engulfed by the consummation of death" (Hesiod 1988:41) before beginning a new cycle of men, or the Biblical patriarchs in Genesis, who died after engendering descendance in the reproductive cycle of life (Gen 5:3-32), in Lovecraft's myth of decline death is the last phase of a cycle. In "Nyarlathotep," the mytheme develops at a cosmic scale with when the narrator ends his dreamlike account with a poetical reference to "corpses of dead worlds with sores that were cities, charnel winds that brush the pallid stars and

make them flicker low" (Lovecraft [1920] 2015: 1.205). Thus, death is a cosmic process inherent to the whole universe. In *At the Mountains of Madness* the mytheme of death occurs when the narrator suggests that the Elder Things disappeared, and their last city becomes a "stony corpse in eternal blackness" (Lovecraft [1920] 2015: 3.116). While the description of the city echoes an analogy with a stone mausoleum, the use of the noun blackness establishes a symbolic relation with death. Even the Great Race in "The Shadow out of Time," that experiences no cultural decline throughout time, finish their mind migration into different species, ending up in Mercury, and "clinging pathetically to the cold planet and burrowing to its horror-filled core, before the utter end" (Lovecraft [1935] 2015:3.400). It is significative that both the alien races Elder Things and the Great Race end their existence in the underground, because this stresses the influence of the pagan myth of the underworld in Lovecraft's fiction, as the place of the dead, like the Hades in pagan myths such as Hesiod's five ages (Hesiod 1988: 41).

Lovecraft's myth of civilization and decline shares common features with previous pagan myths, such as the circularity of the cycles of civilization and decline. In Lovecraft's fiction, however, the cycle does not only affect human civilizations, but also alien societies, which evinces the cosmic dimension of his narrative. This is different from the concept of a linear evolution in scientific discourse from his period, always from less evolved to more evolved societies, and it shows again a formulation of the myth of "Eternal return" formulated by Eliade. This also involves that there are equivalences between different human and alien societies, as some sort of Jungian synchronicity. Second, if any civilization has a rise, maturity, decline, and death, then each of its different stages occupies a liminal position between these periods.

In conclusion, Lovecraft's use of mythical motifs and narrative structures adapts and reinterprets the insights of previous authors, both classic pagan poets such as Homer and Ovid, and modern scholars such as Gibbon and Spengler, to the narrative of 20th century cosmic horror. Using previous information about the rise and decline of true historic societies, Lovecraft explores these concepts through his own fiction to produce wonder and terror. This fiction includes the exploration

of the decadence of Anglo-Saxon rural communities, the detailed description of the rise and decline of alien societies, the decline of fictional human societies, the twilight of Western Civilization, and finally the decline and death of the whole universe through inexorable laws of decadence. In addition, to the mythical, biological, social and historical causes of decline that had been underlined by previous authors, Lovecraft incorporates the forces of cosmic horror as a new cause of decadence.

The myth of the decadence of civilization and the demiurge is underpinned by a psychological basis, since the perception of the own decline involves a mental assessment. This fact establishes a closer relation with both the myths of memory and oblivion and the myth of possession and mind swap whose base was also psychic, while in the four previous myths the physical encounter with the alien phenomenon took a stronger protagonism. But all the seven myths that I have identified in my study illustrate how Lovecraft's fiction was pervaded by common mythologems from previous pagan myths. It is time to synthesize how this cultural transference from paganism into Lovecraft's fiction takes place.

IV.3 Conclusions

The application of myth-criticism and structuralist analysis to Lovecraft's fiction provides tentative insights about how this writer reinterpreted and adapted previous myths to produce his own. The seven myths identified in this chapter are not intended to be exhaustive or to provide the only interpretation of Lovecraft's mythopoesis, but to explore some of the most relevant uses of its components and mythical narrative within his fiction. The task of classifying a typology for these myths in comparison with similar typologies in pagan myths as particularizations of wider transcultural mythologemes, identifying their constituting mythemes and studying their functions has revealed that the basis of Lovecraft's horror is underpinned by ancient paganism, including the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Thus, the visit of the gods in paganism is transformed into the travel of aliens in Lovecraft's fiction; the supernatural demigod becomes the Lovecraftian hybrid; the pagan

underworld is transformed into an scenery for lurking extraterrestrials; the ancient deluge inspires a cycle of water and land; spirits and demons in possessions are substituted by wizards and aliens; the relations of memory, oblivion and death are re-examined under the 20th century scientific discourse; and, finally, the old pagan myth of decadence through human ages and shortening of life expectancy adopts a new cosmic dimension. In this transference of mythical lore from paganism into Lovecraft's fiction, the supernatural component does not vanish, but establishes a heteroglossic dialogue with the new scientific element.

Both the theories of Jung, including his notions of collective unconscious and synchronicity, and Eliade's conceptualization of mythical times as cyclical processes, have been used as critical instruments for the analysis of Lovecraft's myths. They seem particularly useful, because in all the selected Lovecraft's myths, a process of initiation can be noticed. This initiation includes one singular or a plurality of "apprentices" who, through the mediation of a "prophet or madman," receive a "revelation"" undergoing a mental transformation. This transformation involves an awareness of some reality that transcends from individual conscience to a wider mental realm (like the collective unconscious), a state in which some acausal relations (similar to synchronicities) take place, and where events repeat periodically (similar to Eliade's cycles of time). This is also analogous to what it happened in pagan religions, through rituals and initiation, studied by both scholars and so frequently quoted in Lovecraft´s works.

The seven myths that have been analyzed show a recurrent relation in Lovecraft's fiction between three elements, the Cosmos, the realms of Earth, and man's mind. This can be seen in the first myth, the Visit of the Alien Gods that Came from Outer Space, that involve the Cosmos and our planet. The second myth, the offspring of the Alien Gods, involves the reproduction of these alien gods on Earth. The myths of the Underworld, and the Cycle of Water and Land specify that these gods and their offspring inhabit specific realms on Earth, but that sometimes juxtapose with mankind's realm, causing horror, destruction and death. The fifth and sixth myths, Possession and Mind Swap, and Memory and Oblivion are focused on the human mind, since they analyze how

these aliens and cosmic forces interact with the human psyche. Finally, the seventh myth focuses on civilization and decline, going again from the human mind and civilization into the cosmos, involving that decadence is not only a matter of human civilizations, but a part of a wider process at a cosmic scale. Thus, while this decadence involves death, the cycle may start again, through the visit of new alien gods. This would involve that the seven myths identified in this chapter are connected in a cyclical pattern, and at the same time each one of the seven follows its own circular structure in which the repetitive pagan pattern is combined with scientific discourse to create atmospheres of cosmic horror. While Lovecraft as an individual was basically an atheist, he used paganism as a narrative resource in his fiction to produce horror, not just as isolated elements or as inspiration his fictional dark pantheon, but even as myths that converge with scientific discourse. Thus, he adds the lore of pagan historical tradition to provide verisimilitude to his horror stories. If so many ancient civilizations, sometimes culturally isolated, give testimony of analogous cycles of destruction and rebirth, then even the rational mind should not deny their existence.

Thus, circularity is an essential element that appears in all these myths. Another salient feature in Lovecraft's use of mythical narratives and structures in his fiction is liminality, which involves multiple associations. Lovecraft's myths abound in liminal spaces between human and alien realms as an intermediate sphere in which horror is lurking such as the intersection of outer space versus Earth, lands versus waters, and open surface versus the underworld. Liminality is also a crucial feature of the ontology of Lovecraft's characters in these myths to produce fear and repulsion, including hybrid monsters who are half alien and half human or alien creatures who display the physical features of different animal species. Psychic liminality in Lovecraft's fiction also encompasses liminal spaces in the mind, through possession and oblivion, sanity and insanity. The Lovecraft's myths involve a liminal conception of time that cyclically returns, which echoes the pagan conceptions of circular time and timelessness. These different expressions of liminality contribute to produce atmospheres of horror. Liminality is related to cycles since it always follows a pattern of an alternation between different states, in which the function of repetitive pagan rituals

is to evoke the changes between these states and the primeval events that were in the original myth.

Lovecraft's use of mythical narratives in his stories shows not only the influence of myths from different pagan religions and literary traditions, but also his reinterpretation of said myths in the light of scientific theories and discoveries of his own time. These pagan sources include the description, elements, function and symbolism of mythical places such as the underground hell and the world covered by the water in the deluge, and mythical events recurring in different pagan traditions, the birth of demigods as the offspring of gods and mortals, possession, oblivion, and the dawn and fall of human civilization. Lovecraft uses this previous lore and mythical traditions as the basis for his own personal mythopoesis and transmutes them into cosmic horror, in which the traditional spaces and characters of pagan traditions have been readapted into uncanny spaces and characters to produce atmospheres of horror.

In conclusion, an approach to Lovecraft's fiction from the critical approach of myth-criticism shows that he uses the myths of pagan religions to produce wonder and horror. It also shows that he also borrows specific mythemes from the mythical narratives of said religions to articulate consistent mythical structures in the configuration of his own myths. Lovecraft's myths are interrelated across different stories into a mythopoesis or fictional mythical (trans-)universe that is intrinsically related to different mythologemes as wider, common myths that transcend literature, culture, and history. However, this kind of analysis also has inherent limitations, inherent to myth-criticism, since the selection of myths and the mythemes that constitute them can be considered arbitrary.

CONCLUSIONS

One central issue in Lovecraft's fiction is the insignificance of man versus an indifferent universe. Although this affirmation has been popular in Lovecraft's criticism in the last decades (Mosig 1997:27; Joshi 2013: 646; Price 2011: 261), it cannot be used to minimize the importance of supernatural elements in his fiction. Although Lovecraft once referred to his fiction as "non-supernatural horror," the pervasive presence of pagan elements, practices, and narratives in his stories demonstrates that they do include supernatural elements, such as magic words and objects, which stresses the importance of numinous dreams or the divine or semi-divine alien entities that are frequently identified as deities or somehow related to the supernatural. In some stories these supernatural elements even prove to be effective to temporally stop these gods. Most of these elements come from pagan religions. They appear more frequently in Lovecraft's earliest fiction, but are also present, to a lesser extent, in his later works. The abundance and importance of magic and the supernatural can be noticed through the detailed identification and explanation of pagan elements in the narration. In the assimilation of these pagan elements into Lovecraft's fiction it was crucial the influence of anthropologists from Lovecraft's times such as Tylor, Frazer and Murray, but the main influence is clearly from the last author. These elements have been listed and analyzed in chapter two and include periodical festivals, special settings such as mountains, caves, woods or waters, rituals with fire, pagan gods, or characters taken from the historical belief in witchcraft such as familiars of witches or the Black Man. Their function cannot be reduced to something merely ornamental to embellish the stories or justified to explain the human reaction to an alien reality through cults and superstitions. Its use appears to supersede that explanation, because some of them and their actions are described as supernatural by extradiegetic third person narrators, and because these numinous elements are present in alien societies, who frequently have their own temples, gods and religion. Thus, a distinction must be made between the atheist author and his fiction pervaded by paganism. The presence of these pagan elements is the counterpart of the other scientific,

mechanistic, and deterministic insights that constitute his fiction. The interrelation of this dichotomous aspects in Lovecraft's fiction, that is, the rational/scientific and the irrational/pagan contributes to create indeterminacy and to produce liminal atmospheres of cosmic horror. This interrelation is characterized by three features: liminality, circularity, and synchronicity. Each of them deserves some explanation.

Liminality in Lovecraft's fiction involves a border in which there is a coexistence of both the materialistic and aspects of reality on the one hand, and the numinous and pagan aspects of said reality on the other. Lovecraft's literary style, with its imprecise descriptions, its apparent abuse of adjectives, reinforce the ineffability, indeterminacy, and ambiguity of this border. It contributes to create the atmosphere of weirdness which is so distinctive to his fiction. This intermediate place between two situations, was also an inherent characteristic in the description of gods and mythological creatures from different pagan traditions, but Lovecraft masters the technique, that pervades all his fiction. For instance, liminality is the main feature in Lovecraft's fictional deities because they share the characteristics of extraterrestrials who colonize other planets, but also the characteristics from gods (immortality, powers), and this is used to produce horror through this ambivalence. But these gods are also described as monsters, liminal creatures with liminal bodies that share characteristics sometimes identifiable with different animal species, which contributes to intensify horror. The spaces where they dwell are also liminal, such as the waters, the underworld, the forests or outside our planet or our known dimensions. Even when they live in these realms, they sometimes interact with the space of man and vice-versa causing madness and devastation to the latter. A particular case of these alien-gods is that of the “minor” gods of Earth that appear in some stories of the dream-cycle, such as “The Other Gods.” These gods even occupy a more liminal position, because they share some intermediate position between the powerful other gods and feeble creatures such as men and can experience emotions such as “homesickness” or “tears.” The stories in which these appear in the dream-cycle have been sometimes diminished as an unimportant or worse subgenre in Lovecraft's fiction, as it these did not really fit in with the rest of the works. This

also produces liminality in human characters, as an intermediate position between dreams and wakefulness. Another liminal situation that affects human characters is the conflict between madness and reason, since very frequently these are not sure if they had had an extraordinary experience or are simply losing their minds. A last type of liminality appears between memory and oblivion of between life and death. Thus, all these types of liminality are used as a resource to produce atmospheres of horror in Lovecraft's fiction.

Circularity is the second main function of pagan traditions in Lovecraft's fiction. It deals with the concept of mythical time in pagan religions, and the description of repetitive events that take place at the beginning in a far past of in a far future. This involves the rejection of linear time and history and its substitution by periodical cycles of creation and destruction, cosmogonies of horror and cosmic death. This cyclical alternation also enhances an ontological liminality, through the coexistence of being and not-being. Circularity is also related to synchronicity because repetition involves coincidence. In Lovecraft's fiction this circularity is transferred through the succession of festival pagans in different dates of the year, through symbols such are the circle of stones or megaliths were pagan rituals take place, and by the succession in Lovecraft's myths. Individually, each one of Lovecraft's myths follows a cyclical pattern in which their different stages alternate, such as the succession of cycles and water versus lands or underworld and upper world. These myths can also be associated into a wider circular pattern that interrelates and connects them, from the most ancient myths that go from the outer spaces to those that take place in some liminal realms of our planet, from these to the relation with humans and their effects in human minds, and back from these human minds to the infinity of the cosmos.

Synchronicity involves the acausal relation events that take place independently, but that are connected by meaning. This can be noticed in Lovecraft's fiction, when different pagan communities separated by time, space and cultural distance, celebrate the same pagan rituals, share a common pattern of beliefs and experience the same visions. Thus, one of the functions of the pagan symbols in Lovecraft's fiction is to contribute to synchronicity as some sort of connection

between the human mind or psyche and that vast, dark and infinite universe. Thus, these pagan elements decodify the transcription of the essence of the Cosmos in the human mind. This can be exemplified in the case of different characters who dream the same things. Another example takes place when a same character goes back or forward to another period of his life, which relates this concept with circularity. As in the two previous features, the main function of synchronicity is to produce horror. If different, isolated cultures represent the same deity, or isolated individuals around the world dream with it, it must be real.

Thus, the pagan elements share these three features of liminality, circularity and synchronicity, whose main function is to produce horror, but they also underpin Lovecraft's own myths. In his fiction, Lovecraft does not only re-create old pagan traditions but uses them as the base to create his own myths, his own gods and traditions. By using ancient pagan myths Lovecraft does not intend to replicate the old ones, but to produce his own's. Many authors have stressed the influences on Lovecraft through fantasy and horror writers such as the Gothic authors, Poe, Dunsany or Machen, but this study shows that the influence of classical paganism with authors such as Homer, Hesiod, Virgil or Ovid is also paramount. These questions about Lovecraft's myths to the last part of the conclusions of my study, dealing with the results of the application of myth criticism to Lovecraft's fiction.

Myth analysis, as an evolution of the structural approach, has provided interesting insights about Lovecraft's myths and how these may have been influenced by paganism and ancient pagan myths. In this case, I consider that the ideas of Eliade about mythical thought and circular time; Jung, about synchronicity; and Durand about formal aspects of myth criticism and analysis, have proved very useful for my study. For instance, it is very significant that the constituents of myths or mythemes repeat throughout different myths (like synchronicities), showing a cyclical pattern (circularity), and overlapping within the border of two opposed situations (liminality). The list of mythemes that I have found is reduced, which is coherent with the own concept of mytheme as a minor unit of a myth that requires to combine with other to produce the structure of myth. The list

of mythemes includes examples that frequently repeat from one myth to another, such as the outside place, the outside god, the human parent, birth, the hybrid god, the deeds of the god, the return of the god, the madman as a prophet, the apprentice, the city of the gods, water, land, sacrifice, the travel, dreams, revelation, oblivion and death. The similarities of Lovecraft's myths with previous myths allows to characterize both groups as particularization of (trans-) cultural mythologemes, while it allows its classification into different types, such as cosmogonies, eschatologies, anthropogonies, theogonies and etiologies, since in cosmic horror there is no place for soteriologies of salvation.

Nevertheless, myth analysis has also shown its own inherent limitations, such as the heterogeneous character of the nature of the mythemes that constitute Lovecraft's myths, sometimes identified with actions, like Propp's functions of the tale, sometimes analogous to Jung's archetypes, and finally, sometimes just as repetitive characters. An even more overwhelming limitation is the subjective selection of these mythemes and the resulting myths, instead of other, in Lovecraft's fiction. In Lovecraft's mythopoesis the usual situation is that different myths appear intertwined or overlapped among them, which makes very difficult to identify them. While my tentative list of Lovecraft's myths has included seven myths made up of eighteen mythemes, a different study could have identified and included different ones, rejected some or all the list, or split or combined them into a different order.

Lovecraft's fiction is not fully homogeneous, nor necessarily coherent. Some critics have argued that the best of Lovecraft's fiction are those late stories in which he describes in detail alien societies such as these re-created in *At the Mountains of Madness*, or "The Shadow Out of Time." In these stories, the insignificance of mankind, versus alternative humanities, the Elder Things in the former, and the time-traveler Great Race in the latter, would convey a sense of cosmic horror. The horror would be based on human awareness of the fact that mankind is not at the center of the universe but something much weaker, more transient, less intelligent than those races than can travel through space or time, even life on earth. Nevertheless, I contend that the problem with these

two stories is that they are not really frightening for most of readers. Although some critics consider them as the epitome of Cosmic Horror, these early examples science fiction, are not only less frequent in Lovecraft's fiction, but much less scaring than stories such as "The Outsider," "The Dunwich Horror," "The Whisperer in Darkness," or "The Colour Out of Time." This is because defamiliarization, ambiguity, uncertainty and liminality are elements that contribute to produce atmospheres of horror in Lovecraft's fiction in a much more effective way than the detailed description of hypothetical alien societies.

In chapter 2, that was devoted to methodology, six questions were proposed. Although answers have been provided through the explanations of these, now at the end of the conclusions this study, it is time to briefly recapitulate them the conclusions:

1. How abundant are the pagan elements that appear in Lovecraft's fiction? Are they marginal or frequent? Multiple evidence show that paganism is extremely frequent in Lovecraft's fiction. It can be inferred that is has to be an important constituent in his fiction.

2. What are the most frequent pagan elements that appear in his stories? From which cultures are they originally and why did Lovecraft chose them precisely? They include pagan festivals, natural landscapes and constructions such as megaliths and altars, rituals, sacrifices, music, dance, oaths, prayers, magic spells, elements taken from the Western belief in witchcraft such as the dwarf race, the Black Man and familiars, pagan symbols, many gods and goddesses, etc. There are sources that are more productive than others. Some of them are more frequent, such as those from the classical world of Greece and Rome, the civilizations of the Ancient Near East, the Jewish tradition, or the interpretations of a pagan Celtic past in the British islands. But there are other sources such as Ancient Egypt and Native American Civilizations. Lovecraft chose them because he was fascinated with paganism and because they contributed to produce horror.

3. What were Lovecraft's sources to find information about paganism? What scientific and cultural specificities from the sources from his time can be noticed? Lovecraft based his information about myths on the historical and anthropological theories of his times, particularly Tylor, Frazer

and Murray. The way in which he portrayed the presence that there was an ancient race that practiced witchcraft was particularly taken from Murray.

4. What are the particular features of Lovecraft's myths and gods? Lovecraft's gods show a liminal nature, since they can share some characteristics of extraterrestrials and some characteristics of pagan deities. Most of the gods portrayed in Lovecraft's fiction are destructive forces, such as Azathoth, Nyarlathotep, Yog-Sothoth, Cthulhu or Shub Niggurath. They are the creation of Lovecraft but they share some similarities with the gods and goddesses of historical pagan traditions, especially the pristine divinities of chaos in some cultures. Lovecraft created a dark pantheon. There is a particular type of divinities, the earth's gods that appear in the dream-cycle who are weaker and more similar to mankind, although they do not have any interest in human affairs.

5.What are the functions of paganism in Lovecraft's fiction? Is it merely aesthetic?

Traditionally, criticism has interpreted paganism in Lovecraft's fiction as embellishment, or as the human deceptive interpretation of an extraterrestrial reality through cults, legends and rituals. However, the main functions of paganism go beyond that. Their main function is to produce horror. Paganism becomes the counterpart of science and materialism to produce liminal atmospheres of horror and weirdness. Sometimes magic is effective against the monster gods and alien races that appear in fiction. The alien races are also religious, which can be inferred through their references to their temples and gods and demonstrates that Lovecraft did not consider religion as an exceptional situation. Pagan myths also provide the basis for Lovecraft's own myths.

6. How did these real historical myths contribute to shape Lovecraft's own myths in his fiction? Lovecraft reinterpreted and readapted previous pagan myths to produce his own's. Myth-criticism and myth-analysis and the theories of Lévy Strauss, Kerenyi, Propp, Eliade, Jung and Durand provide critical instruments for a tentative of reconstruction of Lovecraft's re-creation of myths. Lovecraft's myths follow a pattern common with these previous pagan myths that include common features such as liminality, circularity and synchronicity. Some examples of Lovecraft's

myths are The Visit of the Alien gods that Came from Outer space; The Offspring of the Alien gods; The Underworld; The Cycle of Land and Water: the Deluge; Possession and Mind Swap; Memory and Oblivion; and The Rise and Decline of civilizations: The Demiurge. These myths contain common elements that are shared by different cultures and pagan myths.

The last part of these conclusions is devoted to discard two ideas that could be wrongly deduced from my approach to paganism in Lovecraft's fiction, before a last reflection about questions for future lines of research. The first idea that I want to highlight is that this study does not want to convey the idea that H. P Lovecraft, as an individual, was a "religious" person in any way. There is quite evidence of Lovecraft's atheism during his life, for instance through many of the letters and essays that Lovecraft wrote. Especially, his rejection of Christianity is beyond any doubt. The fact that there are some cultural influences of Christianity than can be identified in his fiction can be explained by considering Christianity just another pagan religion at the same level with the rest of them. I also want to foreground that this study does not intend to re-assume August Derleth's ideas about Lovecraft's fiction, such as his invention of Elder Gods as the counterpart of the Old Ones, with the aim to protect mankind, the assimilation of the Old Ones to elementals (water, earth, fire, air), or his attempts to associate Lovecraft's fiction to a moral fight between "evil" and "good" forces. I have intended to demonstrate that paganism plays an important role in Lovecraft's works, which does not imply to accept the return of these ideas.

But even considering all the limitations described above, I consider that this study has been worthwhile, not only because of the insights that I have provided, but also because of the question of topics of research that can be the aim of future research. One topic that has appeared continually throughout this study is the question about the importance of the human mind, and madness. Tentatively, I have intended to demonstrate that science, materialism, the transience and unimportance of our species, and cosmic indifferentism are very important in Lovecraft's works, but

they are not everything. Paganism, I think I have proved, also plays an outstanding role to understand Lovecraft's fiction. I suspect that something similar may happen with the role of the mind in Lovecraft's fiction. The stories of the dream-cycle, that in my study have proved to be more useful than they seemed, may provide answers to question. Future research may shed some light about these themes.

REFERENCES

Abad, Katrina (2017), "From Locus Amoenus to Locus Horribilis: Provincial and Urban Spaces of Cultural (Re) Assertation and Hegemony in Yates and Sigel's When the Mountains Tremble and Bustamante's Ixcanul," in *Views from Below: The Underdog in Contemporary Latin America and Spanish Film,* Albany: State University of New York, pp. 1-13

Abdel-Raheem, Ahmed (2018), "Mental models (de)compressions, and the actor's process in body-swap movies," in *Cognitive Linguistic Studies*, Vol.5, No. 2, Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing Company, pp. 376-409

Alarcón, Tonio (2010), "Ni Muertos ni Enterrados. El Terror Gótico en el cine USA de los 70", in Navarro, A. J. (ed.), *Pesadillas en la Oscuridad. El Cine de Terror Gótico,* Madrid, Valdemar

Aldiss, Brian &Wingrove, David (1988), *Thrillion Year Spree. The History of Science Fiction,* London: Palladin Books

Alexandrian, Sarane (2014), *Historia de la filosofía oculta (History of occult philosophy)*. Madrid: Valdemar

Alexanyan, Armen (2017), "Some Philological Observations on "The Horror at Red Hook", in *Lovecraft Annual*, New York: Hippocampus Press, Nº 11, pp. 37-40

Alighieri, Dante (2000), *Divina Comedia. Versión Poética de Abilio Echeverría* Madrid: Alianza Editorial

Alvar, Carlos (1995), "Prólogo", in Alighieri, Dante, *Divina Comedia, Versión Poética de Abilio Echeverría* Madrid: Alianza Editorial, pp vii-xxxiii

Allen, James P. (2005), *The Ancient Egypt Pyramid Texts*, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature

Attebery, Brian (2003), "The Magazine Era (1926-1960), in James, E. & Mendlesohn, F. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 32-47

Aydin, Erdal; Tong, Togan & Pusat, Emre (2006): "The effects of Futurism on Science Fiction

Cinema," in Andolsun, S. (ed), 1st *International CIB Endorsed METU Conference*, Ankara: Faculty of Architecture, pp.187-203

Bathurst, William (1879), *Roman Antiquities at Lydney Park, Gloucestershire*, London: Longman, Greens and Co.

Baudrillard (1990), *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Strange Phenomena*, London: Verso

Baumgarten (2002), *Sacrifice in Religious Experience,* Leiden: Koninjkikle Brill

Becker, Udo (2008), *Enciclopedia de los símbolos (Encyclopedia of symbols)*. Barcelona: Swing

Biart, Lucien (1887), *The Aztecs*, Chicago: McClurg and Company

Bishop, Zealia & Lovecraft, H.P, ([1930] 1989), "The Mound," in *The Horror in the Museum,* Sauk City WI: Arkham House, pp. 96-163

Blackwood, Algernon (2000), *Culto Secreto y otros relatos (Secret cult and other stories).* Madrid: Alianza Editorial

Blavatsky, Helena (1893), *The Secret Doctrine*, London: The Theosophical Publishing House

Boehmer, Elleke (2005), *Colonial and Post-Colonial literature,* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Borzou'ee, Mohammed (2017), "The Survey of the Proofs Presented by Sohrevardi in Revoking Plato's Theory of Transmigration" in *International Journal of Philosophy and Social-Psychological Sciences,* Vol 3, No. 3, pp. 1-6

Boylan, Patrick (1922), *Thoth, The Hermes of Egypt; a study of some aspects of theological thought in Ancient Egypt*, London: Milford

Bremmer, Jan N. (2017), "Descents to the Underworld from Gilgamesh to Christian Late Antiquity," in *Studia Religiologica,* Kraków: Jagiellonian University, Vol. 50, No.4, pp 291-209 https://www.ejournals.eu/Studia-Religiologica

Bronner, Simon (2007), *The Meaning of Folklore. The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes,* Logan: Utah State University Press

Brzezinski, Daniel (2015), "The notion of myth in History, Ethnology and Phenomenology of Religion," in *Teologia Czlowiek*, Torun: Nicolaus Copernicus University, Vol. 32, No.4, pp.13-26

Bruce-Mitford, Miranda (2008), *Signs and Symbols. An Illustrated guide to their origins and meanings,* London: Kindersley

Buchan, John [1902] (1997), *The Watcher by the Threshold: Shorter Scotch Fiction*, Edinburgh: Canongate Classics

Budge, Ernest (1901), *Egyptian Magic*, London: Paul Kegan & Co

Budge, Ernest (1920), *The Babylonian Account of the Deluge and the Epic of Gilgamish: with an account of the Royal Libraries of Nineveh*, Robarts: University of Toronto Press

Bulfinch, Thomas (1856), *The Age of Fable*, Boston: Sanborn, Carter, and Bazin

Calabrese, Omar (1992), *Neo-Baroque: A Sign of the times*. Princeton: Princeton University Press

Carrasco, David (2013), "Sacrifice/Human Sacrifice in Religious traditions", in Juergensmeyer, M (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Violence,* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, pp 209-235

Chaney, William (1964), "Rewiewed Work: The Festival of Lughnasa: A study of the Survival of the Celtic Festival of the Beggining of the Harvest by Máire MacNeill", in *Speculum*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, Vol.1, pp. 188-191

Childe, Vere Gordon (1925), *The Dawn of European Civilization*, London: Routledge & Kegan

Çirakman, Asli (2001), "From Tyranny to Despotism: The Enlightenment's Unenlightened Image of the Turks," in International Journal of Middle East Studies, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Vol. 33. No.1, pp.48-68

Coimbra, Fernando Augusto (2008), "The Pentagram in Rock Art: Some interpretive possibilities", in Coimbra, F.A and Dubal, L. (eds.): *Symbolism in Rock Art*, Oxford: Archaeopress, pp. 7-12

Coleman, J. A. (2019), *The Dictionary of Mythology,* London: Sirius Publishing

Cornell, Tim & Mathews, John (1992), *Roma. Legado de Un Imperio.* 2 vol. Madrid: Folio. Ediciones del Prado

Cornelli, Gabrielle (2016), "Aristotle and the Pythagorean Myths of Metempsychosis," in *Méthexis* 28, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, pp. 1-16

Cross, Frank, Leslie (1958), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Crowley, Dale (2017), "Eldritch Horrors. The Modernist Liminality of H.P. Lovecraft's Weird fiction," in *MSC Academic Endeavors*, Cleveland: Cleveland State University, pp.1-61

Cuccia, Christopher (2021), "A Bridge Through Chaos: The Miltonic in Dagon and Lovecraft's "Greater Mythos," in *Lovecraft Annual*, New York: Hippocampus Press, No. 15, pp. 102-127

Cumont, Franz [1906] (1987), *Las religiones orientales y el paganismo romano (The oriental religions in Roman paganism),* Madrid: Akal Universitaria

Cunliffe, Barry (2002), *The Penguin Illustrated History of Britain And Ireland. From Earliest Times to the Present Day*. London: Penguin Books

Curtius, Ernst Robert (1963), *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, New York: Harper &Row

D'Ammassa, Don (2005), *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction. The essential guide to the life and works of Science Fiction Writers*, New York: Facts on File

Das, Nandini et alii (2021), *Keywords of Identity, Race, and Human Mobility in Early Modern England*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press

Derleth, August (1963), “H. P. Lovecraft and his Work,” in Lovecraft, H. P. The Dunwich Horror and Others, New York, NY: Lancer Books, pp.7-21

Di Valentino, Eleonora (2022), “Challenges of the Standard Cosmological Model,” in *Universe,* Vol. 8, No. 399, Basel: MDPI, pp.1-15

Dixon, Wheeler Winston (2010), *A History of Horror*, London: Rutgers University Press

Donoghue, Denis (2003), “Hawthorne and Sin,” in *Christianity and Literature,* in Snyder, R. (ed.), Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, Vol.52, No.2, pp.215-232

Dunsany, Lord (2007), *Cuentos de un Soñador* (*Tales of a Dreamer),* Madrid: Alianza Editorial

Edlund-Berry (2006), Ingrid, “Hot, cold or smelly: the power of sacred water in Roman religion, 400-100BCE, in *Yale Classical Studies. Religion in Republican Italy*, New York: Cambridge University Press, Vol.33, pp.162-180

Durand, Gilbert (2013), *De la Mitocrítica al Mitoanálisis. Figuras míticas y aspectos de la obra (From mythoanalysis to mythocriticism. Mythic figures and aspects of fiction).* Barcelona: Anthropos Editorial.

Dutra, Daniel (2012), “A utopia na obra de H. P. Lovecraft: uma leitura política de *Nas montanhas da loucura”* in Cadernos do IL, No. 45, Porto Alegre: Editorial dos Cadernos do Il, pp.96-108

Eliade, Mircea (1958a), *Cosmos and History. The Myth of the Eternal Return*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Eliade, Mircea (1958b), *Rites and symbols of initiation. The mysteries of birth and rebirth.* New York: Harper & Colophon Books.

Eliade, Mircea (1963), “Mythologies of Memory and Forgetting,” in *History of Religions,* Vol.2, No.2, pp. 329-344

El-Moursi, Mohamed (2017), “Establishment of Yazidism”, in Curta, F. & Holt, A. (eds.) *Great Events in Religion: An Encyclopedia of Pivotal Events in Religious Culture,* Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio

Escribano Paño, Maria Victoria (2011), “El Cristianismo Marginado” (Marginalized Christianity), in Sotomayor (ed.), *Historia del Cristianismo (History of Christianity)*. Vol.1. Madrid: Trotta

Evans, Timothy (2005), “A Last Defense against the Dark: Folklore, Horror, and the uses of tradition in the works of H. P. Lovecraft,” in *Journal of Folklore Research,* Vol.42, No.1, Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, pp. 99-135

Fairbanks, Arhur (1910), *A handbook of Greek Religion*, New York: American Book Company

Finkel, Irving (1998), *The Hero King Gilgamesh*, Chicago: NTC Publishing Group

Flinders-Petrie (1880): *Stonehenge, Plans, Description and Theories*.London: Edward Stanford

Frankfort, Henri (1993), *Reyes y Dioses (Kingship and the Gods)*, Madrid: Alianza Universidad

Frazer, James ([1922] 1996), *The Golden Bough*, London: Penguin literature.

Frye, Northrop (1974), ""The Decline of the West" by Oswald Spengler," in *Daedalus*, Vol. 103, No.1, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, pp. 1-13

Gadotti, Alhena (2014), *"Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld," and the Sumerian Gilgamesh Cycle*, Berlin: De Gruyter

Garza, Mercedes de la (1980), "Prólogo" in Garza, Mercedes de la (ed.), *Literatura Maya.* Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho

Gayford, Norman (2011), "The Artist as Antaeus: Lovecraft and Modernism", in Schultz, D., and Joshi, S.T. (eds), *An Epicure in the Terrible. A Centennial Anthology of Essays in Honor of H. P. Lovecraft*. New York: Hippocampus Press, pp. 286-312

George Andrew (1999), *The Epic of Gilgamesh. A new Translation.* London: Penguin Books

Giger, H. R. (1977), *H.R. Giger's Necronomicon,* Zurich: Edition C

Giger, H. R. (2007), *www H R Giger com* (printed paper book), Köln: Taschen

Goetz, Delia& Morley, Silvanus (1954), *The Book of the People. Popul-Vuh. Translation into English from Adrian Recino's translation into Spanish.* Los Angeles: Plantin Press

Goethe, Johan Wolfgang ([1870] 1808), *Faust, a dramatic poem. Translated by Theodore Martin*, Edinburgh: William Blackwood & sons

Goho, James (2012), "The Aboriginal in the Works of H. P. Lovecraft," in *Lovecraft Annual*, New York: Hippocampus Press, No.6, pp. 54-75

Gómez Casal, Luis (1998), "El caballo como animal psicopompo en la Grecia Micénica," in *Gallecia, Revista de Arqueoloxía e Antiguedade*, Santiago: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, No. 18, pp.399-424

González, José Antonio (2008), "Eliade y la Antropología" (Eliade and Anthropology), in *El Genio Maligno. Revista de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales*, Granada: Asociación Cultural Cancro, No.2, pp. 91-104

Gossart, Jacques (2002), *La longue marche du svastika: histoire connue et inconnue de la croix gammée*, Paris: Dervy

Griffiths, J. Gwyn (1956), "Notes. Archaeology and Hesiod's Five Ages," in *Journal of the History of the Ideas*, Vol.17, No.1, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp.109-119

Haraway, Donna J. (2016), *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene.* Durham: Duke University Press

Harms, Daniel (1998), *Encyclopedia Cthulhuliana*, Oakland: Chaosium

Hartman, Thomas (1972), “Some Thoughts on the Sumerian King List and Genesis 5 and 11B,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 91, No. 1, Atlanta: The Society of Biblical Literature, pp. 25-32

Hawking, Stephen (2005), *A Briefer History of Time,* New York: Bantam Books

Hawthorne, Nathaniel [1850] (2016), *The Scarlet Letter,* New York: Penguin Books

Hennelly, Mark (1981), ““*Melmoth the Wanderer”* and Gothic Existentialism” in Patten, R (ed.) *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, Houston: Rice University, Vol.21, No. 4, pp-655-679

Hearn, Lafcadio ([1907] 1882), *One of Cleopatra’s Nights and Other Fantastic Romances*, London: MacClaren and Company

Hernández Arias, José Rafael (2003), "Prólogo" (Prologue), in E.T.A Hoffmann, *Los Elixires del Diablo*, Madrid: Valdemar

Hesiod (1988), *Theogony. Works and Days. A new translation by M.L.West.*Oxford: Oxford University Press

Hollinger, Veronica (2003), "Feminist Theory and Science Fiction," in James, E. & Mendlesohn, F. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.125-136

Homer (1945), *The Odyssey. Translated by E. V. Rieu,* Edinburgh: Penguin

Houellebecq, M. (2006), *H.P. Lovecraft, Contra el mundo, Contra la vida (H. P. Lovecraft, Against the World, Against Life),* Madrid: Siruela

Hutchinson, John R. (2021), “The evolutionary biomechanics of locomotor function in giant land animals,” in *The Company of Biologists Ltd. Journal of Experimental Biology*, nº 224, pp.1-15

Hutton, Ronald (2011), “How Pagan Were Medieval England Peasants?”, in *Folklore* 122, pp.235-249

Hutton, Ronald (2013), *Pagan Britain,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press

Ixer, Rob et allii (2019), “Alternative Altar Stones? Carbonate-cemented micaceous sandstones from the Stonehenge Landscape”, in *Wiltshire Archaeological &Natural History Magazine,* Vol 112, pp. 1-13

Jackson, Shirley (1914), “Christianity and the Mystery Religions,” in *The Biblical World,* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Vol.43 No. 1, pp 3-16

Jastrow, Morris (1898), *The Religion of Babylon and Assyria*, Toronto: Robarts

Jones, Christopher P. (2014), *Between Pagan and Christian,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Joshi, S. T. (1990), *H.P. Lovecraft: The Decline of the West,* New Jersey: Wildside Press

Joshi, S.T. (2007), “The Cthulhu Mythos,” in Joshi, S.T, (ed.), *Icons of Horror and the Supernatural. An Encyclopedia of Our Worst Nightmares,* Westport CT: Greenwood Press, pp. 98-108

Joshi, S. T, (2011), “Introduction”, in Schultz, D., and Joshi, S.T. (eds), *An Epicure in the Terrible. A Centennial Anthology of Essays in Honor of H. P. Lovecraft*. New York: Hipocampus Press, pp. 11-38

Joshi, S. T. (2013), *The Life and Times of H.P. Lovecraft,* 2 volumes, New York: Hippocampus Press.

Joshi, S. T. (2014), *Lovecraft and a world in Transition: Collected essays on HP Lovecraft,* New York: Hippocampus Press.

Joshi, S. T. (2018a), “Reviews”, in *The Lovecraft Annual*, No.12, New York: Hippocampus Press. 2018, pp. 180-197

Joshi, S. T. (2018b), "Why Michel Houellebecq Is Wrong about Lovecraft's racism", in *The Lovecraft Annual*, No.12, New York: Hippocampus Press. 2018, pp. 43-50

Jung, Carl Gustav (1955), “Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle,” in *The Interpretation of Nature and the Psyche*, New York: Pantheon Books, pp. 1.146

Jung, Carl Gustav (1975), *The Collected Works of C.G.Jung,* Princeton: Princeton University Press. https://archive.org/details/jung-carl-gustav-complete/01%20Psychiatric%20Studies/ Accessed 03/31/2023

Jung, Carl Gustav (2002), *Los Arquetipos y lo Inconsciente Colective (The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious),* Madrid: Trotta

Kennedy, J. Gerald (1977), “Poe and Magazine Writing on Premature Burial,” in Myerson, J. (ed.), *Studies in the American Renaissance*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, pp. 165-178

Kenny, Robert (2015), “Freud, Jung and Boas: The Psychoanalytic Engagement with Anthropology Revisited”, in *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, London: Royal Society, Vol. 69, No.2, pp. 173-190

Kérenyi, Károly (1942), “Introduzione: Origine e fondazione nella mitologia” (Introduction: Origins and Foundation in Mythology), in Jung, C.G. & Kérenyi, K., *Prolegomeni Allo Studio Scientifico Della Mitologia,* Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, pp. 13-43, 2021

Kovacs, Maureen Gallery ([1928] 1989), “Introduction,” in *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. xvi-xxiv

Kozák, Jan A. (2021), “The Echo of Creation: Parallels between Old Norse Cosmogony and Eschatology” in *Temenos: Journal of Comparative Religion*, Helsinki: Finnish Society for the Study of Religion, Vol.57, No.1, pp.103-126

Krämer, Robinson Peter (2017), “Classical Antiquity and the Timeless Horrors of H. P. Lovecraft”, in Rogers, Brett M. & Stevens, Benjamin Eldon (eds.), *Classical Traditions in Modern Fantasy.* New York: Oxford University Press

Langdon, Stephen Herbert (1916), *The Mythology of All Races. Semitic,* Vol. 5. Boston: Marshall Jones Company

Langdon, Stephen Herbert (1923), *Sumerian and Semitic Religious and Historical Texts,* Oxford:

Oxford University Press

Leeming, David & Leeming, Margaret (1994), *A dictionary of creation myths*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Lévi-Straus, Claude (1955), "The Structural Study of Myth", in *The Journal of American Folklore,* Philadelphia: The American Society of Anthropology, Vol. 68, No. 279, pp. 428-444

Lévi-Strauss Claude (1958), *Anthropologie Structurale*, Paris: Librairie Plon

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1978), *Myth and Meaning*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1981), *The Naked Man*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Lévy, Maurice (1972), *Lovecraft*, Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions

L'Heureux, Jean (1886), "Sacrificial Stone, of the North-West Tribes of Canada," in *The Journal of The Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland,* London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. 15, pp. 160-165

Liddell, Henry George (1883), *A Greek English Lexicon*, New York: Harper and Brothers

Lima, Elisa (2018), "Contemporary Reflexions on the Irish Celtic Revival of the 19th century," in Gomes, A.K. (ed.), *Brathair, Celtic and Germanic Study Group,* Sao Luis: Universidade Estadual do Maranhao, No.18, Vol.18, No.1, pp. 56-70

Lionáin, Clíodha Ní (2012), "*Lebor Gabála Erenn*: The Use and Appropriation of an Irish Origin Legend in Identity Construction at Home and Abroad", in *Archaelogical Review from Cambridge,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp- 33-51

Litmann, Greg (2018), "H. P. Lovecraft's Philosophy of Science-Fiction Horror," in Slater, T. (ed.), *Proceedings of the Science Fictions & Popular Cultures Academic Conference.* Hawai: Create Space Independence Publishing Platform, pp. 93-108

Livy ([c.27BC] 1936), *History of Rome,* Vol. 11, Cambridge: Harvard University Press

Look, Daniel M, "Queer Geometry and Higher Dimensions: Mathematics in the fiction of H. P. Lovecraft", in *Lovecraft Annual*, New York: Hippocampus Press, No.10, 2016, pp. 101-120

Lorenz, Helene Shulman (2006), "Synchronicity in the 21st century," in *Journal of Jungian Scholarly studies,* Vol.2, No 2, pp. 1-13

Losada, José Manuel (2015), "Myth and Origins: Men Want to Know", in *Journal of Literature and Art Studies,* Wilmington: David Publishing Company, Vol.5, No.10, pp. 930-945

Losada, José Manuel (2022), *Mitocrítica cultural. Una definición del mito*, Madrid: Akal

Lovecraft, Howard Philips (1965), *Selected Letters I.* Edited by August Derleth, Donald Wandrei and James Turner. Sauk City: Arkham House.

Lovecraft, Howard Philips (1968), *Selected Letters II.* Edited by August Derleth, Donald Wandrei and James Turner. Sauk City: Arkham House.

Lovecraft, Howard Philips (1971), *Selected Letters III*, Edited by August Derleth and Donald Wandrei, Sauk City: Arkham House

Lovecraft, Howard Philips (1976a), *Selected Letters IV,* Edited by August Derleth and James Turner Sauk City: Arkham House

Lovecraft, Howard Philips (1976b), *Selected Letters V*, Edited by August Derleth and James Turner Sauk City: Arkham House

Lovecraft, Howard Philips (1986), *In Defense of Dagon.* West Warwick: Necronomicon Press.

Lovecraft, Howard Philips (2001), *Hongos de Yuggoth y otros poemas fantásticos*, Madrid: Valdemar

Lovecraft, Howard Philips (2008), *Supernatural Horror in Literature & Other Literary Essays,* Wroclaw: Wildside Press

Lovecraft, Howard Philips (2015), *Collected Fiction*, Edited by S. T. Joshi, 3 volumes, New York: Hippocampus Press.

Lovett-Graff, Bennett (1997), "Shadows over Lovecraft: Reactionary Fantasy and Inmigrant Eugenics" in *Extrapolation*, Kent, OH: Kent State University Press

Lucian (1921), *Lucian's Works in Eight Volumes. English Translation by A. M. Harmon,* London: Heinemann

Lythgoe, Albert (1916), *The tomb of Perneb,* New York: The Gilliss Press

MacGregor, Samuel (1889), *The Key of Solomon King (Clavicula Solomonis)*, London: George Redway

Mackenzie, Donald A. (1913), *Egyptian Myth and Legend*, London: The Gresham Publishing Company

Machen, Arthur [1894] (1995), *The Three Impostors*, London: Everyman

Machen, Arthur (2010), *The Great God Pan, The Shining Pyramid, The White People.* Gwasg Gomer: Parthian Library of Wales,

Macleod, Sharon Paice (2001), "The Descent of the Gods: Creation, Cosmogony and Divine Order in Lébor Gábala," in *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium,* Vol.20/21, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 311-355

Main, Roderick (2014), "The Cultural significance of synchronicity for Jung and Pauli," in *Journal of Analytical Psychology,* No. 59, pp. 174-180

Mariconda, Steven (2011), "Lovecraft's Cosmic Imagery", in Schultz, D., and Joshi, S.T. (eds), *An Epicure in the Terrible. A Centennial Anthology of Essays in Honor of H. P. Lovecraft*. New York: Hipocampus Press, pp. 196-207

Marín, Higinio (2006), "Muerte, memoria y olvido," in *Thémata. Revista de Filosofía,* No. 17,

Sevilla: Editorial Universidad de Sevilla, pp.309-319

Martin, Sean Elliot (2008), *Lovecraft, Absurdity and the Modernist Grotesque*, Electronic Theses and Dissertations, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University

Martin, Sean Elliot (2012), "Lovecraft, Absurdity and the Modernist Grotesque," in *Lovecraft Annual*, New York: Hippocampus Press, No.6, pp.82-112

Martínez, Mario & Mateu, Fran (2019), "Crossing beyond the fields of fantasy, science-fiction and horror," in Martínez Fabre, Mario & Mateu, Fran. (eds.), *In a Stranger Field. Studies of Art, Audiovisuals and New Technologies in Fantasy, SciFi and Horror Genres,* Elche: Massiva, Universidad Miguel Hernández, pp. 7-16

McMillan, Timothy J. "Black Magic: Witchcraft, Race and Resistance in Colonial New England", in *Journal of Black Studies*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Vol. 25, No. 1, pp 99-117

Mendlesohn, Farah (2003), "Introduction: reading science fiction", in James, E. & Mendlesohn, F. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.1-14

Miano, Daniele (2015), "The Goddess Ops in Ancient Rome", in *Bulletin of the Institute of Classic Studies,* Volume 58, nº 1, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 98-127

Miller, J. (2008), Men in Black: Appearances of the Devil in Early Modern Scottish Witchcraft Discourse, in Goodare J., Martin, L., Miller, J. (eds), *Witchcraft and Belief in Early Modern Scotland. Palgrave Historical Studies in Witchcraft and Magic. London: Palgrave MacMillan,* pp. 144-165

Miller, Timothy (2011), "From Bodily Fear to Cosmic Horror: (And Back Again): The Tentacle Monster from Primordial Chaos to Hello Cthulhu" ", in *Lovecraft Annual*, New York: Hippocampus Press, No.5, pp.121-154

Milton, John [1667] (1900), *Paradise Lost*, Chicago: CC Thompson

Mohamed, Nathaly (2021), *A construçao do Locus Horribilis nos contos do H. P. Lovecraft*. Sao Paulo: Universidade Estadual Paulista

Molina Foix, Juan Antonio (2006), "Notas", in Lovecraft, H.P, *Narrativa Completa*, 2 volumes, Madrid: Valdemar

Mondi, Robert (1989), "Χαοσ and the Hesiodic Cosmogony," in *Harvard Studies in Classical Mythology*, Vol.92, Cambridge MA: Harvard Universtity Press, pp. 1-41

Mosig, Dirk, (1997), *Mosig at Last: A Psychologist Looks at H.P. Lovecraft.* Rhode Island: Necronomicon Press.

Moss, Joyce (2004), *Middle Eastern Literature and Its Times. World Literature and its Times*. Vol.6. Detroit: Cengage Gale

Murray, Margaret Alice (1910), *The tomb of the two brothers*, Manchester: Sherratt & Hughes

Murray, Margaret Alice (1921), *The Witch Cult in Western Europe.* Oxford: Clarendon Press

Reprinted (2013) by Lulu.com.

Murray, Margaret Alice ([1931] 2006), *El Dios de los Brujos (The God of the Witches).* Mexico D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica

Nietzsche, Friedrich ([1882] 2003), *The Joyful Wisdom,* Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific

Nieto, Jose María (2010), "Pagan divination in the Greek Patristic. The Terms used in criticizing oracles," in *Adamantius,* No. 16, Rome: Editrice Morcelliana pp.308- 319

Nitze, William (1936), "Is the Green Knight story a Vegetation Myth?", in *Modern Philology*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Vol.33, No.4, pp. 351-366

Norris, Duncan (2016), "Lovecraft and Egypt: A closer examination", in *Lovecraft Annual*, New York: Hippocampus Press, No.10, pp.3-45

Norris, Duncan (2019), "Hungry fer Victuals I Couldn't Raise nor Buy": Anthropophagy in Lovecraft," in *Lovecraft Annual*, New York: Hippocampus Press, No.13, pp. 27-52

Nösselt, Friedrich (1885), *Mythology, Greek and Roman,* London: Kerby & Endean

Nuzum, Kathy (2004), "The Monster's Sacrifice -Historic Time: The Uses of Mythic and Liminal Time in Monster Literature," in *Children's Literature Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No.3, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, pp.217-227

O'Connell, Mark (2009), *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of symbols, signs & dreams interpretation,* New York: Metro Books

Olavarria, Roberto (2018), *The Shadow in the Mind: A New interpretation of HP Lovecraft's "The Shadow Out of Time.* MA Thesis in English Literature and Linguistics presented on July 16 2018 (unpublished). Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana (UGR)

Olavarria, Roberto (2023), "Representations of the 'Evil,' 'Pagan,' Protestant in American Horror Fiction: Nathaniel Hawthorne and H. P. Lovecraft," in Martín Párraga, Javier (ed.) *Las Muchas Caras de la Literatura. Conexiones entre la literatura y otras artes y ciencias*, Valencia: Tirant humanidades, pp. 95-103

Ovid (1916), *Metamorphoses, with an English Translation by F. A. Miller,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

Peinado, Federico & Cordero, Maximiliano G. (1981), *Poema Babilónico de la Creación Enuma Elis (Babylonian Poem of Creation, Enuma Elis)*, Madrid: Editora Nacional

Pérez de Luque, Juan Luis (2014), "Gothic Mythology: "The Moon-Bog" and the Greek Connection", in Joshi ST (ed.), *Lovecraft Annual*, New York: Hippocampus Press, Nº 8, pp 186-204

Pettersson, Mattias (2016), *Racism and fear in H. P. Lovecraft's The Shadow over Innsmount,* Stockholm: Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Poe, Edgar Allan (2004), *The Collected Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, London: Wordsworth Classics

Poe, Edgar Allan (2010), "The Philosophy of Composition", *The Norton Anthology of Theory & Criticism.* 2nd ed. Eds. Vincent B Leitch et al. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. pp. 636-647. Print.

Polaski, Donald C. (2004), "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Parsin. Writing and Resistance in Daniel 5 and 6", in *Journal of Biblical Literature*. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature. No. 123/4, pp 649-669

Prat Ferrer, Juan José (2020), *Grandes relatos de la humanidad, el pensamiento mítico,* Segovia: IE Centro de Idiomas. Language Center. https://www.academia.edu/3654895/El_pensamiento_m%C3%ADtico_Libro_de_texto?email_work_card=title

Price, Robert M. (2011), "Lovecraft's "Artificial Mythology"", in Schultz, D., and Joshi, S.T. (eds), *An Epicure in the Terrible. A Centennial Anthology of Essays in Honor of H. P. Lovecraft*. New York: Hipocampus Press, pp. 259-268

Prohászková, Viktória (2012), "The Genre of Horror," in *American International Journal of Contemporary Research,* Vol.2, No.4, Trnava: Department of Massmedia Communication, pp.132-142

Propp, Vladimir (1968), *Morphology of the Folktale,* Austin:University of Texas Press

Quinn, Dennis (2011), "Endless Bacchanal: Rome, Livy, and Lovecraft's Cthulhu Cult," in *Lovecraft Annual,* No.5, New York: Hippocampus Press, pp. 188-215

Ralickas, Vivian (2007), ""Cosmic Horror" and the Question of the Sublime in Lovecraft", in Attebery, B. (ed.), *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts,* Vol.18, No.3, Idaho: International Association for the Fantastic in the Arts, pp.364-398

Rambelli, Fabio (2009), "Before the first Buddha: Medieval Japanese Cosmogony and the Quest for Primeval Kami," in *Monumenta Nipponica,* Vol. 64, No. 2, Tokyo: Sophia University Press, pp. 235-271

Ramos Vera (2021), "Sobre los mitos del rey Arturo y la magia: *Guerra en el Cielo* de Charles Williams y *Esa horrible fortaleza* de C. S. Lewis" ("On the Myths of King Arthur and Magic: *War in Heaven* by Charles Williams and *That Hideous Strength* by C. Lewis"), in *Miscelanea Comillas, Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales,* Madrid: Universidad Pontificia de Comillas, Vol.79, July-Dec, pp 499-520

Randall Garr, W. (2004), "God's creation in the Priestly source," in *The Harvard Theological Review,* Vol.97, No.1, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 83:80

Reynolds, Brandon (2009), "Lovecraft's Avatars: Azathoth, Nyarlathotep, Dagon, and Lovecraftian Utopias", in *Lovecraft Annual,* New York: Hippocampus Press, No.3, pp.96-108.

Roberts, Adam (2002), *Science Fiction,* London: Routledge

Roberts, Adam (2016), *The History of Science Fiction. Palgrave Histories of Literature,* London: Palgrave MacMillan

Robinson, Christopher (2010), "Teratonymy: The Weird and Monstrous Names of H. P. Lovecraft,"

in *Names*, Vol. 58, pp. 127-138

Robinson, James M. (1990), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers

Rowbotham, John F. (1881), "Certain Reasons for Believing that the Art of Music in Prehistoric Times Passed through Three Different Stages of Development, Each Characterized by the Invention of a New Form of Instrument and that These Stages Invariably Succeeded Each Other in the Same Order in Various Parts of the World," in *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, vol.10, pp.380-389

Ruthner, Clemens (2012), "Fantastic Liminality: a Theory Sketch", in Schmeink, Lars & Böger, Astrid (eds.), *Collision of Realities: Establishing Research on the Fantastic in Europe.* Berlin: De Gruyter, pp. 49-66

Sagan, Carl (1995), *Cosmos. The Story of Cosmic Evolution, Science and Civilisation,*London: Abacus

Sallmann, Jean-Michel (1991), *Las Brujas, amantes de Satán,* Madrid: Aguilar Universal/Historia.

Sanders, Andrew (1996), *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Sävulescu, Radu Cosmin (2015), "The Biblical Flood and Parallel Mesopotamian Myths," in *Anuarul Institului de Cercetari Socio-Umane, C.S. Nicolaescu-Plopsor,* Bucuresti: Editura Academia Romane, Editura Academiei Romane, pp. 161-170

Schultz, David (2011), "From Microcosm to Macrocosm: The Growth of Lovecraft's Cosmic Vision," in ST Joshi and D. Schultz (ed,), *An Epicure in the Terrible. A centennial Anthology of Essays in Honor of H. P. Lovecraft,* pp. 208-229

Setiya, Kieran (2020), "Correspondence: Revisiting H. P. Lovecraft," in *The Yale Review* Vol. 108, No.3, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp.132-155 (openly available by the MIT Open Access Articles pp .1-11)

Simón, Francisco Marco (1999), *Los Celtas*. Madrid: Historia 16

Sirangelo, Valentina (2019), "Sulla natura lunare di Shub-Niggurath," in *Studi Lovecraftiani,* No. 17, Pineto: Dagon Press, pp. 21-45

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight ([c.1400] 1917), Translated and Edited by K.G.T Webster, Boston: Houghton Mifflin

Smart, Ninian (2000), *Atlas Mundial de las Religiones,* Köln: Könemann Verlagsgesellschaft

Smith, Clark Ashton (2014), *Hiperbórea y otros mundos perdidos (Hyperborea and Other Lost Worlds)*, Madrid: Valdemar

Smith, Wesley (1965), "So-called Possession in Pre-Christian Greece," in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, Vol.96, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, pp. 403-426

Smith, William (1884), *A New Classical Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography, Mythology and Geography,* New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers ldpd_10482899_000.pdf (columbia.edu) Last accessed 14/04/2021

Snyder, Philip (2017), *Dreadful Reality: Fear and Madness in the Fiction of H.P. Lovecraft,* Honor Theses: The University of Southern Mississippi

Sokolova, Alla Victorovna (2020), "Christmass Traditions Through the Prism of Paganism and Christianity", in *European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol.3, Vienna: Premier Publishing, pp.18-23

Solmsen, Friedrich (1982), "The Earliest Stages in the History of Hesiod's text," in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, Vol.86, pp.1-31

Sotomayor, Manuel (2011), *Historia del Cristianismo. 1. El Mundo Antiguo.* Granada: Trotta

Spaulding, Todd (2015), "Lovecraft and Houellebecq: Two Against the World," in *Lovecraft Annual*, No. 9, New York: Hippocampus Press, pp. 181-211

Spengler, Oswald (1926), *The Decline of the West (Der Untergang des Abendlandes).* Translated by C.F. Atkinson. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Sperling, Alison (2016), "H. P. Lovecraft's Weird Body", in *Lovecraft Annual*, New York: Hippocampus Press. No.10, pp.75-100

Sprague de Camp, Lyon (2002), *Lovecraft. Una biografía (Lovecraft. A biography)*. Madrid: Valdemar

Stableford, Brian (2003), "Science fiction before the genre", in James, E. & Mendlesohn, F. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.15-31

Stroumsa, Guy G., (2015), *The Making of the Abrahamic Religions in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Stuckey, Johanna (2015), "Spirit Possession and the Goddess Ishtar in Ancient Mesopotamina", in *Matrifocus. Cross-Quarterly for the Goddess Woman Samhain*, Vol 8.1, pp.1-10

Stukeley, William (1740), *Stonehenge. A temple restored to the British Druids,* London: Innys & Manby

Szpakowska, Kasia (2009), "Demons in Ancient Egypt," in *Religion Compass*, Vol. 3, No.5 Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, pp.799-805

Tacitus (2012), *Annals*, London: Penguin Books

Teja, Ramón (2016), *La Práctica de los Exorcismos entre Paganos y Cristianos en la Antigüedad Tardía*, in *Anas*, vol. 29-30, pp 379-384

Thompson, Reginald Campbell (1908), *Semitic Magic. Its origins and development*, London: Luzac &Co

Tolkien, J.R.R. (1977), *The Silmarillion.* Edited by Christopher Tolkien. Boston: Houghton

Tregear, Edward (1901), "The Spirit of Vegetation," in *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol.31, pp 157-159

Trim, David (2011), "The Huguenots and the experience of exile (sixteenth to twentieth centuries): History, memory and transnationalism," in Trim. D. (ed.), *The Huguenots: History and Memory in Transnational Context,* Knoxville: Brill pp.1-42

Tylor, Edward B. ([1871] 1920:2.215), *Primitive Culture. Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art, and Custom.* London: John Murray

Unterman, Alan (1991), *Dictionary of Jewish Lore & Legend*, London: Thames and Hudson Ltd

Van Gennep, Arnold ([1908] 1960), *The Rites of Passage (Les rites de Passage),* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Vermaseren, M. J. (1951), "The Miraculous birth of Mithras," in *Mnemosine*, Vol. 4, pp. 285-301

Vileno, Anna Maria (2014), "Les Sefirot dans l'homme. Une lecture kabbalistique de l'intériorité" (The Sefiroth in Man, A Cabbalist reading of the interior), in *Esthétique et Spiritualité III. À l'école de la vie interieure. Approches interdisciplinaires.* Paris: Collectif des Éditeurs Indépendants

Waite, Edward (1896): *Éliphas Lévi's Transcendental Magic, its doctrine and ritual*, London: G. Redway

Walker, Peter M. B. (1989), *Cambridge Dictionary of Biology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Walpole, Horace ([1764] 2014), *The Castle of Otranto: a Gothic Story*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Walser, Joseph (2015), "The Classification of Religions and Religious Classifications: a genre approach to the origin of religions", in *Culture and Religion. An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 16. No.4, London: Routledge, pp.345-371

Ward, Durin J. H. (1908), "The Classification of Religions", in *The Monist,* Vol. 18. No. 4, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 544-75. Accessed April 29, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/27900135

Wheeler, Robert Mortimer (1932), *Report on the Excavations of the Prehistoric, Roman and Post-Roman site in Lydney Park, Gloucestershire,* Oxford: The Society of Antiquaries

Wiedemann, Alfred (1897), *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians,* London: H. Grevel & Co.

Wilson, Thomas (1888), "Megalithic Monuments of Britain", in *The American Naturalist,* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Vol.22. No.259, pp. 573-589

Wood, Andrew Paul (2023), ""A Kind of Sophisticated Astarte": On the Nature of Shub-Niggurath," in *Lovecraft Annual*, New York: Hippocampus Press, No. 17, 2023, pp. 141-162

Yiassemides, Angeliki (2011), "Chronos in synchronicity: manifestations of the psychoid reality," in

The Journal of Analytical Psychology, vol. 56, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, pp. 451-470

Zeller, Benjamin E. (2020), "Altar Call of Cthulhu: Religion and Millennialism in H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos", in *Religions*, 11:18, pp.1-17