

Lovecraftian Adaptations and Thematic Mutations Caused by Their  
Environment

BA Werkstuk Engelse Letterkunde

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## Abstract

H.P. Lovecraft is an author with relatively little mainstream appeal, yet many contemporary creative minds have been inspired by his works, and as such a vast array of adaptations based on his works have been realised in the 83 years after his passing. Although there are many adaptations available his works are widely regarded as being extremely difficult to adapt due to their Lovecraftian themes. This research thus aims to answer how different media adapt these themes and to what extent mutations of these themes are present due to the change in environment. This theoretical approach is in adherence to the notions presented by Bortolotti & Hutcheon in their article ‘On the Origins of Adaptation: Rethinking Fidelity Discourse and “Success”: Biologically’. As for methodology, this research will look at four distinct types of adaptation and analyse how the themes of these adaptations have mutated in their new environments in contrast to their source.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

It is a difficult task to discern any one given genre in the vast array of work Howard Phillips Lovecraft created during his lifetime. Lovecraft himself identified it as ‘weird fiction’, but as Smith points out it is clear that he was influenced by the Gothic genre of literature, as he took much inspiration from Edgar Allen Poe, Lord Dunsany, Herman Melville and more (831). In order to know the full extent of what Lovecraft’s fiction discusses, one must delve into the personal details of Lovecraft’s life, as that is where the inception of the Lovecraftian themes resides.

Lovecraft’s life was not one devoid of struggle: both his parents became delusional and psychotic, and both also passed away in a psychiatric hospital. Lovecraft himself struggled with depression and was suicidal nearly all his life, and eventually died due to cancer in 1937 (Black 244). He almost never left his house, and if he did, he wore his father and grandfather’s clothes. He avoided most direct social contact and instead spent his life writing numerous letters (Black 244). These descriptions paint the picture of a man who was afraid of not only the world around him, but also of his own mind. Another troubling aspect of Lovecraft’s personality is his view on what he called ‘non-Aryans’, as he “expressed in letters to his friends, on “the mongoloid problem in New York” or his sensation of brushing past “hideous negroes that resemble gigantic chimpanzees” in the city subway” (Tyree 137). DeCamp, in his biography on Lovecraft, depicts him as a man plagued by an intrinsic duality. He states that Lovecraft “was ethnocentric to the point of mania ... yet, when Lovecraft came to know members of these hated ethnoi, he always proved as kind, courteous, friendly, generous, and affectionate towards them as he did towards Anglo-Saxons” and goes on by commenting that even though Lovecraft always expressed antipathy towards Jews he “married one and numbered another among his closest friends” (9-10). It is important to be aware of this background teeming with psychological issues and overt racism, not only because both matters are still problematic in our society – making adaptations a more questionable affair – but also because they are abundantly present in Lovecraft’s work and form the backbone of Lovecraftian themes.

Although Lovecraft has been a tremendous influence for creators of modern horror there is relatively little academic research on his work. Most academics like DeCamp and Smith focus on either the biographical aspect of his letters or on the literary aspect of his fiction, but few write on his influence and the many adaptations that have emerged as a result. Thus, the research question “how are Lovecraftian themes adapted by different media and to

what extent is there a mutation of the original themes present in these adaptations?” is a fresh way of analysing Lovecraft’s fiction. Another important aspect of this thesis has to do with what it contributes to the field of adaptation studies. Studies on adaptations generally contrast different adaptations of one source that are of the same media or investigate how one particular author has been adapted unto films. This thesis is thus unique as it examines how the themes of a work mutate depending on the type of adaptation according to the theoretical framework by Bortolotti & Hutcheon, which is an approach that is distinct from other studies done in the field. A reason for these mutations can be found in the analogy given by E.H. Gombrich who states that an artist with a pencil in hand will look for what can be rendered in lines, whereas if they had a paintbrush in their hands they would look for masses of land to portray (Hutcheon 19). This research is thus justified in the sense that it not only adds to an underexplored aspect in Lovecraftian fiction, but it also tackles the question of adaptation in a unique way.

Lovecraft’s works often repeat the same core themes. This can be attributed to his personal life as discussed earlier, but Smith points out that his narratives are also similar due to the formulaic style of Gothic writing (830). In this research, however, only the themes that are present in *At the Mountains of Madness* and *The Shadow over Innsmouth* will be explained. These themes are cosmic indifferentism, madness and the sublime, racism, and degeneration.

The term cosmic indifferentism, often referred to as ‘cosmic horror’, stems directly from Lovecraft’s worldview. Whereas most of the population have a human-centric view of the universe, Lovecraft held a strong cosmos-centric view. He did not feel as if humanity was the most important thing in the universe, but rather that it is insignificant. The chief difference between the more ‘traditional’ works of horror and Lovecraft’s ‘weird fiction’ is that the monsters in traditional works try to interact with humans, but in Lovecraft’s cosmic horror the non-human is entirely indifferent to the human (Smith 835). The characters in Lovecraftian narratives are often left at the mercy of the overwhelming cosmic entities without any chance of fighting back.

A recurring trend in Lovecraft’s narratives is that the characters in them realise their insignificance in the universe, which in turn drives them to madness. It is not the case that the knowledge itself drives them mad, but rather the inability of the characters to cope with said knowledge (Smith 835). Madness and cosmic indifferentism are thus almost mutually inclusive in Lovecraftian stories. It is clear that the madness found in Lovecraft’s work can be linked directly to his own mental afflictions as stated previously. There is, however, another

aspect to this madness and that is the sublime. Described by Edmund Burke as the “strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling” (59), the sublime can be used in a Lovecraftian sense to describe the overwhelming feeling of dread and insignificance in the universe.

Janicker makes an interesting connection between a description given by Brady and this Lovecraftian sublime, by saying “Brady recognizes that the Romantic poets utilized experiences of sublimity in order to stimulate the reader’s imagination by “inspiring metaphysical thoughts about one’s place in the universe” (104). This emphasis on encountering something more powerful than the individual can be connected to the philosophy of Lovecraft” (189). It is thus interesting to note that where Romantic poets tried to use this feeling of the sublime in a positive manner, Lovecraft transforms it into an experience filled with dread and terror.

Lovecraft’s xenophobia, or rather, racism, has been a controversial issue amongst academics and non-academics alike. His works are rife with descriptions of both veiled racism – as seen in his descriptions of the fish-like people in *The Shadow over Innsmouth* – and overt racism – as previously shown in his descriptions of ‘non-Aryans’. A notion that is closely linked to racism is degeneration, which is a theme highly relevant to both *At the Mountains of Madness* and *The Shadow over Innsmouth*. Karschay explains that “degeneration theory posited that ‘degenerate’ individuals shared a deficient biological make-up, which not only set them apart from society’s ‘normal’ population, but threatened that very population with a potentially contagious disease” and that “‘degenerates’ were not only perceived as members of an alien ‘race’ but often as monstrous freaks of nature who belied humanity’s claim to evolutionary perfection” (2-3). This fear of degeneration was at its height in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and it is thus no wonder that there are myriad examples of this in Lovecraftian works.

This thesis makes use of the theoretical framework proposed by Bortolotti & Hutcheon in their article ‘On the Origin of Adaptations: Rethinking Fidelity Discourse and ‘Success’: Biologically’. In it, they propose that instead of basing the success of an adaptation on its faithfulness to the source, researchers could look at the variations (i.e. different adaptations) of a source like how Darwin looked at the variations between species. This thesis will put a laser focus on an aspect of the framework, namely the relation of mutations to their environment.

Bortolotti & Hutcheon propose a “homology between biological and cultural adaptation” and go further to state that “stories, in a manner parallel to genes, replicate; the adaptations of both evolve with changing environments” (444). The words ‘changing

environments' are an overly broad part of this definition, which could mean a numerous amount of different things such as cultural context, geographical location, or even that the adaptation is in the form of a media altogether new to that particular narrative. As such, in order to avoid confusion, whenever the umbrella term 'environment' is used in this thesis it exclusively refers to the cultural context and form of media. Clear examples of changed environments in cultural context and form of media can be found in adaptations of Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*. For example "Québécois writer Robert Lepage set his adaptation in bilingually conflicted Canada, with francophone Capulets and anglophone Montagues" (Bortolotti & Hutcheon 448) which showcases the environmental change being solely the cultural context, whereas the film adaptation *Romeo + Juliet* by Baz Luhrmann is a changed environment due to both the cultural context and the form of media.

Bortolotti & Hutcheon also hypothesise that mutations will take place in adaptations depending on their environment, as "replication is not repetition without change" (448). This notion is the foundation of this research, as the hypothesis is that by examining the environment of the Lovecraftian adaptation a mutation in themes becomes apparent. It should be noted that "despite some of its non-scientific connotations, mutation is not a negative term in biology where it is judged as beneficial, neutral, or deleterious in the context of its environment" (Bortolotti & Hutcheon 449) and as such the goal of this study is not to determine whether or not the adaptation is successful based on the mutation of the themes, but rather to follow the biological approach by asking what mutations can be discovered and whether they strengthen, weaken, or leave the themes relatively the same or not. In doing so it is expected that visually oriented media will undergo a deleterious mutation of cosmic indifferentism, whereas the radio adaptation will exhibit a beneficial mutation for this theme. The themes of madness and degeneration are not as easy to predict as both can be represented rather well in all forms of media, and thus it will depend on where the creator decides to put the emphasis.

## Chapter Two: At the Mountains of Madness

In *At the Mountains of Madness* a group of professors and students from the fictional Miskatonic University go on an expedition into the Arctic in 1930. The expedition splits up with narrator William Dyer staying behind at the base while the group that trots ahead, led by Professor Lake, advances. Lake reports on some incredible and historic findings of fourteen primordial lifeforms via radio, but soon after all contact is lost. Dyer and his student Danforth and some others decide to go look for the missing group. From their plane they can see the encampment made by Lake's party, but once they investigate it on foot they find the mangled corpses of the dogs and the expedition members, save for Gedney and one dog. Some of the well-preserved fossils seemed to have vanished as well. Dyer and Danforth decide to use the plane to find Gedney when they discover an ancient stone city. They explore the ruins of what they establish to be a long-lost advanced civilization of extra-terrestrial creatures, and they learn that this civilization has retreated into the abyss below the city. Dyer and Danforth eventually find the body of Gedney and they instantly understand that the 'fossils' Lake found were simply sleeping. They once again delve into the city in hopes of finding the abyss, but before they find it they are confronted by a Shoggoth, a dangerous amorphous mass of black sludge that was used by the inhabitants of the city to do their heavy labour. After an escape sequence they flee the city by plane, and the narrative ends with Danforth hysterically parroting the sound the Shoggoth made.

In this chapter the graphic novel and radio adaptations will be analysed to discern what mutations of the Lovecraftian themes take place and how the specific medium affects this process. The results will then be contrasted with each other in order to give a general overview of how the two adaptations differ in handling Lovecraftian themes based on the mutations exhibited.

### The Eponymous Graphic Novel Adaptation by I.N.J. Culbard

The graphic novel is "an extended comic book ... written by adults for adults, and able to tackle complex and sophisticated issues using all of the tools available to the best artists and writers" (Tabachnick 1). There is, however, less room for text, which makes it hard to adapt a Lovecraftian work of fiction that "is characterized by lengthy descriptive passages, strongly detailed and gripping, that escalates to a fever pitch of intensity with the move towards its narrative climax" (Janicker 192). The textual is after all what creates the unnerving atmosphere of Lovecraft's fiction, and this atmosphere is what adds to the Lovecraftian themes. The solution to this problem that Culbard came up with for his adaptation was simple:

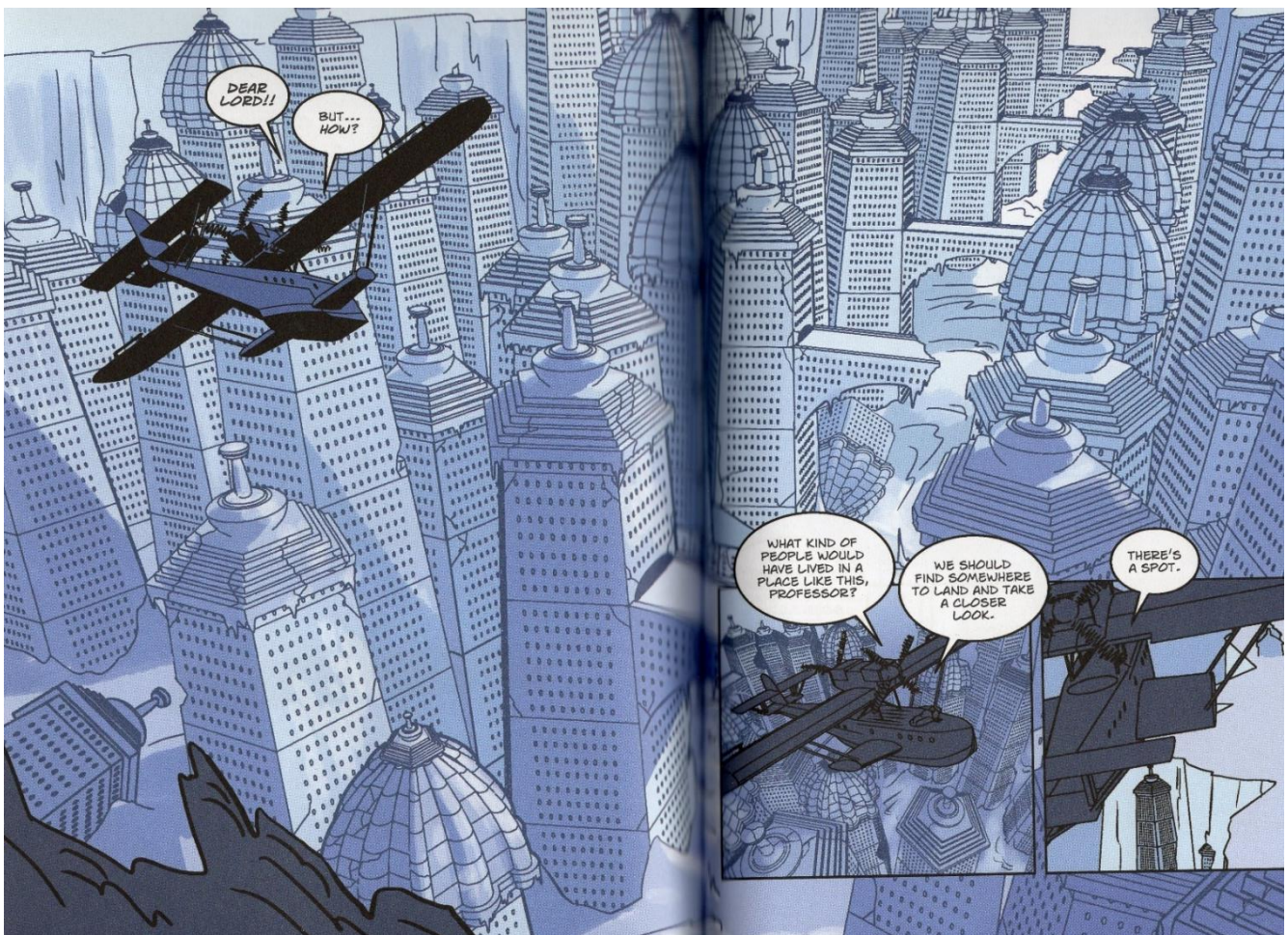
copy the most crucial descriptions directly and use them in expositional panels. It is in this way that Culbard has tried to preserve as much of the original narrative as possible whilst still presenting them as something entirely new, as these are verbatim quotes next to original illustrations. It is an understandable choice, both in a practical sense – as it requires less work – and from a thematic perspective, as by reusing these passages the themes should exhibit the least amount of mutation.

This is not the case, however, as this graphic novel adaptation shows clear thematic mutations of the deleterious kind. These changes can be attributed to several aspects in the adaptation: the new dialogue that was added, the lack of extended insight into the psyche of the characters, the visualisation of Lovecraftian horrors, and the overall lack of build-up and thematic cohesion due to a significant decrease in the textual length of the work. The original *At the Mountains of Madness* is a narrative which spans 81 pages with no elements outside of the words on its pages. In contrast to this the graphic novel is roughly 120 pages long but its word count is drastically lower than its source due to the logical focus on visual elements over textual ones. It should thus be no surprise that the overall atmosphere and thematic unity of the narrative has been lessened at the cost of visualisation. The reasons listed previously in this paragraph are the roots of the mutations that are present in this new environment and will now each be brought up when addressing the mutations of the themes.

#### The Mutation of Lovecraftian Themes in the Graphic Novel Adaptation

The realisation of the insignificance of man's place in the universe, which in turn leads to the theme of madness, is the key to the Lovecraftian theme of cosmic indifferentism, and as such can be found in nearly all of his works. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* is no exception, as it often shows the characters in the story struggling with comprehending the primordial nature of their surroundings by giving extensive insight into the psychological wellbeing of said characters. The passage "the noise shattered all our profoundly seated adjustments – all our tacit acceptance of the inner Antarctic as a waste utterly and irrevocably void of every vestige of normal life" (488) is one of many in the novel that illustrates this theme. Such lengthy passages full of vivid descriptions are quite difficult to translate to a medium such as the graphic novel as its primary focus is on the visual rather than the textual. The graphic novel does have other ways of conveying this theme to the reader. Examples of this are the ability to illustrate the facial expressions and body language of characters, or by using the original dialogue created for this adaptation. There are additionally the aspects of framing (Tabachnick 11) and sequence (Tabachnick 17) which are unique to the graphic

novel. Framing refers to the fact that the graphic novel can make certain panels smaller – and thus less significant – than others, unlike other media which have a fixed aspect ratio. Sequencing then is the progression from one carefully selected key panel to the next. All of these aspects point towards the fact that the visualisation of a narrative can be a great boon to the overall impressions left on the consumer, yet with Lovecraftian narratives there is often an adverse effect and this adaptation is no exception. John Carpenter describes this well as he states that “He is very hard to adapt. Once you start reading it, you realize it’s in his language. He describes things that are indescribable, the indescribable horror. Some of his best stories are just impossible to visualize” (Mitchell 7).



**Image 1.**

By analysing and contrasting the passages of the source novel to the visualisation of the graphic novel adaptation it becomes clear that a deleterious mutation in the theme has taken place. Image 1 as seen above illustrates the moment that Dyer and Danforth discover the ancient city after flying over the Antarctic mountains. As can be seen when observing the illustration, there is no close-up on the facial expressions nor any drawing illustrating the body language of the characters which could contribute to showing their reaction to the

monumental discovery. There are instead only three speech bubbles indicating their bewilderment. The novel, in contrast to this, has an entire passage dedicated to finding: “I think that both of us simultaneously cried out in mixed awe, wonder, terror, and disbelief in our own senses as we finally cleared the pass and saw what lay beyond. Of course, we must have had some natural theory in the back of our heads to steady our faculties for the moment ... The effect of the monstrous sight was indescribable, for some fiendish violation of known natural law seemed certain at the outset” (Lovecraft 455), which continues until the crew land the plane on page 459. It should be noted that Culbard did put extra emphasis on this panel by framing it in two full pages, which does not happen anywhere else in the graphic novel. This is a clear example of the author trying to amplify the effect of a panel by using framing, and although it aptly shows the breadth of the ruined city it lacks the impact of being able to vicariously experience the finding through the psyche of Dyer and Danforth.



**Image 2.**

A different example of the change in the environment weakening the effect of the themes can be found by contrasting image 2 with the passage from the novel it visualises.

This moment is where the intensity of the narrative climaxes in the form of a chase scene and is thus perhaps the single most defining scene of the entire story. The graphic novel illustrates this chase remarkably well, but the panels that are shown in image 2 are the ones that feel rather out of place. In them we see Danforth on the left naming several locations seemingly at random, while Dyer on the right is confronted with their assailant. The use of framing and sequencing on this page is excellent, as there is a clear order of the panels which is furthermore strengthened by the horizontal borders being the ‘Tekeli-li’ onomatopoeia. The movement of the Shoggoth and the use of shadows additionally amplify the strength of this page. The graphic novel adaptation does not, however, give any explanation as to why Danforth is naming these places, whereas the original text has an expansive explanation: “Danforth was totally unstrung, and the first thing I remember of the rest of the journey was hearing him light-headedly chant an hysterical formula in which I alone of mankind could have found anything but insane irrelevance ... The poor fellow was chanting the familiar stations of the Boston-Cambridge tunnel that burrowed through our peaceful native soil thousands of miles away in New England, yet to me the ritual had neither irrelevance nor home feeling. It had only horror” (Lovecraft 498-499). Without this explanation the full horror and weight of the madness that Danforth experiences is not conveyed properly to the reader, which is the case in the graphic novel. These examples thus provide strong arguments for the deleterious mutation of both the Lovecraftian themes of cosmic indifferentism and madness in the environment of the graphic novel.

The abridging of the original narrative to adapt it to the graphic novel environment has been detrimental not only to the themes of cosmic indifferentism and madness, but also to the Lovecraftian theme of degeneration. There are numerous passages in the source version of *At the Mountains of Madness* that deal with the loss of knowledge, abilities, and art over time, such as: “for their prehistoric flights through cosmic space ... they absorbed certain chemicals and became almost independent of eating, breathing, or heat conditions – but by the time of the great cold they had lost track of the method” (Lovecraft 471) and “art and decoration were pursued, though of course with a certain decadence. The Old Ones seemed to realise this falling off themselves, and in many cases anticipated the policy of Constantine the Great by transplanting especially fine blocks of ancient carving from their land city” (Lovecraft 479). These passages display Lovecraft’s fear of the loss of progress and civilization. It could be said that the entire work is based around this notion as the loss of the Old Ones city is central to all the findings and the plot of the tale. It is logical that the graphic novel adaptation also

showcases this theme because it is so central to the work of fiction as a whole, yet the strength of the theme once again fades in the visual dimension.



Image 3.

Image 3 shows that the Old Ones lost their ability to fly through space, which would be a neutral mutation of the theme of degeneration were it not for a few aspects, such as the

framing implying that this part of the narrative is relatively unimportant due to its smaller size, and the fact that image 4 only vaguely conveys the full message.



Image 4.

As seen in one of the passages above the inhabitants of the lost city realised the decay of their artistic skills, and thus tried to preserve them. The book *At the Mountains of Madness*

also mentions that the art in the upper half of the city was of a lesser quality than in the lower half (Lovecraft 479-480) which gives the reader a sense of historical importance to the discoveries and also gives them an indication of the chronological order of these events. The graphic novel mostly does away with this idea of degeneration and the loss of civilization as seen in image 4 which is more akin to an unimportant passing remark as opposed to how the narrator of the novel discerns a clear connection and creates a historical background for the reader. The adaptation thus shifts the theme of degeneration from the centre of the narrative and puts the focus on horror in its place. This is quite logical when considering the fact that this graphic novel simply does not have enough room in its textual elements to flesh out themes, and thus centralises the horror aspect. The adverse mutation of the theme of degeneration is thus caused by not only the loss of the descriptive passages which were so prominent in the original, but also by the change in the environment which seems to be less suited for the development of themes and the choices Culbard made when framing certain panels.

#### The Radio Adaptation by the Dark Adventure Radio Theatre

The radio adaptation is quite akin to the original format of the narrative in the sense that there are no visual elements present. In the previous section on the graphic novel it was discerned that due to the shift from the textual to the visual the loss of thematic cohesion and overall feeling of dread was lost. The question raised in this section is whether or not a deleterious mutation of themes will also occur when the new environments are auditory in nature, or if instead it will bring forth beneficial mutations.

This adaptation was created by the Dark Adventure Radio Theatre, a group that is part of the H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society. This group, like Culbard, has created many Lovecraftian adaptations but unlike Culbard – who creates adaptations of various authors – they are solely focussed on everything to do with Lovecraft. It is thus to be expected that this group knows the themes and takes them into account when creating an adaptation to preserve the message of the original as much as possible. Much like the graphic novel adaptation by Culbard this radio adaptation uses many of the passages from the original narrative directly and it adds onto them with the use of original dialogue. What makes this adaptation unique from the one by Culbard is that it does not copy the structure of the novel. The source text is presented as an article written by the narrator Professor Dyer, whereas in this adaptation there are three ways in which the story is presented to the listener: as an interview, as a radio broadcast, and as if the listener is present during the events of the story. The interview is

between Dyer and an unnamed host of a radio programme, during which Dyer is explaining what transpired during their expedition in order to stop the planned Starkweather-Moore expedition from making the same mistakes they did by going to the mountains of madness. The radio broadcast is an organic way of tying in the narrative of the original to this adaptation, as in the novel the findings of the expedition are reported across a radio network, thus the listener is presented with the information of the expedition like how the general populace would have received it in the authentic text. This also means that the mystery and intrigue of the story have been built up properly for when the findings are revealed, as the listener is not aware that what is presented in the radio broadcast is not the whole truth until Dyer gives his narrative in the following chapter. The broadcast manner of storytelling is only found in chapter two ‘Worldwide Wireless News’ which is named after the programme. The other two storytelling devices are intertwined in the remaining five chapters and this elevates the tension of the overall adaptation.

It is common knowledge that auditory elements can enhance media. Hand states that “the perception and impact of sound can have a profound effect. The power of sound in relation to emotion, memory, and imagination can be immense and sometimes startling” (8). Sound is a part of our daily life which can even be experienced as something involuntary and horrible – like the sound of nails on a chalkboard. One of the first films to use the addition of the sonic elements for intensifying the medium was *Jaws* and this quickly became a staple in the film industry (Moormann 166). So much so that using sound to amplify the tension and to create scares is found in virtually every contemporary horror film in the form of ‘jump scares’ and it is also how action films amplify the tension of certain scenes with the use of complementary soundtracks. It is thus to be expected that the radio adaptation will focus on additional elements which add to the atmosphere of the story, such as the sound design of creatures and environments, original scores to accompany scenes, and the voice-acting of the characters in the story, and that these elements in turn add to the beneficial mutation of the themes in this new environment.

#### The Mutation of Lovecraftian themes in the Radio Adaptation

The Lovecraftian radio adaptation shows a clear beneficial mutation of the themes of madness, cosmic indifferentism, xenophobia and degeneracy. In order to give clear argumentation as to why this is the case a few transcriptions of the audio fragments have been made which can be found in the appendices. These transcriptions will be contrasted to their counterparts from the source novel to establish how the mutation turned out to be benign.

*At the Mountains of Madness* is an atmospheric work that relies heavily on the expansive passages of descriptions and psychological insight of the characters to present its themes. The adaptation not only adds original dialogue to the narrative, but it also borrows some of these passages from the novel with some small tweaking and adds to them with its sound design. Four examples will now be provided to illustrate this argument. Transcriptions 1 and 2 are taken from chapter 3 of the adaptation and are presented alongside the corresponding passages from the novel. This chapter, aptly named 'Lake's Camp', shows the reaction of the crew upon discovering the camp by plane, and their eventual horror when searching the camp on foot. The audio adds to the Lovecraftian themes as the voice acting, dialogue, and sound design elevate the atmosphere of the narrative. It is difficult to contrastively analyse the textual and the auditory, but by reading transcriptions 1 and 2 and their respective passages it becomes evident that the new dialogue and sound design added by the radio adaptation amplifies the narrative and its themes, and therefore a beneficial mutation of the Lovecraftian themes takes place.

As previously mentioned, there are also passages taken directly from the original novel with minor editing done to them, and these too underwent beneficial mutations because of the sound design and voice acting. An example of this is transcription 3, taken from chapter 4 of the adaptation, which is based on a passage on page 495 of the source. This is a key moment in the overall narrative as in it Dyer realises that the Elder Things are actually quite like humans, and thus it suggests that the degeneration of the society of said Elder Things could also happen to mankind. This illustrates the theme of degeneration splendidly and is a crucial part of the story. Upon contrasting the transcription of the adaptation and the passage of the novel it becomes apparent that the Dark Adventure Radio Theatre group has abbreviated the passage somewhat but has kept the most important parts. They furthermore have added an original musical score and voice acting, as well as using sound effects, which all help in making the scene much more compelling than its counterpart passage from the source even when a few sentences have been omitted.

This is the case for the entire work, as the aforementioned auditory elements that were added have led to a general beneficial mutation of the Lovecraftian themes. It is unnecessary to provide transcriptions for the following examples, which stand only to point out some of the smaller touches that make this adaptation so successful at amplifying the effect of the narrative and thus causes the favourable mutation of the themes: the howling of the wind being much like to the cry of the Shoggoths to the point where it is ambiguous as to which one of the two you are hearing (03 Lake's Camp 08:10), the fact this 'tekeli-li' sound is more

horrifying to hear in this adaptation than it is to read it in the novel (04 The Abyss 13:25), the sound design making the voices of Dyer and Danforth sound as if they are in an empty space (03 Lake's Camp 11:00), and the incessant rushing of the wind throughout almost the entire adaptation.

There is also an addition in this adaptation that helps raise the believability of the narrative, as it explains an element in the source text that seemed almost impossible. The element in question is that in the story Dyer and Danforth examine the murals of the lost city and from that seem to be able to know and explain almost the entirety of the history of the Old Ones, even though they had found these murals in a random and non-chronological order. The adaptation adds a few extra lines which address this concern, which can be found in transcription 4. It may seem a small and insignificant addition, but it helps to improve the plausibility of the narrative, and thus in turn elevates the Lovecraftian themes.

#### Conclusion on the Adaptations of *At the Mountains of Madness*

The argumentation and examples given in this chapter illustrate that in both adaptations there have been mutations of the original Lovecraftian themes. Each adaptation, however, presents a different form of mutation. The graphic novel abbreviated the narrative of the source immensely, but it did not make up for this with its illustrations alone, which led to a deleterious mutation of the Lovecraftian themes. The radio adaptation by the Dark Adventure Radio Theatre on the other hand heightened the atmosphere and thematic cohesion of the narrative to a new level, which led to beneficial mutations of the Lovecraftian themes. This significant difference between the two adaptations can be contributed to how the nature of their medium interacts with Lovecraftian horror. As previously mentioned, the graphic novel does not have enough room for lengthy passages, which the radio adaptation has no qualms with. The graphic novel adaptation additionally tries to visualise that which is supposed to drive its onlookers mad as talked about in the introduction to cosmic indifferentism and cosmic horror, whereas the radio adaptation does not need to do this and instead uses music and sound design to play with the imagination of the listeners.

## Chapter Three: The Shadow over Innsmouth

In *The Shadow over Innsmouth* the narrator Robert Olmstead is on a tour through New England in 1927 when he crosses through the seaside village of Innsmouth to minimize his travel costs. During this visit he tries to uncover more information on the shady town as multiple people that he had encountered previously expressed their disgust for the village and its inhabitants. Olmstead meets Zadok Allen who in his drunken mad rambling sheds light on the history of the village, and how the merchant Obed Marsh made a pact with human-like fish creatures called the Deep Ones. He would give them sacrifices to mate with if they gave him their treasures and gold. This reveals to the reader that Zadok along with the shop clerk are the only pure humans left in the town. After Zadok tells his tale he disappears and is presumably killed by the Esoteric Order of Dagon (a cult which prays to the creature Dagon). After the story Olmstead tries to leave town but is forced to spend the night in the Gilman House. He wakes up from his sleep because of the suspicious sounds in the hallway, and notices some of the villagers are trying to enter his room. He eventually escapes the hotel and later – after evading a mob of horrifying amphibian creatures – Innsmouth itself. In the epilogue the reader learns that Innsmouth has been destroyed by the US military, and that Olmstead himself is also offspring of the Deep Ones.

In this chapter the videogame and film adaptations will be analysed in order to discern what mutations of the Lovecraftian themes take place and how the specific medium affects this process. Like the previous chapter the results will then be contrasted with each other to give a general overview of how the two adaptations differ in handling Lovecraftian themes based on the mutations exhibited.

### Chronicle of Innsmouth published by Psychodev

*Chronicle of Innsmouth* is a third-person point-and-click style videogame visualised with 2D sprites. The medium is thus both audio-visual and interactive, which is a combination not yet seen in the previously discussed adaptations. As stated in the section on the graphic novel adaptation, visual media have different approaches and ways in which they can amplify atmosphere and themes. In his introduction to videogame adaptations Flanagan explains that remediation is a key concept concerning these adaptations. This means that videogames can “seamlessly present and contain other types of media experience depending on need” (4) and thus have more flexibility and options regarding the presentation of information to the consumer. It is one thing to write down in a text that it was raining, but it is an entirely different experience to have a downpour of rain visualised for you along with the expected

sound effects and potentially even a musical score. Another form of remediation is that a game can choose to become non-interactive at times by using cutscenes, which are usually short cinematic experiences used to further the plot. An example of such a cutscene will be discussed in the section on mutations within this environment.



**Image 5.**

Image 5 is a screenshot of the very first area the player finds themselves in. On the bottom left there is an action bar which the player can use to determine the action they want to take, which they can then perform on whatever character or person they desire to click on, hence the genre being named point-and-click. The way progress is made in the game is thus by choosing the right options in the utility interface (which shall henceforth be abbreviated as UI) and combining these with the right elements in the environments. To give a clear example: in order to get Zadok Allen to talk the player has to find a bottle of whisky, which they can pick up and give to him using these options from the UI. For most of the game these options can be done without any time restrictions, which allows for a rather leisurely exploration of its settings.

The player-controlled Robert Olmstead has the same name as the narrator of *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, and this is the case for all the characters in the game that represent ones from original novel. Much like the character names this videogame adapts the story structure of *The Shadow over Innsmouth* quite faithfully: the player travels from Newburyport to Innsmouth in a dilapidated bus, walks around Innsmouth gathering information, sleeps in

the Gilman House, and then tries to escape Innsmouth after the inhabitants try to capture him in his room during the night. It is at this point, when the player has completed about three quarters of the game, that the adaptation starts to derail from the narrative structure of the original and ups the ante by merging an earlier introduced subplot with the main narrative. The climax of the story in this adaptation is thus not found in the original novel, yet the denouement and final cutscene of the game is once again faithful to the source as it shows an abbreviated version of chapter 5 of the novel.

#### The Mutation of Lovecraftian Themes in the Videogame Adaptation

Despite the deviation from the original narrative *Chronicle of Innsmouth* still showcases the same Lovecraftian themes as its source, namely a primary thematic focus on degeneration and xenophobia, with elements of madness and the sublime. This adaptation displays heavy mutations of the original themes due to the progression system, the presentation and visualisation, and the general tone of the first third of the game.

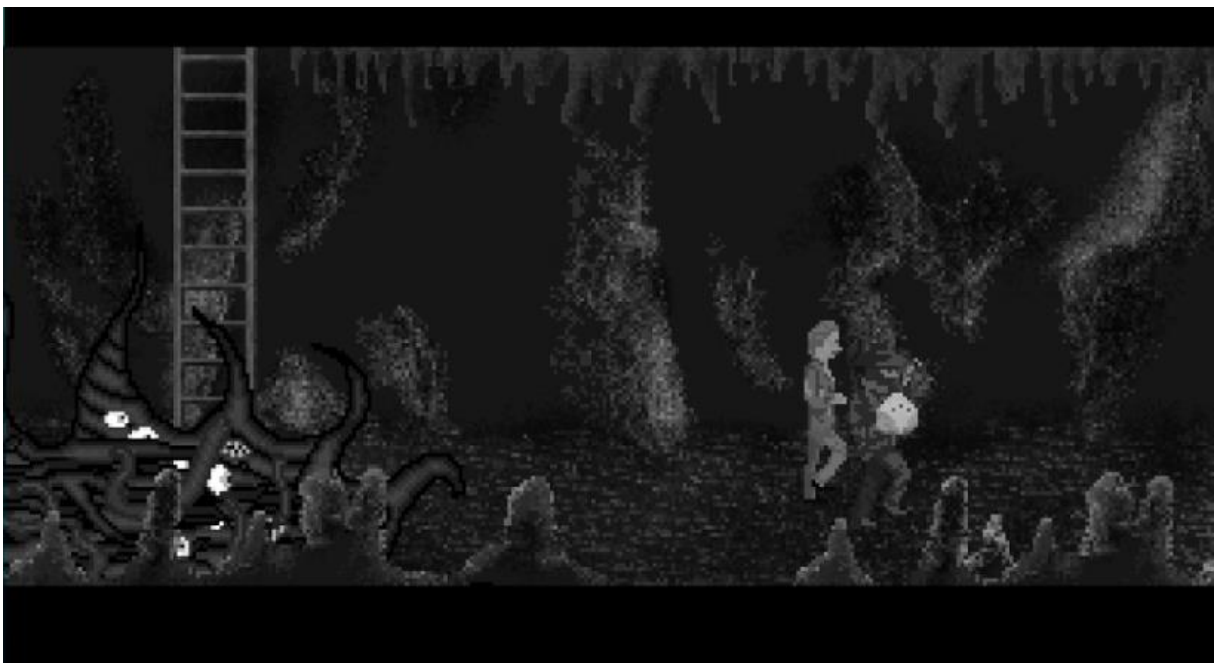
*Chronicle of Innsmouth* has a relatively linear path of progression for the most part as it follows the traditional method, that is – simply put – player collects, finds, or talks to X so that they can accomplish Y. For the majority of the game the player knows exactly what they should do, or at the very least has an overall objective in mind. This works relatively well in the first third of the game which is set in Newburyport, but once the player clears this area and arrives at Innsmouth it is not communicated clearly to the player what X they need to do Y.



Image 6.

As seen in image 6 the atmosphere that was set up in this area in terms of the visualisation and sound design was quite good, but the lack of clear communication about the objectives leads to the player wandering around aimlessly through the town. The frustration this creates leads to a loss of atmosphere and immersion which in turn deteriorates the effectiveness of the Lovecraftian themes present in the adaptation, and it is worth noting that this is an aspect solely reliant on the player's knowledge and input and thus exclusive to this environment.

The presentation and visualisation of the work (which from now on will be simplified to the media-specific term graphics) are done in a 2D retro style. Such a style can be chosen by the developers of a game for multiple reasons, but the main reason for this game was to invoke a feeling of nostalgia in the player. This is evidently the case as on their website <https://www.chronicleofinnsmouth.com> the developers Psychodev emphasise that it is “in the style of Lucas’ graphic adventures in the ‘90s”. Hutcheon writes about videogames that “our visceral responses to the immersive experience of both the visual and audio effects create an “intensity of engagement” (King 2002: 63) unrivalled in most other media.” (51). The crucial moments of the narrative, however, are underwhelming due to the combination of these simple 2D graphics and the disjointed third-person perspective. An example of this is the Shoggoth encounter near the end of the game as seen in image 7.



**Image 7.**

The Shoggoth, a monstrous entity that is supposed to be too horrible to behold, is reduced to a slow-moving ooze with eyes (which can be seen on the left). This encounter is visually unimpressive, and due to the remediation into a cutscene there is no pressure on the

player to make a choice. The player is also kept at a safe distance from the horror due to the third-person perspective, which lessens the intended feeling of dread even further. The last saving grace could have been the sound design, but this too falls flat as there is no amplification from either background music or sound effects. All of these points thus lead to a clear deterioration of the theme of cosmic indifferentism.

The first third of the game is also detrimental to the overall thematic and atmospheric cohesion of the adaptation, as the tone of that portion is wildly different from the rest of the game. The part in question is set in Newburyport and takes place before the arrival at Innsmouth, and during this section the player has to perform miscellaneous tasks so that they can enter the Historical Society in the city in order to make progress. These tasks range from retrieving a stolen pen to obtaining a grabber so that the character can reach the keys to his hotel room. Letting the player accomplish multiple smaller tasks in order to work towards a bigger goal is at the core of the design philosophy of many games such as *Animal Crossing* and *The Sims*, but these tasks should not work against the thematic strength and atmosphere of the game. The chores in this section are also accompanied with dialogue that is meant to be witty and nonsensical, an example of this can be seen in image 8. As there is no real tension in the narrative yet the game instead decides to put an emphasis on humour, but because this is the antithesis of the Lovecraftian atmosphere it heavily works against the thematic cohesion of the adaptation and leads to a deleterious mutation of the themes when it comes to their overall effectiveness.



**Image 8.**

It should be noted that the theme of degeneration, which lies at the heart of the narrative of *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, has undergone a neutral mutation. This subject is

still given quite a lot of attention in the videogame adaptation, especially concerning the way the protagonist reacts when prompted to look at the inhabitants of Innsmouth, but also concerning the final cutscene of the game in which we see that he has turned into one of the Deep Ones, precisely as it happened in the novel. There are less lines of dialogue and text concerning degeneration than in the original, but in contrast to the graphic novel adaptation of *At the Mountains of Madness* this adaptation does make up for the relative lack of textual elements by including voice acting like the radio adaptation.

### Dagon by Stuart Gordon

*Dagon* is a film adaptation by Stuart Gordon from 2001 which tweaks the narrative in order to be more appealing to modern audiences – that is to say, it is more extreme than the original – much like the videogame adaptation did. The film uses the key events of the original story, such as the escape from the hotel, having a drunk old man explain the town's history to the protagonist, and the final plot twist of the protagonist turning into one of the fish monsters. Hutcheon states that “a novel, in order to be dramatized, has to be distilled, reduced in size, and thus inevitably, complexity” (36) but in sharp contrast to that statement *Dagon* changes many aspects of the narrative and includes new elements making it more complex than its source in certain aspects. To name a few examples: the setting is recontextualised from New England to Spain, all of the characters of the original novel are renamed to fit in with the new setting, and instead of having a solitary protagonist the viewer is introduced to a group of four tourists at the start of the film of whom two play a significant role in the story. Most crucial of all though is that the adaptation makes the plot more complex, as there is a new character called Uxia who plays an important role in the story. She is a priestess in the Esoteric Order of Dagon, and while this order is also present in the source it does not have a named character nor does it play a direct role in it. These changes make perfect sense when keeping in mind that the source is difficult to adapt for contemporary film studios due to the lack of female representation and therefore love interest in *The Shadow over Innsmouth* (Menegaldo 58), but these are not the only difficulties when adapting Lovecraft to the big screen. Films are audio-visual in nature, and thus the same problem that the graphic novel and the videogame adaptations faced resurfaces: how can the indescribable be portrayed? Menegaldo states that “even with digital technology, it is still an aesthetic challenge to feature entities defined by features pointing to the impossibility of representation” (59) and this exact issue can be found in *Dagon*.

### The Mutation of Lovecraftian Themes in the Film Adaptation

The film adaptation exhibits a beneficial mutation of the Lovecraftian theme of degeneration, but the themes of madness and cosmic horror show deleterious mutations. These are caused by the representation of Imboca and its inhabitants, the lack of psychological insight of the characters, and the visualisation of Dagon in the film respectively, which will now be addressed in order.



**Image 9.**

Degeneration lies at the heart of the narrative of *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, and after analysing the film it becomes obvious that Stuart Gordon understood this. The way he chose to portray Imboca and all its inhabitants illustrates this perfectly. In the first ten minutes of the film the viewer is shown the shoreline of Imboca from the boat of the tourists (image 9), and from this shot the audience can already discern that the town looks fairly run down, grim, and void of life. Then a few minutes later when Vicky, Paul's wife, goes into the town to call for help she encounters a variety of things that are out of the ordinary, such as the pastor's fingers having webbing in between them, or that she hears inhuman sounds coming from the boarded up houses, and that there are many hooded figures seen shambling through the badly lit streets. The most contributing aspect to the theme of degeneration, though, is the way the monstrous mixes between man and aquatic creatures are presented. Much like the source text the film showcases that the deformity becomes increasingly apparent with age as illustrated by the child in image 10 when compared to images 11 and 12. The novel suggests that there is little variation between these hybrid creatures in the passage "They were mostly shiny and

slippery, but the ridges of their backs were scaly. Their forms vaguely suggested the anthropoid, while their heads were the heads of fish ... At the sides of their necks were palpitating gills, and their long paws were webbed” (Lovecraft 548). *Dagon*, however, presents many different types of these entities as seen in images 11 and 12. In this adaptation the villagers are not only fish like, but some of them even have octopus-like tentacles. It is thus fair to say that the adaptation pushes the theme of degeneration to new heights with this exaggeration. The main character is revealed to be a descendant of Dagon as well at the end of the film, and just like in the novel he at first tries to reject this until he finally gives in. In the adaptation, however, this rejection is also extremified as he tries to burn himself to death, which is thus once again an exaggeration which leads to a beneficial mutation of the theme of degeneration.



**Image 10.**



**Image 11.**

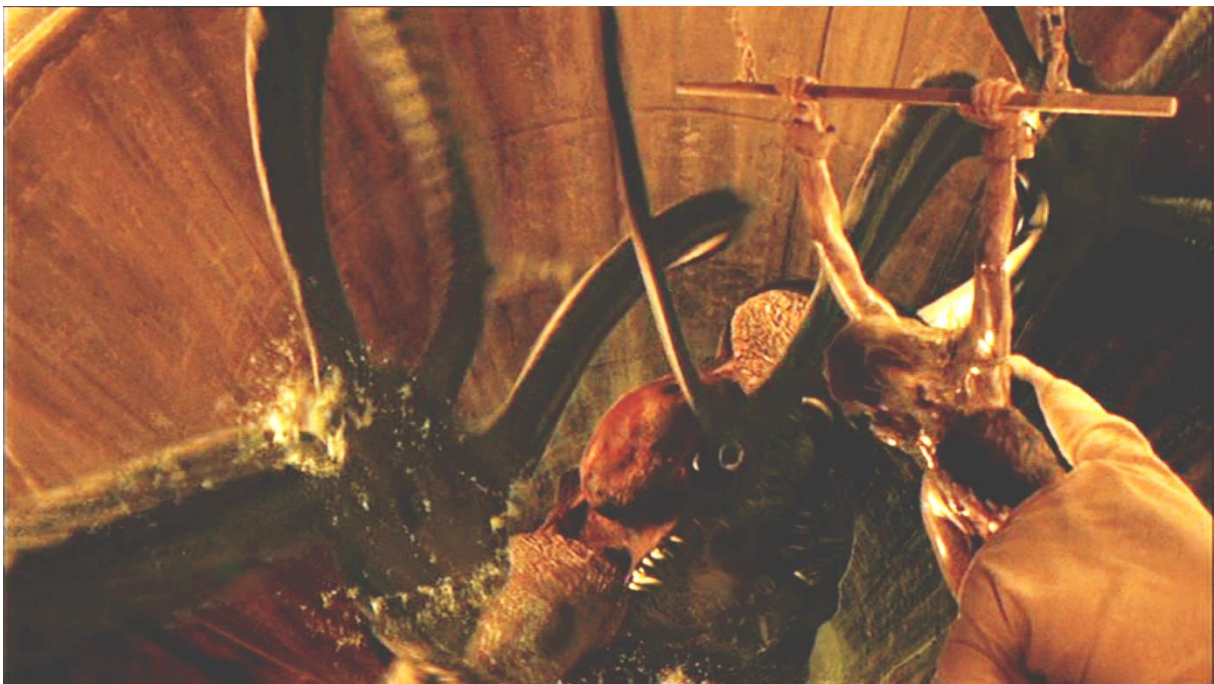


**Image 12.**

The madness dwelling inside of a character can be convincingly portrayed in textual descriptions of their thoughts, but the film adaptation, much like the graphic novel and video game adaptation, is expected to adhere to the principle of showing things rather than explaining them in a lengthy passage like the Lovecraftian novel does. Films have many techniques at their disposal to illustrate that a character has gone crazy such as an actor's performance, camera angles, and special effects. Despite the presence of these aspects *Dagon* does not use them particularly well. The character Ezequiel is heavily based on Zadok Allen from the text, and they are both described as being madmen. The key difference between the two is that over the course of the film Ezequiel turns into a reliable person who helps the protagonist in many situations, which removes any doubt about him being crazy. This is because Paul made Ezequiel remember his parents, which he says moments before his demise and as such this further clears away any traces of madness in the character. The character he is based on from the novel, Zadok Allen, is given no such treatment. Zadok instead talks to Robert who does not believe his rambling, and the more he explains about Innsmouth the more deranged he begins to sound, until finally he disappears as described in the following passage: "and changed the mad ancient's whisper to another inhuman and blood-curdling scream ... Before I could recover my scattered wits he had relaxed his clutch on my shoulder and dashed wildly inland towards the street, reeling northwards around the ruined warehouse wall" (Lovecraft 533). In this way it is left ambiguous whether he was a delusional madman or if he was speaking the truth up to the reveal that the creatures do exist. Another aspect

which brings down the thematic strength of madness in the adaptation is that it lacks the fainting scene that is present in the novel. This scene takes place near the end of the story when Robert is escaping from Innsmouth and hides from the horde of abnormal creatures that are on his tail. The fainting is caused by him experiencing the horror of the sublime as he is unable to cope with what he is seeing. In the film adaptation this fainting scene is omitted completely, which not only mutates the theme of madness but also makes it much less prominent in the narrative.

While cosmic horror only plays a small part in the overall narrative of *The Shadow over Innsmouth* it is still a crucial part of it as it plays with the reader's imagination via the descriptions it gives of the entities. While the film does portray the horror of the citizens of Imboca exceptionally well it also has a scene that hampers the effectiveness of the overall theme, namely the sacrificing ritual. This is the penultimate scene of the film and is supposed to be the climax of the story, yet it also undermines the feeling of cosmic horror. It does this by having the protagonist try to stop the sacrificial ritual by burning the Imbocan villagers that are chanting a prayer. The fact that he is able to stop and murder some of them successfully goes against the theme of cosmic horror, as mankind should be powerless against Lovecraftian monstrosities. The thematic strength is lessened further by the appearance of Dagon in the film adaptation (image 13), and even though it is on screen for only a couple of seconds the less than stellar special effects take away a lot of the horror and intensity from the scene and thus from the overall adaptation.



**Image 13.**

### Conclusion on the Adaptations of *The Shadow over Innsmouth*

As discussed in this chapter both adaptations have exhibited mutations of the Lovecraftian themes of *The Shadow over Innsmouth*, but the exact mutations are different. *Chronicle of Innsmouth* quite clearly displayed deleterious mutations due to the reliance of player input, the progression system, the graphics used, and the mixed signals the adaptation gives the player due to the tonal shift after the first third of the game. The mutations in *Dagon* are not as clear cut though, as degeneration is portrayed excellently, and while the aspects of madness and cosmic horror from the original novel are either omitted or done less efficiently the adaptation does prove that “when plots are condensed and concentrated, they can sometimes become more powerful” (Hutcheon 36). So while the two environments are audio-visual and both restructured and added new elements to the plot in order to emphasise different elements, the film adaptation showed more beneficial mutations than the videogame adaptation due to the design decisions made by their creators.

## Chapter Four: Reflection, Conclusion, and Future Research

The application of the theoretical framework from Bortolotti & Hutcheon about mutations in new environments proved to be quite successful, as for each adaptation discussed in this thesis multiple mutations of the original Lovecraftian themes were discovered. Based on that it is fair to say that the theoretical framework holds some merit. It should be noted, however, that to solely use the aspect of mutations and then categorise them as either beneficial, neutral, or deleterious feels like a rather limited approach in hindsight as the overall value of doing this is not apparent at first glance, but this methodology does offer opportunities not taken in this research. The argument could be made for example that by looking at the potential mutation of the themes in an adaptation its overall success can be determined, as themes lie at the heart of any narrative. This way of determining success would tie in nicely with Bortolotti & Hutcheon's article as they argue for a new way of doing this instead of relying on the fidelity argument.

This research set out to answer how Lovecraftian themes are adapted by different media and to what extent mutations of the original themes are present in these adaptations. A few predictions were given in the introduction and these proved to be quite accurate: the visual media all underwent deleterious mutations when it came to the theme of cosmic horror. The themes of madness and degeneration – according to prediction – exhibited varying mutations. These mutations most of the time stemmed from the design decisions made by the adaptors rather than being rooted in the nature of the environment, except for the graphic novel as that medium inherently lacks the textual density necessary to convey Lovecraftian themes well. The radio adaptation showed the most beneficial mutations of the Lovecraftian adaptations discussed in this thesis. This is because it does not need to visualise cosmic horror and therefore is the only adaptation discussed which leaves this theme intact. It furthermore strengthened the other themes with its audio-design. In contrast to this all the other adaptations showed at least one detrimentally mutated theme. If a conclusion had to be made about the most successful type of Lovecraftian adaptation according to the thematic analysis done via the theoretical framework of Bortolotti & Hutcheon it would thus be the radio adaptation of *At the Mountains of Madness* by the Dark Adventure Radio Theatre.

This thesis proves that mutations take place in all of the discussed forms of Lovecraftian adaptations, and it furthermore shows that by analysing whether these mutations were beneficial, neutral, or deleterious certain media were proven to be more suitable for adapting Lovecraftian themes than others due to their intrinsic properties (e.g. the radio

adaptation being non-visual) leading to beneficial mutations, which is a novel concept in the field of adaptation studies. This implication is quite important as it opens up new questions, such as if this concept is unique to Lovecraft or if in general certain genres and authors are better suited to be adapted as particular media over other forms of media. An example of more contemporary research into these implications would be to analyse how George R.R. Martin's dark fantasy narrative *A Song of Ice and Fire* responds to being adapted in new environments such as the HBO series *Game of Thrones* and Telltale Games' *Game of Thrones* videogame. Researchers could then apply the same theoretical framework on mutations in environments but instead focus on different aspects of a work that could be subject to mutation, such as the narrative structure as seen in the videogame adaptation or how a character might be developed differently depending on the environment like in the film adaptation. They additionally may want to put more emphasis on determining the success of an adaptation based on the mutation that the environment displays, i.e. an adaptation which exhibits mostly beneficial mutations is more successful than one that shows neutral or deleterious mutations. In doing so it could be possible to conclude said research by making a form filled with questions relating to the mutation of the analysed aspect. The form could then give a score based on the answers given, and this score would determine the successfulness of said adaptation. This would mean however that in order to determine the success of the full work there would need to be a form for each individual aspect (such as themes, characters, narrative structure, etc), and as such it would be a relatively large-scale project.

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## Appendices

Transcriptions from the radio adaptation by The Dark Adventure Radio Theatre and their corresponding passages from Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness*.

### Transcription 1

(The sound of the plane's engine and the rushing of wind can be heard throughout the entire sequence)

DANFORTH. (Excitedly) Look up ahead, there's the camp!

MCTIGHE. Do you see them?

DANFORTH. (Cautiously) There's no movement.

PABODIE. Where are they?

DANFORTH. Those patches of darkness. Is that blood on the ground?

PABODIE. It's got to be fuel, or... (shudders audibly).

MCTIGHE. (Starts praying.)

DYER. Do you see anyone moving down there?

DANFORTH. I don't even see the dogs.

MCTIGHE. (Continues praying.)

DANFORTH. What on earth happened here?

DYER. McTighe find a place to set down, we'll look on foot.

MCTIGHE. (Panicking) I don't wanna go!

DYER. (Sternly) We're all going. They may need our help. (Chapter 3, 02:09)

Corresponding passage from the novel *At the Mountains of Madness*:

“We were over the lowest foothills now, and could see amidst the snow, ice, and bare patches of their main plateau a couple of darkish spots which we took to be Lake's camp and boring. The higher foothills shot up between five and six miles away, forming a range almost distinct from the terrifying line of more than Himalayan peaks beyond them. At length Ropes – the student who had relieved McTighe at the controls – began to head downward toward the left-hand dark spot whose size marked it as the camp. As he did so, McTighe sent out the last uncensored wireless message the world was to receive from our expedition” (445-446).

## Transcription 2

(During the entire transcript the sound of the wind howling and the dogs crying and barking frantically can be heard in the background.)

DYER. Is there no sign of the other Elder Things? The undamaged ones?

MCTIGHE. No sign of them.

PABODIE. Hmm... As if they just vanished into thin air.

MCTIGHE. (Irritated) Now don't start with your mumbo-jumbo Pabodie!

PABODIE. (Scowls) And this from a man who says mad men in a storm did this.

MCTIGHE. Do you have a better answer?

DYER. What do you think Frank, really?

PABODIE. (Dismissively) I'm not inclined to say.

MCTIGHE. (Angrily) Now look here Pabodie!

DYER. Easy McTighe! Frank.

PABODIE. Bill. There are books. You know the ones I mean. At Miskatonic. You've read them, I've read them, poor Lake read them. With their fantastical stories of the Elder Things. Earth's first masters who created earth life as a joke or a mistake. I know your friend Will Moth takes them seriously, but I've always thought of them as mad ramblings, as occult poetry. But maybe they're not allegories. Being here, seeing this, I can't help but think perhaps they're much more literal than we thought. Maybe the mad Arab Abdul Al-Hazred was right, and those ancient tales reveal secrets not meant for mankind.

MCTIGHE. (Furious) What books, what are you talking about?

DYER. Alright that's enough! (pauses. The dogs' barking increases in volume) I think we can agree that we can't explain what happened here. I say we radio the outside and tell them what happened but vaguely. There was a storm, the expedition perished. We'll provide no details. We'll take one last flight to look for Gedney and then we all fly back to McMurdo sound.

MCTIGHE. (Frustrated) But we can't just pretend this madness here didn't happen!

DYER. No, it happened McTighe. But if we can't explain it, I think the less said the better.

PABODIE. Nobody should ever know what really happened here. (Chapter 3, 12:40)

Corresponding passage from the novel *At the Mountains of Madness*:

“For madness – centring in Gedney as the only possible surviving agent – was the explanation spontaneously adopted by everybody so far as spoken utterance was concerned; though I will not be so naïve as to deny that each of us may have harboured wild guesses which sanity forbade him to formulate completely” (452).

### Transcription 3

(The sound of the wind rushing in the background can be heard throughout the entire sequence)

DYER. No longer did we fear the missing Elder Things, after all they were not evil things of their kind. (Sombre music starts to play.) They were men of another age, and another order of being. Nature played a hellish jest on them and this was their tragic homecoming. That awful awakening in the cold of an unknown epoch. Perhaps an attack by furry frantically barking quadrupeds and a dazed defence against them and their equally frantic white simians with queer wrappings and paraphernalia. (Music swells.) Ah poor Lake, (Dyer sniffles) poor Gedney, and poor Elder Things. (Sympathetically) What had they done that we would not have done in their place? God! What intelligence and persistence. Radiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star spawn, whatever they had been! (Dramatically) They were men. (Chapter 4, 11:58)

Corresponding passage from the novel *At the Mountains of Madness*:

“After all, they were not evil things of their kind. They were the men of another age and another order of being. Nature had played a hellish jest on them – as it will on any others that human madness, callousness, or cruelty may hereafter dig up in that hideously dead or sleeping polar waste – and this was their tragic homecoming. They had not been even savages – for what indeed had they done? That awful awakening in the cold of an unknown epoch – perhaps an attack by the furry, frantically barking quadrupeds, and a dazed defence against them and their equally frantic white simians with the queer wrappings and paraphernalia ... poor Lake, poor Gedney ... and poor Old Ones! Scientists to the last – what had they done that we would not have done in their place? God what intelligence and persistence! What a facing of the incredible,

just as those carven kinsmen and forebears had faced things only a little less incredible! Radiates, vegetables, monstrosities, star spawn – whatever they had been, they were men” (495).

#### **Transcription 4**

INTERVIEWER. He could tell all that just from looking at their carvings?

DYER. Yes. Their murals were uncanny at communicating subtleties which even language would struggle to impart.