Between

# The Ghost in the Tape Recorder: The Analog Horror of *The Magnus Archives* and *Archive 81*

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**Abstract**

This article discusses two horror-themed narrative podcasts, *The Magnus Archives* (2016-2021) and *Archive 81* (2016-2021). It explores the ways in which these podcasts, part of a new culture of aurality, employ the technological specificities of their medium, while at the same time drawing on the tradition of horror and the Gothic. Specifically, it looks at the ways in which these digital podcasts, disseminated over the Internet to audiences who listen to them mostly on their computers or smartphones, remediate media from the past, such as the radio and the tape recorder, and present them as a source of uncanniness and haunting.

**Keywords**

Podcast, Horror, Analog horror, Nostalgia, *Archive 81*, *The Magnus Archives*.

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# The Ghost in the Tape Recorder: The Analog Horror of *The Magnus Archives* and *Archive 81*

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This article discusses a form of contemporary horror, namely horror podcasts, which has gained a significant following and widespread popularity over the last two decades. Horror podcasts present extremely interesting characteristics regarding the connection between technology and the Gothic, in ways that originally elaborate upon certain technical (such as sound) and thematic (such as the return of the analog) features of contemporary horror cinema. Two shows will be taken into account: *The Magnus Archives* (two hundred episodes divided into five seasons, 2016-2021) and *Archive 81* (thirty-five episodes divided into three seasons, 2016-2019; adapted into a Netflix series of the same title in 2022). The analysis will be limited to the first season of each of these podcasts, as they represent narratively self-contained segments in which the issues discussed in this article can be found exhaustively and clearly.

*The Magnus Archives*, created by Jonathan Sims and produced by Rusty Quill, is a partially anthological series, in which every episode pivots on a statement concerning a supernatural event. Set in the Magnus Institute in London, a fictional research institute dedicated to the paranormal, the series is structured around the reading and recording of statements by the archivist (named Jonathan Sims and played by the author). A standard episode is structured as follows: Jon introduces what he is about to read, reads the statement aloud and records it, and finally comments on it – usually discrediting it by noting that the statement lacks corroborating evidence or that the Institute's team was unable to clarify certain aspects. At the same time, however, he also points out uncanny coincidences that might suggest the statement was, in fact, true. In this regard, *The Magnus Archives* recovers the classic mechanism of simultaneous hiding and revealing of the ghost story (and it is no coincidence that one of Sims' models is M.R. James; the name of the Institute is an obvious hint at his short story "Count Magnus").

As the first season progresses, the initial and final segments of the episodes start gaining more space and becoming crowded with other characters (employees or enemies of the Institute, or simply people with an interest in it). Around and within the individual stories on which each episode pivots, a sort of meta-plot thus starts developing, covering what happens inside the Institute and its surroundings, while recurring characters begin appearing within the statements—characters who soon manifest themselves in the lives of the archivist and his collaborators. In the course of the show, the relationship between the individual stories and the framing one becomes increasingly complex, and it is revealed that behind the statements read by the archivist there is a series of archetypal fears: otherworldly entities trying to penetrate our dimension and conquer it through their avatars, that is to say, the creatures and supernatural manifestations described in the statements.

*Archive 81*, created and self-produced by Daniel Powell and Marc Sollinger, follows an audio archivist named Dan, who is tasked by the mysterious Mr. Davenport with listening to and cataloguing a series of tapes that survived the fire at the Visser, a historical New York building that burned down in the nineties. The tapes were recorded by Melody Pendras in 1994 as part of a research project on the Visser building and its inhabitants. Dan, isolated in a remote facility owned by Davenport's organization and forced to record every moment of his day, discovers through the tapes that the Visser was home to something sinister, orchestrated by Samuel, the leader of a cult disguised as a historical society that included most of the building's residents. In the cliffhanger finale of the first season, Dan confronts Samuel (now transformed into an entity haunting Melody's tapes) and ultimately disappears. Each episode, in fact, ends with the voice of Dan's friend Mark (who also appears within the episodes), who claims that the primary aim of the podcast is to find out what happened to Dan.

## The sound of fear: podcasting and horror

In today's mediascape, the podcast format has gained increasing centrality over the last two decades, with a growing number of products available for an ever-expanding audience. The success of the podcast is strictly tied to the diffusion of iPods and, subsequently, smartphones. As Michael Bull has argued regarding the iPod (and this is even more pertinent now that the device has migrated into the smartphone), «for the first time in history the majority of citizens in Western culture possess the tech-

nology to create their own private mobile auditory world wherever they go» (2007). Contemporary culture «universalises the privatisation of public space» (ibid.), allowing individuals to be in public while simultaneously engaging in an exclusively private activity. It is no longer possible, Bull continues, «to adequately understand the nature of urban culture without also understanding the nature and meaning of the daily use of mobile communication technologies» (ibid.).

Podcasting is a term that covers a wide array of productions that often have little in common. Generally speaking, we refer to podcasting in relation to digitally disseminated audio content (which occasionally may have a video counterpart). This content can vary significantly depending on the type of podcast: it can be an improvised dialogue between individuals or a written text (an essay, a newspaper article, or a narrative piece) read and performed. A podcast can also be, as in the case of Alessandro Barbero's "podcast" in Italy, a simple collection of recordings of conferences and lectures; that is to say, content distributed online that was not originally intended for online consumption. According to Richard Hand and Danielle Hancock, «there is no cultural product that encapsulates the ubiquity and complexity of contemporary mass media consumption better than the podcast» (2019: 164-165).

As a «converged medium», to the extent that it merges audio, the web, and portable devices (Berry 2006: 144), podcasting stands in continuity with radio only in the sense that both media are audio-based. Consequently, they share a greater sense of intimacy compared to visual media and require greater interaction from the audience, who must actively participate in visualizing the content they hear (Berry 2006: 148; on podcasts and intimacy, see Euritt 2023). While, on the one hand, the types of content that appear in podcasts are often those that circulated, and continue to circulate, on radio, and while radio itself has progressively adapted to the podcasting format through a familiar dynamic of remediation, moving from live-only content to online availability (Berry 2016: 11), podcasting also presents some notable specificities.

The crucial difference between podcasting and radio, and the reason for the success of podcasts, is the way in which they are enjoyed. Podcasting is a mobile medium, both in the sense that it is listened to on portable devices while moving, and that listeners can arrange the listening order of the content as they please, taking charge of their own "broadcasting" (Berry 2006: 156; Spinelli and Dann 2019: 7-8). Such "mobility" concerns not only consumption but production as well. As argued by Dario Llinares, Neil Fox, and Richard Berry, «the processes of production and the creation of

content affords new freedoms with regard to the communication of knowledge» (2018: 2). Producing a podcast requires a significantly lower degree of expertise and more accessible technological instruments than radio; furthermore, its distribution can occur through several platforms dedicated to audio content, allowing for the circulation of voices that would not have found a space in traditional media (a positive development, but also a negative one, considering the role of podcasting in spreading disinformation and conspiracy theories). Podcasting is thus a "horizontal" medium: «producers are consumers and consumers become producers and engage in conversations with each other» (Berry 2006: 146).

In relation to podcasts, Llinares, Fox, and Berry have evoked the notion of a «new aural culture» (Llinares, Fox, and Berry 2018), meaning a cultural moment in which oral media experience renewed success despite the ubiquity of written ones. A formula like «new aural culture», if referred to the diffusion of smartphones and thus of podcasting, does not point simply to the type of content disseminated through this medium, but also to the social conditions that make its emergence possible – and thus the greater accessibility in the consumption and production of podcasts compared to radio. Podcasting is one of many examples of the «participatory culture» (Jenkins 1992) that characterizes contemporary mediascapes. It is, as with other on-demand formats, a type of medium whose collective and participatory dimension is intrinsic to its production, and whose consumers, even when they do not become producers themselves, play a markedly more active role than in traditional media:

> Podcast audiences actively control their listening pleasure and edification by choosing or accepting (via algorithmic recommendations based on their perceived 'tastes') what to consume as they simultaneously drive, jog, or scan their social media in the diffracted existence of the 21st century. (Hand e Hancock 2019: 164-165)

This is true for our case studies as well: *The Magnus Archives* was produced primarily through crowdfunding, while *Archive 81* was self-produced.

Among the many varieties of content circulating in the podcast format, this article is mainly concerned with fictional works, specifically those with content belonging to the horror genre. Even this type of podcasting has a precursor in radio – namely, in radio dramas, in which one or more voices perform narrative scenes adapted from other art forms (cinema, literature) or specifically written for the radio (on this, see Crook 1999; Hand

and Traynor 2011; on horror radio dramas, Hand 2014; on their influence on podcasts, Bottomley 2015). Compared to other radio programming, radio dramas have virtually disappeared from traditional media but have found a thriving environment in podcasting, to the extent that this form also constitutes «a scripted, dramatized serial narrative that is written, performed, and produced to be heard» (Bottomley 2015: 183-185).

The current model of the narrative podcast owes much to the influence of *Serial* (2014), part of the *This American Life* format. A podcast that can be defined as true crime (a subgenre of particular importance), *Serial* focused on a real-life murder case that took place in the US in the nineties, for which (according to the podcast's creator, Sarah Koenig) the wrong person was arrested. The success of *Serial* (forty million downloads in the first two months; Hancock and McMurtry 2018: 81-82) is related to its comparatively innovative use of alternating narrative planes between the past and the present, coinciding with a variety of narrative voices and testimonies (Álvarez Trigo 2024: 194-195). As we will see, *The Magnus Archives* and *Archive 81* also show a significant debt to *Serial*, with their ambiguous (albeit explicitly so) relationship between fiction and non-fiction and their constant interlacing of different chronological planes.

The podcasts analysed here are not, however, simply narrative works, but belong to a specific genre: horror. *Archive 81* and *The Magnus Archives* are part of a vast array of horror podcasts developed over the last fifteen years, such as *Welcome to Night Vale* (perhaps the most famous and critically acclaimed, produced since 2012; on this, see Weinstock 2018), *We're Alive* (2009-2014), *The Black Tapes* (2015-2017), *TANIS* (2015-2020), and *Limetown* (2015-2018). Among podcasts that are not strictly informational or cultural, horror series are arguably the most widespread after true crime, and those that elicit the strongest critical responses. This is also evident in the case of *The Magnus Archives*, which has gathered an international fandom, and *Archive 81*, which was adapted for television.

The reason behind the success of horror podcasting is not difficult to discern. Horror and science fiction are genres that have undergone significant development in traditional radio drama (a proverbial example being Orson Welles' adaptation of *The War of the Worlds*, 1938). Most importantly, horror is a genre with a strong fandom component, whose members are accustomed to interacting in an active way with the creators of their favorite products and producing creative objects themselves (such as fan fiction or fan art) belonging to the fictional universe in question. This tendency of horror fandom, as with any other fandom, is perfectly aligned with the participatory dimension of podcasting as a medium. As Hancock

and McMurtry note, «the notion of collectivity is paramount to these programs, emerging both through the shared, listener-led development of an audio-horror corpus and group discussion of the shows, and also in the aesthetic suggestion of physically co-present group listening» (2017: 5). *The Magnus Archives* explicitly promotes interaction with fans (who especially appreciate the diversity of the cast and the romantic relationships between characters; see Juko 2024); indeed, alongside the five seasons, there are several online segments in which the creators of the show answer the audience's questions, or in which (non-canonical) stories written by fans and selected through a contest are read by the cast members. Similarly, live performances of some episodes have been conducted for a paying audience. In the first season of *Archive 81*, on the other hand, Mark ends every episode by asking listeners to circulate the material and to contribute to financing the podcast in order to help him find out what happened to Dan: a request for funding that is framed narratively and that elicits economic support from the audience through a fictional device.

The other element that makes the audio format particularly appropriate for horror stories is the peculiar relationship between horror and sound. Isabella van Elferen, in a volume on this topic, has argued that

> Uncanny sounds pervade Gothic. Hollow footsteps and ghostly melodies haunt the heroines of Gothic novels. The 'children of the night' 'make music' in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Booming leitmotifs announce the Count in *Dracula* film adaptations. Piercingly high violin tones or disembodied childsong indicate supernatural presence in spooky movies. The eerie soundtracks of Gothic television serials invade the safety of the home. Pounding drones of white noise guide survival horror game players through deserted cityscapes. At Goth club nights, all these sounds are mixed into a live Gothic tale. (2012)

Sound has been part of horror fiction since its inception, as it announces the presence of something that cannot be seen while suggesting its strangeness and danger. It is even more crucial in art forms that incorporate sound effects. Horror cinema bases much of its uncanny effect on the presence of a soundtrack aiming to create a sense of suspense, as well as on audio effects that expand upon what is visible on the screen (the growls of monsters, the sound of rotting zombies, the rattling of skeletons…) or that anticipate the presence of the unseen (the howling of a werewolf in the distance, the footsteps of a serial killer behind the protagonist…). Most importantly, sounds referring to off-screen elements play with the dimen-

sion of invisibility that is intrinsic to the effect of suspense, suggesting a presence that cannot yet be associated with an image. Music and sound effects add «layers of highly personal meaning to an on-screen narrative and increases cinematic, televisual or gaming immersion through a cunning annexation of viewers' ears and hearts» (van Elferen 2018; see also Foley 2018 and 2023; Tompkins 2014; and Whittington 2014). These layers also depend on the fact that sound effects are rarely obtained through the actual objects they represent: the sound of a breaking bone, for instance, can be reproduced by breaking a celery stick, and that of a disembowelment by smashing a melon. Sound effects, therefore, implicitly create a connection between the experiences shown on the screen and a sensory dimension that belongs to a wholly different realm.

If sound has a central function in horror, it is not difficult to understand why the genre has found such a receptive medium in podcasting, that is to say, in an exclusively audio format. As in cinema, sound in horror podcasts is used to add complexity to the narrative material. A peculiar feature of podcasting compared to other media, and especially to other audio-horror forms, is the fact that in most cases podcasts are listened to through earphones, meaning in an exceptionally intimate soundscape. This has led to the rediscovery and implementation of binaural recording technologies: a type of "three-dimensional" recording that reproduces the naturalness of sound and allows for immersive listening (Hancock 2018; see also Euritt and McMurtry 2021). Binaural recording enhances those sensations of «invisibility, intimacy and invasiveness» (Hancock 2018) that are central to horror and that amplify its uncanny effects; intimacy, moreover, is one of the features of radio that podcasting emphasizes most (Spinelli and Dann 2019: 7). In horror audio products, sound accompanies the human voice in expanding upon and commenting on the story's content, while simultaneously introducing environmental elements crucial to the plot's progression. For instance, the sound of a creaking door signals the entrance of a character, substituting for what in a film would have been a visual scene of a door opening.

These aspects are central to the case studies in this article. In *The Magnus Archives*, there is a soundtrack (albeit at a very low and non-invasive volume) of ethereal, spectral music that underlines the salient moments of the story. In *Archive 81*, music is one of the hallmarks of the haunting on which the story pivots; its diegetic appearance in Melody's tapes simultaneously stimulates both her and Dan's curiosity, while signaling that she is in a potentially dangerous situation. Most importantly, in both podcasts, the sound of the tape recorder punctuates the entire narrative and often in-

dicates the transition between narrative planes: in *Archive 81*, Dan playing the tapes signals that what the audience is hearing took place in the past. It is not a matter of sound acting as a commentary that amplifies or contradicts what happens on screen, but rather of a narrative use of sound that is functional to the progression of the plot and its central themes. As Laura Álvarez Trigo argues, «in movies, music accompanies and supplements the events on the screen, but in the case of podcasts, sound itself constitutes the horrific event in the narrative, more heavily intertwined with the hauntology of music» (2024: 198).

## Found tapes: found footage, analog horror, and the anarchive

It is, after all, rather intuitive that audio narratives feature an interaction between technology and horror at the level of the soundscape. More interesting, however, is to examine how horror podcasts constantly thematize their nature as media and place it at the center of their supernatural tales. *The Magnus Archives* and *Archive 81* belong to the long Gothic tradition of reflecting on the perils of mediation and knowledge, adapting to the present and to the audio format the centuries-old trope of the found manuscript, a device that has overseen the evolution of the genre at least since *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). In both podcasts, the haunting stems from recovered sources: the written statements that must be recorded in *The Magnus Archives*, and the tapes in *Archive 81* (though it is worth noting that a significant portion of the stories in *The Magnus Archives* also pivots on the recovery of "haunted" media, particularly books). The supernatural event does not take place in an abstract setting, but is indissolubly tied to its recording, that is to say, to its media elaboration.

To this, it should be added that contemporary media have long acquired a spectral dimension in both public perception and fictional adaptations. As Jeffrey Sconce wrote, from the invention of the telephone and telegraph to television and the internet, we can speak of "haunted media" (2000: 59-91)—that is to say, media whose capability of manifesting the invisible and connecting distant spaces has led them to be perceived as possible communication channels with otherworldly entities (Eugene Thacker has instead spoken of "dark media"; 2013). Photography and the telegraph were often used by mediums between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to "prove" the existence of spirits, thanks to what was, in the audience's perception, the ambiguous ontological status of these media

and of the images and voices they rendered. As Sconce writes, «sound and image without material substance, the electronically mediated worlds of telecommunications often evoke the supernatural by creating virtual beings that appear to have no physical form» (2000: 4).

It is not merely that the media in *The Magnus Archives* and *Archive 81* are "haunted"; rather, the two podcasts represent a constant process of remediation, a phenomenon characterizing contemporary mediascapes. According to Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, remediation is the representation of one medium within another, and the adoption of the former's characteristics by the latter (a concept rooted in Marshall McLuhan's assumption that «the 'content' of any medium is always another medium»; Bolter and Grusin 1999: 45). Specifically, these two podcasts (which are digital, dematerialized media that the listener can enjoy anywhere and at any time) remediate analog recording. In the fiction of *The Magnus Archives*, everything the listener hears is recorded on an analog tape recorder (a cassette is also embedded in the podcast's logo); in *Archive 81*, Dan constantly records himself with a digital device, but must listen to and catalogue analog tapes. Both podcasts are thus "hypermediated" products, constantly exhibiting their nature as media by alternating between digital and analog formats and thematizing this transition in every episode (in *The Magnus Archives*, the phrases with which the Archivist opens and closes the reading of the statements are «statement begins» and «statement ends»; while these do not coincide exactly with the switching on and off of the tape recorder, they do underscore its presence and function).

In the last few decades, contemporary horror has consistently dramatized similar processes of remediation and, more generally, mediumistic technologies. From late-century J-horror, with movies like *Ringu* (1998) and *Kairo* (2001), to Hollywood blockbusters like *Sinister* (2012), to the tendency of creepypasta to represent analog media as a source of haunting (as in "Candle Cove"; on creepypasta, see Henriksen 2018; Cooley and Milligan 2018; Balanzategui 2019 and 2021), contemporary horror notably insists on medial processes as a way of facilitating communication and exchanges with the spirit world. *Ringu* is not simply a movie that tells the story of the revenge of a child with paranormal powers, but most importantly one that pivots on the transmission and duplication of a videotape; similarly, *Sinister* is not merely the story of a haunted house, but rather of a haunting that manifests itself through the viewing of Super 8 videos.

The tape recorder that appears in *The Magnus Archives* and *Archive 81* stands in contrast to the smartphone or the PC on which the audience listens to them – a physical support against the dematerialized digital space

of the current age. Analog media, unlike digital ones, age; their materiality (replicated in the podcasts by the characteristic squeaking of the tape recorder) becomes a symbol of a historical depth that refuses to be suppressed and returns in a spectral form. The distinction between digital and analog media is cultural rather than technological: it does not concern the actual physicality of these tools, but rather their perception in the public eye – as evidenced, after all, by the fact that horror, besides the materiality of analog media, also reprises that of digital ones. Specifically, however, in the fiction of these podcasts, the physical support, being material, is also "alive," thus possessing a sinister agency that manifests itself at all levels of the story. In *The Magnus Archives*, we are continuously told that digital recorders do not work and cannot record the statements, unlike the analog ones: in the first episode, Jon notes, «I plan to digitise the files as much as possible and record audio versions, though some will have to be on tape recorder, as my attempts to get them on my laptop have met with… significant audio distortions»; in the thirteenth, «we have previously had some success using it to record statements that our… digital recording software struggles with». As the show progresses, we find that the tape recorder is itself a manifestation of one of the entities trying to penetrate our world, and that its owner, the Archivist, is able to force others to give a statement. In *Archive 81*, the first season culminates in the encounter with Samuel, the mind behind the cult animating the Visser building, now imprisoned inside the tapes that Dan is cataloguing – and it is precisely through this process that Samuel is able to free himself. As Laura Álvarez Trigo argued, in *Archive 81* «this emphasis on media qualities suggests that the locus of horror in the story is located in the medium and the mediated content rather than in the protagonist's disappearance, as the audience is led to believe at the outset of the story […]» (2024: 191). The tapes are a vector of the supernatural haunting.

These podcasts are examples of «technostalgia» (Hancock and McMurtry 2017: 3) or «analogue nostalgia» (Schrey 2014 and 2024): products in which technologies that are obsolete in the present return to influence the world. As argued by Hancock and McMurtry, «the podcast liberates the audio horror experience from its analogue tethers, allowing listeners to alter any space at any time» (ibid.); yet, at the same time, these podcasts showcase the incessant return of precisely those media from which contemporary podcasting has "freed" itself, as well as their sabotage of new media. The nostalgic dimension regarding technology functions here as the return of past media within those of the present, where the former stand in contrast to the dematerialization of contemporary platforms.

There is another form of contemporary horror, especially successful at the beginning of the twenty-first century, which incorporates a medial process: found footage (see Benson-Allott 2013; Heller-Nicholas 2014; Turner 2019; McMurdo 2023). A format, rather than a genre, that gained great popularity with the release and global success of *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) (incentivized by low production costs), found footage is founded on the premise that what the audience is seeing is a real document, recorded by the characters/actors themselves. What qualifies a movie as found footage is the fact that all (or nearly all) of the film is diegetic; that is to say, the final product coincides with what, in the fictional world, has been shot within the very frame of the movie. In *The Blair Witch Project*, for instance, the three protagonists are also the crew that shoots the film the audience sees, while in *Paranormal Activity*, the protagonists set up cameras in order to be constantly recorded, thereby creating the footage the spectators watch. Found footage is based on a structural ambiguity: the audience is told that what they see is real and has actually been shot, yet the subject of the movie is incompatible with our empirical understanding of the world (demonic possession, hauntings…).

*The Magnus Archives* is not, technically, found footage: even if the recordings of its two hundred episodes are diegetic (meaning everything we hear is heard because someone in the fictional world recorded it, intentionally or not), this footage is not "found"; there is no narrative frame suggesting that what we hear has actually taken place. At the same time, however, *The Magnus Archives* displays a typical element of the found footage format: the inability to decide whether the supernatural component of the story is real. In movies like *The Blair Witch Project* and *Paranormal Activity*, it is suggested to the audience that they are watching real footage documenting uncanny events: spectators find themselves in a position of conflict between witnessing supernatural events (which are, however, more often alluded to than shown) and the implied truthfulness of the format. Similarly, in *The Magnus Archives*, Jon "finds" the statements but simultaneously contests the credibility of the witnesses. In episode eight ("Burned Out"), for instance, the statement concerns an apparently haunted house: in his commentary, Jon casts doubt on the credibility of the witness, who confesses to a family history of mental illness and a recent head concussion («Ah, head trauma and latent schizophrenia – the ghost's best friends»), while conceding that some of the most sinister coincidences can actually be verified. In *Archive 81*, by contrast, the mechanism of found footage works in a double sense: Melody's tapes, which Dan must catalogue, are found footage, but so are the recordings of Dan himself, as we are told

by his friend Mark at the end of every episode (this dynamic is significantly downplayed in the Netflix series, where the external framework is removed, and the sequences with Melody alternate actual diegetic filming with traditional third-person sequences). In both cases, it is worth noting the intention to play with found footage's inherent ambiguity through the coincidence of the protagonists' names with those of the creators and performers: Daniel Powell and Marc Sollinger, playing Dan and Marc in *Archive 81*, and Jonathan Sims, the author and voice actor of the character of the same name in *The Magnus Archives*.

Found footage represents a medial process: specifically, the acts of recording and subsequent recovery and viewing/listening. This means it is a form of horror that exists exclusively through a process of mediation: the representation of collecting, editing, and interpreting in which the audience itself is included. Even more interestingly, found footage underlines two central aspects of contemporary media. According to Ruggero Eugeni, first-person shooting (or, in the case of podcasting, recording) results in «the immediate transcription of a subjective experience of embodied grasping of the world, implying a relationship of symbiosis and hybridization between a human subject and a camera» (2015: 52, my translation). Found footage reifies, in other words, one of the tenets of the «post-medial condition: the subjectivization of experience» (ibid.: 61, my translation). This remark is even more relevant in reference to podcasting, a medium that contributes to the privatization of public space and relies on devices that, like the found footage camera, are individual and portable. This "subjectivization of experience" is a central element in horror in general, but especially in the found footage format, which replicates the direct take and the individual gaze; it is no coincidence, therefore, that *The Magnus Archives* is entirely structured around "statements."

Finally, there is another medium that *The Magnus Archives* and *Archive 81* remediate: the internet. Of course, there are more or less explicit references to internet horror in the podcasts: the individual stories of *The Magnus Archives* resemble creepypastas in their brevity and occasionally rewrite them (episode 15, "Lost John's Cave," is clearly modeled after the classic "Ted the Caver") or pay homage to them (as in episode 65, "Binary," which pivots on a haunted computer program). Meanwhile, the framing device is reminiscent of the "SCP Foundation," a collaborative creepypasta project focusing on another "institute" of paranormal research. However, the reference to the internet is also more subtle and primarily concerns the "archival" dimension of the two podcasts, clearly alluded to in their titles. Discussing the contemporary internet, Simon Reynolds noted that the

concept of «archive fever» coined by Jacques Derrida (1995) encapsulates «today's delirium of documentation, which extends beyond institutions and professional historians to the Web's explosion of amateur archive creation», a space that contains everything but where «nothing is too trivial, too insignificant, to be discarded» (Reynolds 2011: 26). The internet is an «anarchive» that constantly multiplies content and prevents its systematization (26-27). The protagonists of *The Magnus Archives* and *Archive 81* consistently complain about the chaos and disorder of the archives they must manage: Melody's tapes are preserved «not in chronological order or, really, any order, kind of all jumbled together» (ep. 1), while Jon laments from the beginning of the show an «absolute mess of an archive» (ep. 1) left to him by the previous archivist. Such confusion is not visible to the listener, despite the Archivist's observations («from where I am sitting, I can see thousands of files. Many spread loosely around the place, others crushed into unmarked boxes»; ep. 1), but it is made evident by the progression of the story, which creates order among apparently disconnected episodes and allows the listener to forge connections and relations. These remarks echo the traditional Gothic trope of spaces as unmappable, found as early as the castles of Otranto and Udolpho (Punter 1980: 200), but can also be interpreted as a meta-commentary on the digital space where these podcasts are promoted and circulated.

By reflecting on their media dimensions, *The Magnus Archives* and *Archive 81* cast an uncanny light on the way in which they are consumed – namely, through digital technologies such as the PC and smartphone. By employing a medium with an intrinsic sense of intimacy (due both to the ways it is consumed and the opportunity it grants each listener to personalize their experience), these two podcasts invite reflection on the perils of a culture in which communication tools and media have become ubiquitous, constant, and immediate. At the same time, *The Magnus Archives* and *Archive 81* continue a discourse inherent to contemporary horror, which pays consistent attention to media formats and supports. These podcasts recover the found footage format (which is already widespread outside cinema and can be found in literary texts such as *House of Leaves* by Mark Danielewski, 2000, or *Horror Movie* by Paul Tremblay, 2024) and the trope of analog horror. In doing so, *The Magnus Archives* and *Archive 81* offer a critical and disturbing gaze on one of the most widespread media of recent decades and its continuity with the technologies that preceded it.

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