

***“Becoming a Part of the Lurking Evil”:***

***Occultural Accelerationism, Lovecraftian Modernity,  
and the Interiorization of Monstrosity***

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***1. Introduction***

Originating in (oc)cultural peripheries, the monstrous has come to dominate the centres of cultural and economic capital, its manifestations concomitant upon the provision of a rich source of metaphors salient to an encounter with modernity experienced as alien and incomprehensible: in other words, an experience of modernity rendered monstrous.

This experience - particularly as it coalesces around the fictive teratologies of H. P. Lovecraft - is constitutive of antinomian and inhuman subjectivities often articulated within contemporary Chaos magick, and in the accelerationism of Nick Land and the Cybernetic Culture Research Unity (CCRU). Foregrounding humanity's insignificance in the face of a secular universe populated by inconceivable extraterrestrial horrors, Lovecraft's imaginary monsters instantiate deregulated neoliberalism as the “enweirded” and morphologically monstrous (yet

conventionalized) “motor of transformation that drives modernity...understood to be inhuman...and indifferent to the human.”<sup>1</sup>

Consequently the subjectification of Lovecraftian monstrousness within Chaos magickal praxis - “becoming part of the lurking evil” within rituals of possession<sup>2</sup>, and in the use of “Cthulhu gnosis” examined here - is treated as the occulturally accelerative manifestation of capital’s destratifying, detraditionalizing and deterritorializing tendencies - foreshadowed by the poststructuralist philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari<sup>3</sup> and Lyotard<sup>4</sup>, and by the later post-Anthropocene Cthulhoid hyperstitutions of the CCRU<sup>5</sup>.

If the deterritorializing capacities and the socio-economic inequalities produced by globalized neoliberalism – via the “indifference of markets to their human consequences”<sup>6</sup> - are recognised as responsible for relocating and interiorizing the teratological within the human, then modernity’s claim to sustaining a humanistic trajectory of rational mastery is revealed as “enweirded” within occultural accelerationist discourse, disclosing neoliberalism’s own occult, supra-rational and inchoate Lovecraftian ontology. For those Chaos magicians working within the Lovecraftian imaginary, increasing the velocity of capitalism’s Lovecraftian, dehumanizing power then becomes the means of intensifying the encounter and identification with radical, monstrous alterity. By transgressing capitalist certainties in the intensification of its monstrous contradictions, the possibility of a new imaginative space - a Lovecraftian “Outside” beyond capitalism - is intimated. Thus the acceleration of capitalism’s inhumanism is rendered by practitioners as a desirable and necessary precipitate to the erasure of the Cartesian subject: the embryonic constituent of an as-yet unfathomed trans-/post-/in-human (and post-capital) singularity.

## **2. “Teratologically Fabulous”: Weird Materialism and the Lovecraftian**

### **Monstrous**

Born in Providence, Rhode Island in 1890, Howard Phillips Lovecraft innovated a genre of modernist, sci-fi inflected cosmic horror in his tales of the “Cthulhu mythos”: a fictive mythography surveying Earth’s occulted and prehuman history of visitations - and colonizations - by a panoply of monstrous extraterrestrial beings (sometimes referred to as “The Great Old Ones”), including the eponymous Cthulhu<sup>7</sup>. A mountainous, alien cephalopod who arrived from another universe or dimension some 2,500 million years ago<sup>8</sup>, Cthulhu’s eventual emergence from a state of suspended animation from beneath the Pacific Ocean is a key event of the mythos - one which will expedite humanity’s inevitable and apocalyptic demise<sup>9</sup>.

The epochal deeps of geological time, the vastness of interstellar space and the infinite, interstitial abysses of speculated non-Euclidean dimensions are the topographies tenanted by Lovecraft’s archaic monsters, effectively framing the central theme of his cosmicism: the recognition of humanity’s finitude and inconsequentiality as “[n]either the oldest [n]or the last of earth’s masters”<sup>10</sup> (Lovecraft 2002c, 219). Typically, then, Lovecraft’s monsters operate as ciphers of a secular brand of pessimistic, existential horror. The literary means of deterritorializing horror from the metaphysical and reterritorializing it within the material, the Cthulhu mythos formed the cornerstone of Lovecraft’s Copernican<sup>11</sup> striving for “a form of non-supernatural cosmic art.”<sup>12</sup>

Lovecraft’s Great Old Ones nonetheless voice a supra-rationalist and supra-materialist aesthetics - one unintentionally (but crucially) allied with modernity’s own subaltern gnostic and occultural sensibilities.<sup>13</sup> As Lovecraft notes:

“I choose weird stories because they suit my inclination best - one of my strongest and most persistent wishes being to achieve, momentarily, the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law which forever imprison us.”<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, central to the Cthulhu mythos is the assertion that reason collapses in the very act of reframing horror *within* rationalist and materialist ontologies; in this, Lovecraft’s own gnostic sensibility initiates a counterintuitive dialectics of the weird, such that the production of the monstrous is predicated on the very exercise of reason in his tales. Thus in *The Call of Cthulhu* the quest for authoritative, rational, and objective knowledge reveals “terrifying vistas of reality and our frightful position therein”, threatening to inaugurate “a new dark age” of unreason.<sup>15</sup>

Lovecraft’s vision of the real is, then, an intrinsically “enweirded” one “incommensurable with any attempt to represent or measure it.”<sup>16</sup> Thus the anomalous corporeality of Lovecraft’s monsters instantiates cognitive unintelligibility<sup>17</sup> in the very materiality which provides them with discursive form: whilst the Great Old Ones “had shape...that shape *was not made of matter*”;<sup>18</sup> they are only material in “the least fraction”, being from “some vague realm or dimension *outside our material universe*”.<sup>19</sup> A sublime if terrifying order of reality is spied through the lens of a dissonant materiality which, whilst subject to articulation, remains “unspeakable” and “indescribable” because its monstrous incongruity utterly “defies the human desire to subjugate through categorization.”<sup>20</sup> Like John Carpenter’s *The Thing*, the material nebulosity of Lovecraft’s monsters threatens “to erase...distinctions and, in doing so, to erase the bounded human world”.<sup>21</sup> If the

monstrous equates with the impossible, Lovecraftian teratologies are doubly so: described as a hybrid “squid-dragon,”<sup>22</sup> Cthulhu is entangled in a recursive hybridity where one hybrid monster can only be described in terms of another; or, in the case of Yog-Sothoth’s quasi-human offspring, through its tautological ascription as “teratologically fabulous”.<sup>23</sup> Not only is classificatory uncertainty registered by a lack of precise terrestrial correlates, but the capacity for language to assimilate meaning collapses in the face of an unknowable materiality.

### **3. Lovecraftian Occultural/Chaos Magical Accelerationism**

In its decoding capacities, Lovecraft’s weird realism thus constitutes a kind of premeditative, hidden accelerationist thesis in his writing. The Cthulhu mythos also foregrounds a pre-CCRU occultural decentralising and eroding of pure reason in its understanding of

“the epistemological affinity between natural science and programmatic (as opposed to doctrinal) occultism...It is the alliance between purely speculative metaphysics and common sense that betrays such affairs of pure reason to futility, since they lack the calculative traction to revise their own conventional notions on the basis of their encounter.”<sup>24</sup>

Lovecraft’s materialism is not, then, “the confident scientific materialism whose goal is the dissolution of mystery...[but] a materialism that joins modern science to a long history of baffled alchemists and mystics”.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, Lovecraft’s enweirded epistemology becomes entangled with those of contemporary Western occultures which, despite their romantic and traditionalist roots, never entirely refute the

progressive, secular narratives of Enlightenment modernity. The “Scientific Illuminism” of Aleister Crowley<sup>26</sup> - which sought to unify science with magic and religion - being indexical of how modern occultists have remained “in thrall to an Enlightenment insistence on the supremacy of...reason even though they challenged [its] dominant definitions.”<sup>27</sup> As a case in point, practitioners of Chaos magick (whose narratives form the ethnographic focal point of the latter part of this chapter) seek to produce “a kind of scientific anti-science...[which] attempts to show that not only does magic fit comfortably within the interstices of science but that the higher reaches of scientific theory and empiricism actually demand that magic exists.”<sup>28</sup>

Appearing in United Kingdom during the late 1970's, Chaos magick is an iconoclastic, punk-inspired “oppositional style”<sup>29</sup> of occult praxis. Utilizing spirit possession, altered states of consciousness and the active investment of belief as a technique for reshaping “consensus reality” (often in the context of ad-hoc rituals constructed from an eclectic bricolage of diverse cultural elements - including Lovecraft's fiction), practitioners treat magick as the methodological pursuit of an unmediated experience of reality. This is often conceived in explicitly Lovecraftian terms as inchoate, amoral and ultimately indifferent to human concerns. Exemplifying the “programmatic” occultism to which Land refers, Chaos magick emphasizes efficacy over doctrine and evaluates any belief or occult technique according to its practical utility.

In contrast to other contemporary forms of neo-traditional/folk/pagan occulture, Chaos magick's affirmation of abjection and inhumanism concretely affiliates it with accelerationist ideology in breaking with “the fantasy of collective organic self-sufficiency”<sup>30</sup> as an effective response to capital's depredations. Furthermore, Chaos magick's core praxis of belief-as-technique directly prefigures

the CCRU's concept of "hyperstition" as both "performative fiction,"<sup>31</sup> and as an assemblage of "semiotic productions which make themselves real"<sup>32</sup> via the active application of belief. Insofar as Chaos magicians (and other occultists) have employed the Cthulhu mythos "hyperstitionally" as early as the 1970s, one might be forgiven for viewing the post-1990s accelerationism of the CCRU as a hyperstitional manifestation of Chaos magick's own futurity. Adherent to William Burroughs' aphorism of "Nothing is True; Everything is Permissible," contemporary Chaos magick's advocacy of a Nietzschean project of self-affirmation and self-creation via a transvaluation of values also echoes the Prometheanism of more recent accelerationist thought.<sup>33</sup>

To this end, Chaos magick seeks to facilitate a critical awareness of human subjectivity's shaping by normative social values, conceived of as interiorized, medialized and ideologically-inculcated "demons" of the psyche. However, an equivalence with Landian accelerationism is registered with regard to such demons – particularly in the recognition that

"[a]ttempts at self-deprogramming, searching out and destroying all those media daemons we find inside us are nothing short of futile...the result would be an organism quite incapable of operating within the modern world. A more practical alternative is to recognize and exploit those daemons ...The post-modern magician is free to RIP OFF™ any aspect of reality that they choose, appropriating those facets...that appeal, reconfiguring them according to whim."<sup>34</sup>

As Phil Hine also notes, for the Chaos magician there is "no escape from the Society of the Spectacle" – only "escape...by becoming...Spectacular."<sup>35</sup> Here occultural

Promethean utopics give way to what both Benjamin Noys and Williams & Srineck problematize as the depoliticized refutation of agency found in Nick Land's immersionist accelerationism.<sup>36</sup>

#### **4. *The Hunters of the Dark: Interiorizing Monstrosity***

Chaos magick's interiorizing of the demonic constitutes a core facet of modernity's psychologizing propensity: toward the decolonization of monstrosity from externality, and its secular interiorization within human subjectivity. Popular representations of the monstrous have thus become recodified in the "decoupling of appearance from monstrosity" (Weinstock 2012, 282),<sup>37</sup> such that modernity's monsters are given expression in anthropomorphized and interiorized form in the mind and body of the serial killer and the terrorist. Indeed, post-9/11 neoliberal politics have proven key to this modern reshaping of the monstrous, albeit in a Lovecraftian vogue: the West's current favourite racialized bogeyman is aptly prefigured in Lovecraft's "Mad Arab" Abdul Alhazred, whose *Necronomicon* (now hyperstitionally available in multiple media formats) is the instrument of humanity's extirpation. One group of Chaos magicians I worked with gave voice to this interiorized monstrosity whilst coordinating a transatlantic ritual to raise Cthulhu from the deeps which, coincidentally, occurred on the 9th September 2001. Members of the group later half-jokingly interpreted the 9/11 attacks as evidence of the ritual's success. Within popular culture, modernity's monsters are also represented by the human agents of inhuman corporate interest: Carter Burke from *Aliens*, whose predatory indifference to his fellow humans matches that of the eponymous Lovecraftian xenomorphs; or the

cartel who aim to sell out humanity to the equally Lovecraftian alien black oil of *The X-Files*.<sup>38</sup>

This interiorization is further evidenced in contemporary occultural understandings of the figure of Satan. No longer viewed exclusively as an external source of moral evil, Satan has become naturalized, psychologized and secularized.<sup>39</sup> In the witch hunts of the period, capitalist inroads into early modern European society - via the Protestant ethic - mobilised representations of the demonic as symbols of internal moral impurity.<sup>40</sup> This delineated a shift in the symbolic order such that external demonic forces became located *within* human bodies in the libidinal dramaturgy of the witches' sabbat - an imagined form of excessive consumption and sexual expenditure oppositional to "the accumulative process with which the persecutors themselves identified."<sup>41</sup> Yet to the extent that contemporary forms of capitalism are dependent upon libidinal and consumptive excess, the symbols of satanic, monstrous and asocial inhumanism have been rendered desirable. For occultural groups like the Church of Satan (whose liturgy and ideology are also inspired by Lovecraft's fictions),<sup>42</sup> the Devil has been repurposed as the emblem of an idealized and unrestrained consuming self, responsive to the cognitive dissonance and hedonic materialism symptomatic of late modernity.<sup>43</sup> Contemporary Satanists thus seek to interiorize the demonic as a model of selfhood concomitant with the monstrously profligate ahuman and asocial behaviours propagated within the demonologies of neoliberalism.

Similarly, the Haunters of the Dark (HotD) - a London-based group of Chaos magicians who I have conducted anthropological fieldwork since the early 2000s - sought to utilize Lovecraft's fictions as the means of acclimating themselves to a modernity increasingly and normatively experienced as "Lovecraftian". This was

effected in hypersitional rituals of possession by which practitioners sought experiential identification with Lovecraft's Great Old Ones,<sup>44</sup> and through "Cthulhu gnosis" - the latter of which related directly to practitioners' experience of everyday life. As such, Cthulhu gnosis involved the daily use of mild, altered states of consciousness, induced through meditative practices, and employed as a means of reinterpreting diurnal, urban reality in the light of Lovecraft's cosmic indifferentism. One member of the HotD described his initial experiences of Cthulhu gnosis as "a growing awareness of humans as tiny insignificant ants scuttling around on the way to employment hives with no awareness of the horrors all around them". Another participant told me that Cthulhu gnosis had led him to acquire a "vision for the universe [which is]...quite brutal - it renders human needs and human emotions useless... [that] we need to abandon all notions of our humanity: sentimentality is the nemesis of evolution".

Rob - another member of this group - came to believe that his flat in Camden was being haunted by the presence of some lurking Lovecraftian entity after employing Cthulhu gnosis:

"The flat was empty, strangely cold...'Desolate' is the best word to describe it...and I didn't have any enthusiasm to do anything at all. Which is very unusual for me as I tend to have a thousand things that I want to do at any given moment. I'm not sure how to describe it but it was really eerie and depressing."

The perception that not only his flat but his everyday reality was being haunted by monstrous, interdimensional forces began to intensify the more Rob engaged in

Cthulhu gnosis. Applying the technique in an attempt to manage a post-hangover day of Christmas shopping in Central London, he related the following experience of walking down Camden High Street:

“There was a conspicuous amount of horrifically mutated people around on Saturday...there was an old woman who actually looked like Cthulhu. She had this weird skin disease like nothing I'd ever seen, strange brown blotches and actual protrusions coming out of her face like little tentacles. It was horrible. Then there was this bloke with a weird growth on the back of his neck about the size of a fist. I was just staggering around the market out of my face witnessing all of this, occasionally stopping to be violently ill. It felt like I'd accidentally gone to some strange and terrifying carnivorous place and was incapable of getting away from it.”

Rob came to manage these unsettling experiences through intensifying the practice of Cthulhu gnosis, during which he would imaginally transform himself into and seek self-identification with one of the “Deep Ones”.<sup>45</sup> immortal fish-like humanoids from Lovecraft’s fiction who mate with humans to breed monstrous hybrids.<sup>46</sup> This in turn facilitated a state of consciousness

“like the stillness at the bottom of the sea or something. I began to identify with the state of mind and become comfortable in it, relaxing into non-human states of consciousness...I had the sensation that the only way to operate in this situation is to override the human impulse to be freaked and let the reptile non-human brain take over. Become a part of the lurking evil myself and it will

pass by.”

Tobias and Dane - two other members of the group - also reported similar experiences of monstrous self-transition whilst engaged in Cthulhu gnosis, with Tobias recounting a vivid dream in which:

“I was picking meat off the bodies of small humans, as if I was some giant carnivorous creature. I didn't feel like a monster or anything, I felt just like myself and was behaving as if it was quite natural to devour flesh from the bodies of these little people as if they were chicken wings or something.”

### ***5. The Monstrous Metropole***

Cthulhu gnosis was commonly utilised by members of the HotD for managing the urbanised alienation of their workaday world. This was often explicitly construed in the reification of late modernity's urban landscape as a monstrously occult terrain, populated by anomalous zones interpenetrative with the Lovecraftian Outside. The Centre Point office building - standing on the sorcerous intersection of crossroads formed by Oxford Street, New Oxford Street, Charing Cross Road and Tottenham Court Road - came to occupy a liminal, folkloric space within this occult imaginary. Not only were a number of pubs and meeting places familiar to pagans and ritual magicians within walking distance, but the ground upon which Centre Point stands was supposedly cursed by Aleister Crowley<sup>47</sup> - a rumour probably inspired by the claim that, in November 1949, Crowley's protégé Kenneth Grant participated in a disastrous magical ritual at a house then existing on the site.<sup>48</sup> Grant (who has played an influential role in the history of occult explorations of Lovecraft's work)

claimed Centre Point as a physical manifestation of the “Portals of Inbetweeness”:<sup>49</sup> thresholds to chaotic and intrinsically alien universes and “zones of Non-Being”<sup>50</sup> inhabited by Lovecraft's monstrous Great Old Ones.

During his time in the HotD, Rob expressed an interest in the Lovecraftian psychogeography of Central London. Noting that the entrance to Tottenham Court Road underground station lay directly beneath Centre Point, he speculated that it could be utilised as a gateway to interdimensional realms. For Rob, the London Underground itself presented an image of chthonic Lovecraftian tentacularity coursing through the underbelly of the capital: a potent symbol of the hidden occult powers which secretly governed the city. Later, at the behest of Tobias and Dane, the HotD engaged in psychogeographical explorations of various dilapidated, occult and folkloric urban sites throughout London, constructing a complex narrative involving the existence of a monstrous Lovecraftian entity lurking within the crypts beneath Freemason's Hall near Covent Garden (also close to Centre Point). The notion of Lovecraft's monsters as powerful manifestations of alien powers within human consciousness - conjoined with practitioners' reshaped perception of the urban topographies of modernity - spoke of an increasingly chaotic, indeterminate and uncomprehending experience of the social landscape they occupied. Rick, a Chaos magician in his mid-thirties who was one of my initial contacts with the London occult community, once told me of an occultist who attempted to evoke a horrifying entity from an urban zone of Lovecraftian liminality (the basement of a disused building), going insane as a result; Gerald Suster (a well-known author and key figure in the UK's occult circles prior to his death in 2001) similarly informed me of an ever-growing “casualty-list” of magicians who had trafficked with the inhabitants of these zones; Kenneth Grant's own account of his explorations of the occultural

Lovecraftian oeuvre<sup>51</sup> is replete with dire examples (often replicating Lovecraft's own florid literary style) of the mental dissolution, mysterious disappearances and strange deaths of those unwarily engaged in ritualised and imaginal encounters with the fictive monsters of the Cthulhu mythos.

However, the Chaos magicians of my acquaintance - following the immersionist imperative of both Deleuze and Guattari, and Nick Land's accelerationism - sought to assimilate such schizoid dissolutions through the interiorization of modernity's Lovecraftian inhumanism. Dane thus told me of how he had developed a meditation on Lovecraft's "blind idiot god" Azathoth – described as a formless nuclear chaos writhing mindlessly at the center of time and space - to visualize "all things around me (both animate and inanimate)...as brief tangible manifestations of an endless swirling primordial chaos with myself in the centre...Good to do whilst walking down the street or shopping or something like that".

This view of metropolitan modernity made monstrous further unites contemporary Chaos magicians with Lovecraft's weird realism. Whilst framing his desire for extrication from the material as illusory, Lovecraft's materialism was further constrained by his romantic and quasi-gnostic "aversion to the modern world."<sup>52</sup> Indeed, Lovecraft's contempt for the mediatized cultures of mass consumption was such that industrialized and mechanized centres of urban modernity were often rendered monstrous in his writings:<sup>53</sup> in *The Call of Cthulhu*, the weird, futurist/cubist architecture of R'lyeh is depicted as swallowing up or consuming one of the unfortunate human sailors exploring that alien city.<sup>54</sup> This anti-modernist perspective is perhaps most generally palpable in Lovecraft's overall delineation of the intrusive chaotic presence of the Great Old Ones as deeply alien to the quotidian symbolic

order (at least as he saw it) of a semi-rural and genteel 18<sup>th</sup> century New England conservatism. In this respect, as Mark Fisher notes, the Lovecraftian monstrous ably connotes late capitalism as

“the 'unnamable Thing', the abomination...which is no longer governed by any transcendent Law; on the contrary, it dismantles all such codes, only to re-install them on an ad hoc basis...very much like the Thing in John Carpenter's film of the same name: a monstrous, infinitely plastic entity, capable of metabolizing and absorbing anything with which it comes into contact.”<sup>55</sup>

It is about this point that the “dark glamor” of occultural accelerationism becomes actualized: the possibility that Chaos magicians’ entanglements with medialised postmodern consumerism - the excessive Landian immersion in “accelerative liquid monstrosity” of shoggothic capitalism<sup>56</sup> - simply replicate neoliberalism rather than open a space of possibility beyond it. This is also fundamentally counter to Lovecraft’s cultural aesthetic. Nonetheless both Lovecraft and Chaos magick converge around the supposition that the uncontained accelerative forces of capital-driven instrumental reason ultimately reveal a supra-rational - if terrifying - dimension of absolute epistemological, ontological and inhuman alterity. In this respect, even Lovecraft seems to ponder the possibility that absorption into monstrous Otherness might reveal unforetold visions of “wonder and glory”.<sup>57</sup>

## **6. *Beyond Capitalism? The Monstrous Imagination and the Lovecraftian Outside***

It is not insignificant that the irruption of the Weird as a literary movement in the late

19th century coincides with the widespread emergence of occult economies within modernity's urban-cultural centres. Indeed, recent studies of witchcraft beliefs in postcolonial African contexts<sup>58</sup> indicate significant convergence between the accelerative forces of capitalist production and the resurgence of occult beliefs. Within these analyses, the impersonal, mystifying and occluded transnational interventions which have increasingly come to shape social actors' local experience of new inequalities of power - along with the attendant allure of commodities and capital - are given critical representation via local concepts of occult and magical forces. Here the velocity of capitalism forces disclosure of supra-rational and occult sensibilities lurking *within* its own logics. Whilst discussions regarding the modernity of witchcraft have focused on the moral ambivalences of such practices, nonetheless witchcraft is a common idiom by which the dehumanising erosion of meaningful social relations by capitalist interventions, and the seemingly occult power of market forces, comes to be understood. Comparisons with occultural conceptions of Lovecraft's Old Ones explored here are evident: not only in capital's indifference to its subjects, but in its attendant monstrous consumerism in which humans themselves become the objects of consumption.

Embraced as an habituated facet of consciousness, the "carnivorous" experiences of everyday inhumanism reported by the members of the HotD resonate with Annalee Newitz's assertion that our ideas about the monstrous increasingly bear an

"uncanny resemblance to ourselves...Mutated by backbreaking labor, driven insane by corporate conformity, or gorged on too many products of a money-hungry media industry, capitalism's monsters cannot tell the difference

between commodities and people...they spend so much time working, they often feel dead themselves...capitalist monsters embody the contradictions of a culture where making a living often feels like dying.”<sup>59</sup>

In other words, an experience of modernity rendered as dehumanisingly and indifferently Lovecraftian, and manifest in everyday experiences of meaningless and “zombified” labour and bureaucracy. Lovecraft’s “blind idiot god” Azathoth – the grinding and mindless center of all things - is reforged in the image of Weber's iron cage.

Such experiences exemplify the "demonically distorted form" which, according to Horkheimer and Adorno, subjectivity acquires under the aegis of commodified, mass-medialized modernity, in turn producing (and eerily echoing Lovecraft) "a new kind of barbarism.”<sup>60</sup> For China Mieville this traumatized subjectivity is most effectively expressed in the literary trope of the tentacle - an appendage now virtually synonymous with Lovecraft. Morphologically nebulous and materially anomalous, the tentacle’s emergence in early 20th century weird literature forms the most salient “placeholder for the unrepresentable”:<sup>61</sup> namely the crisis of modernity instantiated in World War I - and in the later “unspeakable” and “unthinkable” Fordist genocides of the “murderous century” and beyond.

In other words, the Enlightenment project of creating a rational order in the body of the nation-state – one predicated on the maintenance of a sedentary population and the eradication of cultural heterogeneity - reveals modernity’s “preoccupation with the elimination or reduction of disorder... [that] seem[s] to promote other disorders”,<sup>62</sup> such that those who reject its progressive, rationalising and homogenizing thrust (or seek alternatives) are treated as occupying “minority

positions...to be cured, reconstituted and eliminated by modern institutions in the name of social order and progress.”<sup>63</sup> In seeking to manage heterogeneity, modernity counterintuitively manufactures its own weird realism in the dehumanized subjectivities and monstrous disorderliness of technologised, rationalized and bureaucratized acts of state-sanctioned genocide.<sup>64</sup>

The salience of Lovecraft's tentacular monsters lies, then, in their provisioning pop cultural imaginaries and a narrative of selfhood responsive to neoliberalism's indifference, expressed in the form of its own “Great Old Ones”: the immense, inexplicable and impersonal forces of global institutions to which personal agency appears subordinate, and the uncaring, predatory transnational corporate interests which render the human insignificant. Identification with monstrous inhumanity does, then, instantiate an affective but problematic existential strategy of de-agentic enthrallment to a fragmentary social world darkly mirrored in Lovecraft's alienating universe. As Benjamin Noys suggests, the Landian project of merging “with the capitalist Shoggoth is hardly useful... Instead, and what is much more difficult, is what we *do* with this basis of affects, experiences, and moods.”<sup>65</sup> As a case in point, the members of the HotD, in identifying themselves with alien Otherness, explicitly recognized that in doing so they were affiliating themselves with the racialized minority positions that Lovecraft demonized in his Cthulhu mythos.<sup>66</sup>

In this latter regard, the interiorization of the utterly alien, Lovecraftian affects of modernity suggests a subversion of the traditional cultural function of the monstrous - signalling and managing anomalous categories threatening to the status quo - to suggest an alternative, accelerationist reading: in hastening the dissolution of the Cartesian subject to forcibly configure cognition's “becoming inhuman,”<sup>67</sup> these inhuman selves present the possibility of the monstrous as a fulcrum “upon

which...new worlds may be reimagined and forged.”<sup>68</sup> Similarly, whilst Williams & Srnicek advocate a Promethean accelerationism of rational “maximal mastery over society,”<sup>69</sup> (albeit a post-Newtonian one) the fundamentals of Lovecraft’s weird realism - that “scientific progress returns us to the atavistic abyss”<sup>70</sup> - offers an implicit critique of how the rationalizing exercise of power may produce a monstrous and dehumanising disorder in its “proclivity to demonise alterity.”<sup>71</sup> Thus in Negri’s reading of Williams and Srnicek, this Prometheanism also requires that “the rational imagination...be accompanied by the collective fantasy of new worlds.”<sup>72</sup> In this respect, Negestrani’s notion of “Cthulhoid Ethics” is instructive:

“Cthulhoid Ethics is essential for accelerating the emergence and encounter with the radical Outside. Cthulhoid Ethics can be characterized by the question ‘what happens next?’ *when it is posed by the other side or the radical outsider rather than the human and its faculties.*”<sup>73</sup>

The accelerative pushing through to a space of – and self-identification with – the monstrous (a Prometheanism which is thus integrative and coalitional rather than subjugative) offer an imaginal means of reconstructing subjectivity in a way that presents the possibility of a (political) counter-capitalist identification with other marginalized (and dehumanized) subject positions, and for creating a collective space for imagining difference in the face of capitalist realism’s denial of such<sup>74</sup>. In this respect, inhumanism within the Lovecraftian-Chaos magick axis suggests a reaching beyond the purely immanentized and immersive *jouissance* of Landian accelerationism – if only as an “aesthetic [rather] than effective political force”<sup>75</sup> - as one possible conceptual vanguard of the post-capitalist Outside.

## NOTES

1. Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian, "Introduction," in *#Accelerate* [ebook edition], eds. Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2014), 36.
2. For a further ethnographic examination of the use of spirit possession in Lovecraftian occulture, see Justin Woodman, "Alien Selves: Modernity and the Social Diagnostics of the Demonic in 'Lovecraftian Magick'," in *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic*, Issue 2 (2008): 13 – 47.
3. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).
4. Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy* (1974), trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993).
5. See for example Nick Land "Origins of the Cthulhu Club," in *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987 – 2007*, eds. Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic, 2011), 573 - 581.
6. Mackay and Avanessian, "Introduction," in *#Accelerate*, 8.
7. H.P. Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu," (1928) in *The Call of Cthulhu*, ed. S.T Joshi, 139-169. (London, UK: Penguin, 2002), 139-169.
8. H.P. Lovecraft, "At the Mountains of Madness," (1936) in *The Thing on the Doorstep*, ed. S.T Joshi (London, UK: Penguin, 2002), 303.
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