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Alien Selves: Modernity and the Social Diagnostics of the Demonic in "Lovecraftian Magick".

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Introduction

This article examines the significance of the category of the 'demonic' as applied within the theory and practice of 'Lovecraftian' magick[1]: a 'style' of magical practice inspired by the fictional universe of the 'Cthulhu mythos' created by the author H. P. Lovecraft, and popularised within certain sectors of the contemporary Euro-American magical subculture. For these contemporary 'Lovecraftian' magicians, the demonic is mobilised as a potent 'apocalyptic' weapon in contesting the alienating consequences of modernity, and forms an ambivalent moral category distinct from Christianised conceptions of supernatural evil. An equivalent moral ambivalence has also been noted in a number of recent anthropological accounts of postcolonial African modernities[2] - modernities partly characterised by an emerging (and global) tendency 'to interpret modern processes of change in terms of 'witchcraft'' [3]. These accounts recognise that the idiom of the demonic - both in African contexts and more widely -

> encompasses a simultaneous fascination with and desire to be 'modern', and a deep anxiety about where society is heading. The demonic, in this

> understanding, is not a barrier or resistance to change...Rather, the proliferation of images of excess or evil might actually be seen as part and parcel of that 'modernity'...This signals a moral indeterminacy or ambivalence that rails against the prevailing dualistic assumptions that have characterized the study of morality.[4]

Within this reading, indigenous conceptions of witchcraft, the supernatural powers of evil, and other 'occult' forces have come to be treated as

> a form of historical consciousness, a sort of social diagnostics...that try to explain why the world is the way it is, why it is changing and moving in a particular manner at the moment.[5]

Valuable though they are, by placing African witchcraft at the centre of their analyses[6] many of these accounts unwittingly reproduce problematic representations of the non-Western Other: as 'primitive' and otherwise unable to grasp the complexity of modernising processes in 'rational' socio-economic terms[7]. The alternative - followed here - is to retain the usefulness of these recent theoretical formulations by further demonstrating that the transglobal processes of modernisation (and the forms of subjectification they generate) are equally intangible to everyday Euro-American thought, and that contemporary Western magical conceptions of the demonic constitute a comparable idiom for understanding these occluded processes. Specifically, I locate my discussion around a group of 'Lovecraftian' magicians' calling themselves the 'Haunters of the Dark' (hereafter referred to as the HOD), who formed the focus of anthropological fieldwork conducted in London between 1999 and 2001. The ambivalent character of the demonic was powerfully evident in the HOD's spirit possession practices: within the group's loosely ritualised encounters with otherworldly forces, the demonic did not represent a source of absolute evil, but constituted a form of 'alien otherness' disruptive of the rationalising aspects of modernity. While such practices critiqued a conception of modernity-as-instrumental rationality[8], they nonetheless gave voice - via the ambivalent character of the demonic - to a perception of modernity as both problematic *and* desirable. As a consequence, Lovecraftian magick not only resists but celebrates modernity in its various, multiple guises[9]:

whether conceived of as a postmodernity in which the universalising Enlightenment metanarrative of rational progress is reduced to a localised, situated discourse; or as late / reflexive modernity, which does not so much reject the progressive trajectory of Enlightenment epistemology as recognise that the radical doubt which 'was always at the origin of the Enlightenment's claims to certainty, becomes thoroughly exposed to view'.[10] Whilst the disparate theoretical articulations of both late- and post-modernities mark out incommensurable conceptual terrains, they nonetheless share a central concern with uncertainty[11]. In either case, the HOD's engagement with a 'demonic alter' was indented in the processual and contingent production of selfhood via the interiorisation and transformation of uncertainty[12], and practitioners' viewed their own sense of self as emergent from and creatively aligned with the indeterminacy said to characterise the social matrix of modernity.

Lovecraftian magick is, then, not so much marginal to the perceived hegemonic centres of modernity, but exists in a juxtaposed relationship with those (increasingly contingent) centres[13]. The analyses presented here is, therefore, one which seeks to overcome those oppositional metanarratives (i.e. centre-periphery / marginal-mainstream / accommodation - resistance) which have largely circumscribed the theorising of 'subcultures' within the social sciences[14].

The Cthulhu Mythos: An Overview

Originating in a series of loosely-connected stories written by the American writer of supernatural fiction Howard Philips Lovecraft (1890 - 1937), and developed by other genre writers[15], the Cthulhu mythos constitutes a nebulous fictional myth-cycle concerning the 'Great Old Ones' or 'Old Ones' - described by the Lovecraftian magician Zebulon as 'transdimensional entities...who, 'when the stars are right', can enter into our world via psychic or physical gateways'.[16] The eponymous Cthulhu (a mountainous squid-like extraterrestrial entombed in the city of R'lyeh beneath the Pacific Ocean) is perhaps the best known of Lovecraft's Old Ones; others include Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, Shub Niggurath, and Azathoth. These entities are typically depicted as vastly ancient, amoral, cosmic monstrosities which inhabit chaotic, liminal spaces beyond the rational and ordered universe of

human perception. Whilst there is said to exist a global but secretive cabal of cults seeking to facilitate the return of these monstrous beings, those humans unfortunate enough to encounter the Old Ones are invariably sent insane, or otherwise meet some horrible (and usually unspeakable) doom.

More importantly for Lovecraft - a self-styled 'mechanistic materialist'[17] - the Old Ones gave voice to the writer's own 'cosmic' brand of philosophical pessimism: therein, the human subject becomes alienated and decentred by the knowledge of its own insignificance in a blind and ultimately purposeless cosmos.[18] In the opening paragraph of *The Call of Cthulhu* - the narrative of which concerns the irrevocable eventuality of Cthulhu's apocalyptic awakening from an aeon-long slumber - Lovecraft thus writes:

> We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age'.[19]

Such knowledge - a canon of 'forbidden' or 'blasphemous' lore detailing the monstrous antediluvian world of the Old Ones - forms a thematic cornerstone of the Cthulhu mythos: one which undermines anthropocentric assumptions that 'man is either the oldest of the last or earth's masters, or that the common bulk of life and substance walks alone'.[20] Although usually of pre-human provenance, this lore is nonetheless contained within archaic tomes, 'black books', and 'nameless' grimoires written by the Old Ones' human and less-than-human worshippers. Foremost of these tomes is the (wholly fictional) *Necronomicon*, supposedly written by the (equally fictive) 'Mad Arab' Abdul Alhazred in Damascus during the 8th Century C.E., and later translated into English by the very real Elizabethan magus, John Dee[21]. This blurring of fact and fiction - a key feature of the Lovecraft's literary methodology - has led some occultists to assume, erroneously, that the atheist Lovecraft actually believed in the veracity of the Cthulhu mythos. Exacerbated by a number of scholarly essays contained in one published version of

the *Necronomicon*[22], a new mythology has emerged linking Lovecraft to the ceremonial magician Aleister Crowley[23], and claiming that Lovecraft was in fact inspired by an authentic body of esoteric lore. As a further testament to the power of Lovecraft's fictive milieu, over twenty other versions of Lovecraft's fabled *Necronomicon* have been published since the 1950s.[24] No longer a literary device but a manifest social reality, one edition of the *Necronomicon* has even been cited in an unsubstantiated case of 'Satanic' crime.[25]

The Cthulhu Mythos and the Left-Hand Path

As a consequence of the Old Ones' eventual return to our world, Lovecraft tell us that

> mankind would...become as the Great Old Ones; free and wild and beyond good and evil, with laws and morals thrown aside and all men shouting and killing and revelling in joy. Then the liberated Old Ones would teach them new ways to shout and kill and revel and enjoy themselves, and all the earth would flame with a holocaust of ecstasy and freedom.[26]

Perhaps as a result of these powerfully transgressive and antinomian sentiments, the Cthulhu mythos has found favour amongst those interested in the 'darkside' of the Western occult tradition - otherwise denoted by the popular misnomer 'black magic' - and problematically defined by Richard Cavendish as a morally reprehensible attempt at self-deification through association with the powers of evil[27]. Richard Sutcliffe has rightly criticised this view as an 'outmoded and value-laden'[28] misperception of the 'Left-Hand Path' : a term derived from Eastern Tantric traditions.[29] For Sutcliffe, the Left-Hand Path variously encompasses Western forms of Tantra, Aleister Crowley's magical philosophy of Thelema, and Chaos magick - groupings which are not concerned with the celebration of evil, but with an (often transgressive)

> attempt to engage in magical praxis which does not accept externally imposed limitations, but rather tries to celebrate the totality of human experience in all of its folly and grandeur.[30]

The ultimate aim of such praxis is 'to unite the microcosmic human with the macrocosmic Universe'[31], sharing with neo-paganism and the New Age a focus on the 'spiritualised' or non-egoic self. However, in this respect Sutcliffe's definition does require some qualification: while many Thelemic magicians identify themselves as followers of the Left-Hand Path, others equate the term with the selfish and egoistic pursuit of power - contemporary Satanism being a case in point. Satanists often refer to themselves as followers of the Left-Hand Path, but - insofar as their ideology often values egoic self-deification over spiritual transcendence - form an exception to Sutcliffe's definition.

Lovecraftian magick places a marked emphasis on self-knowledge and self-transformation by transgressing the perceived limitations of human and social norms, and as such constitutes a form of Left Hand Path praxis. However, this is a somewhat arbitrary categorisation, as Lovecraftian magick does not inhabit a discrete subcultural niche; the term is thus applied here as a broad and permeable category, denoting the often eclectic use of the Cthulhu mythos by diverse groups and individuals as an unfixed and nebulous mytho-fictional resource. As such, Lovecraftian magick is constituted within a complex and overlapping set of genealogical relations, a summarised version of which is presented in the following section.

A Genealogy of 'Lovecraftian Magick'

One of the key figures responsible for bringing Lovecraft's work to the centre of contemporary magical theory and practice is Kenneth Grant - an associate of the ceremonial magician Aleister Crowley, and also a one-time member of the Crowley-led Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO). During the 1950's, Grant claimed to be in contact with extraterrestrial forces which he came to identify with Lovecraft's Old Ones;[32] his subsequent exegesis of Crowley's writings led Grant to suppose that they contained a system for communing with these very same forces - a reading of Crowley's magical philosophy which may have been instrumental in Grant's expulsion from the OTO (now known as the Caliphate OTO). Grant later founded the Typhonian OTO, a group which has since explored connections

between Lovecraft's fiction and the occult systems of both Crowley and the magician and visionary artist Austin Osman Spare (sometimes referred to as the 'grandfather' of Chaos magick)[33].

Lovecraft's fiction gained widespread recognition in North America during the 1970s [34] - particularly within the then burgeoning counterculture.[35] This period also saw the rise of Anton LaVey's San Francisco-based Church of Satan, which incorporated elements of the Cthulhu mythos in its ritual practices[36] - as did the Temple of Set, a later schismatic offshoot led by ex-Church of Satan member Michael Aquino[37]. During this time Grant had also begun to collate his findings in a series of influential publications (collectively known as the 'Typhonian Trilogies')[38]. In these books, Grant has suggested that, by allowing the Old Ones ingress into the human consciousness, humanity can reclaim its extraterrestrial evolutionary heritage and attain cosmic consciousness in doing so.[39]

The 'extraterrestrialist' project visible in Grant's work has also been coupled with that found in the countercultural writings of Timothy Leary, Robert Anton Wilson and William Burroughs. These sources have also informed the "stellar" magicks currently being developed by Left-Hand Path magicians, largely in response to the perceived biological imperative of making an evolutionary leap off planet.

The work of both Grant and LaVey also exerted a formative influence on the ideas of later Lovecraftian groups including the Esoteric Order of Dagon (EOD): a North American magical order styling itself as 'an occult Order descended from the Sirius-mystery cults of ancient Egypt, Babylon and Sumeria'.[40] The EOD emerged in the late 1980s as one of the first organisation (with members spread across North America and the United Kingdom)[41] dedicated solely to an occult exegesis of Lovecraft's fictional myth cycle.

More recent magical elaborations of the Cthulhu mythos are found in the practice of "Chaos magick", which appeared in the United Kingdom during the late 1970s. The tenets of Chaos magick are partly derived from popular exegeses of quantum theory and the science of 'chaos' or 'non-linear dynamics' - ideas which have been used to promote and legitimise the 'Chaoist' view that observable reality is

founded upon indeterministic, acausal, and non-teleological bases. In the face of this ontological uncertainty - and underpinned by the desire to achieve liberation from the alienating effects of social indoctrination - Chaos magicians advocate a radical epistemological and moral relativism (encapsulated in the motto 'Nothing is True, Everything is Permitted'). This relativism underpins the Chaos magical practice of *paradigm shifting*, by which practitioners attempt to switch between belief systems (sometimes arbitrarily) in order to unmask the contingency and socially-valorised nature of supposedly monolithic worldviews. Although Chaos magicians regularly appropriate recognised cultural systems as part of this practice, they also 'invest belief' in self-invented or fictional cosmologies - Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos being a case in point - in order to undermine those culturally-indented categorical distinctions which separate the 'real' from the 'unreal'. The popularity of the Cthulhu mythos amongst Chaos magicians is also a consequence of its promotion as a workable magical 'paradigm' by the influential magician Phil Hine[42] (whose website[43] also forms an important on-line repository of Lovecraftian magical material).

This briefly-sketched cultural and historical framework constitutes the foundation upon which the Haunters of the Dark formulated their own explorations of the Cthulhu mythos - explorations which, I suggest, can be taken as an index of wider anxieties produced by the experience of modernity, where indeterminacy (like Lovecraft's fictive deity, the 'blind idiot god' Azathoth) reigns supreme.

The Haunters of the Dark: Making the Old Ones Manifest

The Haunters of the Dark[44] - who I first met at a pagan moot in central London during September 1999 - was comprised of eight male members (myself included), most of who identified themselves as Chaos magicians[45]: Jason, a twenty-seven year old art student; Guy, another student in his late twenties; Alan, a civil servant in his late forties; Rob, an internet researcher in his late twenties; Stuart, an administrative assistant in his late-thirties (who only remained with the group for a short time); Damien, a psychology graduate in his mid-twenties who worked in an occult bookshop; and Dane, a freelance writer and internet researcher

in his early thirties. From October 1999, the HOD met on a twice-monthly basis in various London pubs; these meetings comprised largely of preparatory discussions, which enabled the group not only to determine aims and objectives, but also to evolve itself - along broadly Chaos magical lines - as a largely informal body without a visible hierarchy or structure.

In 2000, the HOD began conducting a series of spirit possession rituals - performed at roughly one-month intervals - by which they hoped to communicate with the Old Ones. The first ritual was held during February 2000 in a room above the bookshop where Dane worked. Rob had previously noted that the entity known as Nyarlathotep - a darkly satanic entity described by Lovecraft as the ' 'Black Man' of the witch-cult'[46] - was often depicted as an anthropomorphic intermediary between humanity and the Old Ones[47]; it was thus decided that for this first ritual, a preliminary encounter with Nyarlathotep would best prepare the group for later experiences involving the wholly-other Old Ones.

On the occasion of the group's fourth possession ritual (which occurred in July 2000), the HOD met at an area of urban woodland area in north London - by which time the group had evolved a style of practice which became stereotypical of later rituals. On this occasion, the Old One Shub Niggurath - a perverse alien fertility deity sometimes depicted as an amorphous, protoplasmic cloud and known as the 'Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young' - was to be invoked, with Damien acting as the receptacle for the entity's incarnation.

The ritual took place under the cover of darkness in a clearing in the woodland. After each of the participants had donned black robes and gathered in a circle, Alan - who led the ritual proceedings on this occasion - asked Damien to kneel in the centre of the group; using a ritual liturgy he had prepared some days earlier, Alan proceeded to invoke Shub Niggurath whilst the rest of the group repeatedly chanted 'Ia Shub Niggurath'. As we raised the chant, Damien began hyperventilating - a method commonly used by the group to facilitate entrance into the requisite trance state. When Alan had judged that Shub Niggurath had taken possession of Damien, he gestured to us to stop chanting. Damien arose unsteadily from the floor, head

bowed, and began wandering aimlessly around the perimeter of the circle. Alan then addressed the possessing entity:

> Alan: Who are you?
> Damien/Shub Niggurath: Dirt and leaves and soil.
> A: Shub Niggurath, Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young, will you answer the questions of those who call you forth?
> D/SN: Ask.
> Dane: Tell us your secret word.
> D/SN: What are you to me? I am my will. What is it to you? I have nothing to share with you.
> A: Will you answer our questions? Give to us your power?
> D/SN: Give me your questions.
> A: What word shall we use to summon you?
> D/SN: By my name am I called. No word is needed.
> Dane: I have a question, Black Goat of the Woods. Which direction will our workings take next?
> D/SN: Your...your workings are not me. You are [pause] you are products. You are not me.
> Rob: Shub Niggurath, how should we serve you?
> D/SN: To do, to act, to serve my will, my [pause] not my will.
> R: Not your will?
> D/SN: My will is the sound of the trees, of the rivers, of the grass, the sound of the soil is my will. My will is not you. Give me your questions.
> [...]
> R: Shub Niggurath, how may we serve you?
> D/SN: You may serve me by being what is truest to you, by doing you truest nature, your truest will. Finding that for yourself, you may serve me.
> [...]
> A: Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young, be again at the centre of us, we thank you for your presence, we thank you for your power. We ask you now that you return to your preferred place in the Dark of The Woods, and leave the mind and body of this our brother Damien. We bid you hail and farewell.

The HOD's possession rituals were founded upon a habitual core of trance-facilitating techniques, but beyond this basic question-and-answer format, ritual formed a volatile, unstructured and negotiable space. By the following year group members also began referring to themselves as being part of a 'post-Lovecraftian' group, as entities and forces (variously known as 'Uranakai', 'Lazul' and 'Orzaz') - hitherto unknown within the 'canon' of the Cthulhu mythos - began to spontaneously manifest via possession.

Alan believed that while the Old Ones haunted a perceptual strata 'below and beyond normal human consciousness', they nevertheless formed an intrinsic component of the human psyche. The HOD's practices were thus founded upon a holistic framework which recognised an ontological unity between the Old Ones and human beings - a fact which was often confirmed via dialogue with the Old Ones. The first example is taken from the group's very first possession, involving Nyarlathotep:

> Jason: Nyarlathotep, how do we evolve humanity into something else?
> Nyarlathotep: *Seek for me within* and go beyond the form before you into Chaos (my emphasis).

The following exchange occurred during a ritual possession by the Old One Hastur:

> Rob: Are we of the Old Ones?
> Hastur: Yes, and the Old Ones are of you.

Also significant is Shub Niggurath's reply to Rob's repeated question 'How may we serve you?': 'You may serve me by being what is truest to you, by doing you truest nature, your truest will. Finding that for yourself, you may serve me'. This suggests, indirectly, an ontological permeability between human consciousness and that of the Old Ones.

Ultimately, the HOD saw themselves as preparing a psychic conduit through which the Old Ones could enter our world. According to Jason, this would precipitate 'an apocalypse of consciousness', or the awareness of reality divested of the veneer of socialisation and moral conditioning. In contrast to Lovecraft's bleak nihilism, the group held that such an 'apocalypse' would force the human species to abandon its petty moral, ethnic, religious and national differences, and make the evolutionary quantum leap into an "extraterrestrial" mode of existence,

During the early stages of the HOD's formation, Jason suggested that if they hoped to attain an awareness of the Old Ones as aspects of human consciousness, the group should not conclude their possession rites by attempting to exorcise the Old Ones' presence. As a consequence, participants sometimes reported that the

Old Ones continued to interpenetrate their everyday awareness days or even weeks after possession rituals. This often resulted in feelings of paranoia, personal dissolution, and even physical illness. However frightening, such experiences were seen to precipitate the 'apocalypse of consciousness', shunting participants - sometimes unwillingly - into a 'new mode of being'.

Alien Selves: Becoming Hybrid

The HOD did not, therefore, seek to worship the Old Ones; rather, they sought *identification* with them as avatars of a 'post-human' metamorphosis; similarly, the Satanist Anton LaVey refers to the Old Ones as 'the spectres of a future human mentality'[48] - a view echoed by Rob, who suggested that 'the Old Ones are our future selves who only appear as monstrous because we lack the language to directly perceive them'. Accordingly, Rob felt that the Old Ones represented

> our evolutionary heritage. They are memories of dinosaurs, the silence of space, and the primordial chaos of the big bang. In order for the human species to evolve beyond it current status of clever talking chimp, we must somehow find a way to awaken these long forgotten elements that shaped the development of our consciousness.

He also added that Lovecraftian magick was fundamentally concerned with

> waking up the Great Old Ones that lie sleeping...the primeval consciousness of the universe which has been lying dormant in humanity but is now slowly waking up...becoming the monsters ourselves.

Dane similarly noted that possession by the Old Ones constituted a method of 'trying to approach the unthinkable through the monstrous'. Rob referred this identification-with-monstrous-otherness as 'interspecies symbiosis'[49], noting that Lovecraft commonly used the themes of human-alien hybridity and miscegenation to evoke horror and disgust in his tales; for example, in the story 'The Shadow Over Innsmouth' Lovecraft introduces the 'Deep Ones': a race of batrachian, sea-dwelling humanoids who worship Cthulhu and mate with humans to produce monstrous but immortal offspring[50].

A month or so prior to the Shub Niggurath possession, the group conducted a 'shapeshifting' ritual by which they sought to encompassing the transformative effects of hybridity by assuming the mantle of Deep One consciousness and identity[51]. On this occasion I was asked to lead the ritual, which took the form of a 'pathworking' or guided-imagery exercise designed to facilitate the participants' ideational transformation into Deep Ones:

> Imagine floating in deep, green waters; those waters begin to churn in a gentle whirlpool pattern around you, drawing you deeper and deeper, ever downwards. Down past the rough hulking shapes of early human consciousness, the instinctual drives of flight or fight of your mammalian ancestors, down past the sleek alien ripples of reptilian consciousness, returning to the warm womb of the sea where you float at the brink of the blackest, atavistic depths of amphibian consciousness, the ancient dream-time of Cthulhu...your limbs become fluid and undulating; fins sprout from your back and your skin takes on the sheen of beautiful iridescent scales that shimmer in the darkness...you sense in the distance other presences writhing in the dark waters, and you cry out to them with a profound sense of kinship, a guttural, inarticulate, prehuman croaking - the primal tongue of the Deep Ones. Your joyful cry reaches out to touch those swimmers in darkness, your brothers and sisters the Deep Ones, drawing them toward you. Within that darkness the inhuman sound of your call coalesces to take form and substance as a symbol of power...your cry dissipates across time and space drawing you back to your human form in the here and now.

As the ritual progressed, the participants' movements became more sluggish as they adopted hunched or awkward poses whilst making low, inhuman-sounding noises. Afterwards, members of the HOD reported that they had felt themselves changing, returning to the primeval roots of consciousness, where human selfhood and alien Deep One fused.

'Not in the Spaces We Know, But Between Them'

This concern with identification with a monstrous other is an ideational manifestation of Left Hand Path magick's transgressive sensibility, derived from Aleister Crowley's millenarian notion of the 'Aeon of Horus': a new spiritual *zeitgeist* heralding a self-liberating time of 'Force and Fire'[52] (and mirrored in the Nietzschean strains of Lovecraft's own apocalypticism).

Thus, the practice of Lovecraftian magick was, according to Dane, all about 'calling on the Old Ones to liberate us from society'. Likewise, Phil Hine claims that encounters with such forces of unreason are fundamental to the emancipatory project of magic: to stand in the presence of the Old Ones is, Hine suggests, to embrace madness as a radical metamorphosis of awareness and become transformed by the experience. Hine also describes this as 'becoming 'alien'', an 'evolution into a new mode of being'[53] which confers total autonomy from the values and judgements of society of large.

To embrace the alien, to become monstrous or hybrid, is also to step into the margins between boundaries. Drawing on Mary Douglas'[54] symbolic analysis of anomaly and marginality, Martin Bridgestock[55] argues that a concern with the marginal, the anomalous, and the interstitial is characteristic of horror fiction: it is the incursion of chaos - the violation of established cultural codes and categories - which generates the experience of horror. Lovecraft's Old Ones evoke such feelings because they exist '[n]ot in the spaces we know, but *between* them'[56]: inhabiting 'the borderland between mental categories', such entities threaten 'our entire system of thought and, by implication, the society which generates it'.[57] Chaos threatens to disrupt socially-inscribed conceptual categories but is also the source from which the initial categories of thought are drawn.[58] As James Kneale notes, 'while we might inevitably locate the place of horror on the threshold...we do not have to value these thresholds in the entirely negative way that Lovecraft did"[59]; in seeking the erosion of socially-normative, differentiating boundaries through contact with marginal, 'demonic' beings, Lovecraftian magicians are also seeking an experience of undifferentiated completeness. As a case in point, members of the HOD did, indeed, view the evocation of horror as inducing an experience of the sacred[60].

This concern with the marginal was often mapped onto the social spaces utilised by the HOD. According to Levy, Mageo and Howard, '[t]he poorly-lighted night and the socially uncolonized spaces (bush, forest, wilderness) around communities are perfect settings for uncanny experiences'.[61] These notions are congruent with the urban context in which Chaos magick is often practised, where the uncanny is

located in socially uncolonized or liminal spaces: deserted churches, cellars, squats, subway tunnels, urban woodlands, sewers, and areas of pronounced urban decay. Although such spaces are no longer associated with the irruptions of the uncanny, in the cultural imagination they have become populated with other peripheral and dangerous figures: rapists, child-murderers and drug addicts.[62] For a time, the HOD transferred their site of operations to a derelict hospital in South London: members of the group reported that the palpable sense of fear experienced while winding their way through the vast and unlit building (which was occasionally patrolled by security guards) facilitated states of trance and possession.

For Lovecraftian magicians, these sites provide a physical manifestation of what Kenneth Grant calls 'the Portals of Inbetweeness'[63]: magical gateways leading to 'the zones of Non-Being'.[64] Grant also refers to these 'zones' as the Tunnels of Set (named after Set or Seth, the Egyptian deity of evil and confusion[65]), conduits to a chaotic, non-linear, and intrinsically alien universe.[66] The Tunnels of Set comprise the averse side of the kabballistic Tree of Life - a key symbols of the Western magical tradition - and are inhabited by the *qlippoth*: a Hebraic word meaning 'shells' or 'harlots' [67], and which commonly denotes 'demonic' entities which are also conceived of as disruptive unconscious forces lurking within the human psyche. The chaotic non-linearity of the Tunnels of Set constitutes an alternative to the neo-Platonic spatialised hierarchy which otherwise dominates Western ceremonial magic; they represent liminal spaces where the socially-ordained prism of everyday perception and cognition is rendered ineffective, where linear narratives of spiritual progress collapse allowing magicians to attain a brief but pristine glimpse of an 'authentic' reality.

For the HOD, explorations of these spaces often generated experiences which were beyond the power of language to describe. Nonetheless, the group would attempt to refract the fragmentary consciousness indicative of inbetweeness via an often jumbled and impressionistic discourse. This is evident in the following example, which marks an encounter (via possession) with a monstrous cosmic entity named Orzaz: a hitherto unknown Old One inhabiting the Lovecraftian 'inbetween' space which the HOD referred to as 'the Ghooric Zone':

Dane: Are we in the presence of Orzaz, or someone else?
Damien / Orzaz: Yes...Orzaz.
Dane: Have you got anything to say to us?
D/O: Do not look to the stars, look between the stars. Listen to the stars. The sounds open the portal which is the stars...Do not call Orzaz, Orzaz is. See Orzaz, do not call Orzaz. The call of Orzaz is Orzaz.
Dane: The blackbirds of which you have spoken
before [these were mentioned in an earlier possession ritual]....
D/O: They are not birds, they are black, but they are not black - they are only black to you because you cannot see the colour that they are...
Dane: In which way does their nature impact with ours?
D/O: They move between you and as they move you can move with them and by moving with them you move through the portal which is the sound of Orzaz. The sound of Orzaz and the portal is the same...the vault is the sound of Orzaz. Opening the vault opens Orzaz. It is the sound...of the wings, of birds, as you call them...The beatings of their wings is the sound of Orzaz.....although they are not wings. You see them as wings in the same way you see the colour, and therefore they are your wings. You make them wings and you make them black.

The mental zones in which such encounters took place were described by Dane as 'pre-conceptual' and 'beyond language', and formed within the magical imagination an heterotopia: 'an impossible space, a realm of difference as Derrida would have it...an endless deferral of meaning...a space that has no knowable ontological ground'.[68] Such a deferral is evident in Orzaz derision at the HOD's attempts to clarify and categorise the inhabitants of the 'inbetween' spaces according to this-worldly referents (i.e. 'blackbirds').

The magician Michael Staley (a member of the Typhonian OTO) also suggested that the Old Ones emerge 'from a common background, a continuum, and that continuum is consciousness' of which 'our awareness registers only a limited subset or waveband'[69]. Accordingly, it is from this limited perceptual waveband that everyday cognitive categories are drawn; and it is the intrusion into consciousness by the 'undimensioned' Old Ones that disrupts the categorical boundaries and socially-circumscribed modes of thought, causing them to dissolve within the undifferentiated wholeness, continuum or 'primal chaos' of consciousness. After becoming possessed by the Old One Yog Sothoth, Alan thus felt the boundaries between his own sense of self and the intruding entity dissolve;

he also experienced the entity as existing simultaneously at all points in the space where the possession occurred, undermining his normative conceptions of space and causality.

To the extent that such encounters appear to mystify rather than reveal reality, the claim that the Old Ones form a type of social diagnostics would appear questionable. However, for members of the HOD the conceptual disruptions emergent from such experiences served to highlight the differentiated, contingent and constructed nature of human social relations. In contrast, Lovecraft's own use of the Cthulhu mythos represents a continuation of modernity's rationalising concern with delimiting 'the horror of indetermination'[70] evoked by the socially-anomalous Other. Peter Geschiere notes some 'intriguing convergences' between the indeterminate, non-localised nature of occult powers and

> "new forms of global mobility that, according to some, spell the end of the territorial nation-state as the main organizing principle of global society...Seen in this light, it is clear that the association of witchcraft and modernity is...about converging visions of open space, both frightening and enticing".[71]

For Geschiere, such 'intermediary spaces' become filled by a variety of religious, ethnic and nationalistic discourses which structure uncertainty through the creation of fixed identities[72], inversely demonising those who fall outside the perimeters of stabilised identities. This is evident in Lovecraft's own racist demonisation of 'polluting' ethnic groups within the Cthulhu mythos, where the 'degenerate' worshippers of the Old Ones are depicted as ethnic stereotypes of the worst sort[73].

In their more fearful aspects, Geschiere's 'intermediary spaces' bring to mind the paranoia, fear and anxiety which the Old Ones' dissolution of structured, bounded space evoked for members of the HOD. Underlining the social diagnostics inherent in the group's conception of the Old Ones, Geschiere's analysis was perceptively echoed in the following e-mail sent by Rob:

> The negative fear and paranoia...[experienced] when humans step outside of their consensus reality. When we encounter something as alien as the Lovecraftian gnosis, our knee jerk reaction is one of fear, it automatically presses our fight or flight buttons. But this doesn't necessarily mean that the

> Lovecraftian entities are inherently 'evil'. The negative emotional responses seem to occur because of our own conditioned fear of stepping beyond the construct we mistake for empirical 'reality'

Conversely, the HOD attempted to disembed themselves from the constructed categories of race and ethnicity, subsequently treating their practices as antithetical and resistant to Lovecraft's racism. Thus, Alan (himself of Anglo-Asian descent) claimed that by nominally identifying themselves as 'worshippers' of the Cthulhu mythos, members of the HOD had effectively constructed affiliations with the same ethnic groups which Lovecraft demonised. Rob also noted that

> 'The process of working creatively with non- human entities forces us to take responsibility for these fear complexes by putting us in a situation where we must adapt to a radically alien concept of the universe in order to operate effectively'.

Or as Jason claimed, magical experience 'enables you to be a little less dogmatic about other people'. In this respect, the HOD's use of science-fictional idioms is significant: not only does science fiction literature utilise techniques of 'defamiliarisation and estrangement'[74] - enabling readers to re-envision their world from radically new perspectives - but, as Marion Adler also observes,

> 'science-fiction and fantasy probably come closer than any other literature to systematically exploring the central concerns of Neo-Pagans and Witches...writers of science fiction and fantasy are bound less than any others by the political, sexual, and racial mores of their society...Science fiction has been the literature of the visionary; it has been able to challenge preconceived notions about almost everything, while at the same time attending to fundamental questions of the age'.[75]

Union with the alien Old Ones, notions of transmutation and hybridity, aim to bring about a transformation of the socially-experienced self in a manner suggestive of Donna Haraway's 'blasphemous' cyborg, which holds 'incompatible things together'.[76] Like the cyborg, the Old Ones do not hold an expectation of a finished whole, but of a holism that is processual, changing, dynamic and fundamentally chaotic, offering a model for rethinking socially-defined notions of difference and

otherness which have otherwise circumscribed exclusionist national, ethnic, religious and political identities[77]. As a type of social diagnostics, union and identification with the 'alien within' makes visible the socialised bifurcation of self and other: thus, ritualised encounters with the "demonic" Old Ones enabled members of the HOD to unpack some of the moral problematics surrounding ambivalence.

Selfhood and Uncertainty

Towards the end of my research Alan, Damien, Garth and Rob discussed the fact that they had increasingly come to feel 'comfortable' working with forces that other pagans viewed as intrinsically dangerous and 'demonic'. The normalisation and integration of the Old Ones became points of reference from which these magicians began 'evolving' the self. However, this evolution was not viewed in strictly orthogenic or teleological terms, but as a process of increasing diversity and complexity - a notion embodied in the Chaos magick motto 'Mutate to Survive'.[78]

Lovecraft imbues quantum mechanics with a magical quality, so that mathematical formulae open doorways to dimensions beyond the space-time continuum[79]. Lovecraftian magicians sometimes refer to these paradoxical sites as 'hyperspace' - a concept derived from popular exegeses of post-Newtonian physics[80]. Dane thus suggested that within these 'hyperspatial' and 'hyper-real' sites, the Old Ones falter indeterminately between states of existence and non-existence:

> 'Surely in the hyper-reality [of the Old Ones]...terms like 'existence' and 'non-existence' are pretty much a meaningless bunch of wank...that which doesn't live cannot die and exists as a nightmare or dream 'exists''.

According to Erik Davis - and evident in the HOD's encounter with Orzaz - the 'hyperspatiality' explored by Lovecraft's is idiomatic of a Derridian 'crisis of representation'[81]; inasmuch as the Cthulhu mythos 'marks the limits of language, limits which paradoxically point to the Beyond'[82], the reality of the Old Ones is articulated through imaginary and incomprehensible prehuman languages: '*N'gai,*

n'gha'ghaa, bugg-shoggog, y'hah; Yog-Sothoth, Yog-Sothoth'[83], for example. In practice, the HOD attempted to 'move beyond language' by evoking the Old Ones through the schizoid 'word salad' of dissociated language, glossolalia and 'barbarous words of evocation'.[84] Similarly, the names 'Nyarlathotep', 'Azathoth', etc., did not, according to Damien (and implied by Alan's experience of Yog Sothoth), signify discrete entities with definable characteristics and personalities[85]: they were simply labels which gave conceptual form to the inconceivable. Rob thus asked rhetorically whether 'the Great Old Ones can be used as a language for accessing the higher extraterrestrial circuits of consciousness?'. For the magician Stephen Sennitt, it is chaos and ontological indeterminacy which lies behind the 'language' or phenomenological masks of the Old Ones, who 'are ultimately random, but only in the same sense that we ourselves are ultimately random'.[86]

The social diagnostics inherent in this resonates with (and is indeed inspired by) recent trends in social theory, which hold that the overarching cultural determinants which defined 'traditional' identities have been displaced; a range of possible metacriteria have instead emerged, from which the individual has to chose or alternate between.[87] Thus 'the content and form of prevalent anxieties...have become altered' [88] by a globalised and relativised social milieu, resulting in identity problems as 'traditional' cultural conceptions of order and categorisation are disrupted. Similarly, Richard Sennett[89] suggests that such problems arise as a consequence of the increasing pressures brought to bear upon our decision-making capabilities within this milieu. Drawing upon the work of Fromm and Marcuse, Sennett however argues that attempts to maintain fixed and stable metacriteria ultimately inhibit the possibilities for human freedom. For Sennett, disorder and diversity become a necessary condition of that freedom: static environments and social structures lead to static, unfulfilled personalities, 'self-slavery'[90], and alignment to an ahistorical and imagined preconceived order. As already noted, this order may generate 'the desire for purity'[91], or that specific (but by no means monolithic) rendering of modernity which seeks to subordinate the inchoate and ambivalent elements of reality to an overarching notion of rational order.[92] Through identification with the Old Ones, Lovecraftian magicians are not, therefore, seeking

refuge from the late-modern condition of 'ontological insecurity'[93] in transcendental absolutes; rather, they claim to embrace a type of 'ontological anarchism' where the self is a shifting site of multiple selves and subjectivities.

The HOD's exploration of inbetweeness thus enunciates a space which is disruptive of the rational, hierarchical distinctions emergent from *Enlightenment formations of modernity* - for practitioners, such shifting otherworldly sites form the ontologically indeterminate basis of an alternative conception of modernity, one uncoupled from Enlightenment ascriptions. The dissonant experience of this late- or post- modern milieu - of fragmentary selves and the erosion of a coherent locus of identity - was sometimes expressed (albeit obliquely) by members of the HOD during trance and possession. The following transcript is taken from an occasion in 2001 when Dane and Damien both undertook a trance-induced exploration of the Ghooric Zone, where the Old Ones lie 'dead but dreaming':

Dane: They [i.e. the Old Ones] give us our selves.
Damien: They give us our mortality, our selves are our mortality.
Dane They free us from the lie of self.
Damien: The lie of self is the lie of non-mortality.
Dane: Mortality and non-mortality pertain to the self, the words mean nothing to the dead gods who do not live and therefore cannot die...because they do not live or die, these words mean nothing.
Damien: That does not make the self dead, and cannot die. That does not make the self that which eternal dreams and is dead but does not die.
Dane: Because of the waves crashing.
Damien: The waves that crash are not the self. The waves that crash are the echoes of dead gods.
Dane: And we are the sounds?
Damien: We are the ripple, we are the scum that washes ashore. We are the foam, the sputum.
Dane: We are dead gods?
Damien: We are the remains of dead gods. We are made from the carbon of dead gods. The dead gods that fossilised. We are of their bodies, we are of their forms but we are not them.
Dane: The dead gods were the dead gods are the dead gods shall be.
Damien: Shall they be dead gods or shall they be new gods?
Dane: This is the question.
Damien: And what is the answer?
Dane: What is an answer to a dead god?

Here, the experience of the self is attributed to the detritus of the Old Ones, or the 'dead gods' which Dane defined as those habitual beliefs, roles and behaviours commonly mistaken as the core self or identity. Within the discourses of Chaos magick, these 'dead gods' are also conceived of as Socratic 'daemons'[94], or as 'psychodenizens': taking the form of quasi-autonomous and self-replicating mental virii, [95] these daemons are 'transmitted' through the media and various social and cultural institutions; in thus coming to 'possess' human beings, they create the desires, neuroses, and habitual patterns of behaviour which give shape to modern forms of subjectification. Such daemons constitute the socially-determined self, and as a conglomerate are mistaken for an essential, core identity. For Dane, it was only through a total awareness of the dead gods or Old Ones - beyond the concerns of personal identity - that one could overcome the

> limitations of human thought...We need to become serpent-like to overcome these, we need to regularly shed the skins of our ideas and our limitations or physicality, shedding these and our attachments to them. The ... [Old Ones] reflect a route out of the prison we now inhabit, (a conceptual prison, I assume rather than a physical one)...Essentially then...we shouldn't let ourselves be fooled into thinking that any sort of concept we hold is capable of containing the reality of that which is unnameable. These projected interpretations and names being but skins that we should shed. Along with perhaps, the skin which identifies our sense of self with our singular bodies and minds.

The HOD's identification with the Old Ones essentially reframes the resurgence of these entities as an 'apocalypse of consciousness' - an experience emergent from what James Aho calls 'the apocalypse of modernity'[96], wherein the Enlightenment project of anthrocentric humanism and 'the human centre of modernity has destabilised and collapsed. Its fragmentation has opened a space for new revelations'.[97]

For the HOD, the Old Ones formed a type of social diagnostics by which the ambivalence, disorderliness, ruptures, and uncertainties of late modern 'risk society' were made transparent to experience and strategically managed. The 'new revelations' presented by the Lovecraftian oeuvre mark the limits of rational progress and offer a counter-narrative or 'alternate ordering'[98] to Enlightenment

modernity's teleological certainties - but one that is nonetheless derived from the epistemological centres of that same modernity (i.e. scientific discourse). Part of the attraction of the Cthulhu mythos thus lies in a compatibility between practitioners' use of 'postmodern science'[99] - with its attendant indeterminacies and 'quantum voids' - and Lovecraft's own 'twisted materialism in which scientific 'progress' returns us to the atavistic abyss'[100].

Marc Auge observes that 'mythologies speak of origins but these are cited, used, explored and re-imagined in order to answer the questions asked by the present'.[101] The adoption of Lovecraft's mythology as a system of belief indicates a substantively new and emerging magico-religious response to a crisis of meaning and identity instigated by processes of rationalisation, secularisation, and globalisation. Here, Lovecraftian magick responds to this crisis in a manner critical of Peter Beyer's supposition that, despite globalisation's relativising thrust, religious thought universalises the transcendent as 'a *structured* reality' (my emphasis)[102]:

Lovecraftian magicians do in fact attempt to articulate an alternative conception of the transcendent - as unstructured hyperspace, the abysmal chaos of the Great Old Ones - mirroring practitioners' perception of the social landscape as divested of 'ultimate sacred postulates'[103] and lacking any clear, structural or meaningful locus. It is, as Geschiere suggests, the very non-localised - indeed globalised - character of occult discourses which makes them so durable as metaphors of modern, globalising processes of change[104].

Ultimately, this conception of the sacred entails a recasting of the groundlessness of being, and the decentralisation of the self (with uncertainty as its consequence), as sources of potential self-emancipation and creativity rather than the cause of cynicism or existential angst. Lovecraftian magicians utilise a category of 'fictive' demonic spirits or entities as 'local takes on experience and the world'[105]. Lovecraftian magick emerges as a method of imaginally and metaphorically exploring (and consuming) the multiple, fragmenting and transforming categories of the self in the increasingly complex and uncertain socio-cultural context of postmodernity or late modern 'risk society'; it is the very fact that the semantic

economy of the demonic is one of ambivalent and 'indeterminate' meanings that allows it to accommodate and integrate the enticing and unsettling experience of transglobal modernity's open-ended dynamism[106].

Lovecraftian Magick and Late/Post Modernity

Through the mimesis of possession, encounters with Old Ones enabled members of the HOD to internalise the anomic uncertainties promulgated by modernity in its various guises: if not making the contingencies of spectacular consumer culture appear more predictable, at least making them manageable through instances of 'controlled' possession by the indeterminate ontological roots (i.e. the Old Ones) of that cultural *zeitgeist*. For the HOD, this process entailed immersion in, and the consumption of, signs and images of exotic otherness. In this respect, the ambivalent nature of demonic 'psychodenizens' sheds light on the enticements of modernity - insofar as magicians may choose not to exorcise these 'demons', but enter instead into a 'Faustian' pact: what the Chaos magician Ramsey Dukes refers to as working in a positive sense *with* 'evil' (or those internalised sources of human alienation) rather than *for* it.[107]

In their discussion of spirit possession, Levy, Mageo and Howard note that '[t]wo conditions are necessary for full possession to flourish: people who are psychologically disposed to dissociation, and a cultural environment that makes conventional use of possession episodes'.[108] The assumption that trance necessarily involves dissociation is questionable: anthropologists have applied the category in ways which often do not reflect the semantic variability of equivalent terms found in the cultures studied; thus, possession metaphors may be used in different cultural milieux to describe a variety of emotions and behaviours which do not necessarily entail dissociation.[109] While trance states *are* widely pathologised within Euro-American culture, trance-induced explorations of Lovecraft's fictive universe have, arguably, become conventionalised - particularly within postmodern formulations which characterise the current social milieu as

> a melange of fiction and strange values, intense affect-charged experiences, the collapse of boundaries between art and everyday life, an emphasis upon images

> over words, *the playful immersion in unconscious processes as opposed to detached conscious appreciation*, the loss of a sense of reality, of history and tradition; the decentring of the subject"(my emphasis).[110]

Furthermore, some of the magicians I worked with viewed such 'peripheral' trance states as maintaining concrete links to 'mainstream' culture, being controlled extensions of non-dissociative and culturally-normative altered states of consciousness. Dane, for example, told me that:

> What people fail to see is that possession is like going to the cinema. When you watch a film or read a book, it's the same as possession: you become totally overshadowed by the experience and lose sense of yourself and you enter another reality.

Contemporary Western magical practice is often formulated via a bricolage-like sampling of any number of magico-religious traditions[111]; such practices are indicative of the detraditionalised utilitarian self of late- or post- modern consumer culture, wherein practitioners seek spiritual fulfilment through the consumption of experiential trips into mystical realms[112]:

> The 'whole experience' of revelation, ecstasy, breaking the boundaries of the self and total transcendence...has been put by postmodern culture within every individual's reach, recast as a realistic target and plausible prospect of each individual's self-training, and relocated as the product of a life devoted to the art of consumer self-indulgence.[113]

As such, contemporary magical beliefs form a type of 'self-spirituality'[114] which may also be considered as the narcissistic outcropping[115] of globalising consumer culture. For Cohen, Ben-Yehuda and Aviad, the formation of science fiction and occult subcultures are thus indicative of a personal decentralisation which

> reflects radical secularization in an extreme form: all ends become equally valuable, or better, relative and ultimately valueless. The individual hence turns upon himself, and the immediate here and now: the new narcissism...and the hedonistic desire for instant gratification, frequently manifested by late modern youth, are ultimately an adaptive stance, reflecting the nature of the radically secularized universe into which it has been born.[116]

In this respect, Lovecraftian magick is not so much a 'marginal' practice, but the formalisation of an 'elective centre' which embraces and is adaptive to uncertainty, ephemerality, and postmodernity's multitudinous array of beliefs, ideologies, styles and lifestyle options. As Peter Geschiere notes, witchcraft movements and spirit cults may appear not only as a consequence of social and economic deprivation[117], but also during periods of economic boom 'when people have to deal with potentialities that appear highly promising but...impossible to control and, moreover, highly mysterious in their unpredictability' - the profusion of lifestyle choices perhaps being a case in point.

The emergence of elective centres which take science fiction and the occult as their locus is also indicative of a shift in the way that 'otherness' is conceptualised within global modernity: '[d]ifference ceases to threaten, or to signify power relations. Otherness is sought after for its exchange value, its exoticism and pleasures, thrills and adventures it can offer'.[118] This is also apparent in the manner by which the Old Ones no longer came to signify an alien other for the HOD, but formed the springboard for an arguably narcissistic celebration of an unbounded 'postmodern' self. In other words, 'otherness' has - to a degree - also become commoditised within the Lovecraftian magical milieu[119]. This is not to say that Lovecraftian magicians are little more than 'consumers': the HOD's embracing of the disorderly 'otherness' of the Old Ones caused the following question to be posed during Dane and Damien's dialogic exploration of the Ghooric Zone: 'shall they be dead gods or shall they be new gods?'. Ultimately, it is through continual shedding and restructuring of 'dead gods' - those components which constitute the shifting, multiple sites of 'postmodern' selfhood - by which Lovecraftian magick attempts to answer this question; in doing so, it also constitutes itself as an adaptation to the disorienting consequences of modernity as much as it articulates a possible mode of resistance.

[1] This archaic spelling is commonly used by Left-Hand Path magicians for a variety of practical and symbolic reasons. See for example John Symonds, J, & Kenneth Grant, 'Editors' Introduction' in Aleister Crowley, *Magick* (London: Guild, 1986, 1973), xvi.

[2] See for example Jean Comaroff & John Comaroff, *Modernity and its Malcontents* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (USA: University Press of Virginia, 1997); and H. Moore & T. Sanders, T. (eds.), *Magical Interpretations, Material Realities* (London: Routledge, 2001).

[3] Peter Geschiere, 'Globalisation and the Powers of Indeterminate Meaning: Witchcraft and Spirit Cults in Africa and East Asia", in *Globalization and Identity* ed. by B. Meyer & P. Geschiere (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 211.

[4] John Mitchell, 'Introduction' in *Powers of Good and Evil: Social Transformation and Popular Belief* ed. by P. Clough & J. Mitchell (Oxford: Berghahn. 2001), 5-6.

[5] Moore & Sanders, *Magical Interpretations* (London: Routledge, 2001), 20.

[6] But see Clough & Mitchell, *Powers of Good and Evil* (Oxford: Berghahn. 2001) as a recent corrective to this overdetermined contextual focus.

[7] It should be noted that many of the theorists in question are cognisant of this problem. See for example Geschiere, 'Globalisation and the Powers of Indeterminate Meanings' (1999), 212.

[8] It is this modernity which is often cited as the originary point of New Religious Movements - see Robert Bellah, 'New Religious Consciousness and the Crisis in Modernity' in *The New Religious Consciousness* ed. by C. Glock & R. Bellah

(Berkerley: University of California Press, 1976), 180-202. The "modernisation" of witchcraft in Africa represents an "alternative" rendering of modernity which is not explicitly tied to the instrumental rationality view.

[9] See for example Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Sacralization of the Self and the Celebration of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)

[10] Anthony Giddens, 'Living in a Post-Traditional Society' in *Reflexive Modernization* ed. by U. Beck, A. Giddens, & S. Lash (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 58.

[11] In this respect, I treat late modernity and postmodernity not so much as epochal breaks from, but constituent elements of "modernity". See Barry Smart, *Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1993).

[12] See Dave Green, 'Opposites Attract: magical identity and social uncertainty' in *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic* 1 (2003), 73-101.

[13] See for example Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1997)

[14] See for example: Hetherington, ibid., 20-24; and Sophie Day, Evthymios Papataxiarchis & Michael Stewart (eds.), *Lilies of the Field* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1999).

[15] For an indication of the vast number of authors - both "fans" and professionals - who have contributed to the Cthulhu mythos, see Chris Jarocha-Ernst, *A Cthulhu Mythos Bibliography and Concordance* (Seattle: Armitage House, 1999).

[16] Zebulon, 'Dark Entries: An Introduction to the Magick of the Cthulhu Mythos' (http://www.phine.ndirect.co.uk/ktulmyth/darkent.htm. N.d.a), 1.

[17] See for example: H. P. Lovecraft, *Miscellaneous Writings* (Wisconsin: Arkham House, 1995), 133 - 198; and S. T. Joshi, *A Dreamer and A Visionary: H. P. Lovecraft in His Time* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001), 131.

[18] Joshi, ibid., 244-246.

[19] H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Call of Cthulhu' in H. P. Lovecraft*, Dagon and Other Macabre Tales* (Wisconsin: Arkham House, 1987, 1926), 125.

[20] H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Dunwich Horror' in H. P. Lovecraft, *The Dunwich Horror and Others* (Wisconsin: Arkham House, 1984, 1928), 170.

[21] H. P. Lovecraft, 'History of the Necronomicon' in H. P. Lovecraft, *Miscellaneous Writings* (Wisconsin: Arkham House, 1995. 1927), 52-53.

[22] George Hay (ed.) 1978 (1992). *The Necronomicon: The Book of Dead Names* (London: Skoob Books, 1992).

[23] Lovecraft knew of Crowley - see H. P. Lovecraft, *Selected Letters Volume V* (Wisconsin: Arkham House, 1976), 120) - but there is no evidence to suggest that Crowley had read Lovecraft's work.

[24] See Daniel Harms & John Gonce, *The Necronomicon Files: The Truth Behind the Legend* (California: Night Shade Books, 1998), 51-76.

[25] B. Ellis, 'Legend-Trips and Satanism: Adolescents' Ostensive Traditions as 'Cult' Activity' in (eds.), *The Satanism Scare* ed. by J. Richardson, J. Best, & D. Bromley (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991), 289.

[26] Lovecraft, 'Cthulhu'(1987), 141.

[27] See for example Richard Cavendish, *The Powers of Evil: in Western Religion, Magic and Folk Belief* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975)

[28] Richard Sutcliffe, 'Left-Hand Path Ritual Magick: An Historical and Philosophical Overview' in *Paganism Today* ed. by Graham Harvey & Charlotte Hardman (London: Thorsons, 1995), 110. See also Katon Shual, *Sexual Magick* (Oxford: Mandrake, 1995), vi.

[29] See for example Kenneth Grant, *The Magical Revival* (London: Skoob Books, 1991, 1972), 39; and *Cults of the Shadow* (London: Skoob Books, 1994, 1975), 2.

[30] Sutcliffe 'Left Hand Path'(1995), 131; see also Graham Harvey, *Listening People, Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism*. (London: Hurst & Co, 1997), 97.

[31] Sutcliffe, ibid., 124.

[32] See for example: Gerald Suster, *The Legacy of the Beast* (London: W.H. Allen, 1988), 215; Francis King, *Modern Ritual Magic: The Rise of Western Occultism* (Dorset: Prism Press, 1989), 166; and Peter Koenig, 'Kenneth Grant and the Typhonian O.T.O.'(http://www.cyberlink.ch/~koenig/k_grant.htm.).

[33] The Typhonian OTO's irregular journal *Starfire* often contains articles dealing with Lovecraftian themes.

[34] Over a million paperback editions of Lovecraft's work had apparently been sold in the USA by June 1973 - see S. T. Joshi, 'Introduction' in H. P. Lovecraft & W. Conover, *Lovecraft at Last* (New York: Copper Square Press, 2002), xiii.

[35] Gary Lachman, *Turn Off Your Mind: The Mystic Sixties and the Dark Side of the Age of Aquarius* (London: Sidgewick & Jackson, 2001), 39-58.

[36] Anton LaVey, *The Satanic Rituals*, (New York: Avon, 1972).

[37] Harms & Gonce, *Necronomicon Files* (1998), 111.

[38] Grant, *Magical Revival* (1991); *Aleister Crowley and The Hidden God* (London: Skoob Books, 1992, 1973); *Cults of the Shadow* (London: Skoob Books, 1994, 1975); *Nightside of Eden* (London: Skoob Books, 1994, 1977); *Outside the Circles of Time* (London: Fredrick Muller, 1980); *Hecate's Fountain* (London: Skoob Books, 1992); *Outer Gateways* (London: Skoob Books, 1994); *Beyond The Mauve Zone* (London: Starfire Publishing, 1999); and *The Ninth Arch* (London: Starfire Publishing, 2002).

[39] See for example Grant, ibid. (1992), 37.

[40] The Esoteric Order of Dagon, *Starry Wisdom* 1 / 1 (1987), 1.

[41] The Esoteric Order of Dagon, *Starry Wisdom: Dunwich Lodge*. (USA: Starry Wisdom Press, 1995); *The Esoteric Order of Dagon: An Introduction* (USA: Miskatonick University Press, 1992); and *The Directory of the Esoteric Order of Dagon* (USA: Miskatonick University Press, n.d.a.); and John Day, 'Shadow over Philistia: A review of the Dagon Cult' in *Journal for the Academic Study of Magic* 1 (2003), 39-41.

[42] Phil Hine, *The Pseudonomicon* (Irvine: Dagon Productions, 1994).

[43] Phil Hine, 'Fifth Aeon Egregore' (http://www.phhine.ndirect.co.uk); see also Phil Hine, *Prime Chaos* (London: Chaos International, 1993), 94 - 106.

[44] This is a pseudonym.

[45] Women were not, however, excluded from the group, and female partners of some of the group's members occasionally participated in ritual activities. Without meaning to reduce my analysis to generalised gendered stereotypes, men were more attracted to the sometimes aggressive and confrontational approach of this "style"

of magick.

[46]Lovecraft, ibid., 286.

[47] See for example H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Dreams in the Witch House' in H. P. Lovecraft in H. P. Lovecraft, *At the Mountains of Madness* (Wisconsin: Arkham House, 1985, 1932), 262-298.

[48] LaVey, *Satanic Rituals* (1972), 178.

[49] An idea also contemporaneous with the human-extraterrestrial hybridisations which form a core element of recent alien abduction narratives.

[50] See H. P. Lovecraft, 'The Shadow Over Innsmouth' in Lovecraft (1984), 303 - 367. Robert Temple, in his popular work of "alternative archaeology" *The Sirius Mystery* (London: Arrow, 1999, 1976), argues that amphibian extraterrestrials from the Sirius star system - similar to Lovecraft's Deep Ones - have intervened in humanity's evolution in the distant past, and may be preparing to return to the earth in the near future. The Sirius / Deep One connection also plays a significant role in some Thelemic magical recensions of Lovecraft - see for example Stefan Dziklewicz, 'Dagon Rising' in *Starfire* 1/4 (1991), 63-78.

[51] See also Hine *Prime Chaos* (1993), 100; and *Pseudonomicon* (1994), 39.

[52] Aleister Crowley, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley* (London: Arkana, 1989, 1969), 404.

[53] Hine, *Pseudonomicon* (1994): 9.

[54] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge 1994).

[55] Martin Bridgestock, 'The Twilit Fringe - Anthropology and Modern Horror Fiction' in *Journal of Popular Culture* 23/3 (1989),115-123.

[56] Lovecraft, *Dunwich Horror* (1984), 155-198.

[57] Bridgestock, 'Twilit Fringe'(1989), 115.

[58] Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (1994), 95.

[59] James Kneale, 'From Beyond: H. P. Lovecraft and the Place of Horror', paper delivered as part of the "Placing Horror' seminar series (University of London, 11th March 2003).

[60] See Jack Morgan, quoted in Kneale, ibid.

[61] R. Levy, J. Mageo, & A. Howard, 'Gods, Spirits, and History' in *Spirits in Culture, History, and Mind* ed. by J. Mageo & A. Howard (London: Routledge, 1996), 20.

[62] Charles Stewart, *Demons and the Devil: Moral Imagination in Modern Greek Culture* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 132, 189.

[63] Grant, *Nightside*, (1994), 126. The concept of 'inbetweeness' as used by Grant was initially developed by Austin Spare: see Austin Osman Spare, 'The Book of Pleasure (Self-Love): The Psychology of Ecstasy', facsimile in A. Spare, *From the Inferno to Zos: The Writings and Images of Austin Osman Spare* (Seattle: First Impressions, 1993); Grant, *Magical Revival* (1991), 180; and *Cults of Shadow* (1994), 197-198.

[64] Grant, *Nightside* (1994), 129.

[65] See for example Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 12.

[66] See for example Kenneth Grant, *Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare* (London: Fredrick Muller, 1975), 12.

[67] For a further elaboration of the "demonic" and "interstitial" associations of this term, see William Gray, *The Tree of Evil* (Gloucestershire: Helios, 1974), 17.

[68]Hetherington, *Badlands* (1997), 67.

[69] Personal communication.

[70] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 51.

[71] Geschiere, 'Globalisation and the Powers of Indeterminate Meanings' (1999), 234.

[72] Ibid., 233; see also Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood* (London: Dukes University Press, 2003), 1 - 18.

[73] Lovecraft's racist Othering is also made quite explicit in his naming of the Old Ones (i.e. Yog Sothoth and Shub Niggurath).

[74] Robert Scholes quoted in Marion Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 286.

[75] Ibid. (1986), 285.

[76] Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (New York: Routledge,1991), 149.

[77] A small number of neo-Nazi Satanist group - including the Order of the Nine Angles - do, however, appear to have embraced the racist elements of Lovecraft's mythology. See for example A. Long & D. Myatt 1998 'The Order of the Nine Angles' in *Nox, The Black Book Volume 1: Infernal Texts* ed. by S. Sennitt (Logos Press: Mexborough, 1998), 6 - 22; and Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity* (NewYork: New York

University Press, 2002), 215 - 223.

[78] Hine, *Prime Chaos* (1993), 120.

[79] See for example Lovecraft, *Mountains of Madness* (Wisconsin: Arkham House, 1985), 262 - 298.

[80] See for example Michio Kaku *Hyperspace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[81] Erik Davis, 'Calling Cthulhu: H. P. Lovecraft's Magick Realism' (http://www.levity.com/figments/lovecraft.html, 1995), 5.

[82] Ibid., 6.

[83] Lovecraft, *Dunwich Horror* (1984), 175.

[84] Grant, *Magical Revival* (1991), 100-118; see also Hine, *Pseudonomicon* (1994), 16.

[85] See also Hine, ibid., 19.

[86] Stephen Sennitt, *Liber Koth* (Logos Press: Mexborough, 1997), 7.

[87] See R. Baumeister, *Identity, Cultural Change and the Struggle for Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 247.

[88] Giddens, *Modernity* (1991), 32.

[89] Richard Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder* (London: Faber & Faber, 1996 [1970])

[90] Ibid., xviii.

[91] Ibid., 22.

[92] Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (1991), 15.

[93] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 53.

[94] See for example Frater Equilibrium. 2001. *The Neonomicon: Personal Daemonkeeping and Chaos Magic* (United Kingdom: Privately Published, 2001).

[95] This is a recasting of William Burroughs' claim that language is a psychic "virus" which acts as an instrument of social control. See for example - 1985. William Burroughs, *The Adding Machine: Collected Essays* (London: John Calder, 1985), 48-52, 88-96. This concept of the "demonic" also follows Richard Dawkins' concept of the "meme": see Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 192; and *The Blind Watchmaker* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1986), 158; see also Dan Sperber, 'Anthropology and Psychology: Towards and Epidemiology of Representations' in *Man* 20 (1985), 73-89; and *Explaining Culture: A Naturalistic Approach* (Oxford: Blackwell 1996), 56, 100-106.

[96] James Aho, 'The Apocalypse of Modernity' in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements* ed. by T. Robbins & S. J. Palmer (London: Routledge, 1997), 61-72; see also Giddens, *Modernity*, (1991), 4.

[97] Aho, 'Apocalypse of Modernity' (1997), 62. See also Douglas Kellner, 'Popular culture and the construction of postmodern identities' in S. Lash & J. Friedman (eds.), *Modernity and Identity*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 142.

[98] Hetherington, *Badlands* (1997), vii.

[99] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1979).

[100] Davis, 'Calling Cthulhu' (1995), 5. It has also been suggested that Lovecraft's apocalyptic vision resonates with contemporary fears concerning environmental

collapse (as a consequence of scientific materialism and mass consumption) - see for example George Hay, 'Preface' in G. Hay & R. Turner, *The R'lyeh Text: Hidden Leaves from the Necronomicon* (London: Skoob Books, 1995), 9-10; and Barry Walker, 'The Call of Cthulhu: A Modern Magickal Mythos' in *White Dragon* 25 (1999), 12-15.

[101] Marc Auge, *The War of Dreams: Studies in Ethno Fiction* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), 19.

[102] Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization* (London: Sage, 1994), 6.

[103] Roy Rappaport, *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1979), 117.

[104] Geschiere, 'Globalization and the Power of Indeterminate Meanings' (1999), 233-234.

[105] Michael Lambek, 'Afterword: Spirits and Their Histories' in J. Mageo & A. Howard (1996), 238.

[106] See Geschiere, 'Globalization and the Powers of Indeterminate Meanings' (Oxford: Berg, 1999).

[107] Ramsey Dukes, *What I Did in My Holidays: Essays on black magic, Satanism, and other nicities*. Oxford: Mandrake/The Mouse That Spins, 1998), 22.

[108] Levy, Mageo & Howard, 'Gods, Spirits, and History'(London: Routledge, 1996), 19.

[109] Vincent Crapanzano, 'Introduction' in *Case Studies in Spirit Possession* ed. by V. Crapanzano & V. Garrison (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1977), 10.

[110] Mike Featherstone, 'Postmodernism and the Quest for Meaning' in *The Search*

for Fundamentals: The Process of Modernisation and the Quest for Meaning ed. by L. van Vucht Tijssen, J. Berling & F. Lechner (Dordecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 222.

[111] Sabrina Magliocco, 'Ritual is My Chose Art Form: The Creation of Ritual as Folk Art Among Contemporary Pagans' in *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft* ed. by James Lewis (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 121-140.

[112] See for example Paul Heelas, 'The limits of consumption and the postmodern 'religion' of the New Age' in *The Authority of the Consumer* ed. by R. Keat, N.Whiteley & N. Abercrombie (London: Routledge, 1994), 102-115; and 'The New Age: Values and Modern Times' in *The Search for Fundamentals: The Process of Modernisation and the Quest for Meaning* ed. by L. van Vucht Tijssen, J. Berting & F. Lechner (Dordecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 143-170.

[113] Zygmunt Bauman, 'Postmodern Religion?' in *Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity* ed. by Paul Heelas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 70.

[114] See for example Heelas, *New Age Movement* (1996).

[115] See for example Christopher Lasch, C. 1978. *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978). However, see also Dave Green, this edition.

[116] E. Cohen, N. Ben-Yehuda, N., & J. Aviad, 1987. 'Recentering the world: the quest for 'elective' centers in a secularized universe' in *The Sociological Review* 35 / 2 (1987), 323.

[117] See for example I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: A Study of Shamanism and Spirit Possession* (London: Penguin, 1971).

[118] Jonathan Rutherford, *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. (London:

Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 11.

[119] See for example: Paul Heelas, 'Introduction: On Differentiation and Dedifferentiation" in *Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity* ed. by Paul Heelas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 5-6; and Adam Possamai, 'Alternative Spiritualities and the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism' in *Culture and Religion* 4 / 1 (2003), 31-45.