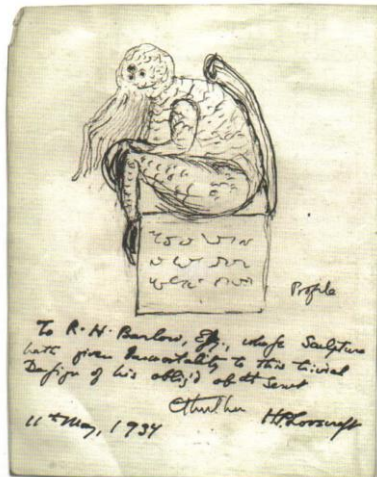


Toward a Minor Weird:

Politics, Deterritorialization, and Group Becomings
in Lovecraft and Miéville



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Cover Illustrations:

“Cthulhu” by H.P. Lovecraft (see “Letter to R.H. Barlow, 1934”)

“Skulltopus” by China Miéville (see *Collapse* Vol. IV)

ABSTRACT

Weird is a genre of fiction that operates at the intersections of Horror, Fantasy and Science-Fiction. While Weird has been used to prompt new theories in metaphysics, its relationship to politics remains relatively unexamined. This thesis aims to rectify this, approaching the works of H.P. Lovecraft and China Miéville according to the program outlined in Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. This is an exploration of the relationship between language, expression and political power. These para-political imaginings are necessary in a culture wherein traditional politics are failing to produce or imagine futures.

This thesis first examines Weird as a genre, drawing out its history and inconsistencies, noting that it is precisely due to this fractured and fracturing nature that Weird is such a ripe vector from which Minor readings may emerge. Following this brief exploration of genre, the thesis takes as its task the reading of Lovecraft's and Miéville's fiction according to the three main concerns of the minor: deterritorialization, the political, and the formation of new groups with new powers of expression. To some degree, this thesis is more of an extended thought experiment than traditional literary criticism, yet it is hoped that in pursuing this project, new means of thinking futures will emerge.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed) _____

Date: 13/10/2019

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INTRODUCTION

TOWARD WEIRD FUTURES: CAN WE IMAGINE RADICALLY DIFFERENT ‘TOMORROWS’?

For those who relish speculation regarding the future, the tale of supernatural horror provides an interesting field. Combated by a mounting wave of plodding realism, cynical flippancy, and sophisticated disillusionment, it is yet encouraged by a parallel tide of growing mysticism, as developed both through the fatigued reaction of “occultists” and religious fundamentalists against materialistic discovery and through the stimulation of wonder and fancy by such enlarged vistas and broken barriers as modern science has given us with its intra-atomic chemistry, advancing astrophysics, doctrines of relativity, and probings into biology and human thought.

- H.P. Lovecraft, “Supernatural Horror in Literature”

Eugene Thacker opens his 3-volume study of the “horror of philosophy” with the claim that “the world is becoming increasingly unthinkable” (*In the Dust of this Planet* 1). The critic builds his case for unthinkability on conditions broadly understood to be constituent elements of ‘the Anthropocene’: increasing pandemics, catastrophic weather and the hellscape of anthropogenic pollution. Thacker argues that any confrontation with such events is a meeting with the “limit of our ability to understand the world at all”. Throughout his investigation, linking genre fiction to the critique of reason, he approaches the limits of thought via the excesses of horror, seeking a generative pessimism that allows, in good conscience, a “world-without-us”.

The nature of any “without-us” is necessarily speculative, though I suggest that in this case, ‘without-ness’ is a condition of transformation rather than eradication.

There is an onto-epistemological process at work in learning how not-to-know. What and how 'reality' are transforms as epistemology alters its parameters and techniques. This has long been the endeavour of philosophy and science, with attendant moves in art and culture. Modernism, in all its radical innovation, was an adequate (even necessary) response to a world in which the realities of quantum physics, nuclear fission, industrialisation and world-war spread like alien tentacles, altering all facets of life. Art *shocked* – the works of Joyce, by way of example, were read as radical, at once deeply interior and positing wholly new exteriors. The human became alien-in-itself. New subjectivities, ways of knowing and being are developed not only in response to a world, but also by way of the art that expresses any given world.

Yet, if contemporary reactions to fiction are anything to go by, the future is cancelled. Nothing is weird. We have seen it all before – and we like it that way. In his 1982 lecture, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", Marxist literary critic Fredric Jameson (116-7), observed that our fictions, rather than producing the new, offered instead, a formalised nostalgia. *Star Wars*, putatively science fiction, an imagining of possibility, instead reproduced the form of the 1950s space opera, Buck Rogers, appealing to comfort rather than to innovation. This is strange given that the terms 'science' and 'fiction' tend to be associated with discovery and creation.

Leaping forward to 2014, cultural theorist, Mark Fisher ("Lost Futures" 6-8), expanded Jameson's argument to encapsulate not only the claim that our fictions were producing nostalgia rather than the new, but that the current cultural-artistic milieu could be used to diagnose the "the slow cancellation of the future"; art, suffering from a millennial exhaustion has lost the "recombinatorial delirium" of the 20th-century.

That said, popular culture in the first quarter of the 21st-century does indeed seem to be different from its earlier forms, notably in a growing inclusivity of minority groups. *Star Wars*, *Ghostbusters* and the Marvel Cinematic Universe offer up visible representations of women, people of colour and members of the LGBTIQ+ community. Traditionally 'masculine', 'straight' and 'white' spaces of representation have become diverse – although not without some reactionary pushback. In popular culture, there has been 'GamerGate' (Todd 66), a Twitter 'scandal' around the casting of 2016's all-female *Ghostbusters* (*Washington Post*) and cries of 'reverse racism' around Netflix's adaptation of Marvel's *Luke Cage*. Yet despite this backlash, it seems that real gains are being made in the progressive project of equality.

I suggest, however, that any ostensible 'progress' in popular culture is an illusion – our imaginations and fictions have yet to overcome the walls set up by the Enlightenment tradition of human-centred reason that Fisher explores in *Capitalist Realism*. This is a world-view or subjectivity that finds it easier to imagine the end of the world than any real change.¹ Minorities across the lines of gender, race, sexual orientation and class are sold the idea of progress, but our fantasies (and reactions to the fantastic) look suspiciously similar to those of the early 20th century. The superhero remains in some sense fascistic, high fantasy tends to be either reactive

¹ This thesis adopts a Deleuzo-Nietzschean framework. In using the term 'illusion' – which presages the Deleuzian 'virtual' – we find conditions removed from the concrete yet acting as a base for 'realities'. Here then, *Weird* is to be read in the manner of 'emergent gameplay' or 'hyperstition', wherein the interaction of subject and system brings into being potentials beyond the limits of design. To argue that progress is an illusion is to argue that this expression is necessary for further connections of the abstract idea of progress to the concrete instantiation of the same. These illusions and virtuals are the connectors that link the linguistic-cognitive and phenomenological worlds of the symbolic to the Real. I name these connectors 'the Outside'.

idealism or bland exploitation and science-fiction (notably in its 'hard' expression) has become increasingly scientific, ignoring Nietzsche's implied question upon writing the death of God: how will (can) we replace Him if we are not creators?

As Fisher ("Lost Futures" 25) and Jameson ("Consumer Society" 117-19) note, formal nostalgias lead to a rigid subjectivity that is temporally dislocated, trapped in a past that never existed. The futures of these presents become a matter of pastiche, rather than progress. Following Jameson ("Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" 68), pastiche is not only the end of the new, but the end of affect. The subject is liberated from their historical condition (which is to say the present moment) by the "blank irony" of affective distance (Jameson, "Cultural Logic" 70). Affective distance, it seems, is at the heart of postmodern discontent. If, as Jameson and Fisher diagnose, we no longer feel connected to our futures, then our relationship with the present is one of an unproductive cognitive estrangement and static subjectivity, wherein we consume tropes merely to pass the time.²

Under this form of directed subjectivity, we allow meaning to be determined heterogeneously. This follows from a way of being that Fisher, in a 2009 interview with *Mute Magazine*, calls 'business ontology'. This is the state of 'reality' as experienced when mediated via the phenomenology of business transactions. This stasis of subjectivity has been much examined through the lens of social theory (notably via the work of the Frankfurt School) and the tradition of modern textual criticism. These traditions owe much to the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' as undertaken by Marx, Nietzsche and Freud (Ricoeur 32-3) that suggest a decentring

² Just as Fisher updates Jameson, Jameson seems to have worked from the same critique as Adorno and Horkheimer and their 1944 essay, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception".

of the rational subject in favour of a subjectivity created by external forces: material conditions, various linguistic-cultural genealogies and psycho-sexual sublimations, respectively.

I suggest that while these traditions have offered a structural analysis of subjectivity, there is a need to not simply analyse but actively produce and engage with new forms of subjectivity, especially if we are to understand futures as potentials rather than as recapitulations. To this end, I advocate for a Deleuzo-Guattarian 'reading' of Weird fiction, following the loose guidelines outlined in the 1975 work *Kafka:*

Toward a Minor Literature. This is a text that engages the immanent desires of the subject with the abstract project of future building, interpolating Marx, Nietzsche and Freud to develop a "material psychiatry" (Eugene Holland, "Introduction to a Non-Fascist Life: Deleuze and Guattari's 'Revolutionary' Semiotics" 22) – literally the healing of material subjectivity. This is a project that locates drives and desires within history, while at the same time critiquing the way these forces interact, suggesting 'untimely' interventions that produce futures adequate to new forms of subjectivity.³

Weird, appropriately, is a contested label - there is little consensus as to why the texts of Weird are considered as a generic corpus. Further, there has been a broad tendency to interpret this body of work as simply a modern extension of the Gothic (Colebrook 210-12, Marshal 631, Weinstock 182, "The New Weird") or as a list of authors that seem difficult to aggregate in terms of style and content, resisting easy survey (Luckhurst 1042). If we are to engage with such a body of work, it will be

³ On the matter of the untimely, I follow Deleuze (*Nietzsche and Philosophy* 107) via Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*, wherein to become 'untimely' replaces the eternalism of Platonic thought with the view of history as a tension between the monumental and the critical use of history, the need to use the outside view of history in a manner that builds on history rather than reinforcing the contingent as normative.

helpful to give a working definition from which to proceed. As this thesis will be addressing the works of China Miéville (a writer and theorist of Weird), it seems appropriate to start with his description of 'Weird' as given in the *Routledge Handbook of Science Fiction*.

Miéville's chapter argues that Weird is a genre fiction that operates at the boundaries of Horror, Fantasy and Science-Fiction (Miéville "Weird Fiction" 510). These boundaries are important, as Weird is a literature of breakthroughs and breakdowns – this is not merely a slipstream genre wherein the tropes of fantasy appear in science fiction. Indeed, the simple 'mashing-up' of genre fiction comes under criticism in Jameson's article, "Radical Fantasy", wherein it is argued that the idealism of fantasy as combined with the future-looking 'hopes' of science-fiction can lead to a reactionary response to the present. This points back at the dangers of nostalgia as a form without real content.

This thesis, then, seeks to draw Weird back into the realm of literary criticism in general and, more specifically, into the spectrum of political literatures. To this end, the short stories of H. P. Lovecraft and "Bas-Lag" novels of Miéville will be used to draw out a new politics of reading that addresses the question: how can we imagine radically different futures? This query is aligned with the Deleuzeo-Guattarian project of diagnosing points of subjective limit, break and difference. This semi-programmatic enterprise began with 1972's *Anti-Oedipus* and expanded to encompass a broader understanding of subjectivity throughout their later collaborations. In drawing out the 'breaks' in literary form and content, it is hoped that new readings of the texts will emerge that in turn promote new 'forms' and 'content' for the reader.

At a time when terms such as ‘post-truth’ and ‘fake news’ are bandied about and issues such as climate disaster, rising wealth inequality and the resurgence of ethno-nationalism are decried as ‘grievance politics’, it seems that a new means of discussion must emerge – and quickly. I suggest that in bringing Weird into the mainstream – without domestication, in fact, with the desire to exaggerate its oddity – we promote new cultural and subjective possibilities.

Broadly, Weird works to decentre the rational subject, often through thematic or formal interventions that rely on the mechanisms of the fantastic. From the ‘birth’ of New Weird under the guidance of authors such as M. John Harrison (who coined the term ‘New Weird’ in his introduction to *The Tain* in 2002) and Miéville, to the slow creep of Weird into popular culture via cinema (John Carpenter in the 70s-80s), video games such as *Morrowind* (2002) and *Darkest Dungeon* (2016) and the critical success of HBO’s first season of *True Detective* (2014), Weird has become somewhat domesticated as a genre from which popular culture can draw elements for the polite thrill of symbolic transgression. In some sense, this domestication has removed the power of Weird to unsettle, indulging in the “bald list of the impossible” abjured by Lovecraft in his short essay, “Notes on Writing Weird Fiction”. It is for this reason that a new method of reading Weird is necessary if we are to restore (or create) its generative potential, living up to the unrealised claim of leading Lovecraft scholar, S. T. Joshi (*The Weird Tale* 118), that Weird should “refashion the reader’s view of the world”.

Yet, while popular culture and consumption has been able to tame Weird, to some degree, the genre has worked as a strange nest in which to incubate the ideas of a variety of posthuman philosophical theories. Graham Harman (5) has gone so far as to argue that as the *de facto* ‘father’ of Weird, Lovecraft should be taken with as

much sense of cultural and theoretical significance by contemporary philosophers as Hölderlin was by Martin Heidegger. Indeed, the basic credo of Lovecraft as outlined in his treatise on “Supernatural Horror in Literature”, the suspension of the limits of human faculties and natural laws, has been central to the theoretical underpinning for philosophers such as Thacker and Ben Woodard (*Slime Dynamics*), who have utilised this suspension as a means of critiquing the limits of so-called ‘critical philosophy’ in the tradition of Kant and his noetic progeny. Further, it seems that much more critical-academic (not to mention para-academic popularisation) attention has been given to Weird by philosophers such as Nick Land (*CCRU: Writings*), Donna Haraway (*Staying with the Trouble*) and Timothy Morton (*Dark Ecology*) – often focusing on issues of posthumanism and deep ecology – than by literary critics.

Heretofore, literary scholarship surrounding Weird has primarily been interested in the authorial-biographical. How do the biographical details of Lovecraft’s life influence his works, asks Joshi (*A Dreamer and A Visionary* 346-7), often finding himself defending the author as a ‘product of his time’ when encountering intimations of sensibilities that offend the contemporary liberal thinker. Likewise, Miéville, when not being asked to ‘theorise’ Weird, tends to be interpreted by his own Marxian politics rather than the stranger images offered up in his fiction, as indicated in *Extrapolation’s* “Special Issue on China Miéville” (Vol. 50. No. 2, 2009).

Such studies of authorial intent have fallen out of favour in the wake of critics within a range of ‘movements’, from New Criticism through to post-structuralism. Further, it is worth noting that the criticism available up to this point is interested in the diagnosis or archaeology of the text – investigating origins of where, how and why – but

consistently ignoring the future building project of fictions.⁴ When Roland Barthes (1967) announced the “birth of the reader”, the reader seems to have been of a rather stable type – this plays out in much of the poststructuralist criticism, wherein we find putatively curious authors discussing much of the same: rocketing from Plato to high modernism, theorists such as Barthes, Derrida, Kristeva – even Deleuze and Guattari – begin at a point that is already well entrenched in the illusory background of our mediated ontology.

That said, and as noted by Patrica MacCormack in “Lovecraft Through Deleuzio-Guattarian Gates”, Deleuze and Guattari invoked Lovecraft amongst the slew of more ‘respectable’ literary figures from which their playground of ideas emerged. While MacCormack is indeed interested in the multiplicity of potential generations in Lovecraft, it seems that her engagement with his oeuvre is more at the level of abstractions, rather than ‘plugging in’ to the text in the manner that Deleuze and Guattari insist is a necessary response to the work of Kafka. While any slavish following of the Deleuzio-Guattarian methodology is fraught with inconsistencies – as Holland (“Deterritorializing ‘Deterritorialization’: From the ‘Anti-Oedipus’ to ‘A Thousand Plateaus’” 56) notes – this method is an “invention of novel connections rather than the mere application of a pre-established rule”. Following this, my engagement with Weir through a Deleuzio-Guattarian lens necessarily lays to one side (but does not forget) the need for total epistemic certainty. While the engagement with the texts must remain rigorous, there is a sense that to ‘make

⁴ See Luckhurst “Weir as ‘Dis/orientation’” and Machin, “Weir Fiction and the Virtues of Obscurity: Machen, Stenbock, and the Weir Connoisseurs”, both in *Textual Practice* Vol. 31 No. 6 (2017), a ‘special issue’ on Weir. Further, Noys and Murphy “Introduction: Old and New Weir” in *Genre*.

concrete' is to disengage with the project at hand; operating at the break of language, the break of politics and the break of Being and eventuating becomings.

Given that this work simultaneously seeks to bring Weird into literary studies and at the same time extend literary studies into the activity of the para-political (or create a political reading of Weird), there will likely be some questions surrounding the lack of engagement with the 'relevant literature' surrounding the authors, a criticism given by prominent Gothic scholar, Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock ("Lovecraft" 115) to Woodard's metaphysical treatise, *Slime Dynamics*. Like Woodard, my readings are 'oblique', looking to draw out contemporary implications rather than drag out the 'truth' of the works. I engage with notable critics of Weird such as S.T. Joshi, Michel Houellebecq and indeed, Weinstock only insofar as their readings are generative rather than normative.

While this thesis will be unable to undertake a synthetic reading of the multiple ideas contained within *Kafka*, my close reading of the works of Lovecraft and Miéville follows the tripartite 'soul' of the minor (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 18), observing moments of 'deterritorialization', 'immediate connection to the political' and the giving rise to 'new groups' and voices in the works under investigation. Each chapter will focus on one aspect of this triumvirate, in turn following the rhizomatic flight(s) of concept from each primary idea. In terms of deterritorialization, I investigate the over and under-determined nature of language in both authors, along with the destabilising of the conceptual. The second chapter examines the relationship between the sublime and the Outside that is a politics-to-come. Finally, I explore the potential groups that emerge from a deterritorialized, political reading of Weird, taking the models of becoming-animal and the war-machine as examples of the successful lines of escape from the present that Weird finds itself expressed within.

Given Weird's potential decentring of subjectivity (the traditional narrative 'voice'), it can be expected that new modes of expression and understanding will be generated beyond the traditional lines of criticism that have addressed Weird – when it has been at all been placed under the lens of scholarly attention. To be fair, this is not so much literary criticism as a kind of thought experiment. It is a prompt for a creative thinking, following the Deleuzeo-Guattarian project that culminates in 1991's *What is Philosophy?*, wherein the philosopher is the creator of concepts rather than the lover or pursuer of wisdom (5-6).

As noted at the beginning of this introduction, there is a sense of temporal malaise that we can see expressed not only in art, but likewise in culture and industry. While politicians continue to ignore scientific and, in the main, popular consensus around topics such as climate change and wealth inequality - not to mention the rapid military build-up that is occurring even as writers such as Steven Pinker suggest that the world is about as good as it can be – we remain comfortable, enjoying or accepting the lure of nostalgia.⁵ Art, I suggest, is one means by which we have access to the necessary recalibration of subjectivity that is a necessary response to the dangers posed by both the Anthropocene and the continuation of Fisher's diagnostic of a business ontology.

We are, I suggest, just as vulnerable to the hubris of comfort now, as we were when, in noting the impossibility of an ethical response to the H-bomb in 1956, Gunther Anders (155) called for the “development of the moral imagination”. Yet, I hold that our imaginations must spark well beyond the moral, in the realms of ontology and epistemology. We must rethink *what* and *how* we *are*, along with new frameworks of

⁵ See Pinker's 2011 *The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*.

knowing. To this end, it is necessary to destabilise these concepts, *being* and *knowing*, if only to build them anew.

CHAPTER ONE

DETERRITORIALIZING WEIRD/STRANGE

RETERRITORIALIZATIONS

A Kafka-machine is thus constituted by contents and expressions that have been formalised to diverse degrees by unformed materials that enter into it, and leave by passing, through all possible states.

– Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (7)

Throughout Fredric Jameson's and Mark Fisher's critiques of contemporary artistic practice, there is a sense that what is missing is the prospect of change. Indeed, the subtitle of Fisher's 2009 *Capitalist Realism: is there no Alternative?* indicates a worn-out ontology: the base conditions of existence cannot be altered, as all hope is lost and temporal malaise sets in. Jameson ("Consumer Society" 116-8) draws out the problem of formal nostalgia as one wherein change is impossible due to a stagnation of desire. The Lacanian Real becomes replaced by reality in terms of limited potentials: culture can only be reproduced rather than produced. Under the means of cultural reproduction that Fisher terms "business ontology", and Jameson "postmodernism", the tendency to sublimate the unthinkable as described in Freud (notably in the sense of the uncanny, the familiar returning as the strange) becomes a repression in which the stagnant returns as the comforting.⁶

⁶ See Freud. (1919). "The Uncanny" in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, pp. 824-41.

For both Fisher and Jameson, desires and the conditions in which they arise, come from a place of lack, following the Lacanian treatment of the term.⁷ Yet, to treat desire in another fashion, as generative, is to step into the project that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari inaugurated in *Anti-Oedipus*, moving from psychoanalysis to schizoanalysis. This is a project that investigates subjectivity and desire according to a process of multiplication, rather than the libidinal-traumatic reductionism of Freud and Lacan. From this model of subjectivity and desire (indeed, the subject for Deleuze and Guattari is the “desiring machine”), there comes a sense of instability that is, rather than a locale of collapse, a place of novel generation. Deleuze and Guattari name this as the process of “deterritorialization”, a process that I suggest is already implicit in the works of both H. P. Lovecraft and China Miéville.

Yet deterritorialization (the destabilising of the conceptual, the use of the traditional for novel purpose) is not merely a practice of writing, but also of reading. This chapter argues approaching the works of Lovecraft and Miéville, with a will-to-destabilise, promotes the expression of new desires that do not simply replicate historical comforts and nostalgia for pasts that never existed. It is necessary, however, to acknowledge the deliberately imprecise methodology offered by Deleuze and Guattari, which Eugene Holland (“Deterritorializing ‘Deterritorialization’: From the ‘Anti-Oedipus’ to ‘A Thousand Plateaus’” 56) has labelled “the invention of novel connections rather than the mere application of a pre-established rule”.

Further, given the evolution of Deleuzeo-Guattarian thought, this chapter cannot hope to engage with the full range of interpretations that can be drawn from concepts

⁷ Jacques Lacan, “The Seminar of Jacques Lacan” *Book VIII: Transference, 1960-61*. Trans. C. Gallagher.

such as deterritorialization. As noted by Holland (“Deterritorializing” 57-60), the use of ‘deterritorialization’ expanded between the writing of *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. In its earliest incarnation, the term indicated an opposition to the Lacanian ‘territorialisation’ that marked the “imprint of maternal nourishment and care-giving on the child’s libido”. *Anti-Oedipus* (222-3) moved desire into the register of the social, expressing the freeing of labour from the territory of the feudal lord, along with the decoding and privatisation of debt and subjectivity.

From *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* onwards, deterritorialization became the process that freed the ‘schizophrenic’ (multiplying) desire from already extant objects of cathexis⁸. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, deterritorialization and its mirror-twin, territorialisation, expanded to encompass categories that rejected anthropocentric psychodynamics and cultural organisation. Deterritorialization took up the project of overturning binary oppositions and indicating a double-becoming, wherein the deterritorialized figure articulates a new territory for another deterritorialized figure, a place of “monstrous crossbreeds” (*ATP* 174).

This understanding of deterritorialization is already at work in *Kafka* (61) when discussing a fragment of *The Trial* (“A Dream”), noting that the line of flight (escape, deterritorialization) is precisely crossed with its own failure to continue flight (reterritorialization), yet is neither negated nor preserved in the sense of Hegelian *aufhebung*.⁹ Rather, escape and capture proliferate becomings (to be fully explored

⁸ The term ‘cathexis’ indicates the investiture of libidinal energy. In Deleuzeo-Guattarian terms, I suggest that this is best understood as the capacity for change given that in *Kafka* (52), desire is read as delimiting and generative rather than an indicator of lack as in Lacan (Seminar VIII 1960-61).

⁹ Sublation is the preservation of an earlier rendition of a concept in that which it has become – yet while Hegel sees this as a means of progress and unity, the Deleuzeo-Guattarian task asks for a progress in multiplicity and difference rather than this unification. Indeed, this sublation can be read as

in Chapter Three), which Deleuze and Guattari (*ATP* 320-1) argue is an essentially minoritarian mode, and it is in this spirit of deterritorialization of language that I shall now engage with the works of Lovecraft and Miéville.

COMPONENTS OF DETERRITORIALIZED EXPRESSION

Broadly, deterritorialized language possess both an overabundance and paucity of ‘meaning’, properties that destabilise the usual concern of a text: namely, the transmission of rational sense or significance. Just as Deleuze and Guattari (*Kafka* 19-20) argue that language deterritorializes the mouth, removing it from its biological ‘materiality’, Lovecraft’s and Miéville’s writings often work according to the poetics of disconnection. This is a severing of the linguistic-affective cord that feeds narrative, following the process outlined in *Kafka* (20-1) that removes expression from the language associated with it, indeed, a “strange and minor use”. This can be taken as language – in utterance and concept – no longer beholden to *logos*.

This chapter approaches such severing/proliferation in the following manner: first, in the over-and-underdetermined nature of narrative in Lovecraft’s “The Call of Cthulhu”, alongside Lovecraft’s tendency to abjure or obscure the general tropes and norms of literary production. Second, the figure of “The Weaver” in Miéville’s ‘Bas-Lag’ novels will be investigated as a site of radical flux and generation; or, in Deleuzo-Guattarian terms, a body-without-organs. In each case, I suggest that by destabilizing the form and content of expression, there are hints at a new

a mechanism in the stagnating machine of remaking and reform that rejects the radical and revolutionary. See G.W.F. Hegel, “Logic” §§95–6.

subjectivity, with attendant desires and futures, possibilities made available by an active engagement with the very strangeness of the texts under consideration.

CTHULHU: THE CALL TO THE OUTSIDE

They all lay in stone houses in Their great city of R'lyeh, preserved by the spells of mighty Cthulhu for a glorious resurrection when the stars and the earth might once more be ready for Them. But at that time some force from outside must serve to liberate Their bodies. The spells that preserved Them intact likewise prevented Them from making an initial move, and They could only lie awake in the dark and think whilst uncounted millions of years rolled by.

– H.P. Lovecraft, “The Call of Cthulhu”

Lovecraft’s 1926 short story, “The Call of Cthulhu”, moves through three fragmented encounters with various incarnations of the eponymous god-priest. First, the narrator recounts his great-uncle’s correspondence with a sculptor (“The Horror in the Clay”), then a retelling of a raid on a ‘cult site’ (“The Tale of Inspector Legrasse”) before culminating, after a fashion, in “The Madness from the Sea” wherein the narrator reads a manuscript composed by a sailor who has ‘met’ Cthulhu during a disastrous Antipodean sea voyage. While W. J. Hanegraaff (101) draws a distinction between the ‘regular’ human world and the “infested Outside” in these encounters, I suggest that by reading “Cthulhu” as metaphysically univocal (that Being is a singular mode and that mode is a becoming), there is a flight towards the new rather than the return of/to the ancient.

In Lovecraft, this flight is the “tension between life and thought” (Woodard, *Slime* 43) that allows a reworking of “cosmic indifference” (Marshall 634). This interpretation leads Joshi (*Subtler Magick* 135) to declare that the Cthulhu cult has “nothing to do” with the ‘reawakening’ of the priest-god-thing in the third chapter of “Cthulhu”, instead being suggestive of a new model by which to understand reality (though Joshi does tend to read Lovecraft via the lens of pessimism or indifference). Yet to notice that this tension is one that does not carry any nostalgia, but rather articulates possibilities as yet unimagined, understands the cult as a kind of cosmic-desiring that calls in a register beyond its own comprehension, to the Outside.

That Lovecraft opens “Cthulhu” (381) by musing on the proposition of a “new dark age” suggests an upheaval in the fabric of not only the social, but likewise an epistemological chasm, from which the unknowable emerges. While this may be altogether horrifying, which Lovecraft’s narrator takes as a given, there is something necessary in horror, as it calls to the Deleuzo-Guattarian “monstrous crossbreed”. This call rejects the determinism of science, the anthropogenic ‘morality’ of the Enlightenment, and posits a playful, if dangerous metaphysics of flux and generation. Here, the problem of ontology is brought to the level of the “literary struggle” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 16), bringing about an artistic genesis appropriate to a time of increasing alienation: to embrace the utterly alien is to redefine the terms under which relationships are considered.

“Cthulhu” makes this move towards the Outside in a manner that recalls the Deleuzo-Guattarian (*Kafka* 73) reading of Kafka’s modelling of law, guilt and desire. Just as law, given by language moves towards an “unlimited deferral” in Kafka, the Real (Outside) becomes a site of intensive change in Lovecraft. This deferral is a deferral of both sense and sentence (expressing Law in the symbolic register).

Sentence here can be taken from its Latin root, *sentire*, meaning ‘to be of the opinion’. Given that opinion carries weight in the epistemological and social senses, opinions take on the qualities of the demi-urge, destructive yet creative. When Deleuze and Guattari (*Kafka* 49) draw the link between attraction and guilt – that guilt attracts the formless law, they draw out the distinction between Justice (what is earned) and Law (what is said). There is a revolutionary impulse here that, I suggest, is at play in “Cthulhu”, as metaphysics (Law) is destabilised in order to bring about the desires of artists and god-things (Justice). This revolution plays out in both the expression (language) and content (affective production) of “Cthulhu” as a form of epistemological *jouissance*; we find ourselves desiring the very frustration of un-knowing.

This un-knowing (deterritorialization to the point of meaninglessness) is twice made explicit by the narrator. First, praise is given for the fact that the human mind resides on a “placid island of ignorance” (381), before then expressing the desire for a heavenly “boon” (398), a blessing that would erase the memory of encountering the alien god-priest, Cthulhu, in terms of ‘pure event’.¹⁰ “A mountain walked or stumbled”, writes Lovecraft (“Cthulhu” 401). “What wonder that across the earth a great architect went mad”. Here, there is an appeal to new modes of knowing that arrive from unknowing, this recalls the Deleuzeo-Guattarian maxim that what is conservatively seen as a breakdown can, in a productive sense, be considered a “breakthrough”, if one adopts a certain perspective.

¹⁰ See Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* pp. 62-3, where it is argued that the event, that which is always in excess of its description, has no ‘present’, is impenetrable and always and at the same time about to happen and having happened.

Just as *Anti-Oedipus* (2-4) argues that the schizophrenic “out for a stroll” is more *productive* than the neurotic on the couch, this ‘mad architect’ or new dweller in a ‘dark age’ has access to the Outside, the future, and new realities, contrasting with the simply repressed subject. This entails reading the hoped-for epistemological oblivion of the narrator and the new powers of production, possessed by this architect, as possibilities rather than endings. The project here is that of schizoanalysis, the work of building reality anew – in direct contrast to the psychoanalytic process of ‘restoring’ an imagined history to a place of stability.

While the narrator is referencing a mundane architect, the subject of the first portion of the story, deterritorialized from narrative, easily moves towards the demiurge, a derangement of *logos* (Word, God and Reason) towards the unutterable desires that are at the same time being spoken by cultists that appear as antagonists in the second section of the tale. That “Cthulhu” (392-4) originally looks to ‘spoken’ language in the form of chants and “hideous phrases”, and culminates in the “accidental” release of Cthulhu “ravening for delight” (405), is suggestive of a new means of speech, the desire for as yet unimagined desires – a new architect of the *socius*.¹¹ This Weird architecture of desire resists the ironic distance posited by Jameson (*Archaeologies* 213) as a postmodern affect that is no longer generative. Luckhurst (1046) and Marshall (636) consider this to be part of the broader project of Weird: to act as a gatekeeper against normalcy, or the idea that the Outside can be in some sense made rational.

¹¹ The *socius* is the affect-producing body of society. This is to say that the *socius* determines the range of possible affective states for the subject. See *Anti-Oedipus* 135-44.

This connection is at its most de-stratified (removed from the reality-narrative, reconnected with the Outside) when the material of the text – writing – stretches towards multiplicity. When Lovecraft (“Cthulhu” 397) writes of the Great Old Ones knowing “all that was occurring in the universe” and transmitting their speech through dreams, he taps into the Deleuzeo-Spinozan (Deleuze, *Spinoza* 43) model of “knowing” termed “intuition”. This is an epistemology of speed that moves in no direction given that the universe is taken to be univocal in its becoming – progress is not so important as *change*. Lovecraft’s cultists are necessary to “liberate the bodies” of the Old Ones. Which is to say, the impossible subjectivities hinted by Lovecraft (“Cthulhu” 381), in the guise of the dreams of the Old Ones, are necessary for the imagining of the conditions required for their freedom. That the Old Ones speak only to the “sensitive” (artists, poets, etc) suggests a co-creation; the cultists and alien-gods desire not to return to history, but rather, a return to the future.

This is a disconnection from the narrative (insofar as there is one) in “The Call of Cthulhu”. A deterritorialized reading of the short story asks us to imagine the stakes not for the various inspectors, professors and police officers, but rather those entities that exist beyond the text, beyond mediated reality. When Lovecraft (“Supernatural Horror”) expresses the desire for the “suspension or defeat” of the “laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos”, he moves towards the Deleuzeo-Guattarian (*Kafka* 49) analysis of ‘Law’ as essentially form without content, a lie established as a “Universal rule”. This lie, when indulged, transforms understanding of desire into an imperative. To describe the sounds of the Cthulhu cultists as unavailable without the intervention of “poetry or madness” (Lovecraft, “Cthulhu” 391) suggests that chaos has become law, that the act of creation rather than the attraction of guilt determines what will be. Another formulation of this would

be that law (ontologically) is now pure desire, fully concrete and no longer in abstract opposition to the state of the universe. This is desire as *generative* rather than 'lack', and law as hypothetical rather than the Kantian categorical.

"Cthulhu" (405) overturns law (narrative) in favour of intensity (affect):

The aperture was black with a darkness almost material. That tenebrous blackness was indeed a positive quality; for it obscured such parts of the inner walls as out to have been revealed and actually burst forth like smoke from its aeon-long imprisonment, visibly darkening the as it slunk away into the shrunken and gibbous sky on flapping membraneous wings.

Here, there is a process of generation that works against the bulwarks of human achievement – namely, mathematics and the scientific method. Geometry is described as working against its own axioms (404-5) and the materialism of scientific empiricism becomes rather a matter of pessimistic wish fulfillment: "My attitude was still one of absolute materialism, as I wish it still were" (397). These tensions reflect a move against critical empiricism and the manner of expression as taken on by other 'popular' writings. "Cthulhu" first conveys an excessive extension of itself in a manner similar to that in which Deleuze and Guattari (*Kafka* 72-3, 85) see as the permanent deferral of meaning and narrative cessation in Kafka's *The Trial*. To conclude "Cthulhu" (407) with the narrator speculating, "I know too much, and the cult still lives" posits a liberation from the narrative 'ending' with the 'capture' of the narrator or even the narrative. As I have argued, what is known here is the indescribable, the pure event of excess that deterritorializes the narrative with its desire to persist.

The narrative form of "Cthulhu" eschews traditional climax and denouement – preferring instead a fractured tension/intensity between speculation and impossible description that can be read as a destructive creativity – the process of creation via

flux, the project of deterritorialization. This follows the line of the Deleuzo-Guattarian 'war-machine', waging war only to create society anew (*ATP* 466). Here, then, we see that the anti-narrative does not seek war (destruction of the narrative), but that this destruction is secondary to the creation of affect/desires (*ATP* 255). To read the cultists as simply against humanity draws away from the true antihumanism of "Cthulhu". Rather, as noted by MacCormack ("Deleuzio-Guattarian Gates"), there is in Lovecraft the shift to the "inhuman" that works against the 'reality' taken as a stable category.

THE WEAVER: A DANCING, MAD GOD

THE SNIPSNAP OF SUPPLICATION AND YET THOUGH THEY SMOOTH EDGES AND
ROUGH FIBRES WITH COLD NOISE AN EXPLOSION IN REVERSE A FUNNELLING
IN A FOCUS I MUST TURN TO MAKE PATTERNS HERE WITH AMATEURS
UNKNOWNING ARTISTS TO UNPICK THE CATASTROPHIC TEARING THERE IS
BRUTE ASYMMETRY IN THE BLUE VISAGES THAT WILL NOT DO IT CANNOT BE
THAT THE RIPPED UP WEB IS DARNED WITHOUT PATTERNS AND IN THE MINDS
OF THESE DESPARATE AND GUILTY ARE EXQUISITE TAPESTRIES OF DESIRE
AND THE DAPPLED GANG PLAIT YEARNINGS FOR FRIENDS FEATHERS SCIENCE
JUSTICE GOLD.

– China Miéville, *Perdido Street Station* (482).

Whereas "Call of Cthulhu" is primarily interested in the expression of affect and destabilising the correlation of sense and reason, rather than taking up traditional narrative components (character psychology, plot, resolution and so on), China

Miéville's *Perdido Street Station* works under the guise of a fantasy or 'steampunk' novel. It contains multiple, complex focalising characters, a cohesive narrative arc that aligns to some degree with the 'quest' tradition of fantasy, and, points toward a comprehensible resolution of the task undertaken by the 'protagonists', Isaac (a scientist), Yagharek (an exiled bird-man) and 'The Weaver', a 'dancing, mad god' that appears to help the former two characters 'save the city' from a plague of nightmares.

Within Miéville's 'Bas-Lag' universe – a 'secondary world' in which his fantastic novels take place – the Weaver is a figure of awesome and alien beauty. This figure instantiates that which Fisher (*The Weird and the Eerie* 15, 61-2) has theorised as the 'Weird', possessing a view from an impossible alterity, problematising agency to the point of bio-cognitive dissonance. First appearing as pure sonority, the "echo of scissors" (Miéville, *PSS* 400), the Weaver manifests as a huge spider, capable of terrible ontological violence.

At first, the Weaver seems to be concerned only with the desires concerning the aesthetic, the pattern of "INTRICATE THREADS" of reality (*PSS* 682). It becomes apparent, however, through its constant free-verse chattering that what it sees, what it desires, moves to an Outsideness that the more mundane of Miéville's characters cannot comprehend. Rather than serving as *deus ex machina*, the Weaver's apparently arbitrary interventions serve to meet the "perfectly planned ... alien aesthetics", indicating a "signifier of excess" (Rich Paul Cooper 217). This excess speaks to, rather than the Lacanian 'signified', the nature of language as metonymy, metaphor and indeterminate indeterminacy (Cooper 218).

In starting from this Nietzschean claim about the nature of language,¹² Cooper identifies one possible entrance into the Weaver's web of narrative as, to paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari (*Kafka* 3), a rhizome with multiple entrances, the locations and uses of which remain largely obscure by their very nature. In *Perdido Street Station*, the Weaver both serves as a government 'assassin' of sorts and aids Isaac – putatively a political criminal, but actually a rather apolitical citizen run afoul of fate. This brings into tension the nature of the rebellion and the rebel. The Weaver moves between physical and ideological spaces, altering the potentials of the very terms of rebellion and law. Here, we read of 'rebels' reaching identical goals to those of the government (the 'saving of the city') yet disrupting both the power of 'democratic' oligarchy and the sanctioned underworld figures.

As Christopher Palmer (29-30) has argued in his article, "Saving the City in China Miéville's Bas-Lag Novels", this victory obscures the 'hopeful' readings of Bas-Lag novels. There is no traditional resolution of the hero's quest – indeed, Isaac is forced to flee New Crobuzon for the crime of 'rebellion'. This is a flight that reterritorializes in Miéville's second Bas-Lag novel, *The Scar*, wherein Isaac's lover, Bellis Coldwine, carries Isaac's criminality by association, is forced to rebel in her own right. In each case, these characters are forced to reckon with futures completely alien to their former desires. Yet, if not for the Weaver and its efforts against the 'Slake Moths' (magical beasts that cause the 'plague' by polluting the city with their parasomnia-inducing bio-waste), it is difficult to imagine that Isaac, Bellis, or indeed, New Crobuzon would have had any future at all.

¹² See Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in the Extra-Moral Sense" in *The Portable Nietzsche*, pp. 42-45.

Prima facie, the Weaver is part demi-god manifest, part fantasy equivalent of popular conceptions of the ‘nuclear-mutant’, emerging from the wastelands left after a magical “fallout” (“Torque”) and taking an interest in the world only so as to change it.¹³ Yet the Weaver is, upon a Deleuzo-Guattarian reading, more than a monster or alien-god-thing. Given its state of being, one of continuing flux and alternating desire that at the same time seeks to ‘build’ a world of beauty, the Weaver is a figure of pure deterritorialization, a “body-without-organs” – a term that, for Deleuze and Guattari (*ATP* 165-70), indicates an entity without underlying principles for its manifestation. Principled bodies, they argue, tend towards the pathological – the hypochondriac body (desiring illness), the masochistic body (desiring restriction), the medicated body (desiring categories). The Weaver, however, desires desire, and the components of its epithet, “mad”, “dancing”, and “god”, speak to the “gaiety, the ecstasy” of *A Thousand Plateaus*’ (167) site of pure desire and generation.

This is a position that necessarily views metaphor and comparison as lack, rather than desire. To read Weaver as pure intensity – generative tensions – seems called for by the roles that the creature plays between the first and third Bas-Lag novels. Indeed, the spider-shaped absence of the Weaver in *The Scar*, remains always in the realm of the virtual, ready to become. *Iron Council* (253-5) sees a more obviously ‘anti-state’ Weaver aiding the ‘Iron Council’ in its revolution – a revolution that is

¹³ While the origin of the Weaver[s] remains speculative, it is hinted in *Perdido Street Station* that it evolved in response to the fallout of weapons that produce ‘stains’ on reality. Yet, given the Weaver’s capacity to skew and weave ontology, I argue that to think of Weavers in terms of conventional time and evolution is a failure to engage with the nature of Weavers as manifestation of abstract deterritorialization in the concrete of narrative.

more of an escape than an overcoming.¹⁴ Just as it is argued in *Kafka* (59), the tension between co-existent states of desire (artist, assassin, rebel, alien) converge upon this becoming-body-without-organs, as to rebel is to operate according to new principles. These principles require experiment and generation rather than interpretation. The positions of the Weaver regarding the Law calls into question the nature of Law, directing one's desires to an Outside of principle.

The Weaver's narrative function, that of disruption, articulates a Deleuzo-Guattarian (*Kafka* 88) "field of desire" that "breaks through" from the Outside. *Perdido Street Station* (402) sees the government, having failed its negotiations with the all-too-"political" Hellkin (a bureaucracy of demons), turn to the "utterly alien" Weaver as a means of returning to the Law by an escape from "bargaining [and] games". The Weaver here is not a path by which the government can continue its project, but rather a move towards new powers and new possibilities. To fully engage with the Weaver is to refuse to see the creature as merely instrumental, its language (ungrammatical), expression (capitalised free-verse) and motivations (alien) create novelty out of tradition, suggesting that new modes of expression lead to new modes of desire and that all that is required for change is to risk leaving the shadows of tradition.

This is not the Platonic return to the cave, wherein the enlightened one beseeches their fellows to come into the light, but rather the hyperactive speleologist commanding 'go deeper!'. Weird is not merely brought down to earth, as Lovecraft

¹⁴ *Iron Council* will be addressed in depth in Chapter Three, yet for the sake of comparison here, I suggest that this is Miéville's most overtly political Bas-Lag novel. It follows the various groups of rebels and insurgents reacting to the totalitarianism of the New Crobuzon government, a state of affairs to which the Weaver attempts to bring aesthetic 'order', by destabilising reality.

moved out of the demonic and into the extra-terrestrial, but deeper, into the burrows of the war-machine that, in *A Thousand Plateaus* (467) “wages war only so as to simultaneously create something else”.

Yet, given the multiple entrances into the labyrinth burrow that is the Weaver, we must now turn to an additional treatment of its deterritorialization, hinted at in the aforementioned manifestation as the whisper of scissors. Rather than treat this “dancing mad god” (*PSS* 487) in terms of character and plot – as Nicholas Birns (202) notes, the Weaver’s interests and capabilities remain ambiguous – I look to the generative potentials of its poetry and sonoric manifestation. Isabella Van Elferen, in her article on “Hyper-Cacophony” (93-4), suggests that the description of sound in the works of Lovecraft describes a materialism that is not available for rational quantification. Likewise, the song-speech of the Weaver resonates at both the “phenomenological” and “ontological” registers that Elferen argues hints at a “great outdoors beyond perception” (92).

In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari were already attempting to integrate the idea of pure sound as a means of formulating new meanings without the intervention of the interpreter. Expression, they argue (*Kafka* 28-9), comes first – prior to meaning – and pure expression is the expression of new forms. The very hint of scissors throughout *Perdido Street Station* acts, on each appearance – the summoning of the alien-deity (399-400), a gift from the mayor (482-3) the origami ‘betrayal’ wherein the Weaver sides with Isaac – as the smoothing of the “EXQUISITE TAPESTRY” offered in this section’s epigram. This smoothing speaks to the “smooth space” created by destruction that will be addressed in detail in Chapter Three. It is worth noting here, however, that smooth space is a territory of pure potential, a body-without-organs of its own, lacking principle even as it

generates anew. This is the nature of the Weaver's song, whether offered in its whispered telepathy or its chorus of scissor-snips.

As the action of *Perdido Street Station* ebbs and flows in a decidedly off-kilter rhythm, somewhere around the middle of the story we encounter the Weaver in the form of a 'letter to the editor' (PSS 504-5). The Weaver compliments Isaac's "tapestry skills", yet the skills displayed heretofore have been the act of drawing the "world-weave" into chaos. Indeed, it is only the procurement of 'Slake Moths', under commission from the bird man, Yagharek, that sets the moths free in the city and provokes the summoning of the Weaver by the New Crobuzon government. Here, it seems that we find the Weaver praising the promotion of chaos, the subversion of ontology into a field of pure desire – a city becoming a body-without-organs.

The Weaver's message does not speak to a plan or principle, nor a change of mind or resignation, but rather to the Nietzschean *amor fati* (*Gay Science* §276), or 'love of fate'. Whether this is a fate as beloved by a creature capable of altering reality to suit its ends, or the Yes-saying of Isaac as his own world unravels, can be read itself as uncertain. Yet, I do not propose a 'joyous' Isaac, nor even a truly joyous Weaver. It is the tension in activity and desire that flows throughout this novel that pushes its narrative into the realm of minor, into the place that, as Holland ("Introduction" 25) argues, demands a diagnostic rather than programmatic reading.

Sandy Rankin (249) reads the Weaver's interactions with Isaac and his friends as a move away from Miéville's – and indeed, a general Leftist – tendency towards "sadness and pessimism". This mirrors the "joyful" reading of Kafka in Deleuze and Guattari (*Kafka* 41), a refusal to "deny life", and offering instead an incompleteness of meaning that is itself, a "very joyous laughter". This laughter is purely expressive,

hence purely generative, rather than operating according to the principle of power used against others.

To espy a Weaver laughter, however, to read its near defeat in battle with the “PATTERN VAMPIRS” that are the slake moths (*PSS* 785), is, I suggest, to bring about a hope that rests on pessimism rather than joy. Consider, by way of example, the Weaver’s poetry of miserable uncertainty as it holds victory (the viscera of the slake moths) in its obscenely human hands:

THIS SIPHONING OF PHANTASMS FROM MY SOLE SOUL LEAVE ME
MELANCHOLIC SEE PATTERNS INHERE EVEN IN THESE THE
VORACIOUS ONES PERHAPS I JUDGE QUICK AND SLICK
TASTES FALTER AND ALTER AND I AM UNSURE. (*PSS* 799)

Here, Rankin (253) attempts a reconciliation of origins between the moths and the god-spider, suggesting that the Weaver’s mourning comes from seeing a shared death-drive – the need to absorb minds (and eventually, all minds, leaving them starved) and, the need to “weave worlds”. This poem, for Rankin, is a moment of *jouissance*. This is an interesting reading, linking the Weaver with the “recent priest figure” (Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP* 171), the psychoanalyst: both the Weaver and the analyst work, in some sense, towards a stabilising absolution of history, to create a universal theory of mind. In the spirit of deterritorialization, however, this unity is unsatisfactory, working only to bring stable categories and binary oppositions into the foreground.

Concerned with “pleasure, death and reality”, the Weaver, as its own interpreter reconnects its unspeakable desires and imagines a future of unity after carnage. While this reconnection may well be the intention of Miéville, there is little hope of

radical creation of futures if one is to look at subjectivity as given and singular.¹⁵ In observing that these lines are delivered via “pure sound”, moving through “flesh and bone” (*PSS* 785), rather than via channels of cognitive-linguistic reception, I argue that to read the Weaver as to be interpreted rather than experimented with, occludes the very possibilities of a materialist Idealism that Rankin (255) seeks in *jouissance*.

The generative potential for the material-Leftist is a matter of deterritorialization rather than interpretation, given that our structures emerge from a material base. In this case, the humming sonority of Weaver poetry must be considered as more than its uneven use of homophone, consonance and simple rhyme, it must be read as an experiment. As Holland (“Deterritorialization” 62) notes, deterritorialized territory is only to be considered generative in its experimental mode, which is the mode of the affective rather than epistemic-hermeneutic. Indeed, the poetry of the Weaver tends towards the violent: “FERVENT AND LOVEABLE” (Miéville, *PSS* 485), it whispers at the climax of a particularly sanguine passage wherein protagonists and antagonists alike are maimed and murdered by the creature. Here, we are left in the mode of Weird invoked by Fisher (*Weird* 21): the ‘beyond’ that refused “already-existing figures” – we find not unity, but wonder; the Weaver does not mourn a lost council, but simply asks the “why” of conflict, hearing a call to the future by reconfiguring conflict according to the desires of the future rather than the grudges of the past.

¹⁵ While this call for Left unity may be implied here, with both the Slake Moths and the Weaver operating “beyond” the law, yet suffering from its rigours, Miéville’s short story, “The Dusty Hat”, is perhaps a more overt cry for the Left to set aside its differences.

RETERRITORIALIZING DETERRITORIALIZATION: THE METATEXT OF PERMANENT REVOLUTION

Holland (“Deterritorialization” 56) suggests that it is only in the “permanently revolutionary” flows of desire that we escape the binary oppositions of Nietzschean-Marxian paranoia and Freud-Lacanian neurosis. Without seeking to pit them against one another, yet without sublation, this diagnostic (schizo-analysis, the recognition of multiple instability as a condition of imagining futures) is a reconnection of the personal with the group without submerging the individual within society. In reading “Cthulhu” and the figure of the Weaver as an overturning of the ‘givens’ of social, political and even metaphysical ‘being’ in favour of desiring production, I note that there is no true rejection of metaphysics (conditions of *how* what is and *what* there is at all) but rather attempts to write anew the conditions for the social and the political, generating new baselines of becoming, new potentials for futures. Likewise, in at first suggesting that we bring Weird back to the realm of literary analysis and then springing into the act of creation, I suggest that, rather than dismissing philosophy, the pursuits of the philosopher are transposed into the domain of the literary.¹⁶

Our metatext here is a machine of infinite univocal positions. As argued in *Kafka*, to be external to the writing-machine is to be involved. By ‘plugging in’ the writings of Lovecraft and Miéville to a machine of pure deterritorialization (deterritorializing itself), we find ourselves ready to begin the experiment of delivering new territories as necessary to the current conditions of subjectivity. From this auto-transversal

¹⁶ This is related to Eugene Thacker’s *Horror of Philosophy* vols. 1-3, wherein the author suggests that in order to attempt a view of the world-without-us, we read philosophy as a horror story, as the break in the limits of human rationality and the Enlightenment project.

movement, language taken as that which signifies in its own resistance to signification, there is then a return from the Outside towards the material-symbolic plateau of the political.

This return is a movement from the abstract, the pure concept of the body-without-organs, even if the purity of such a body denotes a paradox (if not an oxymoron), it remains generative in its radical uncertainty. Learning to read texts that allude to the Outside, to the “great outdoors” beyond *current* concepts and perceptions seems to be a necessary step in imagining the future free of nostalgia as a normative force.

This chapter has argued that Weird, with its tendency towards expressing Otherness in the most extreme mode, is a fine starting point for this project. Yet, this is not a purely speculative project, nor one of relativism. Having argued for the necessity of flux, new epistemologies and modes of expression, I now turn to their ‘practical’ use in reading Weird as primarily connected to the political, the second qualifier of the minor literature.

CHAPTER TWO

WEIRD POLITICS: THE CRISIS OF (POST) MODERNITY

The second characteristic of minor literature is that everything in them is political.

– Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (17)

The political potential of genre fiction has long been suspected to support a traditionalist agenda. Fredric Jameson noted in his essay, “Radical Fantasy”, that appeals to second-worlds, magic, and heroic ‘traditions’, are often informed by reactionary wish-fulfilment. Likewise, Ben Watson’s “Fantasy and Judgement: Adorno, Tolkien and Burroughs”, paints a sceptical reception of speculative fiction by revolutionary leftists. It seems apropos to note that Miéville, both speculative fiction author and political organiser, penned the editorial for the issue of *Historical Materialism* (Vol. 10.4, 2002) in which these papers were published. Peter Fitting (187), writing in 2003, claimed that this “Marxism and Fantasy” volume of *Historical Materialism* heralded the “lifting of a ban” on political engagement with speculative fiction. While this engagement may have largely addressed the failures of fantasy to operate in a progressive, subversive or revolutionary manner, the doubt that even critiquing genre fictions could produce anything close to a useful political reading has somewhat abated.

Having explored the highly deterritorialized (or deterritorializing) readings that are available in Weird fiction, this chapter turns to an examination of the fundamental (if virtual) politics of these texts. Following Eric Wilson’s 2016 *The Republic of Cthulhu*, it will be argued that the ontologically subversive interests of Weird give rise to a

“parapolitics”, a mode of political expression that operates at the boundaries of epistemology and aesthetics. While Wilson makes only sparing reference to the work of Deleuze and Guattari (notably employing their concept of ‘nomadology’, to be discussed below), I suggest that his linking of Weird to sub-state or xenomorphic expressions of group organisation/exercise of power over said groups, links to the second qualifier of Deleuze and Guattari’s minor literature: the political.

In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari draw out three types of ‘minority’: that of the numerically small population, that of the oppressed population and that of the modernist avant-garde. For these groups, to write is to deterritorialize a major language; that of the masses, that of the oppressors and that of hegemonic art forms. Each of these ‘types’ of minor suggests a literature of political struggle: the struggle to be heard, the struggle for freedom and the struggle for artistic form adequate to the cultural situation. While Lovecraft and Miéville represent a rather majoritarian voice in the first two regards (white men from the hegemonic-cultural powers of America and Great Britain respectively), their works interact with the third of these categories – the struggle for artistic form – and give rise to new identities or possibilities for the use of the ‘vehicular’ language that is English.¹⁷

However, the writing of minor literature does not seek to replace extant expressions of “freedom, justice and equality” (Patton, “Deleuzian Political Philosophy” 117). Minor literature is instead the use of major language, a use by which the articulation of alternative justices, equalities, and freedoms summons new forms of political expression. In the works of Lovecraft and Miéville, there is the crisis of language that Deleuze and Guattari (*Kafka* 28) argue is set against the content of the text. These

¹⁷ “Vehicular” language is that which is “everywhere” in the present moment. See *Kafka* pp. 23-4.

are texts that prefer to first *express*, texts that “break forms and encourage new sproutings [sic],” before settling into the content of narrative or ‘meaning’. The anti-logic of Lovecraftian syntax and the excesses of Miéville’s lexicon and genre-bleed lead to the articulation of the writer as sorcerer: the marginal figure that calls to the Outside.

In this chapter, this call to the Outside is explored according to a model of flight given in *Kafka* (65): freedom of movement, freedom of statement and freedom of desire. This becomes the “politics of sorcery” (Delpech-Ramey 14) in *A Thousand Plateaus*, wherein Deleuze and Guattari (264) explicitly reference the ‘sorcerous’ powers of Lovecraft. These are the politics that are appropriate to the creative response of art to the crises of modernity and the continuing process of modernisation. In carrying out exploratory readings of “The Call of Cthulhu” and *Iron Council*, it will be argued that these texts contain immanent flights from majoritarian politics towards the “parapolitics” under discussion in Wilson’s *Republic*, a text that examines the “extra-judicially Weird” (27), and the forces that emerge from the decentring of the Enlightenment subject.¹⁸

Alongside these parapolitics, or emerging from them, are the sorcerous politics of speed that makes any ironic distance impossible. This chapter first speaks to the parapolitics of Weird, looking to the destabilising, yet ‘mobile’ forms expressed in Lovecraft’s “The Call of Cthulhu”, and Miéville’s *Iron Council*. These forms are connected to the attempt to harness the sublime, as understood by Kant, first

¹⁸ This is the Kantian subject, the being that synthesises reason with perception, wherein concepts regulate perceptions of nature.

utilising its alien intensity to radically alter our ways of knowing, and then, our ways of Being.¹⁹

PARAPOLITICAL RESISTANCE: CONJURING THE SUBLIME

Nature is therefore sublime in those of its phenomena whose intuition brings with it the Idea of its infinity.

– Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (112)

The Weird is a radicalized sublime backwash.

– China Miéville, “Weird Fiction” (511)

In discussing the “law” implicit in Kafka’s works, Deleuze and Guattari (49) gnaw at a tension between Kant’s epistemological-metaphysical *Critique of Pure Reason*, and the aesthetic theory of *Critique of Judgement*. Law (metaphysics) is always represented as formally empty, attracted to guilt that cannot be explained; in *The Trial*, K’s crime is never revealed, we merely witness his perpetually delayed punishment. The tension here is between what is permissible and what is experienced. This is the “contiguity of desire” (*Kafka* 50), an overturning of the idea that the sublime may only be approached in the spirit of awe and is lost, “if we are

¹⁹ For Kant, the sublime is that “emotion,” or feeling of intensity that defies the rational free play of the faculties that allows the apperception of beauty. It is a feeling of “quantity, not quality,” and remains distant from rational interaction (*Critique of Judgement*, pp. 97-9). Deleuze was already playing with the idea of using the sublime against the ‘Idea’ to “turn Reason on its head” in *Kant’s Critical Philosophy* (p. 64). This concept finds its fruition in *What is Philosophy?* (164) when “sublime errors” are named a necessity of art – art being a mode by which to summon present impossibilities from the virtual future.

afraid” (Kant 120). Weird, following Wilson (80-1), understands the sublime as a “brain-blasting” trauma that leads to the uncovering of a truth that remains inexpressible - other than by the “signature scream” of Lovecraftian breakdown. This is not the scream of fear for self, but rather the terrifying call to the Outside – from the chant of the Cthulhu cult to the train-shaped silence of *Iron Council’s* (592) denouement. The Weird scream does not refute, but rather conjures the very entities of dread that emerge from the backwash of the sublime. This scream is a statement of pure sonority, resisting interpretation, yet demanding recognition. Indeed, much as desire moves from the Lacanian register of *lack* to that of *generation* in Deleuze and Guattari (*Anti-Oedipus* 27), the sublime, in Weird, moves in close from its position of Outsideness and “allows that swillage of awe and horror back into the everyday” (Mieville, “Weird Fiction” 511).

This “swillage” indicates that the Kantian project of understanding the world rationally was only ever stable so long as the Outside, the “real” of psychoanalysis/speculative metaphysics, was held at bay by the lack of faculties with which to experience the sublime in a synthetic aesthetic-intuitive manner. As Deleuze (*Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* 38) notes, the image of the scream is given to horrify rather than to denote horror. This returns the witness of the sublime to a position of non-reflective dread, a position from which only change (in movement, desire, statement) is possible. In this, Weird makes its first moves to overturn an ersatz metaphysics that takes institutions such as government, law enforcement and the judiciary as the transcendental conditions for any given society. Minor-Weird rejects the politics of comfort or apathy implicit in these transcendentals, taking up the tradition of social critique that moves from Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra* to Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”. These reprovals see art as a

threat to freedom not for its inability to represent the Real or encourage moral-cultural decadence (as worried Plato), but rather as the means by which all revolutionary-desiring impulses are rendered static under enforced cycles of glut and satiation. *Zarathustra*'s "Last Man" that lacks even desire serves as precursor to the subject of "The Culture Industry", disconnected from the *socius* even as desire is increased by the logic of capitalist consumption.²⁰

The following section extrapolates the lines of flight that Weird uses as a means of resistance, building up an argument for the "nomadology" of Weird, its metaphysical (political-legal) indeterminacy that escapes the captures of "the culture industry".²¹ It will be argued that this flight is based on the aforementioned "return" of the sublime as a 'backwash' alongside a need to view Weird as concerned primarily with radical alterity and generation of desire rather than the utopian programs that have interested scholars such as Jameson ("Radical Fantasy") and Sandy Rankin (AGASH, AGHAST, AGAPE). For any grasp of the Weirdness of the Real to be made immanent (micro-political), there is the need to articulate a new politics in which the Outside becomes, like the work of Deleuze's and Guattari's *Kafka* (83), "not a voyage through the past, but one through our future". Here, the project is to restore limitlessness to the Sublime while at the same time dragging it *down* to earth.

Consider now the nature of Outsideness depicted in the ritual worship of "the Great Old Ones", alien creators and destroyers of life, in Lovecraft's "Call of Cthulhu".

Here, I turn to a truncated sentence examined from "Cthulhu", seeking to move past

²⁰ See Plato, *Republic* books III and X.

²¹ Nomadology, the "science" of the nomad is a process of knowledge that resists capture by the state (ATP 405-6). Wilson (*Republic* 29) sees this as the proliferation of entities of control and creation that exceed the conventional understanding of Law as reasonable, entities that cross boundaries, altering them in their passage.

not only the 'literal' interpretation of the text, but beyond the metaphysical implications that Graham Harman explores in *Weird Realism: Lovecraft and Philosophy*:

The region now entered by police was one of traditionally evil repute ... the present voodoo orgy was, indeed, on the merest fringe of the abhorred area, but that location was bad enough. ("Cthulhu" 391)

Graham Harman (251) is particularly interested in reading *Weird* so as to avoid what Cleanth Brooks (192-214) called "the heresy of the paraphrase", arguing that it is only intra-textual relationships between the whole and parts, tensions and continuity, that define the 'object' of scrutiny. Harman (66-7) defends the interpretation of this passage from 'literalization', arguing that to claim that this passage should be read as 'meaning' "the whole area had a bad reputation and the part where they were now was one of the least bad parts", moves against the feeling of the "truly eerie" that Lovecraft ("Supernatural Literature") sees as essential to the writing of 'Weird tales'.²² Rather, Harman lets the unity and tension of the passage overcrowd the raw language; "tradition", "present", and "mere" draw out semiotic connections that indicate cycles of time and contingencies of (evil) power that hint at overarching connections of cosmic horror that move beyond something as 'mundane' as an area of ill repute.

Yet this reading fails to draw out the sense of Miéville's 'sublime backwash', simply acting as a seal against interpretation rather than the apparent project of speculation undertaken by Harman. By reading towards generation, freeing desire and

²² The 'eerie' is best understood as a problem of agency, whether the appearance of agency where there putatively should be none or the lack of agency where it apparently should 'be'. See Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* 61-4.

statement, however, there is movement towards the mode of reading that, in speaking to “tradition”, refuses to reference history, rather indicating that any reference to tradition is necessarily to invoke generation. On the one hand, there is the generation of stable political categories (good, evil, lawful, criminal) and on the other, the nomadic articulations of new modes of parapolitical-cultural generation. While Wilson (55-6) suggests that this is a method of communicating a conspiracy that fundamentally destabilizes civilisations, the Deleuzeo-Guattarian understanding is that this conspiracy generates new models of the *socius*.²³

To read further in “Cthulhu” with this generation in mind, we find that the appeal to tradition is the call for the overturning of said tradition. Indeed, to invoke Nietzsche, as Lovecraft (“Cthulhu” 395) did when having a cultist describe what was to come under the newly ‘awakened’ Great Old Ones, who would teach their followers to be “free and wild and beyond good and evil”, indicates a novel regime of becoming.²⁴ This becoming includes the freedom to desire the replacement of tradition with generative powers that arrive on the tide of sublimity. The cultists, finding their times untenable, act to free their desires by dragging the Outside into the concrete reality of their local *socius*. This indicates that while resistance to and the overcoming of the *socius* is an act of rebellion, it is embedded in existing “social investments” (Deleuze and Guattari, AO 381-2). These investments lead to a politics, which are intrinsically given to the interaction of subjects and power. In the context of the minor, the power in question is that of speed.

²³ Variations of the *socius*, the organizing power of affect any political regime, are discussed in *Anti-Oedipus*, yet as noted by Andrew Culp in his short monograph, *Dark Deleuze*, a new model of conspiracy and creation is necessary after decades of reading Deleuze’s work as a “canon of joy”.

²⁴ We know that Lovecraft had read Nietzsche from his essay, “Nietzscheism and Realism”.

For Deleuze and Guattari (ATP 387-467), the power of speed is harnessed by the ‘science’ of “nomadology”. This ‘science’ can perhaps best be explained as the method and ethics of escape from the institutionalisation of subjectivity. From Deleuze’s (*Kant’s Critical Philosophy* 50) reading of the sublime as an interest of thought beyond the terms of “formal reflection”, we see that the sublime moves at the speed of Spinoza’s intuition, setting the stage for the introduction of the “War-Machines” of *A Thousand Plateaus*. Intuition, for Spinoza, is the knowledge of God - an instant recognition.²⁵ Due to this, I see it as the ‘fastest’ mode of knowledge. Given that freedom of movement necessarily relates to speed to avoid capture, I suggest that this intuitive knowledge, like that of the sublime, is necessary for the machines that move against traditions of the *socius*. As Weir is more interested in expressing the sublime than the beautiful or rational (terms of unfree, formal reflection), it holds that it is also the mode of writing that moves at the greatest speed. In this movement, we find the subject able to resist capture by systems of enforced connectivity by its very ontological malleability – it is in a constant state of becoming.

While Miéville has taken multiple opportunities to point out that his work is, at its heart, the work of a ‘geek’ who loves monsters, it is difficult to not read *Iron Council* as primarily concerned with the conditions and possibility of popular revolution against a despotic regime.²⁶ In describing a multigenerational struggle against what, in Deleuzo-Guattarian (AO 205-6) terms, would be seen as a despotic alliance of imperial filiation, *Iron Council*, putatively a ‘steampunk Western’, draws out a politics

²⁵ Spinoza, *Ethics* P5, S20.

²⁶ Miéville paraphrases this sentiment in interviews with *Believer* (2005), *Gothic Studies* (2008), *Social Text* (2012), *Genre* (2016) and *The Boston Review* (2018).

of control and connectivity that is similar to that critiqued in Deleuze's pessimistic and stylistically pared back "Post-script on the Societies of Control" (1992). Individual agency retreats behind consumerism, justice and law are spoken of without tension, and the very act of creative subjectivity becomes not only difficult, but the attractor of guilt.

In *Iron Council*, desire and movement are limited by the interests of government and industry, while expression is heavily censored: the erstwhile 'owner' of the train that becomes "the Council" is free to move and limit movement, resulting in profit for the company and government. This freedom is juxtaposed against unfreedoms: indentured servitude for dissidents and criminals and the apocalyptic genocide of the feline-insectoid Stiltspear people. Any chance of protest is limited by unfreedom of statement; even as the New Crobuzon government is free to spread war-propaganda to keep its populace compliant, it shuts down the press, noticeably the 'Runagate Rampant', a newspaper devoted to what Miéville's readers would understand as government whistleblowing.

Christopher Palmer (226) notes that the failure of "progressive movements" in *Iron Council* have "substitutes" for success to allow the narrative to move forward. While the Councillors and those who await their return in the imperialistic *polis*, New Crobuzon, are doomed to suffer the same oppressions, the city itself avoids collapse. These revolutionary elements of the narrative are set in the foreground, already touching the second condition of the minor (*Kafka* 17). In running micropolitical narratives below this 'major' plot (the free press against the government, war sceptics, the private revenge of citizens against corrupt magistrates), the revolutionary subject is given hope by the fact that their desires

proliferate series of new revolutionary activity, even as a stalemate with the government becomes the rejection of a part of the self, a stagnation of desire.

There is, however, a fundamental success in the movement of the Councillors, brought about by the ontological trauma performed by the “somaturge” and focal character, Judah Lowe. Although the ostensible cavalry charge of the Council rebels fails, it fails at speed by becoming an entity without velocity, by escaping space. Lowe, capable of ‘crafting’ golems from progressively more abstract ‘substances’, offers a conduit to the Outside. Having begun the novel creating small homunculi of water and dust, stone and later flesh, Lowe comes into a *puissance* that allows the abuse of the Kantian faculties that synthesize concept and form within time and space:

The time golem stood and was, ignored the linearity around it, only was. It was a violence, a terrible intrusion in the succession of moments, a clot in diachrony, and with the dumb arrogance of its existence it paid the outrage of ontology no mind.

(*Iron Council* 591)

Palmer (234), in reading *Iron Council* as a meditation on the symbolic hope necessary for Utopian programs, sees this as the removal of the material – as the councillors are removed from space and reinstated in ‘pure’ time – to the symbolic. Yet to read this text as minor draws out the politics of ontology; the political aspects of the force that generates reality. Here, there is an important link to the Outside in the word ‘was’: *was* is to indicate a metaphysical claim, the past tense of ‘be’. Yet also note that this very being is an outrage against its own conditions of existence.²⁷

²⁷ This use of ‘was’ is strange in the English language as the term ‘be’ or ‘being’ is usually qualified in some manner. Yet, in the relatively recent history of German and French ‘existential’ philosophy, cognate verbs are often used in the manner of nouns, attaining their own unqualified ‘Being’.

At this moment, as the narrative reaches its awful climax, the ultimate deferral of revolution comes as Lowe changes the nature of the Council and time-as-such with his somaturgy, and this event, unable to be registered at the level of pure reason or synthetic apperception, plays out in a manner that avoids capture. This is the destabilisation that is at the heart of nomadology: the transcendental conditions of existence have ruptured, yet not ended, and something altogether new emerges. Lowe removed the revolutionaries from time, but not space, with his magic. Now, the “perpetual train”, heretofore perpetual only in the symbolic register, becomes “permanent” in time, taking on the register of a perpetually free statement of revolutionary intent.

“How long will it last?”, asks Judah’s lover, Cutter (*IC* 593), and the golemist cannot answer other than to say “perhaps till things are ready”. Here, the force of change is preserved against its own destruction by removing it to the realm of the perpetually imminent, yet at the same time immanent. As the novel closes (612-4), the engine and the Councillors are described as visible yet removed, remembered and watched, impervious to the ‘violence’ of scientific and thaumaturgic investigation. This removal, however, kindles an eternal return that speaks both to the Deleuzian sense of ‘pure event’, a call to the Outside that links the Real to the political and a reminder that desire (instant, intuitive) rather than analysis (formal, reflective) is the transcendental condition of change.²⁸ This is a conjuring, an act of sorcery.

²⁸ The event is that which is always in excess of its description, has no ‘present’, is impenetrable and always at the same time about to happen and already happened. Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* pp. 62-3.

THE POLITICS OF SORCERY: INTENSITY AGAINST DISTANCE

In literature and anthropology, reports abound of sorcerers who are capable of traversing and operating upon this line of increasing intensity through which the human being ecstatically finds itself capable of powers and affects outside the normal range.

– Joshua Delpech-Ramey, “Deleuze, Guattari and the ‘Politics of Sorcery’” (11)

Both “The Call of Cthulhu” and *Iron Council*, read as minor, connect the political to the Outside as they articulate a fundamental disregard for the ordering of *logos*: word, reason or God. Just as the Cthulhu cultists perform their acts of summoning, waiting for the conditions to be right for the Old Ones to return (“Cthulhu” 393-5), the councillors enact the means of revolution even as the current state of the *socius* fails to provide the necessary means of revolutionary creation – actions at speed without direction.

Under the crisis of postmodernity, defined by a variety of critics from Fisher (*Ghosts of My Life*) and Jameson (“Late Capitalism”) to Slavoj Žižek (*Organs Without Bodies*) as a form of nostalgia-induced ironic distance, the problem of radically different futures is, to quote Žižek (211), the need to “reinvent their very modes of dreaming”, rather than simply develop new dreams.²⁹ In appealing to the ‘beyond’ of Good and

²⁹ In *Capitalist Realism* (p.2), Fisher notes that the quotation, “it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism” has been attributed to both Jameson and Žižek. Yet, under Fisher’s diagnosis, we reconnect with the destructive/creative project that Deleuze developed out of Nietzschean thought and away from Žižek’s more patient criticism that asks for thought over action (*First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* pp. 15-17) and Jameson’s overarching psychoanalytical-Marxian dialectics of emancipation.

Evil and to do violence to Being itself (the relationship between the subject, time and space), “Cthulhu” and *Iron Council* work towards overcoming the impasse of representing radical upheaval by their very disregard for reason and appealing to the sublime in its sense of terror, rather than as a model that dwells between the beautiful and the grotesque.

In posing the sublime as an active rather than passive register, Weir develops a creative project that extends the minor mode of writing into a minor mode of reading, attached to the ‘politics of sorcery’. This politics develops in the minor reading as a reconfiguration of the “literary struggle” in *Kafka* (16-7). This moves from a project that brings the political concern to the foreground, to a mode of reading that sees the parapolitical-nomad crashing up against the macro-politics of the text. In “Cthulhu” and *Iron Council*, there are both the “chaotic proliferation of supra-statist, statist and sub-statist entities” (Wilson 29) of a para-political nomadicism and the pack formation of groups that subvert and replace the standard institutions of our current political and cultural situation (Delpech-Ramey 15).

Lovecraft’s cultists and Miéville’s councillors alike, develop relationships with the Outside, moving with speed against the major understandings of reason and politics. Calling to the Outside – the “Old Ones” and the time golem – is a movement beyond political convention that demands analysis and into the realm of activity that cannot be reconciled with conventional thought. This is the project sketched out toward the end of *Kafka* (86-88), the experiment of language that articulates a beyond-the-law and made clear in *What is Philosophy?* (109-110): the “summoning” of new peoples via art and philosophy that speak, move and desire freely. The cultists, in appealing to times yet to come, driven by an intuition about materialism (awaiting the ‘right’ stars), and the Councillors, preserved in a becoming without arrival, speak to the

Deleuze-Guattarian (*Kafka* 23) register of sorcery. This is the register of destruction, yet also that of creativity.

As Delpech-Ramey (16) notes, this model of creative destruction is less a “break” with the institutional order than an intensification of possibilities. As mentioned above, intensity is to be taken as a coming into tension, the energy created in transversal crossings of multiple thresholds. The works under consideration develop a sense of tension by creating “monstrous formations within pre-established forms of exchange and already visible forms of power” (Delpech-Ramey 19). When the parapolitics of Weird is foregrounded (the activity of groups operating beyond the State at various co-ordinates) there is just this manner of formation that develops an intense escape from the present situation; not by slow thought or critique but by radical invocation of the irrational-at-speed. This is an appeal to the freedom of desire.

What is at stake for the cultists and the councillors is the matter of their respective realities, the distance between desire and *socius*. The distance of “pastiche” that Jameson (*Archaeologies* 23) sees as the primary mode of experience in contemporary times, is replaced with a connection of multiplicity along intensifying lines of difference that Deleuze, in *Difference and Repetition* (232-6), argues is “affirmative”. This affirmation should be understood as generative of possibilities, new modes of being and becoming, as each act that differentiates itself from the *socius* serves as a locus of creation. This multiplying effect can be drawn out of the difference between time and possibility in both “Cthulhu” and *Iron Council*: the tension between activity (summoning the Old Ones, the movement of revolution to the realm of pure time) intended to activate radical change in the *socius*, and the chance of desire (justice) being generative (successful).

In each case, these escapes are not flights from history, but rather a creation of new histories to come. While Jameson (“Radical Fantasy” 280) sees Miéville’s work as indicative of a “materialist fantasy ... capable of registering systemic change and of relating superstructural symptoms to infrastructural shifts and modifications”, this mode of reading understands texts as descriptive and diagnostic. By reading *Weird* as political, we are encouraged to imagine new modes of participation that evade the capture of our current, stagnant political milieu of putatively ‘representative’ democracy. Indeed, Patricia MacCormack’s work on “Lovecraft Through Deleuzio-Guattarian Gates” offers just such a reading as she seeks to generate lines of connection between radical alterities (woman, animal, monster), and a new politico-ethical consideration that invites active participation with the sublime.

This participation is one of intimacy rather than reflection or escape. As MacCormack (“Lovecraft”) notes, the entity of Cthulhu is intrinsically depicted as at the threshold of modes of Being – dead but dreaming, alien yet terrestrial, trapped in slumber yet calling to the “psychically hypersensitive” (“Cthulhu” 384). Likewise, the councillors are ‘sensitive’ to the psyche of class consciousness and the creative potential of group formation (to be discussed in the following chapter). To observe a psychic or political hypersensitivity is to understand that distance is impossible. The cultists and councillors are compelled to make connections, even if it leads to a complete psychic or physical breakdown.

Given that what is at stake in “Cthulhu” and *Iron Council* is existence itself, these untimely rituals and rebellions are an escape ‘into’ reality via the Outside rather than escape from reality via the symbolic. This returns us to the conjuring of the Sublime, the Real and the interpolation of these properties into a mediated reality that rejects such enchantments in favour of the careless “imitation of “dead styles” (Jameson,

“Consumer Society”), a carelessness that leads to political impasse at the level of desire. The metamorphosis of “Cthulhu” from alien-god-priest into a community rallying-point suggests a wider project of integration of the Real with reality. That the ritual summoning/preservation of Cthulhu is indescribable other than at the registers of “poetry or madness” (391), invites the transformation of the text from tale of horror into the hybrid-summoner figure of *What is Philosophy?*, and the schizophrenic “out for a walk”, invoked in *Anti-Oedipus* (2). What is important here is the “relationship with the outside world”; this is a relationship of conjuration, the boundaries of reality and the Real becoming porous. In this porosity are the “blocks, series and intensities”, described in *Kafka* (72-80) as discontinuities between social coordinates that generate new directions. In “Cthulhu”, we see the cult spread across the globe, alongside an uneasiness about the nature of the Real in relationship to reality. To take this uncertainty as one of speculative politics (creation of realities, connections to the Outside) rather than speculative metaphysics (interpretation of the Real) draws “Cthulhu” into the realm of political literatures.

Likewise, *Iron Council* expresses reality as not merely renewed, but created anew at each instance of Lowe’s somaturgic interventions. The relationship between what *is* and how things *are* is not just called into question, but radically altered in a fashion that is experimental rather than dogmatic. While the golemist begins his study of the ‘craft’ without an attached politics, we see throughout the course of the novel, noticeable upon returning from the anamnestic narrative of Lowe’s history, that the very act of creation is what allows Lowe to express his revolutionary politics. In learning his thaumaturgy from the alien-monstrous ‘Stiltspear’ peoples of the swampland that the expansion of New Crobuzon’s railroad destroyed, Lowe undertakes sorcery - the act of creative destruction. This is a creativity that allows

revolution, yet as noted by Palmer (235), destroys Lowe as an individual: by the time of the return to New Crobuzon, we see the golemist as “diminished by the powerful golems he summons”. While Palmer seems to be indicating that the creation of these automata drains Lowe physically, I suggest that the diminishing of the somaturge is also metaphysical: he becomes less Judah Lowe, less than human, while at the same time extending his presence into the Real, where the staid and standard sense of self no longer applies.

As Fisher (*Weird* 20) has noted, Lovecraft’s tales would be merely banal if they dwelt only on the “hideous unknown” without a juxtaposition with reality as mediated by the concerns of the human. Yet, in reading Lovecraft as generative, we find that the concerns of the human become obscured by interactions with radical alterity. In section three of “Cthulhu” (“The Madness from the Sea”), the encounter of the Norwegian sailor with Cthulhu ‘made flesh’ leads to a total abjection of self that is reflected in the narrator’s musing that “death would have been a boon if only it could blot out the memories” (“Cthulhu” 406). This draws out the implications of the sorcerous idea that “even death may die” (“Cthulhu” 395), the destabilisation of cessation as *Weird*, in the form of Cthulhu and its cultists, removes from death the oblivion promised by modern atheistic nihilism. This then asks: are we ready to enter the “new dark age” alluded to in this story’s opening paragraph? This age would be one in which the givens of the Enlightenment and modernity are overturned in the face of metaphysical cataclysm.

This overturning is not without its difficulty however, as new modes of knowing and being are likely to be, and have been represented as moving against comfort, away from the traditional havens of polite apathy and smirking distance. In *Dark Deleuze*, Andrew Culp first links reading the Deleuzian political project to “apocalyptic science

fiction" (2), which I suggest reflects the Lovecraftian 'dark age' of new knowledges as a "temporary Hell". Palmer's (237) reading of Miéville's "bold and very complicated stories" of war, ecological collapse and rampant inequality, likewise links to this Hadean interlude.

As Rankin (227) and Birns (205) observe, the rebellions of Miéville are complex, not romantic. Victories go unrecognized or, as seen in the climax of *Iron Council*, become permanently imminent, unable to eventuate the necessary and sufficient conditions of their own fulfillment. This, in Miéville, speaks to the remove at which change exists, an ontological push-back against change in both law and desire.

Indeed, even as Lowe 'saves' the Iron Council, he bears the wrath of his erstwhile lover and comrade, Ann-Hari, who cannot accept this new order or reality, falling into what Rankin (235) sees as a traditional "class consciousness", based around organising and democratic worker's choices. For the crime of transforming space into time, Ann-Hari executes Lowe, saying, "This is because you had no right" (*IC* 603). Here, *Iron Council* (602-3) contrasts the politics of traditional revolution with the politics of sorcery, the politics of perseverance with those of creative destruction. When Lowe argues, rather than offering apologies, "I did it ... to save it", Ann-Hari responds that the Council was "something real", that "came in [its] own time". This is the intensity between our current ability to converse and the need to develop new methods of thought, new desires ... and new futures.

RADICAL PESSIMISM AND NEW HOPES

"Cthulhu" and *Iron Council*, read through a Deleuzeo-Guattarian lens, express radical shifts in the possibilities of knowing and becoming. Indeed, as Weird is a

genre of uncertainty, defying interpretation, these texts are necessarily generative. In reading this generation as political, there can be found an expression of new political projects, the call to a future so radically alien as to be unimaginable. It is just this kind of hope that is called for when, to paraphrase Fisher, we have long since lost hope of any alternative to the present. The sublime has been invoked as a stand-in, of sorts, for a vision of this radical alterity, one that is already, in some sense, available at times of overwhelming aesthetic experience – the project then, is to move these experiences into the realm of epistemology, to make the overwhelming knowable. This is the project of the politics of sorcery, the understanding of desire as generative rather than an expression of lack, operating at a speed ‘fast’ enough to deal with the complete inertia of our current cultural-political milieu. In each case, I suggest that we find examples of such hope, such alien engagement in the works that have been discussed throughout this chapter.

These works, however, remain suspicious of the possibility of gaining hopeful attachments to the powers of the Outside. Those who encounter the Real in an unmediated sense come to ill-fated ends: Lowe is shot, the cult is executed or imprisoned, Cthulhu and the ‘perpetual train’ remain in time, yet outside of space. However, by following Culp’s (60) suggestion that we “greet it [cataclysm] with a cheer”, the Deleuzeo-Guattarian (41-2) “Kafka laughter” is dragged into the register of Weird, provoking a reading of pessimism that ultimately leads to new hopes emerging as others find their end. This laughter will be found in the voices of newly emergent groups, the focus of the following chapter – the laughter that draws in close the current suite of cultural-political crises and works at enunciating a new discourse suitable to a world into which the Sublime has been summoned as a means of revolution and rebellion.

CHAPTER THREE

STRANGE ENGINES: PACKS AND PACTS

... literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of collective, and even revolutionary enunciation.

– Deleuze and Guattari (*Kafka* 17).

Throughout *Capitalist Realism*, Mark Fisher draws out the sense of isolation experienced by the subject as constituted under neoliberal capitalism. If any change is to occur in the space of the personal (mental health, employment conditions), or political (climate crisis, wealth inequality) spheres, the onus is on the individual to instantiate change. Indeed, it is precisely this line of thought that current ‘public intellectual’, Jordan Peterson, champions in the best-selling work of ‘philosophy’, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos* and his earlier *Maps of Meaning: The Architecture of Belief*. Each of these texts argue that one must ‘help themselves’, if they are to ever consider helping others, roundly condemning collective responsibility. These claims provide a sense of personalised ‘self-improvement’, a sense that discourages engagement with the political and reinforces the boundaries of tradition.

Groups are, following this line of thinking, established according to essentials (race, sex, culture), products of filiation and hierarchy. Thinkers such as Peterson explain domination and submission according to the ‘givens’ of nature, arguing that what *is*,

ought to be the case. Peterson's now infamous 'lobster analogy' (*12 Rules* 1-37),³⁰ is particularly interesting when compared to the Deleuzo-Guattarian discussion of lobsters in *A Thousand Plateaus* (45-6; 359; 610, n. 26). Each text is interested in lobsters and territoriality; for Peterson, this is a site of justified dominance, while for Deleuze and Guattari, what is at stake is unprecedented change and group formation. I suggest that if we are to find any way of articulating new futures, they will emerge from collective voices and visions rather than be dictated by the powers of tradition and individualism. *Weird*, then, already having been shown to be a vector of deterritorialization and an inherently political literature, is just the place to find such novel voices of communality.

While deterritorialization may be the most difficult of the Deleuzo-Guattarian qualifiers of minor literature to parse, the third, the taking on of "collective value" (*Kafka* 17-8), is the least well developed. Described as the 'writing machine' that "becomes the relay for the revolutionary machine-to-come", literature evoking this "group enunciation" expresses not only the desires of repressed communities but conjures new communities from the future. This chapter takes this claim as its starting point and interpolates the ideas of "becoming animal" and the "war-machine" that develop out of this focus on assemblage and novelty in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Each of these concepts link to the freeing movement of nomadism described in the previous chapter and provide a means by which the minor subject, as a collective, can move towards new futures rather than remain subdued by formalized nostalgia.

³⁰ Peterson's argument is as follows: humans and lobsters share biological drives and because lobsters are hierarchical, humans, having similar biological drives, *should* likewise live hierarchically.

The becoming-animal frees subjectivity from its majoritarian concerns by increasing intensities. As Patton (*Deleuze & the Political* 80-1) notes, this minoritarian-becoming is the entrance into a pact with powers (creatures) that alter each entity's capacity to act and be acted upon. This is a proliferation of desires that allows entrance into deterritorialized space (Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP* 421), which is to say, gives access to zones in which the formation of new subjectivities is possible. These zones, following Deleuze and Guattari (*ATP* 262) are imperceptible to the majoritarian, a place in which the "becoming-animal of the human being is real, even if the animal that the human being becomes is not". This transformation is not to be taken as totemic or symbolic, but rather as a contagion of possibilities, a resistance to binary structures, such as the idea of state power versus terrorism as outlined by Wilson in *Republic of Cthulhu* (39).

Delpech-Ramey (15) draws out the idea that group becomings-animal operate at an "intensity" that precludes absorption into state or family structures, with group formation remaining at the core of this transformation. The "first principle" (Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP* 268) of becoming-animal is that of the pack, and closely related to this is the notion of the pact, an agreement to change. Each animal is at its core a pack, and each pack has a leader that operates in an "anomalous" mode. This mode then indicates not a lack of rules, but lack of hierarchy as the leader creates new structures without resorting to State or Oedipal reterritorialization. To lead the pack is to make a "pact" with the demonic forces of the Outside that Thacker (*In the Dust of this Planet* 45) observes are the "limits of thought". To enter into this pact is to undertake a negotiation with the powers of futures currently unimaginable. This pact is one of movement, the setting of strange groups into flight that breaks through symbolic controls by way of attachment to the Outside.

Whereas the becoming-animal provides a line of escape, the war-machine prevents recapture through its necessarily multiplying aspect (Deleuze and Guattari, *ATP* 427-32).³¹ This indicates that while the current systems of formation and distribution are territorial (stable, traditional), the war-machine creates independent space (“smooth space”) by way of a “double deterritorialization”. This destabilising multiplication highlights the fact that the war-machine is fundamentally an engine of mutation rather than carnage (Patton, *Deleuze & the Political* 110). This mutability works against reterritorialization, the creation of “striated space” (State institutions, cultural taboo), at the same time resisting the creation of values that will themselves lead to future despotism. Indeed, as the formation of States necessitates an increase in power (control, surveillance, punishment), the assemblage of the war-machine increases only affect: the possibility to act, to change, to move and speak.

This mutability and freedom resists the State’s tendency to reproduce both the politico-legal power structures that interest Deleuze and Guattari (*ATP* 397) and the cultural impasse (the art of nostalgia) that Fisher (“Lost Futures”) and Jameson (*Post Modernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*) see as the conservative impulse that shackles the hopes of producing new subjectivities. These new subjectivities are related to the nomadic science explained in chapter two (the science of movement and speed). Indeed, the practitioners of this science are at once constituted by and constituent of the war-machine itself, which is inherently a pack-machine. These subjects, as noted by Patton (*Deleuze & the Political* 117-8) view territories in a manner that departs from ideas surrounding States and borders,

³¹ Deleuze and Guattari (*ATP* 254-5, 464-7) note that there are dangers in the lines of flight taken by the war-machine. First, a war-machine may totalise its destructive tendency, failing to render new connections and proliferate desire. Second, there is the possibility of despotic appropriation of the act of resistance.

linking them instead to the notion of generative values. This, I suggest, speaks to a reverence for territories without recourse to exploitation. That said, it seems that the nomad is most often encountered in spaces that are difficult to capture and exploit in the first place. It is in/on these smooth spaces that this chapter will find its grounding. First, it will be argued that the failure to escape recapture by despotic systems that is represented by becoming-animal in *Kafka* (87), becomes a success in Lovecraft's *Shadow Over Innsmouth* and Miéville's *The Scar*. Each of these texts presents the 'becoming-animal' of at least one character and describes a movement towards 'smooth space' in the guise of the ocean. Then, having noted that the animal becomings in Weird operate at the level of the assemblage rather than a private flight towards future freedoms, it will be argued that the animal-packs that emerge from *Innsmouth* and *The Scar* proliferate new models of autopoiesis that resist the "exhaustion of the future" (Fisher, *Capitalist Realism* 4). These self-creations and recreations are the conditions from which new groups can emerge, with new means of self-extension that enter new becomings with increasingly diverse entities and powers.³²

³² This idea of self-creation moves from the Spinozan *conatus* (*Ethics* P3S18), the 'striving' to maintain and extend existence, towards the "extended autopoiesis" described by Nathaniel Virgo in "The Necessity of Extended Autopoiesis", wherein the Being of an entity is represented not by an individual organism, but rather by the extension of existence into complex systems of multiple organisms.

WEIRD ANIMALS: THE CALL OF THE DEPTHS

This is where the very special problem of the sea enters in.

– Deleuze and Guattari (*A Thousand Plateaus* 529)

The horror of Weird is not phenomenological, but rather, ontological. As Seán J. Harrington (34) argues, the structure of Lovecraftian horror is, at its core, “oceanic”, concerned with the rising or resurgence of the unrepresentable into the realm of recognition. This indicates that Weird terror is not represented as experience, but as the state of existence-as-such. Herein then, is the possibility for negotiation with the inhumanly strange that haunts the peripheries of becoming. Lovecraft’s 1931 novella, *The Shadow Over Innsmouth* and Miéville’s 2002 novel, *The Scar*, speak to this negotiation of ‘becoming’ as Robert Olmstead (the narrator and protagonist of *Innsmouth*) and Tanner Sack (one of several focalising characters in *The Scar*) enter the process of “becoming-animal”.³³ This becoming takes place in the smooth space par excellence, the ocean. Deleuze and Guattari (*ATP* 528) describe the ocean as “filled with events”, not “formed things”. It is a place of potential rather than representational or determined certainties, following Harrington’s (31-2) model of “oceanic horror”, wherein the “Real” (which I have termed the ‘Outside’) is in constant flux. It will be argued that in reading these characters via the lens of the minor, rather than that of racial tension and cultural atavism (in the case of Lovecraft) or utopian

³³ Olmstead is unnamed in the novella, yet Joshi indicates in *A Dreamer and A Visionary* (p. 305), the narrator is named in Lovecraft’s personal notes.

hope (in Miéville), we arrive at the formation of new groups with new desires, potentials and powers of action.³⁴

Olmstead, a young man celebrating his “coming of age” (Lovecraft, *Innsmouth* 867), visits Innsmouth, a seaport in Massachusetts, to research his ancestry. While so engaged, he discovers that it is the home of a hybrid-people that has entered an alliance with the “Deep Ones” (Lovecraft, *Innsmouth* 888-99), interbreeding with the alien creatures and partaking in the creation of an amphibious civilisation. In the years following his ‘escape’ from the city, Olmstead, via further genealogical investigation, ascertains that he is a descendent of Obed Marsh, a mariner and patriarch of the “Esoteric Order of Dagon” (a cult that venerates alien gods in conjunction with the Deep Ones), and Pht'thya-l'y, an ancient and apparently immortal alien (Lovecraft, *Innsmouth* 921-2). Carlin and Allen (83) note that this is a meditation on both “biological degeneracy and wonder”, while Bealer (50) suggests that Lovecraft has an “ambivalent sympathy” for the racialized other that Olmstead finds himself becoming.

Sack, in *The Scar*, is a ‘Remade’ criminal of New Crobuzon that comes to be a citizen of the floating pirate-city, Armada, when the prison ship that he is aboard is taken at the orders of two of the governors of “Garwater”, the ‘riding’ that becomes his home. Sack’s ‘Remaking’, a process of bio-thaumaturgic transmogrification performed in the “punishment factories” of New Crobuzon (Miéville, *The Scar* 134), leaves the man with

³⁴ Tracy Bealer (“The Innsmouth Look”) and Gerry Carlin and Nicola Allen (“Slime and the Western Man”) note that Lovecraft’s weird-horror is representative of the destabilising impact of modernity on the Anglo-centred culture that Lovecraft placed at the pinnacle of humanity’s achievements. This is a standard, biographical reading of Lovecraft. In reading Miéville according to the “program” outlined in Sherryl Vint’s “Possible Fictions: Blochian Hope in *The Scar*” or Christopher Palmer’s “Saving the City”, one finds a tendency towards utopian impulses and incremental change rather than radical transformation.

“a huge tumour of flesh, from which emerged two long, ill-smelling tentacles” (Miéville, *The Scar* 23). Although these protrusions begin as a rotting hindrance to Sack, making social and physical interactions painful, his time *in* the ocean soothes the tortured flesh, inspiring a second ‘Remaking’ that sees Sack become amphibious, replete with gills and a sense of growing comfort in the shrouded depths.

Bealer’s ambivalent reading, one that understands *Innsmouth* as Lovecraft expressing his coming to terms with a globalising, multi-ethnic world, moves away from the Anglo-chauvinist concern with miscegenation that Joshi (*Dreamer* 305-6) sees as *Innsmouth*’s prime concern; and further from the poetics of hatred that Houellbecq (21, 36) argues is the “success” of tales such as *Innsmouth*, opening the possibility of a Lovecraft that reflects on modernity and modernisation rather than the veneration of atavism. Yet this argument is not generative, which is, of course, the project of a minor literature. Likewise, while Sherryl Vint (281) notes that *The Scar* is a tale in which characters such as Sack must sever their connections with the “old social order”, there is little focus on the subject as formed within groups. The transformation is, for Vint, primarily a transference of activity from one State to another, albeit freer, State. The subject remains unchanged and no new group emerges, creating new freedoms, calling to the Outside with new voices.

Both *Innsmouth* and *The Scar* follow a narrative arc that results in a going-into the ocean. This going is to be taken as a negotiated gesture that performs a transformation of the subject entering the space and of the space being entered (which is to say that this is a deterritorialization, as outlined in chapter one). Sack, freed from the tyranny of New Crobuzon, no longer understands his ‘animal-ness’ as an abject condition, but as a move from the molar (human, male, traditional, governed) towards a molecular revolution of selfhood, the process that Deleuze and Guattari (*ATP* 301-2) describe as

“an inhumanity immediately experienced in the body as such”, or, a “becoming animal”.³⁵ That the change is at the molecular rather than molar level indicates a process of building, the multiplicity of subjecthood freed from the constraints of traditional compositions. This juxtaposition is evident in the denouement of *Innsmouth*, when Olmstead breaks with the cycle of suicide that runs through his line (those who reject the negotiation with becoming-animal), seeking rather to “dwell amidst wonder and glory forever” (*Innsmouth* 923).

As David Farnell (146) observes, the ocean in which the Deep Ones dwell necessitates a new form of thinking to match the extra dimension of depth and movement in the ocean, yet I suggest that the Deep Ones, along with Sack, experience further dimensional multiplicity. As is usual in Lovecraft (*Innsmouth* 923), the idea that space is limited to human perceptions is complicated by odd juxtapositions: diving “down” through colour towards heights, thwarts any standard interpretation of direction. Likewise, the ocean of *The Scar* is a place of impossibly alien life; it has wounds and politics that are more-than-human, indicating a terrible violence of ontology that, following Deleuze and Guattari (*ATP* 466), engages in conflict only to bring about new realities. This violence is formative and directional; to navigate a wounded ocean is to enter strange negotiations of triage, warfare and siege, brought to bear against an environment traditionally seen as a place rather than an entity.

Here, the connection of the subject to new conditions of movement brings them into the realization of the more-than-human line of escape that is this multiplicity of direction. As Harman (192-3) notes, representing motion is of primary interest for

³⁵ For Deleuze and Guattari, the molar indicates groups formed in the majoritarian fashion, whether that of the tyrant or the State. Molecular movement and formation are minor activities, the use of the major for new productions rather than reproductions.

Lovecraft, especially as it relates to allusions toward the Other-than-human; the gait of the hybrid creatures of *Innsmouth* is commented upon multiple times by Olmstead, at each instance indicating a recognition of the Otherness of Innsmouth's residents. Yet, while Harman reads this as an indication of an object being distinct from its properties, I argue that the motion-property reveals a fundamental change in the conditions of existence. When Sack's tentacles revivify and he takes to the underside of Armada as a hybrid of speed and caution, when the gait of Olmstead becomes that of the shambling swimmer on land, there is a destruction of the human and a remainder of multiplicity. There are new directions and new futures.

This remaining multiplicity is precisely the 'salvation' of becoming-animal in *Innsmouth* and *The Scar*, the success of the non-human as a method of thinking escape from the present and its pathological attachments to the past. The becoming-animal described in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* always results in an Oedipal, domesticating reterritorialization. In *The Metamorphosis*, the Samsa family returns to "mummy, daddy and me" as the familial block, with Gregor's animality moving towards a singular obsession with his sister rather than the possibility of the pack. Kafka's "Report for an Academy", is a tale of an inverted becoming, wherein the narrator, the ape Red Peter, seeks pure escape, claiming "I didn't want freedom, only a way out". For the ape, the way out of the cage that he finds himself in is to become human, a becoming that the ape finds no contentment in, recognising rather, his own Otherness as an attachment to the past rather than a view to the future. In each case, the becomings of Kafka are the becomings of the individual and are necessarily territorialised by history.

Innsmouth, on the other hand, escalates the concerns of those becoming – here, Olmstead – in terms of both intensity and quantity. Olmstead's becoming begins at the level of the self, the register of the sorcerer, the subject that recognises the

possibility of breaching *nomos* (order, law, tradition). As Delpech-Ramey (16) observes, the consideration of the sorcerer in the singular mode is a *prima facie* error; the sorcerer is always already concerned with the formation of groups, internally and externally. The tension between what is recognised as singular and its becoming multiplicity is displayed in Olmstead's trajectory towards the ocean; beginning with a movement into self-discovery at the level of history (researching his family tree and the 'old neighbourhoods' of his ancestry), moving into the unconscious (his dream-meetings with alien ancestors, acting as a bridge between antiquity and futures as yet unimaginable), before an act that breaks the Oedipal and domestic cycle of self-destruction (there is a line of suicidal activity in his family due to the rejection of becoming-animal) and institutionalisation (Olmstead's cousin has been sectioned on account of non-neuro-typical traits associated with the becoming).

"I cannot be made to shoot myself!" declares Olmstead (*Innsmouth* 922), suggesting a recognition of the tension between the traditional (human) and the other-than-human to come. This 'to-come' rests on the "hyperstitional" aspect of Weird-becoming-animal, the aspect that "indexes the vast tracts of the unknown, still to be discovered, lying outside the purview of any correlation with what is already known" (Brassier and Mackay 17).³⁶ As Julian Murphet (655) notes, Lovecraftian horror works by way of the recognition of inhuman desires emerging from traditionally human spaces. These desires, I suggest, are the desires of groups to free themselves from human-space, to seek out more vital areas of wilderness (a 'smooth space'); Olmstead, the sorcerer bringing change, consults with not only his own

³⁶ This remark is made by Mackay and Brassier in the introduction to the collected works of Nick Land, *Fanged Noumena*. What is at stake here is the intensification that Land's work brings to "becoming-animal", the same escalation that I see at work in reading Weird as minor.

aspect of multiplicity, but with alien ancestors that exist in both historical and future desires. Further, Olmstead desires intensely and creatively, his escape is not that of Red Peter, the bracketing of freedom with tiresome escape, but rather an escape into freedom, an escape into creativity within the pack that awaits in future depths.

Tanner Sack's second Remaking in *The Scar* follows just this line of escape into freedom, a freedom that is only available to the group. Indeed, much as Olmstead remains unnamed in *Innsmouth*, Sack is introduced by voice rather than name. This is at once a hint towards the importance of enunciation – Sack is a storyteller, and stories are to be heard, indicating the necessity of the group. Unlike Olmstead, however, Sack does not tell his own story, his own life, he speaks of mythology as a means of group formation, telling a tale from the time of the world's creation as a means of forming an alliance with one of the ship's crew (Miéville, *The Scar* 23-4). By the time that Sack is further transformed, becoming truly amphibious, his stories have led to the creation of a family of sorts with his one-time warden (of sorts), the sailor-boy, Shekel. Yet while the creation of families in the work of Kafka leads to the recapture of freedom by stifling tradition, Sack and Shekel's family is one of alliance rather than filiation.

This alliance, which begins as a means of deterritorializing the libido in *Anti-Oedipus* (68-75), becomes, in *A Thousand Plateaus* (268-9), the principle of pack formation. This is the emergence of groups from the possibilities recognised by the subject that is prepared to enter into pacts with strange powers. In the case of Sack, there are multiple powers at work as he strives to create a new future – not simply a future that finds him free from the oppressive laws of New Crobuzon, but a future in which he finds himself as part of a group that seeks out new possibilities. Indeed, there has been much critical work carried out on the primary trope of possibility in *The Scar*,

focusing, in the main on the powerful techno-magic of the “possible sword”, along with the “possibility mining” that interests the captains of Garwater and even Coldwine’s “possible letter”; a sword that must be unlearned to wield, the treatment of futures as a fossil resource, a letter with no fixed addressee.

Benjamin J. Robertson’s “A Place I Have Never Seen”: Possibility, Genre, Politics, and China Miéville’s *The Scar*” interrogates the ability of science fiction and fantasy to respond to history, looking to the tensions between the possible and impossible as a place from which to generate meaning. Further, Vint’s “Possible Fictions” (p. 289) suggests that the genre of Coldwine’s letter is in some way related to the potential of the fantastic to “keep hope alive”. I suggest that the possibilities of Sack’s attempts at group formation are equally important if we are to see genre-fiction as a response to history and map towards new futures.

Sack’s story, more so than Olmstead’s, is one in which group creation is at the centre of his drives. Sack enters into an alliance with Shekel, which in turn leads to further alliances with various other factions aboard the city-ship and sees him recognised to the point that “[you] listened to Tanner and you believed him ... everyone knew Tanner Sack” (Miéville, *The Scar* 552). His voice is heard as his selfhood becomes multiple and his capacity to act multiplies. His project is one of radical generation, not satisfied by merely human or recognisably political interactions, nor even the alliance that he enters with the body that was originally ‘designed’ as a form of punishment. Rather, Sack enters an alliance with the depths themselves, a relationship wherein the environment and subject are interconnected, producing new flows of change and potential. This is a view that does not ask the future to explain itself, but rather to bring its inhabitants into the present.

THE SPECIAL PROBLEM: SMOOTH SPACE, AUTOPOIESIS AND THE EXHAUSTION OF THE FUTURE

There is no redemption in the sea.

– China Miéville (*The Scar* 314).

At the midpoint of *The Scar*, Sack finds himself drawn into political intrigues that see him relate his personal desire (for a clear conscience) to those of the group (Garwater) with which he has become interlinked. Unwilling to let New Crobuzon be destroyed by monstrous forces, he betrays the trust of his new comrades to deliver a message to a government vessel. Interestingly, it is only due to Sack's embrace of remaking that he is able to undertake this mission, a plunge into the depths and return to past territories of imprisonment, in the form of interacting with agents of the power that first condemned him to an unfree, becoming animal. Importantly, neither "saving the city", as Christopher Palmer (232) interprets Sack's imperative, nor personal salvation are what lead to Sack's risk of life and freedom.

Sack is compelled to act as a matter of ethics, an ethics that demands the preservation of possibility. Although there is the thought that the city, Bas-Lag, is "safe, perhaps", the chapter closes out with Sack imagining "all of the things that he still has to see" (Miéville, *The Scar* 314). "It's all still there", he thinks, yet what "it" is and where "there" indicates are left to the imagination of a subject that is newly constructed as multiple, in a space that, as mentioned above, necessitates new forms of thought and movement. Sack, in acting to preserve the possibility of futures, serves as a constituent component of the war-machine, the group that acts to preserve smooth space and avoid capture by systems of despotic tradition (*A Thousand Plateaus* 466-

7). Focused through a narrative composite of human, cephalopod and piscine physiognomy, we access a vision of alien futures, the imperative to “save the city” becomes, rather, the impetus to resist the lure of *history as a given*. This sense of history is not so much a departure from the imperative to “always historicize” that Jameson (x) invokes in the preface of his essay collection, *The Political Unconscious*, but rather an understanding that futures must be created anti-teleologically.

This resistance comes by way of entry into smooth space, territories in which traditions of subjugation have not yet taken hold and are resisted according to the methods of nomadic “science”, a “minor” science that is opposed to homogeneity of thought and action (*ATP* 398-9). In rejecting stasis, passages to new thought are opened. By understanding that science is a system of knowledge, an epistemology, I suggest that the science of minor literature is a new way of knowing from the view of the war-machine. Sack and Olmstead, whose becoming is no less one that preserves alien futures than Sack’s, offer models from which we can build new ways of knowing and desiring, working towards imaginings of futures that take into account the relationship of the human to the Other and the human as the Other. In this, I argue, is a conduit to the Outside, one that is not so much an appeal to the Lacanian Real or Kantian noumena, as a negotiation with forces that cannot be known without a novel understanding of our own faculties.

Feminist and posthumanist theorists such as Hélène Cixous (“Laugh of the Medusa”), Donna Haraway (“Cyborg Manifesto”, *Staying with the Trouble*), Jane Bennett (*Vibrant Matter*) and Timothy Morton (*Dark Ecology*) have drawn out similar conclusions in regard to the necessity of new forms of epistemology, even drawing on literature to make their case. Yet, I suggest that in *Weird*, we find a particularly fertile ground on which to practice these new ways of knowing – or mapping out new ways of finding

these 'knowings'. Indeed, the focus on the group that emerges from *Innsmouth* and *The Scar* points to the connection between "Weird" as a means of "transgression" by way of interpolation. Weird is a mode of writing that "foregrounds instability" (Weinstock, "The New Weird" 182), the Deleuzio-Guattarian assemblage that is the war-machine (remembering that as an artefact of 'nomadic science', it is necessarily focused on group creation and the paradox of instability) and a sense of what Nathaniel Virgo (1-4) calls "autopoiesis": the tendency of entities to become defined by their multiple processes in networks rather than isolation.

These processes are not so much in direct opposition to the individualist or essentialist theories of ethics and entity described at the opening of this chapter, but rather an asymmetrical, anomalous line through the individual into the becoming of groups. While in *Kafka* (26), Deleuze and Guattari describe minor literature as the "hatred for the language of masters", by *A Thousand Plateaus*, with the emergence of the sorcerer and the construct of the war-machine, mastery seems to have returned to the 'revolutionary' outputs of language. I suggest that this is precisely because the minor is revolutionary in its *outputs*, its drawing attention to groups mastering alien undertakings, rather than the *input* (the biographical), even when written with revolutionary sympathies, as is the case with Miéville. This is, in a sense, related to the mastery exhibited under the aegis of Modernism, a literary style that indicated its mastery by way of stylistic innovation and anomaly. In each case, that of Weird and Modernism, the writers enter a relationship of reciprocal shocks with their cultural environs.

In noting that any organism is distinct from its environment insofar as it makes itself distinctive (that its difference is a matter of activity rather than essence), Virgo (3) draws out a scientific rendition of the Deleuzian primacy of repetition as an active

process of self-constitution, just the kind that is found in the case of Olmstead and Sack. While both posit the problem of the multiplying enunciation as told through the singular voice, their environment (or environment to come), the depths, opens up what Deleuze and Guattari see as a problem of inhabiting space in which movement is unpredictable due to the fact that the environment is, in a physical sense, active (*ATP* 401). As “smooth space”, the space that resists the formation of anything other than groups, the ocean is a place of becoming, as witnessed in Olmstead and Sack, that draws out the multiplicity of the subject. In each we find, to call upon the opening sentence of *A Thousand Plateaus* (3), “quite the crowd”.

To connect this multiplicity to Harrington’s (30) notion that the ocean, as a literary device, reflects the “unconscious depths” plumbed by psychoanalysis, I suggest that we arrive at the ocean itself as a space of resistance that meets with the Deleuzo-Guattarian ‘axiom’: “[t]he war machine is exterior to the state apparatus” (*ATP* 387). This exteriority is one of multiplicity, attached to the multiplying space that excites potentials and the necessarily machinic-network oriented understanding of subjectivity that develops out of the Nietzschean, Marxian and Freudian theories of subjectivity as a numerous condition. The ocean, in each of our texts, works as a network of processes that lead to both individuation and group formation.

Olmstead, then, is a series of interconnected species: terrestrial ape, extra-planar alien, amphibian fish-frog. Likewise, Sack’s composite body (human-mechanical-magical-squid-fish) provides connections across ‘types’ of being. In each case, the body as a series here merges the “various states” of “contiguity and distance” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* 76-8). The discontinuity between these states (the closeness of the human, the distance of the alien, the impossible depths of the squid) suggests a resistance to the lure or capture of tradition. These bodies are

capable of new modes of vision, escaping the limits of the singular mind (attempting to 'solve' the climate crisis by recycling alone, for example), by recognising the necessity of group voices.

This is the self-recognition of the sorcerer in the first instance (Olmstead accepting his alien lineage, Sack's second Remaking), and then the sorcerer recognising their own 'pack-ness', the swarming nature of their own becomings and interplay with those of others. This is the connection to both the writing-machine that recognises minor literature as destabilising the major rather than separate from it (*ATP* 116-7); and the war-machine that protects groups while escaping recapture by the apparatus of tradition. For Olmstead, the understanding that he can create futures anew in the Cyclopean cities of the Deep Ones, the hope for novelty, allows him to deny the imperative of self-destruction. In the case of Sack, even more than his attachment to Garwater, it is the becoming-multiple in the ocean that expresses possibilities. In each case, these futures are inherently political, related to the exercise and distribution of power, interested in the generation of new power of change – yet always at risk of exhaustion.

Vint's (291-2) work on *The Scar* argues that the hope for change, for new futures, in Miéville's work, is a process of uncertain struggle, rather than a Utopian program. This seems true and relates to the very struggle of literature noted in *Kafka* (Deleuze and Guattari 87-8), the need to create literary-machines that act on the "transcendental" conditions of society. Indeed, to write a 'Utopia' is to imagine an 'end of history' – it is precisely this form of stability that Weird (and minor) abjures. In arguing that assemblages (here the multiplied bodies of Sack and Olmstead) are only useful insofar as they move towards the new, Deleuze and Guattari hint at the idea of breaks in the revolutionary impulse. There are points when the war-machine ceases to be

revolutionary or is captured by Oedipal or State apparatuses. In the works of Kafka, these breaks come in the form of Oedipal recapture as noted above. Yet, in considering the form of Weird, its tendency to obscure resolution, its hybridity and porosity of narrative, I suggest that recapture is resisted in its tendency to generate extra-textual activity.

Neither *Innsmouth* nor *The Scar* “finish” on their final pages. As part of the “Cthulhu Mythos”, the cycle of stories that Lin Carter (28-9) claims give significant information to the entities related to Cthulhu and its kin, *Innsmouth* extends out into a wider network of tales, growing a vision of an expanding universe that, while ostensibly looking back towards ancient secrets, is in fact drawing out the possibility of future becomings. The events of *The Scar* articulate new stories to come, with no resolutions for any of the focalising characters, and the final words (*The Scar* 578) referencing the “possible letter” of Coldwine, a companion of Sack’s. This letter speaks of the future in terms of potential rather than preservation, much as Armada, the new home of Sack and Coldwine, is an amalgamation of shifting parts, micro-cities of becoming.

These intertextual and extratextual links operate at the level of the *network*, the rhizomatic burrow of non-hierarchical group articulation, that which is expressed is a network of strange multiplicities, as discussed above. These becomings, however, are never finalised; there is a sense of constant reinvention in Weird, with final destinations bypassed by the extension of new lines of escape. Sack can be Remade again; Olmstead is described in the throes of metamorphosis rather than already awakening in some abject state (as in Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*). These texts are inextricably linked to the expression of futures.

While it may seem strange or tautological to write in the present of futures yet to come, I argue that much fiction, even putatively futurological fiction, expresses histories and traditions simply at—one remove from chronological advancement. If we are to contemplate ‘true’ futures, those that do not simply recreate the fantasies of the past, we need mechanisms by which to express productivity rather than reproduction. As Fisher (*Capitalist Realism* 61; “Lost Futures” 15) argues, the focus on the individual and systematic deprivation of artists of the tools with which to “create the new”, under neoliberalism has at once led to a decline in the consideration of the group as a force of change and an increase in cultural conservatism (which I suggest is displayed in the social hunger for formalized nostalgia). Weird, however, in expressing the power of alien groups, the connection of the self to the Other, and the necessity of never wanting to ‘arrive’, favouring, rather, the desire for constant flight, opens doorways leading to alien worlds. These worlds, I suggest, are our own.

AFTERWORD: WHAT IS THE END OF THE WORLD?

Do not think that one has to be sad in order to be militant, even though the thing one is fighting is abominable.

– Michel Foucault (“Preface” to *Anti-Oedipus*, xiii)

The “Kafka-Laughter” of Deleuze and Guattari is of a strange kind. It is steeped in neither mirth, nor mockery. It is, rather, a call for affirmation, again, in that Nietzschean mode wherein one loves one’s fate without becoming resigned to inevitability. Weird, I have suggested, through its minor voicing, whether of laughter or sorcery, gives just such an affirmation to the Outside – the world as yet unmediated, the world to come, a future of radical difference rather than orderly repetition. Yet, to conjure this world from the future requires the end of the world of the present. This conjuring, then, must also be an act of affirmation, of multiplication and difference rather than a hope for some utopic ‘end of history’. This is a project of tension and intensity, of interstitial moments of rebellion, failure and inspiration. These are the moments made available, even if only at the limits of imagination in the works of Lovecraft and Miéville, whose works serve as the smooth spaces from which new modes of becoming can emerge.

This thesis has argued that, in following the admittedly loose, decidedly anti-programmatic works of Deleuze and Guattari, we are able to learn anew *how* to interact with fiction as a means of generative rather than representational engagement. Weird, it has been suggested, provides a radical departure from other genre fictions precisely due to its implicit principle of epistemological (hence representationally ontological) disruption, break and reinvention – these are the

principles of both *Anti-Oedipus*' 'schizoanalysis' and minor literature, as developed between *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. In applying this 'creative destruction' of multiplicity to the works under investigation, we find that there is an underlying politics not only within the text, but of the text: new powers come into contact and form new bodies of expression – the alien poetry of dancing-god-spiders, the call to an ancient past that exists in the future of the stars, and the call to the Outside.

It is hoped that in drawing out these 'new powers', suggestions of new interactions, rethinking long held conclusions and so on, that Weird can be understood as a political literature. This understanding seems necessary at a point of history in which we respond to the radical alterity of crises such as climate change with 'traditional' solutions (notably that of the market and its own eerie, instrumental logic). To consider the world (rather than the planet, which will undoubtedly survive 'us') as a song, or an ocean, an active system of tension and flux, rather than one of laws and hierarchy opens up new vistas, that while possibly attached to Lovecraft's 'dark age', offers the wonders of alien constellations rather than a necessity of abyssal wasteland (which seems promised, given the discourse of political tradition).

In this case, I suggest, that the Outside, the unmediated is the reader, who, not having 'heard' the text, has rather sensed this call pre-rationally and is able to bring to bear their own powers of change and production. Yet, as has been noted, these powers of generation, if we hope for any change, must be those of the group, the pack, the pact. We must enter into these alliances willingly, joyfully, even as the alien nature of our production terrorises our former affects of comfort and attachment to formalized nostalgia. These attachments, productions and generations are in way and end point, and to begin with the imperative of "Toward a Minor Weird" indicates

merely one line of flight – I suggest that in the spirit of deterritorialization, the lens of the minor can be applied to all manner of genre fictions, if only to indicate an impasse in generation, and that even such blockages can be made useful in the project of building further connections with the world that, as yet, remains Outside.

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