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CTHULHU'S RESURGENCE AS AN EVENT: MEDIATION AND PERFORMATIVITY IN CHINESE ONLINE NOVELS*

Abstract: In contemporary China, the Cthulhu Mythos has been reconfigured through online literature as a cultural practice that entwines critiques of neoliberal globalization with reflections on technological modernity. Drawing from Lovecraft's motifs of ineffability and madness, Chinese online novels such as *Lord of Mysteries* and *Dao of the Bizarre Immortal* relocate cosmic horror into the narrative logic of time travel and digital mediation. The trope of transmigration destabilizes linear, progressivist temporalities and exposes the fragility of the rational order that underpins neoliberal techno-realism. Within this framework, madness ceases to be a pathological endpoint, as in classical Lovecraftian tales, and instead becomes a mode of action: protagonists negotiate fractured realities, oscillating between virtual and physical domains, and transform cognitive collapse into survival strategies.

These works thus register the experiential conditions of the digital age, in which algorithmic systems dissolve the boundaries of subjectivity and cyberspace internalizes the asylum once located at society's margins. At the same time, they gesture toward new symbolic orders by reframing irrationality as a performative practice through which meaning emerges from interactions between individual agency and networked technologies. In this way, Chinese Lovecraftian online fiction functions as a mediated response to cultural disorientation in the post-COVID era.

Keywords: *Cthulhu Mythos, digital mediation, Chinese online fiction*

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the sudden emergence and rapid popularization of Lovecraftian literature in Chinese online literature after 2018, with a particular focus on the social conditions and latent agency that underpin this phenomenon. Lovecraftian fiction, originating from the works of the American author H. P. Lovecraft, is defined by a central aesthetic that can be summarized as the unnamable horror. In *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, Lovecraft himself declared: "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown."[1] His narratives portray a cosmos and pantheon of extrahuman deities that resist human rationality and comprehension. As a result, Lovecraft's works consistently heighten the sense of helplessness, insignificance, and profound dread, stressing the triviality of human existence when confronted with the vast, indifferent universe and its ancient, alien entities. Through popular culture, the Cthulhu Mythos has achieved widespread dissemination worldwide. Its circulation has been facilitated by collective fan practices and tabletop role-playing games (TRPGs), which together constitute a distinctive global subcultural lineage. Pevčíková has summarized the development of Lovecraftian literature and culture in three stages: Version 1.0 encompasses Lovecraft himself, his literary circle, and August Derleth's reinterpretations; Version 2.0 extends to all works of "Lovecraftian" or "cosmic horror" across literature, media, and popular culture, whether influence is explicit or implicit; and Version 3.0 shifts attention towards self-reflection and intertextual critique of the earlier versions, rather than further expansion.[2]

In contrast to the well-established tradition in the West, where the Cthulhu Mythos has evolved from its literary origins into a comprehensive framework for ritual, play, and subjunctive world-building[3], the Cthulhu tradition in China has long remained at the margins of subcultural activity, known only to a minority within the fantasy literature community. In 2010, a Chinese translation of *At the Mountains of Madness* appeared in *Science Fiction World (Translation Edition)*, and in 2012 Chongqing University Press published a collection of Lovecraft's classic stories, including *The Call of Cthulhu*. Subsequently, online creative works incorporating Mythos elements began to emerge. Among the most influential was the writer "oobmab", whose 2013 story *The Herd of Ba Hui（巴虺的牧群）* drew inspiration from *The Call of Cthulhu* but reimagined the deities as totems within the folk culture of Sichuan and

1 H. P. Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horror in Literature," *The Recluse,* no. 1 (1927): 23–59.

2 Jozefa Pevčíková, "Cthulhu Mythos: History of H.P. Lovecraft's Monstrous Presence in Popular Culture." *Literatura i Kultura Popularna* 29, no. 1 (2023): 317. https://doi.org/10.19195/0867-7441.29.19.

3 Justin Mullis, "Playing Games with the Great Old Ones: Ritual, Play, and Joking within the Cthulhu Mythos Fandom," *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 26, no. 3 (2015): 512.

Chongqing. In 2016, he revisited this concept in *Black Tai Sui*（*黑太岁*）, set in Qingdao, which accumulated more than 180,000 views. However, since his works were published solely on the forum-based website "The Ring of Wonder", their circulation remained limited.

A turning point arrived in 2018, when Qidian Chinese Network, China's largest commercial online literature platform, launched the novel *Lord of Mysteries*. The work achieved extraordinary popularity, with more than 35 million recommendations, and quickly became a cultural phenomenon in the Chinese online literary sphere. The novel recounts the story of Zhou Mingrui, an ordinary programmer who, through a ritual of fortune, is transported into a steampunk world imbued with eerie supernatural forces, inhabiting the body of Klein Moretti, a man who has recently committed suicide. Through Klein's consolidated social networks and personal ties, the protagonist is swiftly drawn into a range of strange changes that occur in a manner reminiscent of role-playing scenarios. The enormous success of *Lord of Mysteries* is comparable to releasing a boulder into a lake, which surged into action and generated a long-lasting wave of Cthulhu-inspired cultural production in China.

Unlike the globally popular Cthulhu fan fiction or games, these Chinese revivalist Cthulhu writings are difidül to strictly categorize as emerging works within the three phases summarized by J. Pevčíková. Instead of retaining the original Mythos, Chinese online literature often employs its motifs as narrative devices by incorporating them into well-known tropes, such as time-traveling adventures or tailored storytelling traditions. *Dao of the Bizarre Immortal*, for instance, merges Western Cthulhu horror with indigenous religious beliefs and folklore. A distinctively so-called "Chinese-style Cthulhu"（中式克苏鲁）story is written from the perspective of Li Huowang, a socially ill narrator who often steps between the "real world" and a bizarre, horrible otherworld. Readerships for works like *Lord of Mysteries* and *Dao of the Bizarre Immortal* far outweigh China's comparatively small Cthulhu fan base. Their popularity results in a shared online cultural moment, less a triumph of subcultural fandom, but more a resonance between particular Mythos traits and the anxieties and desires of contemporary Chinese youth.

The revival of Lovecraftian fiction reflects a change in narrative structure within the broader tradition of Chinese online literature. For years, under the dominance of developmentalist ideology, novels characterized by heroic and conquering narratives have been the social mainstream. In recent years, however, shifting social conditions have undermined the relevance of rationalist narratives. In 2018, *Lord of Mysteries* challenged this tradition by drawing on Lovecraft's aesthetics of indescribable terror, grounding its imaginative world in absurdity, chaos, and suffering. This marked a

departure from the triumphalist trajectory of the upgrading narrative.[4] The contemporary Lovecraftian wave in China thus represents not merely the accumulation of subcultural interests but also a cultural microcosm of broader societal transformations.

This paper, therefore, seeks to explain why Lovecraftian literature has experienced a renaissance in China and to identify the specific social contexts underlying this development. The discussion unfolds in two parts:

1) The state of speechlessness in Lovecraftian protagonists is connected with the concept of muteness in event philosophy. This link demonstrates that Chinese Lovecraftian fiction emerges as a collective psychological response to historical moments of immense, ineffable social or technological change — moments that resist articulation and assimilation through existing linguistic or epistemological frameworks, thereby displacing anxieties and fears into horror narratives.
2) Following speechlessness, the subsequent madness of Lovecraftian characters is examined as a distinctive mode of emotional expression, one that enables new forms of literary innovation and opens the possibility of ethical reflection.

2. Chinese society behind Cthulhu fiction through speechlessness

The core dynamics of Chinese society may be further analyzed from the perspective of event philosophy. Žižek points specifically to a well-known detective novel as one example at the start of the Event. Two trains briefly cross a small station in Agatha Christie's *4.50 from Paddington*. As she lauds a quiet afternoon, a wealthy woman mysteriously watches a man brutally swallow a woman in the opposing carriage. This sudden, violent eruption breaks her peaceful daily routine. What returns from the platform as she panics and tries to help is an even less striking, disjointed jumble of chaotic impressions.

Žižek captures precisely that this woman's speechlessness is the pivotal element of the case. The police officer may tackle and assess the murder exclusively on the other train in a routine case. Nevertheless, this violent intrusion belongs entirely to a woman who makes a deep sense of belonging within the closed, secure, and quiet middle class. Due to her linguistic and cognitive frameworks, she is unable to articulate or clearly represent what she has experienced.[5] A sudden, terrifying rupture that arises without warning and repeatedly disrupts daily life without any apparent cause is termed an event.

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4 Xueqian Zhang, "The Demystified 'Cthulhu' and 'Time Travel': The 'Transition' Narrative in Fantasy Online Novels," *Chinese Creative Writing Studies* no. 1 (2023): 233–241.

5 Slavoj Žižek, *Event: Philosophy in Transit* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 2–3.

This failure of the symbolic order and collapse of discursive systems in the face of an "event" constitutes the core motif of Lovecraftian literature. When protagonists — investigators or scholars — through ancient manuscripts, anomalous constellations, or forbidden rituals, catch a glimpse of the nameless Outer Gods lurking in the cosmos, their reactions mirror that of Christie's lady: language dissolves into powerless screams, rational frameworks collapse, and humanity's fate veers either toward grotesque bodily destruction or descent into madness and disintegration. From a philosophical perspective, Lovecraftian tales function as repeated prefigurations and simulations of an ultimate event.

As a cultural product rooted in particular historical-psychological contexts, Lovecraft's writing also casts a shadow over the "event". This psychological state arises at historical junctures when societies collectively confront immense and ineffable social or technological transformations that cannot be expressed or assimilated within existing linguistic and epistemic frameworks. Anxieties and fears are then projected and mystified in the form of horror fiction. Looking back at Lovecraft's era, similar conditions prevailed. Since Kant proposed the nebular hypothesis in 1755, astronomical discoveries in the 19th and early 20th centuries expanded explosively, heightening the sense of the universe's vastness and humanity's insignificance. This confrontation with the "cosmic sublime" and its associated "supernatural dread" provided fertile soil for Lovecraft's invention of "cosmic horror". Although his most well-known works were authored in the 1920s and 1930s, they gained notoriety primarily after 1943, notably during the postwar paperback revolution. There was no accident here. Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* examined how rationality integrated the "irrational" other, which developed itself in the midst of the rapid technological advancements and geopolitical upheavals of the 1950s and 1960s.[6] The prevalent fear of the unknown beyond reason at that time constituted a powerful resonance in this discourse. The Cthulhu Mythos' popularity thereby echoed and intensified the cultural psychology of that historical time.

What brand-new, wholly frightening, and ineffable entities or phenomena does it intend to solve and convey in the contemporary resurgence and reshaping of Lovecraftian literature in China?

Some hints are found in China's recent development. The State Council created a national strategy for developing big data in 2015, as outlined in the State Council's Action Plan. In 2017, it released the New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan, positioning AI as a strategic priority and igniting waves of capital, enterprise, and research investment. That same year, the so-called "Four New

6 Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (Hove: Psychology Press, 2001).

Inventions" — high-speed rail, mobile payment, shared bicycles, and e-commerce — became widely celebrated. Among them, the ubiquity of mobile payments (Alipay, WeChat Pay) reached unprecedented heights, rendering a cashless society. These "new inventions" became bound up with nationalist pride, often treated as a form of political correctness.

However, the implementation of these technologies relies on the collection and management of citizens' personal data. Given the country's unwavering support for technological advancement, do Chinese citizens feel secure about the widespread adoption of these technologies? In response to cases of "big data price discrimination" （大数据杀熟）, widespread personal data leaks, and addictive recommendation algorithms, many people think that algorithms mainly provide corporate gain rather than consumer fairness. When such things happen, platforms employ algorithms that boost revenue, the state intervenes for social governance, and the people are urged to choose between political exploitation and exploitation. Citizens often feel trapped in a triangular relationship between the individual, the market, and society.

Additionally, sociological concerns about autonomy, trust, and fairness are raised by these circumstances. Many people continue to debate whether opaque systems, which Foucault may refer to as a novel form of governmentality, ultimately restrict the online choices of individuals or, conversely, are the very mechanisms that facilitate them. Meanwhile, Chinese citizens are beginning to recognize the issues of information silos and algorithmic black boxes. Ultimately, these concerns reveal a shifting digital social contract among Chinese citizens, who balance convenience with the risks of surveillance, inequality, and declining agency.

Although China is often considered emblematic of "compressed development", technological acceleration has precipitated wide-ranging social transformations — a phenomenon far from unique to China. Against the broader global backdrop, technology is reshaping human civilization with unprecedented speed and depth, becoming a central problem for all societies. Long before the full advent of the digital society, Deleuze, in his famous Postscript on the Societies of Control, foresaw the shift from Foucault's disciplinary society to the control society, and the corresponding transformation from subject to dividual.[7] This trend of change has continued to the present day, and Katherine Hayles observed that automation increasingly supplants human autonomy.[8] Under global capitalism, technological cognitive systems have acquired ever-stronger autonomy, their expanding, quasi-intentional agency posing challenges to traditional notions of decision-making. Human decisiveness appears to

7 Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October 59* (1992): 3–7.

8 N. Katherine Hayles, *Unthought: The Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 45.

wane; complex systems self-operate and make decisions without human intervention. In short, the logic of technological evolution and its social consequences have already become an event beyond traditional frameworks of cognition and language — an overpowering force whose trajectory neither individuals nor collectives can foresee.

While such acceleration may often remain imperceptible to the general public, in China, pandemic control measures and algorithmic systems have starkly exposed citizens to the speechlessness and powerlessness produced by technological encroachment. This disempowerment embodies a deep contradiction: technology symbolizes national pride but does not necessarily enhance personal freedom. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, Alibaba first developed an Enterprise Health Code in January 2020 to manage employees. Following a major outbreak, the Hangzhou Party secretary proposed a "citizen health code", which was soon adopted in hundreds of cities nationwide, becoming indispensable for mobility. These codes tracked individuals' movements over 14 days, assigning green (free passage), yellow (seven-day quarantine), or red (fourteen-day quarantine) status. Yet the criteria for color changes remained opaque, leading to countless inexplicable shifts and public frustration.

Meanwhile, algorithmic systems penetrated everyday life and industry. In food delivery, the widely read 2020 feature "Delivery Riders Trapped in the System" *(Renwu, 人物)* revealed that between 2016 and 2019, delivery time limits were steadily shortened. Riders, forced to speed to avoid penalties, not only fueled traffic accidents but also provided the algorithm with shorter data, which in turn optimized times further, trapping them in a vicious cycle of perpetual algorithmic tightening. The riders were, in effect, "trapped in the system".[9]

Whether in health codes or delivery platforms, these cases reveal a microcosm of Chinese technological society: system algorithms have reconfigured the architecture of biopolitical power, forging complicity across the internet ecosystem — algorithm design, software development, platform control, and user interfaces. The tensions have worsened further as a direct result of the rise in individual survival pressures and the post-pandemic economic downturn. On the one hand, people are susceptible to complex, opaque systems, such as algorithmic dispatch and health codes. On the other hand, as a result of a collapsed employment and a shaky livelihood, they are exhausted and helpless. Lovecraft's theme of speechlessness resonates with this dual situation when confronted with overwhelming, inexorable forces. Language, reason, and action falter. From

[9] Lai Youxuan, "Takeout Riders, Trapped in the System," *Renwu (人物),* last modified September 9, 2020, https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/Mes1RqIOdp48CMw4pXTwXw

readers, Lovecraft's universe is filled with apocalyptic dread, which signifies both unmanageable algorithmic systems and a volatile, unknown world.

People can perceive the systems and oppression shaping their lives, even as they find themselves unable to examine them thoroughly in an accelerated, algorithm-driven reality. This is a result of contemporary social psychology, not just a literary device. The entanglement of social exhaustion and technological advancement within this unfathomable gap is expressed by apocalyptic and sickening imagery. In response, the concept of "speechlessness" is explored in literature and philosophy, shedding light on the challenges that subjects pose in relation to meaning, language, and action during the era of algorithmic influence.

3. Madness as a Philosophy of Action

As previously noted, the motif of madness in Lovecraftian literature has been grafted onto the time-travel narrative structure of Chinese online literature. Consequently, unlike in traditional Lovecraftian tales, protagonists in contemporary Chinese Lovecraftian online novels often awaken in alternate worlds as traversers through various inexplicable coincidences. At this point, the temporal and spatial framework of the Cthulhu Mythos points toward a "post-rational world" characterized by an all-encompassing and pervasive atmosphere. *Lord of Mysteries* draws on late nineteenth-century London to construct a steampunk world after the First Industrial Revolution, while *Dao of the Bizarre Immortal* plunges directly into a chaotic alternate realm blending Daoist, Buddhist, and folk superstitions. The fusion of Lovecraftian horror with time-travel narrative further dismantles the singular, linear, progressivist conception of time, thereby destabilizing the rational order built upon it. The narrative device of time travel itself functions as a profound fissure, tearing apart the technocratic realism upheld by neoliberal ideology.

The theme of madness progressively comes into focus within this narrative framework. The dichotomy between the "original world" and the "new world", which is a recurring theme in Lovecraftian fiction, is highlighted in time-traveling tales. Prosecutors hurry because they reside simultaneously in two distinct worlds and identities, not only because of their fear of supernatural beings in strange new worlds, but also because of their own internal conflicts. In *Lord of Mysteries*, the gods are depicted as fragments of an ancient creator's fractured mind, with madness serving as the foundation of the universe. The protagonist is confronted with a dual dilemma from the beginning: to brilliantly humiliate others while maintaining his authentic self-awareness, despite being switched and inhabiting another person's body. The protagonist of *Dao of the Bizarre Immortal*, Li Huowang, alternates between a terrifying alternate world and a mental hospital. His madness is remedied as a peculiar

choice that lets him alternate between two completely different realities, and only as a disease that receives treatment.

Due to the deterministic progression of linear time, the protagonists are forced to comply with a nonlinear, multi-possibility space-time. This temporal-spatial dislocation stimulates their psychological disintegration. In the digital era, the conventional insane asylum has become polarized and rationalized within the fractious, hybrid realm of cyberspace. Instead, it does not exist as a physical, isolated structure. This typifies the digital era in particular. Contemporary Chinese Lovecraftian fiction stands out from the typical canon because it employs madness as a central plot point. It has been restored and awoke in the digital era. In another of Lovecraft's original works, the protagonist's madness or death signifies the tragic demise of the narrative and is the inevitable result of a cosmic "event". In Chinese Lovecraftian online works, the themes of madness and death frequently form the basis for narratives. The world's currents, which are defined by information overload and intertwine between the virtual and real worlds, are deeply impacted by this. Essentially, individuals experience a Cthulhu-like epistemic state in which reality seems fragmented, truth appears multiple, conflicting, and cognition is in constant flux.

In other words, the madness and fear depicted in contemporary Chinese Lovecraftian fiction are no longer exceptional states requiring isolation or scrutiny, as Foucault suggested, but are instead embedded within the texture of everyday digital existence. To a certain extent, this has become part of the daily life experience of many, particularly the digitally immersed generation. Addressing this emerging form of mental disorder, Mark Hansen offers a non-pathological account of cognitive decline under contemporary "socio-technical-psychological" conditions.[10] This state refers to cognitive disarray and existential anxiety arising from the profound confusion between the physical space defined by organic bodily coordinates and the representational space constructed by digital information. This is precisely the *zeitgeist* that Chinese Cthulhu-inspired fiction has captured with accuracy.

This collapse, which occurs as a perpetuated generational gap and profound helplessness, is often reflected and expanded upon by the reality of the narratives. For instance, a mother might want her son to return to a secular, stable, and happy world. At the same time, her protagonist is perpetually locked in a conflicted space-time where virtual and real intertwine and is unable to give in. In China's online community, a discourse known as "madness literature"（发疯文学）emerged at the same time. (This is a collective term for a uniquely contradictory, neurotic, and delirious popular writing style prevalent on Chinese social media during this period.)

[10] Mark B. N. Hansen, *Bodies in Code: Interfaces with Digital Media* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 12.

When people post hordes of illogical, babbling-like comments, this well-known social media language is used as a vent for emotions. These absurd outbursts genuinely reveal the pathological strains of the faster-paced digital era, displaying the decline of traditional subjectivity as a direct result of the constant demands of algorithms.

Chinese online literature significantly crosses the conventional binary dichotomy of technological fear and worship by portraying dual virtual and real spaces. Producers seldom experience active madness in later chapters of these narratives. They begin to aggressively examine and adapt to the fusion of virtual and real worlds, seeking common ground between them rather than fully adhering to binary distinctions between truth and falsehood. In this situation, madness operates as a space for the formation of new symbolic orders; however, it shifts from a sign of forced endurance into an active mode of survival.

Instead of grand narratives or forcing structures, what emerges entirely arises from evolving discussions and negotiations between individual agencies and vast, transpersonal technological networks. This fully typifies the performative nature of network and automation technology. While practically completely defining the world, technology physically generates and shapes reality. As a result, the constitution of the subject has shifted from that of a fully rational and self-assured thinker to an actor who navigates technological events through practice, giving rise to an emerging identity.

In *Lord of Mysteries*, the protagonist demonstrates openness to the unknown, learning about the world by "role-playing" different identities and engaging with diverse teams. *Dao of the Bizarre Immortal* expresses the unknown with greater tenderness. Even as Li Huowang traverses bizarre, non-human scenes in the supernatural world, he does not, like his master, devour the supernatural entity Black Tai Sui in order to achieve immortality. Instead, he adopts this twisted monster as his daughter. Once, exhausted to the extreme, Li Huowang sees a stranger offering him three steamed buns fresh from the steamer. Filled with gratitude, he suddenly finds the environment shifting, realizing that he is in fact "biting into a mud ball", a trick he has witnessed countless times before. Yet, unwilling to disappoint the girl's kindness, Li Huowang helplessly shakes his head and continues nibbling the mud ball until it is completely consumed.[11]

Just as the protagonist of *Dao of the Bizarre Immortal* stands alongside the Black Tai Sui and forges kinship with monsters, Chinese Cthulhu-inspired online novels are not merely pessimistic cautionary tales. Rather, they exemplify an active, mediated

[11] Foxy's Quill, *Dao of the Bizarre Immortal (道诡异仙).* Qidian Chinese Network (起点中文网), serialized 2021–2025, accessed October 11, 2025, https://www.qidian.com/ book/1031794030/, chap. 311.

cultural practice. Literature, as humanity's second nature, engages in playful negotiations between technological rupture and the construction of meaning, seeking to reconstruct symbolic order. It guides readers to search, arduously yet courageously, for new possibilities of rebuilding ethics and goodness within a space that is no longer purely representational but performative, fractured, and uncertain. This suggests that, in confronting technological events, the true path forward lies neither in returning to an idealized innocent past nor in fully embracing an uncontrollable future, but in learning how to dance with the monster, rediscovering rhythm and direction in the dance itself.

4. CONCLUSION

The resurgence of Lovecraftian narratives within Chinese online literature demonstrates how global cultural forms are not merely transplanted but actively reinterpreted through the specific socio-technological conditions of the digital age. As this study has shown, motifs of time travel and madness serve as central vehicles through which Chinese writers negotiate the disintegration of rational, linear temporality and the collapse of stable subjectivity. In *Lord of Mysteries* and *Dao of the Bizarre Immortal*, madness is no longer a terminal point, as in Lovecraft's canon, but a productive mode of survival and adaptation within fractured virtual-real environments. Here, madness itself becomes a philosophy of action, enabling protagonists to navigate between competing realities and offering readers an allegory of how to live within the hybrid, unstable terrains of cyberspace.

The popularity of Lovecraftian horror in China, however, is not an isolated phenomenon. It intersects with broader critiques of neoliberal globalization and technological encroachment, collectively sketching a chaotic vision of a post-rational world order. The revival of Lovecraftian literature may thus be read as the lingering presence of the specter of the event within the cultural sphere. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, both Chinese society and global publics have demonstrated an intensified sensitivity to stories of uncertainty, unknowability, and uncontrollability, raising the prospect that there may have been no single historical rupture as its cause. The simultaneous development of genres like "madness literature" (发疯文学) results in a collective effort to counter diffuse, inscrutable forces. Furthermore, this resurgence occurs at the same time that technology began to transform every facet of life, triggering severe stress and dislocation. Based on recent market data, horror

novel sales rose by 54% year-over-year in 2024, with new works exploring issues of war, politics, and disillusionment, as The Guardian observed.[12]

Together, these developments illustrate that the revival of Cthulhu-inspired narratives in Chinese online literature goes beyond genre testing. Rather, they utilize the epistemic and existential crises of the digital era as a cultural test. These works express literature's profound capacity to establish a balance between technological rupture and human meaning-making through their reworking of time travel, madness, and hybridity. They offer fresh, ethical options for living in a world where rational thought is diminished. At the same time, imagination works to create alternative symbolic orders, urging readers to resist disorientation and cultivate resilience.

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