

**LATE CAPITALISM AND ITS FICTITIOUS
FUTURE(S)**

**THE POSTMODERN, SCIENCE FICTION, AND
THE CONTEMPORARY DYSTOPIA**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	7
PLAYLIST.....	8
0. INTRODUCTION.....	9
1. PRELIMINARIES	
1.1 DECONSTRUCTING THE POSTSTRUCTURALIST FALLACIES	
1.1.1 THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL FALLACY.....	18
1.1.2 THEORETICAL SUICIDE.....	24
1.1.3 THE POSTSTRUCTURALIST SUBJECT.....	28
1.2 PARA-, GENRE-, ENTERTAINMENT, AND SUBLITERATURE.....	34
1.3 <i>DISKURSANALYSE AND TRANSPARENZ</i>.....	38
1.4 <i>IN THE SHADOW OF THE SILENT MAJORITIES</i>.....	40
1.5 COGNITIVE MAPPING AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS.....	42
1.6 POSTMODERN ETHICS.....	46
2. A NEW PHASE OF CAPITALISM	
2.1 35 YEARS WORTH OF CLASS WAR.....	48
2.1.1 WHAT DID THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION CHANGE?.....	53
2.1.2 THE DEATH OF BRETTON WOODS AND KEYNESIANISM.....	57
2.1.3 NEO-COLONIALISM AND THE RISE OF THE NEW RIGHT.....	59
2.1.4 MARKETS AND EMPIRES.....	71
2.2 LATE CAPITALISM AND POSTMODERNITY.....	73
2.3 WHAT'S IN A NAME?.....	79
2.4 THE FREE-MARKET TRINITY.....	86
2.4.1 DEREGULATION.....	86
2.4.2 PRIVATIZATION.....	89
2.4.3 SOCIAL DARWINISM RELOADED.....	91
3. CAPITALIST CASUALTIES	
3.1 INFORMATION, CYBERNETIC, AND BIOCAPITALISM.....	93
3.2 DISASTER CAPITALISM.....	97
3.3 CASINO CAPITALISM.....	99
3.4 FRACTIONAL-RESERVE BANKING.....	101
3.5 SAVAGE CAPITALISM.....	103
3.6 TURBO-CAPITALISM AND HYPER-COMMODIFICATION.....	108
3.7 DIVIDE AND CONSUME.....	110
3.8 EXTINCTION CRISES AND COCA COLA PRESIDENTS.....	111
3.9 <i>MORITURI TE SALUTANT</i>.....	114
4. THE POSTMODERN CONDITION	
4.1 ALL THAT IS SOLID MELTS INTO AIR.....	116
4.2 CYBERBLITZ.....	123

4.3 THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF LATE CAPITALISM.....	127
4.4 POSTMODERNISM IS DEAD, LONG LIVE POSTMODERNITY.....	133
4.5 APPROACHING POSTMODERNISM'S DEPARTURE.....	136
4.6 DYSTOPIA NOW.....	140
4.7 THE EXTROPY MYTH AND THE POSTMODERN DENIAL OF TRAGEDY.....	145
4.8 THE BLOODY UNDERSIDE.....	149
4.9 THE POSTMODERN METANARRATIVE.....	154
5. POSTMODERN FICTION	
5.1 POSTMODERNIST LITERATURE.....	156
5.2 POSTMODERN REALISM VS. NEO-REALISM.....	166
5.3 REALISM, POSTREALISM, AND MINIMAL REALISM.....	170
5.4 HYBRID FICTION.....	173
6. SCIENCE FICTION	
6.1 SCIENCE FICTIONALIZATION.....	175
6.2 A CONCISE HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION.....	182
6.3 CYBERPUNK SCIENCE FICTION.....	186
6.4 POSTCYBERPUNK.....	192
7. PHENOMENOLOGY	
7.1 PAUL AUSTER: <i>IN THE COUNTRY OF LAST THINGS</i>	196
7.2 KURT VONNEGUT: <i>HOCUS POCUS</i>	212
7.3 PATRICIA ANTHONY: <i>COLD ALLIES</i>	233
7.4 PATRICIA ANTHONY: <i>BROTHER TERMITE</i>	244
7.5 WILLIAM GIBSON: <i>PATTERN RECOGNITION</i>	253
7.6 RICHARD K. MORGAN: <i>MARKET FORCES</i>	271
7.7 J. G. BALLARD: <i>KINGDOM COME</i>	281
7.8 CORMAC MCCARTHY: <i>THE ROAD</i>	296
7.9 RICHARD K. MORGAN: <i>THIRTEEN</i>	312
7.10 CHUCK PALAHNIUK: <i>RANT</i>	317
7.11 GARY SHTEYNGART: <i>SUPER SAD TRUE LOVE STORY</i>	332
7.12 KEN MACLEOD: <i>INTRUSION</i>	340
7.13 ERIC BROWN: <i>THE SERENE INVASION</i>	346
8. CONCLUSION.....	352
9. BIBLIOGRAPHY	
9.1 PRIMARY SOURCES.....	366
9.2 SECONDARY SOURCES.....	367
10. NOTES.....	392

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PLAYLIST:

Attitude Adjustment 'Out of Hand' / 'No More Mr Nice Guy' / 'American Paranoia' / Shai Hulud 'That Within Blood Ill-Tempered' / 'Misanthropy Pure' / 'Hearts once Nourished with Hope and Compassion' / Flag of Democracy 'Schneller' / Flag of Democracy 'Hate Rock' / RAMBO 'Wall of Death the System' / SFA 'Solace' / Defy False Authority 'Defy False Authority' / Against All Authority 'Nothing New for Trash like You' / Stromae 'Alors on danse' / Ugly Duckling 'Combo Meal' / Amulet 'The Burning Sphere' / Sheer Terror 'Thanks fer Nuthin'' / SLIME 'Sich fügen heißt lügen' / Del the Funky Homosapien 'No Need for Alarm' / RZA as Bobby Digital LP / Dead Prez 'Revolutionary but Gangsta' / The Beastie Boys 'Ill Communication' / Prince Paul 'Politics of the Business' / Ghostface Killah 'Ironman' / Gravediggaz 'The Pick, the Sickle and the Shovel' / Raekwon 'Only Built 4 Cuban Linx' / KRS One 'Keep Right' / KRS One 'St.' / Group Home 'Livin' Proof' / Eminem 'The Marshall Mathers LP' / Dead Prez 'Let's Get Free' / Against All Authority-The Criminals 'Split 10"' / Muff Potter 'Wunschkonzert' / D.R.I. 'Dirty Rotten LP' / Leftover Crack 'Fuck World Trade' / Sheer Terror 'Love Songs for the Unloved' / Muff Potter 'Schrei wenn du brennst' / Gang Starr 'Full Clip: A Decade of Gang Starr' / Nas 'Illmatic' / Genius/GZA 'Liquid Swords' / Mobb Deep 'The Infamous' / KRS One 'Sneak Attack' / A Tribe Called Quest 'The Low End Theory' / Public Enemy 'There's a Poison Goin' on...' / Del the Funky Homosapien 'Both Sides of the Brain' / Gang Starr 'Step in the Arena' / Eric B. & Rakim 'Don't Sweat the Technique' / The Goats 'Tricks of the Shade' / Ghostface Killah 'Supreme Clientele' / The Lurkers 'Fulham Fallout' / U.K. Subs 'Another Kind of Blues' / The Fall 'Hex Enducation Hour' / Upright Citizens 'Bombs of Peace' / Ratos de porao 'Seculo sinistro' / The Saints 'I'm Stranded' / Alternative TV 'The Image Has Cracked' / FEAR 'The Record' / Stiff Little Fingers 'Inflammable Material' / Slapshot 'Back on the Map' / Negative FX 'Discography' / Rage Against the Machine 'Renegades' / The Prodigy 'Invaders Must Die' /

0. INTRODUCTION

The overall goal of this study is (first) to investigate the changes our global economic order went through during the last three decades, (second) to show how these changes are addressed in literature, especially in the literary genres of science fiction (SF) and dystopia, (third) to elucidate the postmodern condition with a particular emphasis on the question if it is still possible to speak of a postmodern condition as such in the present, and (fourth) if there still is an output of postmodern literature being produced in the new millennium.

This study's scope in terms of literary theory draws upon Tom Moylan's term of the 'critical dystopia'. Moylan defines the 'critical dystopia' as opposed to the classical dystopia of the Cold War era as a text that leaves open a space of possibility of a better society, i.e., it leaves intact the utopian impulse out of which both the genres of utopia and dystopia arise. Both Elena Zeißler and Susanna Layh in their recent studies dealing with the genre of dystopia employ Moylan's terminology and concur with his identification of the emergence of a new postmodern variety of dystopian fiction over the course of the last three decades. Postmodern dystopia shares with classical dystopia and science fiction in general the employment of cognitive estrangement, a *Verfremdungseffekt*, or defamiliarization inherent to the narrative perspective of the text. The formal aspects of dystopian fiction have undergone a process of flexibilization in the last three decades, while its thematical scope has remained unchanged. This study exclusively investigates the contemporary dystopia of the postmodern variety. The dystopia genre as such has undergone a process of hybridization with various other literary genres. The abandonment of the plot structure of the classical dystopia is flanked by a departure of linear narrativity. Instead analepses, prolepses, alternating timelines and competing narrative threads are being employed today. The new complexity displayed by contemporary dystopian novels frees the recipient from the two-dimensional evaluative continuum of classical dystopian fiction. The recipient who is at first unsettled by the new dystopia's narrative techniques and the fragmented narrative structure of these texts has to come up with a moral evaluation of the text him/herself, which magnifies the evaluative potency of the judgment thus arrived at. All the novels which are investigated in Part 7 of this study, except the one written by Eric Brown, fall under the heading of the critical, contemporary, or postmodern dystopia for their emphasis on moral ambiguity, their structural fragmentation, their openness to change, their pronounced generic hybridity and intertextuality, their denial of narrative closure and their denial of the

monoteleology which was characteristic of the classical dystopia.

As far as non-literary theory is concerned, this study predominantly draws upon the work of Fredric Jameson. The views of several other theorists of the postmodern, i.e., David Harvey, Jean-François Lyotard, Jean Baudrillard will be discussed as well. Jameson's most significant intervention in the realm of postmodern theory *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* was first published in 1984. The latter seminal text will be minutely analyzed in subchapter 4.3 of this work. Drawing upon the work of Lyotard, Jameson considers the postmodern as skepticism towards metanarratives and as a mode of experience of an euphoric and schizophrenic quality. Jameson follows Baudrillard when he claims that the postmodern is characterized by the rule of the third-order simulacrum (i.e., the simulacrum as a symbol without a referent). Baudrillard surmises that the postmodern condition is defined by the subject's inability to discern reality from its simulation. Baudrillard employs the term hyperreality to denote this state of affairs and Jameson identifies the latter as symptomatic of the postmodern as well. Following Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer's critical theory, Jameson describes the postmodern as a dedifferentiation of the spheres of culture, the economy, and theory in general. Jameson defines postmodern art as characterized by an ironic play with genre conventions, eclecticism, the blurring of the boundary between high and popular culture, pastiche, intertextuality, generic hybridity, and schizophrenic quality that, according to him, results from the postmodern crisis of historicity. Jameson reasons that the postmodern is the cultural expression of the third stage of capitalism, i.e., postmodern or late capitalism. Jameson's view of the postmodern is ambivalent. He describes it both as a freeing from the constraints of modernity and as an atrophy of sense and meaning. Conversely, this study takes up a positive view of the postmodern.

In chapter 1 the basic assumptions on which this study operates are investigated in detail. Here a specific emphasis is laid upon the tenets of post-structuralism. In this chapter I argue that there exists a very real connection between language and reality and thus that epistemology must and can be anchored in the material realm. In addition, the text here develops a pragmatic approach to the problematic of 'truth'. Furthermore, this chapter professes a stance that insists on the factuality of both history and outer reality and posits an intersubjective grounding of subjectivity. In this chapter the truth-tracking capabilities of historiography are defended against post-structuralist relativism. The notion of causality as a universal basis of all epistemology is elaborated upon as well. Furthermore, the postmodern

'death of the subject' is addressed. The postmodern 'waning of affect' and the notion of the schizophrenic subject are investigated in detail too. Moreover, a value criterion for differentiating 'good' literature from 'bad' literature is considered which transcends the modernist categorization into 'high' and 'low' culture and is at the same time congruent with postmodern theory. In addition, SF's position in the realm of art is being investigated with regard to the task of distinguishing trivial art from art of critical significance.

Chapter 2 elucidates the global developments our current economic order has gone through in the last three decades, particularly stressing the importance of the tenets of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism for the shaping of our globalized late capitalist economy. This chapter describes the new stage of capitalism the world entered in 1973, using the United Kingdom as an historical example and identifying the current global situation as a consequence of more than three decades of neo-liberal domination. This chapter draws up a balance after nearly thirty-five years of neo-liberalism in Europe and the US and traces the ascent of the New Right in Western politics. Moreover, the free-market trinity, the tripartite core tenet of neo-liberal ideology is investigated at length in this chapter as well. The influence of the major neo-liberal think tank, the Mont Pèlerin Society as well as the views of its founder Friedrich August Hayek are elucidated at this point. The advent and the demise of Keynesianism and the emergence of the internationalization processes which culminated in what is nowadays referred to as globalization are addressed in detail as well. The process of globalization and the Washington Consensus are investigated and identified as prime movers within the sphere of globalized capitalism. Furthermore, here it is argued that the proclamation of the postmodern condition was an authentic act of nomination. This chapter ends with a preliminary engagement of the key concepts whose further investigation constitutes the fourth chapter of this study.

Chapter 3 further investigates the various qualitative changes which make up our current stage of capitalist development. It deals with the interconnectedness of technology and the globalization process, addresses the cybernetic turn Western society has taken, and elucidates the role of life science in the current state of affairs. The corporation called Walmart is used as an example of the cybernetic organization of our societies here. Furthermore, this chapter elucidates the consequences of the dominance of cybernetic command and control in our world. Naomi Klein's concept of 'disaster capitalism' and the related terms of the 'economic shock treatment' and the 'shock doctrine' are elaborated upon as is Susan Strange's concept of 'casino

capitalism' as well as its consequences in the real world. In addition, the notion that neo-liberalism amounts to an undeclared class war of the super-powerful against the poor is elucidated in this chapter as well. Moreover, the dominance of the exchange value over the use value is elaborated upon. The ramifications of the re-precarization of the working world under neo-liberalism is dealt with in this chapter, refuting the category of 'career dissonance' and opposing it to the notion of 'social death'. Furthermore, the average working conditions under the regime of postmodern capitalism are addressed here as well.

Chapter 4 deals with postmodern theory and its applicability to the present reality, drawing upon the works of Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, and Jean-François Lyotard as well as David Harvey's writings on the postmodern, Karl Marx's concept of 'alienation,' and Slavoj Žižek's notion of 'cultural apartheid'. Furthermore, the mythopoetic categorical cluster of what I would like to call the Extropy Myth is elucidated in detail here and identified as a mainstay of late-capitalist mythology. This chapter describes various aspects of the postmodern (contemporary) condition and some of the phenomena which fall under the monicker postmodernism, or postmodernity, and elaborates on the thesis of the 'end of history' under the postmodern. The postmodern decline of democracy is addressed and identified as characteristic of the development of Western society after the fall of the Iron Curtain. Moreover, this study here calls for the extension of democracy to the economic realm. In addition, the ontological status of postmodernism is described here. The supposed death of postmodernism is thematized as well in this chapter. The many obituaries brought about by postmodernism are examined in terms of a postmodern theory of ruptures. This chapter furthermore distinguishes the dystopian elements of current reality, argues that to be postmodern is the sense that we are all living science-fictional lives, and elaborates upon the importance of technology to postmodernity.

Chapter 5 investigates the current state of postmodernist literature. Art's potential to be of critical significance under the cultural regime of postmodernism is investigated in particular here. The role dystopian SF plays in the realm of postmodernist literature is examined and it is proposed, drawing upon Peter Paik's study of contemporary dystopian SF both in the media of film in the form of animated movies and written fiction in the form of the comic medium, to consider the critical dystopia as a form of postmodern tragedy. The dialectical processes of homogenization and fragmentation of Western culture under postmodernism are addressed here as well. This chapter provides an extensive list of the characteristics of postmodern

literature and stresses the importance of SF topoi in the postmodern literary output. The two strands of postmodern literature that constitute a renaissance of literary realism under postmodernity are investigated under special consideration of Thomas Wolfe's manifesto for a renewal of social realism in literature. Various forms of contemporary literary realism and the different techniques and approaches to mimesis favored by them are juxtaposed in this chapter. Furthermore, this chapter extrapolates the emergence of a new hybrid fiction blending postmodern and realist fiction, contemplates the significance of high postmodernist metafiction, and investigates the relationship between postmodern realism and SF.

Chapter 6 analyzes the current situation in the field of literary SF. This chapter elaborates on the intimate relationship between postmodern and SF and incorporates the attempt of defining SF as a genre. The dystopian nature of contemporary reality is elaborated upon as well. Furthermore, this chapter elucidates SF's special relationship to the present, the past, and the future, and its dialectical position with regard to the presentation of a prognostic or retrospective point of view. This chapter furthermore elaborates upon the role cultural anxieties play with regard to SF. Darko Suvin's concept of the novum is introduced as a distinguishing feature of SF as well as Adam Roberts's approach to providing a comprehensive definition of SF as a genre of fiction. A short genealogy of the genre of SF is provided in this chapter as well. The genre of cyberpunk SF is elucidated here. This chapter concludes with the identification of a new seventh stage of literary SF in accordance with the findings of Marvin Booker and Anne-Marie Thomas.

Chapter 7 investigates the findings of the previous six chapters as they relate to concrete works of fiction produced over the course of the last three decades. The thirteen primary sources are presented in chronological order according to their date of publication here. Chapter 7.1 deals with Paul Auster's 1987 novel *In the Country of Last Things*. As in Auster's New York Trilogy, the city of New York is the subject of this novel, however distorted, or defamiliarized, its representation might be. The novel has been adapted to film in 2013. Auster belongs to the canon of postmodern literature and *In the Country of Last Things* features numerous postmodern themes and issues. It furthermore reflects the political landscape of its time of publication.

Subchapter 7.2's subject is American postmodernist *per se* Kurt Vonnegut's penultimate novel from the year 1991. *Hocus Pocus* is a highly political critique of the US at the time of publication in the form of a dystopian SF novel. This subchapter attempts to categorize *Hocus Pocus* from a generic point of view. What can already be remarked here is that it is an essentially

postmodern work of fiction which is distinguished by a high degree of intertextuality and a very unique relationship between fact and fiction. Vonnegut's penultimate novel is highly political and very controversial. Vonnegut was the prolific author of fourteen novels, many of which, like *Hocus Pocus*, deal with the motif of time travel. Vonnegut died in 2007.

Patricia Anthony's first novel *Cold Allies* was originally published in 1992. Subchapter 7.3 is concerned with said book. Although its story centers around a global military conflict, it is not a straight-forward work of military SF. The novel describes one possible outcome of events if the two postmodern problematics, the problematic of distributive injustice and the problematic of environmental degradation, are allowed to proceed unchecked. There are some parallels between the Third World War as depicted in the novel and the real-world Second World War and the story's characters frequently comment on these parallels. The story visualizes a very probable outcome of events if the dangerous discontent of the underprivileged inhabitants of the global South ever culminates in a united front of the South against the West.

In 7.4 Anthony's second novel is going to be investigated. Patricia Anthony's second novel is called *Brother Termite* and was first published in 1993. The novel is a work of speculative SF and constitutes an interesting variation on the alien-invasion subgenre of SF as well. It is also a work of the rather recent SF subgenre of posthuman SF, since its single focal character and main protagonist and hero is a member of an alien species which invaded earth peacefully fifty years before the time in which the action of the story takes place. Said alien species has rendered humankind extinct and is dying out itself. The movie rights for the novel were sold to James Cameron, but the film has never been realized. Patricia Anthony was a prolific author of SF and alternate history novels. She died on August 2, 2013 while this study was being written.

William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* from 2003, which is discussed in subchapter 7.5, is Gibson's eighth novel and the first part of the Bigend trilogy. The novel was nominated for the 2004 Arthur C. Clarke award. In psychology 'pattern recognition' is a term that refers to the human propensity to identify patterns in visual stimuli. By extension, and in accordance with Gibson's usage of the term, 'pattern recognition' applies to the human innate capability to recognize patterns in the overload of information characteristic of the postmodern condition. When one identifies patterns where there really are none, one has fallen victim to apophenia. The search for meaning in a setting characterized by postmodern information overload thus is a central

theme of the novel.

7.6. investigates Richard K. Morgan's third novel *Market Forces* from 2004. *Market Forces* was nominated for the British Arthur C. Clarke Award for the best SF novel of the preceding year in 2005. It is the first of Morgan's two stand-alone novels. The second stand-alone novel is *Thirteen* from 2007, which is investigated in this study in subchapter 7.9. As opposed to most first-wave cyberpunk from the late 1980s and early 1990s, *Market Forces* is a highly political fable which explicitly satirizes the current tenets of neo-liberalism. The novel also satirizes the neo-colonial practices inherent to the global market order. The story is a dystopian SF version of the typical rags to riches narrative which highlights the absence of upward social mobility by the very exceptionality of coming to pass as it does.

7.7 discusses J. G. Ballard's eighteenth and last novel from 2006 called *Kingdom Come*. J. G. Ballard was known as an author of near-future dystopian SF novels. He died in 2009. *Kingdom Come*, although set in the present is no exception to this rule. His late novels take place in an alternate present that is highly familiar, but takes to extremes current tendencies in a fashion that is definitely akin to dystopian SF. Ballard detects in late-capitalist consumerism a potential for fascism. He treats the suburbs, in which the story takes place as representative of the post-industrial UK *per se*. The novel investigates the notion of violence as constitutive to community.

Subchapter 7.8 investigates Cormac McCarthy's tenth and most recent novel from the year 2006. The novel deals with a father-son pair who travel through a post-apocalyptic US on foot. The cataclysmic event which turned the world of the novel into an ashen desert was most likely a nuclear war carried out with neutron bombs. *The Road* is the first venture of its author into the field of SF. McCarthy heretofore has gained acclaim as an accomplished author of literature that served to reinvent the Western genre.

In 7.9 Richard K. Morgan's second stand-alone novel is being considered. It is called *Thirteen*, or *Th1rte3n*, and was published in 2007. It constitutes Morgan's fifth novel and was released in the UK under the title *Black Man*. Said novel is the last work of SF by this author. After *Thirteen* Morgan turned to the genre of fantasy and produced a notable trilogy in said genre, the *A Land Fit for Heroes* trilogy (2008-14). *Thirteen* was awarded with Great Britain's most prestigious SF award, the Arthur C. Clarke Award, in 2008.

7.10 discusses Chuck Palahniuk's eighth novel from the year 2007, *Rant: An Oral Biography of Buster Casey*. Palahniuk is famous as an author of transgressive fiction which deals with taboo subjects in a way which violates the normal reading habits of the ordinary reader. *Rant* also features

transgressive elements. After having exhausted the horror genre in his notorious horror trilogy, Palahniuk turned to SF writing. He publicly explained that *Rant* was going to be the first volume of a “science fiction trilogy”ⁱ of his. This project, however, never came to fruition and *Rant* remains Palahniuk's solo SF novel.

Subchapter 7.11 deals with Gary Shteyngart's third novel from the year 2010 called *Super Sad True Love Story*. Like *In the Country of Last Things* the story is set place in a dystopian near-future version of New York. Like Auster's 1987 novel *Super Sad True Love Story* is, among other things, an epistolary novel as well. Gary Shteyngart himself, like the parents of the male lead character of the novel, was born in Soviet Russia and emigrated to the US, which gives the character's back story a certain tang of authenticity.

Ken MacLeod's 2012 novel *Intrusion* was short-listed for the 2013 Arthur C. Clarke Award. *Intrusion* is a dystopian SF novel by a well-known champion of the British SF boom, Ken MacLeod. *Intrusion* is his fourteenth and second-to-last novel. Subchapter 7.12 considers said novel at length.

7.13 deals with Eric Brown's nineteenth and second-to-last novel from 2013. It constitutes a new take at one of the most oldest subgenres of SF, the alien-invasion narrative. In *The Serene Invasion* a benign alien race conquers earth and solves all of humankind's most existential problems, thus highlighting the latter's urgency in the world of the present.

The specific thesis which underlies my argumentation in this text is the notion of the continuing relevance of postmodern theory to a valid conceptualization of the present reality and the continuing applicability of the terminology of postmodern literary theory to the literary output of the present. Furthermore, this study is an attempt to exemplify the existential impact that neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideology had and has upon the shape of both national and international politics. This study investigates the SF genre because it still represents the most explicit form of literary contemplation about the current status quo. Dystopian SF elucidates the current status quo from the point of view of a fictitious future and thus is able to garner important insights about the workings of our current socio-economic order.

Another question which is prominently addressed in this study is whether SF is prognostic or retrospective, i.e., whether its futures are made up of the past or of elements of an originally novel vision of society. Furthermore, this study tracks the development of the SF genre from its beginnings as infantile paraliterature to its rise to cultural dominance as a gigantic part of the culture industry at the present point in time. This study also purports to posit a valid

definition of the genre which takes heed of the numerous offshoots and generic variations SF has brought forth over the course of its development which spans more than a whole century. SF's relationship to postmodern theory and postmodern literary theory is investigated as well. The ideological tenets which undergird our current stage of capitalism and their thematization in specific works of dystopian literature form another subject of this study. Therefore, the capitalist mythology which permeates popular culture is addressed in detail as well. This study also provides a concise history of capitalism as a context for the literary developments that constitute an expression of the former. Therefore, Marx's insights into the workings of the capitalist mode of production are heeded in this study. The paramount importance of the two postmodern problematics, i.e., the problematic of distributive injustice and the problematic of ecological survival, are prominently addressed in this text as well. The merging of the Marxist categories of base and superstructure, of the economy and culture, as theorized by Fredric Jameson, is elucidated too. The authoritarian populism that constitutes the New Right's most powerful means of garnering electoral success is taken into account and the Social Darwinist ideology of its proponents is investigated in the text. The cultural Balkanization which is characteristic of the postmodern regime of micropolitics is scrutinized as well with a special emphasis on the way in which the former is used by the New Right in a novel variation of colonialism's original tactic of divide and conquer. The state of mind which results from three decades of neo-liberal public-relations propaganda is addressed in due course. The dystopian character of our present reality is theorized as well as its representation in postmodern literature.

1. PRELIMINARIES

1.1 DECONSTRUCTING THE POSTSTRUCTURALIST FALLACIES

1.1.1 THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL FALLACY

The poststructuralist view of language holds that language separates us from the real world and that there is no access to the real via language. Conversely, Hans Gumbrecht insists on the paramount importance of the material with regard to power. He refers to Foucault's notion of knowledge and discourse as relations of power. The underlying theme of all of Foucault's work is the relationship between power and knowledge. Foucault holds that power controls knowledge. According to him, scientific knowledge is an instrument of social control. Conversely, Gumbrecht insists that the 'soft' sciences work with "Begriffen für Macht und für Gewalt, welche sich der allgemeinen Tendenz zur Eliminierung des Physischen und Konkreten [...] nicht fügen" (Gumbrecht, 128). Gumbrecht insists on the material nature of the exercise of power as opposed to Foucault's view, which locates power relations in discourse production. The status of science is compromised in Foucault's view. To him science is unable to transcend the power relations upon which it is based. Gumbrecht, on the other hand, insists on the physical nature of power and limits its display to the material realm, since, as Tina Besley and Micheal Peters point out in their 2007 study on Foucault, "nothing is more material, physical, [and] corporeal than the exercise of power" (Besley/Peters, 59). A materialist approach to epistemological and ontological questions which heeds the paramount importance of the concrete and the physical is thus of the essence. Although Foucault himself denied that he was a poststructuralist, his work is, according to Stefan Neuhaus, characterized by a tension between structuralist and poststructuralist elements (Neuhaus, 61). It can thus be noted that Foucault was neither a structuralist nor a poststructuralist. His work is maybe best described as a protracted genealogy of modernity. Foucault's emphasis on the primary importance of language belongs to the poststructuralist elements of his work. The most extreme form of this emphasis on language is the assumption that discourse is everything, i.e., the taking literally of Derrida's statement "Il n'y a pas de hors-texte" (quoted in Slocombe, 82). Roger Burbach considers Derrida as a proponent of what he considers as 'strong' postmodernism, which he identifies as a "school [of thought which] undermines any political movements or ideas that are driven by basic social concerns" (Burbach, 83). Strong postmodernism can thus be said to take up a reactionary position which shores up the status quo. There is one theorist who perfectly exemplifies the notion of a 'strong,' poststructuralist, or extreme postmodernism, which professes, among other

things, the end of the social and society: Baudrillard is “the postmodern guru *par excellence*” (italics in original; Mortensen, 182, n. 9). Jameson openly admits that his work is, among others, based on Baudrillard's. Unlike Jameson, Baudrillard, however, is a linguistic idealist. For poststructuralist postmodernists, such as Baudrillard, reality simply is a linguistic construct. Best and Kellner rightfully remark that the ontological doubt sown by postmodern extremists like Baudrillard “ultimately help[s] conservative powers” (Best/Kellner, 243). Kellner contends that Baudrillard's ontological skepticism and his ethical “nihilism [deny] hope for a better future” (Kellner (1989), 118). If there is no such thing as society as the abstract entirety of the social, there is no hope for future change because there is nothing to be changed. For Baudrillard history is the closed circle of Nietzschean eternal recurrence. To him there is no truth and no reality and thus no possibility of change. “Für [ihn] gibt es [...] keine Wirklichkeit mehr” (Behrens, 34f). Robert McLaughlin remarks that Baudrillard's poststructuralist postmodernism “is reactionary [...] in that it takes the form of rebellion[, while] its dismissal of content [...] subverts actual rebellion” (McLaughlin, 58f). There is no escape from Baudrillard's hyperreality; it is impossible to transcend it. The “die has cast. 'Hyperreality'—the reign of the 'simulacrum'—confronts us as ineluctable fate, an inexorable, postmodern *condition humaine*” (italics in original; Wolin, 306). This view suggests that there is no way out of the labyrinth of language; no 'real' which could serve as referent, but only language games. According to Johannes Bertens, Baudrillard's “work exhibits all the worst traits of poststructuralism: a contempt for facts and definitions, a style that is equally reluctant to give concessions to the demands of the concrete and a grand vision that develops distinctly metaphysical overtones” (Bertens (1995), 144). In Baudrillard's simulacral hyperreality, his rendering of the postmodern condition, there is no room for anything but despair: “In the epitome of postmodern political fatalism, the only strategy Baudrillard has to recommend is 'death'” (Wolin, 306). Peter Zima goes even farther. He remarks that Baudrillard's absolute negation of reality can lead to violence, that it either has no consequence at all or leads to “Verzweiflung und Gewaltanwendung” (Zima (2001), 119f). According to Zima, Baudrillard's ethical nihilism and his denial of the real may lead to violent reactions on the part of the human subject trapped in hyperreality. Discourse and language are essential to epistemological questions but not to questions of ontology. Knowledge is power, but only in the figurative sense. This is not to propose a naïve positivism, but the material and the concrete must be acknowledged if one wants to avoid running into aporia at every turn.

Terry Eagleton points out that for the poststructuralists “discourse or interpretation” eclipse the 'real' (Eagleton (2012), 44). Poststructuralism thus “imagines that words or concepts are objects which intervene between ourselves and reality” (Ibid.). Okka Hübner accordingly remarks that the “Grundannahme[...], dass die Sprache aller Erkenntnis und Bedeutung vorgängig ist, [...] für den Poststrukturalismus fundamental ist” (Hübner, 32). Judith Butler therefore asks how we can know “what exists prior to discursive articulation” (Butler, 327). If sensory stimuli are the basis of what human beings perceive as reality, then it is sensible to argue that everything we know is “no more than hypothetical inferences from the stuff of our sensations” (Eagleton (2003), 223). Martin Holz accordingly argues that “the human mind [...] is [a] most intricate piece of VR technology” (Ibid., 17). This latter view declares perception to be another form of representation. Everything we perceive is filtered through our built-in mechanisms of perception which shape and process sensory data in a human-specific way. In this train of thought, the world appears to us as it does because we perceive it this way and not because of some intrinsic quality of the objects. The *noumenon*, the essence of the things in the empirical world, remains for ever out of reach of our senses. We therefore, in the poststructuralist view, are incapable of ascertaining that our view of the world is correct because we are innately incapable of shattering the linguistic grid which separates us from the 'real'. We can see the world only as human beings. This fact limits all our search for truth. This poststructuralist view corresponds to the skeptical epistemology of Friedrich Nietzsche, who formulated a similar idea about the human access to truth. Conversely, the fact that our mechanisms of perception are themselves material and as such belong to the material realm of things grounds our perception in the concrete. The physical body is the anchor which ties our system of perception and our very subjectivity to the phenomenological realm. Our physicality as embodied subjectivity is what connects our language and our discursively formed notions to the real.

In opposition to Nietzsche's radical skepticism, empiric epistemologist Mia Gosselin contends that “generalization, induction and causality are methods of thought that are valid, because [they are] successful” (Gosselin, 197). She, furthermore, argues that the capability of learning from experience what is to be expected “occurs long before humans can speak and that it is a basic cognitive ability [...] *underlying* [...] linguistic behavior” (my italics; Ibid., 198). It can thus be noted that the causality principle predates language. Gosselin claims that in little children “the acquisition of language and the development of the capacity to solve logical problems are independent” (Ibid., 147).

Generalization, induction, and causality “are thus *pre-linguistic* cognitive activities” (my italics; *Ibid.*, 198); i.e., they exist and are intelligible prior to discursive articulation. The faculties of perception are formed independently from language and, therefore, outside of, or prior to, discourse. Thus, the poststructuralist contention that there is no pre-discursive access to the world and that “[u]nsere Wahrnehmung [...] immer bereits bestehenden symbolischen Ordnungen unterworfen [...] ist” (Hübner, 45) is untenable. Perception is not a form of representation as Holz suggests in the above quotation, but a physical and mental instrument to grasp reality in a fashion that is *not* arbitrary. Consequently, truth and other categories may well be linguistic constructs—which nonetheless serve their purpose as long as they are utilized in realization of their relative contingency—but outside reality is not, and neither are we. For instance, not even social behavior exclusively relies on language, since much of the information transmitted in a social conversation is delivered non-verbally. To substitute text, discourse, or language, for the world constitutes a form of idealism and theoretical defeatism *par excellence*. The answer to Butler's question, with regard to human beings, thus is that there exists “a universal core of pre-conceptual [...] thought, which builds the fundamental layer for basic and invariable ways of thinking” and for language, discourse, and subjectivity (Gosselin, 76). Causality comes before language and therefore it is not tenable to argue that human consciousness or language 'produce' reality. Objects and practices may derive their meaning from language, but not their existence, nor does the knowledge of their existence exclusively depend on language. In this sense, at the very least in basic cases, truth claims are valid. If this were to be true, the poststructuralist claim that “subjectivity and agency are not fixed prior to language” (Weedon, 61) is not only compromised but untenable as well.

Postmodernism's (read: poststructuralism) paradoxical approach to language which, on the one hand, claims that language is everything, while, on the other hand, denying any connection between language and reality compromises, among many other things, the notion of truthful representation. Paradoxically, “postmodernism ultimately finds itself asserting an anti-realist stance as the *most realistic, as the most moral*” (italics in original; Toth, 108). This could mean that at the very core of postmodernism's problematization of mimesis, representation, and truth lies a repressed desire for truthful representation, “a passion[, a] craving[,] for the real” and authenticity (Schenk, 268). If this were true, a simple pragmatic correspondence theory of truth would suffice to meet this craving while remaining aware that

every 'truth' is an approximation and as such a human concept which is not based on a metaphysical foundation. Truth as correspondence to the real world is the bedrock of any form of argumentation. Zima points out that it is of paramount importance that “[dies]er Wahrheitsbegriff [...] gegen jede Art von unverbindlichen Pluralismus und Relativismus verteidigt [...] wird” (Zima (2001), 16). Accordingly, Christopher Norris remarks that “the issue of truth—of getting things right in the face of competing ideological or politically-motivated claims—is a matter of the utmost importance” (Norris, 145). Reality sets the limits of textualization, not the other way around. A correspondence theory of truth is a *sine qua non* for science and rational argumentation in general. Ihab Hassan points out that “truth as correspondence [is the yardstick of] naïve science and empiricism” (Hassan, 204). Yet without this 'naïve yardstick' everything is permitted and anything goes, which translates into a “self-defeating [...] radical relativism of extreme particularism, which [...] denies both empathy and obligation” (Ibid.) and thus undermines any form of ethics or moral. It can thus be noted that poststructuralist epistemological doubt fosters ethical nihilism. As far as universals are concerned, it can be noted that they have reality through the existence of the particular individuals which fall under the heading of a universal. Hassan comes to the conclusion that “without qualified generalizations, no appeal to reason, freedom, or justice can stand” (Hassan, 205). “Pragmatic or 'soft' universals” are thus a *sine qua non* both of epistemology and ethics as well as of logical argumentation in general (Ibid.).

Daniel Cordle suggests that since our sensory data has to be considered with a skeptical eye it is necessary to work “with a provisional notion of knowledge” (Cordle, 59). He propagates “a spirit of interested and skeptical inquiry [...] that [...] also [must] be turned on one's own practice” (Ibid., 189). Thus, one has to keep in mind the *relative* contingency of the values with which one operates as well as the provisional status of one's own definitions. Noel Carroll claims that “one can easily maintain that science approximates the truth about mind-independent, culture-independent, reality” (Carroll, 95). The only thing knowledge can never be independent of is the fact that truth always relates to human parameters. Science approximates truth in a human-specific fashion. That is, by the way, the adequate counter-evidence to Nietzsche's epistemological skepticism. Truth cannot be thought of as independent from man. Neither can reality. Thus, the notion of truth always takes up a human-specific point of view. This trivial acknowledgment effectively serves to take the wind out of the sails of Nietzsche-inspired epistemological skepticism like the one favored by poststructuralism. Carroll,

furthermore, insists that “history and the dialectical methodology [of science are] truth-tracking” (Ibid., 96). As Marvin Harris points out, “science is the best system yet devised for reducing subjective bias, error, untruths, lies, and frauds” (Harris, 158). It is therefore crucial to uphold the standards of scientific research in the 'soft' sciences as well.

Philip Tew argues that “irrealism and relativism” are the touchstone of postmodernism (Tew, 37), and Carroll sees in postmodernism “the triumph of relativism” (Carroll, 95). Indeed, a perspectival, relativist view of epistemology is a postmodern (poststructuralist) theme already present in the early Nietzsche, who based the irrealist metaphysics of his later work on exactly this epistemological relativism. Jürgen Habermas, accordingly, condemned postmodernism as a revival of Nietzschean irrealism. One could identify this train of thought with the anti-representational strand of postmodernism which is constituted by poststructuralist theory, so-called 'strong' postmodernism, without having to condemn all of postmodernist theory as linguistic idealism or irrealist nihilism. Tew in this context even speaks of a post-structuralist “'banalization' in critical thinking [that] has been misread as offering something profound” (Tew, 37). By propagating the epistemic self-referentiality of language poststructuralism professes to transcend the traditional process of knowledge production, while this train of thought, in fact, constitutes nothing more than a dead end and an abolishment of scientific research which is declared equivalent to mythic fabrication.

Lena Petrovic remarks that the notion that “the absence of any ascertainable metaphysical truth [does] make all knowledge metaphorical [is not] originally postmodern [...], nor does it matter much” (Petrovic, 74). The awareness of the metaphorical nature of knowledge does not invalidate its pragmatic effectiveness. Poststructuralism's “dominant idea is that there is no direct access to the real, which can only be problematically mediated by language and textuality” (Gregson, 4). This last formulation concisely encapsulates the poststructuralist fallacy. Truth is a human concept and as such does not need a metaphysical foundation. The principle of causality (as the most basic form of narrative) precedes language and is a vital tool for grasping the complexities of the real world. Narrative is causally structured for exactly this reason, *not the other way around*, because the human mind learns to interpret the world in terms of the causality principle and then, temporally speaking afterwards, it learns to verbalize said principle via language. Cause and effect are the most basic form of narrative and as such the basis of all epistemology. The narrative of causality is the instinctive preconceptual basis

of all thought. Thus, “it does not at all seem exaggerated to view humans as narrative animals, as *homo fabulans*—the tellers and interpreters of narrative” (Currie, 6). The realization of the relative contingency of our narratives' truth claims does not compromise their effectiveness.

Jost Hermand challenges postmodernism in general and poststructuralist theory in particular. He argues that (strong) postmodernism is a theoretical discourse which holds that putting into doubt the foundations of logical argumentation is a subversive stance, while as a matter of fact this stance allows theorists to ignore the material relations of power which are the real basis of culture and society (Hermand, 170). Hermand suggests that such poststructuralist/postmodernist discourse uses its epistemological skepticism to dodge discussing the real issues of pertinence. The poststructuralist fallacy consists of supposing the epistemic self-referentiality of language. Postmodernist theory must accept Hermand's challenge and must thus face the concrete political-economic facts which continue to shape our reality. Only a postmodernism purged of the poststructuralist fallacy will be capable of rising to the occasion.

1.1.2 THEORETICAL SUICIDE

Sean Homer rightfully identifies poststructuralist epistemological “skepticism [...] in general with not Holocaust revisionism, but as contributing to the intellectual climate in which it can flourish” (Homer, 79). If all texts are equally valid as sources of historiography, its capacity for issuing statements of fact is compromised. Thus, for instance, Holocaust revisionists could make their sickening claims with the same truth value as historians who utter the facts in accordance with the scientific methodology of historiography. With regard to the latter Homer insists that “there are both extrinsic and intrinsic limits to emplotment set by the historical evidence itself” (Ibid., 81). He defends the truth-tracking capacity of historiography against poststructuralist approaches which treat history as an assortment of equally valid texts. McLaughlin explains that the fact “[t]hat we know our world through discourse does not deny the facts. Gravity is a fact; it is explained and made knowable through discourse” (McLaughlin, 61). Poststructuralism subverts this crucial difference between statements of fact and mythic fabrication. Homer suggests “that if we accept the notion of history as real we can avoid [a] theoretically and politically debilitating collapse and avoid identifying history with its representation” (Ibid., 82). In other words, denying the factuality of history is a form of theoretical suicide. This insight is not meant to propagate a naïve positivism, but to ascertain the parameters inside of

which a critical theory has to and must operate.

Ian Gregson remarks that poststructuralist “skepticism is linked to political pessimism” (Gregson, 91). Moreover, poststructuralist theorists like Baudrillard ultimately propagate nothing other than passive fatalism, especially with regard to politics. Poststructuralism thus is a deeply reactionary ideology. Gregson further argues that “subjectivity [is] socially constructed (and inseparable, therefore, from intersubjectivity)” (Gregson, 33). The notion of an intersubjective grounding of subjectivity provides a viable alternative to the poststructuralist erosion of subjectivity. Žižek holds that logical argumentation and reasoning and the cognitive processes which underlie them are egalitarian and thus communist in nature. “Communism begins [...] with thinking, with the egalitarian universality of thought” (Žižek (2013), 3). He remarks that “thought as such [...] is communist, [because] its practice embod[ies] the axiom of unconditional equality” (Žižek (2011), 374). And so does a postmodernism purged of the poststructuralist fallacy. At its most basic level truly postmodernist theory affirms radical democracy and a pluralism of subject positions.

Helga Thalhofer voices a typically poststructuralist view which amounts to a concise recapitulation of the poststructuralist fallacy when she insists that the referent in poststructuralist theory “only appears in texts as a spectre or force [and therefore]language can exclusively speak about itself” (Thalhofer, 159). To Thalhofer outside reality consists of a sum of *noumenons* about which no judgments are possible. This position is therefore one of linguistic idealism. Conversely, Tew insists that “any textual example represents at a certain level [...] something more than a reflexivity or self-referentiality in fact [is] concerned [...] with something beyond language” (Tew, 43). Tew's position is the valid one of the two. One has to believe that we can reach outer reality with our argumentation because otherwise there is no basis for argumentation. If language can only speak about itself, there is no sense in speaking at all. Thus, poststructuralist theory neatly self-destructs. Furthermore, Thalhofer speaks of “the self-unraveling effect of language” (Thalhofer, 162, n. 21) and concludes that “the search for meaning [necessarily] runs into aporia” (Ibid., 169). According to her, the axiom that language reaches into the real world necessarily “leads to ideology and dogmatic statements about the way things are” (Ibid., 171). She thus repeats a line of argument Nietzsche employed over 100 years ago, i.e., that all language is metaphor, that truth is perspectival and multiple, that language does not reach into the material world of *noumenal* objects, and that any causal relationship between subject and object is purely fictional, being

purely linguistic. According to this poststructuralist view, prototypically represented by Thalhfer, the assumption of a connection between linguistic representation and the extra-textual world of the referent necessarily leads to foundationalist universalism which is unaware of its own ideological nature.

If one assumes that all texts exclusively constitute intertextual language games, all texts become necessarily political. The latter emphasis on the political function of texts is the most salvageable strand of the poststructuralist approach. Thalhfer of course views 'ideology' as purely negative. However, the meaning of the term as a coherent system of ideas is not etymologically charged with a pejorative meaning. Poststructuralism necessarily must see any coherent system of ideas as negative, since its own axioms condemn it to unendingly dwell on the surface of things. All statements of fact, to the poststructuralist mindset, are dogmatic statements about the way things are. Simple acknowledgments of facts, such as gravity or the Holocaust, thus become dogmatic ideology. Poststructuralism assumes the posture of the iconoclast, while the only thing it actually manages to topple is the grounds of its own argumentation.

Poststructuralist theorists draw upon the Saussurean model of communication, which holds that the relationship between signifier, signified, and referent is an arbitrary one. However, this arbitrary relationship does in no way undo language's investment in extratextual reality. To textualize necessarily always involves professing certain ideological positions, but it also always involves an investment into reality as such, both in the manner of reference to the experiential world of physical being and in the form of reference to social intersubjectivity. One cannot subtract reality from representation. Such an operation would necessarily lead to a debilitating aporia of meaning and not, like the proponents of poststructuralism believe, to some kind of privileged insight into the 'true' order of things. Furthermore, "[t]he refutation of any integration of the linguistic frame within being (from which it is self-evidently emergent) [denies] ontology in its holistic and fuller sense" (Ibid., 45). Tew, therefore, insists "that all [...] texts [...] presuppose a reality both as constituents of themselves and existentially independent of themselves" (Tew, 46). The action of text production, i.e., the act of discursive intervention, automatically places one outside the self-destructive axioms of poststructuralism "because by its very nature those actions and their objective, recoverable traces [...], offer referential, ontological acts and models" (Ibid., 49). To textualize is to posit oneself with regard to and in reality. Language does not obstruct us from reality, but helps us to describe

and understand it. The poststructuralist fallacy clearly constitutes an example of what may be called theoretical suicide. Poststructuralism thus “ended up [...] by reducing knowledge and meaning to a rubble of signifiers” (Harvey (2000), 350). Poststructuralist theory is not so much, as Baudrillard put it, a game of vestiges, but much more a zero-sum game. Poststructuralism's “linguistic idealism [results in] the 'death of man'” as the abolition of subjectivity and intersubjectivity (Best/Kellner, 27). However, as Best and Kellner point out, “most postmodern theorists are not linguistic idealists” (Best/Kellner, 27). It is thus perfectly possible to salvage the discourse of postmodernism by freeing it from the poststructuralist fallacy.

Poststructuralist linguistic idealism is a reflection of the impact on the individual subject of the “technological media, especially television, and of consumer capitalism” (Gregson, 20). As has already been pointed out above, the physical system of perception is not a form of representation, or a VR technology inherent to the human body, but a means of gathering human-specific data about the world which is independent from, or an a priori of, language. In the contemporary the postmodern subject is as a rule constantly bombarded with information of seemingly equal validity. Propaganda, spin, and social engineering have become so ubiquitous as to almost eclipse reality. Postmodern reality has become almost intractable. The tremendous impact the media revolution has had on subjectivity must thus be heeded in any theory of the postmodern which wishes to claim a sufficient level of verisimilitude. In the postmodern age, according to Bertens, “[h]istory has disappeared and the present has dissolved in images” (Bertens (1995), 164). The postmodern sensibility is marked by “the overwhelming sense how vast, intractable and outside any individual or even collective control everything is” (Harvey (2000), 350). The poststructuralist attack on the notion of subjectivity and selfhood can thus very well be seen as a direct consequence of this state of affairs. The excess supply of information seems to eclipse reality as much as the real is eclipsed by discourse in poststructuralism. The postmodern subject is subjected to a barrage of information through the media. Everything submits to the rules of the spectacle. “The immediacy of events, the sensationalism of the spectacle [thus] become the stuff of which consciousness is forged” (Harvey (2000), 54).

All inhabitants of the West can be said to share a common cultural horizon of experience shaped by the media and communication technology. “Aufgrund unserer Technologien verstehen und begreifen wir die Welt heute auf eine völlig andere Weise” (Harvey (2011), 222) than our forbears. Robert Kurz and Eric Hobsbawm consider the advent of the computer age as the third

industrial revolution, whose consequences we only now are beginning to comprehend. In a similar vein, Holz points out that “the complex system of media constitute[s] a new a priori” of the human condition (Holz, 68). “Durch die [...] technisch[e] Reproduktion von Bildern und deren Verbreitung durch die visuellen Massenmedien entsteht ein breit gestreuter Erfahrungshorizont der Rezipienten“ (Bauer, 51). Lipina-Berezkina supports this acknowledgment of a new *Erfahrungshorizont* of cultural memory as the basis of “a new 'binding' strategy of reading” as interpretation (Lipina-Berezkina, 281): “It is the reader's [...] cultural knowledge that can create the situation for binding, understanding, and delight” (Ibid., 281). An epistemology of the postmodern has thus to take into account the impact of the different and decisive influences the multi-media revolution has on the process of knowledge formation, epistemology, and socialization. Let us conclude by noting that the poststructuralist and -modernist emphasis on the importance of mediation through language at least serves to heighten “the relevance of literature to real life” (Schwerdtfeger, 12).

1.1.3 THE POSTSTRUCTURALIST SUBJECT

The postmodern subject is decentered, fragmented, aleatory, and empty of content and emotion. However, Zima rightfully remarks that “die Zersetzung [...] der Subjektivität letztlich in planes Einverständnis mit der Gewalt der Gegenwart umschlagen muß” (Zima (2001), 190). Perry Anderson attests that under postmodernism “the bounded self of old begins to fray” (Anderson, 57). The postmodern subject first and foremost no longer is a citizen of a political totality, but an isolated consumer, a rational utility maximizer. The act of consumption has become the prime expression of individuality in the postmodern. The fragmented satisfaction of infinite consumer desire is the supreme emotional goal of the postmodern subject.

The poststructuralist erosion of subjectivity serves to shore up the status quo. According to Anderson, postmodernism's “dismissal of the centred subject in favour of erratic swarmings of desire colludes with the amoral hedonism of the market” (Anderson (1998), 115). Wilson points out the infinite expansion of “the operative notion of 'need' [under late capitalism to an extent] that it [ha]s become virtually indistinguishable from desire” (Wilson, 225). One can never have enough of something one does not really need. And since the things human beings really need, such as sensible, meaningful work, or steady relationships based on mutual respect for the other's individuality, are, nowadays, virtually unavailable, an insatiable demand for ersatz-experience is being generated. Insatiable demands, in the sense of desires that can never

be satisfied, voids that can never be filled, problems that can never be solved, and diseases that can never be cured, are the capitalist ideal, since, as Marx noticed, perpetual expansion is the essence of capital as a process. The construct of the postmodern subject mirrors the vicissitudes of a now global and virtually ubiquitous and thus 'totalitarian' market order (Kurz (2013), 115). Other critics speak of 'market-Stalinism' in this regard. We live in an epoch in which the market rules supreme in every possible respect. Thus the notion of subjectivity has been totally commodified.

Jameson speaks of a “fundamental mutation [...] in [...] the disposition of the subject” (Jameson (1991), 9). This change of disposition with regard to the subject is referred to by Jameson as “the waning of affect in postmodern culture” (Ibid., 10). Patrick O'Donnell similarly remarks that “the quanta of love and trust have severely depleted” in the postmodern (O'Donnell, 50): “Of course, it would be inaccurate to suggest that all affect, all feeling or emotion, all subjectivity, has vanished” (ibid.). However, that is ultimately exactly what Jameson does. Hans Bertens in this regard poses a rhetorical question when he asks: “How could we possibly establish whether we 'postmoderns' [...] feel less affect than [...] the 'moderns' did” (Bertens (2004), 31)? Obviously, contemporary human beings have the same capacity for affect as their modernist forbears. It is the degree of the commodification of everyday life which qualitatively distinguishes the subject of modernism from the postmodern subject.

Jameson argues that postmodern art is qualitatively different from modernist art because the very concept of artistic “expression presupposes [...] a whole metaphysics of the inside and outside[,] the outward dramatization of inward feeling” (Jameson (1991), 11f). According to Jameson, under postmodernism this 'metaphysics of affect' has been eradicated by the infamous postmodern 'death of the subject'. According to him, under postmodernity interiority has become extinct. Jameson is pursuing a quintessentially poststructuralist line of argument here. He suggests that “the poststructuralist critique of the [...] depth model, is useful for us as a very significant symptom of [...] postmodernist culture” (Ibid., 12). The absence of depth in any form is considered to be characteristic of the postmodern. Jameson, for instance, reads the 'death of the subject' as a symptom of life under postmodernity. “[D]epth is replaced by surface, or by multiple surfaces” (Ibid.). According to Jameson, the affectless postmodern subject is fragmented into a rubble of surfaces; emotional depth is substituted by superficial desire. Moreover, Jameson suggests that “the subject has lost its capacity actively to [...] organize its past and future into a coherent experience” (Ibid., 25), which denies the

postmodern subject the ability to graft a coherent narrative out of its history, which destroys the subject's identity because such a narrative is central to the formation of identity. This loss of subjective historicity translates into a zeitgeist which exclusively values the immediacy of the here and now. The loss of the capacity to form a temporal narrative of identity results in a totalization of the present moment in time. Jameson therefore deems the postmodern subject 'schizophrenic' because it is literally split into so many surfaces. Jameson's "schizophrenic [subject] is reduced to an experience of [...] a series of pure and unrelated presents in time" (Jameson (1991), 27). According to Mark Currie, the "schizophrenic is [...] the product of schizoid culture which seems to aspire to the collapse of linear meaning into the compressed time of a perpetual present" (Currie, 107). Jeremy Green in turn argues that the "emblematic postmodern experience is that of the schizophrenic, for whom [reality has] splintered into fragments of heightened sensory experience" (Green, 31). The postmodern subject lives in a temporal condition of a perpetual present. Jameson enters the realm of linguistic idealism here with his version of the 'death of the subject'. According to him, the end of the subject brings with it "the end of psychopathologies [and a] liberation [...] from the older *anomie* of the centered subject" and from all emotion (*italics in original*; Jameson (1991), 15). This is what Jameson describes as 'the waning of affect' under postmodernism. Without a stable sense of selfhood, there is no entity left to affect. Jameson comes to this untenable conclusion by way of the 'poststructuralist fallacy,' i.e., by assuming the basic self-referentiality of language, and by substituting the epistemological and ethical subject with the linguistic subject. Nonetheless, read metaphorically as a manner of metonymic description of real-world phenomena, Jameson's argumentation is definitely very valuable. Nevertheless, Zima remarks in this regard that "die Behauptung, der Subjektbegriff sei überholt, [...] barer Unsinn [...] ist" (Zima (2001), 69), and Currie points out that "it is necessary to have a linear concept of time, not only because it is the basis of guilt and moral action [...] but because the narrative of personal identity and the experience of selfhood are at stake" (Currie, 106). The professed end of psychopathologies oddly collides with Jameson's statement of the schizophrenia inherent to the postmodern subject, since schizophrenia *is* a psychopathology, although admittedly not in the sense in which Jameson, Currie, and Green, use the term.

According to Jameson, in the postmodern the "present of the world [...] comes before the subject with heightened intensity, bearing *a mysterious charge of affect*[,] of euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic

intensity” (my italics; Jameson (1991), 27f). Jameson identifies alienation as the emotional equivalent of modernism, while he links the postmodern to schizophrenic intensity and euphoria. The fact that euphoria and other intense experiences are forms of affect themselves is rather obvious and contradicts Jameson's thesis of the postmodern 'waning of affect' as well. Jameson's 'end of history' is closely aligned with his own notion of the 'death of the subject'. Anderson paraphrases Jameson's exploration of the impact postmodernity has on the human psyche in this regard as follows: “Among the traits of the new subjectivity [...] was the loss of an active sense of history, [thus] psychic life becomes unnervingly accented and spasmodic, marked by sudden dips of level or lurches of mood” (Anderson (1999), 56f). Zima asks why the number of the mentally ill (if one accepts the factuality of mental illness, which I do), i.e., the number of psychotics and neurotics, keeps increasing. “*Eine* Antwort lautet: Weil die symbolische Ordnung als Kommunikationssystem von [...] der marktbedingten Vermittlung durch den Tauschwert entwertet wird” (italics in original; Zima (2010), 266). The exchange value of the totalitarian market order has become the supreme value of all. All other values derive their validity from the exchange value. The postmodern schizophrenic subject is represented in reality by the real psycho-pathology of individuals. However, Zima supposes that it is the postmodern interchangeability of values of the ubiquitous market place that causes the very real psychopathologies of neurosis and psychosis, as opposed to the metaphorical condition of Jameson's schizophrenic. Furthermore, the increase in psychopathologies Zima identifies in our current culture in the above citation refutes Jameson's thesis of the 'end of psychopathologies'. In fact, the rates of psychopathologies, such as depression, are skyrocketing. This clearly suggests that there is a verifiable connection between the new exigencies of flexible, post-Fordist capitalism and this distinct rise in psychopathologies.

Note that Jameson's usage of the term schizophrenia as describing a split personality mixes the clinical definition of dissociative identity disorder with a very general term that “is a non-technical term without a definition [that therefore] should not be used at all”ⁱⁱ. The characterization of the postmodern subject as schizophrenic—even if meant only metaphorically—is thus misleading. Furthermore, Jameson's professed end of psychopathologies is simply counterfactual. Jameson likewise describes modernity as “the age of anxiety” (Jameson (1991), 11), whereas he argues that today “concepts such as anxiety [...] are no longer appropriate” (Ibid., 14). He elaborates that a “shift in the dynamics of cultural pathology [has taken place which] can be

characterized as one in which the alienation of the subject is displaced by the latter's fragmentation" (Ibid., 14). Here Jameson speaks of cultural pathologies of the kind the very end of which he declared above. His argumentation here culminates in "the 'death' of the subject itself" (ibid., 15). Conversely, I argue that postmodern capitalism in fact totalizes the isolation of the individual instead of weakening the concept of individuality. Green describes "pervasive feelings of anomie and free-floating anxiety a[s] aspects of [postmodern] sensibility" (Green, 4). Note that Green lists anxiety among the aspects of postmodern sensibility. Martin Ableitinger adds that both commodification and alienation characterize the postmodern condition (Ableitinger, 102f). It is the ubiquitous commodification of the late-capitalist market order that brings about the interchangeability of values that results in the very real psychopathologies of psychosis and neurosis, as well as a problematization of meaning, *and a potentiation of alienation*.

I insist on an allegorical reading of Jameson's death of the subject because the humanist subject is a sine qua non of all ethics. Furthermore, alienation has certainly not disappeared under postmodernismⁱⁱⁱ. Conversely, it has exponentially intensified. Kellner for instance speaks of a 'totalization of alienation': "in a society in which everything is a commodity that can be bought and sold, *alienation is total*" (my italics; Kellner (1989), 18). Under postmodernism everything has been commodified; there literally is no exterior to capitalism that is available anymore. Thus modernist alienation is raised to the power of two under postmodernism, a potentiation which is reflected in a profound transformation of the emotional make up of the postmodern subject. Harvey attests that "a widespread and profound shift in the structure of feeling" has indeed taken place (Harvey (2000), 9). Jameson describes this shift as a crisis of historicity.

Jameson perceives this alleged crisis of historicity as central to our times. This leads him to identify a problematization "of temporal organization in general" (Jameson (1991), 25) as characteristic of postmodern temporality. Jameson identifies a "basic feature of postmodernism, [in] its peculiar way with time [which he] calls schizophrenia" (Jameson (2002), 135). Jameson translates the temporal problematic of the postmodern crisis of historicity into a textual or semiotic problem. He argues that time with regard to the subject is expressed through narrative, the most basic form of which is the narrative of causality. When one is no longer capable of envisaging one's own narrative, time ceases to have meaning and one is trapped in an eternal present. Consciousness is then confined to fragmentary moments of heightened perception and euphoria. The reason for the postmodern subject's fragmentation in Jame-

son's argumentation is thus the poststructuralist notion of the self-referentiality of language. For the schizophrenic postmodern subject, the signifying chain is broken and it is thus left with "a rubble of distinct and unrelated signifiers" (Jameson (1991), 25). To Jameson this postmodern schizophrenic temporality is "a language disorder" (Jameson (2002), 136). According to him, the postmodern subject is *eo ipso* severed from any access to the referent. In this view, the signifier has intensional content only through its relation to other signifiers and not by virtue of any faculty inherent to the signified. "The signified [...] is an effect produced by the interrelationship of material signifiers" (Ibid., 136f). Thus the postmodern (read: poststructuralist) subject is left with the material signifier and nothing else; "a signifier that has lost its signified has thereby transformed into an image" (Ibid., 138). If there is no connection between the signifier and the signified the whole of language becomes contingent. Bertens points out that such an "unconditional surrender to language [would indeed spell] 'the end of man'" (Bertens (1995), 47). Here it signifies the death of the subject. Jameson suggests that the subject's psychological unity is "a function of language, or better still of the sentence" (Jameson (1991), 27): "If we are unable to unify past, present, and future of the sentence, then we are similarly unable to unify past, present, and future of our own biographical experience or psychic life" (Ibid.). Jameson identifies the epistemological, ontological, and ethical subject with the grammatical subject here. In Jameson's line of argument, the schizophrenic postmodern subject's psychic life is split up into unconnected fragments of experience which defy temporal organization. He reads schizophrenia as a linguistic phenomenon. However, the psychopathology of schizophrenia, in fact, is *not* a linguistic disorder. Schizophrenia is a clinical category under whose heading fall a large number of heterogeneous psychological disorders which have nothing to do with a split of the diseased's personality. Jameson's schizophrenic subject obviously lacks a counterpart in the real world. In order to undertake self-reflection there has to be a (unified) self to reflect. Yet, the 'human animal' obviously has not lost its capacity to graft a coherent temporal narrative for its identity formation under postmodernity. When Jameson speaks of the 'schizophrenic' subject he aims at addressing the alleged fragmentation of subjectivity under postmodernity. Kellner identifies "capital itself [a]s the demiurge of allegedly postmodern fragmentation" of the subject (Kellner (1995), 257). The commodification of subjectivity results in its fragmentation.

With the fragmentation of the subject "there would seem to be nothing to which the idea of freedom could be attached" (Eagleton (1996), 42). In

Jameson's line of argument, the postmodern subject dissolves in so many fragments. Thus the freedom of the postmodern subject is wholly devoid of content. There is no unified subject left. The postmodern subject "is [...] 'free' in the sense of being diffuse, decentred, [and] provisional" (ibid., 43). Conversely, Eagleton remarks that "a certain capacity for critical self-reflection belongs to the way the human animal belongs to the world" (Eagleton (1996), 36). Subjectivity has not disintegrated under postmodernity. The human animal continues to experience itself in the terms of said concept. However, Jameson's description of the postmodern subject "corresponds pretty well to *the experience* of advanced capitalist societies" (my italics; Ibid., 90). Jameson's conception of the subject can thus be interpreted as a description of the experience of the postmodern. I insist on reading Jameson's vision of the postmodern subject as descriptive, not prescriptive, or normative. The decentered, fragmented, pluralist subject of postmodernity corresponds to the experience of postmodernity, and not to any actually real individuals. Thus, Eagleton clarifies that such a subject as Jameson describes it "would not be a human subject at all, which is [...] why [*it*] can exist only on paper" (my italics; Eagleton (1996), 94).

1.2 PARA-, GENRE-, ENTERTAINMENT, AND SUBLITERATURE

Formal homologies between theoretical discourse and artifacts of popular culture are neither rare nor accidental occurrences in the age of the postmodern (Fritz/Stewart, 9). For instance, splatter, zombie, and horror movies can be interpreted as an exemplification of the postmodern fragmentation of the humanist subject. In the past "judgements of quality [which] have derived from an institutionalized and class-based hierarchy of cultural taste" (Barker, 46) would have excluded aforementioned movies, and the SF genre in general, from the canon of what was then considered as serious art. Today this tendentiousness on the part of the cultural elites has decreased in prominence and the boundaries delimiting 'high' or 'serious' art from 'low' or 'popular' art have become increasingly pervious. Denying the arbitrary character of cultural classification is an expression of an elitist notion of art and culture. Conversely, Josh Toth argues that the postmodernist "aesthetic that aimed to [...] destabilize the opposition between high and low culture, bec[ame] itself an aesthetic of the elite" (Toth, 112). This notwithstanding it still remains a fact that under postmodernism the membranes demarcating high from low culture have become highly permeable. Hermand, in his 'vulgar Marxist'^{iv} fashion, condemns all artifacts of popular culture together with postmodern art which appropriates 'low

cultural' features as superstructural correlatives of the economy, which have as their primary function to keep the masses trapped in false consciousness (Hermand, 66). Yet, this study holds that both 'low' cultural art and postmodern art which appropriates 'low' cultural elements can be of critical significance.

In 1997, Brian McHale announces that “the 'great divide' [between high and low culture] is still in place, although traffic across it has greatly intensified” in the postmodern period (McHale (1997), 236). McHale calls the “effacement [...] of the hierarchical distinction between 'high' culture and 'low' (popular, mass) culture [...] the most potent and attractive 'myt[h]' of postmodern culture” (McHale (1997), 236). Toth accordingly concedes that “the books and buildings of high postmodernism are just as 'monumental,' just as 'elite,' as the masterworks of high modernism” (Toth, 22). McHale formulates a dichotomy between 'low-art' writing, whose principal goal is entertainment, and 'high-art' writing, which is informed by aesthetic concerns. For McHale the merging of postmodernist literature and contemporary SF, which is a characteristic of contemporary postmodern fiction, constitutes an example of a successful fusion of 'high-art' and 'sub-literary' fiction which, however, according to him, does not abolish the hierarchical distinction between the two.

The blurring of genre characteristics is typical of postmodernity as much as the blurring of the hierarchical categorization of artifacts into 'high' and 'low' culture. According to Sabine Broeck, “postmodern 'high culture' [is a] grey zone [of] flexible, not strictly demarcated space between the clearly and purposefully trivial romance industry and postmodernist art” (Broeck, 153). Broeck thus does not differentiate between 'high' and 'low' art, but between the trivial and art which is of critical significance. The idea of a flexible grey zone of cultural demarcation contradicts the tenets of modernist “[l]iterary criticism [which] has notoriously distinguished [...] between the canon of the chosen few for the chosen few and its paraliterary underdog for the masses” (Mohr, 1). SF and the other fantastic genres, i.e., fantasy and horror, by definition belong to these paraliterary underdogs. Yet, according to Gary Wolfe, the unstable genre markers of the fantastic genres contained from the very beginning “the seeds [...] of a nascent set of postmodern rhetorical modes that [have helped] supplant not only the notion of genre itself but also the modernist barricades that [...] insulate literary culture from the vernacular fiction of the pulps” (Gary K. Wolfe, 15). The three fantastic genres have contributed to the dissolution of the modernist divides between genres and between 'low' and 'high' art.

SF is commonly categorized as 'trivial' literature. "Trivialität bedeutet einen Zugang zum Interesse derer, die sich nicht als distinguiert, fein, gehoben verstehen" (Laudan, 66), i.e., the vast majority of the population. SF as a 'popular' literary genre is endowed with a mass appeal that is usually denied to more 'serious' high cultural genres, but is it really trivial literature? Else Laudan divides 'popular' literature into two evaluative categories. She distinguishes 'good' popular literature from 'bad' popular literature as follows: "ein guter Roman muss spannend, gut zu lesen sein [und] ein guter Roman muss die Intelligenz nähren und das emanzipierte Denken anregen" (Ibid.). A 'good' popular novel constitutes a compromise between entertainment and the stimulation of critical thought. Neuhaus provides his own yardstick by which to distinguish 'good' from 'bad,' i.e., trivial, literature. According to him, *Trivilliteratur* confirms dominant norms and serves to defuse anxieties (Neuhaus, 69). "Trivilliteratur ist ausschließlich identifikatorische Lektüre, aus der man nicht austreten kann, soll oder will, während Literatur [...] im engeren Sinne zur kritischen Reflexion anregt" (Ibid., 116). Neuhaus's definition of 'good' literature thus corresponds to the second part of Laudan's definition of 'good' popular literature. Furthermore, Neuhaus contends that *Trivilliteratur* "den jeweils herrschenden Diskurs [...] stützt" (Ibid., 191). *Trivilliteratur* thus is literature which does not stimulate critical reflection on the part of the reader and serves to shore up the discursive status quo.

Furthermore, Neuhaus considers texts which do not emit aesthetic stimuli that create distance to their content as escapist, in the sense that their recipients can have virtual experiences through these texts which they cannot have in reality, i.e., such texts allow for "Ersatzbefriedigung" on the part of the recipient (Ibid., 63), and thus are trivial literature. This latter notion is highly problematic, since it applies to the majority of all literature that has been produced this far and excludes, for example, SF from the canon of 'good' literature on principle. It is a basic condition of (nearly all) literature (and of art in general) that it allows for experiences that are otherwise denied to the audience. To use escapism as the ultimate evaluative criterion for the categorization of literature thus is not a useful approach.

Dunja Mohr laments that SF "as an escapist literature of entertainment [is] preoccupied with adventure and horror for its own sake" (Mohr, 39). The latter view subscribes to a hierarchical understanding of art. It is rather spurious to argue that 'true' art is exclusively created for didactic or pedagogic purposes. Moreover, 'good' popular art seems to consist of a compromise between entertainment and critical elements. Conversely, Laudan demands "eine alternative Bewertung von Kultur unter politischen

Gesichtspunkten" (Laudan, 67), and Matthias Uecker postulates that "das Moment der imaginären Bedürfnisbefriedigung der Reflexion gesellschaftlicher Zustände untergeordnet [sein muss]" (Uecker, 195). In the latter views, for literature to be of critical significance, the subversive reflection of the status quo has to supersede purely escapist entertainment in a given artifact. Critical significance here translates into subversiveness with regard to the hegemonic discourse. Lance Rubin points out more specifically what subversive art should accomplish. According to him, it should make us as readers "face our [...] complicity in the status quo" (Rubin (2008), 176). Subversive art thus reflects the status quo and at the same time discloses the recipient's complicity in it. This is the subversive potential of 'good' popular texts. Iré Gözen, drawing upon Suvin, also postulates subversiveness as a sensible criterion for the evaluation of literary texts (Gözen, 31). Subversiveness is a very important criterion for interpreting postmodern artifacts, but it is by far neither the only one nor the ultimate one.

Wolfgang Iser's vision of postmodernism incorporates the following elements: plurality, deconstruction, and hybridization, in high cultural artifacts as well as in popular genres (Iser, 202f). Gerhard Böhler, referring to Iser and Lyotard, elaborates on postmodernism's radical pluralism, which combines "Elite- und Massenkultur [...] nicht einfach [i]n beziehungslose[m] Nebeneinander einer großen Vielheit [...], sondern [in] spannungsvolle[r] Verbindung des Vielen" (Böhler, 288). Chris Barker points out that the recipients of postmodernist art, or its consumers, "are not passive dopes but discriminating active producers of meaning" (Barker, 51), or at least a significant part of them are. Tendentious differentiations between low, or mass-cultural, sub-literary, para-literary, genre, or pulp fiction and high, literary, or intellectual art, therefore, seem out of place in the postmodern context.

In direct opposition to Iser's view it can thus be concluded that one "fundamental feature of [postmodernist art is] the effacement [...] of the older (essentially high-modernist) frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture" (Jameson (1984), 54) and that clinging to 'old' judgmental categories, such as *Schund*, pulp, trash, or *Trivialliteratur*, "or so-called paraliterature" such as SF (Jameson (2002), 128) is highly problematic. Even Eagleton, who "is arguably the sharpest and most perspicuous critic of postmodernism" (Žižek (2008), 99), recognizes the postmodernist insight of the "chancy nature of literary canons [and] their dependence on a culturally specific frame of value" (Eagleton (2008), 208). Nevertheless, as Hobsbawm points out, even in a postmodern setting "[ist] es noch immer möglich und

auch notwendig, zwischen ernsthafter und trivialer, guter und schlechter [...] Kunst zu unterscheiden" (Hobsbawm (1994), 643). There thus has to be an evaluative category for art which is in accordance with postmodern theory. The abovementioned category of subversiveness seems to rise to the occasion.

Postmodernism can at the very least be said to have brought about a shift in focus and an intensified permeability of the cultural dividing lines. McHale accordingly points out the inherently postmodern literary strategy of 'double coding' whereby the postmodernist artifact "simultaneously addresses an elite minority audience through high art codes, and a mass public through popular codes" (McHale (1992), 146), which dovetails with the characterization of the typical postmodernist artwork as hybrid. According to Ableitinger, the postmodern artifact is a "Hybrid aus zwei Bedeutungen, [da] es zusätzlich zu seiner Eigenschaft als fetischisierte Ware auch noch eine kulturelle Nutzbarkeit zu tragen ha[t]" (Ableitinger, 103). This 'dual meaning' of the postmodern work of art corresponds to the notion of 'double coding' as well as to the Marxian differentiation between the use and exchange values of commodities. The term 'double coding' comes from architecture theory where it means a style which appeals both to so-called highbrow and lowbrow audiences. According to Anderson, postmodernist art consists of "a liberating mixture of new and old, high and low" (Anderson (1998), 22). While the modernist work purposefully demarcated itself from mass culture, postmodernist art transcends the divide between 'high' culture and popular culture. The modernist dichotomy between 'high' and 'low' art "thus gives way to a wholesale mixing, with a consequent unsettling of the categories by which the practices of high and low are carefully sorted, categorized, and patrolled" (Green, 41). The modernist dialectic of high and low has been supplanted by the postmodernist dialectic of subversive and trivial literature.

1.3 DISKURSANALYSE AND TRANSPARENZ

Neuhaus analyzes "Diskurs[e als] Phänomene der Machtausübung" in works of literature (Neuhaus, 13). He subscribes to a Foucauldian notion of power as relationships of control and dominance as opposed to Gumbrecht's view of power as the physical exercise of force. Neuhaus postulates that "die Analyse des Diskurses [...] nur vollzogen werden [kann], wenn die in [den] Texten zusammenlaufenden Fäden bis in die verschiedensten Disziplinen, Wissens- und Gesellschaftsbereiche zurückverfolgt werden" (Ibid., 17). The interpretation of any given artifact thus has to heed the cultural context from which it emerged.

Neuhaus defines discourses as power relations that have specific consequences at all levels of social relationships. To speak is to take up a subject position in a discourse and to be subjected to the regulatory power of that discourse, thus one is subjected to the rules and discipline of a discourse. "Die Tendenz des Diskurses zur Normierung macht sich [dabei] selbstständig und greift zu weit in die Persönlichkeitsrechte ein" (Ibid., 42). Hence, it is necessary to subvert those hegemonic discourses and to make transparent their normative power as well as their workings. Therefore, a text can be considered as subversive "wenn e[r] geltende Diskursregeln subvertiert, indem er eine Beobachterposition einnimmt, sozusagen zum Analytiker von Diskursen wird" (Ibid., 22). Neuhaus's main criterion for judging literature is thus its subversiveness with regard to the hegemonic discourse. Neuhaus remarks that one cannot step outside of discourse, but that one nevertheless can take up the position of an observer of that discourse. For Foucault, the crucial difference between affirming the hegemonic discourse and subverting it is whether one functions as a part of that discourse or whether one becomes an analyst of the workings of said discourse (Neuhaus, 116). "Transparenz des Diskurses" (Ibid., 63) can be achieved via interpretation (Ibid., 115). Neuhaus elaborates that literature's subversive potential depends on the extent to which the real conditions of society are critically reflected in a text (Ibid., 61): "[e]ntscheidend [ist dabei] inwiefern die Fiktion über die rekonstruierbare [...] historische Struktur hinausgeht und weshalb sie dies tut" (Ibid., 69). This notion is of special significance for the evaluation of SF texts, since the latter by definition fashion 'new' worlds out of elements that are discernible in the world of the contemporary. The differences between the depicted fictitious future worlds and present reality are thus highlighted by such texts.

Neuhaus's approach is deconstructive in the sense that he seeks to expose the texts' blind-spots, i.e., the unacknowledged premises on which they operate. According to him, when analyzing a literary text, one should detect what kind of thematic content is represented in which way and by means of what statements it is structured, and, on the other hand, and equally important, what has been excluded, what is not said and what is tacitly taken for granted. However, "[a] narrative does not speak for itself. It needs to be articulated by a reading, and a reading will always be a kind of rewriting, but the reading cannot interpret the text in complete freedom, cannot say anything it likes" (Currie, 134).

1.4 IN THE SHADOW OF THE SILENT MAJORITIES

According to the hegemonic discourse, class as a reality has ceased to exist, while, in fact, the “realities of class-based powers, privileges and prerogatives, reflected in greater access, influence and resulting impacts and effects, both tangible and intangible, cannot be denied” (Wilson, 257). A denial of social categories such as class—which is an integral part of neo-liberal ideology and thus of the dominant discourse of our time—is a phenomenon which also finds its counterpart in postmodern theory. For instance, Baudrillard, as early as 1978 in his book *À l'ombre des majorités silencieuses*^v denies the reality of sociology as a science as well as the usefulness of its categories (Baudrillard (2010), 10). Although he “did not adopt the term 'postmodernity' until the 1980s” (Kellner (1989), 94) and although he “does not offer an explicit theory of postmodernity” (Ibid., 120), Baudrillard's oeuvre constitutes a perfect example of extreme postmodernist idealism, at least when it comes to his conception of postmodern society and the social. His (negative) idealism is as much a rehash of Nietzsche's radical skepticism as neo-liberalism is a resuscitation of nineteenth-century liberalism and Social Darwinism.

When Baudrillard declares that no social referent exists anymore, which could invest such terms as the people, class, the proletariat, or objective circumstances with meaning (Baudrillard (2010), 26), he simultaneously denies “materiality—that is, political economy, capital, the body, human suffering and so on” (Kellner (1989), 51). By “erasing [...] society at large—from his theory” (Ibid., 73) as well as the possibility of change (an idea which recurs in his whole oeuvre), Baudrillard eventually simply shores up the current status quo. “Context and use, form and content, media and reality, all dissolve [...] in Baudrillard's one-dimensional theory, in which global theses and glib pronouncements replace careful analysis and critique” (Ibid., 73). In his later works, Baudrillard unanimously displays an “anti-hermeneutical bias which denies the importance of content and its interpretation” (Ibid., 74).

Baudrillard makes exactly the same mistakes as those critics, among them Petrovic and H.T Wilson, who identify a brief version of Baudrillard's position with postmodernist theory as a whole, and postmodern theory, in turn, as the reason for and *not the study of* the current material circumstances. Baudrillard totalizes the prominence of culture to such a degree that it becomes everything there is. He thus mistakes the part for the whole. This is a confusion of cause and effect as well as of object and subject. In addition, although Baudrillard excels in accurately describing the symptoms of the postmodern malaise in other respects, his views of the social are clearly and

deeply infused with a class bias. Baudrillard prefers the term 'mass' to refer to the people. This mass, according to him, is “nichts anderes mehr [...] als ein unzähliges Abfallprodukt, statistischer Ausschuss” (Baudrillard (2010), 11). His usage of the term 'mass' thus has distinctly pejorative overtones. Baudrillard displays a type of neo-aristocratic disdain towards the majority. Curiously, he accuses sociology of treating the proletariat with utter contempt for not acknowledging the total negation of sense which he identifies as its most striking characteristic (Ibid., 19). In sharp opposition to this, he speaks of *his* own class, the bourgeoisie (or better still, the 'inner bourgeoisie' in Nicos Poulantzas's sense, or what Sandy Brian Hager calls the transnationalist capitalist class)—i.e., nowadays, as in 1978, the ruling class—as “den [...] schmalen Grat jener sozialen Schicht [...] auf dem [die] Vernunft [...] ihre Bahn [...] verfolgen [...] konnt[e]” (Ibid., 14). He obviously not only shares neo-liberalism's contempt for the lower classes, but its negative idea of human beings and its blasé sense of aristocratic entitlement. He, just as Nietzsche, cannot help exuding an odious resentment against the 'common' people and blaming them apparently for their gullibility, their ignorance, and the state of the world. Another curious parallel is that Nietzsche wrote during the period of time in which the first phase of liberal (imperialist) capitalism got underway, just as Baudrillard lived his life during the second coming of this economic ('new') world order. Just as Nietzsche's philosophy allowed for the 'interpretation' Nazi-intellectuals made of it, which is extremely sad in the light of the fact that Nietzsche publicly denounced both the antisemitism and German nationalism of his time, Baudrillard's theories, although they include some very astute descriptions of postmodern phenomena, translate into a propagation of passivity and defeatism. Furthermore, his “declaration [...] that contemporary art is [i]s utterly worthless” (Lipina-Berezkina, 270) is particularly counterproductive and highly problematic as well. Kellner surmises that “[u]ltimately[,] Baudrillard is both safe and harmless” (Kellner (1989), 216). He does not pose any threat to the status quo; on the contrary, his linguistic idealism and ethical nihilism ultimately serve to shore up the currently existing social order. Kellner therefore rather aptly calls Baudrillard “[a] court jester of the society he mocks [while] he safely simulates criticism [and] advertises his wares” (Ibid.). Kellner believes that “Baudrillard's project [...] ultimately [...] comes down to [a] capitulation to the hegemony of the Right and a secret complicity with aristocratic conservatism” (Ibid., 215). Bertens accordingly remarks that Baudrillard “prefers a Nietzschean aesthetics of aristocratic disdain and excess” (Bertens (1995), 148f) to real criticism^{vi}. Baudrillard's extreme postmodernism, as mentioned above, denies

“the reality of social and political experience” (Gregson, 135). Baudrillard's salvageable insights into the phenomenology of the postmodern will be used in this work, while his negative linguistic idealism is to be categorically rejected.

1.5 COGNITIVE MAPPING AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

Carroll criticizes postmodernism *per se* as a “pseudo-historical narrative” (Carroll, 102) and as “a history of the present” (Ibid., 101). Conversely, Carroll argues that postmodernism as a concept of historicizing the present is invalid “because we do not yet know what the effects of [...] the [...] current transitions in international capitalism will be” (Ibid., 102). In his opinion, “histories of the future [...] need distance in order to identify which of the events occurring now will fall into important, subsequent chains of events” (Ibid.). He condemns postmodernist theory as a whole because, in his opinion, the postmodernist “attempts [...] to break through [the] metaphysical barrier to writing the history of the present [...] are simply utopian” (Ibid.). This, however, is the utopian task postmodernism has set itself, viz. to write the history of the present. Jameson points out that “the grasping of the present from within is the most problematical task the mind can face” (Jameson (2000), 48). However, there is no 'metaphysical barrier' to transcend in the course of said endeavor. Postmodern theory's project of writing a history of the present is totally consonant with a materialist approach. Jameson contends that it “is safest to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think of the present historically” (Jameson (1991), ix). Furthermore, since now, i.e., at the present point in time, Carroll's condemnations are nearly two decades old, we can very well see the effects and consequences of the global processes that used to constitute postmodernism then and continue to constitute postmodernity now. To undertake the endeavor to think the contemporary historically is akin to what Jameson calls 'cognitive mapping'.

Jameson “calls for a new postmodern aesthetics and politics of 'cognitive mapping', a politics of aesthetic representation with a pedagogical and didactic content” (Best/Kellner, 188). Jameson therefore professes “a representational effort that [...] will allow us to get a handle on that elusive postmodern reality” (Bertens (1995), 172). This representational effort translates into what Jameson calls 'cognitive mapping,' which is “a new representational practice that in 1991 [Jameson] defined as 'nothing but a code word for 'class consciousness'” (Jameson quoted in Bertens (1997b), 107). In this study I would like to reinterpret said 'class consciousness' as a

consciousness of postmodernity's two main problematics: the problematic of distributive injustice and the problematic of environmental degradation. Zima remarks that the present age's main problematic "seems to be the gradual but steady erosion of the natural environment by market forces" (Zima (2003), 27). According to Harald Welzer, climate change poses a quantitatively and qualitatively new problem in the twenty-first century (Welzer (2009), 208). Environmental degradation on a global scale is the direct outcome of neo-liberal market forces which are unbridled by politics. As Žižek points out, "the state political elites serve capital, they are unable and/or unwilling to control capital even when the very survival of the human race is ultimately at stake" (Žižek (2011), 334). Contemporary capitalism is locked in on a course to self-destruction by virtue of its ongoing destruction of the environment. As Noam Chomsky puts it, our "chances of survival are very slight"¹, which corresponds to military historian John Keegan's conclusion that "[u]nless we unlearn the habits we have taught ourselves, we shall not survive" (Keegan, 385). Accordingly, "the fate of the Whole (life on earth) hinges on what goes on in what was formerly one of its parts (the socio-economic mode of one of the species on earth)" (Ibid., 333). Democracy is subordinated to capitalism as well. According to Chomsky, "under capitalism we can't have democracy by definition. Capitalism is a system in which the central institutions of society are in principle under autocratic control"^{vii}. Accordingly, Marx defined a capitalist society as one in which the system of capital accumulation dominates everything else. Furthermore, what Chomsky says is true of capitalism in general is true of late capitalism in particular. The latter quote stems from 1973, i.e., the point in time when neo-liberalism began its ascent to global dominance. This leads us to the other problematic of the current age, that of distributive justice or rather the complete lack thereof, the problematic of distributive injustice, i.e., the fact that differences in wealth both between nations and among their people are skyrocketing, which makes it appropriate to speak of the current world situation as a state of 'global apartheid'. A subversive postmodern artifact must thus engage these two problematics if it aims at subverting the hegemonic discourse of neo-liberalism which holds that limitless expansion is to be expected, that class as a category is devoid of meaning, and that neo-liberal global capitalism will timely realize a paradisaical utopia once the freedom of the market place has finally been rendered total. A view which is prototypically presented by Johan Norberg.

In our current state of "seemingly classless confusion" (Bertens (1997b), 108),

¹(Denis Delestrac, *Pax Americana and the Weaponization of Space* (2009))

we are told that class is an obsolete category. This ascertainment is purely ideological, however. Under the present circumstances any person's class status is in fact of paramount importance. According to Žižek, “every non-class issue [...] can be interpreted through the prism of class antagonism” (Žižek (2011), 253). For Žižek “class struggle [i]s the 'nonfoundational' foundation of all other struggles” (Homer, 84). Žižek goes even farther in his assessment of the importance of class struggle: “the real for Žižek is [...] class conflict and social struggle” (Ibid., 77). Thus, it can be said that for Žižek class is the foundational Real of our times. Even the problematic of environmental degradation can be translated into the terms of class struggle, since the North-South divide plays a crucial role in this regard as well. It is the periphery which suffers the most dire consequences of past and present environmental policies of the center.

Wilson points out that it is of paramount importance “not to lose the concept and reality of *class*” (italics in original; Wilson, 256f). Furthermore, “the concept of class [...] still remains the central analytic [category] for a minimally adequate understanding of the situation” (Ibid., 257f). Since the nature of postmodernism in its current form lies in a process of late-capitalist globalization, “our continuing collective delusion that globalization [...] is a competition between countries and capitals rather than between classes” must be shattered (Wilson, 9). The term 'global apartheid' refers to the fact that the huge differences in wealth allocation constitute an unjust ordering of things on a global scale. The uneven distribution of wealth is organized around the parameters of the category of class on a worldwide basis.

Art can play a crucial role in unveiling the collective delusions on which our Western societies operate. However, for Jameson, as for Baudrillard, postmodernist art “signals our helplessness vis-à-vis the postmodern world, and is therefore a deeply regrettable sign of the times” (Bertens (1997a), 10). Conversely, this study employs a positive definition of postmodernism and of postmodernist art. Over the course of the last four decades (which is roughly the time span during which postmodernism was the dominant mode of artistic production) art has not lost anything of its emancipatory power. To profess otherwise is a sign of a defeatism à la Baudrillard.

Žižek rightly remarks that “indifference towards ideology is the very form of [...] complicity with the ruling ideology” (Žižek (2011), 253). Therefore, it is possible to assess art for its complicity with or subverting of the capitalist ideology of the Extropy Myth^{viii}. To be subversive, a postmodern artifact arguably has to engage the problematic of class and through its prism the two major problematics of the current age. In literature pragmatic commitment to

engaging the two postmodern problematics is motivated by the utopian “urge to bring about workable changes in the writer's world” (Den Tandt, 124). This study suggests that 'cognitive mapping' is just that, i.e., a pragmatic contract which relies on the foundation that art's representations are a crucial way of dealing with and understanding of reality. A subversive artifact allows the recipient to locate him/herself in the world and with regard to the artifact. Such a work of art sets up the cognitive parameters which are necessary to position oneself with regard to the status quo. It is the critic's task to identify and make transparent the political content of any given work of art.

Christophe Den Tandt claims that “a liberating intrusion of the real into the symbolic [is able to] momentarily shatte[r] the linguistic grid” (Den Tandt, 128). Reality permeates language and language permeates reality. There is no way of subtracting the one from the other or of investigating one of the two in isolation from the other. The Real “is [...] the excess and violence that are unrepresentable[,] that constantly threaten to erupt and blast us out of the postmodern complacency of our contemporary discursive regime” (Homer, 84). The unrepresentable Real transcends representation, yet, art still has to attempt to mirror it. 'Rough reality,' 'la réalité rugueuse' [...], has a way of eluding you—until it punches you in the face” (Suleiman (1997), 60). 'Rough reality' does not stay put; it cannot be confined in so many artifacts which safely sever it from the observer. Materiality is reasserting itself with a vengeance all over the world. Be it in the increasingly fierce international competition for scarce resources or in the West's neo-colonial wars in the Middle East. Sherryl Vint points out that “images of horrible atrocities, perverted sex and decadent dreams [are] aspects of our social reality we wish to ignore” (Vint (2010a), 100), but whose representation has the capacity of being “shocking and offensive [which are both] qualities Jameson suggests art lost under postmodernism” (Ibid.). The unrepresentable real can thus be insinuated through the mimesis of extreme violence and explicit sexuality. Works of art still work even and especially under the postmodern. Transgressive representations retain the faculty of momentarily shattering the linguistic grid and of granting insights into the Real of our times. Furthermore, a representation of “catastrophe [...] gives body to the Real of our time: the thrust of Capital which ruthlessly disregards and destroys particular life-worlds, threatening the very survival of humanity” (Homer, 77). The real of our time are the two problematics of the postmodern.

It is important to take note of the fact that postmodern epistemological doubt does not rule out political action. Contra Baudrillard and poststruc-

turalism in general Homer thus identifies the following as the imminent task for contemporary criticism: “Our role as critics is not to abolish th[e] faint murmurings of history and reality from texts but to retain them and open ourselves up once more to the reception of history through cultural texts” (Homer, 74f). Jameson's concept of cognitive mapping can be harnessed for this endeavor. Cognitive mapping today means interrogating the “relationship between [...] representation and transnational capitalism” (Rothberg, 125). Global neo-liberal capitalism is the Real of our times. Any work of art that aspires to be of critical significance thus has to address the workings of our totalitarian economic order. Rothberg suggests that “cognitive mapping [i]s the potential solution” of the postmodern problematization of representation (Ibid., 128). Cognitive mapping translates into the endeavor of thinking the present historically and to posit oneself in that present. With regard to representation it incorporates the necessity to posit oneself with regard to the artifact and to locate the latter with regard to current reality, i.e., our current phase of capitalism. Jameson calls for “cognitive mapping [as] class consciousness of a new and hitherto undreamed of kind” (Jameson (2000), 49).

Rothberg identifies “a fetishistic denial of the disruptions of genocide and colonialism [at the heart of Western culture and asserts that] cognitive mapping provides an impetus to begin to chart such disruptions” (Rothberg, 131). The genocides and massacres of colonialism are the historical basis and precedent, not only, of the Holocaust (Traverso, 74 and Vietta, 37), but of our current globalized capitalism as well. Best and Kellner “agree with Jameson that the forces of capitalism structure ever more domains of social life, a process that is becoming increasingly transparent and cynical under the regimes of Reagan, Bush, Kohl, and Tory conservatism” and their contemporary successors (Ibid.). Therefore, the reality and the crucial importance of class as a category for understanding our contemporary world cannot be denied and it amounts, at the very least, to ideological tendentiousness to do so. The two problematics of the postmodern must be addressed by art *and theory* if it is to be of critical significance, because, as Karl Georg Zinn points out, “[d]as nur scheinbar wertneutrale Schweigen über Unrecht und strukturelle Gewalt bedeutet Komplizentum mit ihnen” (Zinn, 193).

1.6 POSTMODERN ETHICS

Eagleton not only regards Nietzsche as “the grandfather of postmodern thinking” (Schwerdtfeger, 19), or “as the inspirer of the postmodern” (Sandbothe/Welsch, 77), but completely identifies postmodernist theory with

the latter's philosophy (Eagleton (2008), 201). Zima rightfully points out that “[n]ahezu alle wichtigen Themen der [...] postmodernen Philosophien [...] in Friedrich Nietzsches Werk antizipiert [...] werden” (Zima (2001), 130). Nietzsche regarded the perceivable “world as formed by language and mind outside of any material considerations” (Barker, 108). He thereby substituted the God of Christianity, whose death he so famously announced, with 'man', or, in his later works, with his infamous *Übermensch*. According to Bärbel Tischleder, “reality is an endless succession of fleeting moments [and] every actual perception is already a form of memory (a projection of meaning and structure where there is in fact nothing but change)” (Tischleder, 76). This latter view of reality corresponds to Nietzsche's rather rudimentary epistemology and to poststructuralist skepticism. Barker rightfully remarks that “such a perspective is a form of idealism” and, therefore, incompatible with postmodernist theory (Ibid.). What Nietzsche set out to achieve in his early treatise *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense* (1873) was to abolish the essentialist, Platonic notion of an independent, unitary truth; in the process he “reduce[d] time, space, and causality to cognitive metaphors” (Ibsch, 265). His critique of language as an instrument of 'truth' anticipated the poststructuralist insight, based on Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist linguistics, that 'truth' is a linguistic construct of the human mind, determined by cultural discourses and, as such, always relative.

The postmodern linguistic turn results in epistemological and ethical irony, an irony which is self-reflexive. Will Slocombe points out, regarding the difference between Nietzsche's modernist and contemporary postmodernist nihilism, that “postmodern nihilism can be considered *self-referential* [...] including itself in that which it is negating” (italics in original; Slocombe, 101), while Nietzsche's rather stable nihilism maintains (although implicitly) its own truth claims. The postmodernist “rejection of truth as a fixed and external object” outside of language (Barker, 21), however, is part of Nietzsche's epistemology as is the notion of the perspectival character of knowledge in the sense that “we have and require multiple viewpoints or truths” (Ibid.). Nonetheless, the ironic realization of the contingency of moral values does not put them out of effect. “Even if viewed as socially specific, partial and in practice often Eurocentric, conceptions of universal human rights [...] remain central to liberation struggles throughout the world” (Weedon, 62). As Žižek points out, “it is absolutely crucial [...] to remain faithful to the universalist/secular project of modernity” (Žižek (2011), 280). The values of the Enlightenment remain valid and a necessary basis of progressive politics, but they have to be applied to all human beings. In practice, human rights

today apply first and foremost to the citizens of the West and to the rich in particular: “Der westliche Begriff der Menschenrechte enthält als stumme Voraussetzung [...] die Zahlungsfähigkeit” (Kurz (2013), 58). The immigration policy of the EU countries is a good example of the fact that human rights in the West are granted with regard to financial solvency. There is one concession one has to make to poststructuralism with regard to the universality of human rights: it has to be clear and finally for the first time be put into practice that the universal human rights inherent to the Enlightenment apply to *all human beings everywhere in the world* and not just to the European male white bourgeois or the wealthy as such. According to Burbach, “some universals like universal human rights, for example, may be relative and historically determined, but they are necessary, even essential, for the struggle of women, people of color, and the oppressed in general” (Burbach, 76). Eagleton points out that to combat the exploitation inherent to capitalism “effectively implicates ideas of humanity which are necessarily universal” (Eagleton (1996), 121). It must be noted in this context that the most basic human right, the right to food, continues to be excluded from the list of Universal Human Rights.

Conversely, postmodernist ethics' most important characteristic “is the rejection of any universally prescribed moral values” (Schwerdtfeger, 16). The perspectival nature of truth “undermine[s] everything that has, to date, served as a basis for our ethics” (Ibid.). It also renders void all other approaches which claim to work from a stable foundation outside of language, or within language. In this sense, assuming the existence of intrinsic, universal qualities which are not subjected to time and context is not a viable figure of thought anymore. Instead, Barbara Schwerdtfeger insists that “a certain set of basic values which includes the respect for human life” (Ibid., 27) is a *sine qua non* for all ethics and thus universal.

2. A NEW PHASE OF CAPITALISM

2.1 35 YEARS WORTH OF CLASS WAR

Thirty-five years of virtually uncontended discursive and political hegemony of neo-liberalism have brought about a host of changes in the world at large. For once, the gap between the rich and the poor has considerably widened in all regards, between rich and poor nations as well as between the classes of human beings which constitute these nations. One third of the world's population lives in relative poverty, i.e., on less than \$2 a day^{ix}. 1.4 billion people live in absolute poverty, i.e., of less than \$1 a day, while the number of millionaires and billionaires is skyrocketing. Every day over 100,000 human

beings die of hunger in a world whose agricultural capacity would easily suffice to feed twice as many people as are currently populating the earth. Moreover, the global fresh water supply is in decline causing desertification and wars for water. Every day 5,000 people die from unclean drinking water. Furthermore, we live in an age of accelerated species extinction as well as of climate change which severely affects the Southern hemisphere. Thirty-five years of neo-liberal world domination have resulted in a host of extremely negative effects. The most striking effect of the rule of neo-liberalism is a concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a small elite, i.e., the transnational capitalist classes. What is also worth of notice is the fact that in the former social democracies of the West the welfare states of old have been transformed into neo-liberal workfare regimes, which translates into the wholesale destruction of Western capitalism's greatest democratic accomplishment: the welfare state.

A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi argues “that it is not neo-liberalism but rather neo-conservatism that has been the dominant political ideology in the advanced capitalist countries for at least the last 30 years” (Akram-Lodhi, 157). In this study these two terms will be employed synonymously^x. Hence, after more than three decades of neo-liberal hegemony, it seems sensible to take stock of its consequences. Andrew Adonis and Tim Hames argue that, although the New Right's neo-liberal/conservative ideology has long ago established itself as the global hegemonic discourse, it is “problematic” to call the Thatcher/Reagan-era a “Conservative Revolution” (Adonis/Hames (1994b), 249). The OED gives the first meaning of revolution as “an attempt of a large number of people to change government [...], especially by violent action”. The neo-liberal, or neo-conservative, 'revolution' was not undertaken by a large number of people, it was undertaken by an elite minority of the most powerful people within the leading industrial nations, the most powerful fraction of the group Karl Marx called the ruling class. According to Burbach, “for the first time in history an international bourgeoisie [has] coalesce[d], and [...] states and governments [...] are being reshaped and restructured so that they can better serve the global interests of th[ese] new ruling strata” (Burbach, 15).

Although the outcome of the 'neo-conservative revolution' can be considered as highly violent, both in the sense of structural and of physical violence, the transition itself was a more or less bloodless one—notwithstanding the fact that there are a lot of British miners, as well as Latin American and African unionists, Indian human rights activists, or German asylum seekers who would contest this view. John Kannankulam speaks of a global 'economic

paradigm shift' occurring simultaneously with the rise of the New Right (Kannankulam, 175). However, the paradigm shift I have in mind here refers to a complete change of most of the core notions of the dominant discourse of the West and of the whole world as well. This is a paradigm shift which includes the very fabric of human life and human consciousness, not only of the way people think, but of the way people conceptualize reality, the way people feel. Furthermore, the material consequences of this unique shift are equally momentous. This paradigm shift commenced in the early 1970s and gathered momentum during the 1980s. "In the eighties, a victorious Right passed over to the offensive. [...] By the end of the decade, the post-war mission of social democracy in Western Europe—a welfare state based on full employment and universal provision—had been largely abandoned" (Anderson (1998), 91).

Margaret Thatcher's election victory in 1979 "signaled the end of an *ancient régime*, a system of [...] Keynesian spending programmes, subsidized welfare and trade union power. Move the date forward 17 months [...], replace Thatcher by Reagan, [...] and the same [can] be said of the United States" (italics in original; Adonis/Hames (1994a), 1). Add another two years and you can identify the beginning of a similar process in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), although from a very different historical point of departure. However, in both countries the conservative party gained power and was afforded with the opportunity to change society as they saw fit (Kannankulam, 185). Thatcher enjoyed an unprecedented "Entscheidung-sautonomie" during her terms in office (Ibid., 251). She stayed in office longer than any PM in the last 150 years. Thatcher was able to accomplish said feat via a successful application of the neo-conservative key strategy of 'authoritarian populism'^{xi}. Furthermore, Thatcher instigated a wholesale privatization program of unprecedented proportions. Among other things, her policies caused the precarization of the national labor market. Her rule had "catastrophic long-term effects" on British society (Judt, 543). The Tories were succeeded by so-called New Labour—Thatcher's Conservative party remained in office, after she had to step down in 1990, under John Major for another 7 years, which extends the British New Right's rule to 17 years altogether—which instead of revoking the severe changes brought underway by its conservative predecessors, even furthered the latter's agenda. "The conscious use of the terms 'New Labour' and 'New Democrats' reflects the realignment of their parties in a pro-business direction" (Burbach, 8). Tony Blair and Bill Clinton both belong to a group of politicians who dedicated their careers to consolidating the neo-conservative/neo-liberal turn in their

countries. Tony Judt summarizes the Reagan/Thatcher 'revolution' as the birth of a "new realism" (Judt, 535). A new political reality had been created. It is an insidious rhetorical strategy of neo-liberals to refer to themselves as 'realists,' as if the pragmatic necessities of the present made anything else but neo-liberal privatization of social need an unrealistic, utopian ideal, as propagators of Thatcher's so-called TINA-doctrine claim. Kannankulam identifies this rhetorical strategy as an integral part both of the ideological propaganda of the German and the British New Right (Kannankulam, 309) and underscores the historical import of the New Right, and Thatcherism in particular, by identifying it "*als Kulminationspunkt d[er] rechten Gegenoffensive [gegen] die Arbeiterklasse*" (italics in original; Kannankulam, 236). This counteroffensive against the working class has been highly successful and has cost many casualties on the part of the latter. The 'new realism' of neo-liberal hegemony in fact *created* the new reality to which it applies. It is common practice to blame the neo-liberal turn on the exigencies of the globalization process, but globalization came into being through the policies pursued by the Western states, *not the other way around*.

In the second half of the 1990s, globalization supposedly forced "the convergence of all [...] national economies towards neo-liberal [...] policies" (Gamble, 33). Although globalization is not the agentless force of nature as which neo-liberals like to portray it, it can nevertheless be noted that we are now living in a united world, one world under neo-liberal capitalism. Since neo-liberals "tend not to be very good at winning electoral support" (Ibid., 31), only a combination of the "neo-liberal economic programme with conservative policies[, prototypically represented by] the authoritarian populism of Thatcher[,] Reagan," (Ibid.), was able to bring about the neo-liberal 'revolution'.

In the 1970s, neo-liberals and neo-conservatives "together formed [...] the 'New Right'" (Akram-Lodhi, 162). Both "neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism sought to overthrow capitalist social democracy" and, after the successful realization of this goal, continue to share many other "common interests" (Ibid.). "Der Neokonservatismus überschneidet sich [...] in dem Glauben mit dem Neoliberalismus, dass freie Märkte [...] alles Notwendige enthalten, um allen Freiheit und Wohlbefinden zu bringen. Obwohl sich dies bereits als völlig falsch erwiesen hat" (Harvey (2005b), 195). According to Andrew Gamble, there are two main strands of neo-liberalism. First, there is a "laissez-faire strand—the belief that [...] markets [should] operate with as few impediments as possible" (Gamble, 21). Gamble calls this strand the right wing of neo-liberalism which he considers to be "hard-headed and mean-

spirited” (Ibid., 22).

According to a reputable global study, “the richest 1 per cent of the world's population own 40 per cent of the planet's wealth. *The richest 10 per cent own over 85 per cent of the world's assets*, with over half of the world's population owning barely 1 per cent of the global wealth” (my italics; Featherstone, xix). In addition to this, “there were 140 (dollar) billionaires in the world in 1986, 476 in 2003 and 793 in 2006” (Ibid., xx), while the number of starving people in the world rose from 827 millions in 1992 to over 906 millions in the year 2010 (Ziegler (2012), 31). Therefore, “[t]he major problem of [...] our [world i]s the extreme inequality of wealth and resource distribution despite abundance” (Dinello, 232). Gamble however calls the latter sentiment 'reductionist,' because, according to him, it is an expression of “a tendency to reify neo-liberalism and to treat it as a phenomenon which manifests itself everywhere and in everything” (Gamble, 34). Gamble argues that such a view “is too simple a judgment” (Ibid.), while allowing in the same breath that it “is true but rather unenlightening [that] all governments throughout the global economy are now neo-liberal governments” (Ibid.). Furthermore, he denounces such sentiments as “profoundly pessimistic because [they] imply that only an overthrow of existing power relations from below or from without offers any prospect of change” (ibid.). This, in a way, corresponds to what Welzer concedes, namely that it is “notwendig, vom Denken-wie-üblich abzugehen” (Welzer (2008), 261). The latter statement, in turn, seems to be in the same line of argument as Thom Hartmann's, who argues that the “problem is not a problem of technology, [or] of too much carbon dioxide, [...] global warming, [or] waste, all of those things are symptoms of the problem. The problem is the way that we are thinking, the problem is fundamentally a cultural problem”². Welzer concedes that “die Frage nach den [...] Möglichkeiten des zukünftigen Überlebens [der menschlichen Spezies (!)] eine *kulturelle Frage* [...] ist” (italics in original; Welzer (2008), 263). Hence, Gamble's insistence on the possibility of (positive) change from within the transnational capitalist class, or from the remnants of representative democracy, is not shared by many. Furthermore, even Gamble admits that the “unrestricted capital accumulation[, brought about by neo-liberal globalization, indeed has negative] effects on global poverty [and] the global environment” (Gamble, 35). The neo-liberal turn in global politics can thus be considered as the reason of the two major problematics of our day and age, the problematic of environmental degradation and the problematic of distributive injustice. In this regard,

²(Nadia Connors, *The 11th Hour* (2007))

Akram-Lodhi speaks of a rapidly emerging “global crisis” (Akram-Lodhi, 172), which, according to him, is caused by the neo-liberal economic policy enforced by the three major international financial institutions (IFIs), viz. the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), “die letztlich trotz allen ihres rhetorischen Getöses die globalen Verteilungsverhältnisse zementieren” (Altvater (2007), 19). I would like to add the European Union (EU) and the G8 to this list of supranational neo-liberal institutions. The post-Bretton Woods Washington Consensus^{xii} role these IFIs play in the neo-liberal project of globalization amounts to the establishment of a global hierarchy that Simon Dalby calls global apartheid.

In the first part of this study, I will demonstrate that what Gamble deems a 'profoundly pessimistic' view of the current situation is in fact a thoroughly realistic one and that to opt for an optimistic approach in Gamble's sense would not only be highly problematic, but tantamount to what Peter Paik identifies as the “disavowal [...] of reality” (Paik, 153), which according to the latter, lies at the core of contemporary (postmodern) Western consumer culture. In the words of Maude Barlow: “we'll never[...] ever, solve the world [...] crisis until we have the courage to talk about the world political and economic system[,] the system [...] that deliberately create[s] winners and losers”³. We have to address the organizing principle of our current global economic order of late capitalism and we have transform said order into a more just and more democratic form. “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to *change* it”^{xiii}. Nevertheless, suffice it to say at this point that optimism, in the light of the actual facts, seems rather unrealistic.

2.1.1 WHAT DID THE COUNTER-REVOLUTION CHANGE?

First and foremost the neo-liberal revolution resulted in a redistribution of wealth from the lower classes to a small elite of powerful people at the apex of society. Furthermore, parallel to this development a new underclass emerged: “In nahezu allen Industriestaaten entstand eine neue Unterschicht, zu einem Leben in bitterer Armut verdammt” (Wagenknecht (2012), 171). This is an direct effect of the consequent application of the tenets of neo-liberal ideology to real-world politics.

While there are various different neo-liberal positions there are a few basic notions which they all have in common. The three pillars of neo-liberal ideology are: 1) privatization, 2) deregulation, and 3) Social Darwinism^{xiv} on a

³(Sam Bozzo, *Blue Gold: World Water Wars* (2008))

global scale. Wilson summarizes the process of privatization of public enterprises turned loose on the world since the Thatcher Revolution as a substitution of “one form of subsidization, one manifestly abusive of democratic, public and social values, [...] for [...] another” (Wilson, 218). The second item of the free-market trinity effected a continuing retreat of the welfare state in Europe and America concomitant with capital's “withdrawal from shared responsibilities[, and] includ[ing] attacks on small businesses as well as the social safety net, regulation[, and] even representative democratic processes” (Ibid., 36), thus creating societies that are increasingly disorganized by the market.

Friedrich August von Hayek was the co-founder of the Mont Pèlerin Society, which is *the* major conservative think tank in the world, whose ideas were disseminated among the political elites of the West in the 1970s and informed both Thatcher's and Reagan's policies (Ibid.). His Austrian School of economics succeeded in establishing its theories as the hegemonic discourse through the neo-liberal revolution. “Hayek [...] wanted to keep legislation to an absolute minimum” (Thirkell-White, 139), propagating “the spontaneous naturalism of the market order” (Ibid., 140). This supposedly 'natural' market order is to be safe-guarded by a strong residual state reverted “to a nineteenth-century role of 'night watchman'” (Gamble, 23). Incidentally, Milton Friedman, the leading neo-liberal theorist in the US, also a co-founder of the Mont Pèlerin Society, according to Klein, considered said Austrian economist as his “own personal guru” (Naomi Klein, 53). Klein calls Hayek “the patron saint of the Chicago School” (Ibid., 131). The Chicago School could be best described as the US equivalent of Hayek's Austrian School, i.e., a highly influential neo-liberal/conservative think tank. One part of the momentous influence these neo-liberal schools of thought were able to wield comes from the fact that they were the first to promote the science of economics as we know it today and therefore were able to set the scientific standards (Kannankulam, 143). Within the 'natural' free-market order propagated by these two schools of economics, governments have three roles, and three roles only: “protecting private property; enforcing contracts” (Wilson, 225); and providing military might “as a bulwark and a guarantor [for] the property and contractual rights of capital” outside of its nation of origin (Ibid., 251). This 'new' role for the state corresponds miraculously well to the role of the state during the period of colonization between the fifteenth and eighteenth century and the age of imperialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century: the state and its military might has once again become the *ultima ratio mercatorum*.

This resuscitation of the state and the military as agents of the economy and the transformation of the welfare state as a safety net into workfare regimes of social control resulted in increased public spending on the state apparatuses and an enlargement of the corresponding bureaucracy instigated by New Right governments. “Wenn es um die Armen und die ganz unten geht, ist vom schlanken, liberalen, zurückgenommenen Staat plötzlich keine Rede mehr. Eher fährt der Neokonservatismus eine Doppelstrategie: unsichtbare Hand, eiserne Faust” (Misik, 48). Of course, the New Right's spending priorities differed radically from those of their predecessors. The severe cut-backs in welfare costs were more than compensated by increased spending on military, police, tax cuts for the rich, and bureaucratic expenses necessary for enforcing the new workfare regimes. Wilson remarks in this regard that “the international armaments industry [has mad]e a 'business' and a hypocrisy out of the original reasons for military preparedness” (Wilson, 226). In addition to 'privatizing' the military, the state is in retreat in all other areas of the provision of formerly public goods: in health, education, industry, telecommunication, public transport, and energy. These changes were justified with cost-effectiveness and the propagated 'roll back' of the state, while in fact they were primarily—the disastrous statistics concerning the doings of post-privatization former public enterprises speak volumes in this regard—aimed at destroying solidarity between the different societal groups as well as consequently eradicating the very idea of citizenly entitlement. Harvey describes the New Right's agenda with regard to the welfare state as follows: “All forms of solidarity were to be dissolved in favor of individualism, private property, personal responsibility and family values” (Harvey (2005a), 13).

The third of the three pillars of neo-liberalism is arguably the most insidious one, amounting to an ideological project aiming at a change of collective mentality, in short, to make the majority of the West's population believe into the Social Darwinist tenets of neo-liberalism and to accept them as rules of nature or as “simple common sense” (Gamble, 20). This project has been highly successful. Hence, neo-liberalism's Social Darwinist notions of society, individuality, and freedom are nowadays widely treated “as physical laws” (Bould (2010), 118), which amounts to a genuine, though hugely unacknowledged, paradigm shift, a basic reorganization of the hegemonic consensus. Harvey observes that “neo-liberalism was from the very beginning a project to achieve the restoration of class power to the richest strata in the population” (Harvey (2005a), 10). As Akram-Lodhi remarks (although he, of course, speaks of 'neo-conservatism'), “as a class project of capital[, this]

unambiguously succeeded” (Akram-Lodhi, 169).

In the beginning, i.e., during the Reagan/Thatcher 'revolution,' it was crucial for the success of the neo-liberal agenda to attribute the blame for the economic crisis of the 1970s to those who wanted to fight it. It was Hayek's idea to shift the blame for public debt and inflation on Keynesian capitalism. “As Hayek [...] noted, the key issue [...] was to recognise that inflation was not a matter of technical error on the part of the monetary authorities, but of the political balance of power” (Gamble, 26), i.e., “to blame [the] recession [...] upon 'big government' and [...] taxation” (Judt, 537), and thus “direct popular hostility toward the state and away from the capitalist class” (Akram-Lodhi, 162). The Keynesian welfare states were held responsible for the stagflation of the 1970s by the electorate, and thus the New Right swept into power with the promise of abandoning the Keynesian economic paradigm. The inflation of the seventies—more or less a direct result of the abandonment of the gold standard of the US dollar which, for instance, caused an “increase[e in] the world price for non-fuel [commodities] by 70 percent [and] of food by 100 percent” (Judt, 454)—was, in turn, a result of the Vietnam War and the huge public debt the US accumulated to pay for this neo-colonial endeavor. “[I]n den 1960er Jahren [...] drohte [...] aufgrund des steigenden US-Haushaltsdefizites [...], dass die im System von Bretton Woods angelegte Dollar-Gold Konvertibilität auch tatsächlich faktisch vollzogen wurde” (Kannakulam, 112). The US were incapable of meeting these demands. Therefore, Nixon officially abandoned the gold standard in 1971.

Two years after the abandonment of the 'gold standard,' the reintroduction of floating exchange rates that spread over the globe in the early 1970s and which remains effective until the present dealt the final death blow to the Bretton Woods system of control over international monetary transactions^{xv}. A quite convincing case can be made for the scenario that the transnational neo-liberal fractions of the Western ruling classes, with their systematic efforts to erode the Bretton Woods system, caused the recession of the 1970s in the first place (Kannankulam, 169). Kannankulam identifies the inner bourgeoisie as the driving force behind the re-liberalization of the global financial market: “es [...] waren [...] vor allem die von den USA als Hegemonialmacht des atlantischen Fordismus aus agierenden mit der Liberalisierung der Finanzmärkte als auch der Internationalisierung verbundenen Akteure und Klassenfraktionen [...], die zentral [für die] Krise des Fordismus [verantwortlich war]en” (Ibid., 108). These key players belonged to the social stratum of the inner bourgeoisie and were decisively influenced by Friedman's Chicago School. This very same class faction in the USA and the

West in general in “the 1970s [...] and 1980s [...] set out to eclipse national factions [...] and to capture the 'commanding heights' of the state” (Burbach, 44). As history shows, they were hugely successful in this endeavor. The abandonment of the gold standard, the dissolution of the Bretton Woods system, and the rise to dominance of neo-liberal discourse and politics, and the subsequent death of the welfare state, are the most noteworthy consequences of the inner bourgeoisie's bid for power.

2.1.2 THE DEATH OF BRETTON WOODS AND KEYNESIANISM

The WB and the IMF were created in “direct response to the horror of the Second World War. With the goal of never again repeating the mistakes that had allowed fascism to rise in the heart of Europe, the world powers came together in 1944 in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, to create a new economic architecture” for the world under the aegis of Harry Dexter White and John Maynard Keynes, who both attributed the reason for the successful rise of fascism in Germany to the global economic recession of the 1920s and 30s (Naomi Klein, 162). Keynes, in turn, identified the liberalization of the global financial market as the main reason for the historical stock market crash. According to Kannankulam, these institutions were brought to life to bring the international capital flows under political control (Kannankulam, 109). The central pillar of this system was the adherence to the US-dollar as the lead currency and the latter's adherence to the gold standard (Ibid.). “[D]ie Mitgliedsstaaten dieses Währungs- und Finanzgefüges wurden hiervon ausgehend darauf verpflichtet, ihre Wechselkurse im Verhältnis zum Dollar [...] zu stabilisieren” (Ibid.). “Keynes warned seventy years ago [that unrestricted international financial transactions, compromise] democratic governance” (Chomsky (2003), 138). Furthermore, with regard to the effect of the 1929 Crash in Weimar Germany, Keynes had presciently warned early on “that if the world took a *laissez-faire* approach to Germany's poverty, the blowback would be ferocious” (Naomi Klein, 54). Thus it can be noted that Keynes identified a direct causal connection between the *laissez-faire* economic liberalism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and the ascendancy of the “most monstrous regime in history [which,] incidentally, [...] came to power in the country that by reasonable measures represented the highest peak of Western civilization” at the time (Chomsky (2003), 67). The latter notion corresponds to William Spanos's argument that there lies not only a Nietzschean “will to power [at the heart of Western Enlightenment discourse,] but [a] will to the 'final solution' [as] consummate and total violence against the recalcitrant other” (Spanos, 66). The history of

Western rationality has a pronounced 'dark side' consisting of destruction, mass murder and genocide and is as such an ongoing process (Vietta, 301).

“The market crash of 1929 had created an overwhelming consensus that laissez-faire had failed and that governments needed to intervene in the economy to redistribute wealth and regulate corporations” (Naomi Klein, 17). For this reason it was possible to establish the Bretton Woods consensus. However, as early as 1956, said accord suffered its first major setback in the aftermath of the Suez crisis (Kannankulam, 110). The Bretton Woods system did not last longer than three decades. When it was eventually abolished in 1973, it only existed in a severely watered down residual form. Said system of national autonomy, social responsibility, and full employment, naturally had its disadvantages, but, as Klein puts it, “it led to the creation of almost everything that we associate today with the bygone days of 'decent' capitalism—social security in the U.S., public health care in Canada, welfare in Britain, workers' protections in France and Germany” (Naomi Klein, 54).

Keynesianism had been contested in the financial community from the very beginning, but since the public consensus was bent on preventing anything like the two World Wars from ever occurring again, said approach was then successfully established as the dominant economic policy of the world. “Friedman and his mentor, [...] Hayek, [however,] patiently protected the flame of a pure version of capitalism, untarnished by Keynesian attempts to pool collective wealth to build more just societies” (Ibid., 17). Friedman started to propagate the re-liberalization of the global financial market as early as the 1950s. It was the hegemonic rivalry between the two Anglo-Saxon nations which in the end brought about the de facto re-liberalization of global finance. Thus, the denotation neo-liberalism for current free-market ideologues is misleading, since world finance had already been liberalized anew in 1973; but the destruction of the Keynesian system was not enough for Hayek, Friedman and their disciples. Their project aimed at nothing less than economic global domination.

According to Kannankulam, since 1964 there has been remarkable change in US monetary policy (Kannankulam, 112). Hence, Kannakulam identifies a neo-liberal turn in US politics which occurred in the 1960s. “[D]en Interessen der aufstrebenden finanzliberalistischen Fraktionen innerhalb der USA [wurde immer mehr von der Politik] entspr[o]ch[en]” (Ibid., 116, n. 9). To pay for the Vietnam War the guarantor of the Bretton Woods system employed a “Politik der 'wohlwollenden Vernachlässigung' (benign neglect)” towards said system (Ibid., 112). This 'neglect' led to the creation of an independent financial market in Europe. This process culminated in the ascendancy to dominance

of Chicago School free-market ideology within the US government. This ideology influenced Richard Nixon to abandon the gold standard in 1971. The controlled 'floating' of the exchange rates which resulted from this and which Friedman had demanded as early as 1953, furthermore, was the harbinger of further neo-liberal reforms (Ibid., 114). Richard Milhouse Nixon plays a paradoxical role in these proceedings. "Few Presidents have come closer to expressing a philosophy compatible with my own," Friedman wrote of Nixon" (Friedman quoted in Naomi Klein, 133f). Interestingly, while Nixon fulfilled his neo-liberal promises with regard to the rest of the world, he hesitated to meet Friedman's demands domestically, out of fear for his re-election, and maybe, as Klein suggests, because he did not consider them effective for his own country. Thus Nixon was reelected and in his second term "proceeded to shred [some] of Friedman's orthodoxies, passing a slew of new laws imposing higher environmental and safety standards on industry" (Ibid., 133), which his former mentor Friedman perceived as a slap in the face. Friedman was severely disappointed by the so-called 'Pepsi-kid' and retrospectively branded Nixon a 'socialist'. After the abandonment of the gold standard and the reestablishment of floating currencies in the countries of the former Bretton Woods system the re-liberalization of world finance once again became reality: "Das, was Keynes [...] als ursächlich für die Krise der 1930er Jahre ansa[h] und unbedingt vermeiden wollt[e,] war nun wieder finanzpolitische Realität" (Kannankulam, 118). With the central pillar of Bretton Woods gone, neo-liberalism used the momentum of this epochal victory to spread over the entire globe. "Die Vereinigten Staaten und Großbritannien waren die Anführer d[e]r [hiermit eingeleiteten internationalen] Konkurrenz der Deregulierung" (Ibid., 117), a process which became world famous under the monicker 'globalization'. "So verlagerten multinationale Konzerne in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren vielfach ihre niedrig qualifizierten Segmente in Länder mit hohen Ausbeutungsraten" (Ibid., 140). Kannankulam dubs this process the 'internationalization of production' and concurs that it went hand in hand with the 'internationalization of the financial markets'. Taken together these two processes constitute the initial stage of (neo-liberal) globalization (Ibid.).

2.1.3 NEO-COLONIALISM AND THE RISE OF THE NEW RIGHT

As Fritz Reheis points out, the birth of capitalism, its original accumulation of capital, "basiert [...] auf einer gigantischen weltweiten Enteignung der Produktionsmittel. Allein die Opfer der weißen Landnahme in Nord- und Südamerika sind unermesslich" (Reheis, 39). According to Enzo Traverso, only in the second half of the nineteenth century colonialism's death toll in the

colonies amounted to between 50 and 60 million people (Traverso, 69). Colonialism is part of global capitalism's "dark history" (Vint (2010a), 110) and the forerunner of what is nowadays referred to as globalization. Today international corporations in league with the great national powers engage in colonial policies with regard to the global South which constitute a continuation of the colonialism of old (Vietta, 303f).

As Kannankulam remarks, the processes of internationalization started in the second half of the twentieth century. It is only after the implosion of the Eastern Bloc that these processes have been transformed into a 'New Order' for the whole world: "'McWorld' has arrived" (Dalby, 133). There is no extraterritorial Other to capitalism anymore. Today, the whole world is united under our current totalitarian market order.

The international connections between the transnational fractions of the capitalist classes originate from the historical period of colonialism as well as from the hegemonic position of the US economy after WWI. The second industrial revolution instigated by Henry Ford's introduction of the assembly line and the Taylorization of the work process saw the emergence of the first multinational corporations. The first multinational corporations, e.g., the Ford motor company, began to 'buy' labor in many different countries around the globe. After WW II, this process took up speed and the USA became the major exporter of capital in the world. Beginning in the 1960s, Western Europe and Japan began to pick up with the USA. This development culminated in a proper trade war between the US, Western Europe, and Japan, in the 1970s (Kannankulam, 138). This trade war, in turn, set loose a furthering of the internationalization processes which culminated in the process of globalization. The latter internationalization processes—carried out on behalf of the same class fractions which are responsible for the rise of neo-liberalism brought down the Bretton Woods system, i.e., achieved the re-liberalization of world finance. Globalization, in turn, is neo-liberalism's "distinctive form" (Harvey (2007), 156), i.e., the global enforcement of neo-liberalism. Globalization as a process in its current full blown form depends on the new technologies of the third industrial revolution, i.e., on the computer and all its adherent innovations. The new information technologies "have compressed the rising density of market transactions in both space and time" (Harvey (2007), 4), which allowed the geographical expansion of the neo-liberal economic order into all available areas of the globe. The total mobility that these changes provided to capital resulted in a homogenization of the different national economies in which they operate which, in turn, affects the population of said nations as well. A homogenization process has

been set loose which embraced first the societies of the West and then the world as such. Furthermore, the internationalization of the markets is synonymous with an internationalization of financial crises. Recessions and crises are thus internationalized, no longer limited to separate national economies. They become crises of the world market as a whole. The internationalization of production which began in the 1960s and 1970s necessitated the internationalization of finance; because some of the multinational corporations got so big that their national financial institutions alone could not provide the wherewithal to provide them with the capital they needed to operate.

According to Chomsky, “the neoliberal socio-economic programs called 'globalization' by Western ideologues” are inherently anti-humanitarian (Chomsky (2003), 24) as well as antidemocratic (Ibid., 138). Klein goes as far as considering 'neo-liberalism' as synonymous with 'globalization' (Naomi Klein, 14). The term globalization refers to the fact that, over the course of the last three decades, multinational corporations have successfully subjected all the world's economies to an immense process of rationalization —Bertens speaks of “hyper-rationalization” (Bertens (1997b), 116)—that aims at a total maximization of profit via “the subordination of all areas of life to [the] formal and instrumental rationality” of capital accumulation (Wilson, 254). Wilson argues that globalization, this “allegedly objective and irresistible process[, i]s nothing more than the shibboleth used by propagandists of capital” as an excuse for and justification of the neo-liberal transformation of society (Ibid., 186). Hager accordingly suggests that globalization is not the “inevitable and agent-less external economic restraint” on democracy as which it is presented (Hager, 114), but a class project carried out on behalf of the transnational capitalist class.

Zinn speaks of the 'globalization myth' that holds that globalization is a process akin to the laws of nature, “eine Art Schicksal, dem nur Toren glaubten, sich widersetzen zu können” (Zinn, 112). Conversely, globalization is a man-made process which Zinn describes as “ideologisch verabsolutierte Überliberalisierung” (Ibid.) which, in accordance with the Washington Consensus, forces the developing countries to open up their markets to Western capital under circumstances which are extremely detrimental to the former. Zinn insists that globalization is a process brought about by the policies pursued by the governments of the West. Globalization is not a form of agentless nomological fate but a process brought about by the actions of man and thus subject to intentional change.

Mark Bould identifies the postmodern erosion of identity and the corres-

ponding 'crisis of selfhood' as a direct effect of said global transformations, when he concedes that under late capitalism "humans are torn apart by capital, our selves reduced to those abstractions (labor-power, consumption-power) which it needs to operate and perpetuate" (Bould (2010), 133). Since capital has become completely mobile under globalization, while "the bulk of labor [remain]s local" (Ibid., 120), capital is now capable of exerting unprecedented pressure on everyone who has to work for a living. Hager, in this regard, speaks not of national capitalist classes but of one unified "transnational capitalist class" (Hager, 121) which unites all the national branches of the international class factions into one transnational capitalist class. While the bulk of the world's population is not only divided by nationality, religion, race, sex, gender, etc., but also into types of employment, the 'transnational capitalist class' has arrived at an unprecedented consensus between its national subsidiaries.

Jean Ziegler, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food from 2000 through 2008, concedes the following about our current economic order: "die gegenwärtige globalisierte Ordnung des westlichen Finanzkapitals [ist] das letzte und bei weitem mörderischste der Unterdrückungssysteme, die im Laufe der vergangenen fünf Jahrhunderte vom Westen errichtet wurden" (Ziegler (2008), 84). Globalization is a continuation of colonialism on an even larger scale. Late capitalism has become the empire on which the sun never sets because it encompasses all of the globe. According to Burbach, "globalization marks an entirely new epoch in the world's economic history" (Ibid., 21). This coincides with Kurz's assessment that the introduction of the information age and its adherent technological innovations constitute the third industrial revolution (Kurz (1999), 638). The total financialization of late capitalism together with globalization's penetration of all areas of the globe indeed translate into a 'New World Order' which as such is completely dependent on the new information technologies.

The goal of the neo-liberal revolution was the restoration of class power in the hands of a small elite as well as the concentration of wealth in the hands of the very same class faction. "Zur Erreichung dieses Ziels hat die Kapitalistenklasse den typischen Weg eingeschlagen, der in den Modellen der Kapitalakkumulation im 1. Band des *Kapitals* skizziert wird" (italics in original; Behrens, 319). Wages were lowered by exposing skilled labor in the West to competition with the developing countries. The power of the unions was shattered and production was outsourced to low-wage countries. A precarious underclass was created in the countries of the West with whom capital was able to constantly threaten wage earners. A sector of flexible and

precarious temporal work was created which can be used by capital to keep in line its work force. Taxes for the wealthy were lowered while the taxes for the lower strata increased. All the world's national economies now compete with each other, which translates into tremendous advantages for the transnational corporations which are no longer bound to the borders of the nation state. Furthermore, the markets of the developing countries were opened to Western exports via structural pressure by the IFIs.

Colonialism has been superseded by so-called globalization. However, as Susan George points out that the aims of colonialism have not become obsolete: “[I]m Gegenteil. Diese Ziele [...] wurden nur mit anderen Mitteln verfolgt. [...] Schulden [sind] eine weitaus nützlichere Strategie als Kolonialismus“ (George, 25). The history of neo-liberalism is rich with such ironic twists, like the one mentioned above, where a conservative American President, i.e., Richard Nixon, a self-proclaimed Keynesian, who, by the way, was affectionately called 'the Pepsi-kid'⁴ for all the international lobbying he did for said multinational corporation before he became President—brought about changes, which, in turn, brought far more radical right-wing politicians than himself into power in other countries, and hardly a decade later in his own as well. Kannakulam calls it a historical irony that the USA at the end of the 1970s faced similar pressures caused by the re-liberalization of financial markets which was effected by US economic policy in the first place as the UK government did in the early 1970s (Kannakulam, 116). The 'pressure' the UK experienced was an unprecedented devaluation of the pound, which in short ensured Thatcher's election victory in 1979, an ironic twist which will be elaborated on in the following. The similar 'pressure' the US experienced was the unprecedented devaluation of the dollar and the recession caused by it which won Reagan his first election, and which he then set out to counteract by exploding US public debt. The latter economic policy, in turn, culminated in the international financial crisis of the late 1980s.

The international monetary institutions which enforce neo-liberalism in the developing world, the IMF, the WB, and the WTO, the first two of the three were founded under the Bretton Woods agreement, but were very early on re-shaped by Friedman's and Hayek's disciples, at present enforce what Barlow refers to as “trade rules [which amount to a] new colonialism[,] rules that are killing people”⁵. As Ben Thirkell-White puts it, “[i]nternational financial policy [...] is very much an elite concern” (Thirkell-White, 148), meaning that the political decision makers “enjoy considerable autonomy” in

⁴(John Pilger, *Burp! Coke versus Pepsi in the Ice Cold War* (1984))

⁵(Sam Bozzo, *Blue Gold: World Water Wars* (2009))

such questions (Drahokoupil et al., 10), since the electorate simply is not aware of the import of these “collectively binding [...] decisions” (Ibid.). Therefore these decisions exclusively mirror the capitalist states' “form-determined bias [toward] capita[l]” (Ibid., 9). In addition to this, the IFIs and other momentarily influential institutions are not even democratically mandated in the residual sense that the government apparatuses of our national neo-liberal authoritarians are. They are part of the parallel power networks which bypass the official and formal channels of democratic government (Kannankulam, 10), which Kannakulam identifies as characteristic of the global authoritarian statism enforced by the Washington Consensus, which succeeded the Bretton Woods System as the global economic paradigm. The new, post-Bretton Woods role devised for the abovementioned organizations consists of pushing through neo-liberal agendas throughout the capitalist periphery, i.e., the developing world. But instead of realizing “the [fictitious] neo-liberal utopia of self-regulating free markets that maximize individual freedom and enhance” prosperity in the former 'Second' and 'Third Worlds' (Thirkell-White, 141), the gap between the rich and the poor has grown wider than ever, between and within the 'Second,' the 'Third,' and the 'First Worlds'. “One consequence [of the neo-liberal revolution] has been the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor within Western societies, but also globally too” (Featherstone, xix). As John Milbank, Christian theologian and Professor of Religion, Politics, and Ethics at the University of Nottingham, puts it, our new age of Western economic imperialism makes no “distinction between [the] colonies as the extra-capitalist sources of 'primary accumulation' and the [...] home markets” any more (Milbank, 66). In other words, the capitalist class today is less inclined to grant favors according to nationality, or race.

“Die[se] Umbrüche der internationalen Weltwirtschaftsordnung [...] führten [...] dann [...] zur globalen Verfestigung neoliberaler Muster in Form des Washington Consensus” (Kannankulam, 151). John Williamson, who coined said term in 1989, gives its broad sense as 'market fundamentalism,' or the 'neo-liberal agenda,' “ein global wirksames System [...], dessen Ziel die weltweite Etablierung einer in [Williamsons] Zielen benannten ökonomischen Ordnung und Disziplin ist” (Ibid., 130).

The ten key points of Williamson's Washington Consensus can be summarized as a wholesale neo-liberalization of the countries to which it is applied: deregulation, which allows capital to move freely in and out of the country in question; financialization; privatization, which is done in such a way as to ensure that the enterprises in question are sold below their real value to

external investors; the unconditional opening of the domestic market to Western exports, which translates into the removal of the trade barriers that had been put in place by the developing countries to protect their own industries; the floating of the national currency; tax cuts for the rich and higher taxation of the poor, which lessens the economic power of the state and its capacity to intervene in the market. These are the rules of the Washington Consensus which are imposed by the IFIs on the developing world.

The abovementioned financial crisis of 1987 forced a great number of developing countries into debt. Interestingly, another ironic twist, said crisis was single-handedly caused by Ronald Reagan's economic policy of exploding the US public debt for the sake of winning the arms race against the Soviet Union, and of course, in order to create jobs for his electorate to ensure his reelection. Another major reason for said financial crisis lies in the reliberalization of the international financial market, which, as Keynes predicted, triggered a global crisis-dynamic. Paul Volcker, who became head of the US Federal Reserve Bank under Nixon in 1979, initiated "angesichts des anhaltenden Wertverfalls des Dollars [...] eine Erhöhung [d]es Leitzinses[, was] die Weltwirtschaft in eine massive Krise führte" (Ibid., 124), thus "deliberately plunging the US, and much of the rest of the world, into recession and unemployment" (Harvey (2005a), 13). Volcker raised the federal fund rate up to 21.5 percent in 1981. "The debt spiral was born[.] Soaring interest rates meant higher interest payments on foreign debts, and often the higher payments could only be met by taking on more loans" (Naomi Klein, 159). Most developing countries, "having borrowed heavily in the seventies, found themselves in [dire] straits" (Ibid.). Mexico and Argentina declared state bankruptcy in 1982. "Insgesamt stieg der Schuldenberg der Dritten Welt bis 1985 auf 1.000 Milliarden US-Dollar an" (Kannankulam, 128). Reagan 'surmounted' the crisis of the 1970s via the tactic of massively borrowing abroad (Kannankulam, 127). A tactic which culminated in 1987 in "den [bis dahin] schlimmsten Kurseinbrüchen an den Weltbörsen seit 1929" (Ibid.). This international stock market crash, among other things, proved that the reliberalization of the international financial market was by then complete. "In dieser Situation griff vor allem der Internationale Währungsfond ein" (Ibid., 128), the 'debt trap' was born. The debtor states were forced by the IMF to subject their societies to the rules of the Washington Consensus.

In short, developing countries in debt are thus forced by the IFIs to exclusively rely on the export of raw materials and to exclusively grow cash crops, i.e.,

export crops like tea and coffee, which are then sold at very low prices to Western corporations as part of the rationalization and modernization programs said IFIs implement in these countries in exchange for debt relief and subsidies. The cash crops and raw materials are being pumped out of these countries to be sold at bargain prices to Western corporations. The borrower countries can thus only pay for the interest on their debts. Thus, the developing countries are 'trapped' in debt⁶.

The very IFIs which were supposed to 'govern' global capitalism under the Bretton Woods system had been infiltrated by neo-liberal (and/or neo-conservative) ideology long before it gained ascendancy in national politics. Kannankulam speaks of a "neoliberal-monetaristischen Wende" that spread from the US Federal Reserve System to the IMF (Kannankulam, 216). The 'neo-liberal monetary turn subsequently succeeded in converting the British "Callaghan-Healey Administration [...] zum Monetarismus" (Ibid., 250), which cost the latter the election and catapulted Margaret Thatcher into world politics. Another ironic twist...

Furthermore, it is a simple fact that the IMF, the WB, and the WTO, deal in investment and not in charity. As former United States Under-Secretary of the Treasury, Lawrence Summers, put it, "[f]or every dollar the US contributes to the World Bank, US corporations receive \$1.3 in procurement contracts"⁷. It seems like 'development aid' has been turned into a rather lucrative (quasi-)business as well, and into a farce and a travesty. George points out the disproportion in the money flow between the south and the north: "weltweit gesehen betragen 2004 die Zuflüsse vom Norden in den Süden 78 Mrd. US-Dollar [und] Abflüsse vom Süden in den Norden hingegen [...] 478 Mrd. US-Dollar" (George, 27).

Margaret Thatcher's predecessor, James Callaghan, was driven by the conditions of an IMF loan to instigate the abandonment of social democracy in the UK, "permitting the emergence of a disfavored periphery of unprotected, non-unionized part-time employees [and] social hardship" (Judt, 539), which, by extension, cost him his reelection. "Der zur Behebung d[e]r Währungskrise benötigte Kredit durch den IWF wurde an die Durchführung eines IWF-Stabilisierungsprogramms geknüpft" which submitted the British economy to a neo-liberal restructuring in accordance with the later-developed rules of the Washington Consensus (Kannakulam, 115). Like Helmut Schmidt in Germany and Jimmy Carter in the US, Callaghan, therefore, instigated the first neo-liberal changes in his country, even before

⁶(Sam Bozzo, *Blue Gold: World Water Wars* (2009))

⁷(Sam Bozzo, *Blue Gold: World Water Wars* (2008))

the New Right came into power. According to Judt, it “is more than a little bit ironic that Labour was constrained to fight the historic election of 1979 on the claim that it had *not* engineered a social crisis[,] when this was exactly what it had done—while the Conservative party swept back into power under [...] a woman who insisted” on implementing just this kind of radically monetarist policies with a vengeance (italics in original; Judt, 539). The de facto establishment of a margin of disenfranchised long-term jobless in Britain was one of the results of Thatcher's policies as well as a rise in “petty crime and delinquency [...] in line with the growing share of the population caught in permanent poverty” (Ibid., 544). Under Reagan in the US the number of people caught in poverty literally exploded, rising by no less than 6 million people. Both in the US and in the UK a reserve army of labor, an excess or surplus population emerged at the margins; a phenomenon which persists to the present day. This pool of desperate unemployed, together with the general “movement toward part-time and contractual work[, creates] an ever-present threat [to] full-time occupationals” (Wilson, 24), which makes the latter accept stagnating wages while corporate profits skyrocket. This scenario, at present, applies to the West as a whole and to the world as such as well. The same goes for the fact that this disenfranchised underclass provides a handy scapegoat as an 'enemy within' against which the (New) Right's populist 'law and order' campaigns can be aimed as well as the truncheons of their enforcers, which, in turn, accustoms the electorate to the employment of excessive force on the part of the executive branch and serves to further undermine any residual solidarity between societal groups. The core of Hayek's “teachings was that the economic forces of supply, demand, inflation and unemployment were like the forces of nature fixed and unchanging” (Naomi Klein, 50). According to Hayek, markets are destiny. This neo-liberal market fundamentalism went global with the Washington Consensus. John Williamson, the original author of the Washington Consensus, himself admitted in 2000 that the term he himself coined by now stands for the extreme and dogmatic belief that markets can solve everything (cited in Kannankulam, 129, n. 16). The Washington Consensus has recently been 'officially' surpassed by the Seoul Development Consensus of 2010^{xvi}. British neo-liberal New Labour economist Gordon Brown, later PM of the UK, publicly announced the death of the Washington Consensus in 2009. Conversely, Williamson replied that his ten points were still very much in effect. The 2010 consensus, in fact, does read a lot friendlier and more humane than its disciplinary predecessor, but it also is rather vague and does not in any way invalidate Williamson's 10 points. After the meeting of the

Finance ministers of the G20 in April 2011, “the G20 released a *communiqué* where they emphasised the importance of implementing [said] Consensus, saying they were anticipating concrete recommendations to be released by their high level panel in September” 2011^{xvii}. No 'concrete recommendations' have been issued so far. It can be noted that under the directorship of Dominique Strauss-Kahn the prominence of the Washington Consensus in IMF policies diminished. Strauss-Kahn, however, had to step down in 2011 and was succeeded by self-declared (neo-)liberal Christine Lagarde, which translates into a renewal of the IMF's neo-liberal agenda.

In a way, neo-liberalism 'proved' its notion that the market-place is the great unchanging truth of human society, since, after over 30 years of neo-liberalism, none of the problems it professed to solve has changed; unemployment is still high, public deficits are greater than ever, the state has not been rolled back but its executive branch has been rebuilt into a fortress for the ruling class, global poverty has been stagnating on a very high level for over a decade now, the environment is declining faster than ever, the 'Evil Empire' of communism has successfully been substituted by Islamic fundamentalist 'evildoers,' etc. It thus can be noted here that the “discursive re-definition and ultimate subordination of traditional social democratic ideas [...] to the commodifying logic of neoliberal restructuring [in fact] serve[d] to intensify and deepen th[e] tendencies it set out to counteract” (Hager, 122).

Under Reagan the US public deficit actually increased on an unprecedented scale. In Thatcherite Britain, “Sir Geoffrey Howe as Chancellor raised the tax burden in face of sharply increasing unemployment” (Riddell, 28), which translated into a public sector surplus and simultaneous high unemployment for Britain. Kannankulam points out the fact that under Thatcher the percentage which taxes contributed to the British GDP actually increased from 33.1 percent to 37.6 percent (Kannankulam, 271). Moreover, this increase of the overall tax burden involved an element which is rather telling regarding Thatcher's agenda. According to Besley and Peters, “there has been a cumulative shift in the tax burden away from corporations toward individual wage earners [which] ended up favoring corporations and high-income groups at the expense of low- to middle-income groups” (Besley/Peters, 163). The direct taxes decreased while the indirect tax burden, which is mainly shouldered by the lower classes, increased. Furthermore, under Thatcher the top income tax rate was reduced by more than 50 percent. The same happened in the Reaganite US. This translates into yet another redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich.

To the coeval critics of Thatcherite and Reaganite neo-liberalism, its

'unorthodox' ideas, such as battling poverty by abolishing the welfare state, or abolishing public deficit via massive tax cuts for the wealthy, "seemed bizarre and likely to precipitate a much deeper crisis for capitalism" (Gamble, 23), which they did. Nonetheless, neo-liberalism succeeded in "reaffirm[ing] the inevitability" of capitalism (Gamble, 25). Under neo-liberalism market forces have indeed become destiny. Zinn in this regard speaks of the neo-liberal, neo-classical quasi-religious belief in the capitalist market and its divine provenance (Zinn, 193). Neo-liberalism's belief in the metaphysics of the market place has turned capitalism into a religion^{xviii}.

According to Peter Riddel, "Reagan and Thatcher also helped to *change* other countries, possibly more than their own. They altered the political landscape" (italics in original; Riddel, 41). Riddell adds that "by the end of the [...] 1980s [...] a second recession had taken much of the gloss off the earlier successes" of the neo-liberal reforms (Ibid.). One could argue that the only real amend brought about by Thatcher's "revolution from the Right" (Judt, 547), viz. a slight decrease in unemployment, in fact, only lasted for a short period of time and then reversed itself. Furthermore, one could point out the fact that Thatcher was only able to boast a positive public balance because of the profits generated by oil drillings in the North Sea (which, by the way, were instigated by her predecessor) and one-time-only profits from the massive privatization wave she instigated. In addition to this, Kannakulam points out that Thatcher, instead of solving basic problems, postponed them into the future (Kannankulam, 272ff). With regard to Reagan's policies he clarifies that the stock market crash of 1987 marked the moment in time when the bubble created by the deficit-driven boom of the 1980s burst (Ibid., 275). According to Kannakulam, even the very limited successes, i.e., the few occasions when their reforms had any positive effects, of both Reagan and Thatcher 'were built on sand' (Ibid., 272). Neither Reagan's, nor Thatcher's, neo-monetary economic policies were adequate for solving the structural problems of the economy (Ibid., 255). Reagan's "Strategie der Verschuldung[,] wurde [...] in hohem Maße durch die hohen Rüstungsausgaben [...] betrieben" (Kannakulam, 312). According to the director of the Office of Management and Budget under Reagan, David Stockman, this unprecedented US deficit (44 billion dollars at the time) had another desirable side effect. It allowed him to use this deficit as a "battering ram" to force Congress to grant severe cuts in social expenditure (Borchert, 199).

From "the standpoint of the upper classes[,] neoliberalization [...] has been a huge success" (Harvey (2007), 156), notwithstanding the fact that it did not solve a single one of the problems it set out to solve. The impact of

Reaganism and Thatcherism, in my opinion, cannot be overestimated, for they created precedents for neo-liberal policies in the West and successfully changed the global discursive formation. In fact, they not only brought about a wholesale revival of Social Darwinist discourse, but implemented said nineteenth-century pseudo-science, in an only slightly modified guise, as the dominant discourse and as general common sense.

Furthermore, Thatcher's 'two-nations' program and her *idée fixe* of a 'property-owning democracy' in fact translate into nothing more and nothing less than a two-tier society and straight-up plutocracy, which means a democracy of the rich, where only those who own property get to vote. Burbach in this regard speaks of the "creation of a '20:80 society' in which the top twenty per cent of the population takes more and more of the world's income while the other 80 per cent suffers economic decline or stagnation" (Burbach, 39). As Edward Comor points out, "[f]rom 1975 to 1998, real consumption in the world doubled to \$24 trillion while 86 percent of all private consumption is carried out by just 20 percent of the world's population" (Comor, 174). Richard Wolin, in turn, speaks of the "'two-thirds society': a society in which two thirds of the population live in relative affluence, while the other third leads a quasi-marginal existence, more or less getting by" (Wolin, 276). This marginalized third of society is excluded from postmodern consumerism and works precarious jobs in the low-wage and subcontracted labor sectors. Besley and Peters identify "the growth of a recalcitrant and permanent underclass, of those who are structurally disadvantaged in terms of access to an increasingly specialized and highly segmented labor market" (Besley/Peters, 163). What the views of the latter theorists have in common is the idea of the emergence of a two-tier society of one kind or another over the course of the last decades.

Of course, Thatcher did not completely succeed with her anti-democratic endeavor, but even the many partial successes she had have done severe damage to British democracy and as a precedent to democracy in general. The momentous contribution Reagan and Thatcher made to the new global status quo and the paradigm shift that is its base ought to be recognized. These two trailblazers of our current age of neo-liberal authoritarian etatism "took what had hitherto been minority [...] positions and made them mainstream" (Harvey (2007), 62). Nowadays, all the world's governments are neo-liberal. Hence, it is sensible to say that these two individuals helped their ideology to conquer the world, a project which would not have succeeded without the help of the said two 'great' Western authoritarian populists. They inspired scores of other politicians to finally drop most of their democratic

values and get back to the business at hand, viz. generating profit for the wealthy and getting rich oneself in the process. Naturally, these two trailblazers of the New Right could not have succeeded without the help of many like-minded politicians and scores of epigones in all the countries of the world.

2.1.4 MARKETS AND EMPIRES

After Reagan, his Vice-President became the new President of the US, former CIA director George W. H. Bush (Bush I), whose policy, like the one of Margaret Thatcher's conservative successor in Britain, John Major, was not merely rooted "in the Reagan/Thatcher rhetoric," but a continuation of their policies (Adonis/Hames (1994a), 1). Furthermore, both Major and Bush I were "largely staffed by their [predecessors'] lieutenants [and thus] husbanded their legacies intact" (Ibid.).

Bush I pronounced the 'New World Order' in 1990. Gamble identifies "neo-liberalism [as the] dominant ideology [of the 'New World Order' which, in turn, is] inseparable from [...] globalization" (Gamble, 26). Bush I's successor, Bill Clinton, took "most of the Reagan paradigm [...] as given" as well (Adonis/Hames (1994a), 1). However, it should be noted (a fact Adonis and Hames, curiously enough, happen to overlook) that Clinton and his New Democrats even furthered Reagan's agenda, as did Tony Blair's New Labour with Thatcher's legacy. The "Clinton administration's core project [consisted of] financial liberalization, globalization and domestic fiscal retrenchment" (Cafruny, 66). Hence, it should be noted here that the so-called New Democrats under Clinton and New Labour under Blair, instead of countermanding the neo-liberal reforms of their conservative predecessors, in fact, furthered them and effectively instated them as the new status quo. "Ironically, [in the US and the UK,] it was [the] center-left [which] did the most to consolidate the role of neo-liberalism both at home and internationally" (Harvey (2005a), 25).

After the NATO war against Serbia, "the dual-track enlargements of NATO and the EU have entrenched the position of political elites and business interests across Europe linked to the USA and neoliberalism" (Cafruny, 75). These elites correspond to the class faction that Kannankulam, drawing upon Poulantzas, identifies as the 'inner bourgeoisie': "Jene neue Klassenfraktion ist grundlegend mit dem 'imperialistischen' US-Kapital verbunden" (Kannankulam, 150).

In the year 2000, the neo-conservative think tank called 'Project for the New American Century' in a publication spoke of a future 'new Pearl Harbor' which

would be necessary as a “catalyzing event” to reestablish US global dominance^{xix}. On September 11, 2001, US neo-conservatism got its Pearl Harbor. In 2001, as macabre as it sounds, 9/11 actually “created a window of opportunity for the US neo-conservative project to further the imperial turn in US foreign policy” (Drahokoupil et al., 1), which the Bush II/Cheney administration used, among many other things, to effect a “sharp reduction of the taxes on the wealthy and on corporations” (Jameson (2003b), 60). Furthermore, Milbank identifies “the global perpetuation of the neo[-liberal] revolution of the 1980s” as one of the main 'real' targets of Bush II's so-called 'war on terrorism' (Milbank, 74). Be that as it may, 9/11 has become the apocalyptic event of postmodernity. As a media event it has taken postmodern hyperreality to a whole new level.

Neo-liberalism is the ideology Western civilization propagates and pushes through in the new millennium in its neo-colonial wars and via the new 'muscular' foreign policy of the US. The tenets of neo-liberalism have become the new paradigm inside which Western politics operates both at home and abroad. The imperialist, neo-colonial turn in US foreign policy is an expression of neo-liberalism. This new “American neo-Roman imperialism” (Ibid., 65), which, as always, is “of course [endowed] with total European connivance” (Ibid., 66), though potentially “suicidal” (Ibid., 82), and equipped with a “relatively genocidal tendency” (Ibid., 79), may in the end turn out to be a good thing, since—as Gamble so tellingly points out—“markets need empires” (Gamble, 35) and “international monetary stability requires hegemonic leadership” (Cafruny, 79). There could not be anything more important than 'markets' and no other source of stability than 'hegemonic leadership,' now could there? If markets truly need empires one could construe from this that the neo-liberal free market has created its empire in the form of US military dominance.

Spanos locates “an epistemic break [...] in the decade of the Vietnam War” (Spanos, 66). He argues that the American invasion of Vietnam brought about a “(self)disclosure of the violence—the Egyptianism as Nietzsche and Foucault ironically put the Hellenism of European modernity” (Ibid., 67)—which subsequently led to the ascendancy of postmodernism. Just as the second European Thirty Years' War of the first half of the twentieth century unmasked the will for the final solution inherent to Enlightenment discourse, so the US Vietnam War unmasked the neo-colonial aspirations of the Pax Americana which had superseded the Pax Europa by then. Spanos dubs the Vietnam War “the first postmodern war” (Ibid., 69), which according to him, Milbanks, Jameson, and Petrovic, constitutes “a genocidal assault on a third-

world people undertaken in the name of the ontological principles of humanist freedom” (Ibid.). Akram-Lodhi identifies the employment of the military “to realize [...] global political and economic goals” (Akram-Lodhi, 156) together with its official justification on obscure reasons of moral based on a Manichean view of the world “in terms of good and evil” (Ibid., 159) as a typical expression of what he calls neo-conservatism. The West's, and especially the US, military has long since again become the *ultima ratio mercatorum*. According to Akram-Lodhi, neo-conservatism has been the dominant political ideology of the West for, at least, the last 30 years. This, coincidentally, is the exact same time span in which emerged what Jameson calls 'late capitalism' and 'postmodernism'. It can be noted that late capitalism is the form of capitalism in which the neo-liberal paradigm has risen to dominance. Postmodernism is thus the cultural logic of neo-liberalism.

2.2 LATE CAPITALISM AND POSTMODERNITY

Carroll argues that postmodernity as a distinct historical period does not exist. His main argument for this standpoint is that as in Fordist capitalism today “production is still the key to economic dominance” (Carroll, 100). He simultaneously points out that the main characteristics of capitalism which are commonly attributed to postmodern 'late capitalism' were already discernible in modern capitalism (Ibid.). Conversely, Carroll allows for the existence of postmodern art, especially postmodern literature (Ibid., 99). Petrovic, in diametrical opposition to Carroll's view, acknowledges the existence of a postmodern condition, but denies the existence of postmodern/ist art, claiming that there “is no postmodern literature, there is only postmodern interpretation of literature” (Petrovic, 60). Bertens, in a similar vein as Carroll, characterizes the postmodern condition as a form of radicalized 'hyper-modernity' and thus opts for the term “radicalized modernity” instead of postmodernity (Bertens (1997b), 117).

The death of postmodernism was first announced in the 1970s. Then it died again along with irony, killed on September 11, 2001, by Al Qaeda (Gross et al., 14). Apparently, this date marks “a turning point [where] an epoch had come to a close[, once again, the] epoch [of] postmodernity” ended (ibid.). The reason for the reemergence of this strange obituary in 2001 is given as 9/11 being “authentic in a way postmodernism denied” (Ibid., 15). Conversely, and much more convincingly, Jameson argues that the events of September 11, 2001, marked the emergence of a “new inauthenticity” (Jameson (2003b), 57). Accordingly, Cynthia Weber states that “the events of

September 11 confirmed the postmodern collapsing of the real and the hyperreal” (Weber, 3).

The first pronouncement of postmodernism in 1870 “when according to English salon painter Chapman he and his friends wanted to venture a postmodern painting” (Sandbothe/Welsch, 76) coincides with the beginning dematerialization of trade through “instantaneous communication” technology in the second half of the nineteenth century (Youngquist, 14). This latter process has culminated in our present digital age. According to Paul Youngquist, the invention of the telegraph and its use for the stock market inaugurated the maximization of “profit beyond the physical limits of goods” (Ibid., 19) which is symptomatic of our present-day finance turbo-capitalism. He thus argues that the emergence of this disconnection of speculation from the actual goods marks the point where “production [ceased to be] the impetus of exchange, [and thus] industrial capitalism [began to] ced[e] to finance[,]” post-industrial, or 'late capitalism' (Ibid., 18). Kurz and Hobsbawm even speak of a third industrial revolution which marks capitalism's transition from Fordist to post-Fordist capitalism. Production may very well still be the key to economic dominance, but the whole structure of capitalism has changed around it, which is a fact one cannot overlook. Furthermore, even the nature of production has changed, immaterial labor now being hegemonic at least in the West. The Fordist Taylorization of industrial capitalism has given way to the age of the microchip and flexible accumulation. Our current phase of capitalism can thus be considered post-Fordist and, with equal validity, postmodern.

Since the very term 'postmodern' means 'post,' i.e., after, 'modo,' i.e., now, after the contemporary, one could argue that postmodernism's rejection of the past even encompasses the present; “the term 'post-modern' [is thus] a *contradictio in adjecto*” (italics in original; Klähn, 81). This notwithstanding postmodernity as the epoch 'after' modernity and modernism remains a valid instance of nomination. Žižek, accordingly, remarks that “post-'68 capitalism forms a specific economic, social, and cultural unity[, and] the name 'postmodernism['] designat[es this] new historical epoch[, which is an] act [...] of authentic *nomination*” (italics in original; Žižek (2011), 246). Note that, ironically, postmodernism presumably is so 'cutting edge' that it even outdates the present. “Postmodernism establishes itself by declaring other modes of thought and practice obsolete” (Green, 23). The declaring void of all preceding discourses is one of the characteristics of postmodernism. Postmodernism posits itself as having broken with everything that came before^{xx}.

The system of economic organization of our epoch might best be called late (or multinational, or consumer) capitalism. This purest form of capitalism yet has penetrated all “hitherto uncommodified areas” of human intercourse, which resulted in a conflation of the public and the private spheres (Jameson (1984), 78). Jameson defines the epoch of postmodernity as an era characterized by this new intensified stage of capitalism. The characteristics attributed to the era of 'late capitalism,' such as a potentiation of alienation, inauthenticity, the absence of morality, and an overall emphasis on the surface and the moment at hand, seem to describe the present state of affairs (2014 A.D.) quite accurately. Paik, accordingly, speaks of our present epoch as “an era of unconstrained greed, resource depletion, and looming environmental catastrophe” (Paik, 43).

The usage of the term “Postmoderne” is very disparate (Welsch, 14). Jameson defines postmodernism as the cultural realization of the changes in the economic realm. While the service sector grows ever more important in Western society, production is outsourced to what were once called the 'Third' and 'Second' worlds. Countries which used to be out of reach of neo-liberal capitalism behind the iron curtain are now part of a global, multinational, or transnational, economy as are almost all other countries and cultures and all parts of their respective societies. The emergence of new technologies and new means of communication as well as the postmodern emphasis on the importance of culture has effected significant and profound changes, some of which have already occurred and some of which are currently going on. Although this cluster of phenomena is very heterogeneous, they culminate in a transformation of the perceivable world which affects everyone and everything in it. It thus seems sensible to give such a new situation, or condition, a new name. Since it is virtually impossible to define an epoch without referring to its predecessor, and since the one in question here has been profoundly influenced by modernity, it seems rather sensible to deem this new epoch 'postmodernity'.

Kellner points out the obvious when he remarks that “capitalism is a system of oppression which especially exploits and oppresses its underclass, particularly people of color” (Kellner (1995), 163). Raewyn Connell's gender-oriented contention that European and American masculinities are deeply enmeshed in the worldwide violence by which Western culture gained hegemony (Connell, 206) hints at the fact of the interconnectedness of American and Western-European imperialism, which Jameson fails to mention. The Pax Americana not only succeeded the Pax Europa, but it continued the latter's imperial project by the same methods and means.

According to Linda Hutcheon, “postmodern theory and practice [...] remained in that earlier paradigm of [...] *American-ness*” (italics in original; Hutcheon, 7). Postmodern culture, in fact, is American-style consumer culture. There is no denying this fact. And there is no denying the fact that said form of culture is the dominant culture the world over. Consumer capitalism always goes hand in hand with consumer culture. There is no separating the two from each other. Rothberg accordingly points out that “the question of [...] US hegemony [...] plays a large role in Jameson's approach to postmodernism and globalization, as well it must” (Rothberg, 136). It must because US cultural hegemony is a fact, an important facet of contemporary reality. Postmodernism is not “a decentered phenomenon [...] being theorized from the center” (Hutcheon, 7), but “a critique of the dominant capitalist culture” from within (Ibid., 8). Furthermore, while the US might very well be “an empire in decline” (Žižek (2011), 175), it remains the one hegemonic military power in the world and its cultural dominance may be contested but remains considerable. Rothberg points out in this regard that “it is important that critical thinking does not reproduce American hegemony on the level of theory. [According to him,] Jameson's writings [...] constitute a call for [...] a critical internationalism” (Rothberg, 137).

Daniel Dinello remarks that “American politicians [...] arrogantly view themselves as determiner of what is right and good in the world” (Dinello, 232). American foreign politics under neo-conservatism subscribes to a Manichean world view which separates the world into black and white, 'good' and 'evil'. Spanos calls “America [...] the self-appointed contemporary keeper of the ontological principles and values of the Occident” (Spanos, 65). According to Green, since 9/11 in the US “grief, trauma, and fear have been mobilized [...] for an aggressive policy of *pax americana*” (italics in original; Green, 211). For instance, the justification for the second American Gulf War (not counting Western support for Saddam Hussein in the war between Iraq and Iran from 1980 to 1988) was again the promulgation of “a humanitarian war” (Kellner (2010), 89), while the obvious real reason was “securing the access to Middle Eastern oil reserves” (Ibid, 88). Youngquist argues that US-American imperialism is “global in scope, dispersed in operation, and coeval with a complex electronic communications network” (Youngquist, 189) and a cybernetic system of surveillance. This view is presently being bolstered by the disclosures of former NSA operative Edward Snowden. Postmodern theory's prioritization of US-American consumer culture thus only mirrors a momentous real-world phenomenon.

Jameson reasons that late capitalism's emphasis on exchange-value has

caused people to prefer appearance over essence. He describes contemporary culture as “the culture of the simulacrum” (Jameson (1984), 66). The principal progenitor of the simulacral hyperreal which characterizes the human condition under postmodernity, of course, has been television. “Television simulates real-life situations, not so much to represent the world, but to execute its own. News re-enactments of 'real-life' events blur the boundaries between the 'real' and the simulation, 'entertainment' and 'current affairs'” (Barker, 208). The advent of color TV was one of the main instigators of the postmodern. TV has changed the way in which we perceive reality; it is the main source of the images and simulacra that dominate postmodern culture. Elena Gomel remarks that “in the postmodern [...] the lines separating appearance [from] reality [are] not blurred [...] but nonexistent” (Gomel (2011), 56). The real has been televised by reality TV and thus has become a simulacrum of itself.

Anderson claims that the advent of color TV constitutes the “single watershed of the postmodern [...], which first became general in the West in the early seventies” (Anderson (1998), 88). The ascendancy of color TV, thus, perfectly coincides with the emergence of postmodernism. Jameson remarks that “the depoliticization of the workers' movement is attributable to the media” (Jameson (1991), 23). The medium in question, the postmodern medium *per se*, is, of course, television. “The development that changed everything was television” (Anderson (1998), 87). “With it a qualitative jump in the power of mass communication had arrived” (Ibid., 88). Accordingly, Bertens emphasizes “the roll of the media, and especially television, in the formation of postmodern culture” (Bertens (1995), 150). The advent of TV has heralded the rise of what Baudrillard deems 'hyperreality,' a situation where the real can no longer be told apart from its simulation, and which is characteristic of postmodernity. According to Adam Roberts, the “ubiquity of TV and cinema has resulted in a super-saturation of the visual in culture as a whole” (Roberts (2006b), 265). TV sets “are perpetual emotion machines, transmitting discourses that are wall-to-wall ideology, in the strong sense of the word” (Ibid.). The ideology they predominantly spew is congruent with the ideological tenets of neo-liberalism. Furthermore, contemporary culture is predominantly a visual culture where image takes precedence over the written word. “[D]ie postmoderne Welt [ist] durch das Fernsehen hergestellte Welt, [...] in der die Wirklichkeit bloß noch simuliert wird und ungewiss ist, ob es das was wir Realität nennen, überhaupt jenseits der medialen Simulation gibt” (Behrens, 10). The image is disconnected from the actual world of the referent and becomes a pure simulation of an original that no

longer exists. Media simulation becomes a simulacrum of actual reality, devoid of all authenticity. Furthermore, “haben [d]ie veränderten Sehgewohnheiten [...] dazu geführt, dass auch die Grenzen zwischen [SF] und Realität mehr und mehr verwischen” (Carsten Wagener, 102).

Under the postmodern, SF tends to become a mode of literal description. Roberts gives the following example of this phenomenon: “[w]hen *Challenger* exploded, the moment collapsed together our perceptions [...] from the real [TV] mode of an actual launch to the 'SFX' mode of film [...] that was the reason why [...] it was so unsettling” (italics in original; Roberts (2006a), 114). Real-world catastrophes seem to mimic the CGI imaginings of the SF film. This corresponds to what Holz has got to say about the unsettling effects of the “[l]ive-on-TV coverage [of the 9/11 attacks, which] was 'like something on TV,' a cinematic nightmare, a virtual reality simulation come alive” (Holz, 261, n. 246). The media coverage of “September 11 confirmed the postmodern collapsing [...] of reality and film” (Weber, 3). There is no way of discerning 'real' news from its simulation anymore.

Burbach argues that the “three main political ideologies that have driven the Western world since the French Revolution—liberalism, conservatism and then socialism—[...] are unable to explain or incorporate the tremendous complexity and diverse realities of the contemporary world” (Burbach, 71). Furthermore, under postmodernity the Enlightenment metanarrative of progress and development has been proven void by “the massive discrepancies in wealth, health and standards of living between the Third and the First worlds” (Weedon, 61). The problematic of distributive injustice proves void the humanitarian metanarrative of Enlightenment. The 'metanarratives,' 'myths,' or 'grand narratives,' have thus been discredited as ideological fiction. The Enlightenment metanarrative of progress disintegrates in the face of a reality which invalidates all of its axioms. Paik points out in this regard that the “postmoderns are distinguished by their inability to generate [...] fictions to which they can impute a binding character” (Paik, 66). Conversely, neo-liberal ideology still clings to the *grand récit* of progress in the form of the Entropy Myth. According to Paik, the postmodern “erosion of myth-making inventiveness [translates into] the enhancement of the critical powers of demystification” (Ibid.). Thus, postmodern thought can engender a liberating influence. To make a grand narrative out of the disbelief towards grand narratives qualifies as a very poor (mythical) axiom on which to proceed, which, in turn, gives credence to Paik's point about the postmodern erosion of myth making. Postmodernism thus ushers in the possibility of coping with reality without succumbing to mythopoetic fabulation.

Contra Burbach's declaration that liberalism, conservatism, and socialism are no longer functional, it can be remarked that neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism are alive and well. They shape the hegemonic discourse of today as well as world politics. And insofar as socialism is concerned, Harvey rightfully remarks that “Marx's *Capital* is rich in insights into what the current status of thinking is all about” (italics in original; Harvey (2000), 342). He elaborates elsewhere that, in his opinion, the neo-liberal counter-revolution over the course of the last thirty years has globally reestablished such a situation “wie sie Marx auf so brillante Weise an England in den 1850er und 1860er Jahren dekonstruiert hat” (Harvey (2011), 25). “Marx' Analyse [ist] leider nur zu aktuell” (Ibid., 184). Behrens completely agrees with Harvey here (Behrens, 25). Conversely, according to Wolin, “Marx[']s assumptions [...] fail to do justice to the dynamics of late capitalism” (Wolin, 302). However, it must be noted that Wolin's interpretation of Marx^{xxi} is dubious to say the least. In opposition to Wolin's view stemming from 2004, in 2009, Michael Quante admonishes that the wounds struck by the globalization process, the fall-back into neo-liberalism, and the erosion of the welfare state exemplify the current relevance of Marxian thinking (Marx, 217). In 2011, Fritz Reheis declares that Marx's analysis of society and the economy today is more up-to-date than ever before (Reheis, 11). However, Wolin is right when he remarks that “even Marx [...] conceived of socialism as the *realization* of bourgeois ideals (hence, 'real' equality would replace formal equality) rather than their abstract negation” (italics in original; Wolin, 309f). The problem is that we are infinitely far from achieving this goal, or at least not much closer to it under late capitalism than we were in Marx's time.

2.3 WHAT'S IN A NAME?

According to Akram-Lodhi, the answer to the question 'What's in a name?' is “[q]uite a lot actually” (Akram-Lodhi, 171). In the case of late capitalism, as opposed to the phase preceding it, i.e., high capitalism, or Keynesianism, this is definitively true. Consequently, global, multinational, consumer, information, flexible, corporate, finance, information, cybernetic, post-industrial, post-Fordist, and neo-liberal capitalism all refer to the same stage of capitalism, viz. late capitalism. While other terms, e.g., disaster, casino, and savage capitalism, also refer to late capitalism, they nevertheless are of a more general nature, whereas the terms which are now under discussion specifically subdivide historical capitalism into four distinct phases: mercantilism, industrialism, Keynesianism, and globalization. Jameson, basically, gives the same periodization save for the fact that he does not

distinguish industrial (also called imperial, high, or monopoly capitalism) capitalism from Keynesianism. Jameson bases his periodization on the work of Marxist theorist Ernest Mandel, who dates the advent of late capitalism to the first half of the 1940s. Jameson, however, temporally locates the advent of late capitalism to after the Second World War. Thus, it can be noted that a “shift within industrial capitalism, from a rigid Fordist regime of accumulation to a flexible, post-Fordist one, [a] transition to [...] post-industrial capitalism” (Bertens (1997b), 104) has taken place some time after the Second World War. This transformation established “a new socio-cultural formation—or even a wholly new post-industrial dispensation—that might [...] be termed postmodernity” (Ibid.). Globalization, late capitalism, and postmodernity, are thus synonymous terms, all referring to our current phase of capitalism. Postmodernism refers to the culture this new phase of capitalism has engendered. “This is a postmodern age [...] because the world itself has changed dramatically in recent decades” (Burbach, 76f). Furthermore, there is no avoiding the fact that our current economic system has totalized commodification, which constitutes a potentiation of the reification known in modernity.

The changes global capitalism underwent in the early 1970s after the death of Keynesianism and the end of the Vietnam War resulted in the advent of late capitalism. Bertens notes that today “modernization and postmodernization [...] coexist in a precarious balance of power” (Bertens (1997b), 116f). He refers to his notion that postmodernity, as the new phase of Western culture corresponding to the new phase of capitalism, is a 'radicalized version' of modernity. However, there is a host of different shifts which taken together comprise the transition from high to late capitalism and hence from modernity to postmodernity. First of all, there is the “return of an older entrepreneurialism [...] in postmodernity” (Ibid., 116), which refers to the resuscitation of nineteenth-century economic liberal ideology and Social Darwinism in the form of neo-liberalism as a counter-movement against Keynesianism. This Social-Darwinist revival incorporates praise for the Schumpeterian entrepreneur, the master of the universe who makes history every day at the stock exchange. Robert Misik points out that with the Schumpeterian heroic epos dedicated to the entrepreneur a neo-tragic sound has entered discourse: “Es [...] gibt [...] keine Alternative—der Kapitalismus hat etwas Schicksalhafteres. Er bringt Härte ins Leben—und zum Glück für die Tragiker aus der unternehmerfreundlichen Publizistik meist Härte in das Leben der anderen” (Misik, 43). It is the marginalized underclass with its precarious living conditions which pays the price of a market which has

become 'neo-tragic' fate.

Hayek's and Friedman's neo-liberal free-market ideology consists mainly of three distinct notions: privatization, deregulation, and the substitution of the Keynesian welfare state with so-called 'workfare' regimes. These resuscitated nineteenth-century notions "jumped the barrier into practical politics, establishing themselves as leading ideas [...] in the thinking of the international agencies of the global order in the 1970s and 1980s" (Gamble, 23f). This "triumph of planetary capital [was facilitate]ed by the rise to power of the Reagan, Thatcher, and Kohl administrations" (Moylan (2010), 81). The advent of postmodernism to the dominant mode of culture happened synchronously. The neo-liberal capitalist economic order then "sprea[d] like an oil slick all over the world" (Bertens (1997b), 117) via a process most commonly referred to as globalization. The tag 'post-industrial' does not, as Carroll suggests, imply the absence of (industrial) production (Carroll,100), but refers to the fact that actual (industrial) production of commodities, the "sweatshop production [was] displace[d] either internally [...] to less developed sectors of our own [...] countries [...] or to other [...] less developed [...] parts of the globe [...], alongside service functions often performed under conditions of wage slavery, if not slavery itself" (Wilson, 5). In addition, globalization opened up the possibility of capital flight with which Western capital now can always pressure the governments of their respective nations of origin and threaten their workforces. Roger Luckhurst identifies this omnipresent threat of capital flight as one of the reasons of the postmodern crisis of identity, since, according to him, "the global flights of capital [...] uproot whatever anchors of identity the precarious stabilities of industrial culture [used to] allo[w]" (Luckhurst, 156). It is thus sensible to speak of post-industrial capitalism when referring to our current epoch.

Youngquist concedes that it took time "for finance capitalism to develop to the point that [it drove] the global economy" (Youngquist, 20). He locates the moment of the advent of finance or late capital on the global stage to the early 1970s. Since this point in time capitalism has transformed from a conglomerate of national systems of accumulation into one united global system of accumulation. The term finance capitalism distinguishes our current phase from industrial capitalism, or high capitalism (and from Keynesianism), with the former's emphasis on disembodied financial transactions and speculation as opposed to the latter's emphasis on industrial production. Youngquist thus speaks of finance capital as a new form of capital because it "gives priority to the financial circuit rather than to the production circuit" (Gamble, 26). This translates into the fact that the amount of money

currently existent is no longer dependent on the amount of real products, assets, and property in existence. Finance capitalism asserted the dominance of "'friction-free' capital-in-motion" (Bould (2010), 119), which "allows capital to regain mobility, dissolving the spatial and institutional rigidities" of the Keynesian welfare states (Gamble, 26) and subsequently the welfare state itself. Incidentally, Žižek identifies the welfare state as "modern Europe's greatest economico-political achievement" (Žižek (2011), 238). Note that some critics, such as Gamble, or Reimut Zohlnhöfer, refuse to see the passage from the welfare to the workfare state as a (purely) negative development. The neo-tragic Schumpeterian discourse sounds better when it is other people's livelihood which is being put in jeopardy and not one's own. This, however, is not to argue that there is a 'good' material economy and a 'bad' immaterial one. The financialization of the world economy is an expression of the inner logic of the free 'totalitarian' market itself. There is no way of subtracting the one from the other and thus purging the economy from its inherent irrationality. The only way of erecting a just society is to transcend this economy which transforms all and everything within its scope into interchangeable units subject to the exchange value of money.

Chomsky remarks that "th[e] free movement of capital [is globalization]'s core feature" (Chomsky (2003), 138). Capital thus has become largely independent of the nation state, it has truly turned transnational. Harvey gives another central feature of neo-liberal globalization as "the financialization of everything" (Harvey (2005a), 18). Ours is an economic system which has totalized the market order. It thus makes sense to speak of our current financial system, as Kurz does, as of a totalitarian market order. The market place ultimately wields the absolute authority over all aspects of the human condition. This totalization of market forces enshrines the exchange value as the supreme arbiter of everything and turns any manifestation of life into a commodity. Furthermore, this total financialization also refers to the fact that stock trading in the last three decades has grown exponentially and at present surpasses the world's GDP. The severe cut-back in social expenditure and the transformation of the Western welfare states into workfare regimes constitute further central characteristics of the neo-liberal restructuring of world politics. It is noteworthy in this regard that cuts in social services equal a diminishment of democracy (Segbers, 77), since 'workfare' regimes "jeopardize the citizen's ability to exercise those civil and political rights that [constitute] the supposed [democratic value] implied within citizenship" (Hager, 122). According to Chomsky, neo-liberal globalization and capital flight have become "the 'greatest obstacle' to democratic

governance” in existence (Chomsky (2003), 138). A general 'roll back' of democracy as such is thus another characteristic of postmodern capitalism.

After the dissolution of the Eastern Bloc in the early 1990s, Bush I announced a 'New World Order' which is “inseparable from [...] globalization” and the economic ideology of neo-liberalism (Gamble, 26). Globalization, as the unification of the global economies, was completed in the 1990s with the help of the new communication technologies as well as other technological innovations, such as the Global Positioning System (GPS) and program trading. All the world's national economies have been sown into one global system from which no one can escape. This is yet another characteristic of our current stage of capitalism.

“The labor market has been radically restructured ([e.g., there has been] a steep increase in temporary contracts, more flexible hours, and so on)” (Bertens (1997b), 111). Bertens, drawing upon Harvey, calls the phenomenon —of which the latter transformations constitutes only one facet of an abundance of changes—“time-space compression [which] gives rise to the schizophrenic disorientation [...] characteristic of the postmodern experience” (Ibid., 113). Time-space compression is a change in the quality of the relationship between time and space. It is caused by technological innovations of great import as for example the introduction of the telegraph, the steam locomotive, the assembly line, and the Taylorization of factory work, which taken together caused a massive surge of time-space compression from the second half of the nineteenth century up to the First World War. Time-space compression refers to a change in the way human beings experience and perceive time and space. It goes along with feelings of confusion, displacement, and assault on one's senses. “We can link the schizophrenic dimensions of postmodernity [...] with accelerations in turnover times in production, exchange and consumption that produced, as it were, the loss of a sense of the future except insofar as the future can be discounted into the present” (Harvey (1998), 291). According to Klein, the *Krisenhaftigkeit* of late capitalism translates into the fact that “a steady flow of disasters is now so expected that the ever-adaptable market has changed to fit this new status quo—instability is the new stability” (Naomi Klein, 428). Welzer likewise points out that stability, today, is the exception and instability the rule (Welzer (2009), 209). Living in postmodernity we have become accustomed to a steady stream of catastrophes that never stops. Jameson postulates that perpetual change equals stasis and from this deduces one of his 'end of history' theses, viz. that the lack of truly singular events has turned history into an instance of endless repetition of change and thus into an

eternal recurrence of the same that collapses the future into the present (Jameson (2002), 60f). This loss of historicity is another characteristic of postmodern culture.

According to Bould, late capitalism's "network logic [...] breaks down [human] life-cycle rhythms" (Bould (2010), 123). He argues that late or information capitalism has initiated an immense intensification of "the dichotomy between market logic and individual lives" (Ibid., 120). New technologies, like GPS and the Internet, allow capital "to circulate in the timeless time and the spaceless space of instantaneous communication" (Ibid., 120), and rendered possible the achievement of a sophistication of organization never seen before. These two phenomena, together, have drastically changed the nature of work. Work as such has been completely subjected to globalized capital's computer-based cybernetic network logic. Technology is thus one of the chief ways in which capitalism expands to fill all the previously non-commodified spaces. The phenomenon that technological innovations go hand in hand with massive disadvantages for the labor force, the vast majority of the world's population, the environment, and society is not a new one. Over a century ago, Marx spoke of the 'alienation' and the 'reification' that resulted from industrialism and its rationalization of the workplace. In 1984, Jameson already identified an "unparalleled quantum leap in the alienation of daily life" (Jameson (1984), 76) as one of the characteristics of the postmodern condition. In the case of late capitalism, it thus seems sensible, paraphrasing Bertens, to speak of 'hyper-alienation'.

Wagner remarks that "der Begriff 'Postmoderne' heute unpopulär [ist, dass jedoch] die mit der Postmoderne assoziierten Trends [...] nicht [...] verschw[un]den [sind], sondern [...] eine Renaissance [...] unter anderen Termini [...] erleben" (Annette Wagner, 160). Bertens's 'radicalized modernity,' for instance, simply refers to postmodernity by another name. In the following sub-chapters copious examples of the changes and transformations which taken together constitute the shift from high to late capitalism will be discussed and the very certifiable effects of these changes will be elaborated upon as well. Some of these changes have already been addressed in the preceding sub-chapters. Here are just a few more examples of the transformations that comprise the shift to late capitalism: it has brought about a "decline in the industrial manufacturing sectors [and the emergence] of an unemployed underclass" (Barker, 149). Furthermore, we are undeniably living in "a world in which everything [now] has an exchange-value" (Suleiman (1990), 189). The emergence of new technologies and new means of communication, as well as the postmodern emphasis on the importance of

culture, comprise significant and profound changes as well. The unification of the world's national markets in a global system is another momentous change as is the decoupling of the exchange rates from the gold standard. The advent and decline of the Pax Americana and the new US neo-imperial wars in the Middle East constitute another new phenomenon. The diminishment of democratic rights inherent to the neo-liberal project is another defining feature of postmodern capitalism which affects all the West's (and arguably the world's) citizens. Wagner thus argues that "spätestens seit den 1980er Jahren [...] der fortschreitende Strukturwandel in allen Lebensbereichen [...] für die westlichen Industrienationen [...] Realität [...] ist" (Annette Wagner, 159). In addition, it should be noted, and has been addressed numerous times in this study already, that the so-called 'globalization' of the world's economies has affected each and every part of this planet and profoundly changed the lives of all its inhabitants. These transformations culminate in a transformation of the world. This new world system and its adherent culture herald a new denomination: postmodernity and postmodernism.

In 1987, Welsch envisioned postmodernity as a step towards a "Zeit nach dem Zeitalter der Kriege" (Welsch, 40). Unfortunately, Jameson's diagnosis of 1984's postmodern condition has proved to be a better prognosis of the future than Welsch's optimistic vision. War is good for business, even more so in the epoch of postmodernity. War has become ubiquitous. It has become one of the central pillars of everyday life. Cybernetic technology and theory, the GPS, the computer, the assembly line, were all invented for military purposes and today shape quotidian life. According to Kurz, the whole Western money system of modernity was spawned by the emergent modern military apparatus after the introduction of gunpowder into warfare in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Kurz (2013), 92ff). Kurz thus speaks of a "Leichengeruch[, den] die [...] Weltmarktdemokratien unserer Tage nie mehr losgeworden sind" (Ibid., 95). The surveillance by all kinds of secret services has become ubiquitous as well. These secret services can be said to lead a clandestine information war against their own populations. Accordingly, this is the point to remind the reader of the still obvious, "namely that [...] postmodern culture [remains] the [...] expression of [yet another] wave of [Western] military and economic domination throughout the world" (Jameson (1984), 57). In the light of present Western imperialism, "as throughout [...] history, the underside of [our] culture [remains] blood, torture, death and horror" (Ibid.).

2.4 THE FREE-MARKET TRINITY

In the following, the core ideas of neo-liberalism, i.e., the so-called free-market trinity, will be elaborated upon. It will be shown that all of its three key tenets contain serious anti-democratic elements. As Harvey observes, neo-liberalism “is severely anti-democratic, even as it frequently seeks to disguise this fact” (Harvey (2005a), 20). Harvey concludes that “[w]hat remains of representative democracy [after over 35 years of neo-liberalism] is overwhelmed, if not, as in the US, totally[,] though legally[,] corrupted by money power” (Ibid.).

2.4.1 DEREGULATION

Deregulation refers to a whole bundle of different transformations whose shared characteristic is that they aim at the removal of obstacles to the accumulation of profits for the capitalist class. Deregulation applied to the labor sector translated into the removal of job protection and the abolishment of workers' rights, the flexibilization of the labor market via the creation of a minimum wage sector, consisting of precarious sub-contractual and temporal jobs, as well as the wholesale removal of social safety nets, which, in fact, forced a whole portion of the population into poverty and compels these people to accept any job offered to them, regardless of wage, qualification, or working conditions. “Für die Lohnabhängigen bedeutet die[se] Entkollektivierung sozialer Risiken eine umfassende Re-Kommodifizierung der Arbeits[welt]” (Urban, 104). This translates into a “fortschreitend[e] Prekarisierung der Arbeitswelt [und] bedeutet Beschneidung individueller sozialer Rechte” (Gerntke, 81). This precarization of the labor market is not limited to the minimum-wage sector. The “movement toward part-time and contractive work [created] an ever-present threat [to] full-time occupationals” as well (Wilson, 24). Against the backdrop of mass unemployment this threat constitutes an enormous potential for blackmail (Gerntke, 82) with which capital can enforce stagnating wages, deteriorating working conditions, and break union-power, i.e., this “latter threat [...] is presently used to keep the people and their institutions in line” (Wilson, 226). Full-time occupationals are, furthermore, under constant pressure to be more efficient, to perform more in a shorter time. Another way for capital to exert pressure on full-time employees lies in the fact that structural unemployment constitutes a constant reservoir of workers out of which they can be replaced at any given time. Jürgen Urban calls this phenomenon a reactivation of the mechanism of the industrial reserve army (Urban, 105), a nineteenth-century condition already described by Marx and

Engels. These phenomena together result in a “fragmentation of the population into types of employment” or unemployment (Wilson, 20).

It can be noted here that the postmodern industrialized state does no longer organize the distribution of wealth, but instead enforces the accumulation of profit. Harvey speaks of the formation of a united transnational class out of the national bourgeoisies in the West. He identifies “eine [...] transnationale Klasse[, die] sich auf den territorialen Hegemon verließ, um [...] die Art von institutioneller Architektur aufzubauen, innerhalb derer sie den Wohlstand der Welt auf sich vereinigen konnten” (Harvey (2005b), 182). The 'territorial hegemon' mentioned above is the USA and its global military apparatus.

The deregulation of the labor market has resulted in a variety of negative effects even for that portion of the population that does manage to find a job. For instance, “the gradual inclusion of [...] adults into the working society as full-time occupationals” increased support for neo-liberal capitalism among this group (Wilson, 23), since “they consider themselves dependent on” the system (Ibid., 22), because today “the opportunity to be 'exploited' in a long-term job is experienced as a privilege” (Žižek (2013), 8). Social Darwinism signifies that they, the new full-time occupationals, have prevailed against the others because they are better suited for the jobs they do, while, in fact, the main difference between them and those who did not get the job is, apart from pure contingent luck, the higher degree to which they identify with the current neo-liberal order. Thus, they will not waver in their support for said system because such a deviation from the hegemonic doctrine could very well translate into a loss of the privileges associated with partaking in said system. This constant individual quest for personal opportunism of worldview dovetails with the everyday worries about violence, crime, and terrorism, “[den] zum Teil realen Ängste[n], die sich mit [den] Alltagsorgen vor soziale[m] Abstieg verbinden” (Deppe, 24). According to Heidi Ashbaugh, the situation most feared by adult Americans today “is a socioeconomic slip into liminal class status” (Ashbaugh, 125). The precarization of the working world thus translates into a more general precarization of postmodern life. Constanze Alt, referring to Habermas's discourse of individualization, describes late-capitalist culture as one in which life as a whole is cursed with the Sisyphean punishment of futile and hopeless labor (Alt, 52), i.e., a society which has totalized commodification. According to Alt, the Habermasian 'discourse of individualization' identifies the following phenomenon which results from our new 'total' or 'totalitarian' stage of capitalism: an erosion of human character that culminates in “[ein]er absolut gesetzten Vereinzelung“ of the individual (Ibid., 53). This Habermasian notion of individualization, in

turn, incorporates the impossibility of solidarity and intersubjectivity, ethical nihilism, psychopathologies, and an erosion of identity and interiority (Ibid., 52ff). All the latter phenomena can more or less completely be attributed to corresponding changes within capitalism, which were brought about by neo-liberalism: “Der Mensch ist nicht des Menschen Wolf, aber in Gesellschaften mit extremer Ungleichheit wird er es” (Wagenknecht (2012), 394). Contra Hobbes it can be noted that the state in which 'man is man's wolf' is not the 'natural state' but the state of a society completely subjected to market forces. The precarization of the working world obviously hugely contributed to the phenomena summarized by Alt, since what the latter calls the 'discourse of individualization' corresponds to Wilson's contention that neo-liberalism/conservatism effected a change of the discursive definition of individuality, establishing a limited notion “of [...] individualism *per se*[, as legitimating] 'privacy' in society only to the extent that one expresses (consumption; spectating) or embodies (status; possession) it in societal approved ways” (italics in original; Wilson, 204). These “isolated individuals [see themselves as little more than] rational wealth maximizers” (Chomsky (2003), 234), or rational utility maximizers. These people organize their whole lives around the notion of cost efficiency, competition, and a hierarchy of status. As Best and Kellner concede, neo-liberal capitalism transforms “individuals from citizens and discussants of political and cultural events to culture-consuming spectators of political and media spectacles” (Best/Kellner, 236). Thus it can be noted here that the very idea of individuality underwent a process of commodification under postmodern capitalism.

Deregulation in addition refers to the 'simplification' of governmental processes, supposedly for reasons of cost-effectiveness, to facilitate investments, etc. “[D]ie Praxis, dass in zahlreichen Ministerien Vertreter von Konzernen [...] an der Ausarbeitung und Formulierung von Gesetzesvorhaben mi[t]wirken” (Deppe, 37) is a good example of such a facilitation of investment through 'government deregulation': “The result is that the regulated get to write the rules and regulations while public decision-making becomes ever more opaque” (Harvey (2005a), 21). “[D]iese Form der direkten Verzahnung von Wirtschaftsinteressen und Gesetzgebung [hat] der Demokratie erheblichen Schaden zugefügt” (Deppe, 37). Furthermore, government deregulation involves a 'retreat' of government from the market, which is supposed to regulate itself through the rules of supply and demand. This retreat of the government to the role of 'night watchman,' or arbitrator, involves the wholesale privatization of state-owned businesses, such as infrastructural, telecommunication, or health enterprises, as well as a distinct

slackening of the laws governing these sectors. However, the idea of a deregulated, 'free' market or 'free' trade effectively collides with Western protectionism. Wilson castigates capital's "cavalier and dismissive attitude toward the large majority of the people in [the developing] countries [and] toward the majority [of people] in their countr[ies] of origin" (Wilson, 251f). The atrocious working conditions in the developing countries to which production is outsourced is ignored by capital as much as the precarization of the living conditions of a vast swath of the population in the industrialized countries.

A rather fitting example for the effects of deregulated markets within the West is the passage of the law deregulating the electricity supply of California in December 2000. In all the decades before the passing of said law only one Stage 3 rolling blackout occurred in California. Following the passing, California experienced 38 blackouts defined as Stage 3 within a time period of less than 18 months^{xxii}. This epidemic of rolling blackouts was, in fact, a part of the Enron Crisis, since "Enron traders [...] intentionally encourag[ed] the removal of power from the market during California's energy crisis [which i]s documented in recordings made at the time"^{xxiii}. The privatization of such public enterprises has similar effects as the deregulation of infrastructural support systems, such as the supply of electricity, that once, under the aegis of Keynesian social capitalism, were run by the government.

2.4.2 PRIVATIZATION

"The [...] privatization of hitherto public assets has been a signal feature of the neo-liberal project" (Harvey (2005a), 33). According to Naomi Klein, the free-market experiments with whole-sale privatization conducted in the early 1970s in the developing countries of the Latin-American Southern Cone "had generated such spectacular profits [...] that there was tremendous appetite [...] for new frontiers—and not just in developing countries but in rich ones in the West too" (Naomi Klein, 132). Naomi Klein repeatedly and convincingly compares neo-liberals with religious fundamentalists, because they profess an ideological economic creed which supposedly *must* inevitably lead to 'salvation,' viz. "fantastic prosperity for" all (Norberg, 153) who follow the 'doctrine of salvation's' "march of freedom" (Ibid., 286). Doing so means orthodoxically adhering to the holy laws of pure, "*true capitalis[m]*" (italics in original; Ibid., 16), i.e., neo-liberal globalization, which will timely realize a "pure capitalist utopia" (Naomi Klein, 82). Zinn calls the neo-liberal belief in the utopian potential of an economy completely free from intervention a "Religionsersatz" (Zinn, 192).

According to Harvey, the abovementioned Latin American experiments “demonstrated that the benefits of [...] privatization [...] were highly skewed” (Harvey (2007), 16). In Chile, for instance, the “ruling elites, along with foreign investors, did extremely well” (Naomi Klein, 53). However, in the long run, “increasing social inequality ha[s] in fact been such a persistent feature of neoliberal [reforms] as to be regarded as structural to the whole project” (ibid.). By the end of the 1990s at the very latest, the neo-liberal agenda had successfully ousted its 'enemies' on all continents. It can be noted that neo-liberal theory in the US, in Europe, and worldwide always displayed enormous overlaps as well as personal connections which at the very least seem to necessitate speaking of a transatlantic consensus in this respect. Burbach accordingly speaks of “the rise to hegemony of a transnational faction of the bourgeoisie” (Burbach, 22).

Privatization was introduced in the wealthy West as well. Judt argues that “Thatcher was a *radical*, bent upon destruction[.] For her, [...] politics [...] was [...] class warfare” (italics in original; Judt, 545). Hobsbawm accordingly emphasizes the anti-social nature of Thatcher's agenda (Hobsbawm (1994), 511). Under her rule “profits rose sharply[, so to speak,] in line with the growing share of the population caught in permanent poverty” (Ibid., 544). The Thatcher administration privatized just about everything that once belonged to the British government, for instance, public transportation. The “incompetence and malfeasance of the procedure [of] privatization” (Ibid.) draw a rather negative balance for privatization in Great Britain. Furthermore, Thatcher's project of privatizing the British National Health Service, “das wohl kostengünstigst[e] und effizientest[e] Gesundheitssystem der Welt” (Borchert, 218), is a good example of the hypocrisy of the privatization rhetoric. In the UK, between “1979 and 1993, two thirds of state-owned industries had been sold to the private sector” (Riddell, 30). “In the USA there was less scope for privatization” when Reagan came into office (Ibid., 31), since most of the enterprises that were being privatized in the UK were already in private hands in the US before he took office. It is no wonder that Reagan did not change the American economy as deeply as did his British counterpart in her country, since many of the neo-liberal reforms were unnecessary in the US, because they had already been implemented as part of American entrepreneurial capitalism driven by Friedman's Chicago School. The “neoliberal context [not only] demands adherence to Washington and Wall Street” (Cafruny, 75), but in a way originated there. “In den USA kam es [...] Anfang der 1970er [...] zu einem Paradigmenwechsel der vorherrschenden wirtschaftspolitischen Ausrichtung hin zum neuen (sprich:

Neo-)Liberalismus“ (Kannankulam, 113)^{xxiv}. Thus, the US was the first country in which the inner bourgeoisie gained dominance. This rise to dominance of the neo-liberal, monetarist fractions in the US necessarily had to bring about similar changes in the other nations which were then connected through the Bretton Woods system (Ibid., 150). Furthermore, the USA used its hegemonic military status to further the neo-liberal agenda in Europe and the developing world. According to Alan Cafruny, “US military power [...] in tandem with US structural financial power [...] consolidated the turn to neoliberalism in Europe” in the 1990s (Cafruny, 64). It is thus sensible to speak of an “US-led neoliberalism” (Ibid, 75).

Neo-liberalism can only be said to be working from the perspective of global capital. From the latter point of view neo-liberalism has been a complete and utter success. From the perspective of the other 90 to 99 percent of the world's population it does not work at all, but has “led to dismal outcomes e[very]where with fair consistency” (Chomsky (2003), 147). Hobsbawm points out that the “rapidly growing inequalities created by the uncontrolled free-market globalization are natural incubators of grievance and instability” (Hobsbawm (2008), 50), which in turn tend to result in armed conflict. Hobsbawm draws a causal relation between the rising economic inequality and the occurrence of war. As Harvey points out, “[t]he gap between rhetoric (for the benefit of all) and realization (the benefit of a small ruling class) increases” (Harvey (2005a), 50). One of the dismal outcomes that Chomsky mentions is a de facto erosion of democracy which in fact is concomitant with privatization (Judt, 138). Chomsky elaborates that “privatization does not mean you take a public institution and give it to [a] nice person, [but that] you take [it] and give it to an unaccountable tyranny”⁸. Multinational corporations, which are the principal beneficiaries from neo-liberal privatization, are hierarchically structured transnational entities which wield power of the order of small nation states. Their goal is not the public good but the maximization of profit in every which way.

2.4.3 SOCIAL DARWINISM RELOADED

According to Wilson, the acceptance of the Social Darwinist ideology of neo-liberalism as common sense by the vast majority of the Western population is a “product of secondary and primary socialization by capital through [its] influence over communities, schools and mass media” (Ibid., 237). Wilson points out “Social Darwinism's zero-sum conception of individualism and its

⁸(Jennifer Abbott, *The Corporation* (2003))

anti-social conception of freedom” (ibid.). Misik remarks that “[d]as Gewinnstreben allein [...] nur zum Recht des Stärkeren [...] führt” (Misik, 47). In other words, a society in which market forces rule supreme fosters a human condition in which 'man is man's wolf'. The major tenets of neo-liberal ideology as presented to the masses will be addressed in the following.

I would like to demonstrate neo-liberal ideology by means of one of Thatcher's most infamous quips: “there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families”^{xxv}. This declaration expresses a popular and populist neo-liberal train of thought. According to one-time member of the Mont Pèlerin society, “Karl Popper[,] social institutions [...] should always be understood as the result of decisions, actions, and attitudes of human individuals” (Harris, 50). This, however, does not mean that said social institutions have no existence. The idea that an abstract concept such as society has no material existence is a good example of false consciousness. As Harris points out, “[s]ociocultural wholes are necessarily knowable only through a process of logical and empirical abstraction from the observation of their parts, the smallest of which are the activities and thoughts of individuals” (Harris, 51). He elaborates that “even though some cultural things cannot be touched or seen, they are nonetheless real” (ibid., 52).

Referring to the tripartite motto of the French Revolution *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, Hermand formulates the following demand: “Nur dann wenn [...] nicht allein von 'Freiheit' sondern auch von 'Gleichheit und Brüderlichkeit oder besser: Mitmenschlichkeit' [gesprochen würde], ließe sich [...] über längst fällige Demokratisierungsmaßnahmen diskutieren” (Hermand, 133). I quoted this passage to bring to attention the democratically reductionist notion that Thatcher expresses in the abovementioned phrase, viz. the neo-liberal emphasis on 'liberté' at the detriment of the other two parts of the trio, namely equality and fraternity. It is just as reductionist to deny the existence of society, a notion which is brought forward by Thatcher to justify her attacks on the British embedded liberalism. Thatcher's argument frees the rich from all responsibility for the poor. Thatcher thus straight-forwardly propagates an unbridled egoism of the upper classes, “jene[r] Schichten—die heute auf Kosten der Armen in der Dritten Welt wie auch der Armen in ihren eigenen Ländern in einem materiellen Überfluß leben, der die Existenz aller Menschen bedroht” (Hermand, 135).

Eagleton calls Thatcher an “unwitting Ockanite” (Eagleton (2012), 13). William Ockham was a nominalist, and so is Thatcher, however unwittingly and ignorantly, when she denies the existence of that abstract entity called

society. Eagleton elaborates that “[n]obody of course has ever *seen* a system, any more than anyone has ever clapped eyes on the Freudian id, the University of Cambridge or the Save the Children Fund; but it seems rash to conclude from this that none of them exist” (italics in original; Eagleton (1996), 9). In Thatcher's case “not looking for totality is just code for not looking at capitalism” (Ibid., 11). Eagleton is referring to poststructuralism and Marxism respectively here. Thatcher's vulgarly ignorant nominalism, however, is rather telling. What does it mean when the head of state declares that society does not exist? It means that the state is released of any obligation to fend for its people. It means that the individuals and families which take the place of society have to exclusively fend for themselves. It implies that the state only exists to guarantee private property and the correct enactment of contracts. If society does not exist, neither do classes. Thatcher's statement seems to be a Freudian slip of the tongue, a rather blatant example of false consciousness. As Harris remarks, “both individual entities and distinctively supra-individual entities have physical reality” (Harris, 133). And so do class and society. Denying their existence translates into propagating Social Darwinism and the law of the jungle. If there is no such thing as society, there is no such thing as democracy neither. Thatcher's dictum exemplifies the erosion of democracy under neo-liberalism. Thus the basic democratic notion of “liberty means the liberty to shop with abandon, democracy means the democratic free market; and justice is confused with the justice of policing, punishment and the penal system” (Burbach, 135): “Ein postmodern-konsumistisches 'I shop therefore I am' löst das moderne 'Cogito ergo sum' ab” (Behrens, 71). There is no place in the hegemonic discourse for the third part of the tripartite motto of the French Revolution. Consumption has become worship in the religion of capitalism. Society exists, but it seems to be terminally ill.

3. CAPITALIST CASUALTIES

3.1 INFORMATION, CYBERNETIC, AND BIOCAPITALISM

It took until the 1990s for late capitalism to achieve its current full-blown globalized form. Postmodernism refers to the culture this new phase of capitalism produced and as such it is “an ongoing project” (Welsch/Sandbothe, 77). With the fall of the 'iron curtain' in the early nineties of the last century, the last remnants of political modernity effectively disappeared from the face of the earth. Since the early 1970s the forces of neo-liberal globalization have succeeded in shifting at least the advanced economies “from an industrial-based system of production (Fordism) to an

information-based system that operates through more flexible methods of exploitation, accumulation and control (post-Fordism, or [...] sonyism)" (Moylan (2010), 81). The term 'sonyism' refers to the cybernetic system of command and control said corporation set up as its organizational structure after which all other corporations began to fashion their organization in the 1980s.

According to Burbach, "[t]he epoch of globalization and the information age are completely intertwined" (Burbach, 51). The computer is the necessary prerequisite of globalization. "One could not exist without the other[,] the informational age denotes the technologies that facilitate the globalization process" (Ibid.). The large variety in names for post-Fordist capitalism stems from a multitude of changes which in this study will be summarized under the heading of the transition from high, or industrial, to late, or post-industrial, capitalism. One of the major changes which comprise this transformation is "the shift from economic structures based on heavy industry to those based on technology" (Gregson, 1f), specifically communication and information technology. We have entered the information age. The information age is "an age in which technology and the manipulation of knowledge are at the cutting edge of the new global economy" (Burbach, 51). Bould argues that the so-called "Information Age's *truly fundamental social cleavages*" (italics in original; Bould (2010), 120) consist of the internal fragmentation of labor, the exclusion of a significant segment of society, and the dichotomy between market logic and individual workers' lives.

Holz points out another aspect of this phenomenon when he contends that "the virtuality of TV, Internet and cyberspace is increasingly perceived as real" (Holz, 10). Accordingly, "what seemed like [SF] in the 1980s [today is] social reality" (Ibid., 7, n. 1), and thus "the demarcation line between the imaginary and the real becomes increasingly fuzzy" (Ibid., 10). Baudrillard identifies a paradigm "shift from the real to the hyperreal" (Ibid., 10), from fact to fiction, and from representation to simulation, which has taken place in the industrialized West in the 1980s. Therefore, cyberspace (a term coined by William Gibson) could be called the third dimension of capitalism. According to H. J. Krysmanski, information capitalism is characterized by "abstrakten völlig losgelösten Finanztransaktionen[, die] über weltweite Computernetze sekundenschnell, millionenfach [...] mehr Geld [bewegen] als alle Zentralbanken zusammen in ihren Reserven haben" (Krysmanski, 163f). The practice of program trading, whereby computer programs run the trading activity instead of human brokers, has revolutionized the stock market.

The abovementioned 'virtualization' of trade very likely is the reason for "the

cultural dominance of Baudrillardian simulacra” (Gregson, 15). Baudrillard considers the loss of the 'reality principle' as the main characteristic of postmodern (Western) culture. This loss is “a phenomenon restricted to the Western, industrialized hemisphere of the globe” (Holz, 250). It conspicuously dovetails with the disembodied trade at the stock-market where values are being traded which have no material correspondent in the real world: “Man muss nichts Greifbares mehr produzieren, um enorme Summen Geld zu verdienen. [...] Wirklichen Reichtum gibt es mit Hilfe der Finanzmanipulationen” (George, 29). Under information capitalism, it is not the object any more that matters, what matters now is the information concerning said object. If the materiality of the object is rendered secondary, then all things become interchangeable units, they become commodities. Information, or late, capitalism operates freely, globally, and instantaneously, and totalizes commodification. This contributes to the postmodern sensibility that “everything is in a state of flux[, that] everything is temporary, provisional, and subject to unpredictable change” (Bertens (1997b), 114f).

The notion that everything can be broken down into basic patterns of data, according to Youngquist, is the essence of cybernetics (Youngquist, 228, n. 3). Therefore, he dubs our current society a cybernetic society. Accordingly, Jameson identifies “cybernetic technology [a]s the marker if not the cause of postmodernity” (Jameson (2005), 71). Cybernetics is a “hybrid of philosophy, linguistics, mathematics, and electrical engineering” (Dinello, 10). According to Holz, “the era beginning with the 1980s can aptly be seen as dominated by a 'cybernetic turn'” (Holz, 19). This dovetails with yet another recent transformation based on scientific 'achievements,' the dawn of yet another new era caused by new scientific findings, the biotechnological age. According to Jeremy Rifkin, “within less than ten years, a handful of global companies will own [...] the actual genes that make up the evolution of our species”⁹. Rifkin calls our era the age of biology. Žižek, in a similar vein, identifies our current phase of capitalism as “*biocapitalism*” (italics in original; Žižek (2008), 357). Dinello points out the enormous importance biotechnology is being granted in public discourse, when he contends that “DNA [today is treated] as a sacred entity” (Ibid., 182f). The belief that DNA defines humanity implies a denial of the impact of crucial influences like upbringing, or education, on human beings. Taken to its logical extreme, this belief in genetics as fate is in diametrical opposition to the basic humanist principle of (abstract) 'free will' and thus jeopardizes the very idea of what it means to be human.

⁹ (Jennifer Abbott, *The Corporation* (2003))

According to Youngquist, “cybernetic command and control [went] global with GPS” (Youngquist, 41). Both GPS and cybernetics, like the computer and the Internet, were originally developed for military purposes, as was the Fordist assembly line. GPS is a good instance of the momentous influence of new (cybernetic) technologies on human life. It “has quietly revolutionized the transport industry” (Ibid.), allowing “to keep the whole flow of commodities moving at maximum speed” (Ibid., 42), and contributing to the hyper-rationalization, or hyper-Taylorization, of production, translating in “reality [into a] science of exploitation”¹⁰, because it is used for the maximization of profit at the cost of working conditions. The latter quote refers to the fact that Nike measures the production process in tenths of seconds and on average pays its Third-World employees “three tenths of 1% of the retail price [as] wage”¹¹.

A rather poignant example for this cybernetic transformation is Walmart. Jameson, rather fittingly, speaks of the “Walmartification” of capitalism as a whole (Jameson (2005), 153, n. 22). This “discount retail chain has seen such harrowing success thanks partly to its cybernetic command and control over goods in motion” (Youngquist, 42). The classic nineteenth-century “plight of the wage laborer fits uneasily into Walmart's [late-capitalist] communications landscape” (Ibid.). With the latter statement Youngquist acknowledges the fact, which critics like Carroll deny or ignore, that there has been a distinct shift in our economic system. Walmart employees, as opposed to high-capitalist industrial workers, do not 'produce' anything. Youngquist argues that Walmart employees “are [...] machines [sic] for managing the interface among communications systems” (Ibid.). According to Youngquist, the “revolutionary reorganization” (Ibid.) which Jameson notices above “arises from configuring distribution in cybernetic rather than merely material terms” (Youngquist, 43). Youngquist proceeds by using Walmart as an example of “the emergence of a new social formation, one [he] would call cybernetic” (Ibid.).

Youngquist warns that in our “cybernetic social formation [the idea of] 'tomorrow' [may] become a simple matter of calculation and calibration” (Ibid., 44). He suggests that the 'cybernetic turn' of Western society is responsible for the “focus on the present”, which Ursula Heise deems characteristic of both the postmodern condition and postmodernist novels (Heise, 64). Heise characterizes the postmodern sense of time as reduced to the present as “the moment now at hand [as] the only time phase available” (Ibid.), and

¹⁰(Jennifer Abbott, *The Corporation* (2003))

¹¹(Jennifer Abbott, *The Corporation* (2003))

Jameson claims that we now “inhabit the synchronic [not] the diachronic” (Jameson (1984), 64). This change in the perception and conceptualization of time can be attributed to the dominance of cybernetics in postmodernity, which has made the very notion of a future as different from our present obsolete. Drawing upon Jameson, Veronica Hollinger remarks “that contemporary Western culture can be defined [...] through its loss of the sense of a viable future, concomitant with its loss of a sense of history” (Hollinger (2002), 166). Hence, Youngquist argues that under cybernetic, late, or finance capitalism “the future is no longer a time to come” (Ibid., 19), it has been turned into neither “event nor idea, [but into] a logic, an algorithm, an equation that administrates the present by way of economic possibility” (Ibid., 11). Any sense of the future that transcends the notion of a future beyond a mere continuation of the current capitalist order has thus been eradicated by the advent of cybernetics as the paradigmatic philosophy of our age.

3.2 DISASTER CAPITALISM

The monicker Disaster Capitalism refers to the fact that neo-liberal economists tend to exploit catastrophes, like September 11, for their own goals, pushing through right-wing policies at moments when the general public is in a state of shock and occupied with other issues perceived as more existential. The term was coined by Naomi Klein in her 2007 book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Klein calls “orchestrated raids on the public sphere in the wake of catastrophic events, combined with the treatment of disasters as exciting market opportunities, 'disaster capitalism'” (Naomi Klein, 6). The term thus refers to the fact that lately stock markets tend to thrive in times of (non-economic) crisis because global corporations make a lot of profit through so-called 'reconstruction' of war zones and areas where natural catastrophes occurred. Carlton Crown, Wall Street broker and commodities trader, illustrates a central notion of disaster capitalism, the notion of catastrophe as opportunity, rather succinctly in the following statement: “9/11 [was] one of the worst things I've seen in my life time, *but* every trader will tell you everybody doubled their money. It was a blessing in disguise. Devastating, crushing, heart-shattering, but [we] all made money [...] In devastation there is opportunity”¹².

Another ironic twist of late capitalism is that the very same corporations from the industrialized nations which cause(d) climate change in the first place with past and present pollution—resulting in an ever increasing number of

¹²(Jennifer Abbott, *The Corporation* (2003))

natural disasters—are now able to profit from them. Because of their geographical location in the Southern regions of the globe, the 'developing countries' are most prone to the various disastrous effects of climate change, such as desertification, floods, tornadoes, and droughts, and thus to wars about natural resources, while the owners of the heavy industries located there remain safely in their countries of origin in the Northern hemisphere: “Die Klimaerwärmung, ein Ergebnis des unstillbaren Hungers nach fossiler Energie in den frühindustrialisierten Ländern, trifft die ärmsten Regionen der Welt am härtesten; eine bittere Ironie, die jeder Erwartung Hohn spricht, dass das Leben gerecht sei” (Welzer (2009), 204f).

According to Naomi Klein, neo-liberals use catastrophes like Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans as opportunities to impose new, more capital-friendly, regimes in the affected areas under the guise of reconstruction, breaking unions, privatizing schools, and transferring the poor population from the respective areas (Naomi Klein, 410f). Klein elaborates that neo-liberals have been taking advantage of moments of crisis to install their policies, employing an “economic shock therapy,” since as early as the Thatcher Revolution (Ibid., 451). When Britain entered the Falklands War against Argentina, the “disorder and nationalist excitement resulting from the war allowed [Thatcher] to use tremendous force to crush the striking coal miners” (Ibid., 10). In addition, she “used the enormous popularity afforded her by the victory to launch the very [...] revolution she had told Hayek”—with whom she maintained continuous correspondence by mail throughout her time in office—had been impossible before the war (Ibid., 138). “Thatcher's personal approval rating more than doubled over the course of the [war], paving the way for a decisive victory in the following year's election” (Ibid.). Otherwise she would not have been reelected, just as in the case of Bush II, where “a minority President has been legitimized” and reelected thanks to the so-called 'war-on-terror' (Jameson (2003b), 57) by means of an authoritarian-populist mobilization of nationalist emotions (Kannankulam, 270).

In the course of her book, Klein provides copious examples for those neo-liberal strategies she summarizes under the heading 'shock doctrine,' which, according to her, originates from neo-liberal theorist Milton Friedman's Chicago School of economics. Klein describes this academic environment as the birthplace of the American strand of neo-liberalism. Furthermore, Friedman is, according to Klein, the 'father' of the 'theory of economic shock therapy' (Naomi Klein, 7), which is the theoretical basis of what she calls disaster capitalism. It was to be first “applied to a real-world economic crisis” in fascist Chile (Ibid., 80). For this reason, Klein speaks of the “Pinochet

option” when governments opt to employ military might against their own people to push through neo-liberal economic change (Naomi Klein, 226). She speaks of a “pseudo crisis” (Ibid., 257) when the neo-liberal lobby and its “corporate funded think tanks” in a certain country or area deliberately create the impression of an impending crisis in order to push through a specific policy (Ibid., 258).

According to Jameson, war solves “a certain problem for capitalism [consisting of] the absence of generalized physical destruction” (Jameson (2003b), 60). In this regard, Klein identifies a “puzzling trend” (Naomi Klein, 424) which set in after 9/11. According to her, the 'truism' “that you couldn't have booming economic growth in the midst of violence and instability” does no longer hold true (Ibid.). Wars which involve the US/NATO result in a distinct rise in military and security stocks (Ibid.) as well as a skyrocketing of the profits of gas and oil industry, since these wars rather reliably take place in oil/gas-producing countries and/or regions which are strategically important for access to such countries (Ibid., 426). Furthermore, “[r]econstruction is now such big business that every new destruction is greeted with the excitement of hot initial public stock offerings” (Ibid., 425).

In addition to this new boom in war profitability, there is the historical fact that war has been good for business before. Kannankulam, for instance, mentions the 'Korea boom' which 'single-handedly' got the German economy back on its feet after the setbacks of two lost World Wars in a row^{xxvi}. During the Korean War, “kam [es] im Rahmen de[r] weltweit anziehende[n] Rüstungskonjunktur [...] zu einer beispiellosen Expansion des Außenhandels“ in West Germany (Kannankulam, 162f). War is a very profitable business. The Korean War claimed app. 3 million casualties.

3.3 CASINO CAPITALISM

The term 'casino capitalism' was first coined by British economist Susan Strange^{xxvii}. It draws on the notion that the stock markets have been completely disconnected from the actual economies they were designed to represent. Stock-market speculation, in fact, has no connection with the actual material commodities anymore and thus could be described as a form of gambling. Over the course of the decades following the death of the Bretton Woods system the global financial market became ever more disconnected from the actual economy. The term casino capitalism, or the term “planetary [...] casino,” or gambling economy (Moynan (2010), 81) is based on the assessment of the practices of speculation at the deregulated international stock markets and the fractional-reserve banking system. The booming

market for derivatives is the prime example of speculation as a form of gambling, since derivatives are a highly complicated form of betting. The derivative market yearly wields amounts of money which are ten times as high as the economic output of the whole world. The establishment of floating exchange rates in the 1970s brought about booms in the secondary and the foreign exchange market, “denn die sich daraus ergebenden täglichen Kursschwankungen eröffneten beträchtliche Möglichkeiten für Spekulationsgeschäfte [und] Wechselkurskrisen” (Kannankulam, 119). The floating of the world's currencies triggered another dynamic. Now nation states and their central banks compete for exchange rate stability. Said competition among the world's national central banks contributes to the huge pressure potential constituted by the threat of capital flight. In a way, national governments are at the mercy of their financiers in said system: “die staatlich[e] Wirtschaftspolitik, [ist] nun eingezwängt [vo]n der Notwendigkeit, währungspolitische und außenwirtschaftliche Stabilität aufrechtzuerhalten” (Ibid., 131). If a government was to implement policies not in accordance with the neo-liberal, market-first approach, capital flight, together with other disciplinary market instruments, such as the ratings for national economies, could drive such a nation into crisis (as happened in Mitterand's France). So, as in any casino, the bank always wins in the end. Harvey points out that since the “adoption of a flexible exchange rate system in 1973 [...] all nation states have been at the mercy of financial disciplining [which translates into] external power [of the market] over internal politics” (Harvey (2000), 165). However, it must be noted that this state of affairs is the consequence of the policies pursued by the Western industrialized nations in the 1970s and 1980s. The administrations of the West *created* this very situation in which they are at the mercy of the international market place.

“The trading of derivatives—which essentially is betting on the future of commodity rates, interest rates and especially currency exchange rates—is an untaxed and unregulated area of speculation that has boomed in recent years” (Burbach, 63). The 'disconnection' of stock-market speculation from the material world was brought about by the abandonment of the gold standard. The monetary founding translates into Reagan's 'magic of the market place,' viz. a set of complex practices which are so complicated and arbitrary that the deregulated global stock markets manage to create 'bubbles' in a cyclical fashion, which have resulted in a host of international financial crises so far. These crises then are habitually followed by huge governmental 'bail outs'. This is one of the ways public money, the taxpayers' money, is routinely and legally transferred to the private sector. Harvey thus

identifies the “emergence of [a] casino economy [that] rests on the production of fictitious capital” (Harvey (2000), 332).

3.4 FRACTIONAL-RESERVE BANKING

One of the reasons why such 'aberrations' rather continuously occur is the very organizing principle of our current global economic order, so-called fractional-reserve banking. After the re-liberalization of the international finance market “verlagert[e] sich [...] die Funktion des Geldes [...] *erneut* von seiner Rolle als Wertmaßstab und Zirkulationsmittel im Welthandel stärker auf die Rolle als [...] Kreditgeld” (italics in original; Kannankulam, 118). “Since 1973, [t]he world has come to rely, for the first time in its history, upon immaterial forms of money” (Harvey (2000), 297). Today, app. 95% of the world's money is so-called check-book, digital, or credit money; only 5% of the world's money is 'real,' material, money in circulation in the form of actual coins and bills.

This, however, does not mean that the 5% of real money in circulation are not dependent on the fractional-reserve banking system. Check-book or virtual money can always be transferred into material money. Check-book money is generated whenever a bank grants a loan to someone. The banks in the US are legally allowed to grant loans in an amount of money which is app. nine times as high as the sum they have at their disposal in actual value. In the EU the ratio is 8:1. The money those banks lend the borrower is check-book money. It exists only as digits within the computer systems of said bank. The borrower, in turn, offers a collateral for his/her loan, for example, a house. Since the banking system is a closed circle, the borrowed money will sooner or later return to the creditor bank. The creditor bank is now legally entitled to treat the thus created check-book money as real money in its possession and thus to loan it out again ninefold. This process is then repeated ad infinitum. Therefore, almost all money depends on a debt system which translates into an enormous skimming off of real property and assets, i.e., a transfer of actual value from the public, i.e., the people, to the private sector, i.e., banks and corporations, since, if the borrowers cannot pay back their debts, the collateral passes into the possession of the lender bank, who gets concrete valuables for check-book money which never actually existed.

Hence, yet another ironic twist of late capitalism is that someone who owes his/her bank money is actually allowing that bank to generate new money, which it then can loan out to someone else again, again generating even more money. Thus, an individual who goes bankrupt, while being considered as an utter failure by society and faced with poverty, in fact, accrues a

tremendous profit for his/her creditor bank and thus contributes to the overall economy. Since the average required debt/money ratio in America is 9:1 and due to the fact that the banking system is a closed circle, all money that one loans from a bank is worth nine times the borrowed amount to the creditor bank. In other words, if a person owes \$1,000 to his/her bank, the bank is able to *create* \$9,000. This is why the current monetary system is a debt system. The borrower subsequently uses the money borrowed from the bank to pay his/her bills, or to buy something s/he can't afford. The seller, or the company to which the money is paid, then deposits this money at another bank. This money will in the end be deposited at the bank where the original loan took place. Thus, the more debt you create, the more money the banking community can create. According to Thilo Bode and Katja Pink, it is “[d]ie internationale Bankenregel, [dass] das Verhältnis von verliehenem Geld und dem dafür haftenden Eigenkapital [...] das Achtfache nicht überschreiten [...] sollte” (Bode/Pink, 72). They point out that “die tatsächliche Relation von verliehenem Geld und dafür haftendem Eigenkapital am Ende nicht mehr 8:1, sondern 80 oder 100:1 [...] betrug” (Ibid., 72). Bode and Pink are referring to the last crisis of finance capitalism, the subprime mortgage crisis of 2007 and 2008.

In order for this system to remain stable the amount of debt must perpetually increase at an ever increasing rate. The latter, of course, is simply impossible in a finite system. Marx postulated that capitalism is “a constant process of running into barriers [...] which it finds means to surpass [and that it will ultimately run into a barrier it] cannot overcome” (Bould (2010), 124). “Der Kapitalismus nähert sich mit hohem Tempo sehr ernst zu nehmenden Barrieren—er stößt an ökologische Grenzen, an Marktgrenzen, an Profitabilitätsgrenzen” (Harvey (2009), 53). Whenever a stock market bubble bursts, capitalism has hit such a barrier. Usually, governments bail out the banks involved, so as to ensure the survival of the economic order. This is “an absurd situation and a tragic one”¹³.

William Still's argument, elaborated in his 2009 documentary *The Secret of Oz*, refers to the fact that the global monetary system can be called a debt-producing system, because private banking institutes control the world's money issuance via the fractional-reserve banking-practice. “Die globale Wirtschaft fußt auf Schulden, üblicherweise 'Kredite' oder 'Leverage' genannt” (George, 29). This practice, according to Still, is the reason for the accumulation of public debt as well as for recessions and depressions, such as the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, the 2000 Dot-com crisis, and the late 2000s

¹³(Paul Grignon, *Money as Debt II: Promises Unleashed* (2009))

Financial Crisis. Still convincingly argues that a global depression is emerging today because the world's governments have lost the control about the quantity of money in circulation. Still claims that the amount of money in circulation worldwide has been lowered by 40% in the last years and that such a dramatic decrease in money quantity is a deliberate strategy of the transnational banking community to impose their policies upon the world¹⁴. He argues that the factual control the banking community has at present over the quantity of money in circulation amounts to a de facto plutocracy which, according to him, has originally been established at the end of the nineteenth century. It may sound like a 'conspiracy theory,' but fact is that the world's banks, and *not* the world's governments, control the global issuance of money, this translates into an enormous source of power for the global banking community. If a financial systemic crash of the new truly globalized market were to occur at the present age, the results would truly be apocalyptic.

The fact that 95% of all money in the world is virtual money could be considered as another reason for the loss of the reality principle Baudrillard laments as the main characteristic of the present age. "The breakdown of money as a secure means of representing value has itself created a crisis of representation in advanced capitalism" (Harvey (2000), 298). Money is the basis of status in our societies. Since money is no longer a material value, but a function of an intricate system that depends on "perpetual debt"¹⁵, status does not depend on achievement, merit, or work, but becomes completely contingent. I find the following a rather obvious conclusion: a virtual economy necessarily results in a virtual culture which, in turn, gives rise to a type of human being severed or isolated from reality. Harvey concludes that the postmodern crisis of representation is a result of "the breakdown of money as a secure means of representing value" (Ibid.). He remarks that "the financial system has achieved a degree of autonomy from real production unprecedented in capitalism's history, carrying capitalism into an era of equally unprecedented financial dangers" (Harvey (2000), 194). He adds that it "is tempting, of course, to see this all as some prelude to a financial crash that would make 1929 look like a footnote in history" (Ibid.).

3.5 SAVAGE CAPITALISM

Savage capitalism (*Raubtierkapitalismus* in German) could be considered a derogatory term if it were not, in fact, referring to some very real and

¹⁴(William T. Still, *The Secret of Oz* (2009))

¹⁵(Paul Grignon, *Money as Debt* (2006))

extremely momentous issues. The monicker savage capitalism, for instance, refers to the fact that “[i]n den Augen [...] des Südens [...] die gegenwärtige kannibalische Weltordnung des globalisierten Finanzkapitals [...] sich [...] nahtlos ein[f]ügt [...] in die Erbfolge der [...] Sklavenhaltung und Kolonialisierung” (Ziegler (2008), 83). Barlow, for instance, calls the WB's policy in Kenya “theft [and] a form of murder” because the WB forces Kenya, “one of the driest [places] on earth[,] to export its water,” by making it grow immensely water intensive export-crops, viz. roses, “to get [...] out of debt”¹⁶. Ziegler accordingly concedes that “Freihandel [...] mit Freiheit überhaupt nichts zu tun [...] hat[.] Das ist eine riesige Lüge. Es ist die Freiheit des Raubtiers im Dschungel”¹⁷. Ziegler further elaborates what, in his opinion, makes our current economic system not only savage but 'murderous': “Alle fünf Sekunden verhungert ein Kind unter zehn Jahren. Und das auf einem Planeten, der grenzenlosen Überfluss produziert. [...] die Weltlandwirtschaft [könnte] problemlos zwölf Milliarden Menschen ernähren [...] Ein Kind, das am Hunger stirbt, wird ermordet” (Ziegler (2012, 14f). According to Ziegler, hunger enters the world through the policies of the multinational corporations which control the global food supply. It thus is a consequence of the global financial market and as such the effect of the actions of a small group of people and can therefore be conquered by the actions of man (Ziegler (2012), 106). World hunger is not fate or destiny, but enters the world via the policies of man. However, Ziegler seems to exaggerate. I would suggest that the proper legal term is 'negligent homicide,' or 'criminally negligent manslaughter,' not murder. This is the case for the average citizen of the West, who nowadays is for the better part occupied with securing his/her own day-to-day survival. Furthermore, the poor of the West have other things to worry about than global hunger; as Altvater points out, “wissen [...] die herrschenden Eliten [...], dass die Armen sehr selten revolutionär sind, weil die Organisation ihres [...] elenden Alltagslebens ihre emanzipatorischen Energien bindet” (Altvater (2007), 19). Nevertheless, the richer you are, the greater is your responsibility. The greater a person's power is, the greater is her/his culpability. This does not seem to make any difference in this case, however, since the sheer number of victims appears to call for the maximum penalty for all culpable parties. “Dieser Massenvernichtung begegnet die öffentliche Meinung des Westens mit eisiger Gleichgültigkeit” (Ziegler (2012), 15). Instead, “wird [d]as Weltbankmantra vom Wachstum, das 'gut für die Armen' ist, [...] weiter als Sedativum der internationalen Öffentlichkeit

¹⁶(Sam Bozzo, *Blue Gold: World Water Wars* (2008))

¹⁷(Erwin Wagenhofer, *We Feed the World* (2005))

verabreicht” (Altvater (2007), 15). The number of people who are severely affected by hunger is currently close to one billion. Each year eighteen million people die from hunger and malnutrition^{xxviii}.

Robert Monks, referring to the pollution of the global biosphere, dubs late capitalism “a doom-machine”¹⁸. He adds that “in our search for wealth and for prosperity, we created something that is gonna destroy us”¹⁹. Furthermore, he elaborates on capital's attitude towards legality: “again and again we have the problem of whether you [break the law] or not is a matter of whether it's cost-effective”²⁰. Harvey points out that in economic “technical parlance” this tactic of handling the law and legality is called the 'externalization of liabilities' (Harvey (2007), 67). In other words, in our current international economic order morality is considered a liability. Criminal activities are thus indeed a function of our current monetary system. In addition to this, our current form of capitalism is dominated by the institution of the multinational corporation. Chomsky, referring to the average corporation's strictly hierarchical structure, its authoritarian and immoral nature, its chauvinistic and imperial aspirations, and its “terrorist” practices (Dinello, 2003), calls corporations “monstrous institutions” and “tyrannies”²¹.

Thus, savage capitalism refers to the parts of neo-liberal ideology which comply with the pseudo-scientific ideology of Social Darwinism. It refers to globalized capital's disdain for law and democracy, and the incredible violence that is let loose over and over again against third-world peoples who, for instance, happen to live under a dictator who lost favor with the West, as well as the structural violence directed against the poor in the First as well as the Third World. Structural violence takes the form of class division, sexism, and racism (in its new cultural guise, or in its traditional forms). The fact that a huge swath of the world's population is denied food translates into a tremendous amount of structural violence directed at the weakest and most vulnerable people in the world. In the First World, “the state [...] use[s] its coercive power against any who seek to systematically challenge the [...] privat[ization] of social need” (Haroon-Lodhi, 166), while, in the Third World, governments time and again choose the 'Pinochet option' in similar situations, as has been the case in Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina in the 1970s.

¹⁸ (Jennifer Abbott, *The Corporation* (2003))

¹⁹(Jennifer Abbott, *The Corporation* (2003))

²⁰(Jennifer Abbott, *The Corporation* (2003))

²¹(Jennifer Abbott, *The Corporation* (2003))

Harvey calls “accumulation by dispossession” one of the main strategies of neo-liberalism (Harvey (2007), 186). The land seizure of colonialism was part of the original accumulation by dispossession of capitalism. Accumulation through dispossession translates into “a centralization of wealth and power in the hands of a few by dispossessing the public of their wealth or land”^{xxix}. When the neo-liberal economic changes imposed on the developing countries are faced with organized resistance, this tends to lead to violent clashes between states and their peoples, for instance, in the Chiapas region in Mexico (Ibid.), in Bolivia, or more recently in Greece. Harvey gives “four main elements [...] of accumulation by dispossession[:] 1. *Privatization*[,] 2. *Financialization*[,] 3. *The management and manipulation of crises*[,] 4. *State redistributions*” (italics in original; Harvey (2005a), 33ff). Accumulation by dispossession thus dovetails with the ten rules of the Washington Consensus. On May 25, 2005, American industrialist Warren Buffett told a CNN reporter that Bush II's “outrageous fiscal mission” (Jameson (2003b), 57) of renewing “with a vengeance [...] the Reagan/Thatcher tax revolutions, designed to eliminate the welfare state” (Ibid., 60) amounts to “class warfare. [According to Buffett, his] class is winning, but they shouldn't be”^{xxx}. This latter statement, in turn, corresponds to the following quote attributed to a “leading British neo-conservative [who,] when asked whether he was Marxist, replied that he was, but that he wanted the ruling class to win” (Akram-Lodhi, 172 n. 4). Harvey describes the neo-liberal counterrevolution as “class war” waged by the ruling class against the rest of society (Harvey (2005a), 15). Kellner is in complete agreement with Harvey's assessment when he describes the “1980s [a]s an unprecedented era of class warfare” (Kellner (1995), 126). As Chomsky points out, “the doctrines of [what is today called] 'neo-liberalism' were forged as an instrument of class warfare” (Chomsky (2003), 367). Behrens in turn speaks of a “grausamen Klassenkrie[g] der Akkumulation durch Enteignung” (Behrens, 377). This notion amounts to a declaration of war by the richest, most powerful people of the world, a group which consists of an extreme minority, viz. the transatlantic (and global) ruling classes, which are distinguished by an unprecedented consensus and common interest, against the working classes and the poor of the world, which in turn are distinguished by their division against each other and among themselves. Hence, this is an unfair war fought on an extremely unlevel battlefield, especially, taking into account the fact that “the state as [the] site of class struggle” (Hager, 110) has an inherent form-determined bias towards capitalist policies. Harvey argues that “it never did make much sense to speak of a distinctly US versus British or French or German or Korean

capitalist class” (Harvey (2007), 35) due to the “international links [that have been established] through colonial and neo-colonial activities” among the transnational factions of the ruling classes (ibid.). Today the world is ruled in accordance with the wishes of the transnational faction of the bourgeoisie in the different nation states which operates on the basis of class not on the basis of nationality.

As has been demonstrated in subchapter 3.2, warfare has ceased to be 'bad for business'. This “means that the world is becoming less peaceful while [capital is] accumulating significantly more profit” (Naomi Klein, 424). As Jameson puts it, “the generalized physical destruction [of] war [is] necessary for the health [of] capitalism” (Jameson (2003b), 60). So, the aim of this global class war is to accumulate more wealth for those who already own almost everything there is. As Harvey says, “if it looks like class struggle, and acts like class war, then we have to name it unashamedly for what it is” (Harvey (2007), 202). Moreover, we have the right and the duty to engage in this sophisticated war waged against the majority of the world's population and fight back.

According to Harvey, it is “one of the primary fictions of neo-liberalism that class is a fictional category that exists only in the imagination of socialists and crypto-communists” (ibid.), whereas, in reality, class, i.e., one's individual social and economic (birth) status, is as significant today as ever^{xxx}. If globalization really is a global class war waged by the ruling class against the working class and the poor, Youngquist's following statement makes perfect sense: “Global capitalism is world war made cost-effective” (Youngquist, 202). This statement makes all the more sense in the light of the fact that the food industry of the world, such as it is, could easily produce enough food to feed almost twice of the world's population, while, in fact, 100,000 people die each day of starvation. As Karl Otrok says “100.000 Leute sterben [täglich] an Hunger [...] wir wollen sie nicht füttern [...] wir lassen sie sterben, damit wir leben[, denn] ein Konzern hat kein Herz²².”

Contrary to the popular myth, “[h]unger is spreading once more. It affects nearly one billion people[, while o]ver 50% of [the] grain traded around the world is used for animal feed or biofuels²³”. The enormous discrepancy between the perceived notion about world hunger and its real proportions is a good example of another key characteristic of the postmodern condition, viz. what Jameson calls “a desire for the lack of historicity” (Vint (2010a), 109). This formulation translates into a de facto 'denial of reality'. For

²²(Erwin Wagenhofer, *We Feed the World* (2005))

²³(Yann Arthus-Bertrand, *Home* (2009))

instance, with regard to commodities, it refers to the fact that we as consumers habitually ignore the “unacknowledged and dark history of labor” (Ibid., 110) connected with each and every single product we buy or consume.

In summary, war has become an important motor of our current form of capitalism and war per definition is the most savage occupation known to humankind, consisting of the physical destruction of large numbers of human beings as a matter of course. In addition, what Keegan identifies as the unequalled “ruthlessness” characteristic of the Western way of warfare (Keegan, 389) has been successfully exported to the Third World. This, by extension, means that the term 'savage' capitalism is a rather fitting one. Ultra-violent fictions, such as Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991), clearly demonstrate the incredible hidden structural violence let loose upon the poor by neo-liberal, global capitalism.

3.6 TURBO-CAPITALISM AND HYPER-COMMODIFICATION

It seems rather fitting today to consider the “cynical hyper-consumerism of the Age of Reagan” (Latham (2010), 45) as characteristic of current Western culture as a whole. Under the “totalization of commodification” (Spanos, 68), which is one of the key characteristics of late capitalism, “consumption ha[s] become the chief basis of social order” (Bertens (1997b), 105). It is thus sensible at the current conjuncture to speak of hyper-consumerism, as opposed to the comparatively moderate consumerism of modernity. According to Wilson, “consumption [has] become [...] the essence of what was originally understood to constitute privacy” (Wilson, 204). Wilson elaborates that people today “identify their personhood and status with their ability to consume (and display) commodities and services” (Ibid.). Neo-liberals across the board successfully argue that the free market is synonymous with democracy. However, what is here perceived as “liberty [is] a name for what is actually servitude” (Petrovic, 56). We thus now live in a consumer society or under consumer capitalism. Conversely, Carroll argues that “conspicuous consumption predates [late] capitalism” (Carroll, 100). As has been mentioned earlier, Carroll refuses to acknowledge that a significant transformation of capitalism has taken place. What he fails to grasp is that in the context of postmodernity it is legitimate to speak of 'hyper-commodification,' as opposed to the rather 'moderate' commodification that Marx identified as one of the hallmarks of industrial capitalism (Bauer, 57f). Consumerism has become worship in the religion of capitalism and consumption has increased exponentially over the last decades.

While under high, or industrial, capitalism there were still significant pockets of uncommodified space available, these have literally ceased to exist today. Individually, all the transformations that took place in the capitalist regime of production could all be regarded as radicalized modernist phenomena, as “part and parcel of modernity” (Bertens (1997b), 117). But seen collectively, taking into account the overall result of these processes, it seems rather problematic to maintain the notion that we are still living in a world governed by industrial capitalism. In 2013, Žižek speaks of “today's 'postmodern' capitalism” under which “immaterial labor is 'hegemonic'” (Žižek (2013), 9), immaterial labor as opposed to the material labor which characterized the industrial proletariat. Note that labor, as Kurz points out, is never immaterial, only nowadays its products tend to be immaterial (Kurz (2013), 176). However, the hegemony of immaterial labor is restricted to the global North. Critics like Carroll fail to take into account the interconnectedness of the different phenomena which taken together constitute the transformation to late capitalism. “[D]ie wechselseitigen Verstärkungstendenzen dieser zeitgleichen Entwicklungen [...] des Übergangs von nationalstaatlich organisiertem Wohlfahrts-Kapitalismus zum globalen Finanzmarktkapitalismus [münden in de]r Herausbildung der Postdemokratie” (Urban, 102ff). This transformation amounts to an actual “quantum shift” affecting all and everything (Hager, 117). Welfare capitalism refers to the era of Keynesianism in the quadripartite categorization of capitalism in which Keynesianism constitutes a separate stage. In the tripartite categorization of capitalism employed by Jameson, Keynesianism is subsumed under the stage of high, or industrial, capitalism. In “the contemporary [world,] there is virtually nothing that escapes commodification” (Bertens (1997b), 112), not even politics. Everything is governed by the exchange value, everything has been turned into a 'business,' including such integral things as education, health care, water supply, electricity, individuality, religion, government, and human sexuality.

The preeminence of exchange value over use value is another characteristic of the 'hyper-commodification' of late capitalism. As Marx pointed out a long time ago, money “negates the individual's subjectivity and identity by reducing all specific characteristics of a person to the latter's role on the market: to the exchange value” (Zima (2003), 18). In our “late-capitalist society, the market laws and the exchange value dominate all spheres of life and undermine” morality (Ibid., 22). According to Mike Featherstone, “the triumph of the exchange value [translates into] the instrumental rational calculation of all aspects of life” (Featherstone, 14). Advertisement “has

become more important than manufacture” and Western culture virtually imploded into advertisement (Vint (2010a), 110). The dominance of exchange value over use value means that commodities are no longer produced to perform the function that was once primarily associated with them as well as possible and for as long a period of time as possible. Furthermore, commodities are no longer produced to achieve quality. People do not buy shoes according to their quality, but for trademark and fashion reasons. Such clothes, which as a general rule are produced in the developing world under intolerable working conditions, have a total production-cost, including wages, that amounts to a tenth of the retail price they are sold for²⁴. For instance, expensive but stylish shoes (sneakers), which last about half a year but may be out of fashion even earlier, have become a sort of fetish. All this translates into a total maximization of profit: demanding an outlandishly high price which is in no reasonable relation to the actual production cost for an item of poor quality which is equipped with a very limited life span has been made possible by globalization and through the other changes that make up the shift from high to late capitalism.

3.7 DIVIDE AND CONSUME

Petrovic contends that today “students [in the West] are being trained [...] in [...] interpretative blindness” (Petrovic, 62). This statement corresponds to what Wilson identifies as a “subtle process at work [which] undermines [...] the ability to conceptualize the world in ways which [allow for] the possibility of real alternatives to what exists” (Wilson, 255). Frank Deppe, accordingly, contends that this process of the erosion of the critical capacity of the human mind, which he identifies as a dangerous depolitization of the populations of the West, is not only at work among the poor but also increasingly envelops particularly the young as well as “große Teile der Studierenden an den Hochschulen” (Deppe, 22). Vint points out that “mass—that is, market-driven—culture *creates* the people as masses: pacified, incapable of independent thought, tending toward the easy absorption of stereotypes rather than individual critical reflection” (italics in original; Vint (2010a), 98). Vint suggests that such a “‘mass man’ [is] the ‘natural inhabitant’” of our postmodern, late-capitalist society (Ibid., 102). This postmodern ‘mass’ person is distinguished by “Eindimensionalität und [...] Subalternität” (Deppe, 40). Postmodern ‘man’ is a product of the “strange paradox of a world extensively homogenized, yet intensely fragmented” (Petrovic, 62). While capital has become intensely internationalized or globalized, labor, the bulk of the population, remains

²⁴(Jennifer Abbott, *The Corporation* (2003))

local and yet has to keep up with the globalized market. Bertens contends that “modernity's thrust towards universality and homogeneity [...] is [not] weakening under late capitalism” (Bertens (1997b), 107), in fact, it is intensifying. This intensified 'homogenization' unfolds simultaneously to what Bertens calls an ongoing “hyper-differentiation” (Ibid., 116). Spanos speaks of “cultural Balkanization” in this respect (Spanos, 73). Kannankulam mentions a “zunehmende Polarisierung der Bevölkerung entlang beruflicher, regionaler, ethnischer und geschlechtlicher Linien” (Kannankulam, 256). Spanos suggests that minority emancipation is a form of the traditional imperial strategy of *divide et impera* and calls for a “solidarity of *differential* identities” (italics in original; Spanos, 73). Kannankulam declares that the New Right achieved “die Mobilisierung und [...] Einbindung der Subalternen in einen 'autoritären Konsens' [...] durch den gezielten Einsatz von rassistischen Diskursen” (italics in original; Kannankulam, 262). Racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and sexism have proven themselves time and again as volatile instruments in the hands of the ruling class.

3.8 EXTINCTION CRISES AND COCA COLA PRESIDENTS

In addition to the transformations already mentioned various “[u]nsettling [environmental] transformations are sweeping across the planet[. W]e've entered a time of faster change than any human being has ever witnessed”²⁵. Said transformations, which seem “like something out of [SF]”²⁶, translate into dramatic changes in the global environment. Neo-liberalism has had an extremely negative influence on the global environment. There are more than “enough specific examples of environmental losses resulting from the unrestrained application of neo-liberal principles to give sustenance to such a general [conclusion]” (Harvey (2007), 173). At present, “50 to 55,000 species a year are going extinct because of us”²⁷. The pervading postmodern “anxiety that we are, in fact, [already living] on the other side of irrevocable change” (Hollinger (2002), 173) thus seems more than reasonable. Kellner voices such a truly postmodern apocalyptic fear when he describes “the ultimate anxiety that everything is indeed fucked so fucked there is fuck all to do to improve things or provide any hope for the future” (Kellner (2010), 86). All serious scientific evidence suggests that this ongoing project of the postmodern apocalypse will come to its conclusion rather soon. Hence, the “postmodern condition [is, in fact,] a critical condition” (Hollinger (2002), 160): “The era of

²⁵(*Strange Days on Planet Earth*, Episode 1 (2007))

²⁶(*Strange Days on Planet Earth*, Episode 1 (2007))

²⁷(Nadia Connors, *The 11th Hour* (2007))

neoliberalism happens to be the era of the fastest mass extinction of species in the Earth's recent history" (Harvey (2007), 173). The fact that momentous environmental degradations, such as the destruction of the Rain Forest, are temporally concomitant with neo-liberalism's ascendancy to global dominance can hardly be an accident. The extinction crises humankind has caused among other species must, in the end, will make the human race extinct as well. Harvey remarks that, given that one accepts that these processes of environmental change are a reality, "the further embrace of the neoliberal ethic and of neoliberalizing practices will surely prove nothing short of deadly" (ibid.). Consequently, in 2003, Chomsky identifies humankind as an "endangered species" (Chomsky (2003), 236). Correspondingly, Samuel Epstein, M. D. (Professor Emeritus of Environmental Medicine, University of Illinois), contends that since 1940 we are living in 'the petro-chemical era'. According to him, "[w]e are in the midst of a major cancer epidemic and [...] industry is largely responsible for this"²⁸.

Harvey gives a 'classic' example of the 'externalization of liabilities' routinely exercised by multinational corporations and big business in general: "The classic case is that of pollution, where individuals and firms dump noxious wastes free of charge in the environment. Productive ecosystems may be degraded or destroyed as a result" (Harvey (2007), 67). Harvey considers this phenomenon a 'market failure' (ibid.). I argue that it is actually the expression of the market logic.

In the year 2009 there were app. 900 million cars existent on this planet²⁹. In the first half of the year 2011, two major German automobile companies (Volkswagen and Audi) informed the German public of the glad tidings that they planned to sell one of their automobiles to every third Chinese over the course of the next twenty years. The workers of Germany can rejoice, about 10,000 new jobs will be created, which will do a lot of good in the face of millions of unemployed. The people of China can rejoice, since at least every third of them, although devoid of any democratic rights, will soon be considered wealthy enough to own his/her own "symbol of comfort and progress"³⁰. There are app. 1.3 billion Chinese, which means that Audi and VW plan selling over app. 433 million cars there. This translates into an increase in the numbers of cars in existence worldwide by nearly 50 percent. Another interesting minor detail in this respect is that, apart from the contribution the automobile has already made to the Greenhouse Effect, that "the

²⁸(Jennifer Abbott, *The Corporation* (2003))

²⁹(Yann Arthus-Bertrand, *Home* (2009))

³⁰(Yann Arthus-Bertrand, *Home* (2009))

manufacture of an average automobile [uses up] 350,000 liters of water”³¹. In a time where more and more violent conflicts are being fought over the access to drinking water, using up such a large amount of the most essential of all finite resources does not make for glad tidings at all. Audi and VW, in their announcement, en passant mentioned that they will put money into research for the manufacture of an electrical car too while building 433 million more non-electrical ones. This is another instance of economic historical irony. The world's automobile companies have been talking about designing an electric car for the better part of a century now. They just, for some obscure reason, do not get around to actually building one.

“Since 1950 [...] we've more fundamentally altered [...] the earth, than in all of our 200,000 years of history”³². The burning of fossil fuels has contributed considerably to this 'alteration' we effected. Then there is the rather disconcerting fact that the 'alteration' is accelerating. While some particularly 'anti-environment' neo-liberal politicians like Ronald Reagan, or George Bush II, deny the existence of climate change (Harvey (2007), 172), scientists paint a rather different picture. According to David Orr, the process of global warming is approaching “what many scientists are now referring to as a tipping point [...] where we lose control of climate, and once we've lost control of climate, then things like Katrina [...] will become the norm”³³. The notion that climate or the environment is ours to control, of course, is part of the problem, but what Orr wants to say is that there will be an exponential rise in natural disasters in the near future, which is interesting since the number of 'natural' disasters in the world has actually already skyrocketed in the last three to four decades.

“Interestingly, the two main culprits in the growth of carbon dioxide emissions these few last years have been [...] the USA and China (which increased its emission by 45 per cent over the past decade)” (Harvey (2007), 173). This staggering increase of CO2 emissions by China will soon be supported by Continental Europe by means of 433 million new VWs and Audis on the streets of China. A nation by the way which until today remains a totalitarian party-dictatorship and whose ruling elite will only benefit from making much-coveted luxury items, such as German automobiles, available to their subjects. China is also already the world's second largest oil-importer. 433 million new cars will translate into an immense increase in China's demand for oil, which will necessarily have distinctive geopolitical

³¹(Sam Bozzo, *Blue Gold: World Water Wars* (2008))

³²(Yann Arthus-Bertrand, *Home* (2009))

³³(Nadia Connors, *The 11th Hour* (2007))

consequences.

The cooperation with totalitarian dictatorships and fascist regimes is another facet of neo-liberalism. As former President of the Coca-Cola Company, the quintessential global corporation, Donald R. Klough, said in an interview, multinationals like his soft drink empire claim to abide “by the laws of the land[. Our] Company and its product [are] absolutely non-political”³⁴. The fact that Coca Cola's Latin American franchise operators were implicated in the murder of unionists, for example, in Guatemala in the 1970s³⁵, contradicts this only at first glance. As long as said franchise operators get away with the crimes they commit in order, for example, to keep their employees from unionizing, or to shut up cumbersome activists who complain about pollution, everything is fine. Here is another example of a supposedly apolitical franchise operator of the Coca Cola Company: The last President of Mexico, Vicente Fox (who left office in 2006), “prior to being President [...] was general manager for Coca Cola in Latin America[.] You could say that Coca Cola ruled Mexico” during his presidency³⁶. Regarding Coke's operations in the developing world, Klough reasoned in 1984 that his company does not only fulfill “the need of providing [...] refreshing liquid[, but] also provides purity [in] countries [where] you don't have the luxury even of going to a tap and getting a decent portable glass of pure water”³⁷. This altruistic quest of providing the developing world with “pure, clear, [,]tasty[, and] very inexpensive” liquid³⁸ has culminated in the present situation where in many African countries Coca Cola is cheaper than water. Barlow remarks that the “new face of colonialism comes in the form of Coca Cola. You walk anywhere in Africa and it's Coca Cola water[;] you cannot drink the water out of the tap[;] you cannot find anything but[;] you can't even find purifier, so you're an absolute slave to this company”³⁹. As Klough points out, this is a good thing because it provides even the poorest, most miserable Coolie with the chance to enjoy the same beverage the President of the United States of America drinks.

3.9 MORITURI TE SALUTANT

As mentioned above, the capitalist class is able to exert pressure to an unprecedented degree by constantly brandishing a three-bladed Damocles'

³⁴(John Pilger, *Burp! Pepsi versus Coke in the Ice Cold War* (1984))

³⁵(John Pilger, *Burp! Pepsi versus Coke in the Ice Cold War* (1984))

³⁶(Octavio Rosas Landa in Sam Bozzo's *Blue Gold World Water Wars* (2008))

³⁷(John Pilger, *Burp! Pepsi versus Coke in the Ice Cold War* (1984))

³⁸(John Pilger, *Burp! Pepsi versus Coke in the Ice Cold War* (1984))

³⁹(Sam Bozzo, *Blue Gold: World Water Wars* (2008))

sword over the heads of its workers. This threefold threat consists of the constant menace of capital flight and outsourcing to the developing world; the presence of a growing attendant reservoir of potential replacement workers, consisting of “minimum wage, part-time workers hired as needed and fired with short notice [without] union protection and consequently [with] no job security” (Moylan (2010), 90), who are thus happy to accept any position that might become vacant; and the presence of a constantly unemployed underclass, Marx's industrial reserve army, which, in turn, is always ready to fill available spaces in the precarious low-wage labor market. The threat of dismissal, of losing one's job, is a very serious threat, not confined to “what human resource managers call 'career dissonance[,' but something that can be perceived as] 'social death[,' viz.] the prospect of economic and social annihilation” (Luckhurst, 149). The state of constant insecurity and merciless competition with which capital is now allowed to control labor has “brutalizing effects [on the] downsized, overstretched [...] workforce” (Ibid, 149). Consequently, capitalism's “disciplinary apparatuses [...] reduc[e] us into units of labor and consumption” (Latham (2002), 132), leaving no room for participation in the democratic process. Average working conditions have worsened considerably in the last decades because of the internationalization processes that culminated in globalization. At present, workers have to keep up with the work rhythms of a global market dominated by multinational corporations which have become de facto 'empires on which the sun never sets'. In postmodernity, being part of the labor force means working nights, working flexible hours, working without job security, without the benefit of a social net, and most of all working no more *on* the assembly line, but as an interchangeable *part of* the assembly line. According to Dinello, the introduction of industrial “robots thoroughly changed the nature of human society by changing the nature of work when, in post-Henry Ford factories, machines replaced humans or turned [them] into assembly line machines” themselves (Dinello, 36f). Hence, the abovementioned intensification of the negative aspects of the Fordist regime of industrial capitalism under late or, hence, post-Fordist capitalism translates into a fragmentation of the Fordist division of labor (assembly-line production) beyond recognition. The Fordist Taylorization of labor has been succeeded by what I would like to call hyper-Taylorization. A typical occupation today consists of the constant repetition of a very limited number of atomized tasks. “Once one enters the system of wage labor, one exists only as labor power for that system, and other aspects of human existence become irrelevant” (Vint (2010a), 102). Late-capitalist “factory workers serve the machine, [they are]

reduced to robot-like 'autonomous movements' as they subordinate their bodies and selves to the demands of the labor process" (Ibid., 103).

4. THE POSTMODERN CONDITION

4.1 ALL THAT IS SOLID MELTS INTO AIR

Under late capitalism that third, or fourth, post-industrial phase of the capitalist development, after the advent of the third industrial revolution and the information age, commodification has turned total, which constitutes a qualitative difference to the preceding stage of Fordist capitalism. The "spectre of a society of 'cheerful robots' who might well desire, or happily submit to, increased servitude" (Best/Kellner, 8) is closer to realization than it ever was in the preceding stages of capitalism. In fact, it has already been realized: "Heute verhalten wir uns alle [...] als Roboter der marktwirtschaftlichen Selbstverantwortung" (Kurz (2013), 44). "Die affirmative Kultur des Nachkriegskapitalismus hat die Menschen betäubt, wo nicht gar abgetötet und sie zu gehorsamen Automaten [...] gemacht" (Moynan (1990), 24). Not only are we witness to a totalization of the commodification of all and everything, we also live in a time which is characterized by a potentiation of time-space compression. Thus, "[t]he sense that 'all that is solid melts into air' has rarely been more pervasive" (Harvey (2000), 285f). Today "the urbanization, industrialization, commodification, and class, gender, and racial discrimination that some call capitalism—are more powerful than ever" before (Harris, 89). Eagleton thus speaks of the "appalling mess which is the contemporary world" (Eagleton (1996), ix). After the dissolution of the planned economies of actually existing Socialism postmodern capitalism rules supreme across the globe^{xxxii}. We live in a phase of "capitalism not embattled, but complacent beyond precedent" (Anderson (1998), 118).

Numerous critics in the 1990s have argued that postmodernity is an era of transition, that we live in a transitory phase between two distinct periods of capitalism. Some even argue that this transition is as vast and all-encompassing as the transition from feudal mercantile to modern capitalism. In the year 1990, Harvey states that "we are witnessing a historical transition, still far from complete and [...] bound to be partial in certain important respects" (Harvey (2000), 173). In this vein, Jameson suggests the sense of in-betweenness, of living in a transitory stage between two distinct phases of capitalist development, as one of many definitions of postmodernism in 2000 (Jameson (2000), 48). Harvey, in turn, postulates the emergence in the mid-1970s of what he calls the system of flexible accumulation. The regime of flexible accumulation is paralleled by the totalization of commodification we

have already identified as one of the hallmarks of late capitalism, by an acceleration of turnover times in production, exchange, and consumption, an emphasis on ephemerality, spectacle, and quick-changing fashion, deregulation, financial innovation, deteriorating working conditions, outsourcing, “an overall reduction of the standard of living” (Harvey (2000), 186), a far-increased flexibility of labor contracts, i.e., the commodification and precarization of the labor market, capital flight, the triumph of aesthetics over ethics, and the decoupling of financial speculation from the realm of the material. Harvey identifies the advent of postmodernity as “the passage to [...] *flexible accumulation*” (italics in original; *ibid.*, 145ff). Flexible accumulation is furthermore characterized by “greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological, and organizational innovation[,] giving rise [...] to [...] a new round of [...] 'time-space compression'” (Harvey (2000), 147). Flexible accumulation represents a marked departure from the Fordist system of accumulation which dominated the phase between the end of World War II and 1973. Flexible accumulation implies “high levels of unemployment, rapid destruction and reconstruction of skills [...] and the roll-back of trade union power—one of the political pillars of the Fordist regime” (Harvey (2000), 147ff). It can thus be noted that Harvey's term of 'flexible accumulation' is intensionally identical with Jameson's late capitalism.

If postmodern theory is actually 'dead'^{xxxiii}, postmodernity as a provisional designation for our era persists. Thus, in 2001, Burbach remarks that “the postmodern age is an ongoing process” (Burbach, 77). Two years later, Zima ascertains that “postmodernity is unlikely to end soon” (Zima (2003), 13). Zima). He gives four reasons why the postmodern age will last. First, the fact that “postmodernity is not as firmly established as some of us might be led to assume” (Zima (2003), 26), that in other words “the postmodern problematic geared towards indifference is not yet consolidated” (*ibid.*), which means that postmodernization processes and modernization processes still temporally coexist in the contemporary. Zima's second reason is the all-out commodification of the social, the political, and the cultural, symptomatic of postmodernity which gives the postmodern the character of a new human condition (*ibid.*). According to Green “[t]he only rule that can be detected [...] is the rule of profit: postmodernism [...] is indistinguishable from the marketplace” (Green, 40). Jameson thus postulates the conflation of base and superstructure, of economy and culture, as characteristic of postmodernism. There is no space left where market forces do not rule supreme. Best and Kellner point out that “[l]ate capitalism extends commodification dynamics to virtually all realms of social and personal life, penetrating all spheres of

knowledge, information, and the unconscious itself” (Best/Kellner, 185). Even the human psyche is not exempt from penetration by the exchange value under late capitalism.

Zima's third reason—which again relies on the notion of a modern and a postmodern problematic—for believing that the postmodern age will last is the fact that, according to him, such problematics do not change overnight but rather over the course of decades and centuries (Ibid., 27). His fourth reason is the fact that “no revolutionary elite in the Marxist or Leninist sense is in sight which would challenge the market forces” (Ibid.). The very notion of the possibility of revolutionary change has become obsolete. There is no future which differs from the present in postmodernity. Some critics argue that with the advent of postmodernism the old nomenclature of theory and philosophy has become obsolete. Others postulate that “the postmodern [i]s a mere fad or ephemeral fashion” (Kellner (1995), 48). However, as Robert Rebein points out in 2001, “postmodernity [...] is the one great reality of our time” (Rebein, 15). We are living under postmodern capitalism, if we like it or not. Even Petrovic concedes in 2003 that “postmodernism, seemingly on the wane, actually persists” (Petrovic, 75). In the same year, Zima contends that “postmodernity is there to stay” (Zima (2003), 27). In 1997, Bertens suggests to “see postmodernity as emerging rather than as fully established” (Bertens (1997b), 116), and Carroll at the same point in time remarks that “postmodernism is [...] the dominant tendency of the moment” (Carroll, 99). In 2007, Annette Wagner remarks that “die Debatte um den Begriff Postmoderne [i]n den letzten Jahren [...] zunehmend versiegt [...] ist” (Annette Wagner, 121) and that “einige in den 1990er Jahren bereits den Tod der Postmoderne verkündeten” (Ibid., 122). Joan Gordon and Monica Hollinger, in 2002, point out that “postmodernism [...] names our present cultural moment” (Gordon/Hollinger, 3). O'Donnell remarks in 2010 that “[a]n 'era' [...] is an heuristic convenience” (O'Donnell, 11). It nevertheless is a useful convention which allows to classify distinct historical epochs under distinct categories. In 2003, Chomsky remarks that the “'spectacular' [...] changes that have occurred since World War” II, i.e., the fact that there now is a lasting peace among the European imperial powers, justify speaking of the post-War world as of “a 'postmodern' world system” (Chomsky (2003), 62). In 2012, Gomel calls our “particular historical juncture [...] postmodernity” (Gomel (2012), xi). The discussion about the term has faded, but the phenomena to which it applies persist. This study suggests the usage of 'postmodernity' as a collective term for the totality of contemporary culture after and under all the momentous changes, both ongoing and concluded, which transformed and

transform the ruling economic structure of our time.

Furthermore, presciently countering the alleged 'death of irony' after 9/11, Best and Kellner call it “ironic that in an era of worldwide struggles for democracy postmodern intellectuals are trying to dissolve key concepts of the democratic revolution” (Best/Kellner, 297). One of these key concepts is the notion of 'class'. Poststructuralists such as Baudrillard—and neo-liberals like Thatcher—deny the existence of society. This ironic twist has rendered postmodernism politically suspect to many theorists, for example, to feminists. Harvey points out in 2005 that the neo-liberal project of class warfare of the upper classes against the working classes “occurred in decades when many progressivists were theoretically persuaded that class was a meaningless category” (Harvey (2005), 49): “Wir haben das letzte Vierteljahrhundert in einer Welt verbracht, in der uns wieder und wieder erzählt wurde, dass 'Klasse' bedeutungslos sei” (Behrens, 376), while the transnationalist class factions in the West made their bid for hegemony and succeeded. In fact 'class' has been and continues to be a social category of paramount importance. One could very well argue that poststructuralist anti-representationalism has contributed to compromising the capacity for opposition against the neo-liberal project. Thus, Burbach remarks that “postmodern philosophy [...] directly undermines progressive political and social struggles” (Burbach, 74).

Harris remarks that “[a] system that is so egregiously flawed [as ours] cannot represent the end-point of history” (Harris, 189). Jameson considers Harris's objection to Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis—which by the way identifies “democratic institutions with the market” (Jameson (2000), 89)—as the “naïve objection to Fukuyama, [which consists of stating] that, in spite of everything, history does go on” (Ibid., 88). Jameson juxtaposes such 'naïve' objections with a Marxist, systemic notion. According to him, Marx's notion of the end of history is the realization of Communism, where each gives according to his/her ability and receives according to her/his needs. It is obvious that our current world is nowhere near the arrival of such a stage of development. Obviously, Jameson's Marxist reason for rejecting Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis is consistent with Harris's statement that our present system is too severely flawed to represent the end point of anything. Jameson refutes Fukuyama's claim by adopting a classical Marxist position here. Furthermore, Jameson gives us a second line of argument concerning his notion of the 'the end of history': “everything now submits to the perpetual change of fashion [...] nothing can change any longer. This is the sense of the [...] 'end of history'[:] The persistence of the Same through

absolute Difference[,] absolute change equals stasis” (Jameson (2002), 60f). Perpetual change equals stasis and “the only conceivable radical change would consist of putting an end to change itself” (Jameson (2002), 60). Thus, History runs into aporia. Furthermore, Fukuyama's version of the 'end of history' does not amount to much more than an instance of capitalist triumphalism. What collapsed with the Fall of the Berlin Wall was not a communist or even socialist society, but another version of capitalism. Actually existing socialism was closer to a totalitarian version of Keynesianism than to Marx, although Marx's consistent refusal to envision the new society the application of his teachings were supposed to instigate indeed left room for the 'interpretations' the various real-world dictatorships of the proletariat made of his work. Burbach argues that because of the end of the Eastern Bloc and the crisis of democracy in the Western states, we are now living in the age of a distinctly postmodern politics. Politics is now conducted according to the rules of the spectacle. What thus has come to an end is not history but the age of modern politics. Politics is not about politics anymore, it is about advertisement and social engineering, about vote catching and populist authoritarianism. According to Gomel, “[w]hat seems to have ended is not history but rather history's dream of becoming utopia” (Gomel (2012), 147). This notion corresponds to Jameson's train of thought according to which the postmodern subject is plagued by an erosion of historicity, by the incapability to form a coherent narrative of identity out of the past and the present, and therefore is devoid of a future. It has become unimaginable to postulate a possible future beyond or after capitalism. Utopia has become inconceivable. There is no future beyond a simple continuation of the present. Jameson's third version of the postmodern 'end of history' arises from the fact that “capitalism[']s consequent penetration of as yet uncommodified parts of the world [...] make[s] it difficult to imagine any further enlargement of the system” (Jameson (2002), 90) and thus any future essentially different from our present third/fourth stage of capitalism. Furthermore, the “past [...] has meanwhile [...] become a simulacrum” (Jameson (1991), 18); i.e., it is only accessible to us via simulations which *eo ipso* reflect more of our present reality than of the extra-textual reality of the past. Jameson describes the temporal attitude inherent to the postmodern sensibility as follows: The past is forever out of reach, the present is a state of constant change, ephemeral, fragmented, hallucinatory, and the future is a mere continuation of the present, more of the same, perpetual change equals stasis and thus history is dead.

According to Burbach, “the collapse of communism is most often attributed

to the superiority of capitalism[.] But [in fact] the Soviet Union was beaten [...] through Reagan's decision to challenge it on the military front with an accelerated arms race" (Burbach, 4). Nevertheless, the collapse of actually existing socialism is one of the founding features of postmodernist globalized capitalism. In this context, Harvey suggests that what collapsed at the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s in the former Eastern Bloc, so-called 'actually existing' socialism, was not so much a 'real' version of socialism, but "eine andere Variante des Kapitalismus" (Harvey (2011), 248). He refers to Lenin's decision to implement Fordist production techniques in the newly-founded Soviet Union as the reason for the capitalist development of the nominally 'socialist' countries (ibid.). Wilson, accordingly, points out that "the Soviet Union [...] was [not] a socialist or communist power as Marx would have understood it" (Wilson, 13). Its collapse, nevertheless, marks the end of a particular kind of modernity and the completion of the world's shift to late capitalism.

According to Jameson, "at some point following World War II a new kind of society began to emerge" (Jameson (2002), 143), but he fails to specify the exact temporal location of this emergence. Harvey gives the date of said shift as 1973, which, according to him, is the temporal location when postmodernism began to assume cultural dominance. At the beginning of the last century, "Lenin [...] identifi[ed] a new stage of capitalism that was not explicitly foreseen in Marx: the so-called monopoly stage" of imperialist capitalism, or industrialism (Jameson (2000), 34f). According to Mandel, there are three stages of capitalist development mercantilism, industrialism, and our current phase, late capitalism. Each of these correspond to the cultural epochs of realism, modernism, and postmodernism respectively.

Bertens further divides "postwar capitalism into two periods, with 1973 as the dividing moment[,] the first of which is a continuation of the prewar, Fordist, capitalism of modernity[, i.e., Keynesianism], which is then followed by the post-Fordist and postmodern capitalism of the last [...] decades" (Bertens, 169), i.e., late capitalism, or globalization. The decoupling of the dollar from the gold standard in 1971 is here too used as the temporal marker of the beginning of postmodernity. Jameson thinks the passage from modernism to postmodernism, i.e., from imperialist (or industrialist) capitalism to late capitalism (or globalization) as a long-term process which spreads out "over several decades" (Jameson (2000), 84). Burbach suggests a slightly different periodization. In his account, "[t]oday we are living in the early phases of the fourth epoch of capitalism" (Burbach, 22). Burbach divides Bertens's first phase of capitalism into two distinct phases.

Furthermore, he rightfully remarks that “[p]eriodization is somewhat arbitrary” (Ibid.). In his account, “[t]he first epoch [...] of mercantilism and primitive accumulation [...] ran from 1492 to 1789” (Ibid., 21f), that is to say from the 'discovery' of America until the French Revolution; his second epoch of industrial capitalism lasts from the French Revolution to the beginning of the twentieth century. Into this epoch falls “the rise of the bourgeoisie, and the forging of the nation state[; the] third epoch starts around the turn of the twentieth century with the rise of corporate ('monopoly') capitalism and the financial-industrial corporation [and] intensified wars among imperial powers” (Ibid., 22). This epoch runs from 1900 to the early 1970s and ends with the abolition of the gold standard as well. Burbach's periodization is worth considering. Not only does he incorporate Lenin's second period of 'monopoly' capitalism (in his line of argument, the third phase). His fourth phase can also be identified with Jameson's and Bertens's third phase of capitalism. For instance, Jameson's whole conception of postmodernism hinges on said transformation from industrial to post-industrial capitalism. According to Burbach, the fourth period is referred to “as globalization, it is highlighted technologically by the microchip and the computer—the information age—and politically by the collapse of twentieth-century attempts at socialism” (Burbach, 22). Said fourth stage of capitalism was heralded by the third industrial revolution, which consists of the consequences of the introduction of the new information technologies which have turned immaterial labor hegemonic in the West.

Anderson contends that “democracy has [...] dwindle[d], as falling rates of voter participation and mounting popular apathy set in” (Anderson, (1998), 114). Deppe agrees and identifies “eine Entpolitisierung [...] der Zivilgesellschaft” (Deppe, 21). According to him, “dominieren [s]olche Einstellungen [...] vor allem in den unteren Gesellschaftsklassen” (Ibid.). In other words, those classes who stand to gain or lose the most through general elections are also those who do not bother to vote. Deppe thus contends that “[d]ie Gesellschaft [...] sich [...] in Richtung einer Demokratie der Eliten [...] entwickelt” (Deppe, 29). Although Deppe is referring to the current political situation in the FRG, these findings hold true for all Western democracies. Harvey points out that “mass democracy [i]n the neo-liberal view, [...] is equivalent with mob rule” (Harvey (2005a), 20). He contends that the “neo-liberal state is profoundly anti-democratic” (Ibid.). Richard Detje and Horst Schmitthenner remark a persisting fact of all (real-world) democracies, namely that the democracy does not extend to the working world (Detje/Smitthenner, 91). The workforce is so used to hierarchical decision

structures being imposed on them as 'natural' laws in their work regimes that they tend to accept them outside their occupational life as well. Our lives at the work place are governed by quasi-feudal command structures and by (total) exploitation, which necessarily influences the ways in which we perceive the world and the ways in which we think. Marx has pointed this out long ago: “Es ist nicht das Bewußtsein der Menschen, das ihr Sein, sondern umgekehrt ihr gesellschaftliches Sein, das ihr Bewußtsein bestimmt” (quoted in Nyikos, 24, n. 8). Horst Kreschnak points out that soul-destroyingly dull labor diminishes the psychic capabilities of the worker and his/her ability to make decisions (Kreschnak, 71). The third industrial revolution has exponentiated the Taylorization of the second industrial revolution, turning industrial workers into interface machines and totalizing the classical Marxist alienation inherent to abstract labor. It is the abject stupidity of abstract labor which keeps the masses trapped in false consciousness. As a worker one learns to submit oneself completely to the machine and thus becomes a machine oneself. As Harris points out, “behavior and ideas must be seen as elements in a feedback relationship. In the short run, ideas do guide behavior, but in the long run, behavior guides and shapes ideas” (Harris, 28). Our societal being (*gesellschaftliches Sein*) is trapped in a hierarchical order and thus we can only envision a world of hierarchical order. For these reasons, a host of theorists demand that the sphere of democracy is extended to encompass the economy. This study seconds this proposal.

4.2 CYBERBLITZ

'Cyberblitz' is a term of Baudrillard's which refers to the immense prominence of cybernetic technology and cybernetic control in our current societies. Arguably, cybernetics is the leading scientific discipline of postmodernity. However, in 1991 Jameson asks whether postmodernism “even exists in the first place” (Jameson (1991), 55). McHale, in 2004, remarks that “it's not the putative death of postmodernism that [he] find[s] threatening, but rather the possibility that it never existed in the first place” (quoted in Krause, 9, n. 8). In 1992, McHale declares that “[n]o doubt there is no such 'thing' as postmodernism” (McHale (1992), 1). Conversely, Petrovic, in 2003, remarks that “[t]he term 'postmodern' [is] employed meaningfully to describe the massive material and political changes that have led to the post-industrial [...] society” (Petrovic 51). Petrovic's position is that the term postmodernism has ontological reality when applied to the changes the world went through in the last three decades and when employed to grasp the changes in state of mind and consciousness these transformations effected. According to Cordle,

“postmodernism is a way of thinking about the contemporary moment, an attitude; it is not a concrete thing” (Cordle, 173). Like the concept of 'society' postmodernism has ontological reality through the actions and thoughts of its practitioners. Kellner remarks that “the discourse of the postmodern is a cultural and theoretical construct, not a thing or state of affairs” (Kellner (1995), 47). However, postmodernity, as opposed to postmodernism, refers to our current state of affairs. Postmodernism is not a *noumenon*, or a Kantian *Ding an sich*, it is a theoretical construct which facilitates the process of making sense of a postmodern world. We can say that postmodernism is both the theory which describes and explains the era of postmodernity and the works of art to which this theory can be validly applied. Green suggests that “postmodernism [i]s a process, a perpetual questioning, rather than a sealed historical period” (Green, 23). Postmodernism is the historical investigation of the present age. In 1999, Cordle, in turn, intersperses that “postmodernism [...] is a concept integral to our understanding of contemporary culture” (Cordle, 169f). McHale relativizes his 1992 statement when he declares that “postmodernism exists discursively, in the discourses we produce *about* it and *using* it[,] in that sense, if in no other, postmodernism does indeed exist” (italics in original; McHale (1992), 1).

Krause gives the following reason why, in his opinion, postmodernism is a defective concept: “Die kanonischen Deutungen für 'PM' sind unglaublich, weil inkonsistent oder vage bis zur Unverständlichkeit” (Krause, 5). Nevertheless, as an umbrella term of theory the term 'postmodernism' continues to have its uses and to be used in the present. Furthermore, Krause concedes that the term 'modernism,' which he puts forward as his first substitute for the term 'postmodernism,' suffers from similar inconsistencies as does the latter term. Moreover, Krause suggests three other substitutes for the term. He asks “ob 'PM' nicht durch [...] 'Zeitalter der Beschleunigung' [...] ersetzt werden sollte” (italics in original; *Ibid.*, 128). Then he suggests using 'aesthetization' as a substitute for postmodernism (*Ibid.*, 137, n. 112). Krause notes that “‘Beschleunigung' und 'Flüchtigkeit' [...] zeitgenössische Phänomene [...] sind“ (*Ibid.*, 126), but he concedes that these phenomena only constitute a 'gradual' difference from modernity. All three notions, ephemerality, acceleration, and aesthetization are incorporated in, for example, Jameson's conception of postmodernism. There is thus no real need to find a substitute for the term. Cordle notices that “the obscurity of postmodern discourse may well be a cause for concern and certainly it does no harm to remind ourselves of the benefits of clarity” (Cordle, 170). Below I venture to demonstrate and clarify the consistencies in Jameson's work about the postmodern. I intend to

exemplify that in this case “impenetrable prose [is not] a symptom of muddled thought, or a way of obscuring banality” (Ibid). Another synonym for postmodernism implicitly suggested by Krause is, referring to Habermas's book *The New Obscurity: The Crisis of the Welfare State* (1986), “Unübersichtlichkeit” (Ibid., 124). He remarks that “[d]ie Inkonsistenz des Begriffs 'PM' [...] manchem als Vorzug [...] gilt[:] Sie reflektiere die 'Unübersichtlichkeit' der 'postmodernen' Weltlage” (Ibid., 124). Krause, nonetheless, votes against the usage of the term 'postmodern' because he argues that “die 'Verworrenheit' der Sache [...] die Verworrenheit der Theorie nicht legitimieren [...] kann” (Ibid., 124). Krause advocates a style of consistency and clarity (Ibid., 13) that the theorists of the postmodern, in his opinion, conspicuously lack.

According to Bertens, “the grand theorists of the postmodern [are] Lyotard, [...] Baudrillard, and [...] Jameson” (Bertens (1995), 66). Since the second of the three is a linguistic idealist and denies the existence of reality and since his position has already been elaborated upon in subchapter 1.4, he will be investigated only briefly in the following. “Baudrillard denies all human agency and creativity” (Kellner (1989), 28). He postulates the end of society, the social, of class, and, in the end, abolishes the concept of an extra-textual reality as such. Baudrillard thus tacitly ignores the sufferings “of the millions being harmed, even killed, as a result of the domestic and foreign policies of the Reagans, Bushes, Thatchers, Bothas and Pinochets” (Kellner (1989), 215) and their successors. His critique in the end boils down to a tacit complicity with the status quo. Baudrillard's theory fails to meet both of Krause's pragmatic requirements for the production of theoretical texts, i.e., clarity and consistency.

Let us now turn to Bertens's first grand theorist of the postmodern, i.e., Jean-François Lyotard. The latter, like Baudrillard, “advocates a radical anti-representationalism” as well (Bertens (1995), 127). Lyotard was the first theorist to introduce the term 'postmodern' into philosophical discourse with his 1979 book called *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* “was the first book to treat postmodernism as a general change of human circumstance” (Anderson (1998), 26). According to Lyotard, society consists of the sum total of an infinite number of language games. Metanarratives, according to this train of thought, posit the rules of these language games by means of which they make sense. “Narrative is [...] for Lyotard the inevitable source of all legitimation and therefore of all value and truth” (Ibid., 126). For Lyotard, human identity is determined by language games as well.

“Simplifying to the extreme, [Lyotard] define[s] the *postmodern* as incredulity

towards metanarratives” (italics in original; Lyotard, xxiv). According to him, “[i]n contemporary society and culture [t]he grand narrative has lost its credibility[,] whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation” (Ibid., 37). The latter two narratives, according to Lyotard, are the two grand narratives of modernity. The metanarrative of emancipation posits humankind as its subject as the “hero of liberty” (Ibid., 31). It is the Enlightenment narrative in which knowledge frees humankind from superstition and ignorance. The speculative metanarrative holds that humankind progresses as it gains more and more knowledge, “a tale of spirit as the progressive unfolding of truth” (Anderson (1998), 25). Under late capitalism, however, “[k]nowledge [has become] an informational commodity” (Lyotard, 5) and the grand metanarratives have been compromised and substituted by the ever so many little narratives of identity politics. “In Lyotard's universe of language games, norms and values are always created and re-created through discursive intervention and are never given” (Bertens (1995), 129). Lyotard's view of knowledge formation is thus close to poststructuralist theory. Anderson argues that Lyotard's “real target [is] crystal-clear. Just one masternarrative lay at the origin of the term: Marxism” (Anderson (1998), 29). Lyotard is a linguistic idealist as much as Baudrillard. In Lyotard's linguistic idealist universe the “social subject itself seems to dissolve” (Lyotard, 40) because of the destruction of the master narratives. Without the unifying and stabilizing effect of the two metanarratives of modernity, the human subject is no longer operational and robbed of its identity. If there are no subjects any more, how can there be cognitive development? Furthermore, if everything consists of incommensurable language games determined by micronarratives, how can you tell truth from falsehood? Lyotard leaves one transcendental value which is an a priori of his universe: “justice as a value is neither outmoded nor suspect” (Ibid., 66). However, he does not specify how this justice is to be enacted. Bertens rightfully notes that Lyotard leaves the question of “the vexing problem of justice in a world of heterogeneous language games” unanswered (Bertens (1995), 129). Krause calls Lyotard's main thesis of the incredulity towards metanarratives (or to be specific the metanarrative of Marxism) a “[p]erformative[n] Selbstwiderspruch” (Krause, 19), referring to the paradoxical notion that postmodernism displays the tendency to make a metanarrative out of its incredulity to metanarratives. Lyotard thus fails to meet Krause's criteria as well.

Let us now turn to the third of Bertens's theorists: Fredric Jameson. According to Hermand, two theorists of the postmodern distinguish

themselves as “empirieverpflichtet[e] Kunsthistoriker[, die] auch die ideologischen, sozioökonomischen, geschlechtsspezifischen und kulturellen Voraussetzungen bei der Entstehung von Kunst mitberücksichtigen” (Hermand, 59). The two theorists in question are both proponents of a Marxist literary theory: Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson. Now we will investigate the multiple definitions of the term provided by, arguably, *the* single most influential critic of the postmodern, i.e., Fredric Jameson. Jameson's works on postmodernism amount to “grand attempts to theorize postmodernity as a new epoch, postmodernity as distinctively different from an earlier modernity” (Bertens (1995), 95). Even Krause concedes that “Jameson [...] allein [...] 'PM' als kulturellen Ausdruck ökonomischer Gegebenheiten [...] behandelt” (Krause, 111). According to Best and Kellner, “Jameson [...] attempts to absorb the best insights [...] of postmodern theory into an updated Marxian theory of the present age” (Best/Kellner, 182). Whether he succeeded in this endeavor or not will be investigated in the following.

4.3 THE CULTURAL LOGIC OF LATE CAPITALISM

Jameson “sees a causal relationship between new developments in western capitalism and the rise of the postmodern” (Bertens (1995), 162). Hence, the title of his seminal essay: *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1984). According to Anderson, Jameson's “first and most fundamental [move] came with [this] title—the anchorage of postmodernism in objective alterations of the economic order of capital itself” (Anderson (1998), 54f). The rise of neo-liberal capitalism in the economical domain is paralleled by the advent of postmodernism in the cultural domain. Postmodernism is thus the cultural concomitant of neo-liberal capitalism.

Let us now investigate this move, bearing in mind Krause's requirements of clarity and consistency, especially in the light of Jameson's rather difficult prose style. In the 'Preface' of his 1991 book version of his seminal essay Jameson suggests that postmodernism is best understood as a theory that historicizes the present state of affairs, it investigates the way our past determines our present (Jameson (1991), ix). In other words, postmodern theory deals with the ways in which postmodernity as a historical epoch, denoting our present point in time, came about. Furthermore, Jameson defines postmodernist theory as a form of postmodernism itself, a notion that might very well account for Jameson's contradictoriness which Krause laments. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, via a step-by-step analysis of the Preface to the book version of Jameson's essay, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), it is indeed possible to read Jameson

dialectically and thus yield important insights from his theorizing. According to Jameson, “[p]ostmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good” (Ibid.). The main problem with Jameson's writing is that he does not distinguish postmodernism from postmodernity and postmodern from postmodernist. In the last sentence he clearly refers to postmodernity as a historical epoch which follows modernity. In the advanced capitalist societies, modernization is complete and modernity has been succeeded by postmodernity. Nature as such has vanished from sight as global (sub-)urbanization picks up speed and the slums around the Third-World metropolises grow with accelerating velocity. Nature has been superseded by culture. According to Jameson, “‘culture’ has become a veritable ‘second nature’” (Ibid.). The last sentence can be read as affirming the Marxist insight that social being determines consciousness, a phenomenon which has greatly intensified in the present. Jameson speaks of “an immense dilation of [the] sphere [of] culture [...] (the sphere of commodities)” under the postmodern (Jameson (1991), x). Jameson's sense of culture differs from Harris's here. Jameson is referring to practices through which the private becomes public, such as the creation of art, watching TV, or posting on the Internet. In the same sentence he equates culture with the economic realm, the sphere of commodities. This suggests an identification of base with superstructure, i.e., of the economy with culture. “So, in postmodern culture, ‘culture’ has become a product in its own right” (Jameson (1991), x). This statement translates into the notion of a total commodification of culture as well as of the human condition. Under postmodernity modernist consumerism has been raised to the power of two. Thus, “[p]ostmodernism is the consumption of sheer commodification as a process” (Jameson (1991), x). This means that our very thoughts and behavior have become colonized by capital, everything has become a commodity. Jameson is not speaking of a gradual development here; as Krause suggests above, but of a qualitative change away from modernism. “There is no longer anything external to the system of global capitalism” (Burbach, 46). Conversely, “modernism was still minimally and tendentially the critique of the commodity and the effort to make it transcend itself” (Burbach, 46). Jameson declares that the modernist project has been surpassed by postmodernism.

Furthermore, he concedes that we are “in a situation in which we are not even sure there is as coherent a thing as an ‘age,’ or zeitgeist or ‘system’ or ‘current situation’” any longer (Jameson (1991), xi). He refers here to what Krause has dubbed “die auffällige ‘Unübersichtlichkeit’ der Weltlage” (Krause, 124), i.e., to the obscurity, acceleration, aesthetization, and ephemerality,

which Krause identifies as characteristic of our current situation and which are akin to the phenomenon that Harvey calls 'time-space compression,' which is characteristic of postmodernity.

Jameson goes on to insist emphatically “that postmodernism is not the cultural dominant of a wholly new social order[,] but only the reflex and the concomitant of yet another systemic modification of capitalism itself” (Ibid., xii). This statement at first glance seems contradictory, a contradiction which can be explained by taking into context Jameson's Marxist leanings. In the Marxist view, a 'wholly new social order' would constitute the arrival of socialism, or communism proper, since in Marxist periodization capitalism is succeeded by socialism and socialism by communism. This, however, has not come to happen and instead capitalism has 'simply' entered a new phase. This change in the base has then brought about the according changes in the superstructure that make up postmodernism as a cultural phenomenon. Thus, Krause is right when he remarks that “Jameson [...] eine Konvergenz, ja Identität [von] 'Überbauphänomen' [und] Basis [...] behauptet” (Krause, 111). Jameson concedes as much when he speaks of “lightning striking from the superstructure back to the base, fus[ing] its unlikely materials into a gleaming lump of lava surface” (Jameson (1991), xiii). Jameson's standpoint thus is a classical Marxist one.

Jameson assumes a disdainful posture towards the very thing he is theorizing when he remarks that he has “pretended to believe that the postmodern is as unusual as it thinks it is, and that it constitutes a cultural and experiential break worth exploring in greater detail” (Jameson (1991), xiii), which he then proceeds to do in book length. According to Jameson, “the 'postmodern' is to be seen as the production of postmodern people capable of functioning in a very peculiar socioeconomic world indeed” (Ibid., xv). A new form of culture will breed a new form of human being. Social being determines consciousness. The peculiarity of the present world lies in the eyes of the beholder here, since Jameson's original publication of his seminal essay in 1984 was three decades ago, which translates into one whole generation which grew up under postmodernity and neo-liberalism and thus considers our current 'highly peculiar' world as the norm.

The next noteworthy statement is another example of Jameson's eclectic vocabulary; he speaks of the “Heisenberg principle of postmodernism [which, according to him, is] the most difficult representational problem for any commentator to come to terms with” (Jameson (1991), xvii). The so-called Heisenberg principle stems from the field of quantum mechanics and amounts to assuming “a fundamental limit to the precision with which certain

pairs of physical properties of a particle [...] can be known simultaneously”^{xxxiv}. The pair of properties to which Jameson refers here is the one of “*text and work*” (italics in original; Jameson (1991), xvii). He speaks of “the 'end of the work of art' and the arrival of the text” here (Ibid); “the work [...] is not supposed to exist in the postmodern” (ibid.). Every artifact has to be considered as a text, determined by its context. Jameson has in mind a dialectical process of interpretation by means of which the text is turned into a work of art again. Jameson is referring to poststructuralist deconstruction here. By making texts into examples of a certain theory, one reinstates them as works of art. In other words, a postmodern artifact becomes a work of art only in the process of interpretation. Interpretation, in turn, is an “endless slide show, [a] 'total flow' prolonged into the infinite” (Ibid., xvii). Jameson subscribes to a view akin to Nietzschean perspectivism here which holds that it is impossible to represent the true nature of anything, but that one can come close when one tries to take up all possible perspectives on the subject in question.

Late capitalism is the name for the new stage of capitalism which brought about the innumerable changes in culture for which Jameson suggests the term postmodernism. The fact that he uses postmodernism itself as a synonym for late capitalism exemplifies the notion of an identity of base and superstructure which I have elaborated on above. Jameson goes on to elaborate on the term late capitalism and its forerunner monopoly, or imperial, capitalism. Jameson rightly identifies the “matter of internationalization” as one of the distinguishing features of late capitalism (Jameson (1991), xix). Furthermore,

its features include the new international division of labor, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and the stock exchanges (including the enormous Second and Third World debt), new forms of media interrelationship (very much including transportation systems such as containerization), computers and automation, the flight of production to advanced Third world areas, along with all the more familiar social consequences, including the crisis of traditional labor, the emergence of the yuppies, and gentrification on a now-global scale (Ibid.).

Jameson's concept of late capitalism is thus identical with neo-liberal capitalism and the stage that Burbach refers to as globalization as well as Harvey's regime of flexible accumulation. Jameson then brings up the concept of Althusserian Marxism. Althusser holds that the relationship of base and superstructure is not straightforwardly causal. He professes that the superstructural phenomena, such as the state, culture, and society, are semi-

autonomous entities. Jameson does not assume “the interrelationship of culture and the economic [a]s a one-way street but [as] a continuous reciprocal interaction and feedback loop” (Ibid., xivf). Jameson here subscribes to the Althusserian principle of 'semi-autonomy' “in which the various levels [...] run at different rates of speed, develop unevenly, and yet conspire to produce a totality” (Ibid., xix). This view explicitly contradicts Jameson's abovementioned thesis of the identity of base and superstructure. However, then, via Althusser, we arrive again at the identity of base and superstructure which together represent the totality of everything that exists, which constitutes a classical Marxist view and a rejection of the Althusserian approach. Jameson openly admits that his “approach to postmodernism is a totalizing one” (Jameson (2000), 35). The “*cultural* and the *economic*, [...] collapse back into one another and say the same thing, in an eclipse of the distinction between base and superstructure” (italics in original; Jameson (1991), xxi). The fusion of base and superstructure, of the economic and the cultural, as has already been mentioned above, is one of the defining features of postmodernism. The postmodernization process has led to an absolute, a total, commodification of culture, the state, human relations, and society as such. The market has thus been turned total(itarian).

Jameson claims that “the development of the cultural forms of postmodernism may be said to be the first specifically North American global style” (Ibid.). It can therefore be noted that in Jameson's view postmodern culture is identical with American-style consumer culture. He then mentions the brief 'American century' (1945-73), which corresponds to the Bretton Woods system. Late capitalism and postmodernity are here to stay. Under the new system of flexible accumulation “Capital itself becomes free-floating. It separates from the 'concrete context' of its productive geography” (Jameson (2000), 142). This process began in the 1970s and has culminated in the present situation in which by far the better part of the world's money is used for financial speculation which in turn has been completely severed from any connection with the material realm of actual commodities and their production.

At the end of the *Introduction*, which dates back to 1990, Jameson points out that the concept of postmodernism “is not merely contested, it is also internally conflicted and contradictory” (Ibid, xxii). He claims that “*Postmodernism* is not something we can settle once and for all and then use it with clear conscience[, but] we cannot *not* use it” (italics in original; *ibid.*). The latter quote is also cited in Krause (2007); only that Krause cites it as “we can *not* use it” (italics in original; Krause, 115). Krause then constructs a contra-

diction out of Jameson's text by means of that misquoted phrase. I will now examine Krause's other, probably more carefully researched, arguments against Jameson.

One of the defining characteristics of postmodernism, according to Jameson, is the fusion of base and superstructure. Krause points out that Jameson speaks of a fusion of base and superstructure and in the same breath assumes a causal relationship between the two. To conclude from this identity thesis that there can be no causal relationship between the two is a valid objection against Jameson's argumentation. Secondly, Krause questions Jameson's periodization of capitalism. Jameson bases his economic facts upon the work of Ernest Mandel, a Marxist economist of some renown. The fact that his economic theorizing is founded on the work of said classical Marxist analyst does not mean that it could not be put into question *per se*, but, nevertheless, gives his theorizing a satisfactory credence. Moreover, it has been sufficiently established in the course of this work that the tremendous bundle of changes in our mode of production constitutes a shift in the latter from Fordist accumulation to flexible accumulation, from monopoly, or imperial, capitalism (or from Keynesianism)^{xxxv}, to late or post-industrial capitalism. According to Green, "various schools of interpretation [...] accept that the early 1970s [...] signaled the difficult transition to new practices of production, labor, and consumption" (Green, 35). Youngquist temporally locates "the arrival of finance capital on the world stage [in] the early 1970s" (Youngquist, 20). Jameson's reasoning in this regard can thus be considered as sound. The same goes for the cultural artifacts Jameson examines as typically postmodern. His aesthetic analysis is equally sound. Even Krause concedes that "Jameson eine lohnende Betrachtungsweise ein[führt]. So wird ein dringliches Desiderat—dem Anspruch nach—eingelöst: Es gilt, Zusammenhänge zwischen ökonomischer und kultureller Sphäre zu begreifen" (Krause, 112). This desideratum is met in Jameson's essay. There exists a reciprocal feedback loop between base and superstructure; in fact, the two have become nearly identical. Krause's next objection reads as follows: "Befremdlich auch, dass die 'postmoderne', die 'globale' und die amerikanische 'Kultur' gleichgesetzt werden" (Ibid., 115). No matter how odd Krause considers the fact is that postmodernist culture is of North American pedigree, it still is a fact that the adjective 'postmodern,' among other things, applies first and foremost to American-style consumer culture. Accordingly, Hobsbawm identifies the US as the core country of cultural consumer democracy (Hobsbawm (1994), 634) which began to rise to international prominence first in the West and then in the world at large in the 1950s.

Krause's next objection to Jameson reads as follows: “[v]on einer weltumspannenden militärischen und ökonomischen Vorherrschaft der USA [...] kann [...] in diesem Zeitraum keine Rede sein” (Ibid., 114f). Krause, rather randomly, chooses the 1970s and 1980s as a temporal reference point here, a time phase which saw the disintegration of the Bretton Woods system, whose imperial hegemon was the USA. During the 1970s and 1980s, the USA and the Soviet Union were the two world superpowers. After the disintegration of the USSR the USA remained the world's sole superpower. To speak of the global military and economic dominance (at least in the Western hemisphere) of the USA during the 1970s and 1980s is thus a simple statement of fact. But let us investigate the current state of affairs. In his 1998 essay on globalization, Jameson rightfully remarks that “[b]y the intermediaries of the great, mostly American-based transnational or multinational corporations, a standard form of American material life, along with North American values and cultural forms, is being systematically transmitted to other cultures” (Jameson (1998b), 64). Kellner accordingly remarks that “U.S. Culture is increasingly exported to the entire world” (Kellner (1995), 5). Walter Göbel points out that “postmodernism is one of the most successful exports of the neo-imperial American centre” (Göbel, 139). Theo D'Haen identifies “the United States as the hub of late or consumer capitalism (D'Haen, 289). Besley and Peters observe that “the world is, arguably, now unipolar, with the USA's immense military, technological and economic power leaving it as the only superpower that furthermore is now dominant in popular culture” (Besley/Peters, 117). It thus still seems perfectly correct to speak of “a whole new wave of American [...] domination throughout the world” (Jameson (1991), 5) as Jameson does.

4.4 POSTMODERNISM IS DEAD, LONG LIVE POSTMODERNITY

Kurz hands down a rather withering verdict with regard to the postmodern: “die Postmoderne [...] war [...] nichts anderes als der begriffslos gewordene moderne Kapitalismus in einer Spätform eitler Selbstbespiegelung” (Kurz (2013), 166). He thus postulates the end of postmodernity and postmodernism. Postmodernity brought along a list of obituaries, including the “death of the novel” (Green, vii), “the disappearance or death of the author” (Besley/Peters, 49), the “death of consensus” (Crockett, 263), “the End of Ideology” (Mohr, 2), “the end of everything” (Jameson (2000), 87), “the end of representation[,] metaphysics[,] the overtaking of the 'real' by 'simulation'” (Hollinger (2002), 165), “the destruction of the subject” (Petrovic, 64), “the end [...] of philosophy” (Paik, 75), “the end of the political project [...] and

society” (Best/Kellner, 283), “the end of [...] social class” (Jameson (1991), 1), the end of history as such, “the end of art” (Anderson (1998), 99), “the death of man as knower” (Petrovic, 57), “the death of narratology” (Currie, 5), “the death of [...] the book” (Green, 15), “the death of high culture” (Garrett, 18), “the end of criticism” (Currie, 56), and “the end of literature” (Green, 45). “Das Ende des Kapitalismus, das Ende der Arbeitsgesellschaft und das Ende der Klassengesellschaft sind die beliebtesten Parolen, die mit der Diagnose einer postmodernen Gesellschaft einhergehen“ (Behrens, 74). Vera Nünning accordingly notes that “it has become fashionable to announce the death of almost anything under the sun” (Nünning, 235), which constitutes a distinctly postmodern phenomenon. The above list of obituaries can be read as the expression of “a postmodern theory of 'ruptures'” (Toth, 17), as the project of breaking with everything that came before, i.e., with modernism. All the items of this long list of obituaries were then, in turn, allegedly rendered defunct, i.e., were reinstated, after 9/11 by the “long overdue 'end of irony,' the return of 'the real' and of 'authentic feelings'” prompted by the terrorist attacks (Berressem, 271). Ironically, Jameson identifies this new era of an alleged reemergence of authenticity as a wave of a 'new inauthenticity'. Žižek contends that “9/11 did mark the end of a certain postmodernism: the [...] age of irony and political correctness” (Žižek (2011), 358).

Featherstone notes that from the very beginning of the term's usage there were many who proclaimed postmodernism “to be a short-run fad and [who] were already talking about 'post-postmodernism'” in the 1970s (Featherstone, xxiii)^{xxxvi}. The advent of postmodern theory has from the beginning been accompanied by postulations of its demise. In 2005, Green writes that “[p]ostmodernism, it seems, is history” (Green, 1). Conversely, in 2003, Klaus Stiersdorfer points out that “the tolling of postmodernism's death knells may be premature” (Stiersdorfer (2003a), 9). Žižek continues to use the term postmodernism to describe our current phase of capitalism in 2013. This study holds that we, today, have entered a new phase of, or within, postmodernity. Hassan remarks that “postmodernism expands into [...] geopolitical postmodernity” (Hassan, 199). In other words, whether postmodernism was a valid notion or not, we are now living in postmodernity, or “cultural postmodernism has 'mutated' into geopolitical postmodernity” (Amian, 1). Our current geopolitical system has transformed decisively since the days of modernity.

In 2007, McLaughlin points out that “postmodernism [...] is still useful, maybe vital, in the current political scene” (McLaughlin, 61f). Hassan holds that

whatever the validity of postmodern theory the validity of postmodernity as a period marker is self-evident. Consumer capitalism's reach now indeed encompasses the entire globe. Liberal democracy, while its substance considerably dwindles, has become the paradigm of world politics. Neo-liberalism defines the vocabulary of the hegemonic discourse not only with regard to economics but in its entirety. The opposite approach of insisting on postmodernism's usefulness at least as a period marker is the view that holds that postmodernism and postmodernity are theoretical constructs that lack (and always have lacked) all validity. Victoria Lipina-Berezkina identifies such approaches as “misreadings of postmodern complexity” (Lipina-Berezkina, 269). Carrol and many other critics define “postmodernism as a reactionary, mechanical reflection of social changes” (Featherstone, 1), whose goal is “to prevent independent critical thought while appearing to defend it” (Petrovic, 53).

In the twenty-first century, the “race is on to define an emergent period that seems to have arrived *after* the end of history” (italics in original; Toth, 3). The latter statement serves to exemplify two things: First, that irony is not dead, and, second, that “[p]ostmodernism, to a certain degree, persists” (Ibid., 4), since there is no valid substitute in sight. Annette Wagner argues in 2007 that the term postmodernism remains useful in the new millennium: “der Terminus [ist] in internationalen wissenschaftlichen Diskursen weiterhin [prä]sent [und kann] nicht [...] einfach fallengelassen werden” (Annette Wagner, 122). The advent of the post-industrial information and service economy finds its superstructural correlative in what Jameson called postmodernism in 1984. The term 'postmodern' has from the beginning been a dialectal one, because it “inscribes within itself the very term (i.e., modern) that it defines itself against” (Toth, 13). According to Toth, postmodernism is both continuous and discontinuous with modernism. Thus, the “fact remains that a truly POSTmodern [sic] epoch, with a name of its own, remains to be seen” (Ibid., 15). Toth temporally locates the apparent decline of postmodernism in the year 1989 when “the Berlin Wall fell, suggesting the final triumph of capitalism” (Ibid., 107), which, according to him, is “the very moment when postmodernism [...] became hegemonic and thus utopian” (Ibid., 117). Žižek rightfully points out that the year 1989 “represented not only the defeat of state socialism but also of Western social democracy” (Žižek (2011), 460). In the light of the changes which, for example, the German society underwent after 1989 this statement is clearly true. The year 1989 marks the triumph of neo-liberalism as the economic paradigm of our time. Since then it has become inconceivable to postulate any economic

approach diverging from the consensus of neo-classical economic theory. Furthermore, Toth gives 1989 as the period marker of postmodernism's decline because in this year "Tom Wolfe published his 'Literary Manifesto for the New Social Novel'" (Toth, 107) which will be discussed in detail in subchapter 5.3. Another epoch-making year of the postmodern period is the year 2001. Maria Beville contends that our current postmodern, "post-9/11 era of global terrorism" (Beville, 199) is "comparable to the Reign of Terror in the years following the French Revolution" (Ibid., 10). Beville insists upon employing the term postmodern to designate cultural artifacts produced in the twenty-first century. She posits herself in explicit opposition to those critics which announced that 9/11 marked the "Post-Postmodernis[t] Return of the Real" (Gross et. al., 14) and "the end of irony" (Ibid.). She insists on the continuing relevance of the term to an adequate understanding of both the art produced in the contemporary and the present epoch as a whole.

If postmodernism is dead, it once must have been alive. Nevertheless, there are critics who denied the validity of postmodern thought from the beginning, claiming that there was no distinctive shift in capitalism and therefore no reason to speak of a new epoch. One of these critics is Noel Carroll, who denies that there ever was such a thing as postmodernism as early as (or as late as) 1997. Carroll's main argument against postmodernism is that production is still the key to economic dominance. Thus, according to him, it is not valid to speak of a paradigm shift. He elaborates that all the markers of the postmodern were already included in modernism (Ibid., 99f). According to him, "global postmodernism fails to mark a distinction" from modernism (Ibid., 100). As has been sufficiently demonstrated in the first part of this study, a "shift and transformation of all aspects of culture" has very much taken place (Featherstone, 8), which allows us to link "the stages of modernism to monopoly capitalism and postmodernism to post-World War II late capitalism" (Ibid.).

Inventing a substitute for the term has not yielded any results. Any concept of a post-postmodernism always includes the epistemes of postmodernism both in art and in theoretical discourse. It therefore seems sensible to stick to the usage of postmodernism as a term which still carries enough hermeneutic weight to be of theoretical and practical use.

4.5 APPROACHING POSTMODERNISM'S DEPARTURE

In 1997, Suleiman gives the following three strands of postmodern theorists: "the first group [is], on the whole, celebratory" of postmodernism (Suleiman (1997), 53), the second group is "pro-modernist" and thus "disapproving" of

postmodernism (Ibid.), and the third group of “the cultural pessimists [...] share[s] the negative analysis of the pro-modernists[, but] also refuse[s] to envisage a 'better' (modernist) alternative, because in their view postmodernism [is] here to stay” (ibid.). Suleiman gives Eagleton, Jameson, and Habermas, as representatives of the second group (Ibid., n. 4) and Baudrillard as the proponent of the third group (Ibid.). Among the pro-postmodernists she lists Hutcheon and Lyotard. Lyotard, however, considers postmodernism as a phenomenon within modernism, and thus has to be counted among the pro-modernists, while Hutcheon sounds the “death knell” for postmodernism in 2002 (Toth, 2). The main question in this regard, in my opinion, is whether or not post-postmodernism is not just another way of speaking of postmodernism, or POSTmodernism, i.e., a postmodernism which is a phenomenon in its own right. Is not the return of referentialism in the form of neo-realism the epitome of “the particular confrontation between realist referentialism and modernist reflexivity [which is] particular [to the] postmodern” (Ibid., 5)? And isn't “the increasing globalization we witnessed in the decade of the 90s,” and which we are still witnessing today (Ibid., 6), a central process of postmodernization, or hyper-modernization? According to Krysmanski, “liegt [d]as Wesen der Postmoderne [...] in einem Prozeß der kapitalistischen Globalisierung” (Krysmanski, 163). Even Hutcheon recognizes the fact that “electronic technology and globalization transform[ed] how we experience the language we use and the social world in which we live” (Hutcheon, 10). She, furthermore concedes that “these changes [could be read as] further signs of postmodernity” (Ibid.). Green contends that the alleged decline of “postmodernism itself might well be subject to th[e postmodern] principle of accelerated obsolescence” (Ibid.). It thus seems rather sensible to treat the purported obsolescence of postmodernism as part and parcel of the postmodern 'theory of ruptures'.

Habermas sees the project of modernity as unfinished (Habermas, 13), a notion which is coupled with the implied faith that sooner or later the old categories will once again make sense of a post-postmodern world whose underlying structures will then again reveal themselves to the observer's eye. This view is shared by Carroll, Petrovic, and Wilson, who argue that postmodernism is a chimera of academics with too much time on their hands, or that it is an instrument of late-capitalist domination.

The fourth group of the post-postmodernists is represented by Josh Toth. Toth bases his argument on the fact that postmodernism included both continuities and discontinuities with modernism. His argument is that Habermas's unfinished project of modernity was passed on to postmod-

ernism. Toth posits postmodernism as dead but dominant and contends that what will come afterward still remains to be seen. In the same paradoxical spirit as Toth, Habermas contends that “modernism is dominant but dead” (Habermas, 5).

According to Zima, a “good reason for believing that postmodernity [...] will last [is that] it has just begun” (Zima (2003), 26). We all live in the new culture of hypercapitalism, “die das Leben zu einer rundum zahlungspflichtigen Erfahrung macht” (Krysmanski, 164). Not even the human psyche is exempt from postmodern consumer capitalism's thrust towards totalization: “Gefühle [...] selbst [...] werden [...] zur Ware gemacht” (Reheis, 79f). Edward Comor in this regard speaks of “the systemic compulsion to commoditize virtually every aspect of life” (Comor, 179). Under postmodernity market forces rule every aspect of human existence. Even “*Experience* [has] *become* [...] *a commodity*” (italics in original; Latham (2002), 128). Jameson identifies “the penetration of commodity fetishism into [...] the psyche which had [...] always been taken as some last, impregnable stronghold against the instrumental logic of capital” (Jameson (2003a), xv) as one of the characteristics of postmodernity. In 2013, Žižek adds that “[t]he self-propelling circulation of Capital remains more than ever the ultimate Real of our lives” (Žižek (2013), 78). Capitalism's thrust towards limitless expansion is the *perpetuum mobile* that shapes our lives. Bertens concedes that “as a *Weltanschauung* [capitalism's] power has become ubiquitous” (italics in original; Bertens (1997b), 112). Žižek correctly points out that under “‘postmodern' capitalism [...] the *economy itself (the logic of market and competition) is progressively imposing itself as the hegemonic ideology*” (italics in original; Žižek (2011), 412). Neo-liberal conservatism has become the hegemonic paradigm of our times. Accordingly, “[t]he role of consumerism as a meaningful ideology and consumption as a meaningful activity has become” paramount (Comor, 180).

Bertens does not deny postmodernism's existence, but questions its position as a cultural dominant. According to him, modernization and postmodernization will coexist in a precarious balance of power well into the twenty-first century. To converge both Bertens's and Toth's positions we have to take recourse to Žižek, who points out that modern and “pre-modern sub-states are not atavistic remainders but rather integral parts of the 'postmodern' global constellation” (Žižek (2011), 172). Wilson acknowledges as much when he states that “[r]eality would always be a composite of all three[, i.e., the pre-modern, modern, and postmodern,] with one or another dominant” (Wilson, 28).

I would like to take Beville as my representative of the first group of the pro-

postmodernists, since her work on postmodernism was published 12 years after Suleiman's categorization and 7 years after Hutcheon's obituary of the postmodern. To again point out the obvious, our situation is one that is lightyears away from a state of resolution that could be said to transcend the epistemes of postmodernism. Hollinger states that "our desire for the resolution of historical time" (Ibid., 162) and the "postapocalyptic sensibility [spawned by it, is an] exemplary [...] aspect[t] of the postmodern condition" (Hollinger (2002), 172). It is a characteristically "postmodern sense that we are indeed living on 'after the end.'" (Youngquist, 247, n. 11), that we are, in fact, already on the other side of irrevocable change. This is why this study continues to use the terms of postmodernism and the theoretic framework that has been erected around them.

Let us now return to the second group of the pro-modernists. Petrovic announces that "speaking th[e] language [of] postmodern thinkers [...] corrupts the imagination" (Petrovic, 63) and prevents "independent critical thought" (Ibid., 53). For her, "bourgeois mythology [i]s an apt description of *most* postmodern theories" (my italics; Ibid., 57). Her fellow pro-modernist Carroll carries this refusal of the tenets of postmodernism even farther. Carroll argues that postmodernism "lack[s] the hindsight required for historical plausibility" (Carroll, 102). An argument that can be curbed by the fact that 15 years after the publication of his essay, as Beville demonstrated in 2012 and Youngquist and Paik in 2010, postmodernism remains a viable source of interpretation in the second decade of the new millennium. The pro-modernists like to see the "postmodern [a]s a neo-conservative interruption of a distinctly modern—or, rather, *radical*—period of cultural production" (italics in original; Toth, 10f). This corresponds to Habermas's categorization of Foucault and Derrida as "young conservatives" (Habermas, 13f). Since the advent of postmodernism and of neo-conservatism temporally coincide, it is rather tempting to draw a causal relationship between the two. A good case can be made for the thesis that both postmodernism and the New Right's mixture of neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism have their root in the protests of 1968. Postmodernism constitutes the reaction of a defeated Left and neo-liberalism/conservatism the reaction of a challenged Right. While the Left drifted into the realm of political apathy, as exemplified by the prototypical development of the two former Marxists Lyotard and Baudrillard, on the grounds of epistemological skepticism, the Right committed itself to a highly successful project of pragmatic actionism which culminated in the ascent of the New Right's counter revolution. Kurz thus identifies postmodernism as "[die] flankierende kulturelle Ideologie der

markwirtschaftlichen Globalisierung” (Kurz (2013), 47). However, this study refuses to accept Kurz's notion of postmodernism being the cultural ideology of neo-liberalism. There is a utopian core to postmodern thinking which transcends mere apocalyptic hedonism and aspires to realize a radically democratic project which Žižek would probably deem communist because of its being based on the axiom of unconditional equality.

Conversely, the pro-modernists see postmodernist theory as a simple instrument of late capitalism. Wilson identifies “the collapse of academic and intellectual resistance [against] neo-conservatism” (Wilson, 280) as the benchmark of contemporary postmodern academia. In today's system of education, the priorities of education have indeed been “reduced to the pragmatic requirements of the market, whereby students are trained to become compliant workers, spectatorial consumers, and passive citizens” (Petrovic, 53). The aims and practices of education and academia have not been exempt from neo-liberalism's logic of commodification. To “maintain capitalism's cultural hegemony it has been necessary to create a cultural middle management composed of teachers, professionals and experts” (Ibid.) whose task it is to defuse their students' capacity for critical thought. These “cultural commissars” (Ibid.) indeed make up a good part of international academia today. Dinello, in this regard, speaks of the “academic-industrial military complex” (Dinello, 184). So far Petrovic's and Wilson's criticism is correct. Critical theory today actually is a “Supermarket of Theory” (Buchanan/Irr, 8) with its own brand names and fads. Where they both err is in the fact that they equate postmodernist theory on the whole with said cultural middle management of late capitalism.

4.6 DYSTOPIA NOW

Paik points out that “[t]he disappearance of the division between collective falsehoods and [...] truth [i]s the overriding political crisis of postmodernity” (Paik, 65). The post-structuralist attack on the correspondence theory of truth is a correlative of this postmodern problematic. The ubiquity of misinformation, propaganda, social engineering, and spin has yielded peculiar consequences. The postmodern “subject's knowledge that governments and the mass media employ falsehoods, far from giving rise to a critical attitude, in fact results in the [...] assent of the subject to his own mystification” (Paik, 66). The postmodern subject's desire for an intelligible, coherent world view, in the light of the obscure and rather unintelligible status of contemporary reality, results in the subject's pragmatic assent to the ideology of the capitalist order. The hegemonic discourse holds that progress can be

sustained indefinitely and that humankind is engaged in the process of a new 'great ascent,' although even the notion of a first 'great ascent' is no more than an ideological fiction which serves to gloss over the true nature of the advent of modernity.

Conversely, Booker and Thomas point out “the already dystopian character of contemporary [...] capitalist society” (Booker/Thomas, 58). Vint agrees with this view of contemporary reality when she states that “we have [actually] entered the cyberpunk future” (Vint (2010a), 113). She specifies that “twenty-first-century life is an exteriorization of some of the motifs of” cyberpunk SF (Ibid., 229). We are living in a world which corresponds to what in the past was considered dystopian SF. Accordingly, Robert Morace concludes in 2010 that “we are [...] living in exactly the kind of world Vonnegut imagined” in *Hocus Pocus* (1990), for instance (Morace, 153), and Donald Morse contends in 2003 that in “the twentieth-first [sic] century, life on Earth resembles far more a Vonnegut novel than Stanley Kubrik's famous film [...] *2001: A Space Odyssey*” (italics in original; Morse, 159). According to Holz “what seemed like [SF] in the 1980s has been transformed into social reality” today (Holz, 7, n. 1). According to Karin Hoepker, we live in a “society [that is] science fictional already” (Hoepker, 226). Hollinger points out that we “who live in technoculture have come to experience the present as some kind of future at which we have inadvertently arrived, one of the many futures imagined by science fiction. We apprehend a version of the future in the features of the contemporary science-fictional moment” (Hollinger (2006), 452). Thus, “[t]o be postmodern [...] is the feeling that we now lead science-fictional lives” (Hollinger (2002), 161). Krysmanski points out that “Geopolitik [...] zu [SF und SF] zu Geopolitik geworden [...] ist” (Krysmanski, 167). Target drones assassinate terrorists in the Middle East on account of information gleaned by a global network of surveillance of truly Orwellian proportions. “The fact that we live in a cyberpunk world is in large part due to the dominance of neoliberalist globalization in our day-to-day lives” (Murphy/Vint, xvii). The hegemony of neo-liberal discourse has spawned a culture and a society congruent to the dystopias of 1980s' cyberpunk SF. Anderson thus postulates the real-world “dissolution of civil society [...] into a jagged no-man's-land of [...] deregulated violence: the world of William Gibson or *Blade Runner*” (italics in original; Anderson (1998), 112). What all the mentioned theorists have in common is a view of the contemporary as deeply dystopian and as an extension of the literary visions of former SF. Moylan adds that “since the beginning of the 1990s [...] the world situation has become ever more dystopian” (Moylan (2010), 81). The phenomena

Moylan holds responsible for the dystopian nature of the 1990s have also been carried into the twenty-first century without losing any of their shattering power. It is safe to say that Moylan would identify the first two decades of the twenty-first century as far more dystopian than the 1990s. Accordingly, in 2002 Laudan remarks that “die Realität [...] bereits tief[st]e Dystopie [...] ist” (Laudan, 75). “We live morally in an almost complete dystopia [...] and materially (economically) on the razor's edge of collapse, distributive and collective” (Suvin, 381). According to Suvin, “the overarching dystopian construct is the [...] one of Post-Fordism and global capitalism itself, the killer whale inside which we have to live” (Ibid., 391).

The neo-conservative revolution which “dominated the 1980s and set in motion the [...] dystopian world of the 1990s” (Moylan (2010), 82) has been carried into the twenty-first century intact. We are all living in a “profoundly threatening global economy or world society—a highly impersonal, brave new cyber-technological order” now (Wolin, 277). Cybernetic command and control rules supreme in our age of networked surveillance and Walmartification. Program trading and, in fact, the whole of the financial sector, which has risen to dominance under late capitalism, completely depends on technology. Roberts thus points out that “postmodernism as a cultural logic depends on today's advanced technology” (Roberts (2006a), 124). “Teilhabe an den technischen Innovationen [...] wird [...] zum Gradmesser für die soziale und ökonomische Kompetenz der Subjekte” (Kaschinski, 203). Those who are left out from technological innovation are effectively barred from participating in consumer society. Ingrid Lohmann remarks in this regard that “Technologie [...] 'so [zur] präzise zugespitzten' Kurzformel für Macht und Herrschaft des Kapitalismus [wird]” (Lohmann, 174). The new technological superpowers are the imperialist powers of old, while the periphery is severely discriminated against in terms of access to the new media and technologies. Istvan Csicsery-Ronay points out that “the global corporation's power [derives from] their technological manipulation of consciousness and physical identity” (Csicsery-Ronay, 226). If one is to participate in the new industrial revolution, one is largely dependent on the technology solely provided by global corporations. Thus, Vint remarks that “the fact remains that corporations do control everything” (Vint (2010a), 112). The multi- or transnational corporation has become the dominant institution of our times and transcends the nation state of old.

The immersion of everyday life in technology has a profound impact on the psychological constitution of the postmodern subject. Thus, SF “has come to function [...] increasingly, as literal description” of our present reality

(Gordon/Hollinger, 2). In “the twenty-first century [...] the experience of daily life is closer to [SF] than to the world of the historical account or realistic fiction” (Attebery, 91). Ours is “a throw-away society, which discards treasured possessions as quickly as it forgets histories and biographies” (Gross et. al., 21). Obsolescence, the artificially generated obsolescence of commodities through deliberately built in short life spans, is one of the pillars of late-capitalist production. According to Ray Anderson, late-capitalist production “is a waste-making system [because] for every truck-load of lasting value, 32 truck-loads of waste are produced”⁴⁰. Obsolescence renders suspect even this outrageous ratio of lasting value to waste. In addition to the waste-producing system of industry, each “of us now produce[s] more than 1,500 pounds of trash [each] year” by just living in Western civilization⁴¹.

The commodification of the human body emerged as a phenomenon at the height of the second industrial revolution at the beginning of the twentieth century. At that point in time the 'statistical person' emerged as made up by averages and means. We are now living in the time of a third industrial revolution. The market's reach has increased dramatically under the current economic order. It thus makes sense when Hollinger explains that “the fin-de-millennium simply turns the cultural volume [...] of the fin-de-siècle [...] tenfold” (Hollinger (2002), 160). The same is true with regard to the commodification of the human body which finds its expression in the booming organ trade. Nowadays, the commodification of the human body has reached unprecedented extremes, thanks to biotechnology. Our age is characterized by the “wissenschaftlich-ökonomische[n] Reduzierung des Menschen auf eine biologische Ware und Substanz” (Kaschinski, 204). Rothberg accordingly points out that “the regime of power [...] characteristic of late, globalized capitalism [is] biopower” (Rothberg, 135). The term 'biopower' was coined by Foucault. It refers to government practices which regulate the production of human beings. Under 'biocapitalism' human identity is increasingly cast as being defined by DNA. Accordingly, Kai Kaschinski adds that “Biotechnik die Leittechnologie des 21. Jahrhunderts [ist]” (Kaschinski, 205).

Joseph Nazare identifies “a late-capitalist caste system” in our Western societies (Nazare, 286). This statement is corroborated by the fact that social upward mobility at present is in fact declining all over the world, especially in the US (Hacker/Pierson, 28). According to Žižek, “our predicament today [is] the free circulation of commodities across the globe, accompanied by

⁴⁰(Nadia Conners, *The 11th Hour* (2007))

⁴¹(*Strange Days on Planet Earth*, Episode 1 (2010))

growing divisions in the social sphere proper” (Žižek (2011), 169). Žižek calls the postmodern social order “cultural apartheid” (Ibid., 46). Dalby, accordingly, suggests that “apartheid [...] offers a microcosmic model of the current global polity” (Dalby, 137). Dalby elaborates that “the term 'global apartheid' implies a radical unfairness in the world, and one supported by the dominant political and legal structures of the present global order” (Ibid., 139). The term 'global apartheid' attests to the continuing reality of the term of 'class' and the class divisions it describes. 'Classism,' or class discrimination, remains a vital aspect of the social order under which we live in the West and globally as well. The discrimination on account of class affiliation on the supranational level translates into the growing discrepancy between the wealthy North and the impoverished South. “Solange ein Viertel der Menschheit drei Viertel der verfügbaren Ressourcen verbraucht, zwingt dies den übrigen viereinhalb Milliarden Menschen eine Form von globaler Apartheid auf” (Grefe/Schumann, 167). Another frightening prognosis for the future is the fact that the earth's biosphere would not survive if India and China were to attain a living standard for (all) their citizens comparable to the one in the West. It is necessary to realize and address the “harsh realities of [our] times defined by the seemingly uncontested power of capital and the dramatic impoverishment of the vast majorities of the world's population” (Rothberg, 118). It is a simple fact that “global warming, climate change, and the horrors of an unrestrained corporate globalization endanger the earth” (Kellner (2010), 80). And so does the continuing condition of global and cultural apartheid, the exclusion of large swaths of the population both in the South and in the North from participation in the hedonist consumer culture emanating from the West. Art has to reflect this “class division” (Ibid., 89). Žižek points out that “materiality is now reasserting itself with a vengeance in all its aspects, from the forthcoming struggles over scarce resources (food, water, energy, minerals) to environmental pollution” (Žižek (2011), 330). The materiality of class division is exemplified by the notion of a 'distribution war' that is led by the transnational capitalist classes against the lower strata of their respective societies and the South in general. Žižek suggests the following as a motto for “the apocalyptic times in which we live” (Ibid., 327): “*fiat profitus pereat mundus*” (italics in original Ibid., 335).

Our contemporary society is constructed around the success criterion of capitalism. Success is measured in money. The exchange value is the only value that counts, but even this impoverished basis of evaluation has been undermined under the current market order by the abolition of the gold standard. “The success criterion [...] of corporate capital [...] asserts the

continuing validity of the present's unequal and impoverished social order into the future” (Latham (2002), 129). All innovation has to be profitable, wherefore research in non-profitable projects, and the soft sciences in general, is largely curbed.

4.7 THE EXTROPY MYTH AND THE POSTMODERN DENIAL OF TRAGEDY

Ours is “an economic system organized around perpetual expansion” (Paik, 133). However, infinite expansion obviously is impossible in a finite system such as our planet's ecosystem. Technology therefore has become the object of a quasi-religious salvation myth. As Žižek points out “not only is religious faith part of capitalism, capitalism is itself also a religion, and it too relies on faith (in the institution of money, amongst other things)” (Žižek (2011), 130). It also involves faith in the notion of perpetual progress. A belief in capitalism most of all not only requires faith in the possibility of limitless expansion, but takes it for granted. The fetishistic disavowal of reality and the belief in the religion of capitalism thus go hand in hand. Neo-liberalism dreams up a utopia that will be realized once the last obstacles to free trade have effectively been removed on a global scale. Once the market has been brought back to its 'natural' state of unforced equilibrium all other problems will dissolve by themselves. Of course, this is a ridiculous idea which, however, corresponds to the belief system of the Extropy Myth, which holds that advances in technology will allow capitalism to expand indefinitely, e.g., by colonizing other planets.

However, capitalism rapidly approaches obstacles it will not be able to overcome. As Paik remarks, thus “finding oneself trapped on a course to destruction [is] the basis of tragic narrative” (Paik, 136). Maintaining the illusion “of an infinitely expanding [economy, therefore, amounts to a] progressivist and technicist denial of tragedy” (Ibid., 18). It also denies the reality of the fact that technological progress goes hand-in-hand with massive disadvantages. The second industrial revolution, for instance, brought about a quantum leap in the alienation of the factory work process. The third industrial revolution has resulted in an absolute commodification of human existence as a whole. We as citizens of the capitalist West habitually ignore these facts. We thus “live in a state of collective fetishistic disavowal” of reality (Žižek (2011), x), “the 'spontaneous' state of our daily lives is that of a lived lie” (Ibid., xii). The lie is the notion that competition on the market is nonviolent, while the exact opposite is true. Western civilization continues to depend on an incredible amount of structural violence. The commodity fetish consists of the fact that the dark history of labor of each commodity is being

habitually ignored by the consumer. People suffer for dog food, for children's toys, and in the production of key chains. The whole production circuit is a system of exploitation and hyper-Taylorized inhumane factory work. Abstract labor^{xxxvii} as such is congruent with the fourfold alienation that Marx associated with the act of commodity production: the worker is alienated from the commodity s/he produces, s/he is alienated from the process of production, s/he is alienated from herself as his/her species-nature (*Gattungswesen*), and s/he is alienated from his/her fellow workers. This is one aspect of the concept of reification as postulated by Marx and this process has hugely intensified under late capitalism.

According to Žižek, “the fetish is a symbolic fiction that is knowingly assumed by the subject as real and binding for the sake of guaranteeing the symbolic efficiency and ideological coherence of a given social reality[. It] permits the wholly conscious disavowal of truth” (Paik, 64). Life in the West is governed by this direct will to ignorance. This translates into the direct approval to one's own mystification. Ignorance is awarded with a steady subject position in the hegemonic discourse. The upright consumer of the middle and upper classes displays his/her compliance with the status quo by displaying commodities as status symbols. S/he enacts the hegemonic ideology through the act of consumption. Commodity fetishism obscures the dark history of labor of each commodity and the fetishistic disavowal of reality carried out by the consumer glosses over any thought about the actual pedigree of the product that is being purchased. Another element of capitalist mythology lies, according to Marx, in the appropriation of the surplus value by capital which is denied by the fetishistic illusion that the wage paid the worker constitutes the price of the whole work that was performed, while it in fact only constitutes the monetary value of the necessary labor. The surplus value is acquired by capital for free and determines its rate of profit.

Not only is the obvious truth of the finite nature of the earth's resources actively denied in capitalist mythology, but also the dark side of commodification, lying in the labor which is necessary to produce any commodity. To maintain our willful delusion we deny the materiality of the world and the factuality of labor. We thus deny the apocalyptic tragedy of our postmodern condition: “The true utopia is the belief that the existing global system can reproduce itself indefinitely” (Žižek (2011), 363). 'Utopian' in the latter sentences can be translated as 'fictitious' or 'fantastic'. Our belief in the indefinite expansion of capitalism is utopian, while the reality of the world is dystopian. As Žižek elaborates, “in developed capitalism [...] today: 'Evil' is our daily practice” (Ibid., 424). Žižek is referring to “[h]umanity's ability to ignore

the suffering of fellow creatures” (Vint (2010a), 104). Not only are we actively ignoring the suffering of animals, we also ignore the suffering and dying of our fellow human beings outside the Western societies on a regular basis as well as the miserable condition to which the disenfranchised underclass is reduced in our own societies.

There will be a dramatic increase in geopolitical conflicts about resources in the imminent future. Already there are wars being fought over the access to clean drinking water. Furthermore, at the present moment in time, “[s]ix million children die of hunger every year—17,000 every day”^{xxxviii}. According to Ziegler, hunger comes into the world via the actions and policies of man and can therefore be conquered by the actions and policies of man: “Das Massaker ist kein Schicksal. Wir müssen seine Ursachen erkennen und bekämpfen” (Ziegler (2012), 106). “Hunger [...] schafft [...] einen dauerhaften, wenn auch maskierten Kriegszustand ” (Ibid., 110). Hunger breeds despair and despair breeds violence. This violence is easily ignored as long as it is directed by the poor against the poor, but there is a very real possibility that the structural violence of the market place to which the North submits the South will lead to a violent reaction against the North and its people. The “dangerous discontent of the underprivileged” (Jameson (2003b), 75) already erupts in the practice of terrorism on a regular basis. Not religious fanaticism alone, but the despair and destitution of extreme poverty is one of the main reasons for terrorism. The USA is the primary aim of terrorism not only for its military imperialism, but for its economic imperialism as well. It is no coincidence that Al Qaeda targeted the World Trade Center. World trade is the enemy of the poor the world over and many Muslims live in poverty. As Hobsbawm points out, the “dramatic increase in economic and social inequality within, as well as between, countries will reduce the chances of peace” (Hobsbawm (2008), 33). Hobsbawm identifies a positively causal connection between poverty and violence. Moreover, the poor are more susceptible to the easy solutions propagated by religious fundamentalists and political extremists.

According to Ziegler, the enemies of the right to food are the transnational corporations which, directly or indirectly, control the main part of the worldwide food production: “Ihre [CEOs] bestimmen jeden Tag, wer auf diesem Planeten stirbt und wer lebt” (Ibid., 139). “[D]er von jeder normativen Einschränkung, jeder sozialen Kontrolle befreite Markt, [...] tötet [ü]berall und immer[.] Durch Not und Hunger” (Ibid., 166). Ziegler's realistic statement is the antithesis of the neo-liberal utopian myth of the natural state of the market which would realize fantastic prosperity for all, while in reality

markets free of regulation kill 'everywhere and always'. "Gleichzeitig ist die Menschheit reich, so reich wie nie zuvor[, reich] genug, dass niemand mehr verhungern, verdursten oder mangels medizinischer Grundversorgung sterben müsste" (Greife/Schumann, 165). This fact makes this jarring injustice in the international distribution of wealth practically unbearable. The act of willingly ignoring this fact is what I call the postmodern denial of tragedy. There is no room for the "dark side of progress" in the dominant discourse (Vint (2010a), 105). Instead, we are bombarded daily by a cacophony of incessant information concerning all kinds of trifles, negligibilities, and non-issues in and by the mass media.

Furthermore, the dominant discourse fosters "the idea of limitless expansion through technology" (Dinello, 28). This discursive cluster will henceforth be referred to as the Extropy Myth. The Extropy Myth holds "that advances in science and technology will some day let people live indefinitely"^{xxxix}. According to Dinello, "the Extropian philosophy [put]s a postmodern, 'cyborgian spin' on Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch*" (italics in original; Dinello, 29). The chief way in which growth is to be perpetuated is via technology. Technology is supposed to allow the economy to grow indefinitely and the upper class to extend their life spans without limit. When there are no outer barriers left to overcome capitalism turns in on itself and colonizes all hitherto uncommodified aspects of human life. We therefore "are clearly entering a new phase of enhanced exploitation" (Žižek (2011), 473). However, capitalism will eventually hit a barrier it cannot surpass. The Extropy Myth denies this fact. Its believers live in a constant state of a fetishistic disavowal of reality and as long as those believers make up the majority of the population in the West our society remains trapped en route to its own extinction. What we need in order to escape the trappings of said 'post-ideological' ideology is a yard stick of values distinct from this goal-oriented capitalist mythology.

An argument can be made for SF in general being an extrapolation of the Extropy Myth, since it assumes the existence of a (more or less) far-off future as a given. John D. Schwetman remarks that "much science fiction just celebrates the advance of civilization and the march of technological progress across the universe" (Schwetman, 132). The notion of a possible colonization of other planets is part of the Extropy Myth, while we in fact are getting closer to a point where we will not even "be able to get a rocket off the planet earth. Because [of] all the space junk" that clutters earth's orbit already⁴². Not only is it implausible that humankind will ever be able to utilize

⁴²(Denis Delestrac, *Pax Americana and the Weaponization of Space* (2009))

the resources of other planets, but, conversely, it is also very plausible that “the conditions on Earth will render the survival of humanity impossible within a couple of centuries” (Žižek (2011), 351, n. 40), maybe even within a couple of decades. To be locked on a course to destruction is the essence of tragedy. The Extropy Myth denies the existence of this real-life tragedy. Paik therefore poses the following question: “Could it then be the case that the aptitudes and dispositions necessary for bringing about revolutionary change are somehow entwined with the capacity to think and feel tragically” (Paik, 137)? The answer to said question is affirmative. The fact that the future has become obsolete as an imaginary field for change only holds true for the envisioning of *positive* change or a non-apocalyptic end to capitalism. The abundance of dystopian futures produced in the last three decades all show a tendency towards depicting some wayward totalitarian version of capitalism which has very much in common with our present-day version of the same. The incapacity to envision revolutionary change is in itself a tragic trait. The postmodern mind-set is unable of tragic thought. The apparent “breakdown [...] of the genre [of tragedy] would correspond to the pervasive sense of political paralysis, social anxiety, and cultural ossification that afflicts the [...] postmodern order” (Ibid., 143). Postmodern ambiguity seems anathema to tragedy. A form of tragedy compatible with the postmodern condition thus has to evoke “what might happen [...] in a world wracked by the [...] worsening effects of climate change, intensified geopolitical competition for scarce resources, and an economic system organized around perpetual expansion” (Ibid., 133). In Paik's opinion contemporary dystopian SF can be, or should be, a form of postmodern tragedy. Paik identifies the erosion of traditional tragedy as a genre with a disavowal of reality that externalizes evil as what other people do and which chooses to ignore the moral implications of the postmodern subject's immersion in the status quo. As Paik puts it, “the largely unspoken religion of [post]modernity” is the progressivist and technicist denial of tragedy and reality (Ibid., 18). This statement dovetails with Žižek's pronouncement that capitalism itself is a religion quoted at the beginning of this chapter as well as with the Extropy Myth as described above.

4.8 THE BLOODY UNDERSIDE

Nowadays, more than ever, the underside of Western culture is blood, torture, death, and horror. One might add genocide to the list. A good case can be made for the opinion that good (subversive) art is involved in a process of “[p]oking at the ugly underside of human civilization and scaring

up its truths” (Mohr, 33). It has been modernist art's task to examine “the dark side of the [second] industrial revolution combined with the mechanized cataclysm of World War I” and II (Ibid., 10). It is postmodern art's task to illuminate the dark side of the third industrial revolution and the state of war to which the economy has submitted vast swaths of the world's population. Nowadays, our world is governed by the interchangeability of the exchange value which turns objects into units, into commodities whose dark history of labor is hidden from the consumer's view by the commodity fetish. It is postmodernist art's task, in turn, to make this unacknowledged history visible and to portray the structural violence inherent to the totalitarian order of the market place. According to Rob Latham, the “posthuman vision bears with it a pronounced dark side, an anxiety that the vast potential of high technology may actually prove to be predatory rather than empowering” (Latham (2002), 126). The Extropy Myth has a dark side as well. What if future advances in technology are not used to prolong human life but for other, malign purposes? Thus, technophobic SF is a tool of myth criticism, since it makes visible the dark side of the Extropy Myth. “Ziel und Wertmaßstab der Science Fiction [sind] die Kritik an politischen und sozialen Zuständen” (Gözen, 32). Subversiveness with regard to the hegemonic discourse thus is the proper evaluative category with which to classify a work of SF.

Western society has its dark sides as well. It is “the trap of the 'democratic fiction' [to] ignor[e] the fact that [...] domination and servitude are located in the 'apolitical' economic sphere of property and managerial power” (Žižek (2011), 444). The workplace is still organized in strictly hierarchical terms. Not only multinational corporations are unaccountable tyrannies, small enterprises are also structured hierarchically with a boss at the apex who exerts a more concrete cybernetic command control over his/her underlings on a daily basis. In the long run behavior guides and shapes one's ideas. A hyper-Taylorized working environment necessarily breeds spectatorial, passive consumers instead of active political citizens.

In “our contemporary post-political/bio-political society” (Žižek (2011), 418), the silent 'a-political' majority is governed by the direct will to ignorance. The undesirability of truth is a defining feature of Western culture and also a major tenet of the Extropy Myth. Furthermore, what is being actively ignored as well is the fact of the existing poverty within the West; “auch in den reichsten Gesellschaften der Welt [...] leben [...] zig Millionen Menschen in Armut [...]—und es werden immer mehr” (Reheis, 45). For instance, 15.5 percent of the German population live in poverty^{xi}. In the US the number is 15.1 and in the UK it is 14 percent^{xii}. The growing discrepancies in the distri-

bution of wealth within the West itself are also glossed over in the public arena as is the misery in the periphery. However, sometimes the real facts erupt into public awareness in a way that only by an active denial of reality, by the direct will to ignorance, can they be ignored. The direct will to ignorance clashes with postmodern reality as “the horrendous facts of postmodernity invade our lives continually: diasporas, migration, refugees, the killing fields” (Hassan, 203). However, migrants and refugees typically only enter media discourse with regard to the question if the government can afford to accommodate them and not with regard to the reason for the forced diasporas. Paik is speaking of the self-same phenomenon of the direct will to ignorance when he identifies the “[r]eadiness of the postmodern and posthistorical subject to turn its back to the brutal deeds of the past” (Paik, 43) and the present.

According to Janna Greve—who investigates the persistence of the phenomenon of slavery in the twenty-first century (currently, there are an estimated 27 million slaves world-wide (Greve, 117))—“werden [i]n Europa [...] Produkte, die in Zwangsarbeitsverhältnissen entstanden sind, als völlig alltäglich angesehen und bedenkenlos konsumiert” (Ibid., 120). The same, of course, goes for commodities produced by sweatshop and child labor. According to Greve, every year there are 1.2 million children being sold into slavery (ibid., 117). “In der Berichterstattung [d]er Medien allerdings spielen moderne Sklaverei und Menschenhandel [...] k[e]ine Rolle” (ibid.). The news value of such persistent highly negative facts is negligible. Žižek identifies a similar phenomenon in the contemporary practice of news coverage: “The death of a West Bank Palestinian child, not to mention an Israeli or an American, is mediatically worth thousands of times more than the death of a Congolese. But why this ignorance?” (Žižek (2011), 162), Žižek asks. The answer is: to gloss over Western capital's complicity (ibid., 163). African misery is not as mediatically interesting as Middle Eastern or Western misery. Africa serves as a foil for the 'civilized' West in media reports. Africa still takes up the place of the 'dark outside,' where the 'barbarous Other' reigns. Africa serves as a negative example by which the situation in the West is measured and always comes up 'better' in these measurements. It is the negative example with which capital daunts the Western working class. We do not want African conditions and since we do not have them (yet), we are supposed to be happy with what little we got. A hyper-alienating factory job is better than starving to death. And, of course, African misery is hermetically separated from the West. It remains an obvious but vastly ignored fact that ours is “a way of life that produces incredible misery and suffering for people

throughout the world” (Kellner (1995), 333). Our hegemonic discourse refuses to acknowledge this fact. The atrocious working conditions in the sweatshops of the South to which Western corporations have outsourced production are comparable to those described by Marx in his *Capital Volume I* (1867), or worse, and “cast a shadow over [...] everyday consumer culture [...] turning hidden conditions of production into an ethical and political issue” (Featherstone, xviii). Under postmodernism everything has become political, especially questions of consumption.

One essential thing that is actively ignored in our society on a daily basis is the fact that “the (relative) prosperity and peace of the 'civilized' West was bought by the export of ruthless violence and destruction into the 'barbarian' Outside” (Žižek (2003), 133). The world's biggest arms-exporting countries all belong to the 'civilized' West, while the customer states as a rule belong to the peripheral South. The FRG used to be the world's largest exporter of anti-personnel mines until they got internationally banned in 1997, although the US, for instance, did not cosign said treaty. The proxy wars of the Cold War have been substituted by the 'new wars' led on behest, among others, of global multinational corporations. Such facts are seldom reported in the Western media. Late-capitalist ideology “protect[s] its solid citizens from any reminder of its failure to provide social and economic equity for all” (Youngquist, 88ff). Under our current New World Order of global apartheid big business is always involved in the wars going on elsewhere. Its geopolitical interests are furthered by their support for one warring party or other. Žižek exemplifies that “America's peace was bought by the catastrophes going on elsewhere. Therein resides the true lesson of the [9/11] bombings” (Žižek (2003), 135). This lesson applies to the West as a whole. The New World Order translates into a tremendous increase of the structural violence aimed at the poorest countries in the world. Youngquist thus goes as far as saying that “Al Qaeda payed American imperialism back in kind” (Youngquist, 189). According to Youngquist, Al Qaeda “targeted the architecture of global Imperialism [by attacking] the World Trade Center's Twin Towers and the Pentagon” (Youngquist, 189f). Al Qaeda targeted the symbol of America's military might as well as the symbol of its economic imperialism and by extension the economic imperialism of the West as a whole. World trade is characterized by structural violence and has thus become a legitimate target for terrorists who want to hit the West. As Kellner remarks, “[t]he scandal [of the 9/11 bombings] thus served to mask the perception that the system itself is fundamentally a scandal: cruel, immoral and unscrupulous” (Kellner (1989), 82). The scandal is the on-going structural violence wielded by an all-powerful

market order which has become so dominant that its workings are considered as destiny. According to Baudrillard, “one could speak about a world war not the third, but the fourth and only, truly global one, since its stake is globalization” itself (Baudrillard (2003), 152). Baudrillard counts the Cold War as the Third World War in his argumentation. Hobsbawm also considers the Cold War as the Third World War (Hobsbawm (1994), 286). World trade is a world war waged by the transnational class factions, Poulantzas's inner bourgeoisie, against the poor. Globalization, thus, indeed, is world war made cost-effective. Ziegler in this regard speaks of a “Weltwirtschaftskrie[g]“ (Ziegler (2008), 16). According to Sarah Wagenknecht, this war “ist ein Krieg, der still zerstört und leise tötet, ein [...] Verteilungskrieg” (Wagenknecht (2012), 15). Its casualties are the millions of starving people who are not being fed, the ill who are not being treated and are denied medication for monetary reasons, the sweatshop workers of the South, and the growing number of people living in poverty within the confines of the West. Under such circumstances “war becomes [...] ubiquitous in a way that makes the Cold War look like street theater” (Youngquist, 208). It is the task of contemporary art to elucidate this war and its casualties on all fronts. Postmodernist art thus has to become war reporting of this current 'distribution war'.

The Extropy Myth involves the belief “[in] the progress of Good, its [slow] climb to power in all areas (science, techn[ology], democracy, rights of man) correspond[ing] to a defeat of Evil” (Baudrillard (2003), 153). This belief in perpetual progress holds that progress as such is an end in itself, that by furthering capitalism's grip on all aspects of human existence we automatically put forward a moral good and contribute to the defeat of an elusive undefinable Evil. By consuming and spectating, the two legitimate expressions of the postmodern citizen in consumer society, one thus already makes a contribution to the defeat of Evil. This is a trickle-down-ethics. The invisible hand of the market will see to it that everyone gets what s/he needs. By conspicuous consumption the Western consumer-citizen creates jobs and thus helps the poor. The Extropy Myth intersects with neo-liberalism here. The latter holds that one only harms the poor by helping them directly through welfare projects.

According to Nathan Gardles, “you have to change the idea behind limitless expansion, in a phrase, from well-having to well-being. It's a cultural transformation”⁴³. Under postmodernism everything has become cultural, and culture has become synonymous with the economy; therefore, the

⁴³(Nadia Connors, *The 11th Hour* (2007))

question of the survival of the human species has become a cultural one. We have to change our culture of consumption into something more sustainable, more just, if we want to survive as a species. The underside or the 'Real' of the myth of limitless expansion, of extropy, is traumatic violence. Žižek discerns three forms of violence: "First, there is external physical violence" (Žižek (2011), 292). Then there is "'abstract violence' at its purest: a pseudo-natural catastrophe [of a financial crisis] which hits thousands like a tsunami for no apparent reason" (Ibid., 291). The third form of violence Žižek discerns takes the form of physical illness, e.g., cancer, or neurological diseases like Alzheimer's, which constitutes a meaningless physical intrusion from within one's own body. Samuel Epstein suggests that even this third form of meaningless violence is caused by big business⁴⁴; i.e., Epstein argues that all the new artificial substances introduced into the world since the end of WW II by the petro-chemical industry, which have by now completely permeated human society as a whole, are the main cause of the current mushrooming cancer epidemic.

4.9 THE POSTMODERN METANARRATIVE

Suleiman points out that most (postmodern) theorists are "middle-class white Americans, occupying good jobs with lifetime security [and thus tend to] lack a real sense of tragedy" (Suleiman (1997), 56). The same can be said about any number of European theorists. However, just as Marx succeeded in describing the atrocious living conditions of the proletariat of his time without ever having worked in a factory himself, it seems generally possible that such theorists transcend the limitations cast upon them by their privileged class status. However, Gregson argues that the postmodernism of some critics "applies only to a particular white and affluent section of the Western population" (Gregson, 89). This may be the case for the great poststructuralists and linguistic idealists, e.g., Lyotard and Baudrillard. However, theorists like Jameson or Eagleton potentially transcend these limitations of their theoretical scope. Suleiman attests said group the lack of a sense of tragedy. The same disavowal of tragedy Paik deems characteristic of the whole of Western society, according to Suleiman, also afflicts the theorists of the postmodern. The ivory tower of academia can serve to separate one from the trials and tribulations of real life, or so it seems. "An insufficient sense of tragedy and irony dulls one's awareness of the intractability of things" (Suleiman (1997), 60). This is another facet of the post-modern denial of tragedy. A sufficient sense of tragedy, in the sense of an

⁴⁴(Jennifer Abbott, *The Corporation* (2003))

adequate acknowledgment of reality, seems to be a sine qua non of engaging in (postmodern) theory in a way congruent to postmodern reality.

The poststructuralist fallacy contributes to a climate in which fundamentalism can prosper. A pragmatic correspondence theory of truth is therefore especially important in this regard. It also is important to realize “that some of the butchers [...] are themselves intellectuals” and that the whole micronarrative justifying genocide “is the work of intellectuals” (Suleiman (1997), 63, n. 15). Fundamentalists, fascists, Holocaust deniers, and ethnical extremists all prosper in a climate of ethical ambiguity and ontological skepticism. It is thus the theorist's task to uphold the universal applicability of human rights, the notion of truth as correspondence, and the factuality of history. However, it is important to realize in this context that “the postmodern denial of shared understanding” (Toth, 134) is not a universal claim, i.e., that “incommensurability is valid only from case to case, not universally” (Sanbothe/Welsch, 85). This can be demonstrated with a simple example: To truly understand that two languages are incommensurable, one has to be able to understand them both. Only then can one recognize the inherent differences in meaning and connotation which make a number of phrases hard to translate from one language into the other. The incommensurable languages of postmodern micropolitics necessitate a *tertium comparationis* for successful translation and peaceful coexistence.

The “claim that postmodernism can evade assuming the status of a master narrative—that is, as a form of narrative that can finally evade becoming a metanarrative” (Toth, 180f, n. 49) is indeed “self-refuting, since [t]he argument for postmodern knowledge [...] is basically a metanarrative about the failure of all metanarratives” (Carroll, 94). Thus, a truly postmodern stance is to refute the metanarratives of modernity as the ideological fiction that they are without fashioning a new grand narrative out of this refutation. This necessitates a practice of science which always questions its own assumptions and axioms as well.

With regard to the dominance of white-male, middle-class intellectuals in postmodern theory (a description which encapsulates the point of view of someone like Richard Rorty to a t), Bertens remarks that postmodernism has “broken with a modernity that was the exclusive prerogative of the male white North Atlantic bourgeoisie” (Bertens (1997a), 7). What we have in modernity is a contradiction of its universal ideals and its “*assumptions* [...] which firmly place the male white bourgeois at the center of the universe” (italics in original; Ibid., 13). And the white male bourgeois remained there until very recently while the neo-liberal mind-set wants to return to this state

of affairs. Postmodernist theory can therefore make a great contribution to the realm of science by dethroning the white male heterosexual bourgeois. Postmodernism's task is to deconstruct the modernist grand narratives. Postmodernism, at least potentially, frees the field of theory from the dominance of the heterosexual, white-male bourgeois. Thus, "postmodernity develops and radicalizes many [...] modernist (late modern) arguments directed against modern ideologies and philosophies" (Zima (2003), 14). There is no central group in postmodernism, just discursive interventions by individual theorists. Therefore, no single group or tenet can be said to have usurped postmodern theory as a whole, which thus stays neutral with regard to the modernist tendentiousness towards the white male, European bourgeois. Furthermore, "modernity as an historical period begins with the Enlightenment [...] in the 17th century, and lasts for about three centuries until the Second World War" (Zima (2003),13). If one accepts postmodernity as a period marker for our current phase of cultural development, one is tempted to assume, in the light of a 300-year-long modernity, that the postmodern age is going to last for quite some time to come.

5. POSTMODERN FICTION

5.1 POSTMODERNIST LITERATURE

High postmodernist metafiction is dead. This much is true. The death of the author and the novel, however, have been canceled. In 2005, Green concedes that "the novel is not exhausted or doomed, but continues to transform itself in unexpected and compelling ways" (Green, 13). He contends that "the novel is in fact thriving" (Ibid., vii). The novel is not dead and neither is postmodernism. Accordingly, Stiersdorfer points out in 2003 that "[n]o novel approaches to literature were identified, which could clearly be shown as transcending the vast and diffusive area of postmodernist practices" (Stiersdorfer (2003b), 233). There is no substitute for postmodernism in sight and contemporary literature continues to employ the conventions of postmodern fiction. It thus remains wholly unclear in this respect "whether we have arrived at a new phase of or beyond postmodernism" (Teske, 109). As long as the nomenclature of postmodernism continues to yield adequate results, it does not seem sensible to jettison the concept and the adherent corpus of theory.

It again seems necessary, at this point, to remind the reader of another obvious fact, namely that art "is an industry [...] operating according to the law of profit" (Barker, 47) and that its recipients, therefore, are consumers of commodities, only that the commodities in question here are works of

fiction, as opposed to car stereos, soap, or kitchen utensils. Art has not been exempt of postmodernity's hyper-commodification: "Just as workers have no value beyond their service to capital, so too art has no value beyond its status as a commodity" (Vint (2010a), 96). This study, however, holds that, at the very least in particular cases, art still has the capacity of transcending the commodity form, i.e., to be subversive. This study insists on art's critical significance. This notwithstanding in general, with regard to exchange-value versus use-value, literature is not "radically [different] from commodity culture [or] popular commercial television" (Kellner (1989), 111). One important effect of the postmodern commodification of art is a certain internationalization of culture: "[d]ie angestrebte internationale Vermarktung im globalen Maßstab [...] sorgt [...] für die Überwindung von Alters-, Sprach-, Rassen-, und Kulturbarrieren" (Bühler, 260). Naturally, nations still exist and to a considerable degree remain "fortresses of [...] xenophobia" (Rousseau, 8), but even this phenomenon has transformed on a global scale. "Diasporas [...] have irreversibly weakened the conception of a nation as homogenous population residing in a defined territory administered by the national state" (Csicsery-Ronay, 220). Globalization, the prevalence of American-style consumer capitalism, the erosion of the traditional nation state of modernity through immigration, and the international interconnectedness of almost all aspects of human life culminate in a certain homogenization of Western societies. Patricia Kerslake thus argues that "the nationality of empire [has] become an irrelevancy" (Kerslake, 187). The inner bourgeoisie as the ruling class faction does no longer differentiate so much for reasons of nationality, but treats the lower classes of both the North and the South equally dismissively. However, in postmodern politics nationalism, racism, homophobia, and xenophobia continue to be employed in a populist fashion. In "the United States and other industrialized nations [reigns] a pervasive homogeneity, an overwhelming unanimity of ambitions" (Paik, 147). In fact, "with the exception of a small minority of leftist dissenters" we in the Western industrialized nations all are firm believers in neo-liberal capitalism now (Ibid.). This makes it sensible to speak of Western culture as a whole, not in the sense of a 'common culture,' but in recognition of the profound similarities between them. Contemporary American literature's "portrait[s] of contemporary American culture" (Annesley, 1), by extension, thus engage Western culture as a whole as do works from other national cultures of the West.

This study seeks to "avoid a reductionist approach which [...] disregards literature's link with society, sociology, philosophy [and] psychology" (Zima

(2003), 21). Not only is it “unhelpful to isolate the literary world from the rest of culture” (Ibid., 22), but taking up such a reductionist perspective is tantamount to succumbing to idealism. As Ableitinger remarks, “[a]lle kulturellen Formationen muss[e]n unbedingt in ihrem sozialen, politischen, wirtschaftlichen und historischen Kontext betrachtet werden, da sich Kultur unter Ausblendung des Einflusses der genannten Kategorien unmöglich beschreiben l[ässt]” (Ableitinger, 108). “Die literarische Postmoderne lässt sich nur schwer definieren[;] dieses schillernde Phänomen [...] erlaubt [...] keine vereinheitlichende Eingrenzung” (Zeißler, 59). Conversely, Featherstone gives the following concise list of the constitutive features of postmodernist art:

the effacement of the boundary between art and everyday life; the collapse of the hierarchical distinction between high and mass/popular culture; a stylistic promiscuity favouring eclecticism and the mixing of codes; parody, pastiche, irony, playfulness and the celebration of the surface, 'depthlessness' of culture; the decline of originality/genius of the artistic producer; and the assumption that art can only be repetition (Featherstone, 7).

The following are characteristic features of postmodernism in literature: “the ubiquitous representation of bodies[,] images of dissolution, incompleteness and fragmentation” (Volkmann, 304); “verstärkte Selbstreflexivität, Genremischung und Markierung von Kontingenz” (Grabes, 126); “metafictional techniques, use of collage or pastiche, disruptions in the narrative timeline” (Tally, 3); “indeterminacy, [...] unstable identity, [...] pluralism and multiplicity, skepticism of authority, and skepticism about grand narratives” (Rosen, xxvi); “glitzy, high-tech produced intensities; [...] implosion of forms; and quotation and repetition of past images and forms” (Kellner (1995), 234); “[the] reject[ion of] simplifying [...] binaries[,] indifference and equivalency of various contradicting positions[,] a focus on artistry in production and on fun and desire as the main attitudes of reader and writer towards literature” (Teske, 108f).

Postmodernism is subjective, theoretical, self-absorbed, and skeptical of established ideas, of value judgments and norms, of traditional aesthetic models in general and grand narratives in particular. It is “essentially urban” (Bertens (1997b), 109); “multi-faceted and plurivocal” (Teske, 108); and “dedicated to excess, anxiety, fear and death” (Beville, 11). Postmodernist fiction is “preoccupied with death” (McHale (2010), 20) and constitutes “the latest, renewed [attempt] of our cultur[e] to represent and thus symbolically to master death” (Ibid.). Beville accordingly points out that “[o]ur contemporary age of terror requires a contemporary terror literature” (Beville, 202). Postmodern art that faces the challenge of representing 'our contemporary

age of terror' must tackle the two problematics of the postmodern. It has to do so by employing transgressive content which articulates what our hegemonic discourse wants to silence.

A typical feature of postmodernist art is its invasion of the high by the low and a propensity towards grotesque hybridity. In the realm of written fiction, this means that 'high' literature incorporates elements from so-called "sub-literary genres[, such as] thrillers, [...] horror, pornography[,] cinematic or televised melodrama and farce," and SF (McHale (1987), 102). The grotesque nature of such a work of fiction is the effect of an eclectic blending of styles, genres, and media, which results in a "Mehrfachkodierung" (Welsch, 324) of meaning, i.e., a plurality of possible interpretations. Readers tend towards interpreting literature in accordance with their own value systems, without conscious thought. They consider their value judgments as independent of any discursive or cultural regulation as simply self-evident (Zerweck, 236). *Mehrfachkodierung* foregrounds this unconscious process and causes 'irritation' on the part of the recipient (Welsch, 324).

Welsch claims that postmodernist pastiche is not necessarily arbitrary and does not necessarily result in an indifference of meaning, or rob such an artifact of sense, or depth, but instead creates a new and original brand of pluralist, not synoptic, 'truth' (Ibid.). Hybridity corresponds to intertextuality and pastiche is a form of intertextuality. One typically postmodernist hybrid form of literature is the mixture of fact and fiction in narratives, which creates a strong referential illusion, i.e., what Werner Wolf calls the "Illusion der Beziehbarkeit der fiktiven Welt auf die reale" (Wolf, 57). "Postmodern novels [...] mix discourses, fact and fiction" (Mohr, 67). Ulrich Broich contends that postmodernist "intertextuality [...] generally has a deconstructive function" because it foregrounds representation (Broich, 253). According to Karl Kroeber, the usage of said strategies can "intensify the recursive potency of [a] narrative" (Kroeber, 7). Kroeber argues that postmodernist skepticism does not negate fantasy, but brings about "organized self-skepticism" on the part of the reader, which results in irony towards one's own fantasy, since a story of written fiction takes its form only in the individual mind (Ibid., 48). Irony, in the sense of a self-reflexive "understanding of the contingency of one's own values and culture, is a key sensibility of postmodernism" (Barker, 201) and, in postmodern art, is mainly directed at the possibility of 'truthful' representation. Nevertheless, no matter how nihilist a postmodern work of art may be, its interpretation needs to transcend the apparent amorality of the artifact. The postmodern work of art thus must contain a nascent connection to extra-textual reality.

Self-reflexivity is another feature of postmodernist literature, which is realized via metafiction and the deconstruction of representation, or the aesthetic illusion. Paradoxically, postmodern fiction “both confirms and subverts representation, the subject, liberal humanism, and even capitalism itself” (Bertens (1995), 104). The denial of teleology, e.g., by refusing to structure a story according to a moral principle, is another important feature of postmodernist fiction. Accordingly, the “fragmenting and disconnecting [of] narrative unity” is a distinctly postmodern literary strategy (Kellner (1995), 141). The events within such a story are of a contingent nature and do not allow to infer a higher, metaphysical organizing principle that governs life. Prominent postmodernist features, such as structural discontinuity, or fragmentation of the plot, a plurality of (sometimes exclusive) plot lines, “the almost obsessive repetition of a relatively restricted inventory of scenes” (Heise, 65), and the denial of “formal [and] thematic closure” (Szegey-Maszák, 277), all aim at rendering representation problematic and at negating teleology. So do open endings, which give a story a certain polysemy, or polyvalence.

Aleid Fokkema devised a set of connotative codes of conventional, i.e., realist, character representation (Ibid.). Connotative representation gives a character content by molding it after real-world parameters; i.e., it follows codes that ensure a “general mimetic effect” (Aleid Fokkema, 75), such as biological, psychological, and social verisimilitude of character configuration; this corresponds to Wolf's “Figureillusion” (Wolf, 101). Conversely, postmodernist characters appear only as partly human; their linguistic constructedness is foregrounded via breaches of said conventions on the *récit* level and via breaches of the conventions of storytelling on the discourse level. Thus, “literary postmodernism [...] examine[s] the self as alienated from the community and also from itself” (Beville, 46). Postmodernist fiction thus mirrors the totalized alienation of postmodern capitalism. In this way it engages “the terrors of the dissolution of reality and subjectivity that lie at the heart of the postmodern condition” (Ibid., 200). There are no 'postmodern subjects' in reality like those Jameson, for example, describes. They only exist on paper, in theory, and in fiction writing. Postmodern ontological and epistemological skepticism has found its way into many works of postmodern art.

Currie categorizes postmodern fiction into three types: First, the “postmodern novel [that] takes the issue of the relationship of fiction and reality as a central concern” which will henceforth be referred as (postmodern) metafiction (Currie, 2). Under this heading fall novels like

Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972). The second type of postmodern novels is the intertextual novel. Intertextual novels "are citational, in the sense that they cite, allude to, refer to, borrow from or internalise other texts and representations, both real and fictional. They [...] recycle, repeat, reshape and rewrite past forms" (Ibid., 3). Thomas Pynchon's novella *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) is an example of such an intertextual novel as is Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). The third type will henceforth be called postmodern realism. The novels of the third type "represent a contemporary state of global culture dominated by new technologies" (Ibid.). They "reflect aspects of globalisation" (Ibid.). The postmodern realist novel "represents a world of simulation, [...] archiving [...] the contemporary phase of capitalism" (Ibid.). Contemporary SF paradoxically seems the best example of such literature of Currie's third type. Gibson's corpus of works can be considered as representative in this regard, especially his last three novels, which take place in the present and deal with postmodern culture and the contemporary phase of capitalism. Furthermore, Bret Easton Ellis is a transgressive author whose oeuvre is prototypical of contemporary postmodern writing whose work would fall under the heading of Currie's third type of postmodern novels. This study will employ Currie's categorization because it has the advantage of heeding both the formal as well as the content level of fiction.

Moylan identifies the emergence of a new form of dystopian literature in the late 1980s and early 1990s which can be deemed a postmodern variety of the former. He distinguishes this novel type of dystopia from the classical dystopia of before. According to him, at the latter point in time a second dystopian turn in literature as well as the real world took place which annihilated the genre of utopian fiction. While the 1970s saw the emergence of the critical utopia in works such as Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia* (1974) and Samuel R. Delany's *Trouble on Triton: An Ambiguous Heterotopia* (1976), the 1980s and 1990s saw a dystopian backlash of anti-utopian literature which culminated in an uncontested dominance of the dystopian genre and a dwindling from sight of its antonymic twin. Moylan speaks of a critical utopia when the work in question incorporates a dystopian impetus which expresses itself in specific flaws of the depicted utopian society. Conversely, he speaks of critical dystopia when the work in question is imbued with the utopian impulse of hope for a better society. Moylan gives a comprehensive list of features that differentiate the new postmodern dystopia from its older, classical variety. The protagonist of the classical dystopia is an average (male) member of the faceless mass of featureless apathetic citizens and initially subscribes to the oppression by the

totalitarian regime. The critical dystopia broke with this tradition as well since Margaret Atwood for instance wrote a dystopia taking up a female perspective in 1985 with her novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, a work of fiction which belongs to Moylan's realm of critical, postmodern dystopias. The postmodern dystopian vision of the future depends on the imagination of the future as a space of possibility which is open to various developments. The classical dystopia rejects the future as a space of possibility. Zamyatin's, Orwell's, and Huxley's totalitarian orders are there to stay. In these novels resistance is indeed futile. The thus depicted societies are conceived as social machines which are impervious to change and thus to history. The horror of the imagination of a totalitarian order extrapolated from tendencies in the current status quo is increased by its inevitability and unchangeability. The postmodern dystopia breaks with the implied stability of the totalitarian order and introduces ambiguity and difference into the classical dystopian narrative. The tripartite plot structure of the classical dystopia is abandoned. The narrative of the postmodern dystopia does not necessarily culminate in the eventual assimilation and/or destruction of the rebel. The postmodern dystopia thus denies the teleological structuring of the classical dystopia. The classical dystopian dramatic conflict revolves around the protagonist's awakening and ensuing rebellion and the state's subsequent hunt for the rebel which culminates in the rebel's destruction or assimilation. This constitutes the tripartite plot structure to which virtually all dystopias of the classical variety orthodoxically adhere, while the postmodern dystopia breaks with this practice and introduces contingency, ambiguity and polyvalence to the dystopian mode of literature.

The postmodern has been witness to a literal implosion of the literary demarcations of old. Dystopia has developed into a subgenre of science fiction. Both share the setting of their stories in the future, a discontent with the social realities of the status quo, a suspicious attitude towards technological progress, and joint narrative strategies, such as defamiliarization, extrapolation, and unreliable narrators. After 'the end of history' and the fall of the iron curtain one could have expected a drop in the production of dystopian fiction. However, the last two and half decades actually show that the genre prospers in the new geopolitical situation. In 1992, Francis Fukuyama proclaimed that "we can [no longer] picture to ourselves a world that is *essentially* different from the present one, and at the same time better" (italics in original; Fukuyama,46). Fukuyama here attests to the supposedly utopian character of our present. According to Fukuyama, who, not unlike Marx, is assuming a Hegelian perspective on history, i.e., he

subscribes to a teleological metanarrative of historical development, the apex of history had been reached with the French Revolution of 1789, whereas the time afterward has been a period of the rise to hegemony of the tenets of liberal democracy. According to him, history has fulfilled its telos with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the global triumph of neo-liberal capitalism which in his line of argument equals the realization of utopia per se. Conversely, and somewhat more convincingly, Darko Suvin, among many other, characterizes the present as a realized dystopia. In fact, some of the near-future inventions of classic dystopia have indeed been turned into reality. Therefore the dystopian gaze of formerly fantastic fiction has turned into a means of literal description and the critical dystopia can be considered as a form of postmodern realism. The classical dystopia anticipated many phenomena which are nowadays commonplace in Western society. Anticipating the postmodern media society, in the classical dystopia media technology is employed for brainwashing the willing populace of a leisure-oriented consumerist society into passive submission, which seems to pretty aptly describe the current status quo.

The point where the dystopia genre and postmodern fiction overlap is in their basic subversiveness with regard to the current status quo. Both dystopian and postmodern fiction deconstruct the current cultural existence and its categories. Both appeal to the reader to regard the world of thought fostered by the status quo skeptically and with vigilance. The postmodern dystopian texts of the last decades forego the totalizing tendencies of classic dystopia and are characterized by openness, pluralism, ambiguity and contingency. The relationship between postmodern and dystopian fiction is complicated by the latter's pronounced teleology. However, the generic hybridity displayed by postmodern dystopian fiction lets the two merge rather aptly. The didactic intention of the classic dystopian text has been passed on, although in a less prominent variety, to the postmodern dystopia genre. Parody, pastiche, marked imitation, and intertextual allusion belong to the literary arsenal of the postmodern literature and the postmodern dystopia genre makes use of them as well. Postmodern dystopian fiction is characterized by a pronounced intertextuality and generic hybridity. As opposed to the classical dystopia, postmodern dystopian fiction is more obscure and ambivalent, and less teleological. The task of coming up with a valid value judgment is left for the reader to conduct. The topos of alienation permeates postmodern dystopian fiction as much as it modern forbear. Another topos which has been passed on to postmodern dystopia is the use of language as an instrument of oppression by the totalitarian state. The influence of poststructuralism and

the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has made the control of language via the state a resurgent feature of postmodern dystopia. Despite the poststructuralist influence on the conception of language in the fictitious worlds of the texts and the employment of postmodern narrative devices, the authors of contemporary dystopias defend the identity of the subject against the postmodern proclamation of the death of the subject and insist on the applicability of such paramount universals as human rights and the rights of the individual. The central conflict of classical dystopia, the rebellion of the human individual against a totalitarian regime, has been passed on as well. The dystopia genre continues to point out the self-destructive potentialities of the present society and castigates the complacency of the West, the solipsism of the postmodern consumer, the self-inflicted ignorance of the masses, political apathy, passivity, and the hyper-consumerism of postmodern capitalism.

The postmodern dystopian text employs narrative strategies of postmodern literature like unreliable narrators, fragmentation of the plot, embedded narratives, and metafictional commentary to undermine the reader's trust in the narrative process. These texts refuse to deliver a coherent, stable fictional world. They refuse to yield a comprehensive truth or a decisive resolution of the plot. Postmodern dystopian texts employ contradicting story lines which leave the text completely open to interpretation. Such texts refuse to favor any one possible interpretation over the other, which willingly puts into question the stability of the world projected by the text. These texts also predominantly have open endings which adds to their ambiguity. Furthermore, postmodern dystopias foreground the contingency of the events in the story. Recently, after an interlude of utopian writing in the 1960s and 1970s, SF writers again develop a dystopian textual strategy that speaks to the attenuated and terrible reality brought about by the neo-liberal restructuring of the economy, the conservative restoration in politics, and the cultural shift to the right that dominated the last three decades. Jameson questions the commonly assumed status of the literary dystopia as a direct opposite of Utopia. According to Jameson, as a literary form that works with the quotidian fears and apprehensions of imminent disaster, the dystopian gaze appears to be too close to the current situation to partake effectively in the powerful estranging mechanisms of Utopia. He argues that the dystopian imagination is too close to reality to be an inversion of the fantasy that is utopia. Jameson declares that utopian literature negates the unfreedom of the present and thus is of a negative nature. Accordingly, in this line of argument, dystopian fiction only serves to mirror the unfreedom of the

present historical moment and thus is neither a prognostic nor a retrospective but a descriptive form of fiction. He thus argues that dystopia is necessarily conservative. However, dystopian fiction can be as much an expression of a radical dissatisfaction with the current status quo as its utopian counterpart. Furthermore, much dystopian fiction expresses a utopian impulse which affirms the possibility of change for the better as nascently incorporated in the present moment in history. Moylan accordingly points out that dystopian stories of violent and unjust societies can provide a creative take on the problems of the current social order as well as on possibilities for political moves against and beyond it. According to Moylan, a dystopian text that precludes the possibility of historical change based on active intervention of the individual, i.e., a text which has a closed structure that aims at denying the utopian impulse at the base of true dystopian fiction, isn't a dystopia but a 'pseudo-dystopia' or 'anti-utopia'. A dystopian text can be seen as utopian in tendency if in its portrayal of the 'bad place' it suggests (even if indirectly) or at least stimulates the potential for an effective challenge and possibly change by virtue of human efforts. In this line of argument, a text can be deemed anti-utopian if it fails (or chooses not) to challenge the ideological and epistemological limits of the actually-existing society. The dystopian rebel's resistance, even if crushed, and his/her change of consciousness, even if defeated, stand as evidence that radical transformations can actually happen. Moylan discerns a dystopian turn which took place in the 1980s and 1990s in the world of geopolitics as well. Both Presidents Reagan and Bush promised the realization of a neo-liberal and neo-conservative utopia, the former regarding the US, the latter regarding the whole world. In hindsight, it is obvious that neither of these two utopian promises has been kept. Conversely, these two American Presidents ushered in a whole new era of real-world dystopia.

Since the early 1980s, several science fiction writers turned to dystopian strategies as a way to come to terms with the changing, and enclosing, social reality. The critical dystopias of the last three decades reject the conservative dystopian tendency to settle for the anti-utopian closure invited by the historical situation setting up open endings that resist closure and maintain the utopian impulse *within* the work. What further distinguish these open, critical texts from their classical forbears is an intensification of the practice of genre blurring. By self-reflexively borrowing specific conventions from other genres, critical dystopias more often transcend or transgress the received boundaries of the dystopian form and thereby expand rather than diminish its creative potential for critical expression. These new postmodern dystopias

with their permeable borders, their questioning of generic conventions, and their resistance to closure, represent one of the most prominent sites of social critique in the present age. The writing practice of the postmodern, critical dystopia is alive and well in the second decade of the new millennium which bears witness to yet another round of real-world dystopian change.

Over the course of several decades the canon of fiction which is considered postmodernist has changed. In the 1970s Robert Coover and Thomas Pynchon were considered the principal proponents of a postmodern literature. Furthermore, through to the 1970s Kurt Vonnegut and Ishmael Reed were considered as prototypically postmodern as well. “More recent critics draw up a slightly different list: Thomas Pynchon, once again, but also Don DeLillo, Kathy Acker, Paul Auster, [and] a few of the writers associated with cyberpunk, particularly William Gibson” (Green, 32). I would add Ellis to this list. Note that cyberpunk SF is part of the postmodern canon. According to Dietmar Böhnke, “the use of [SF] elements or conventions” has become a characteristic of postmodernist fiction (Böhnke, 260). Bernd Klähn gives “some kind of 'science-fictionalized' way of sensemaking” as characteristic of postmodernist fiction (Klähn, 82). Harvey accordingly attests “a collapse of cultural distinctions between [...] 'science' and 'regular' fiction” in postmodern literature (Harvey (2000), 291). McHale identifies cyberpunk SF as “the postmodernist wave of” SF (ibid., 182). He also speaks of a science fictionalization of postmodern literature. Postmodernist fiction can thus be said to have “close affinities with the genre of the fantastic” and with SF in particular (McHale (1987), 74). The lines demarcating SF from postmodernist fiction can be said to have grown increasingly fuzzy, especially since the advent of cyberpunk SF in the 1980s. There exists a close interconnection between postmodern fiction and SF. McHale for instance draws attention to “the 'cross-over' of thriller motifs from entertainment literature to 'advanced' postmodernist fiction and the more or less self-conscious use of such motifs as tools of cognitive mapping” (McHale (1992), 178). Accordingly, cyberpunk SF is considered a hybrid of hard-boiled detective fiction, SF, and the thriller genre. The interconnectedness of SF, cyberpunk, neo-realism, and postmodernist fiction will be addressed in subchapter 6.1.

5.2 POSTMODERN REALISM VS. NEO-REALISM

Poststructuralism has famously problematized the connection between language and reality. The postmodern return to realist storytelling can thus be seen as a rejection of the poststructuralist tenets of postmodernism. This move does not transcend the realm of postmodernist theory but helps to

avoid one of its biggest fallacies. Already in 1991 Jameson identified “a certain 'return to storytelling' in the postmodern period” (Jameson (1991), 367). Four years later, Bertens contends that “[p]ostmodernism [...] has given up experimentation and returned to narrative and figuration” (Bertens (1995), 216). High postmodernist metafiction is dead. Contemporary postmodern fiction is distinguished by a return to the conventions of realist storytelling, however, without abandoning (all) postmodern narrative devices. Schwerdtfeger concedes that since the 1980s a “revival of realistic elements in writing” has taken place and that at the same time there emerged literature which combined referentiality with postmodernist stylistic features (Schwerdtfeger, 1). McHale accordingly contends that “narrative persists as the mode of intelligibility” (McHale (1992), 269, n. 5). Gregson suggests that the rise in literary publications of realist novels is the expression of the 'nostalgia for authenticity' symptomatic for the postmodern era. He identifies a “hunger for the referent” here and suggests that this phenomenon might have its origins in the cultural dominance of Baudrillardian simulacra (Gregson, 15). Herbert Grabes likewise identifies “eine deutliche Wiederkehr realistischer Konventionen” in the literature of the last decades (Grabes, 129). However, this postmodernist revival of realism does not constitute a simple naïve return to the conventions of classical realism. Grabes relativizes his last statement with his notion of the postmodern 'aesthetics of variation'. Postmodern literary conventions thus continue to play a considerable role in contemporary literature. Grabes identifies a versatile variation of the writing style of realism in postmodern fiction which draws upon the already existing conventions of popular fiction and the mass media of the cinema and television (Grabes, 112), a postmodern aesthetic “der abgemilderten Alterität, der subtilen Differenz” (Ibid., 115). This 'aesthetic of variation' adds a new dimension of intertextuality to the postmodern literary arsenal. TV being the postmodern medium *par excellence*, recourse to its conventions constitutes a new approach to literature. The act of interpretation becomes crucial to this approach. The reader's cultural *Erfahrungshorizont* is a necessary prerequisite for making sense of such new postmodern texts. The task of interpretation is wholly passed on to the reader and the reader's cultural knowledge.

Postmodern “neo-realism seems willing to do what postmodernism was not (yet) willing, or able, to do: embrace both realism and metafiction as equally contingent 'language games'” (Toth, 119). There are two significantly different approaches discernible in contemporary realist fiction, a postmodernist and an anti-postmodernist one. In the following, these two varieties will be dealt

with respectively. Firstly, the postmodernist variety: Elizabeth Young calls this phenomenon postrealism, while Günter Leypoldt and Gregson speak of minimal realism and postmodern realism respectively. Toth applies the terms neo-realism and renewalism with a congruent meaning to Leypoldt's and Gregson's, while Robert Rebein speaks of minimal realism, which he equates with 'dirty realism'.

Leypoldt's and Gregson's concepts correspond to one another to such a degree that they can be used analogously. Leypoldt focuses on the minimalist tradition, while Gregson is concerned with the new genre's relation to postmodernist literature. The hybrid variety of postmodern/ist realism is described by Gregson as "self-consciously fragmentary," while emphasizing very modernist notions like love, authenticity, and oppression (Gregson, 14). Leypoldt differentiates between minimal realism, which is postmodernist in its subterranean denial of closure, and what he calls neo-realism. The last of the two represents the 'anti-postmodernist' variety mentioned above.

Leypoldt defines 'representationalism,' as a mode of representation which gives the impression of being confined to "the transmission of information" (Leypoldt, 11). It thus "hides or deemphasizes its textuality" (Ibid.), as does the *faction* technique of New Journalism, by blurring the boundary between fact and fiction. Conversely, neo-realism, in Leypoldt's sense as opposed to Toth's, is a realism which is not only representationalist—i.e., applying techniques of detailed mimetic descriptions of the quotidian life of 'average' people, which creates a strong referential illusion—but also includes structural traits of traditional realism, such as "plot coherence, narrative closure, a hierarchy of voices and effective values" (Ibid.). These features clearly position neo-realism outside the "anti-humanist" tradition of postmodernism (Gregson, 6). Neo-realism, in other words, is 'atavistic' in, among other things, its return to classical realism's "liberal humanist premises" (Ibid., 136). Such presuppositions, however, do not necessarily render the works of fiction in which they are employed any more human/e than others. "There is nothing innately 'human'" (Sontag, 210) in preferring one mode of representation over another, nor is there more 'truth' to be gained *per se* by means of style and structure.

Thomas Wolfe is an important contemporary champion of the anti-postmodernist conception of realism. He employs "an 'either-or' logic that opposes deconstruction to articulation and self-reflection to 'true' mimesis" (Cornis-Pope, 259). Wolfe elaborates on his "return to traditional" realism (Leypoldt, 52) in his influential essay *Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast: A Manifesto for the New Social Novel* (1989) in which he castigates (high) postmodernist

literature's anti-realist tendencies (Wolfe, Thomas, xivff). "Rejecting the claims of postmodernism as decadent and elitist, Wolfe argues that only the realistic novel [...] has the ability to be socially pertinent and captivating" (Toth, 174, n. 28). Leypoldt attests that Wolfe, not all too subtly, equates the conventions of classical realism with 'true' literature here and implies that to depart from it would be tantamount to escapism, or in the vein of Wolfe's cunning polemic—which uses war metaphors for the act of creating fiction, e.g., the 'authentic,' down-to-earth 'realist' writer is "willing to wrestle" and "love[s] the battle" (Ibid., xxviii)—to "nihilism, cowardice [and] incompetence" (Leypoldt, 53). "Wolfe [i]s very open about his hostility to neo-fabulist writers, writings that abandon social realism in favor of myth and fables and fantasy" (MacKendrick, 12). It can thus be noted that Wolfe not only distinctly dislikes postmodern metafiction, but that he also abhors SF, which is a fantastic literature. This view gives voice to an old but still widely held commonplace which still measures fiction against the achievements of classical realism and which "springs largely from generalizing this privileged strain of [the novel] to the genre as a whole" (Eagleton (2003), 201). "Not surprisingly, Wolfe holds up his own [work] as an example of [...] his brand of neo-realism [...] that rejects postmodern strategies" (Toth, 174, n. 28). Leypoldt remarks about Wolfe's New York novel, *The Bonfire of the Vanities* (1990), that "[w]herever the reader begins Wolfe's labyrinth of facts, he or she will inevitably arrive at the deep knowledge" the author intended to transmit (Leypoldt, 80). *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, in other words, is in an overt attempt of producing Jameson's "pedagogical political" work of art (Jameson (1984), 92), flaunting its 'hermeneutic depth,' it defies postmodernism in its "coherency and lucidity" (Leypoldt, 80) and displays a self-evident (if not self-righteous) sense of meaning and purpose, i.e., a prominent teleology, which "guarantees instant moral self-congratulation" to reader and author alike (Sontag, 209). "The respected appeal to the reader's moral feeling" (Ibid.) appears to be a mandatory requisite of this brand of atavistic neo-realism. Neo-realism thus undoes one of the greatest accomplishments of postmodernist literature, namely its departure from, implicitly or explicitly, imposing morals upon the reader. Kauffman identifies a tendency congruent with Wolfe's approach among the 'cultural elite' of regarding "readers as mere dupes [who are as] incapable of distinguishing representation from reality" (Kauffman, 247) as they supposedly are of coming up with their own viable (moral) interpretations. Postmodern/ist realism not only leaves coming up with moral value judgments to the reader, but also subverts "psychological realism" (Heise, 53) and the modernist

surface/depth models of hierarchized representation as well, which makes it difficult for “the reader to infer a coherent story” (Ibid.) and constitutes a challenge to received reading habits and to the expectations of the recipient.

5.3 REALISM, POSTREALISM, AND MINIMAL REALISM

Since the 1980s a revival of realist fiction has taken place. There are two distinct tenets discernible in the texts produced under this new literary paradigm. On the one hand, there are texts that employ a naïve return to the conventions of nineteenth-century realism, and on the other hand, there are the propagators of a postmodernist conception of realism. The former can be referred to as neo-realists, while the latter shall be addressed as postmodern realists. Postmodern realism is a (post)nihilist one, which deploys a moral minimalism that “leaves the reader entirely alone in making sense of the text's ethical assumptions” (Leypoldt, 264). Slocombe defines postmodern nihilism, as opposed to Nietzschean modernist nihilism, as a nihilism that includes its own axioms in its critique of values and norms. A postmodern realism which takes heed of the ethical nihilism of the postmodern must thus acknowledge the notion that all values have equal validity. Postmodern realism is minimalist and at the same time postmodernist in its “rejection [...] of any form of morality” (Slocombe, 141). It is the reader's task to come up with an ethical interpretation of the text. In addition, another minimalist feature of postmodern realism is its eschewal of what Leypoldt calls the “stylistic pyrotechnics” of high postmodernist metafiction (Leypoldt, 12). This is the point where Gregson's postmodern realism differs from Leypoldt's minimal realism. While the latter juxtaposes “extremen Detailrealismus und Mimimalismus” (Alt, 35), Gregson's concept—although it leaves out the most striking metafictional and anti-illusionist features of postmodernism—includes elements such as “self-reflexive irony, unreliable narrators [and] *mise en scène*” (italics in original; Leypoldt, 12), which Leypoldt's excludes. Currie classifies postmodern realism as the third form of the postmodern novel. The other two are the metafictional postmodern novel and the intertextual postmodern novel. Thus, in his categorization of postmodern realism metafictional and intertextual elements are excluded as well. Furthermore, “[p]rofound characterization, historical or cultural contextualization [and] political and social detail” (Leypoldt, 12), which “are either entirely missing or only sparsely constructed by means of surface details” in Leypoldt's conception (Ibid.), remain a part of Gregson's and Currie's conceptions as well, as long as they are then subverted by postmodernist techniques.

Andrea Gutenberg gives the following list of constitutive structural elements of the so-called realist novel of the nineteenth century: “starke Kohärenz der Ereignisse, hoher Grad der Ereignishaftigkeit im Sinne von äußerer Handlung, große zeitliche Ausdehnung und eine ausgeprägte Tendenz zur Geschlossenheit und Teleologie“ (Gutenberg, 101). The postmodern-realist engagement with the elements in this list is compromised and ambiguous in every single point, while neo-realism fulfills all four of them. If the generation of new aesthetic, or narrative, forms constitutes an ideological act in its own right, the same might be said about simply recycling old ones. Furthermore, mono-teleology is one of Neuhaus's main criteria for categorizing a work of fiction into the class of trivial literature. Eagleton gives the following description of the telos of the classical realist novel. According to him, it “aims for settlement and *détente*, repair and restitution, marriage and meaningful identity, whatever the destruction and disenchantment it must wade through to arrive there” (italics in original; Eagleton (2003), 201). Neo-realism is in essence a reactionary or conservative genre. This holds true for Thomas Wolfe's neo-realism with its “closed plots and socio-psychological commentaries” (Leypoldt, 259). Wolfe's neo-realism claims to address postmodern society's ills, but, since it does so in the traditional realist fashion, its social commentary cannot help but striking the reader as obsolete and atavistic. Bret Easton Ellis's postmodern realism seems to rise to the occasion far more adequately. Conversely, Wolfe's neorealism is clearly and expressly anti-postmodernist. Wolfe propagates a simple return to the realism of Émile Zola, which completely denies the literary developments of half a century.

Alt identifies Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) as a specimen of the 'naïve' variety of neo-realist fiction, which, however, differs from Wolfe's brand in its extreme subject matter and its eschewal of some of the features of classic realism, such as epiphanies, mono-teleology, overt didacticism, and, at least to a significant degree, 'typicality' of story, action, and characters; i.e., it denies generalization, by employing an “unique specificity” of content (Eagleton (2003), 187). Interestingly enough, as Leypoldt points out in his comparison of the latter book's critical reception to that of Ellis's serial-killer novel *American Psycho*, Harris's serial-killer novel met general critical acclaim, its “black terror [was greeted by most critics as nothing] more than titillating diversion” (Rousseau, 20). A reaction which came as an expression of the attitude that “aesthetic brilliance renders [even] the most gruesome depictions of sexual violence [...] acceptable” (Leypoldt, 253). Both Harris and Ellis belong to those “authors [who] approach fear and

shock by trying [...] to brutally present us with gross detail” (Beville, 107). Harris, in opposition to Ellis, however, sticks to the conventions of the thriller genre. His novel fulfills traditional reader expectations, while *American Psycho* “openly subverts” them (Leypoldt, 255), as do Ellis's later works like *Glamorama* (1998) or *Lunar Park* (2005). Ellis's novels thus comply with the “postmodern imperative to be inaccessible, to expose as illusory the idea of shared experience and communal understanding” (italics in original; Toth, 121). The denial of generalizability is a distinctly postmodern method as are attacks on the universality of the human condition. Conversely, Harris's heroine prevails and there are always 'normal' characters at hand against whom the reader can measure the deviancy of the villain, who is equipped with a full-blown inner life and “stamped as purely evil and deviant” (Leypoldt, 262). This excludes Harris's novel from the realm of postmodernist literature (Broich, 253). Harris's work falls under the heading of Wolfe's neo-realism. Paradoxically, “the most passionate critic[al condemnations] of Ellis[']s novel [were] on [the grounds that it w]as sophomoric and fatuous in style and execution and without any artistry” (Leypoldt, 254). This is an interesting point because Ellis's books are a great deal more complex than most works of neo-realism.

For Monika Fludernik, realism is a style of writing which aims at “the mimetic evocation of reality both from a sociological and psychological perspective” (Fludernik, 37). These two perspectives are subverted in postmodern realism, although to different degrees. Postmodern realism takes heed of “the substantial impact on lived experience of social and economic conditions” (Gregson, 141) in its revival of representationalist, mimetic techniques of storytelling, but eschews psychologically realist representation of character, as well as teleology, and employs (discreet) metafictional features, which, on the one hand, subvert the aesthetic illusion, while, on the other hand, “the illusion of lived experience” (Wolf, 31) is being reinstated “as the central organizing parameter of narrative” (Heise, 7). The advent of postmodern realism heralds the return of representation into storytelling. This return to representation extends to the methods of character conception. Aleid Fokkema contends that if a character is conceived as having a consciousness, this character is “representational according to convention” (Aleid Fokkema, 76) and thus not postmodernist in the proper sense. The return of character to prose literature constitutes a hybridization of realist and postmodernist narrative techniques, a miscegenation of two methods of storytelling. Fludernik identifies “two major types of novelistic illusionism: the deployment of an *effet de réel*, via providing odd surface details and thorough

descriptions of outer appearance,” and the instantiation of psychological verisimilitude, via equipping characters with a 'believable' inner life (*italics in original*; Fludernik (2001), 38). Psychological verisimilitude, according to Fludernik, is the most important of the two distinguishing features of realism as a technique of representation (*Ibid.*). The characters of postmodern realism often are not furnished with any verisimilar psychological depth, which would allow for 'epiphanies' or any other expression of the old “depth models,” whose repudiation by postmodernism Jameson bemoans so bitterly (Jameson (1984), 62). Postmodern realism's characters take heed of the postmodern erosion of character which is typical of postmodern character representation, but they can, nevertheless, approach a certain kind of compromised psychological verisimilitude. Furthermore, in postmodernist realism “referential data is not forced on the reader by an authoritative narrator. It appears in the margins of a main narrative” (Den Tandt, 132). Postmodern realism's approach to representation is a more subtle one. Teleology is not forced on the reader, but remains one possible means of interpretation among others.

Although postmodern realism incorporates many postmodernist elements, its representationalism means that it does not fit “comfortably into the postmodern canon” (Gregson, xiv). Therefore, postmodern realism can be interpreted as a “stepping away from postmoderni[sm] and toward contemporary hybrid fiction” (Grassian, 12). This, however, would be a paradoxical progress as such, since hybridity is one of the most prominent characteristics of postmodernist art. Consequently, it seems more sensible to speak of a new or “different engagement with postmodernism” of these new fictions instead (Young, 14). Time will tell whether or not this “postmodern-inflected realism” (Toth, 119), this “current trend of blending and hybridization[, actually constitutes] a transitory period before the establishment of the next major literary trend” (Grassian, 177), or 'just' a new variety of postmodernism. Recourse to the techniques of other literary epochs does not constitute an approach that would transcend the postmodernist literary paradigm, but seems to present a further expansion of postmodern literature's intertextual scope.

5.4 HYBRID FICTION

Hybridity is one of the benchmarks of postmodern texts. Intertextuality is itself a form of hybridity as well as another characteristic of postmodern literature. The coexistence of metafictional devices and realist conventions in the same texts constitutes another form of postmodern hybridity. Currie

identifies a vast spectrum of postmodern texts which are “at large [...] organised around [two] poles [...], one being realistic, transparent and aiming to disguise the codes and conventions that mark its textuality while the other is overtly artificial, declaring its textuality by exposing its codes and conventions” (Currie, 104). The latter pole is represented by postmodern metafiction and the former by postmodern realism. Currie's second category of postmodern novels, the intertextual novel, ranks in the middle between the two poles. Since the 1980s the realistic pole has again risen to dominance in the literary field which is no doubt an expression of the postmodern 'craving for the real,' its overriding desire for authenticity, of which the boom in autobiographies discernible in the last three decades is another aspect. Postmodern realism engages postmodernist thematic elements in its superficiality and “its concern with fragmentation, alienation and angst” (Barker, 187), while it stylistically embraces the conventions of literary realism.

Postmodern alienation is a total alienation which envelops the whole of the postmodern human condition. The postmodern crisis of subjectivity and identity finds its expression in such texts which keep psychological verisimilitude at a minimum, i.e., in the postmodern erosion of character. Postmodern realism displays active hybridity in its blend of modernist, realist, and postmodernist elements, thereby combining over 100 years of literary history, an appropriation of styles of the past, which Jameson would deem typically 'postmodern'. “Having superseded earlier literary movements, postmodern literature has incorporated them all and as often as not presents a sampling of modern literary history” (Bertens (2004), 33). Postmodern realism thus constitutes a hybrid sampling of the techniques of past and present literary epochs. Rebein, in this regard, speaks of a “kind of hybrid story [which] take[s] representation from realism and invention from postmodernism” (Rebein, 36). Postmodern realism thus takes the best from both worlds. The appropriation of the writing styles from over 100 years is also paralleled in contemporary SF. The latest stage of the development of SF, postcyberpunk, is characterized by the deployment of story elements of all the previous phases which make up the history of the SF genre.

The convergence of postmodern literature and 'subliterary' SF is one of the characteristics of postmodern literature. With regard to the science fictionalization of postmodern literature Grabes points out that “durch die Hybridisierung von Realismus und [SF] sich das unheimliche Gefühl einstellt, dass die alternativen Welten nur allzu sehr der unseren gleichen” (Grabes, 111). SF uses the form of displaying a fictitious future to describe our real present and so do science-fictionalized postmodern texts such as Kurt

Vonnegut's *Hocus Pocus*: “[D]ie für die Postmoderne häufig als kennzeichnend angenommene Hybridisierung“ results in a transformation, even an erosion, of literary genres and the blending of literary narrative devices (Erl/Seibel, 181f).

According to Harvey, “postmodern fiction is mimetic of something, [it] mimics the conditions of [the] flexible accumulation” of late capitalism (Harvey (2000), 302). Accordingly, Toth contends that postmodernist metafiction comprised a utopian impulse towards verisimilitude and concedes that “self-reflexive and fragmented works that aimed to expose the illusion of reality a[re] *more realistic* than recent works of realism” (italics in original; Toth, 108). Fictions describing the postmodern condition cannot help being fragmented, ephemeral, and ambiguous, since these are the central pillars of the postmodern tout court. According to Jameson, SF can be “more realistic, as a social document, than [...] postmodern social realism” (Jameson (2005), 71). It thus seems sensible to postulate a convergence of the two. SF has become postmodern social realism and postmodern social realism has become SF. Accordingly, Gomel identifies SF “[a]s the realism of postmodernism” (Gomel (2012), 15). Furthermore, she categorizes “[SF] as postmodernism, as [the] dominant literary expression of postmodernity's [...] narrative [...] imagination” (Gomel (2012), 13). According to Gözen, SF as such can be considered as an “Ausdruck der Postmoderne” (Gözen, 37).

6. SCIENCE FICTION

6.1 SCIENCE FICTIONALIZATION

In 1987, McHale identifies SF as “postmodernism's noncanonized or 'low art' double” (McHale (1987), 59). Furthermore, in 2012 Gomel “sees a convergence, if not outright identity, between 'mainstream' postmodernism and [SF]” (Gomel (2012), 9). Brian Attebery in 2002 attests to “the close relationship between [SF] and postmodern literature” (Attebery, 91). SF is thus symptomatic of a certain postmodern sensibility which holds that we already live science-fictional lives due to the immersion in technology of quotidian life in the West and due to the distinct dystopian leanings of our contemporary reality. The third industrial revolution has brought with it the advent of a whole range of technologies which in the 1980s would have been considered as SF. Furthermore, our contemporary age of terror and cybernetic surveillance even shows distinct parallels with the fictitious worlds developed in older dystopian texts. Thus, Kurz identifies George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) as a paradigmatic anticipation of our current 'totalitarian' economic order (Kurz (2013), 114).

SF arguably has become the representative fiction of our age. Cyberspace is the third dimension of late capitalism and the World Wide Web is the literal embodiment of postmodern intertextuality. Accordingly, Roberts, citing Csicsery-Ronay, points out that SF “has [...] becom[e] a mode of awareness about the world” (quoted in Roberts (2006a), 28). According to Youngquist, SF “is the representative fiction of finance capital” (Youngquist, 19), i.e., contemporary SF's fictitious (future) worlds represent our current late-capitalist reality. Finance capitalism is one of the monickers to describe our current phase of capitalism. Youngquist describes late (or finance) capitalism as the stage of capitalism that “emancipated [itself] from [...] physical transfer[.] The only transfer that matters [now] is semiotic” (Ibid., 18). This primacy of the 'semiotic transfer' translates into the postmodern emphasis on ephemerality, instability, and ambiguity, which, in turn, has a profound impact on fiction. Paik points out that SF is “the literary genre most conspicuously associated with the hegemony of global capitalist [post]modernity” (Paik, 91). SF is the genre with the closest ties to a practice of financial speculation which has been completely severed from the physical realm. SF fantasies of flight, of transcending the physical constraints of the human body and the material world, mirror the dominance of the disembodied stock exchange of totally financialized late-capitalist speculation. Furthermore, SF “ist längst kein literarisches Genre mehr, sondern eine gigantische Industrie” (Kiausch, 19). It is thus safe to say that SF nowadays is more than a literary genre among others. It is *the* postmodern literary genre *per se* and as such a gargantuan money machine for big business as well. SF has long since transcended the confines of literature. Roberts accordingly points out that “almost all the twenty top-grossing films of all time are science-fictional” (Roberts (2006a), 65). SF as such has from its very beginning been a marketable commodity. Its roots in the pulp fiction market of the first half of the twentieth century attest to its close affinity to the market place. Thus, Latham speaks of the “ongoing commodification of” SF (Latham (2010), 37) and describes the genre's development in terms of the capitalist market place (Ibid., 31ff). There is a close relationship between the speculative future of the stock market and the extrapolative future of SF. Youngquist goes as far as identifying the decoupling of the stock market from the material realm of the commodity as the founding impulse of SF. He sees a parallel development of the stock market with the help of newly invented communication technologies and SF as the literary translation of the momentous changes the new conditions of trade brought about in the material world. McHale distinguishes two types of SF texts, viz. speculative and extrapolative.

Extrapolative SF takes the current state of affairs as its point of departure and proceeds to fashion a possible future world on the basis of the latter. Speculative SF involves an “imaginative leap” which posits a radical departure from the paradigm of the current state of affairs which significantly changes the fictitious future it describes (McHale (2010), 4). McHale adds a second distinction, which is complementary to, but not synonymous with, the first one, an opposition “between 'hard' and 'soft' [SF] (i.e., between [SF] based on the 'hard' or physical sciences and [SF] based on the 'soft' or human sciences)” (McHale (2010), 4). The dialectical relationship between 'hard' and 'soft' SF informs the etymology of the genre as a whole. McHale and Uschi Kiausch furthermore distinguish two strands of traditional SF from each other which “belong to different cultural strata. [Firstly, the p]redominantly European [...] tradition of 'serious' [SF, i.e.,] such canonically literary genres as utopian fiction, satire, and the *conté philosophique*” (italics in original; McHale (1993), 236), i.e., “die frühe europäische Tradition der [SF, die] häufig zivilisationskritische oder sozial-utopische Elemente enthält“ (Kiausch, 23). This highbrow strand of SF is opposed to the American pulp version of the genre. The “other stream, that of popular or 'sub-literary' [SF which] is [the one] with [which] postmodernist fiction has engaged in the most fruitful transaction” (McHale (1997), 236) and whose roots lie in the American pulps of the 1920s and 1930s.

Gary Wolfe points out that SF “as a genre [is] based as much in ideology as in story” (Wolfe, Gary K., 16). Classical SF's interstellar project of colonization and conquest as such served as a retrospective justification of historical colonialism as well as for the coeval imperialism and colonialism which still went on at the height of the pulp era. Roberts thus remarks that “colonialism [i]s an important factor in shaping the emergence of” SF (Roberts (2010), 208). As such SF “addresses [...] the ideological basis of colonial practice itself, [viz.] the ideology of progress” (Ibid., 211f), i.e., the Extropy Myth. The pulp SF of the first half of the twentieth century was dominated by fantasies of white (male) explorers charting a barbarian outside and 'discovering' new territories to be submitted to (civilized) human rule. SF thus, at the beginning, was immersed in colonial discourse and propagated a galactic imperialism akin to the one going on on earth. The axiomatic assumptions of liberal capitalism from the beginning shaped the ideological backdrop against which the stories of classical SF were depicted. The term 'SF' itself was introduced in 1929 by Hugo Gernsback, whose formal definition of the genre reads as follows: SF “is a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision” (quoted in Roberts (2006b), 2). In the early phase of the

genre's history the two pulp-periodical publishers who gave birth to the genre in its narrow variety, Hugo Gernsback, the publisher of the pulp SF periodical *Amazing Stories* considered by many 'the father of SF', and John W. Campbell, editor of *Astounding Stories*

set and policed the standards that qualified writing as [SF], not only openly stated standards of plausibility and extrapolation, but also unstated standards of appropriateness and legitimation. [...] Their cosmic liberalism saturated space with the values of individuality, accumulation, and perpetual progress (Youngquist, 137).

In other words, the values of economic liberalism, or neo-liberalism as it is known today, were the ones more or less implicitly endorsed by the early American SF authors as was the Entropy Myth. Therefore, it can be said that SF "connects the imperial project from our past with the potential neo-empires of the future" (Kerlake, 3) and thus (sometimes) helps to elucidate the empires of the present. SF thus can be said to engage a very peculiar form of mimesis which mirrors our current reality via depictions of a fictitious future. J. G. Ballard gives voice to this paradoxical core tenet of SF, i.e., the view that SF as an arealistic genre of fiction is closer to reality than traditional realist fiction. In his 2008 autobiography, Ballard notes that in 1956 he was "convinced [...] that [SF] was far closer to reality than the conventional realist novel of the day" (Ballard, 189). Therefore, it can be said that SF belongs to "the realm of aesthetic conflict between mimesis and the fantastic" (Mohr, 11). SF realizes its fantastic content in the literary idiom of realism. It can be distinguished from fantasy by the way its fantastic elements are 'explained' in the story. In SF, science, or pseudo-science, works as a justifier, in fantasy this task is largely fulfilled by magic. The willing suspension of disbelief in SF focuses on mostly technological nova, while the other two fantastic genres, horror and fantasy, evoke the supernatural for this purpose.

Furthermore, there are two approaches to a categorization of SF, a broad and a narrow approach: "the narrow tendency [is] to view [SF] only as that fiction which derives directly out of the American pulp tradition[, while] the broad tendency [is] to consider all 'arealistic' literature, [such as] Pynchon and other postmodernists, as" SF (Booker/Thomas., 4). This study adopts the broad approach. Applying the broad categorization of SF, dystopia and utopia as well fall under the heading of SF. This approach is all the more sensible due to the fact that SF and dystopian fiction merged in the first half of the 20th century since any work of SF per definition either envisions a utopian or a dystopian future society. As Suvin surmises, dystopian "fiction is [...] both an independent aunt and a dependent daughter of SF" (Suvin, 383). Booker and

Thomas posit George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Evgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1924), and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) as the founding texts of the genre of dystopian SF. According to these two theorists, "dystopian fiction remains one of the most important subgenres of science fiction in the [...] twenty-first century" (Booker/Thomas, 72). Even Zeißler, who investigates dystopian literature as a genre that is independent from SF, recognizes the fact that it is becoming increasingly difficult to tell the two genres apart (Zeißler, 57). Mohr gives the following as stock topics of dystopian SF literature:

nationalism, militarism, slavery, exploitation, class antagonism, racism, barbarism, enforced and controlled gender relations, rape, overpopulation, drug dependence, sexual perversion, pogroms, degeneration, nuclear devastation, [...] catastrophes such as (terminal) ecological pollution, and authoritarian/totalitarian regimes that oppress the masses. Monotonous conformity, surveillance, denunciation, and the degradation of humans to object status (Mohr, 33).

Jameson remarks with regard to the overriding dominance of dystopias in the SF of the last decades that "total destruction and [...] the extinction of all life on Earth [nowadays] seem more plausible than [a] Utopian vision" of the future (Jameson (2005), 199) or an end to capitalism. Contemporary "Western culture can be defined, in part, through its loss of the sense of a viable future, concomitant with its loss of a sense of history" (Hollinger (2002), 166). We are currently living in "a state in which individuals can perceive neither their own true needs nor another way of life" (Kellner (1989), 18). There is no future for postmodernity. The present is the only temporal horizon available. This 'loss of historicity' is part of the apocalyptic postmodern sensibility. One might compose a list of various man-made disasters which gave rise to the postmodern apocalyptic sensibility: the Holocaust, Bhopal, Seveso, the Exxon Valdez oil spill, Chernobyl, Hiroshima, 9/11, the Rwandan Genocide, Fukushima: "Technologische Katastrophen und wissenschaftlicher Irrglauben [sind für uns alle] zur historischen Erfahrung geworden" (Kaschinski, 209). We are living in the age of man-made natural catastrophes. Every year new 'accidents' occur, new oil spills, new meltdowns, more chemical leakage, new genocides. Furthermore, in addition to the problematic of environmental degradation one has always to keep in mind the problematic of distributive injustice, which Ziegler identifies as a war waged against the poor by the wealthy. Moreover, there are the civil wars, the so-called 'new wars,' breaking out like a rash all over the world which more often than not are being fought over the access to material resources

like precious metals or water. Hassan provides yet another list of catastrophes: he contends that “[i]n sum, cultural postmodernism has mutated into genocidal postmodernity (witness Palestine, Bosnia, Kosovo, Ulster, Rwanda, Chechnya, Kurdistan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Afghanistan, Tibet...)” (Hassan, 203). Under postmodernity the master narratives of modernity have given way to the incommensurable micronarratives of ethnic particularism. Many of these disasters, catastrophes, and genocides, have been brought about by, or with the help of, technology, either accidentally or in the case of the Holocaust, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and 9/11 on purpose. Welzer points out that these catastrophes in an astonishingly short time demonstrate that instability is the rule and stability the exception (Welzer (2009), 209). Furthermore, this continual string of disasters attests to the dystopian nature of contemporary reality, since it employs nearly everyone of Mohr's stock topics of dystopian fiction. When such disasters as an exception to the rule happen to strike the West and rich Westerners are the victims of Žižek's first kind of violence the public is said to be traumatized. Yet terrorist attacks on Western targets mirror the ruthless violence the West has been exporting to the 'barbarian outside' for over four centuries now. They are very much an outgrowth of our civilization as opposed to the notion that events like 9/11 lie outside of the realm of culture. A realization of the fundamental instability of the global situation fosters a postmodern sensibility of ephemerality, precariousness, and insecurity. Ours is the age of global terrorism and the 'barbarians' are inside the gates. After the Holocaust and Hiroshima we are living in the future of our collective past, which was inaugurated by the man-made catastrophe of nuclear annihilation and the singular genocide of the European Jews. The apocalypse has already occurred, or is constantly occurring in a hydra-headed, Janus-faced carousel of terrorism and counter-terrorism. Gomel points out “how deeply entrenched in postmodern culture the apocalyptic desire is[. T]he End Times are now” (Gomel (2012), 120). Contemporary SF's distinct tendency towards dystopian near-futures stems from this apocalyptic sensibility.

Booker and Thomas point out that SF's “outrageous exaggeration of existing circumstances [often] on reflection turns out to be much closer to reality than first appears” (Booker/Thomas, 107f). SF as a genre comments upon and reflects our present point in time from the standpoint of a fictitious future: “Während sie sich scheinbar mit der Zukunft beschäftigt, wirft Science Fiction tatsächlich einen neuen Blick auf die Gegenwart, wie sie als Vergangenheit im Horizont einer fiktiven Zukunft repräsentiert wird” (Moylan (1990), 50). Roberts remarks that SF “does not project us into the future, it relates to us

stories about our present, and [...] about the past that has led to this present” (Roberts (2006a), 28). SF thus shows a close affinity to the postmodern project of writing a history of the present. Any SF text includes certain story elements which distinguish the world projected by the story from the reality of the recipient. Suvin's “term 'novum'[...] refer[s] to [such a] point of difference[,] a concrete and material symbol that is integrated into a certain discourse of scientific possibility” (Roberts (2006a), 6f). Such nova can be efficiently used to identify a given text as SF without having to rely on stylistic criteria. The first and most prominent novum that almost all SF writing shares consists of the fact that SF stories as a rule are set in some future time yet to come. One can go a little further and add that for the past century of SF-writing the common denominator of almost all writing that qualifies as SF, or science fictional, is the temporal displacement of the plot into the future. Roberts gives the following list of accepted SF nova: according to him it is possible to

classify the major tropes of [SF] into half a dozen categories. Books that take any of the following subjects, themes, trappings or props are liable to be thought of as [SF]:

- spaceships, interplanetary or interstellar travel
- aliens and the encounter with aliens
- mechanical robots, genetic engineering, biological robots
- computers, advanced technology, virtual reality
- time travel
- futuristic utopias and dystopias (Roberts (2006a), 12).

With regard to dystopia, utopia, and SF Mohr acknowledges that “the division between fact and fiction is blurred in all three genres” (Mohr, 38), which is one of the distinguishing features of postmodern literature. The technological nova of SF have to plausibly evoke (pseudo-)scientific discourse to render the story's action plausible. The line demarcating fictitious science from actual science becomes fuzzy in the process. For instance, many real-world inventions were inspired by specific trappings of SF. Both the inventor of the cellular phone and the MP3 were inspired by *Star Trek*. But it is not only the distinction between fact and fiction which is rendered fuzzy in SF. The three fantastic genres overlap and intermingle and thus subvert any neat categorization. For instance, historical Gothic literature is one of the sources of both SF and horror literature (Rottensteiner, 259). “Das Grauen, das aus der Wissenschaft erwächst” (Ibid., 258) is a ubiquitous SF topos. Especially in film, the genres of horror and SF very often overlap. When addressing deep-seated cultural anxieties, SF transcends its status of 'escapist' entertainment.

According to Dinello, SF “taps into [our] existential fears” (Dinello, 6): “Man könnte [...] die Dystopien, die Anti-Utopien, als politisch-soziale Horrorliteratur bezeichnen. Geht es in ihnen doch um die modellhafte Abbildung horribler gesellschaftlicher Zustände” (Rottensteiner, 259). These fictitious 'horrible societal circumstances' reflect the status of our current societies.

SF is the literature of 'cognitive estrangement'. 'The willing suspension of disbelief' is the axiom of the reception of any type of literature, but in the case of SF, and the other two fantastic genres, the suspension of disbelief goes farther and deeper than in any other literary genre.

6.2 A CONCISE HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION

Booker and Thomas speak of “the often-noted ability of [SF] to change dramatically over time in conjunction with technological and other changes in the world at large” (Booker/Thomas, 5). As the paradigms of science change SF has to transform as well so as to make sure that its (pseudo-)science keeps pace with the times. In the following the changes the SF genre underwent since its emergence in the nineteenth century will be investigated. Jameson divides the history of SF into six stages: adventure, science, sociology, subjectivity, aesthetics, and cyberpunk (Jameson (2005), 93). Nowadays it seems sensible to add a seventh stage: the category of postcyberpunk. The first stage of “adventure” can be dated to the 19th century (Ibid.). Jameson posits the birth of SF either with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in 1818, or in 1895 with H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* (Jameson (2005), 1). According to Hollinger, “*Frankenstein* [i]s a forerunner fiction about the implosion of human beings and their technologies” (Hollinger (2010), 199). It anticipates the postmodern SF trope of the cyborg. Schwetman thus identifies Shelley's groundbreaking book as “the first cyberpunk novel” (Schwetman, 129). Kaschinski adds R. L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) as one of the primary precursors of SF (Kaschinski, 200). Youngquist adds the following to the list: Edgar Allen Poe's 'The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfall' (1835), Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1874) and *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865) by the same author (Youngquist, 16). From these source texts it becomes obvious that SF has roots in Gothic literature. As history progresses SF's affinity towards horror literature and fantasy will remain pronounced.

Note that Roberts, for instance, “does not concur with the belief[...] that [SF] starts with [...] *Frankenstein*” (italics in original; Roberts (2006b), 93). Instead, he traces the pedigree of SF back to the first century AD. This study, in contrast to this extremely broad approach to SF, employs a more narrow

approach which limits SF to the contemporary and its modernist and Gothic ancestors and excludes its ancestors from farther back in time. Furthermore, contra Jameson this study favors the common periodization of the SF genre which consists of only four stages of development: the pulps, the 'Golden Age,' the 'New Wave,' and cyberpunk, although it seems sensible to add Jameson's first stage of 'adventure' as a predecessor and the stage of postcyberpunk as a subsequent stage^{xlii}. According to Youngquist, SF “as a distinct genre does not arise until well after communicative and economic practices converge and reorganize culture accordingly” (Youngquist, 16). Youngquist declares SF “the creature of” financial speculation (Ibid., 15). He identifies the nascent seeds of our contemporary finance capitalism in the decoupling of trade from the material realm in the second half of the nineteenth century which was brought about by the introduction of the telegraph and postulates that the 'disembodiment' of trade is mirrored in the fantasies of the SF produced at the time, for instance, in Wells's novella *The Time Machine* (1895).

The first stage of Jameson's categorization of the SF genre, viz. 'adventure,' can be temporally located in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. It is thus temporally congruent with the second industrial revolution. From the first appearance of the genre onwards it was intrinsically connected with the capitalist economic order. As has been pointed out above, Youngquist identifies SF as the representative fiction of finance capital. Finance capital truly came into its own with the advent of the Information Age, the emergence of the third industrial revolution. Late capitalism's globalization is an offshoot of (nineteenth-century) colonialism and many of coeval SF's explorations of outer space mirror the neo-colonial practices of Western (financial) imperialism. Verne, Wells, Poe, and Stevenson wrote various variations of the scientific adventure romance, which constitutes the first stage of SF according to Jameson's categorization.

Jameson's second phase of SF is 'science,' which he dates to the first appearance of SF pulp periodicals in the second half of the 1920s (Jameson (2005), 93). SF is “a form that really became visible as a separate entity [...] in the 1920s [...] via American pulp magazines” (Booker/Thomas, 7). According to McHale, the “pulp-magazine [SF of] the 1920s and 1930s [did] swing to [the] speculative 'space opera'” (McHale (2010), 4f). According to Roberts, in pulp SF “the emphasis was on eventful narrative, strong characters, a binary ethical code of good and evil, and [...] exotic and wonderful locales” (Roberts (2006b), 174). The 'pulp era' of SF is congruent with Jameson's second stage

of 'science' which can be temporally located to the 1920s and 1930s as well. The plausible mimesis of scientific explanations became the basis of the pulp era's adventure stories. The pulp era was then succeeded by the "so-called 'Golden Age' [of SF in] the 1940s and 1950s" (McHale (2010), 5). The 'Golden Age' begins when John W. Campbell's became publisher of *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1938. According to Roberts, "the phrase *Golden Age* valorises [...] 'Hard SF', linear narratives, heroes solving problems or countering threats in a space-opera or technological-adventure idiom" (italics in original; Roberts (2006b), 195). It thus is largely congruent with pulp-era SF. Jameson's third and second phases coincide with the 'Golden Age'. His third stage is that of "Sociology" (Jameson (2005), 93). According to McHale, 'Golden Age' SF "had extrapolative world-building as its dominant" (McHale (2010), 4). "The boom-and-bust cycle characteristic of the [SF] genre was never more in evidence than during the late 1950s and early 1960s [when t]he pulps [...] vanished utterly" (Latham (2010), 31). At the end of the 'Golden Age,' at the end of the 1960s, the pulps had been successfully ousted by the paperback book market as the dominant venue of the SF industry; a process which started in the 1940s. "At the dawn of the new decade, the genre was widely perceived to be in crisis" (Ibid., 32). The next phase of SF coincides with Jameson's fourth and fifth stage of 'subjectivity' and 'aesthetics'.

Jameson divides the stage of SF development commonly referred to as the 'New Wave' into two distinct stages, the stage of "Subjectivity [...] and representation", which he dates to the 1960s (Jameson (2005), 93), and the stage of 'aesthetics,' which he dates to the 1970s. Jameson temporally posits the 'New Wave' in the late 1960s and lets it extend to the early 1980s, but he does not feature it as a separate stage of the development of SF. His categorization thus features two distinct phases which are not recognized by SF critics in general. Common SF criticism considers the 'Golden Age' to be succeeded by the 'New Wave'. McHale remarks that "[t]he 'New Wave' [SF] of the 1960s [...] prolonged itself into the 1970s and 1980s" (McHale (2010), 5). Jameson refers to Dick, Delany, and Ballard as the most prominent practitioners of his fifth stage of aesthetics. Jameson's fifth stage of 'aesthetics' is thus congruent with the 'New Wave' of SF. J.G. Ballard "decreed [in 1962] that pulp [SF]'s fascination with interplanetary travel had been rendered obsolete [...] and that the genre's future lay in the disciplined exploration of 'inner space': mind control, psycho-biology, altered states of consciousness" (Latham (2010), 33). The 'New Wave' was spearheaded by magazines such as Micheal Moorcock's British *New Worlds* magazine. Such editors attempted to make SF stories

more sophisticated in terms of literary style as well as content, responding especially to trends of the late 1960s to include more open treatment of issues like sexuality. The “so-called 'new wave' in American and British [SF constitutes] modernism's [...] breakthrough to [SF in] the 1960s” (McHale (1987), 69). Furthermore, “[th]e 'New Wave' [SF] of the 1960s clearly marks a return to the speculative dominant” (McHale (2010), 5). According to McHale, “by the late 1960s [...] we can [discern] a tendency towards the 'postmodernization' of” SF (Ibid.). Several SF authors from the late 1960s onwards produced postmodernist SF texts, e.g., Samuel R. Delany and J.G. Ballard. In “the late 1970s, after the 'New Wave' had clearly ebbed [SF] seemed [again] to have hit an aesthetic wall” (Latham (2010), 38). Latham dates “the corporate takeover of [SF to that] period” (Ibid., 39). The commodification of SF gathered speed in the late 1970s and early 1980s with the tremendous financial success of the *Star Wars* franchise. *Star Wars* spawned a whole industry of spin-off commodities and literature. This resulted in a state of affairs on the book market that obstructed innovation. In that phase innovation in the literary SF genre was impeded by the capitalist success criterion which held that only those novels got published which promised to be profitable by repeating the old, successful conventions.

Cyberpunk SF put an end to this static stage of the SF market. According to McHale, cyberpunk SF “rejects the speculative dominant and swings back to extrapolative world-building” (McHale (2010), 5). Cyberpunk is the sixth and last of Jameson's categories and the fourth phase of the common categorization of SF. Jameson temporally locates his sixth and last stage of SF in the first half of the 1980s. According to him, cyberpunk arrived on the scene in 1984 with the publication of Gibson's *Neuromancer*. Jameson draws a causal connection between the advent of cyberpunk and the simultaneous advent of the New Right and the rise to dominance of computer technology and finance capitalism (Jameson (2005), 93). In 1984, “*Neuromancer* exploded on the scene [...] and utterly changed the stakes of the game” (italics in original; Latham, 39). Cyberpunk put dystopian near-future SF back on the map. Its emergence in the 1980s coincides with a phenomenon that Moylan identifies as the second dystopian turn in contemporary literature, the first one took place after WW II, and which is synonymous with the rise of the postmodern dystopia. Cyberpunk combined a fascination with the new computer technology with film noir aesthetics and conventions, and propagated a cynical, disaffected world view very much in line with the postmodern sensibility as postulated by Jameson. According to Moylan, “the imagery of [cyberpunk] symptomatically captures the 1980s ambiance of privilege and poverty”

(Moylan (2010), 83). Cyberpunk's set of characters mirrors the social divisions created under Reagan, Thatcher, and their successors. According to Kellner, "cyberpunk writing [...] responds to the predatory greed of unrestrained capitalism during the Reagan/Bush/Clinton era" (Kellner (1995), 303). In 1995, Kellner even suggests that "cyberpunk [SF] can be read as a sort of social theory" (Ibid., 299). According to him, "cyberpunk fiction [...] deconstructs dichotomies between fiction and social theory" (Ibid., 330, n. 33). This notion has distinctly postmodern overtones. Kellner in turn suggests reading Baudrillard's (anti-)social theory as dystopian SF. However, "*Neuromancer* is [...] almost single-handedly responsible for the 1990s turn toward postmodernism of [SF] theory and criticism" (italics in original; Booker/Thomas, 160). Cyberpunk SF radically changed the face of SF for the decades to come, and Gibson's cyberpunk nowadays is very much part of the postmodern literary canon.

Another common trope of contemporary SF is the one of the cyborg (cybernetic organism). The cyborg is the literary embodiment of postmodern hybridity. The hybridity of human embodiment and technology is a distinctly postmodern feature. Most recent and current SF, especially cyberpunk SF, is set in "a familiar dystopian near future characterized by environmental degradation and dominated by multinational corporations" (Paik, 93). The futures of cyberpunk SF thus mirror our contemporary world. A motif that cyberpunk SF borrowed from postmodernist SF is the "Burroughsian leitmotif [of] the contesting of [...] control" (Nazare, 286). The spirit of cyberpunk as such can be said to be characterized by said motif.

6.3 CYBERPUNK SCIENCE FICTION

For Jameson, cyberpunk constitutes the supreme expression of postmodernism in literature. According to Keith and Thomas "cyberpunk's primary contribution is its distinctive style, a surface texture that is evocative of the information overload characteristic of contemporary postmodern culture" (Keith Thomas, 111f). Gözen agrees that cyberpunk is "die literarische Speerspitze der künstlerischen Auseinandersetzung mit den Schlüsselphänomenen des Zeitalters der Postmoderne" (Gözen, 9). McHale categorizes cyberpunk as the apex of the postmodernization of SF. Cyberpunk "is a fictional attempt to grapple with the realities of our postmodern condition" (Booker/Thomas, 110). "Cyberpunk-Weltentwürfe [...] bilden eine Art postmodernes Kaleidoskop" (Gözen, 269). Cyberpunk's dystopian near futures most often are so close to the present that the difference may appear negligible. In fact, cyberpunk depicts futures that are 'just around the corner'

from our present.

Joseph Heath describes the impact of the movie *Blade Runner* (1982)—which, although it was based on a 'New Wave' SF novel by Philip K. Dick (*Do Androids Dream of Electrical Sheep?* (1968)), was the first major motion picture to endorse a cyberpunk aesthetic—as “a shock for audiences at the time” (Heath, 1). According to McHale, in the year 1992 “*Blade Runner* [still was] undoubtedly the most influential example of cyberpunk poetics in any medium” (McHale (1992), 229). Roberts, furthermore, considers the film as a primary example of postmodernism (Roberts (2006b), 285), since it features many of the aspects that are commonly associated with postmodernism: the visualization of a genre-bending fusion of hard-boiled detective fiction and dystopian SF which anticipates the cyberpunk genre, the fusion of film noir conventions with those of the dystopian SF movie which foregrounds the film's explicit intertextuality, the eminent effacement of boundaries in the film, for example, between different cultures and between man and machine, the post-industrial nature of the world depicted, and the eclectic blending of different styles as evidenced by the clothes worn by the characters. The streets of *Bladerunner* are awash with the waste of a post-industrial society in decline. Its streets are crowded by multicultural multitudes and above the rubble of the street level loom the corporate pyramids of all-powerful multinational corporations. This shows the intimate relationship between postmodernism and cyberpunk SF. Heath claims that *Bladerunner* “deeply [...] revolutionized [SF] as a genre” (Heath, 1). “Why was it so shocking? Because it was the first time anyone ever suggested that there might be *advertising* in the future—or worse, that there might be even *more* of it in the future than in the present” (italics in original; *Ibid.*). *Bladerunner* was one of the first works of art which pictured the future as a potentiation of our current form of capitalism. It was strictly extrapolative and thus represented a departure from the SF that had come before. What *Bladerunner* did for the movie business *Neuromancer* did for the book market. It revolutionized the SF genre. SF at the time did not feature brand names and advertising. The commodification typical of the postmodern moment is brought to a head in cyberpunk fiction. Cyberpunk extrapolates from our present culture, which is inundated by advertising, propaganda, spin, and social engineering, tenets that are already in existence, and intensifies them. Heath elaborates that “it was universally assumed that the future would be some kind of post-scarcity socialism, not information hypercapitalism” (*Ibid.*, 2) when the movie came out in 1982, two years before the publication of Gibson's seminal novel *Neuromancer*. Back then people still believed that the human condition

would transform for the better over time. There was still a widespread belief in a utopian vision of the future. Now, from the viewpoint of the twenty-first century, the notion that there could ever come into being a form of human society which would transcend our hypercapitalist world order seems hopelessly utopian. Cyberpunk did away with this old conception of the future and thus made the futures it projected appear more realistic. The cyberpunk aesthetic features gigantic urban areas where multicultural multitudes go about their everyday business. In cyberpunk, multinational corporations rule supreme and life is immersed in information technology. Cyberpunk's futures have always been very close to the present of publication, setting its action not centuries or millennia in the future but hardly a few decades. Furthermore, the absence of morals is an important distinguishing feature of cyberpunk SF as well as the appropriation of elements from other genres, such as hard-boiled detective fiction and the thriller genre.

Furthermore, the cyberpunk imagery incorporates, among other things, “cyberspace-addicted outlaw hackers, world-controlling mega-conglomerates that have replaced governments, and malignant artificially intelligent electronic viruses that run rampant inside global networks” (Dinello, 162). Cyberpunk is uniformly dystopian. There are no cyberpunk utopias. The futures of cyberpunk are always even worse than the present at the time of writing was. Furthermore, the “cyber half of the neologism suggests [a] dystopian post-Fordist apparatus of control” (Moylan (2010), 85). Cybernetics is the leading science of postmodernity and Punk Rock with its pastiche-like ensembles and intertextual melanges in music form is a distinctly postmodern subculture.

Samuel Delany's *Dahlgren* (1975), Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electrical Sheep?*, and William Burroughs's *The Wild Boys: A Book of the Dead* (1971) are often considered as forerunners of the genre of cyberpunk. Thomas Pynchon's science-fictional postmodernism is another literary precursor of cyberpunk SF. *The Matrix* (1999) was the first highly successful cyberpunk film. However, there have been many movies between *Bladerunner* and *The Matrix* which endorsed a cyberpunk aesthetics. Furthermore, “cyberpunk has exercised a major influence in the realm of comic books and graphic novels; Japanese comics (*manga*) and animated films (*animé*) have show[n] a strong cyberpunk influence as well” (italics in original; Booker/Thomas, 11), as exemplified by the films *Akira* (1988) and *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), both of which are adaptations of Japanese cyberpunkish manga stories.

According to Roberts, cyberpunk prominently “deals with human and

machine hybridity” (Roberts (2010), 214). Vint defines cyberpunk as a “literature of anxiety regarding the consequences of technology invading the body” (Vint (2010a), 101). Cyborgization is another prominent feature of cyberpunk SF. Many of its characters have been technologically modified and thus embody human/machine hybridity, which is a strongly postmodern topic. “Die Verschmelzung von Mensch und Maschine sowie die kritische Reflexion über die zunehmende Technisierung der Gesellschaft und deren Einfluss auf das Individuum sind Kernthemen des literarischen Cyberpunk” (Gözen, 10). Hollinger demands that “the body's role as the material substrate of the self [and] the corporeal mediator between mind and world” (Ibid., 207) should be emphasized in contemporary SF as an expression of the postmodern notion that subjectivity and language are anchored in reality via the material body. Samuel “Delany sees all cyberpunk as necessarily pro-technology, as a way of seeing that prioritizes the technological over the psychological” (Roberts (2006a), 124). However, psychological verisimilitude never was part of SF's literary arsenal. It can even be argued that the ephemeral, rudimentary depiction of character which has been characteristic of SF since the pulp era was postmodern avant la lettre. Cyberpunk's shallow characters are thus only a continuation of an SF tradition. Cyberpunk definitely displays a distinct fascination with futuristic technology. Conversely, Dinello speaks of cyberpunk's “attack on the fusion of corporate control and high technology” (Dinello, 51). Dinello remarks that cyberpunk and the *Terminator* film series “lin[k] anti-human technology with corporate interests and irresponsibility” (Ibid., 131). Technology in cyberpunk is both liberating and limiting. Thus it can be noted that “cyberpunk articulates a distinctively double-edged attitude to the machine” (Roberts (2006a), 125). Computer technology adds another dimension to the mind/body dichotomy. Cyberspace is depicted as a space which transcends the material, and the physical body is depicted as a burden. To achieve freedom the cyberspace-addicted characters of cyberpunk are totally dependent on the machine. This too is a tenet already existing in the real world driven to extremes in cyberpunk's fictitious futures.

Neuromancer is “a postgeneric fiction [...] drawing freely on a variety of realist, science fictional and supernatural plot elements to create a hybrid narrative that looks hardly anything at all like” SF (Hollinger (2002), 160). It thus mirrors the postmodern dissolution of genre boundaries and displays a distinct intertextuality. It blends Currie's second and third type of postmodern novels, since cyberpunk novels are both intertextual and realist. Cyberpunk fuses the conventions of the hard-boiled noir detective story (both its literary

and its cinematic variant) with classical, extrapolative, 'hard' SF, and the thriller genre: "Im Cyberpunk wurde [...] eine Welt weißer Männer geschaffen, [...] die die Loner-Figuren in den Krimis der Chandler-Tradition zitieren" (Mayerhofer, 34). Thus, "cyberpunk has been widely criticized for reinforcing gender binaries" (Booker/Thomas, 92).

Cyberpunk clearly employs the "conventions of genre mystery or techno-thriller, where all events receive conclusive explanation" in the end (Easterbrook, 58). This is an anti-postmodernist element of the genre. Contrary to the postmodern denial of teleology, cyberpunk submits to the genre conventions of the thriller and the detective novel and presents ends which neatly unravel the plot's mysteries and explain away any ambiguity. However, cyberpunk continues SF's paradoxical approach to mimesis. It employs the conventions of realism to depict a wholly fantastic content. Den Tandt thus identifies the "cyber-oriented [SF of] William Gibson [as] postmodern realism" (Den Tandt, 123). Nazare, accordingly, speaks of "Gibson's cautionary realism" (Nazare, 291). On the one hand, cyberpunk is a literature of cognitive estrangement, on the other, it serves as an almost literal description of our contemporary reality and is thus a realist genre as well. "*Neuromancer* [...] is postmodern in the way it combines and implodes genres" (Kellner (1995), 299) and realist in matters of style. It can thus be considered as the genre which comes closest to incorporating a postmodern form of realism and ultimately as the postmodern genre *per se*.

In *Neuromancer* "the idea of lasting love is a bad joke[, its fictitious world is] dominate[d by] cold cynicism, disingenuous denial, and self-absorbed alienation" (Dinello, 165). It thus mimics both Reaganite reality as well as the 'waning of affect' Jameson considers as typical of postmodernism. Social Darwinism is the ideology which informs cyberpunk's fictitious worlds. Cyberpunk shows us a Social Darwinist future in which neo-liberalism has been elevated to a religion. Capitalism permeates everything in the worlds of cyberpunk SF. It thus mirrors the real world of the present.

According to Kellner, "Gibson is mapping the present from the vantage point of his imagined future, demonstrating the possible consequences of present trends of development" (Kellner (1995), 299). The urbanized worlds of cyberpunk are ruled not by governments but by transnational corporations which are depicted as standing above the law. Cyberpunk's settings are exclusively urban, nature has disappeared from the equation in its futures. In cyberpunk "nature has shriveled and died" (Kellner (1995), 313). Cyberpunk thus thematizes the postmodern problematic of environmental degradation, while its depictions of all-powerful multinational corporations as the source

of both evil and social cohesion deconstruct the problematic of distributive injustice.

In the 1980s, “postmodernist fiction [did] 'catch up' with popular” SF (McHale (1997), 237). Cyberpunk is the culmination of the feedback loop that exists between mainstream postmodernist writing and popular SF writing. “Cyberpunk [SF] can thus be seen [...] *as [SF] which derives certain of its elements from postmodernist mainstream fiction which itself has, in its turn, already been 'science fictionalized' to some [...] degree*” (italics in original; McHale (1992), 229). Cyberpunk draws on the works of prominent postmodernists like Robert Coover, Kurt Vonnegut, William Burroughs, and Thomas Pynchon, who in turn themselves employed the ploys and trappings of pulp-era and 'Golden Age' SF. Cyberpunk in addition harks back to the 'New Wave' of the 1960s and 1970s. Most prominently Samuel R. Delany and J. G. Ballard are among its literary precursors. Delany and Ballard in turn were responsible for the postmodernization of SF. Cyberpunk is thus a prototypical example of that feedback loop existing between postmodernism and SF.

Cyberpunk's near futures can be said to be mimetic of the present age because they are extrapolative, not speculative. Cyberpunk's futures are extrapolations of our current reality and thus display tenets driven to extremes which already exist at present. According to Roberts, SF in general “reflect[s] the issues and concerns of the historical period in which [it] was written” (Roberts (2010), 209). Kellner points out that “cyberpunk [...] depicts the [...] fact of growing discrepancies of wealth and power between rich and poor, the mushrooming underclass, exploding into crime and violence, the growing power of criminal and drug cultures” (Kellner (1995), 320). Criminal subcultures figure prominently in cyberpunk SF as well as large disproportions in the distribution of wealth. Cyberpunk thus takes on the postmodern problematic of distributive injustice.

Cyberpunk “appeared capable of cognitively mapping the conditions of the emerging global order” (Moylan (2010), 82). Nowadays, it has been surpassed by postcyberpunk in the literary field while our reality's dystopian leanings in many respects outdo the writers of cyberpunk SF. Graham Murphy and Vint emphasize cyberpunk's “continued relevance [...] for understanding our current material reality” (Ibid., xvii). Cyberpunk mirrors the world in which it has been created. Without the neo-conservative counterrevolution the genre could not have been conceived. Cyberpunk does not question the totalization of the reign of the market but accepts it as a given and even imagines new forms in which the market could penetrate human consciousness. However, classical cyberpunk was politically ambiguous, or even apolitical, whereas

postcyberpunk is more politically outspoken.

6.4 POSTCYBERPUNK

Cyberpunk constitutes the sixth stage of Jameson's categorization of SF. Let us now turn to the seventh and latest phase of SF, which Jameson did not conceptualize and which constitutes the fifth stage in the more common categorizations of the genre. In 2010, Murphy and Vint announce that "cyberpunk is dead. R.I.P." (Murphy/Vint, xii). However, admittedly cyberpunk was "pronounced dead as early as 1989" (Moylan (2010), 84). According to Booker and Thomas, "cyberpunk was declared dead as early as the publication of the *Mirrorshades* anthology" in the year 1986 (italics in original; Booker/Thomas, 114). Cyberpunk thus died at least thrice, just like postmodernism, which has been declared dead over and over again for decades. However, nowadays we are "well on the other side of cyberpunk" (Gordon/Hollinger, 2). This notwithstanding Murphy and Vint insist that "cyberpunk [...] remains relevant amidst its transformation into a more generalized set of practices" in the twenty-first century (Murphy/Vint, xiii).

Recently, cyberpunk has begun to transform, creating new literary genres in the process. One could interpret cyberpunk as the literary reaction to the rise to hegemony of the neo-liberal discourse. Its Social Darwinist near futures correspond completely to the age of unrestrained Reaganite and Thatcherite greed. Postcyberpunk does the same for our Schröders, Blairs, and Bushs, and their successors, and the policies they spawned. In 2014, neo-liberalist rhetoric still informs the hegemonic discourse and neo-liberal politicians continue to shape the field of politics the world over. Therefore, Murphy's and Vint's insistence on cyberpunk's continuing relevance makes perfect sense. Cyberpunk in the late 1990s and early 2000s fanned out into a number of new offshoots. "Der Begriff des Post-Cyberpunk kursiert seit [...] zwanzig Jahren innerhalb des Science-Fiction-Literaturbetriebs" (Gözen, 310). The 1990s brought generic advancements which culminate in what some call 'postcyberpunk'. Postcyberpunk is also referred to as second-wave cyberpunk. "[D]evelopments in postcyberpunk [SF] have been largely dominated by a [certain] group of writers [...] from the mid-1990s to the present" (Booker/Thomas, 11). This group of SF writers represents an amalgam of the complete history of SF up to this point. Their work is marked by the influences of the 'New Wave,' of 'Golden Age' SF, pulp-era SF, and cyberpunk. Richard K. Morgan is an exemplary proponent of said group. His novels constitute a peculiar mixture of cyberpunk and the 'Golden Age' space opera, among other things. In the 1990s, postcyberpunk fiction evolved, often

blending with 'posthuman' SF. Human beings in posthuman SF have evolved nearly beyond recognition. Postcyberpunk embraces the props and trappings of the earlier phases of the SF genre's development. Its attitude is less cynical, the future has been transformed from a dead end to an arena of possible change again. "[P]ostcyberpunk [is] less angst-ridden and alienated than" classical cyberpunk (Booker/Thomas, 117). It is also less cynical and less politically indifferent. Postcyberpunk, moreover, on the whole displays a more positive view on technological progress than cyberpunk did.

Unlike cyberpunk, biopunk is based on biotechnology as opposed to the close relationship between cyberpunk and computer technology. One of its precursors is H. G. Wells's *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896). One of biopunk's most prominent current practitioners is Paul Di Filippo. The "*cyber* of cyberpunk has been replaced with the *bio* that is biopunk" (italics in original; Murphy/Vint, xiv). According to McHale, biopunk "use[s] bio-engineering techniques—cloning, genetic engineering" as its scientific background (McHale (2010), 15). According to Dinello, "biopunk[']s style [grew] out of the cyberpunk tradition" (Dinello, 220). Biopunk is a postcyberpunk genre. Its exemplary protagonist remains (as in cyberpunk) the proverbial "alienated, amoral tough guy" (Ibid.). Biopunk is the literary expression of an age ruled by Foucault's biopolitics as well as of the paramount importance of biotechnology at the present point in time. Some even speak of a biotechnology revolution having taken place. Biopunk "unites the fears of electronic technology with the evil of corporate and military technology" (ibid.) and "embraces the physical" (Ibid.). As opposed to classical cyberpunk the mind is not privileged at the expense of the body in biopunk. The physical, material embodiment of subjectivity in the human body is distinctly foregrounded in postcyberpunk and biopunk. It even incorporates pornographic elements. Biopunk "engineer[s] new reconfigured human types [via] bio-techniques" (McHale (2010), 16). It takes to extremes the existent real-world tenets of bioengineering. Biopunk "motifs revise, update and rationalize classic Gothic-horror motifs" (Ibid., 17). The body is maimed, dismembered, and mutilated. Biopunk employs a "Gothic horror imagery of the disrupted, exploded, or dismembered body" (Ibid., 25), "of [...] cannibalism [and] necrophilia" (Ibid.), and thus permeates the demarcating line separating SF from Horror literature. Richard K. Morgan's 2007 novel *Thirteen* is a good example of this phenomenon.

One of the distinguishing features of postcyberpunk is its blending of genres. It mixes cyberpunk motifs with space opera SF, biopunk, and cyberfiction, or in Gibson's case it blends cyberpunk SF and realism. Many non-SF writers of

contemporary literature belong to the so-called slipstream literature which is distinguished by the employment of diverse SF-related themes and conventions. Cyberfiction is literature which addresses the cybernetic systems of command and control which shape our current societies and which rely on computer technology. According to Vint, there are “three main areas of interest [which are] addressed by [this] emergent cyberpunk/slipstream/postmodernist literature[:] posthumanism[,] the workings of global capitalism[, and] the far-reaching effects of information technology on social existence” (Vint (2010b), 229f). It can thus be noted that what Vint identifies as science-fictional postmodernist fiction is congruent with Currie's third type of the postmodern novel, the category of postmodern realism. There seems to exist a close relationship between contemporary SF and postmodern realism that goes beyond a mere feedback loop between the two as suggested by McHale. Postcyberpunk SF blends the thriller genre with hard-boiled detective fiction, military SF, and the 'Golden Age' space opera. Murphy and Vint for example identify “Morgan's unique [...] fusion of cyberpunk's *noir* and cyber motifs [and] the utopian potential of [SF]” as an exemplary representative of postcyberpunk (italics in original; Murphy/Vint, xvf). Morgan's “vivid and detailed descriptions [of p]hysical and psychological violence [...] demonstrate [hi]s indebtedness to the noir and war genres” (Frelik, 176). Robert A. Heinlein's novel *Starship Troopers* (1959) is a common example of military SF, while Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler are precursors of the genre's hard-boiled elements as well as the film noir of the first half of the twentieth century. The tech-noir film genre prototypically represented by James Cameron's *The Terminator* (1984) also can be said to have had a great influence on the (post)cyberpunk genre. This intertextual mixture of different genre elements of different media is a distinctly postmodern feature. Pawel Frelik calls “Morgan's novels 'cyberpunk,' 'postcyberpunk' or 'cyberpunk-flavored'” (Ibid., 175). The term 'postcyberpunk' is not as widely used as was its predecessor. *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* (2004-5) the animé television series modeled after the eponymous manga is widely considered as prototypical of the postcyberpunk aesthetic just as *Bladerunner* was prototypical of the cyberpunk aesthetic.

Morgan's 2004 novel *Market Forces* (in particular) “revises and challenges at least two major facets of Movement-era [cyberpunk]: the lack of any meaningful attitude towards politics and the issue of (dis)embodiment” (Ibid., 176). However, “Morgan's [...] nihilistic protagonist[s] come across as vehemently apolitical and cynical” (Ibid.) as did the heroes and heroines of cyberpunk as well as film noir's and hard-boiled detective fiction's tough-guy

loner characters. Most of Morgan's novels themselves, nevertheless, are neither politically indifferent nor cynical. There are distinct utopian impulses hidden in Morgan's prose. Frelik speaks of "Morgan's embrace of the utopian potential" of SF (Frelik, 180). While cyberpunk's characters "were mostly race-blind and [its] heroes uniformly white" (Frelik, 176), Morgan's protagonists are people of color, or have an ethnic background, and he explicitly addresses the issue of racism in his works as well as class as a meaningful social reality. Frelik castigates "the political indifference of classic cyberpunk" (Ibid., 183). Conversely, "Morgan [...] ultimate[ly] embrace[s a] revolutionary rhetoric" most prominently in *Market Forces* (Ibid., 182). While classical cyberpunk valued the mind over the body, "Morgan clearly celebrates [the] inescapable presence [...] of the flesh" (Frelik, 186). His protagonists all are physical beings who enjoy their sexuality. This fact is emphasized by "the degree of attention the body receives in [Morgan's fictions. This, g]iven the setting and genre conventions[,] translates into very graphic[,] 'intimate' [...] descriptions of physical violence [and] sexual scenes" (Frelik, 185). The emphasis on sex and violence is another story element that was already present in film noir.

According to Neil Easterbrook, Gibson's 2003 novel *Pattern Recognition* "provid[es] a concise reflection on [...] the nature of postcyberpunk SF" (Easterbrook, 47). However, Gibson's late work does not belong to the realm of SF anymore. It thus does not belong to the genre of postcyberpunk. Gibson has moved his prose into the slipstream of science-fictional postmodern fiction. Easterbrook remarks that "*Pattern Recognition* [is] Gibson's first truly postmodern novel" (italics in original; Ibid., 60) and "a postcyberpunk novel" as well (Ibid.). The latter judgment however collides with the genre conventions of postcyberpunk as formulated above. Gibson's Bigend-trilogy, his three works which were published after the millennium, are all situated in a present-day setting and eschew all other nova which commonly make a work part of the SF genre. Moreover, said novels blend cyberpunk and realist writing in a way which transcends SF. With *Pattern Recognition* "Gibson [...] has moved from fictional futures towards the present" (Holz, 110). His last three novels, *Pattern Recognition*, *Spook Country* (2007), and *Zero History* (2010), all take place in the present. The latter three books form a trilogy, which is held together by the recurrence of some of its key characters, e.g., Hubertus Bigend is featured in all three books. Therefore, I suggest calling said three novels the Bigend-trilogy. Gibson in his most recent works has left the SF genre and instead writes a peculiar postmodern realism which eschews all SF motifs, while its stories feature enough technological trappings

to justify calling it cyberfiction.

Hoepker attests to the changes within the slipstream, science-fictional postmodern literature: Many mainstream authors have produced works which can be “characterized as clearly science fictional, 'poaching' subjects of technoscientific extrapolation in ways that would have been unlikely a few years earlier” (Hoepker, 225). She gives Michel Houellebecq as an example of such a 'poacher'. There are more, Chuck Palahniuk, Paul Auster, P. D. James, and Cormac McCarthy prominently among them. Gibson is a striking example of the exactly opposite development. He moved from being an author of cyberpunk SF to creating postmodern realist novels which still feature technological props, only that these props are items from the real world.

7. PHENOMENOLOGY

7.1 PAUL AUSTER: *IN THE COUNTRY OF LAST THINGS*

The novels of the Phenomenology chapter are going to be investigated in chronological order according to their date of publication, tracing the developments of the SF genre over the last three decades. Paul Auster's *In the Country of Last Things* from 1987 is the oldest of the novels dealt with in this study. *In the Country of Last Things* is an epistolary dystopian SF novel. Furthermore, it exemplifies the characteristics that Moylan attributes to the critical or postmodern dystopia. It foregoes the totalizing tendencies of the classical dystopia, it leaves open a space of possibility, and abandons the plot structure characteristic of the typical twentieth-century dystopia.

McHale's division between speculative and extrapolative SF can only be applied to the text rudimentarily. *In the Country of Last Things* is definitely a work of soft SF, since it deals with the social consequences the onset of scarcity could have in a place like New York and foregoes any thematization of the role technology could play in the development of society. It can be inferred from the story that the text projects a speculative future, since it suggests that there has been a singular event in the past of the story which has turned the world of the novel into a dystopia. The novel features many of the stock topics of dystopia as given by Mohr, such as overpopulation, degeneration, and an authoritarian regime that oppresses the masses. The novel thus is a hybrid of speculative soft SF, the epistolary novel, and the postmodern dystopia. It can therefore be classified as belonging to Currie's second type of postmodern novels, i.e., it is a genre-bending intertextual novel. Nevertheless, the text also displays elements which could be read as grounds for classifying it as a work of postmodern realism.

“By using historical sources, especially descriptions of the Warsaw Ghetto and

the siege of Leningrad 1942-44, and by projecting these elements into New York, Auster has created a dystopic science fiction setting” (Springer, 134). The novel projects a dystopian near-future SF scenario consisting of these components of twentieth-century history. Therefore, it “belongs to what Brian McHale has called ‘postmodernist futures’” (italics in original; *Ibid.*, 135), i.e., its future thematizes the postmodern condition. Paul Auster is widely considered as an exemplary postmodern writer and, “[a]lthough Auster has employed modernist techniques, critics have described th[e] tex[t in question] as postmodern” (Martin, 22). Futuristic dystopia is one of the nova that according to Roberts are typical of SF literature, and SF in turn is arguably the representative literature of late capitalism and thus of the postmodern condition. The fact that the text imagines the future as a grim dystopia is in accordance with the tenets of postmodern literary theory, as is its problematization of the role of language, and the fact that its plausible future is made of elements of twentieth-century history, thereby exemplifying the notion that SF is more retrospective than prognostic and giving voice to the postmodern notion that all literature can achieve in the present age is to provide a history of the present. The novel thus constitutes a prototypically postmodern text.

As Suvin points out, “dystopia has been and remains more or less radical anti-capitalism” (Suvin, 385). Auster's story can thus be read as a sustained critique of late capitalism. Although the story's action takes place in an unspecified future its subject nonetheless is contemporary. In the novel, “Auster [...] scathingly critiques his hometown” (Martin, 158), i.e., the city of New York. The problematic of distributive injustice is explicitly addressed in the text through the abject poverty in which wide swaths of the city's population live. In the world of the novel, the majority of the population of the unnamed metropolis is reduced to living a life as it is common in the Third World. The struggle to attain the bare, most basic necessities of life characterizes life in this postmodern metropolis. The text thus mirrors the condition in which at least one third of the world's population in the present has to live. Furthermore, “Auster critiques the mindset of contemporary society in *In the Country of Last Things*. He asserts that spirituality and the desire for self-knowledge have been replaced by a detrimental craving for insignificant objects” (italics in original; *Ibid.*, 160). The mindset of the postmodern consumerist subject is criticized in the text by the depiction of a world which is utterly devoid of the amenities of consumer capitalism. Consumerism has not survived the onset of scarcity and is thus shown as an escapist disavowal of reality. The novel overall emphasizes the role of intersubjectivity in human

relations and thus critiques the paramount role monetary value plays in consumer capitalism in which every conceivable thing has a price tag attached to it.

Like dystopian SF in general, the novel can be said to deal with the present from the viewpoint of a fictitious future. "By using materials from the history of the twentieth century, the novel is oriented towards the past. At the same time, though, the author extrapolates from his materials into a time which appears like a (near) future" (Ibid., 138). The story's near-future setting dovetails with the conventions of cyberpunk SF. *In the Country of Last Things* was published three years after Gibson's seminal cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer*. Cyberpunk's near-future dystopias were very much en vogue at the time when Auster wrote his novel. It can thus be taken for granted that Auster was aware of first-wave cyberpunk and the conventions of the genre and that he employed the SF elements in the novel on purpose and consciously aimed to create a SF novel.

According to Carsten Springer, "the city [in the story is] a metaphor for postmodern life" (Springer, 134): "Auster's novel is an allegory [...] on the 'postmodern condition'. The novel's setting represents postmodernity" (Ibid., 141). Auster's novel can thus be considered as representative of the postmodern condition. Therefore, although the novel sticks to the conventions of modernist representation, its subject matter is very much postmodern, which makes it possible to categorize the novel under Currie's third type of postmodern novels as well; i.e., it is also a work of postmodern realism. All in all, the novel is best described as a hybrid of Currie's third and second type. Furthermore, *In the Country of Last Things* can also be read as an example of what McHale called 'the science fictionalization of postmodern literature'. While Auster's other works predominantly draw upon the conventions of the detective novel, this novel employs the conventions of the SF genre. "*In the Country of Last Things* differs from Auster's preceding and subsequent works in several [other] major aspects. Firstly, the narrator-protagonist of the novel is female; secondly, the story takes place in an imaginary setting" (italics in original; Springer, 133). Thirdly, the novel can be read as an explicit critique of late capitalism, while Auster's other works, which also thematize the impact of the postmodern condition on the human subject, forego such an explicit thematization of the postmodern problematic of distributive injustice.

The story's first-person narrator is a twenty-two-year-old woman named Anna Blume. Anna Blume, coincidentally or on purpose, also is the name of a poem by the German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters published shortly after the end

of World War I, in the year 1919. Said poem is “a parody of a love poem, an emblem of the chaos and madness of the era, and [...] a harbinger of a new poetic language”^{xliii}. The protagonist's name can thus be interpreted as an intertextual reference to this historical example of experimental poetry. It furthermore serves to establish a connection between the entropic chaos of the world of the text and the cataclysm of the First World War. The reader does not learn the name of the protagonist, however, until the first half of the story has already been told (p. 95). Furthermore, the narrator's age can only be deduced by intentionally vague hints dropped throughout the story. In fact, it is only at the very end of the novel that one can effectively deduce the narrator's age. Conversely, her sex is established on the very first page of the novel (p. 1). The story purports to originally have been a letter written by Anna Blume to a nameless addressee. Therefore, introductory phrases like “she wrote” (p. 1) or “she continued” (p. 39) are scattered throughout the text. However, the first-person narrator's point of view clearly dominates the narrative. Blume's fictional addressee only contributes less than half a dozen of such phrases as those quoted above to the story and nothing else. Blume frequently refers to the act of writing the text, thus also incorporating metafictional elements as it was typical of the literary works of high postmodernism. Brendan Martin wrongly interprets the few instances in which the narrative voice refers to itself in the third person as emblematic for the narrator's fractured sense of selfhood: The “opening words of [the novel] contribute to the degree of confusion associated with Auster's fictional work. The first person narrative voice is Blume's, but Blume refers to herself as both 'she' and 'I'. Due to her traumatic experiences Blume may be distanced from her sense of selfhood” (Martin, 19). Conversely, the few instances where the fictional addressee takes over the narration for one short phrase obviously are the reason for the changes from the first person singular to the third person. Blume is not referring to herself in the third person. “The first fifth of the novel [...] establishes the dystopian setting” (Springer, 133). In the unnamed city where the story takes place everything “is in constant flux” (p. 1). Its residents can “take nothing for granted” (p. 1f). This reflects the ephemerality characteristic of the postmodern condition. It also exemplifies the notion that radical change has become a quotidian experience under the postmodern. Harvey's 'time-space compression' characterizes the narrator's experience of reality. Furthermore, the world as projected by the text shows postmodern life from the perspective of the poor third of earth's current population. It thereby tackles the problematic of distributive injustice. The novel shows life from the point of view of postmod-

ernity's rejects, the one third of the populace that is excluded from the society of the spectacle. *In the Country of Last Things* is an "investigation of [...] the numerous abandoned and displaced inhabitants of New York City[, the] ignored underclass" (Martin, 114). The novel gives voice to the rejects of postmodernism, in particular to that part of the population which has to live without a place of residence, i.e., the homeless. "In his projection of the contemporary city, Auster views homelessness as the norm rather than the exception" (Ibid., 153). The majority of the city's inhabitants are homeless. According to Martin, "Blume's experiences are similar to those of some inhabitants of contemporary New York City" (Ibid., 145). In 1987, after six years of Reaganomics, the number of the homeless in the US had exploded. Auster's postapocalyptic homeless thus reflect a very real real-world phenomenon. In *In the Country of Last Things*, the condition to which the latter part of the population has been reduced has become the way of life of the majority. Food is scarce, there is no electricity, no plumbing, and no protection by the law (p. 16); "the nameless and ruined city [in which the action takes place is represented] as a place of entropic disintegration" (Springer, 133). This thematization of entropy as the end stage of consumer capitalism explicitly deconstructs the Extropy Myth. The novel exemplifies the self-destructive tendencies of our current totalitarian market order. The city in the story is a dystopian representation of the postmodern metropolis: "The crucial point about the city is that nothing in it is stable or predictable; everything is uncertain" (Ibid., 134). The novel thus exemplifies the impact of a state of constant radical change that Jameson deems characteristic of postmodern society and the representation of which he considers as one of the prime subjects of postmodern literature. It thus, on the one hand, also demonstrates the dysfunctionality of the metanarratives of modernism and, on the other hand, thematizes the impending necessity of justice as value that is neither outmoded nor suspect. Furthermore, postmodern fragmentation has become literal in *In the Country of Last Things*. The world of the novel is dominated by "a constant process of eradication of all certainties" (Martin, 154). In the city, everything is falling apart, "things disintegrate into muck, or dust, or scraps" (p. 35). This further emphasizes the ephemerality characteristic of the postmodern condition. In addition, postmodernism's eclectic arbitrariness is thematized by the utter contingency which rules the lives of the city's inhabitants. The story addresses the abolishment of the master narratives of modernism which could give sense to the mess that is the postmodern world through the very arbitrariness that rules the world as projected by the text.

The only thing that is certain in the world of the novel is death: “Death is no longer an abstraction, but a real possibility that haunts each moment of life” (p. 15). The novel thus takes part in the paramount preoccupation with death that McHale deems characteristic of postmodern literature as such. “Annihilation is the only certainty in this hostile landscape” (Springer, 158). The only thing that remains certain under the postmodern nihilistic onslaught is the creatural certainty of physical finality. Blume lists the different 'death cults' which have come into existence in the city. There are for instance “the Runners” who by running until they literally drop commit suicide on the streets (p. 11). Then there are “the Leapers” who jump off tall buildings (p. 13). Furthermore, there are “the Euthanasia Clinics” (p. 14) in which for a certain amount of money one is injected with lethal poison and dies without pain. Moreover, there are the “Assassination Clubs” (p. 14) where one orders an assassin who will kill one at an undetermined point of time in the future. However, “[m]ore common are the solitary deaths” (p. 13) which take place in private. The threat of death is ubiquitous in the world of the novel and a sudden, relatively painless death has itself become a commodity which is bought and sold. “A clever person can live quite well off the deaths of others” (p. 13). In the world of the novel even death has been commodified, which represents the total commodification of late capitalism. Death as the universal leveler of the human condition plays a paramount role in the world of the text. Its omnipresence reflects the postmodern notion of the body as the incorporation of subjectivity. The creatural finality of the physical realm has become the defining feature of life in Auster's plausible future. The text can thus be read as an allegory on the human condition under late capitalism which has rendered suspect all values that could serve to transcend the realm of the physical and the instant gratification characteristic of postmodern hyper-consumerism.

The novel depicts a post-apocalyptic world after the onset of scarcity: “hunger is a curse that comes every day, and the stomach is a bottomless pit, a hole as big as the world” (p. 5). The role hunger plays in the story further emphasizes the importance of the physical to the postmodern condition. It also capitalizes the real-world situation of the hundreds of millions of people who starve under our current new world order of late capitalism. The city which is “the central location of [the novel] is both a replica of contemporary New York City as well as an extreme vision of a possible, yet recognizable future. Auster refers to this bleak and degraded environment, and maintains that he reflects the level of disintegration evident within [the] New York” of the real world (Martin, 153). Furthermore, Auster's fictional postmodern

metropolis reflects the real-world situation in the mega-cities of the Southern hemisphere. All the references to places within the story are fictional, counterfactual. The city that is described does not exist. However, it is also more than clear that the city of the story is a stand-in for Auster's New York. Auster's text extrapolates in accordance with likelihood and necessity what it would look like if the predicament that is currently common of the metropolises of the global South would be inflicted at some future point in time on a metropolis of the hegemonic center. In Auster's nameless city, "[b]eatings [and] murder [...] are commonplace" (p. 6), "and babies refuse to be born" (p. 7). In addition to the impossibility of reproduction which robs the society depicted of any possible future in the world of the story the "law of the jungle is in operation, and society has become cutthroat" (Martin, 155). Capitalist competition has been totalized in the world of the story; every aspect of life has become a struggle between life and death. In Auster's novel the Hobbesian condition in which man is man's wolf has turned into reality. It thus represents the reign of the neo-liberal homo oeconomicus in its most pure form.

A fatalistic surrender to contingent fate has become commonplace and apathetic apoliticism is the basic attitude of the general populace: "there are no politics in the city as such. The people are too hungry and too distracted" (p. 17). Governments change rather frequently in the story but without direct consequences for the city's inhabitants apart from heightened oppression by the police. This inconsequence of political change in the world of the novel corresponds to the wide-spread belief in the contemporary that elections do not change anything, which is one of the reasons given by the apolitical postmodern subject for not partaking in the democratic process. The emphasis the governments in the story lay on the executive branch reflects the real-world practice of authoritarian populism of the New Right when it gained power. In Auster's novel, "dystopia [has] becom[e] the method for an allegorical description of the living conditions of the postmodern present" (Springer, 135), including the political apathy of the postmodern citizen in our current postdemocratic age.

The workings of Auster's postapocalyptic landscape are explained in the first part of the novel. "The first part of the novel consists of short and fragmentary passages; the establishment of the postmodern entropic setting" (Springer, 140). The iconoclastic novelty of the postmodern condition is allegorically addressed throughout the text: "[I]f as we know it has ended" (p. 20) and "the old assumptions are so much air and emptiness" (p. 20). The first half of the story constitutes a detailed description of life in the city. For

instance, to take care of the human waste the local government sends “the Fecalists” (p. 30), who collect the excrement in the morning. This is one of the two major services provided by the government to the populace. Excrement is used as a power source in the novel. “Each census zone has its own power plant, and these are entirely run on waste” (p. 30). In the world of the novel, “[s]hit is a serious business, and everyone caught dumping it in the street is arrested. With your second offense, you are automatically given the death penalty” (p. 30). In an ironic expansion of the capitalist order which turns even the most creatural part of the human existence into a commodity, excrement is a serious business in Auster's postmodern metropolis. This again reflects the total commodification of postmodern capitalism. Furthermore, the notion of excrement serving as a power source can be interpreted as an ironic reference to the real-world dependency of the First World on fossil fuel. The draconian punishments for offenders hint at the existence of an executive of Orwellian proportions which constitutes another stock topic of the dystopian novel. There are labor camps to which offenders are sent in the world of the text. No one knows what to expect from them because no one has ever come back from such a labor camp to tell his/her story. The ubiquitous threat of deportation for contingent reasons is definitely reminiscent of the real-world Warsaw Ghetto as is the existence of an authority which wields absolute power over the lives of the inhabitants. The government of Auster's postmodern metropolis has been reduced to the executive. Apart from the collection of excrement and the enforcement of its rather arbitrary laws the government provides one more service to the populace: “Every morning, the city sends out trucks to collect the corpses. This is the chief function of the government” (p. 17) in the story. The executive as the sole remainder of a once democratic system of the past in the story is represented by the brutal and malign police force. The police are corrupt and exclusively function to oppress the inhabitants of the city by employing sheer force. This postdemocratic rump state and its penal system in the story are a clear reference to the American prison system as well as to the Russian Gulags and the concentration camps of the third Reich. The prison-industrial complex has become the dominant feature of governance in Auster's world in which one gets sent to so-called labor camps for the most ludicrous of offenses which in turn mirrors the development of the prison system in the US since the declaration of 'the war on drugs'.

The story is told from the point of view of an outsider. Blume is not an original inhabitant of the city. She has journeyed to the “postapocalyptic, yet ostensibly, primitive country” (Martin, 10) that is the city from some

unspecified location outside of the city. She has come from a better-off place by ship to search for her lost brother William. However, her quest for her missing brother is thwarted from the moment she sets foot in the city: "A detective-like search for her brother [...] is rendered impossible by the environment" (Springer, 135). Her brother William has gone to the city to work as a journalist there. William's employer has equipped Anna with a photograph of William's replacement, a man called Samuel Farr. Her quest is to find Farr and thereby locate her missing brother. This quest is referred to throughout the story, although Anna has literally no chance of finding either of the two in the postmodern metropolis to which she has so foolhardy relocated. The motive of the quest in the story is thus negated from the start. The notion of an overarching search for truth or enlightenment which could give sense to the happenings of the story is thus denied by the author. The novel therefore fits pretty neatly in the postmodern canon as categorized by Leypoldt. The fact that the text projects the existence of an outside to the metropolis that's the sole locus of the story's action in which life is better also hints at the existence of a space of possibility for a better society. This feature is one of the arguments for classifying the text as a postmodern dystopia in accordance with Moylan's typology of said genre of fiction.

"The environment to which Blume relocates symbolizes an end of history" (Martin, 156), not in Fukuyama's utopian sense of a global triumph of liberal democracy and consumer capitalism, but in the postmodern sense of cultural entropy as the end stage of the developments society is currently going through. The city of the story is a culmination of what could happen to the world if the two postmodern problematics, the problematic of distributive injustice and the problematic of environmental degradation, continue unchecked. *In the Country of Last Things* thus thematizes and deconstructs the Entropy Myth. The world projected by the novel could very well be the final outcome of current tendencies. Furthermore, the fact that the story's backdrop has been forged out of real-world occurrences, namely the German siege of Leningrad and the Warsaw Ghetto, highlights the notion that the capitalist system of the real world incorporates very real apocalyptic possibilities. Auster's future prophesies a recurrence of past aberrations of monopoly capitalism in a new guise. The fact that Auster projects a future that very closely resembles the past is a reference to the dystopian topos that humankind is unable to learn from its past mistakes.

The story continues by describing the life of the narrator in the city. She soon starts to work as a scavenger. To do so she has to buy a certificate which allows her to work as such. Her work consists of walking the streets of the city

with a shopping cart, looking for salvageable trash which she then sells “to [...] private entrepreneurs who convert these odds and ends into new goods that are eventually sold on the open market” (p. 33). She moves through the city like a shopper in a shopping mall, although her objective is not to shop with abandon but to invest the discarded remnants of this future society with a new function and to turn them into commodities endowed with an exchange value. Besides turning excrement into a source of energy, in the world of the story trash is commodified as well, a state of affair that mimetically mirrors the real lives of countless inhabitants of the global South. The scavengers are under constant threat of being robbed by “the Vultures—scavengers who make their living by stealing from other scavengers” (p. 37). The novel depicts a society in which neo-liberal competition has turned cutthroat. The dog-eat-dog world of the neo-liberal homo oeconomicus has turned total in the world as projected by the text. The vultures that prey on the scavengers are a further exemplification of the late-capitalist rule of Social Darwinism under which man becomes man's wolf. Furthermore, the scavenger is the natural inhabitant of a world shaped by entropic contingency. “To arrange oneself with the chaos means here to sort through the fragments and to try and impose a certain order on the postmodern disorder” (Springer, 136). Anna gathers odds and ends, fragments of former commodities, which are then turned into objects endowed with an exchange value again. Thus a certain degree of economic order is reintroduced into “the entropic disorder of the city” (Ibid.). The fact that the only source of order depicted in the text springs from the economy is an exemplification of the neo-liberal conception of the market place as the universal arbiter of human relations. The fact that the thus established order in the world of the text is inherently detrimental to the best interests of the majority of individual human beings whose lives it governs highlights the antisocial and inhuman conception of human relations as defined in the Social Darwinist ideology endorsed by the proponents of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism.

In the city nothing goes “as planned” and everything is “the work of pure chance” (p. 43). The contingency of events is clearly highlighted by the story. This utter contingency reflects the anarchy of the global market place as favored by the ideologues of neo-liberalism. Anna's life in the city is a further elaboration of this theme. The story thus defies teleology and narrative closure. After having lived on the streets of the city for several months, by pure chance, Anna meets a woman called Isabel and saves her life, wherefore the latter allows her to live at her apartment, which she shares with her

demented husband called Ferdinand. Thus, Anna is rescued from homelessness by sheer chance. Isabel's and Ferdinand's apartment is the first of the three locations around which the city's postmodern masses clamber in the novel. By naming the couple Isabel and Ferdinand, "Auster makes direct comparisons [to] the exploratory voyage of Christopher Columbus to America [here]. Isabella and Ferdinand, the Spanish monarchs of the late Fifteenth Century, provided the resources necessary for Columbus's quest" (Ibid., 156). However, Anna's exploratory voyage to the city has turned out to be a futile quest. She has spent several months since her arrival as a homeless scavenger. Now she has found a companion in Isabel. Ferdinand, however, is a viciously mean apathetic solipsist who refuses to leave the apartment. He spends his time exclusively by building model ships. Ferdinand has not left the apartment "in over four years [because i]t's all death out there" (p. 52). Ferdinand is "thoroughly disgusted with himself and the world" (p. 53), which is why he only communicates with Isabel and Anna by uttering scathingly mean remarks and insults. Ferdinand is a representative of the "apathetic populace [that] constantly anticipates, and occasionally welcomes, annihilation" (Martin, 156). He constitutes the prototypical postmodern consumer whose apathy borders on autism and solipsism. When Ferdinand tries to rape Anna, the only attempt at performing a proactive deed he undertakes, he is annihilated too. Anna fights off his rape attempt quite easily, but in the last moment refuses to end his life. Instead, she warns him and leaves the apartment to roam the streets until early in the morning. The next morning Ferdinand is dead. There is only one possible explanation: Isabel must have killed him.

Isabel dies of sclerosis and Anna has to leave the apartment because it is violently invaded by armed thugs (p. 84). The third form of violence Žižek discerns, that of physical illness which constitutes a meaningless physical intrusion from within one's own body, is mirrored by the intrusion of the armed thugs into the apartment. There is no sense or meaning to these two forms of intrusion which thus only work to exemplify the reign of contingency in the world of the text. The temporary shelter from life in the city provided by a humane individual is shortly usurped by the dystopian disorder that rules the city and Isabel's compassionate behavior is thus branded as deviant or at least as an exception from the rule. Under late capitalism and in the world of Auster's novel man is man's wolf, which is exemplified by Ferdinand's behavior and the aggressive intrusion of the forces of chance. The intrusion of the armed thugs into Anna's refuge emphasizes the paramount importance of physical violence in the world of text. Žižek's first form of violence is shown

as the true ordering principle of the society as projected by the text, thus highlighting the tremendous degree to which our current world order relies on structural violence.

The disintegration of the lifeworld in the novel results in a parallel disintegration of language. For several weeks after leaving Isabel's apartment Anna tries to escape from the city, but learns that escape has been made impossible because ships are no longer allowed to dock in the city (p. 86). At one point Anna talks with one of the workers engaged in the process of the Sisyphean endeavor of building a Sea Wall that will never be finished to fend off a potential invasion that will never come. The worker is amused by Anna's talking of airplanes. "I don't know what you're talking about, he said. You could get in trouble for spreading that kind of nonsense. The government doesn't like it when people make up stories" (p. 87). The very idea of a "machine that flies through the air and carries people from one place to another" (p. 87) has become extinct in the world of the text. Anna remarks accordingly "that things vanish—but once they vanish, the memory of them vanishes as well" (p. 87). The signifier becomes devoid of the signified and turns into a meaningless assemblage of phonemes: "It is a slow but ineluctable process of erasure. Words tend to last a bit longer than things, but eventually they fade too" (p. 89). Language is engaged in a process of disintegration as well. "Entire categories of objects disappear" (p. 89). The text thus addresses the linguistic turn of postmodern philosophy. Language as the touchstone of postmodern reality disintegrates and negates the possibility of meaning and sense: "Devoid of all meaning, even language is reduced to the level of a series of nonsensical noises" (Martin, 154). In the end, words become "a storm of whirling phonemes, and finally the whole thing just collapses into gibberish. The word 'flowerpot' will make no more sense to you than the word 'splandingo'" (p. 89). Ultimately, the "division of signifier and signified [is] brought to the extreme of approaching a state where language becomes useless and is even annihilated" (Springer, 134). The last things in the novel's title are the last representatives of certain objects in the world. When these disintegrate, as everything in the world of the story eventually does, they will not be replaced but vanish together with their linguistic representation, which thus loses its referent and thereby becomes devoid of meaning. Accordingly, "it becomes increasingly difficult to communicate with anyone" (p. 89). The text thus takes on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which holds that all knowledge is discursively formed and constitutes poststructuralism's approach to language which I have defined as the poststructuralist fallacy above. In the end the text problematizes said

hypothesis via its valuation of human contact over all the other forces governing the world of the text, and language remains the touchstone of intersubjectivity. Its power to grasp reality is thus shored up by the text.

The next location Anna takes refuge in is “the National Library” (p. 94). Meanwhile, a “Terrible Winter” is gathering speed in the background of the story's action (p. 90). As much “as one-third to one-fourth of the population” succumbs to it and dies (p. 92). This 'Terrible Winter' can be read as a stand-in for the pernicious effects climate change has in the real world, especially in the global South which is hit the hardest by them. The novel thus takes on the postmodern problematic of ecological degradation as well. The 'Terrible Winter' is Anna's first winter in the city. On the run from the police Anna enters the National Library building by accident. There she meets a rabbi and the reader learns that Anna herself is Jewish. Furthermore, this is the point of the story where Anna's last name is first revealed to the reader (p. 95). By sheer chance, then, she meets Samuel Farr (p. 99), whom she has sought since the beginning of the story. Farr, it turns out, has no knowledge of Anna's brother William's whereabouts. However, the two decide to pool their resources and live together in Samuel's small room in the library (p. 102) so they can survive the 'Terrible Winter' together. Soon the two fall “deeply and irrevocably in love” (p. 107). In the course of the winter, they “burned hundreds of [...] books to keep [...] warm” (p. 116), while Samuel is working on a book of his own whose subject is the city. The library becomes a refuge and books turn into a source of warmth. No one reads books anymore, but Farr, nonetheless, invests all his energy in writing one, annihilating countless tomes in the process. The use value of literature has been reduced to its capacity of being a source of warmth. This exemplifies the prototypical topos of dystopian fiction of the deterioration of language, while Farr's quest to produce a work of literature himself as well as Blume's letters to an unknown addressee, which make up the body of the text, themselves heighten the status of literature as a possible source for dissent and critical thinking, which in turn is a common topos of dystopian literature as well. The creation of literature is Farr's *raison d'être*, but he destroys numberless texts nevertheless. This paradoxical situation is completely open to interpretation, foregoes explicit evaluation, and is simply presented as a statement of fact by the text. The government in the story does not like people who make up stories and it is wholly unclear why it provides academics like Farr with housing. According to the book, “the scholars [living] in a number of public buildings” (p. 110) are allowed to do so as a consequence “of the Purification Movement that had taken place during the tumult of the previous decade”

(p. 110). That is the only explanation that the novel provides and the only reference to the singular event which has turned the story's world into a dystopia. The miraculous appearance of Samuel Farr is the second *deus ex machina* in the story, the appearance of Isabel in the story being the first. Resulting from Blume's relationship with Farr, an event occurs which hints at the immaculate conception of Christian religious dogma through its wondrous quality: "Shortly after the turn of the year, [Anna] discovered that [she was] pregnant" (p. 117). This constitutes a breach of the very axioms of the story's world in which reproduction has become defunct. "By becoming pregnant, despite her claim that no more children are born in the city, she symbolically surmounts the living conditions of the city" (Springer, 137). Again, as in the case of her alliance with Isabel, human contact provides Anna with an exception to the rule that governs life in the city. "By creating a child together, we had made it possible for a new world to begin" (p. 117). However, "symptomatic of life in this barren zone, the couple are ultimately doomed" (Martin, 159). Anna loses her child and the couple is separated by adverse circumstances. Anna is lured into a "human slaughterhouse" (p. 125) where she by accident sees "human bodies hanging naked from meathooks, and [a] man with a hatchet [...] lopping off the limbs of [a] corpse" (p. 125). Alarmed by this sight Anna escapes by jumping through a closed window. The force of the impact results in a miscarriage. The notion of cannibalism as exemplified by the image of a human slaughterhouse has an allegorical meaning. Cannibalism is the ultimate metaphor for the unbridled and insatiable desire that fuels consumer capitalism. By using other human beings as a source for sustenance the slaughterhouse men have totalized the commodifying logic of late capitalism. Not only have "commodities [...] acquired monumental significance" (Martin, 155), but "individuals and emotions have assumed the level of commodities" (Ibid., 157) as well. Cannibalism represents a consumerism that has been driven to its furthest extremes. Anna's abortive pregnancy at one and the same time explicates the text's blending of dystopian and utopian elements which makes it fall under the label of the critical dystopia as theorized by Moylan. While her miscarriage seems to exemplify the futility of hope that governs life in the text, the very fact that she has managed to get pregnant at all hints at the possibility of a better future that could transcend the limitations imposed on the inhabitants of the city in the story. The fact that this utopian glimpse results from the most principal form of human interaction highlights the over-all importance the novel eventually contributes to human intersubjectivity. Anna's budding hopes are thus thwarted again by adverse and contingent

circumstance. However, Anna's life is then saved again by a third *deus ex machina* in the form of an altruistic community of humane individuals. The existence of such individuals serves as a contrast that highlights the cutthroat competition that governs life in the city. The text offers a glint of hope here too in the existence of a society of individuals who resist the logic of commodification and base their lives on altruistic premises. After her fall from the window Anna comes to at "Woburn House" (p. 127), the third principal location of the story. Woburn House is a shelter for homeless people where Anna is nursed until she has recovered from her jump out of the window. When she comes to the first time she learns that she has miscarried (p. 128). She sends for Sam, but, as it turns out, the library has meanwhile burned down and Sam is missing and presumed dead (p. 129). The destruction of literature that Sam and Anna undertook by burning books to keep warm has thus been completed. Literature's impact on human life is thus negated by the back story, while its importance is emphasized by the text's metafictional organizing principle, i.e., the fact that the text purports to consist of letters written by Anna to an unnamed addressee. The fact that these letters have arrived at their point of destination emphasizes the potential importance of literary art to the human condition. The act of writing is thematized several times over the course of the novel. Blume describes the process of writing as follows: "God knows why I persist. I don't believe there is any way this letter can reach you. It's like calling out into the blankness, like screaming into a vast and terrible blankness" (p. 183). Her letter, however, has reached its destination. "Blume triumphs. Her notebooks arrive at their intended destination" (Martin, 19). This 'triumph' gives the novel's ending an optimistic note that counteracts the novel's overall gloomy setting and makes the text a critical dystopia. However, at this point of the text Anna's life has again been destroyed: "everything from now on would be aftermath—a dreadful, posthumous sort of life, a life that would go on happening to me, even though it was finished" (p. 137). Life in the story is something that happens to you, not something you actively partake of. The city's inhabitants "are unable to oppose the sinister logic of the city, and blindly accept that they are ultimately powerless" (Martin, 157). Life in the city is dominated by "complacency, abject misery and apathetic surrender" (ibid.). The story's world thus mirrors the politically apathetic shallow consumerism that characterizes the postdemocratic society of the spectacle. As Anna recovers she befriends Woburn House's head nurse and proprietor Victoria Woburn. Victoria is the novel's third *deus ex machina*. Again Anna is provided with a refuge from the city by sheer chance. Victoria offers Anna to stay at Woburn

House and work there. Anna accepts. Her work consists of conducting interviews with the numerous applicants who want a place in the house. "Woburn House was a haven, an idyllic refuge from the misery and squalor around it" (p. 139). Anna listens to the terrible stories of the various applicants whose lives invariably are dominated by "strings of bad luck, the miscalculations, the growing weight of circumstances. Our lives are no more than the sum of manifold contingencies, and no matter how diverse they might be in their details, they all share an essential randomness in their design" (p. 143f). The lives of the city dwellers are governed by contingent misery. Once more Anna finds protection from the entropic disorder of the city in interpersonal contact. In the course of her stay at Woburn, Anna starts an affair with Victoria (p. 158). Her relationship with Victoria serves Anna as shelter from a world characterized by "[s]tarvation, murder, [and] the worst forms of cruelty" (p. 147). The fact that she has a same-sex relationship furthermore serves to deconstruct the heteronormativity that was characteristic of Western society at the date of publication and which remains inherent to the ideology of neo-conservatism.

Again Anna's refuge is only temporary. Woburn House disintegrates as well and there is no money left to sustain the house's operation. Anna's third shelter from the harsh realities of her world is shortly sucked up by entropy as well. However, during one of Anna's interview sessions with the applicants for a place at Woburn House Anna is reunited with Sam (p. 160). Woburn House's funds meanwhile continue to deteriorate: "the distinction between Woburn House and the rest of the city was growing smaller. We were being swallowed up" (p. 171). After Sam has recovered from the effects of starvation he takes up work in Woburn House as well. In the end, Woburn House consumes itself as its residents use everything as firewood and strip bare the house's skeleton. The small pocket of possibility to lead a decent life deteriorates quickly under the onslaught of postmodern contingency. The fact that the two lovers have been reunited, however, gives rise to hope. Notwithstanding the general destruction that defines life in the city, intersubjective contact retains the possibility of providing postmodern life with sense and meaning. At the end of the story, the remaining residents of Woburn House are planning on leaving the city. It remains open if they are going to make it or not but Anna is optimistic; "the novel's ending, despite its openness, can be concluded to indicate the protagonist's survival" (Springer, 138). The novel thus leaves room for hope for the better and can thus be categorized under the heading of Moylan's postmodern dystopia. The story's moral ambiguity and its open ending can be considered as further exemplification of Moylan's

literary concept. The novel emphasizes the importance of intersubjectivity in the face of a dystopian world. “The contact to other people allow[ed] Blume, despite the hostile postmodern environment, to solve the crises which threaten her identity” (Ibid., 141). The only refuge from the harsh postapocalyptic city are other people and intersubjectivity. “Thus, the 'last things' of the title can also be understood to refer to the 'most important things:' humaneness and contact” (Ibid.).

7.2 KURT VONNEGUT: *HOCUS POCUS*

Robert Tally calls Kurt Vonnegut's *Hocus Pocus* from 1990 “a postapocalyptic tale of human frailty” (Ibid., 149). Nevertheless, Tally fails to take into account the political dimension of the novel. Jerome Klinkowitz rightfully points out that *Hocus Pocus* “is surely the most immediately political of Vonnegut's novels” (Klinkowitz, 148). *Hocus Pocus* can be said to be a genuine anti-war novel, a fact that Tally curiously enough completely overlooks. Chris Glover remarks that “our common destiny as the playthings of fate and the creations of our own stupidity figures heavily in [Vonnegut's] novels” (Glover, 194). This is especially true of Vonnegut's penultimate novel *Hocus Pocus*. It is highly political in its explicit condemnation of the prison-industrial complex and in the unflattering picture it draws of the equally momentous military-industrial complex that continues to shape US foreign policy in the new millennium.

The story, seen from its date of publication, takes place in the future, mainly in the years 1991 and 1999. The frame story is temporally located in the year 2001, eleven years into the future from the time of publication. Its metafictional commentary, its disrupted time line, its mixture of fact and fiction, its intertextuality, its incorporation of visual images into the text (e.g., drawings of tombstones), the fragmentation of the text into a set of short anecdotes, its generic hybridity, and its resistance to any attempts of clear-cut generic categorization make *Hocus Pocus* a postmodernist work of fiction. Furthermore, Vonnegut's stories in general defy teleology and *Hocus Pocus* does not constitute an exception from this rule. *Hocus Pocus* is a conglomerate of anecdotes which take place in several different timelines, and there is no overall telos to the story. In fact the story ridicules the very idea of the existence of such a telos. The story highlights “THE COMPLICATED FUTILITY OF IGNORANCE” (p. 11) and displays its protagonists as the “severely limited lunkers, not to say crazy lunkers, they really were” (p. 167). As Glover remarks in above citation, this condition of limitation, in Vonnegut's work, applies to the human species as a whole. The events of the story from the very beginning are characterized by a marked contingency and its protagonist

is characterized by utter passivity which according to Zeißler is a characteristic feature of the postmodern dystopia.

Eugene Debs Hartke, *Hocus Pocus*'s first-person narrator constitutes such a highly limited individual. He very much is a plaything of fate. The story of his life boils down to a sequence of interrelated anecdotes which transcend his own volition. He joined the Army because his father said so. He becomes a teacher at a college for the learning disabled because an associate of his offers him a job there at a convenient point of time. He becomes a teacher at the Athena prison facility by mere chance as well and is accused of being the mastermind behind “the biggest prison break in American history” (p. 36) that later on occurs there by accident as well. His life was “booby-trapped” from the beginning (p. 40). The narrator stresses this point when he insists on “telling young people to prepare for failure rather than success, since failure is the main thing that is going to happen to them” (p. 45). The novel is not only a story of human frailty but also very much a narrative about human misfortune, both fictitious (like the events of Hartke's personal history) and real (as the many historical examples that are being referenced throughout the text). Eugene Debs Hartke ultimately is “a pawn of fate” (Morse, 154), a creation of his own stupidity. Every single one of the very few choices he makes himself throughout the story turns out to not only not be in his best interest but to be totally averse to it. The incapacity of the narrator to make choices foregrounds the contingency of the events in the story. *Hocus Pocus* thus is aptly described as “a series of chimerical detours through life” (Morse, 160). The novel thus reflects the postmodern emphasis on contingency and the narrator's passivity mirrors the complacent apathy of the postmodern consumer.

The fact that the novel's action takes place in the future makes the novel science fictional, if not an extrapolative SF novel *per se*, as well. The world as projected by the text is a dystopian one characterized by mass imprisonment, civic unrest, and scarcity. The text starts with an editor's note signed K.V. In this editor's note it is established that the book's author is not Vonnegut, but the novel's first-person narrator, Eugene Debs Hartke. The story itself starts with a dedication which contradicts the claims to authenticity made in the editor's note: “*This work of pure fiction is dedicated to the memory of*” American socialist Eugene Victor Debs. The nomination of the story's principal character is a good example of the intertextuality characteristic of Vonnegut's novels. Eugene Debs is referenced in three others of Vonnegut's novels, viz. *Jailbird* (1979), *Deadeye Dick* (1982), and *Timequake* (1997). It is safe to say that Eugene Debs has been an inspiration if not a role model for

Vonnegut. Vance Hartke, from whom Vonnegut borrowed his protagonist's last name, when he served in the US senate, strictly opposed the Vietnam War. Both Debs and Hartke stem from Vonnegut's home state of Indiana. There are further intertextual references to *Deadeye Dick* and *Breakfast of Champions, or Goodbye Blue Monday* (1973) in the text, i.e., the name of the town where Eugene Debs Hartke spent his childhood as well as the name of the company for which his father worked during that period of time (Freese, 655). Paul Slazinger, one of *Hocus Pocus*'s fictitious characters, is featured in yet another of Vonnegut's novels, viz. *Bluebeard* (1987), a fact which only serves to thicken the intertextual density of the text. The whole novel displays a complicated relationship between fact and fiction. On the one hand, the story creates a very dense sense of realism via its repetitious references to real-world facts of history and its matter-of-fact writing style which does not differentiate between fact and fiction, while, on the other hand, at the same time denouncing its own fictitious nature through the fact that its story takes place in a time yet to come. This tension is germane to the genre of SF.

From the beginning it is clear that the book also is a highly ironic fictitious autobiography of the first-person narrator. Eugene Debs Hartke is the name of “the surrogate author: a figure within the fictional world who occupies the role of [the] author” (Currie, 3). The novel as such thus falls under the first of the three types of postmodern novels Currie discerns in his *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (2011), i.e., it is a metafictional work of postmodern fiction which problematizes the process of representation. However, *Hocus Pocus*'s referential illusion is much too strong to clearly posit the book as a work of postmodern metafiction. The tension between the referential illusion created in the text and the text's overall, and highly obvious, fictional nature posit the book in another category of fiction, i.e., SF, which does not contradict its categorization as a postmodern text but rather augments it. From a SF point of view, the story's novum is the fact that it takes place in the future, a rather dystopian near future—which, nowadays, lies in the past as well. The absence of any (pseudo-)scientific gadgetry and its extrapolation of current tendencies distinguish the book as a work of extrapolative soft SF. As Tally puts it, Vonnegut's future in *Hocus Pocus* is “a future-that-is-also-the-present” (Tally, 149). Vonnegut's novel can therefore consider to also provide an alternate history of the present. According to Morse, “Vonnegut's anti-utopian future runs counter to many of the themes and values found in the more traditionally optimistic science-fiction writing” (Morse, 23). Vonnegut's special brand of SF is postmodern by virtue of the fact that it is, among other

things, dystopian. The employment of the SF element of a dystopian near future is a good instance of what McHale dubs 'the science fictionalization' of postmodern mainstream literature (McHale (1992), 229). In the year of publication, 1990, the first wave of cyberpunk had just faded. One of the central nova of first-wave cyberpunk was the setting of the story in a dystopian near future. Cyberpunk itself is widely regarded as the genre which completed the postmodernization of SF. The fact that the novel incorporates many of the hallmark topics of cyberpunk constitutes a rather obvious example of what McHale deems the "ever-tightening feedback loop between [SF] 'genre' fiction and state-of-the-art mainstream fiction" (Ibid., 235). Furthermore, the novel belongs to the genre of postmodern dystopia for the same reasons that Auster's novel does, i.e., because it abandons the tripartite plot structure of the classical dystopia, since it subverts the didactic teleology of the classical dystopia, and for the reason that its gist subverts the totalizing tendencies of the classical dystopia. Furthermore, the story for all its apparent pessimism about the future leaves open a space for the possibility of an improved society.

Vonnegut is notorious for playing with the conventions of SF in his novels. The epitome of this tendency of his is the fictitious SF author Kilgore Trout whom Vonnegut employs as a fictional stand-in for himself in the fictitious worlds of his texts. *Hocus Pocus* features an SF embedded narrative penned by Trout which further extends the text's otherwise already immense scope of intertextuality. The fact that the novel ironically plays with the conventions of the autobiography genre, the SF genre, and the dystopia genre undergirds the argument for categorizing it as a postmodern novel of Currie's second type, i.e., it is an intertextual postmodern novel as well. "The Protocols of the Elders of Tralfamadore" (p. 164), as the story-within-the-story penned by an unnamed SF author who probably is identical with Vonnegut's fictitious stand-in Kilgore Trout is called, distinguishes itself from the rest of the text, since it is the longest consecutive anecdote within it (p. 164-69). This highly teleological embedded narrative satirizes the marked contingency of the rest of the text. "The Protocols of the Elders of Tralfamadore" provides humankind with its very own grotesque telos. It satirizes "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," the anti-Semitic hoax probably created by the Russian secret service at the beginning of the twentieth century, while at the same time deconstructing every kind of religious creation myth, especially the one of Christianity. *The Protocols of the Elders of Tralfamadore* purports that a gathering of sentient ancient threads of energy takes place next to the planet Tralfamadore where these beings agree to make space travel possible by

breeding germs which can stand the vacuum and which are to be transported through interstellar space via asteroids. The Tralfamadorians also play an essential role in another novel by Vonnegut, i.e., *Slaughterhouse-Five, or The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* (1969), in which Vonnegut processes his own experiences during the firebombing of Dresden in the Second World War. In *Hocus Pocus* the Tralfamadorians themselves, as opposed to the human race, have a sense of humor and “so knew themselves for the severely limited lunkers [...] they really were” (p. 167); they thus were no help for breeding superstrong viruses. The earthlings, however, lacking a sense of humor were not immune to the “kilovolts of pride the Elders jazzed their brains with” (p. 167), and could therefore be induced to conquer their own world and then to try to conquer the universe, during which process they hopefully would create the kind of viruses which could survive interstellar travel. The Elders of Tralfamadore, according to this embedded narrative, are responsible for the part in the Bible where it says that man should conquer the world and they encouraged the Earthlings “to make more effective weapons by studying Physics and Chemistry [...] to ensure that germs were going to experience really hard times” (p. 168). Thus, the whole purpose of humankind's ascent to domination is to breed indestructible germs for space travel. The gist of this embedded narrative explicitly satirizes a teleological reading of human history and exemplifies the death of the metanarratives of modernity under the postmodern condition.

Apart from its pronounced intertextuality another postmodern feature of the story is its thematization of the first postmodern war, i.e., the Vietnam War. Vonnegut's book is very much about the Vietnam War, “that war, which was about nothing but the ammunition business” (p. 2), which becomes clear on the first pages of the novel, since its narrator is a Vietnam veteran obsessed with his experiences in said war. The novel proper begins with the words “[m]y name is Eugene Debs Hartke, and I was born in 1940” (p. 1). The year of writing is given on the same page as 2001 (p. 1). In the Vietnam War, Hartke “learned first-hand that war is meaningless butchery of ordinary people like himself” (Morse, 153). The whole story is riddled with anecdotes about the Vietnam War. For example, Eugene Debs Hartke is said to have been the last American to leave Saigon (p. 43). Accordingly, Peter Freese classifies *Hocus Pocus* as “a Vietnam novel” (Freese, 668). The end of the war is continuously and humorously referred to in the story as the moment in time “when the excrement hit the air-conditioning” (p. 163). Vonnegut thus marks the date when the postmodern started to gain ascendancy in theory and the arts and when neo-liberalism's advent began in the US. The excrement hit the air

conditioning in 1975, two years after the death of the Bretton Woods system, whose decline resulted from the efforts of the American president to finance the extremely costly war in Vietnam. Vonnegut's emphasis on said date thus exemplifies the momentous importance of said point in time. As shown in the quotation above, the story's narrator refuses to use curse words and blasphemy, which marks a strong distinction from Vonnegut's other texts, which openly endorse vulgarity as a way to mimic everyday language. The American defeat in Vietnam in the story serves as the prime example of the purported fact that failure, not success, is the norm in human relations: "We had lost a war! Losers!" (p. 37). Hobsbawm traces the influence of the American defeat in Vietnam up to the First Iraq War in 1991, which according to him was an belated attempt to compensate the feeling of humiliation spawned by said defeat (Hobsbawm (1994), 313). Coincidentally, the latter war began one year after the publication of *Hocus Pocus*. The war reporting about the First Iraq War was a prime example of postmodern media orchestration by the American military. This earned the war the nickname of 'The Video Game War'. The news broadcasts about said war collapsed the distinction between the real and the hyperreal in its simulation of the reality of war which abraded the distinction between news coverage and propaganda, between fact and fiction. The novel takes part in this continuum of medial hyperreality, blending the difference between fact and fiction in a similar way the news media did in their reports about the Iraq War, although arguably in pursuance of a much more laudable objective. Vonnegut's future did not foresee the war against Iraq, but it very much did anticipate the hyperreality of simulated war reporting that characterized the coverage of the first major American war after the momentous defeat in Vietnam.

One typically postmodernist hybrid form of literature is the mixture of fact and fiction in narratives, which creates a strong referential illusion, i.e., what Wolf calls the "Illusion der Beziehbarkeit der fiktiven Welt auf die reale" (Wolf, 57). The story of *Hocus Pocus* is interlaced with references to actual history. The narrator purports that he wants to tell the history of the fictionalized valley of the story's setting (p. 8). Said valley actually exists, while its history as told by Vonnegut is for the better part purely fictitious. Fact and fiction are intertwined in the text in short anecdotes, which are interspersed into the story, to a degree that makes it hard to tell them apart. For instance, the geographical location where the story takes place is a real-world town in the State of New York called Scipio, while the College located there as well as the prison facility which both play prominent roles in the story are purely fictitious—which does not hinder the author from giving overprecise

accounts of their coming into being. Douwe Fokkema regards overprecision as a typically postmodernist device: Overprecision, “is [...] symptomatic for the postmodernist sociolect[, since it] contradicts the modernist preference for precise and goal-directed phrasing motivated by attempts at authenticity and truthfulness” (Douwe Fokkema, 36). The story's overprecise accounts of pseudohistory thus satirize the very notion of representation and can therefore be considered as an explicit instance of metafictional irony which constitutes another prototypically postmodern topos. Fokkema remarks that overprecision is realized in a text “through repetition and rephrasing,” or revision (Ibid., 37). Vonnegut's text abounds with examples of overprecision realized through repetition and rephrasing. For instance, the selling off of American companies, institutions, and real estate to foreign firms is alluded to more than twenty times throughout the whole book. For example, on page 28 it is stated that “they sold the boats and mines to a British and Omani consortium based in Luxembourg”. On page 34, “[h]is mother's side of the family had just sold Cincinnati's sole remaining daily paper and its leading TV station, and a lot of radio stations and weekly papers, too, to the Sultan of Brunei, reputedly the richest individual on earth”. The “Japanese had taken over the operation of Athena [...] hoping to operate it at a profit” (p. 57), a “dairy farm owned by German land speculators” (p. 71), “the company that makes it, has been taken over by Koreans. The new owners are moving the whole operation to Indonesia, where labor costs next to nothing” (p. 86), etc. In fact, every time an American firm or asset is mentioned in the story the author adds to it the pedigree of its new foreign proprietors. The repetitive specific descriptions of the foreign companies taking over the American businesses constitute a clear example of overprecision and revision. Furthermore, on the content level the phenomenon of internationalization to which these examples allude is characteristic of globalized late capitalism and the neo-liberal practice of selling off national assets to international bidders on a market that has been freed of physical restraints. The fact that these national assets are sold off to foreign investment firms mirrors the real-world phenomenon of the privatization of formerly publicly owned firms in the periphery which translates into their being taken over by foreign investors. Vonnegut suggests with said allusions to real-world phenomena that his future US have turned from the center of the capitalist market order into a part of its periphery. In Vonnegut's novel, the American century culminates in the degradation of the world's former imperial hegemon to the status of a second-rate Third World nation whose military is not employed to ensure its world domination anymore, but to keep its own population from

overthrowing the government.

The novel abounds with repetitions. For example, the phrase “next to the stable, in the shadow of Musket Mountain when the sun goes down” is repeated seven times with slight variations throughout the story (p. 83, 84, 140, 153, 155, 219, 250), the phrase “[s]ee the Nigger fly the airplane” is repeated four times (62, 204, 229, 240), “I had to laugh like hell” is repeated fifteen times with slight variations in the novel, and the phrase “when the excrement hit the air-conditioning” is repeated five times (3, 4, 102, 163, 310). André Hahn describes the postmodernist device of “*Repetition and Revision*” (Hahn, 233) as follows: He attests postmodernist literature a “Tendenz zur Relativierung des Vertrauten[, d]ie als Verfahren der Parodie oder Travestie dient, durch welche sich das Begrenzte oder Klischeehafte traditioneller Genres, Werke, Stile, Themen oder Stoffe besonders gut aufzeigen lässt” (Ibid., 234). Said concept serves this purpose by subverting the traditionally linear structure of literary texts. The story of *Hocus Pocus* thus moves in a cyclical fashion, always diverging and then returning to one of the four temporal anchor points of the narrative. Hahn deduces his concept of 'Repetition and Revision' from jazz aesthetics and applies it to postmodernist drama. It seems sensible to apply it to postmodernist prose as well. “*Repetition and Revision* bedeutet so viel wie die mehrfach auftretende Wiederkehr [...] eines bestimmten Satzes, der in der Wiederholung aber einer leichten Veränderung unterliegt” (italics in original; Ibid.). A constant repetition of certain phrases gives a text a circular structure because it creates the impression that “immer 'dasselbe' wieder neu erlebt wird” (Ibid., 235), while the revision of the repeated items, which can be whole scenes, and single words as well, invests them with new meanings. “Durch die Revision wird [...] aufgezeigt, dass sich trotz identischer Worte und übereinstimmendem Kontext immer wieder neue und somit einzigartige Situationen ergeben” (Ibid.). On the one hand, the reiteration of said feature adds coherence to the narrative. “Andererseits destruieren die Wiederholungen einen authentischen Gehalt, erscheinen sie als eine Form der Sinnentleerung” (Hartmann, 23). Consequently, repetition has both a mimetic and a deconstructive effect (Ibid., 13). The practice of repetition and revision contributes to the text's metafictional organizing principle in an ironic twist that subverts the referential illusion created by the text and is as such a prototypically postmodern feature of the text as well. “[T]he almost obsessive repetition of a relatively restricted inventory of scenes” (Heise, 65) is a means of exemplifying the postmodern notion of the eternal recursion of Nietzschean philosophy and serves to highlight the text's anti-teleological

organizing principle. Other prominent postmodernist features, such as a fragmentation of the plot into a series of interrelated anecdotes, can be seen in *Hocus Pocus* as well. The same is true with regard to the Jamesonian quip that the postmodern imagination is only capable of envisioning the future as a grim dystopia. The sad fact is that many of the catastrophic events foreseen by the novel have actually occurred in the real world after it was written. Real-world events which are indirectly foreshadowed in the novel are among others the Columbine High School massacre, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and the events of September 11. The dystopian nature of the future as imagined by Vonnegut is another reiteration of the notion that humankind will not learn from its past mistakes. The so-called Vietnam Syndrome in US American politics has presently been 'overcome,' resulting in various new wars with US involvement, giving further credence to Moylan's, Jameson's, and Suvin's (among others) notion that geopolitics under the postmodern have turned into a form of real-world dystopia. Although *Hocus Pocus* is by far the most pessimistic novel discussed in this chapter, it is not completely devoid of the intimation of a utopian impulse. Even though the story culminates in disaster in almost all respects, the text sustains a very minute glimpse of hope for a better future in its incorporation of characters who through their very exceptionality seem to prove the rule which is propounded by the story, i.e., that what is to be expected in human relations is failure rather than success. However, at the end of the novel, the prison-industrial complex which is such a powerful player in the real world of US national politics has suffered a substantial defeat. The employment of executive force by the government to safeguard the transnational bourgeoisie against the people hints at the possibility of a change for the better coming from below. The fact that the government in the novel has to resort to direct physical violence to keep the people in check hints at the general possibility of change through united class action borne by those parts of the population which are the eventual losers under the regime of neo-liberalism, i.e., the vast majority of people. The existence of resistance against the distributive injustice that governs the world of the text leaves open a space for improvement. Vonnegut's novel can therefore be classified as a critical dystopia as well. The topos of war pervades the whole story, but related topics such as colonialism and past and present imperialism are addressed in the novel as well. From the beginning, the narrator makes references to all kinds of wars, fictitious and factual, with US involvement. According to Tally, "*Hocus Pocus* [...] is a novel very much about death [...] owing to the omnipresence of actual deaths in the book" (italics in original; Tally, 148f). In fact, the novel is

at least as much about American military history as about death, owing to the numerous references to famous American military staff and the prominent role the Vietnam War plays within the story. According to Morse, *Hocus Pocus's* “main character [is] imperialism, which [Vonnegut] defines as using an army and navy employing up-to-the-minute weapons to conquer people, steal their personal property, and seize their land” (Morse, 137). According to Dr. Helen Dole—a black female physicist, who applied for a job at Tarkington College, but during the course of the job interview decided not to take it because she is “asked [to] never, whether in class or on social occasions, discuss politics or history or economics or sociology with students” (p. 233) —“Europeans [...] were robbers with guns who went all over the world stealing other people's land, which they then called their plantations. And they made the people they robbed their slaves” (p. 234). The latter statement is a rather apt description of colonialism. Dole insists on the fact that “Tarkington's Trustees [...] were the heirs to the property of such robbers” (p. 234). The text thus elucidates the fact that the wealth gained by the original accumulation of capital constituted by colonialism as theorized by Marx is in practice passed on from one generation to another. This practice contributes to a concentration of capital in the hands of a small elite (of tremendously rich and powerful family dynasties) which can thus wield a humongous power over the realm of politics in the real world as well as in the world of the text. The story thus emphasizes capital's complicity with all the major atrocities committed in the name of colonialism. The small elite at the apex of society to whom the Trustees of Tarkington College belong to a significant degree consists of the descendants of the original colonizers, which gives Dole's statement in the story a very real real-world correlative. Militarism and nationalism are inherent to imperialism and are as such addressed in the story as well; they also are on Mohr's list of the stock topics of dystopian fiction. Dole is one of the few characters in the novel who is able to beat the odds. In fact, her rationalizations of the neo-colonial order established under the auspices of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism make her what Neuhaus, drawing upon Foucault, characterizes as an observer of the hegemonic discourse, a position which inherently incorporates the possibility of change. Dole's very exceptionality in the world of the story does not diminish this utopian impulse, since it opens the text as a whole to the possibility of radical change.

The story's over-all dystopian mood is established in the text by little digressions like the following: “In more optimistic times, when it was not widely understood that human beings were killing the planet with the by-

products of their own ingenuity and that a new Ice Age had begun” (p. 7). The topos of an impending ice age is alluded to several times throughout the narrative and can be considered as a stand-in for global warming. The postmodern problematic of ecological survival thus plays a prominent role in the world of the story. On page 152, a “typical ruling class Chowderhead” tries to cheer up Eugene Debs Hartke, who has just been fired from his teaching post, by pointing out that soon one billion Chinese consumers will want to buy American cars. Hartke answers this with a question of his own: “Can you imagine what 1,000,000,000 Chinese in automobiles would do to [...] what's left of the atmosphere” (p. 152)? This is not an idle or a rhetorical question anymore, but has become a daunting reality. What will happen to the atmosphere when Chinese consumer demand has exploded the number of automobiles in the world by app. 50 per cent? There are many more references to environmental degradation in the story which take on the problematic of ecological survival: In Vonnegut's dystopian future “man was the weather now. Man was the tornadoes, man was the hailstones, man was the floods” (p. 118). The oceans are a “shore-to-shore, horizon-to-horizon carpet of bobbing plastic bottles” (p. 181). The environment in *Hocus Pocus* is shown as severely depleted. This notion directly mirrors the real-world phenomena of climate change and the resulting catastrophes that hit the global South while the industrial nations of the North are exempt from its most horrible effects, which illustrates the ironic realization Welzer draws in this regard, i.e., that those who are responsible for climate change are also those who suffer the least under its effects, which is an example of the real-world irony that is characteristic of our new world order.

The problematic of distributive injustice is also directly addressed in the novel. Both the racism and class oppression germane to late capitalism are elucidated in the story. The narrator, having quit the Army after the end of the Vietnam War, becomes a teacher for the learning disabled offspring of the ruling class at the fictitious Tarkington College in the real-world town of Scipio, New York^{xliv}. On the other side of the lake which lies in front of said village is located the fictitious “New York State Maximum Security Adult Correctional Institution at Athena” (p. 8). In the year 1999, when “the population of the prison, under hideously overcrowded conditions, had grown to 10,000” (p. 15), a mass prison break takes place and the escaped convicts attack the town of Scipio and take the town's 'ruling class' hostage, killing 77 members of the village's 'Servant Class' in the process (p. 225). The term “Servant Class” (p. 108) refers to all those American citizens who aren't fantastically rich, i.e., 99 per cent of the population, as opposed to the

members of “the Ruling Class” (p. 77) who are distinguished by having an abundance of wealth at their disposal. Vonnegut stresses the point that this is the only thing that truly distinguishes them from the rest of the population: “rich people [a]re poor people with money” (p. 173). Vonnegut thus argues against the neo-liberal approach of “imparting virtue to the accident of wealth” (Morse, 4): “According to neo-conservatives, only the elite at the apex of the hierarchy can understand th[e] 'natural' truth about human society and history” (Akram-Lodhi, 158). This 'natural truth' translates into flat-out Social Darwinism. Neo-conservatives can thus be said to 'ennoble' their own elite status, which they almost exclusively acquired by simply being born wealthy, as an achievement, as a kind of 'natural' award they are entitled to, since they are more capable ('fitter') than the rest of humanity. Conversely, Wagenknecht points out that “nahezu alle wirklich großen Vermögen entweder aus Erbschaften resultieren oder aus Einnahmen aus bereits vorhandenem Vermögen” (Wagenknecht (2008), 232). Extreme wealth is a birth right defended by the ruling class, or its transnational faction, Poulantzas's inner bourgeoisie, which is identical with Vonnegut's 'Ruling Class'. Hartke on the other hand very much belongs to the 'Servant Class,' which becomes clear when he is fired by the board of trustees: “They were letting me go. Soldiers are discharged. People in the workplace are fired. Servants are let go” (p. 108). The reason for the termination is the fact that Hartke transgressed his status of being a member of the servant class. He was mistaken in thinking that he had a right to express his own opinions freely. Hartke is let go because he “ventures opinions on American history, politics, and literature—in other words, for acting like a complete human being” (Klinkowitz, 144). For the Trustees, all of whom are members of the ruling class, a member of the servant class has no right to such a fulness of being. Hartke transgressed his role as a cultural commissar of the market order when he gave his students realistic insights into his war experiences. The novel also alludes at one point to what Dinello calls the academic-industrial military complex when it is stated that the napalm that has been dropped over Vietnam was “developed by Harvard University” (p. 43). Vonnegut describes the relationship between the ruling and the service class as similar to the one between “B-52 bombardiers way up in the stratosphere [and] the devastation that they caused” on the ground (p. 200). The America, or in fact the world, Vonnegut describes is not a meritocracy. It is the exact opposite of the “aristocracy of virtue and merit” (Morse, xiii) which, according to Morse, is the utopian promise of the American dream^{xiv}. In *Hocus Pocus*, one's class status is as much a matter of utmost contingency as

is everything else. However, once one has entered Vonnegut's world as member of the 'servant class,' one is bound to remain one. The same goes for color of skin. Vonnegut presents only one 'black' character who managed to rise above the limitations placed upon her by society, the abovementioned Helen Dole, a 26-year-old Doctor of Physics, who lives in Germany. She has wound up in Scipio by accident and is planning to leave it as fast as she can (p. 233). Since she only appears at the end of the story, after Hartke has described the fates of so many black people as necessarily ending in a life of crime (the prison's inmates are color-coded, i.e., they, in opposition to the inhabitants of the surrounding country, are black), and since Vonnegut describes her fate as a freak accident of destiny (p. 232f), which stumps "statistical expectations" (p. 232), the introduction of her character into the story only serves to highlight the highly racist nature of the America Vonnegut describes. The postmodern problematic of distributive injustice thus plays a paramount role in the story as does the Balkanization of the working class which Spanos describes as typical for the postmodern condition. Racism is described as a means of the ruling class to divide the servant class among itself. The populace of Vonnegut's fictitious America is highly fragmented among itself, both by race and by class. Race and class both are of pivotal importance in the novel. Vonnegut speaks time and again of the prisoners' 'color coding,' which makes them readily identifiable as (escaped) convicts by virtue of their color of skin: "They were color-coded, after all. In the Mohiga Valley, their skin alone sufficed as a prison uniform" (p. 59). The notion of class is given equal importance. The story explains that Tarkington College was founded to take care of the learning-disabled offspring of the ruling class. Vonnegut states, for example, that every book of the library of Harvard University was "written for or about the ruling class" (p. 17). He juxtaposes the ruling class with the 'servant class,' to which most of the soldiers serving in Vietnam belonged as well as the story's narrator. The members of the ruling class consider their fellow Americans from the lower social strata as foreigners (p. 235) and feel solidarity only towards other members of their own class (p. 227). The ruling class in *Hocus Pocus* has "managed to convert their wealth [...] into a form so liquid and abstract, negotiable representations of money on paper, [so] that there were few reminders coming from anywhere that they might be responsible for anyone outside their own circle of friends and relatives" (p. 199). Vonnegut's fictitious 'ruling class' is identical with Poulantzas's 'inner bourgeoisie,' or what others call the transatlantic faction of the international ruling class and the way this stratum is described, as has been already been pointed out above, can be considered as a themat-

ization of the problematic of distributive injustice. According to Vonnegut, “[c]apitalism was what the people with all *our* money, drunk or sober, sane or insane, decided to do today” (my italics; p. 79). Vonnegut in this novel thus explicitly deconstructs the Extropy Myth. According to him, the idea “that Humanity is going to somewhere really nice [i]s a myth for children under 6 years old, like the Tooth Fairy and the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus” (p. 171). His near future is as desperate as was his present.

Another way in which the story takes on the problematic of distributive injustice is via the opinions of the narrator's grandfather who was a Socialist. His opinion on things like religion and exploitation is referred to in the novel in a repetitive way as well. For example, on page 52 it is mentioned what his view on a prison-industrial complex as demonstrated by the story's fictitious prison facility would have been like: “He would have seen exploitation of the poor and powerless in the growth of the prison across the lake as well” (p. 52). There is no far leap of imagination necessary to apply this statement to the very real prison-industrial complex in the US. Incidentally, the US prison population originally began to skyrocket with the declaration of the 'war against drugs' by Richard Nixon in 1971, i.e., there exists a very real correlation between the rise to hegemony of the tenets of neo-liberalism and the explosive enlargement of the prison-industrial complex. Accordingly, Vonnegut's stand-in Eugene Debs Hartke remarks in 2001 that “[t]he War on Drugs goes on” (p. 262). The paradoxical idea of a war on drugs is highlighted by the text and uncovered as the means of class warfare which is its true function in the real world. Just like Bush II's 'war on terror' the 'war on drugs' is a perpetuum mobile. By definition it can never be won. Conversely, it serves as a pretext to criminalize a significant part of the lower classes. Vonnegut does not fail to mention that the vast majority of the population of the Athena Correctional Facility has been incarcerated for drug offenses. In Vonnegut's fictitious universe the 'war on drugs' serves to soak up the surplus population created by late capitalism. Thus, on page 52 the narrator cynically suggests “an appropriate sign to put over the gate to Athena [...] instead of 'Work Makes Free,' for example: 'Too bad you were born. Nobody has any use for you,' or maybe: 'Come in and stay in, all you burdens on Society’” (p. 52). The useless surplus population created by late capitalism both in Vonnegut's fictitious US and the real US is soaked up by a mushrooming prison system. In Vonnegut's near future, the number of prisoners rises so fast that aircraft carriers and atomic submarines are turned into prisons. The notion of mass imprisonment is a stock topic of dystopian fiction as given by Mohr and also mirrors the real world of US domestic politics. The fact that the government

in the world as projected by the text is in the process of losing control about the incarcerated part of its population leaves open a small space for the possibility of positive change from below in the novel, although the rebellion of the inmates of Athena in the novel only results in the further victimization of the story's underclass, while the members of the transnational bourgeoisie in the novel as in the real world get away scot-free. The novel depicts a world ravaged by the onset of scarcity which is a very postmodern topos as well. There is a civil war going on in the South Bronx, and the price for gasoline has risen so sharply that a booming black market economy has arisen around the sale of gas. In the world of *Hocus Pocus* gas has become so expensive that "few people can afford to own an automobile anymore" (p. 203). Luxury items like chocolate and coffee have become scarce as well. The story thus depicts the onset of scarcity, which from a logical point of view has to arrive at some point in time in the future. Naturally, only the rich can afford such luxury items. The novel thus foregrounds the fact that the pernicious effects of late capitalism's totalitarian world order as a general rule hit the lower classes the hardest, while the class faction which can be held responsible for said negative effects is insulated from the latter. The novel thus reflects the structural bias towards the rich and wealthy which is inherent to the current world order.

In Vonnegut's near future it is not Enron and WorldCom which go bankrupt but a fictitious company called Microsecond Arbitrage. It is a girl with a handgrenade who "wiped out the Prom Committee of her high school" (p. 196) instead of the two boys who committed the Columbine High School massacre. After the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill the narrator ensures us that in the future "[t]here was always another oil spill" (p. 148), and instead of 9/11 "an atom bomb [is] dropped [...] on New York City" (p. 42). As is the case with much SF of critical significance, like Kim Stanley Robinson's *Science in the Capital* trilogy, Vonnegut's novel presciently predicts many of the catastrophes which later on took place in the real world.

In Vonnegut's future, the I. G. Farben company is still around buying up American companies, as is the German manufacturer of crematoria "A. J. Topf und Sohn in Essen, Germany. Th[e] same outfit that had made the ovens for Auschwitz in its heyday" (p. 202). These are in fact counterfactual references to extratextual events. While I. G. Farben in fact "manufactured [...] the cyanide gas used to kill civilians [...] during the Holocaust" (p. 23) and the company J. A. Topf und Söhne did indeed build the crematoria for Auschwitz and other extermination camps, both companies did not survive the end of World War II. These two references are a good example of the

author's intermingling of fictitious and factual references. Furthermore, these two references serve to associate late capitalism with the singular horrors of the Holocaust thereby elucidating the very real complicity of capital with Nazi fascism. Real-world globalization is shown in the novel in the fact that, for example, the US is invaded by a "Japanese [...] Army of Occupation in Business Suits" (p. 237) and the fact that all American assets have been sold off to foreigners. The notion of a Japanese army of occupation taking over the US as well as the idea that German firms which were involved in the singular atrocity of the Holocaust buy up American businesses suggest that late-capitalist globalization has reversed the result of the Second World War and thus again hints at the very real affinity of neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideology to fascism as evidenced in real-world geopolitics by the close cooperation between Chicago School economists and Pinochet's fascist Chile. Furthermore, the real-world prison-industrial complex is satirized by the fact that the burgeoning Athena prison facility, in a clear instance of neo-liberal privatization, is run by Sony. *Hocus Pocus* thus reflects aspects of real-world globalization as well and thus is also, at least partly, to be counted as a work of Currie's third type of postmodern fiction, i.e., postmodern realism. Vonnegut's penultimate novel thus transcends Currie's categorization and serves as an example of its author's highly versatile imagination. The novel displays salient features of all three types of Currie's postmodern novels, the dystopian SF novel, and the postmodern dystopia. It thus subverts the very notion of generic classification which in turn constitutes a very postmodern approach towards literature on the part of the author.

Vonnegut has structured the story around four main events in the narrator's life which also represent a mixture between factual and counterfactual references. The American defeat in Vietnam in 1975, the narrator being fired from his job as a teacher at Tarkington College in 1991, a mass prison break at the Athena Correctional Facility in 1999, and the narrator awaiting trial for being the mastermind behind the prison break in 2001. The story's timeline jumps back and forth between these four temporal settings. The story's retrospective point of view gives the author the possibility to engage in "high-speed forward- and reverse-narrative time travel" (Jay McInerney quoted in Freese, 649). Klinkowitz goes as far as characterizing *Hocus Pocus* as "another time-travel novel" (Klinkowitz, 143) of Vonnegut's. The time-travel motif informs the narrative of said book and at the same time makes it a SF novel as well, given the fact that time travel is one of Robert's typical SF nova and Booker and Thomas list the time-travel narrative among the typical subgenres of SF (Booker/Thomas, 15ff). The novel covers the whole of American history

from its 'discovery' until its millennial future as “a country in [...] an advanced state of physical and spiritual and intellectual dilapidation” (p. 237). Hartke's “memoir [...] skips about not only his own experiences but across the full range of American history” (Klinkowitz, 143). Furthermore, the narrative is riddled with anecdotes which take place between the abovementioned four temporal settings, both real and fictitious. Many of these anecdotes derive from American military history, such as the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima in 1945 (p. 200) or the death of the book's fictitious character Jack Patton during the Vietnam War (p. 38). The novel's time-travel motif is realized without recourse to a technological device that would render such voyages through time possible on the content level. Moreover, the story's engagement of time travel is rooted in the story's metafictional organizing principle. The novel thus does not belong to the time-travel subgenre of SF, although its action takes place in various temporal settings and thematizes the notion of historical time through its many references to real-world history. The novel explicitly problematizes the notion of a teleological understanding of history through its emphasis on contingency and failure. In *Hocus Pocus* human history consists of a conglomeration of anecdotal moments in time that transcend human volition. The story thus deconstructs the understanding of history as a teleological process directed towards a Hegelian goal and negates the modernist metanarrative of progress and Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis. This anti-teleological conception of history, however, also limits the scope of the influence of human agency on the process of history. Thus the novel's pessimistic gist seems to endorse a rather fatalistic picture of human history.

The highly complicated relationship between fact and fiction in the narrative is epitomized by the name of its first-person narrator, who carries the name of two real-life personalities who died in 1926 and 2003 respectively. However, it is Eugene Victor Debs to whom the whole novel is dedicated by Vonnegut. His namesake in the novel satirizes the real-world Debs's most famous quote, which is given by Vonnegut at the beginning of the text inside the first of many drawings of a tombstone—“While there is a soul in prison I am not free”—when he goes to work in a gigantic prison facility that he describes from a Socialist point of view as a “scheme for depriving the lower social orders of leadership in the Class Struggle and for providing them with a horrible alternative to accepting whatever their greedy paymasters would give them in the way of working conditions and subsistence” (p. 52). The novel's protagonist's complicity with the imprisonment of vast swaths of the population emphasizes the novel's pessimistic conception of human agency.

Through his pronounced passivity the novel's main character as a plaything of fate contributes to the very evils the story condemns. Debs's quote spectacularly clashes with the main character's opportunistic complicity with the prison-industrial complex in the world of the story.

The metafictional comments in the novel already begin with the editor's note in the preface to the text, where Vonnegut purports to be merely the editor of this work of fiction. Throughout the main text the narrator repeatedly refers to the act of writing (5, 45, 157, 182, 195, 240, 261, 267f). The frame narrative, which takes place in the year 2001, is mentioned continuously until the end of the book. The fact that most of the narrator's history takes place in the past makes the narrative peculiarly realistic, since the narrator's past and the numerous real-world events referenced in the story are addressed in the same idiom. The detailed but disrupted accounts of the writer's youth and his years in Vietnam are riddled with historical fact so that a strong referential illusion is created by the text. Thus, when the action of the story moves into the future the referential illusion holds. The conventions of postmodern and SF thus converge into a highly peculiar amalgam which is a hallmark of Vonnegut's fiction and one reason for his renown as an accomplished author who was "highly gifted in the craft of storytelling" (John Irving quoted in Freese, 650). Furthermore, the story features the postmodern device of an inconclusive ending. The reader thus never learns if the narrator is going to be convicted or not. The open ending of the novel further contributes to its status of being a postmodern dystopia.

In *Hocus Pocus* Vonnegut himself engages in "the wonderful new science of Futurology" (p. 238). The latter quotation also constitutes an example of metafictional irony. The novel as a whole displays its author's tragicomic sense of humor. Here are a few quips from the novel which are emblematic of the novel's overall ironic stance: "I am perfectly happy to say now that the trouble with the ruling class was that too many of its members were nitwits" (p. 77); "I now stand behind that statement 100 percent. All nations bigger than Denmark are crocks of doo-doo" (p. 121); "the whole world was for sale to anyone who had Yen or was willing to perform fellatio" (p. 94). Vonnegut's bitter humor expresses itself in a very postmodern form of irony. Furthermore, the text incorporates elements which are typical of the dystopian novel. Its protagonist is distinguished from the other characters of the book by a heightened sensibility which finds expression in his interest in the art of music and which in turn comprises a feature common to the protagonists of classical dystopian fiction. However, the tripartite plot structure of the classical dystopia which consists of the protagonist's

immersion in the totalitarian society of the text, his (the classical dystopia unanimously employs a male perspective) awakening and ensuing rebellion, and the subsequent hunt of the state for the rebel which culminates in his eventual assimilation or destruction, is abandoned by Vonnegut's text. It can therefore be classified as a critical or postmodern dystopia. "Wie in der klassischen Dystopie die Vernichtung des persönlichen Widerstandes zur Erzählkonvention gehörte, so erleidet [...] der Protagonist [in der postmodernen Dystopie] aufgrund seiner Passivität eine persönliche Katastrophe" (Zeißler, 218). Hartke as a passive plaything of fate is overwhelmed by the story's contingent events and his life culminates in catastrophe. According to Zeißler, this is a typical element of the postmodern dystopia genre as opposed to classical dystopia. Hartke's personal catastrophe consists of his incarceration at the end of the story and his being tried as the mastermind behind the prison break as well as the fact that his family collapses in the course of the story.

The novel's preface purports to work as a second temporal framing device. In it K.V. 'explains' the idiosyncrasies of the text and purports to merely be the editor of the story which in fact was written by Eugene Debs Hartke himself. This statement jarringly clashes with the fact that the novel's second frame story takes place eleven years in the future. The narrative thus flaunts its own fictitiousness while at the same time creating a very strong referential illusion which lets "Hartke see[m] like a real person, and Scipio see[m] like a real town" (Jay McInerney quoted in Freese, 650). The fact that Scipio actually is a real town in the state of New York only further demonstrates the immensely complex relationship between fact and fiction displayed in this novel of Vonnegut's. The second frame story is the tale of the first-person narrator awaiting trial in 2001 in the library of Tarkington College while authoring the novel which is supposed to tell the story of his life. This story is told in a highly fragmented manner. The timelines intermingle, clash, and converge in highly sophisticated manner, which belies the easy readability of the book. Morse in this regard speaks of Vonnegut's "deceptively simple style [that] in *Hocus Pocus* [...] helps to hide its artifice" (Morse, 121). Furthermore, the text is divided into short anecdotes by dividing lines which according to the foreword signify "where one scrap [of paper] ended and the next began" because the frame story purports that Hartke wrote the novel on all kinds of pieces of paper due to a lack of proper writing utensils. This subdivision of the text gives the story a fragmented form in which splinters of anecdotes are put into sequence which vary in length from two pages to a single word of text.

Another postmodern feature endorsed by the novel which has already been addressed above is its high level of intertextuality. It features numerous quotations both from Shakespeare and from *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*. The latter is mentioned seven times in the course of the story (30, 124, 145, 147, 151, 221, 225). Moreover, the story features "literary references from Cooper and Dreiser through Poe and Melville to Mailer and Updike" as well (Freese, 654). Apart from *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* a number of other books, works of fiction, are mentioned in *Hocus Pocus*. The fictitious fun-loving billionaire to whose entourage Henry Kissinger belongs in the novel is a namesake of Arthur C. Clarke, the SF author. Clarke's 1953 novel *Childhood's End* is mentioned on page 145. *2001: A Space Odyssey*, Stanley Kubrick's seminal 1968 SF movie based on a short story of Clarke's, is mentioned on the same page. According to Freese, Vonnegut's Clarke is as much a fictitious stand-in for real-life millionaire Malcolm Forbes as *Hocus Pocus*'s character Jason Wilder is "a fictional projection of William F. Buckley Jr." (Freese, 679f). These two characters are another example of Vonnegut's way of mixing fact and fiction. Gustave Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary* is mentioned on page 112 as are Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Another work of fiction mentioned in *Hocus Pocus* is *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This anti-Semitic hoax appears on pages 207 and 208. 'The Black Brotherhood of Islam,' a fictitious black prison gang, grafted after the real-world Nation of Islam, circulates hundreds of copies of said text among Athena's prison population. In yet another factual extratextual reference to history the narrator remarks that Henry Ford, "[t]he great American inventor and industrialist" (p. 208), published said text in the USA. What the text does not mention is that Hitler considered Henry Ford as his personal role model as well as the fact that during the whole Second World War Ford manufactured thousands of trucks and half-tracks for the German army. This reference again draws attention to capital's real-world complicity with Nazi fascism in particular and totalitarianism in general. The title of said antisemitic forgery is parodied by a nameless SF author in the story. *The Protocols of the Elders of Tralfammadore* is a story within the story and has also been addressed above. It constitutes an embedded narrative, which according to the text was published in a pornographic magazine called *Black Garter Belt*. It is recounted on pages 164 through 169. From an SF point of view, said embedded narrative is one hundred percent an SF text, although of a strange posthuman variety. The name of its unnamed author can be guessed by the reader who is familiar with Vonnegut's other works. It is probably Kilgore Trout, "Vonnegut's alter ego" (Freese, 658). Tralfammadore

is a planet which features prominently in other Vonnegut novels, such as *The Sirens of Titan* (1959). This embedded narrative is thus also an instance of intertextual referentiality. The intertextual references to both high- and lowbrow cultural artifacts embeds the text in contemporary culture and levels the modernist distinction between 'serious' and popular literature which in turn constitutes a prototypically postmodern strategy for the production of art.

TV, the postmodern medium *per se*, plays a prominent role in the story as well. It is the only connection the inmates of the Athena prison have to the outside world. But instead of contemporary TV they only come to watch a feedback loop consisting of video tapes of ten years old recordings of TV shows in a random order, which is a nice rendering of postmodern hyperreality. There are references to popular TV programs, such as *Donahue* (p. 186), *I Love Lucy* (p. 263), and *Howdy Doody* (p. 192), as well as allusions to real-life celebrities like Ronald (p. 197) and Nancy Reagan. Henry Kissinger, who is among other things one of the main responsible parties for the illegal bombardment of Cambodia during the Vietnam War, even appears as a character in the story, although only shortly and not as an actant (p. 141, 146, 182, 184). The bombing of Cambodia which was illegal by the terms of the international law of war, and which later on became known as 'Operation Menu' is indirectly referred to in *Hocus Pocus* as well (p. 171), and in the real world largely contributed to the rise of Khmer Rouge in Cambodia by killing a high percentage of the country's inhabitants. Furthermore, the novel's references to popular TV shows in combination with its numerous references to so-called 'high brow' literature constitute a very vivid exemplification of Vonnegut's trademark fusion of "high art and pop art" (Freese, 19), which in turn is one of the hallmarks of postmodern art. This eclectic combination of the high and the low is one of many reasons why Vonnegut's work is part of the postmodern canon. Moreover, Vonnegut's oeuvre as such is an exemplification of what McHale called the science fictionalization of postmodern mainstream literature as well as an example of the postmodernization of SF.

"Hartke's world is one of indifference and egotism, racist discrimination and senseless warfare, economic downfall and environmental pollution, drug abuse, insufficient education, and TV addiction" (Freese, 678f). In Vonnegut's world, the poor "got absolutely no protection from the Government" (p. 78), while the rich are treated like family. The poor have to work minimum wage jobs under deteriorating working conditions, while the rich speculate at the stock markets and make fantastic profits. Therefore, it can be noted that Vonnegut's fictitious future is not that far from our current reality after all.

However, in *Hocus Pocus* Vonnegut again “couples his bitter despair about the wretchedness of the world with an unembarrassed plea for improvement and an unabashed praise of love and decency” (Ibid., 20). This paradox, which informs the author's oeuvre as a whole and which has led Freese to refer to Vonnegut as both “a hopeful pessimist” and a “despairing optimist” (Ibid., 7), in *Hocus Pocus* is represented by Eugene Debs Hartke, who is at the same time a former government-sponsored mass murderer (having killed 82 people) (p. 268) and a loving family man, a victim and a perpetrator. Hartke is “an able spokesman for Vonnegut's point of view” (Klinkowitz, 148). However, as Freese rightfully points out, Hartke's dark side seems to prevail. He avoids making his own decisions and fails to show any remorse for the things he did. Vonnegut's honorary title of a postmodern humanist, which for many constitutes a *contradictio in adjecto*, is well-deserved. Vonnegut “is simultaneously a skeptical postmodernist who rejects grand narratives and the idea of a generally valid truth and a caring humanist who has an abiding faith in the value of human life, although he knows that he cannot validate such a claim” (Freese, 32). Nevertheless, the overall thrust of *Hocus Pocus* is pessimistic, even more so when one reads it in the twenty-first century. “The scales hardly balance but dip precipitously down on the negative side” (Morse, 175). Too many elements of Vonnegut's 1990 dystopia have become literal reality, and reality, as always, continues to outdo the writer. Vonnegut's penultimate novel predicts that “events, and humans in the new century, in the new millennium, will continue much as they did in the old. The result will not be progress toward enlightenment [...], but to apocalypse” (Ibid., 160).

7.3 PATRICIA ANTHONY: *COLD ALLIES*

According to Dietmar Dath and Barbara Kirchner, Patricia Anthony's first novel *Cold Allies* from 1993 is a “brillante Metapher für die Verselbstständigung militärisch-strategischer Logik” (Dath/Kirchner, 191). Its story revolves around a future world war between the Northern countries (Europe, Australia, Japan, the US, and Israel) and the South represented by a League of Arab nations, the Arab National Army, ANA. However, *Cold Allies* (1993) does not constitute a case of simple military SF because it does not relish in the “Lust an 'Stahlge- wittern'” of the future (Rottensteiner, 262). “Military [SF] ist [e]in heute populärer Zweig der [SF], die irgendwelche militärischen Auseinandersetzungen unter galaktischen Reichen, mit oder ohne außerirdische Beteiligung, ausmalt und meist auf militärische Kompetenz setzt” (Ibid.). Although Anthony's story pictures a Third World War with the participation of aliens, her novel is not a typical work of military SF, since she tends to forego

detailed descriptions of futuristic military equipment and battles and focuses on her characters instead. Her novel is more an anti-war novel than an example of military SF. All characters are represented as suffering under the exigencies of the war. Its heroes and heroines are wholly unheroic everymen and -women, many of whom die. Furthermore, the negative aspects of war take precedence over the exhilaration of battle. Every time a battle occurs in the story the cost in human lives is clearly mentioned. The battlegrounds are littered with body parts and mutilated corpses and the story features many accounts of horrible wounds. There are numerous descriptions of the horrors of war in the novel. For instance, on page 287 there appears a “little girl [with b]leeding stumps where her hands should have been” (p. 287). There are more examples of children harmed by war in the book. Furthermore, some of the focal characters are killed or wounded in combat as well.

The novel is not so much a metaphor for a runaway military-strategic logic but an extrapolation of the two postmodern problematics. It depicts a future outcome of the current process of globalization and climate change. If the current trend is not altered in the near future a military conflict between the South and the North seems like a distinct possibility. The ANA, which represents the southern nations, leads a war of extermination against the northern allied nations: “they take no prisoners” (p. 5) and exterminate the civilian populations of the areas they conquer with nerve gas or shoot them. The only real-world correlative of a similar war of extermination is the German conquest of Eastern Europe and Russia during the Second World War. Conversely, the allies stick to the rules of the Geneva Conventions, so much so that the Supreme Allied Commander of Western Europe, General Lauterbach, is ready to step down from his post for a ridiculously minor transgression against said conventions (p. 276). *Cold Allies* appeared long before the (second) declaration of the 'War on Terror' and the breaches of the Geneva Conventions effected by US military personnel and the CIA^{xlvi} in its course. There are numerous references to the Second World War in the story. Many of the Eastern European allies have served in the Red Army and they are the ones who draw comparisons between the current war and the “Great Patriotic War” (p. 239). At the end of the story Warsaw is under siege by the ANA and the characters comment on the parallels between their situation and the historical destruction of Warsaw during World War II by the Wehrmacht. Like *In the Country of Last Things*, *Cold Allies* takes up elements of past history and reassembles them in a new way, framing them via the back story of a plausible future. The reason for the war is the Greenhouse Effect. Thus the reasons for this world war differ very much from the ones for

the Second Thirty Years' War from 1914 to 1945. While the latter was brought on by the competition of the old imperial powers on behalf of their national capitalist classes in the case of the First World War and to a significant degree in the case of the Second as well (Hobsbawm (1994), 274), Anthony's fictional Third World War has been caused by scarcity. Anthony depicts a world after the onset of scarcity. The world of her novel is governed by resource depletion. All non-military vehicles in the story run on propane gas, solar energy, or electricity (p. 31, 55). The newest tanks of the Western allies as well as Means's CRAV run on nuclear energy. All other military vehicles run on Diesel and gas wherefore there is a pointed lack of fuel that often keeps the armies from moving. Furthermore, the ANA in the first part of the book shoots down the last remaining US GPS satellite with a laser. An idea which was SF in 1993, but today has been rendered reality by the US and the Chinese militaries which both shot down a satellite by rocket in the 2000s. In the fictional world the Greenhouse Effect has considerably worsened, resulting in droughts and famines in the Southern countries. From the point of view of the ANA the "Greenhouse heat was a genocidal plot of the industrial countries" (p. 38) to depopulate the South. The Arab armies are fleeing from starvation and drought in their homelands (p. 17) and thus move northward. This clearly thematizes the problematic of environmental degradation as well as the problematic distributive injustice. On page 28, two general officers of the allies, an American and a Ukrainian general, have the following conversation: "I think I understand the Arabs. They're just hungry.' [The Ukrainian] dismissed the Greenhouse Effect with a wave of his hand. 'Let them eat dirt.' The American's lips tightened. 'I thought that's what we were trying to do'" (p. 28). The fault of the Westerners from the Southern point of view is that they are indifferent to their plight: "The sin of the Westerners was simply that they did not care" (p. 38). This mirrors the real-world indifference of the global North with regard to the vast swath of the world's population that lives in poverty. "Westerners never listened. That's what the entire war was about" (p. 219). Anthony's future world war mirrors the distributive war that Wagenknecht identifies as characteristic of the current stage of capitalism and which Ziegler refers to as a *Weltwirtschaftskrieg*. "Had we won the war, we would have taught them to listen" (p. 241). The indifference of the imperial hegemon and its allies is given as the reason for war here, a rationalization which harks back to the real-world phenomenon of the practice of news reporting that Žižek identifies as characteristic of the Western approach to geopolitics which covers the sensational victimization of Westerners but completely ignores the quotidian casualties of the distributive

war. This perceived complacency of the West in the context of the famines caused by the Greenhouse Effect in the South is the reason why the Arabs in the story hate the Westerners. They hate them so much that they are ready to employ genocidal tactics against the civilian population and still feel justified in their hate. This mirrors the real-world atrocities committed by the army of the IS in Syria and Iraq which justifies its barbaric conduct in religious terms, but came into being as an effect of the very secular geopolitical actions of the West in the Middle East. On page 266, the captured commander of the ANA's Eastern army, General Sabry, laments the fact that the ANA lacks the technological know-how to annihilate the West with nuclear bombs: "I wanted to," Sabry groaned. Oh, how he had wanted to. He leveled a glare of hatred at Lauterbach. 'I wanted more than life to kill you'" (p. 266). This extreme hatred also has obvious real-world correlatives. The "dangerous discontent of the underprivileged" (Jameson (2003b), 75) today finds many violent expressions, one of them being terrorism. "Der Hass auf den Westen, diese unausrottbare Leidenschaft, beherrscht heute eine große Mehrheit der Völker in der südlichen Hemisphäre. Er ist ein machtvoller Mobilisierungsfaktor. Dieser Hass ist keineswegs pathologisch" (Ziegler (2008), 13). General Sabry's hate is a reflection of this real-world phenomenon. Samuel Huntington suggests that cultural differences are the overriding reason for his so-called 'clash of civilizations' while in fact all the phenomena which he attributes to the latter can also be explained by the Marxian category of class. The common denominator of the Arab Nations in the story is poverty, not religion. Their motivation for engaging in genocide is not religious or cultural but economical. Their justification is that they want to make room for the starving masses in their home countries in the global South. The novel thus emphasizes the role poverty and marginalization play in the generation of the dangerous discontent our totalitarian market order fosters in its rejects, which in the current stage of geopolitics predominantly finds expression in religious fanaticism. Huntington mistakes the symptoms with the cause. The novel rightfully points out that Huntington's approach is skewed because it ignores the paramount role the distributive war and the North-South divide play in the phenomena he seeks to explain.

The warring parties in the novel represent a high degree of internationalization. For example, the Ukrainian army, with American help and German tanks and technology fights against an Arab invasion of Poland, while the ANA represents over a dozen Arab and South-Eastern European nationalities which all stick together to fight this war. This internationalization "reflect[s] aspects of globalization" and the high-tech gadgets mentioned in the story "represent

[the] contemporary state of global culture dominated by new technologies” (Currie, 3). *Cold Allies* thus falls under Currie's third category of postmodern novels. It is a work of postmodern realism. Furthermore, it is an extrapolative SF novel as well as a work of dystopian SF and it also belongs to the genre of the postmodern dystopia. It thus constitutes a generic hybrid and can aptly be classified as a postmodern work of fiction.

Anthony's novel was published in 1993. She does not date her future, but it is easily possible to deduce a time frame for her narrative from the hints given in the story. Since numerous of its characters have first-hand knowledge of serving in the Red Army of the Soviet Union (p. 244), the action can be sensibly temporally located in the first decade of the twenty-first century or the last decade of the twentieth. Anthony's novel thus describes a near-future scenario.

Anthony employs the strategies of literary realism to render her story. There are eight focal characters through whose consciousnesses the action is mediated. Of these eight focal characters, two are Arabs and another two are American civilians. The other four focalizers all are soldiers of the Western Allies of some sort. Since the respective subchapters of the focal characters are all roughly of the same length, the Western view of the conflict is over-represented. Furthermore, although the war takes place in Europe, there is only one European focalizer, a Ukrainian, General Valentin Baranyk. The remaining five Western focal characters are Americans. The two Arab focalizers, furthermore, do not appear synchronously. Colonel Quasim Abdel Wasef, an Egyptian national, is not only the second to last focal character who is introduced in the story (p. 36), he also remains the sole Arab focalizer until he dies on page 215. His storyline is then taken over by Rashid Aziz Sabry (p. 226). Sabry is first mentioned by name on page 110 as Wasef's superior officer. He is introduced as a character (an actant) on page 152, but does not become a focalizer until page 226. He is the last focal character to appear in the story. With regard to race, two of the focal characters are Arabs, and one of the American military characters is a black woman from New Orleans called Rita Beaudreaux. However, “New Orleans isn't there anymore” (p. 236). It has been flooded by the rising ocean, which is a rather uncanny premonition to have in 1993. Florida has been flooded as well (p. 81). One of the two civilian focal characters is a Texan boy who was displaced by the drought and experiences life as a refugee in a way which reminds one of the Dust Bowl migration wave. The boy's name is Jerry Casey. He arrives with his dead father at the border to Colorado and is interned in a refugee camp by the police there. The police consider all refugees as “Texas Trash” (p. 57) just

like the Dust Bowl refugees were all considered as 'Okies' in the 1930s. The police not only beat up and torture Jerry when he secretly tries to enter Colorado on foot (p. 91), but also shoot refugees who fight about food (p. 90) as well as people who allegedly carry infectious diseases (p. 135). This mirrors what Wilson calls capital's dismissive attitude toward the large majority of the people in the developing countries and toward the majority of people in their countries of origin. The poor in their country of origin are treated like members of an enemy army. The police in Anthony's novel treat the poor of their own country the same way the Western military treats its enemies by brutalizing and killing them. This behavior constitutes a radicalized version of the neo-liberal practice of class warfare which the transnational faction of the bourgeoisie has been leading over the course of the last three decades against the different national working classes both in the West and the world at large. In the world of the novel, one's class status has become a matter of life and death. The novel thus emphasizes the paramount importance the category of class has for any attempt to come up with a comprehensive understanding of the current status quo. The fact that Anthony's refugees mirror the historical Dust Bowl migration wave highlights the continuity of capital's dismissive attitude towards the poor and the working class.

Linda Parisi is the name of the second civilian focalizer. She is an author of non-fiction 'alien contact' books. She lives in Virginia in the North-East of the US and therefore lacks any understanding of the severeness of the situation brought about by the Greenhouse Effect in the Southern states: "One thousand Americans die of starvation every day" the reader learns on page 28. The Southern states of the US experience famines and droughts as much as the global South, while the standard of living in the North has remained undiminished. The North-South divide in the novel runs through the territory of the imperial hegemon itself, thus emphasizing the fact that the gap in wealth between the developed countries and the Third World is not a matter of culture or religion but of class. Linda Parisi flees from her apartment in Virginia because Military Intelligence officers have come to question her. She flees due South and thus experiences the misery of the Southern refugees first hand, although she does not feel empathy for their suffering, since she is a self-absorbed and arrogant character. Parisi thus mirrors the complacent late-capitalist consumer who is indifferent to the plight of the global poor as long as her own standard of living remains unchanged. Furthermore, Parisi is a fraud. Her 'alien contact' books consist of made-up lies, which is why she takes flight when the authorities show interest in her work. This reference to alien contact nonfiction in the novel is an ironic metafictional nod to the SF

genre. Parisi is totally taken aback when she learns that there actually are aliens contacting humankind. She has made a career out of the gullibility of her readers, while Anthony weaves a complex narrative out of history by means of the conventions of SF and the dystopia genre. Anthony's novel incorporates the strong didactic intent of dystopian fiction as opposed to Parisi's fraudulent nonfiction which seeks to disguise the actual facts by mystifying its readers and distracting them from the real problems of the world. Parisi's work is part of the society of the spectacle which distracts the consumer's attention from the real issues by bombarding her/him with an incessant barrage of trifles and non-issues. This is a state of affairs that mirrors the current mediascape in the West and its denial of tragedy, which I argue is a characteristic feature of the postmodern mindset.

The focalizers from the American military are Rita Beaudreaux, a National Guard medical examiner deployed in Spain at the Western front of the war, Justin Searles, a navy fighter pilot, and Gordon Means, who pilots a robot by remote control, a Computerized Robotic Attack Vehicle or CRAV, another novum of the story. The latter focal character is the main one by far. *Cold Allies'* 19 chapters are all subdivided into subchapters which represent the action from the point of view of one of the eight focal characters each. Gordon Means has 33 such subchapters for himself. He is by far the main character of the novel. As Currie remarks "sympathy [...] is technically produced and controlled by the devices of access, closeness and distance" (Currie, 30). Gordon is the character who provides most access to his inner life and is therefore the main target for the reader's sympathy. He is followed by General Baranyk, who has 19 subchapters, while Rita Beaudreaux has 16, Wasef has 12, Jerry has 10, and Mrs. Parisi has 10 as well. Justin Searles has nine, and Sabry has six.

Gordon Means is not a typical soldier. He is a comic and SF buff who grew up playing computer games. He has personality issues. He is timid and shy and uses his CRAV to escape his feeble physical self to become a "fucking, goddamned Superman" (p. 130). One could consider this character as a stand-in for the typical SF fan. As Youngquist points out, SF's intended audience consists of "those who are dissatisfied with the way things are: adolescents, post adolescents, escapists, dreamers, and th[e] powerless" in general (Youngquist, 136). Gordon Means in the course of the story chooses to escape his human self as he joins the aliens and learns to commandeer one of their ships, which can be considered as the fulfillment of a typical SF buff's wildest dreams. Although Means is a member of the military, his outlook is more or less civilian. He has problems with military etiquette and

all his contact to the reality of war is mediated through technology. He kills by remote control and is thus a combatant of a Video Game War. He is qualified for this kind of warfare because he spent his youth playing video games. This mirrors the real-world phenomenon that the US carry out much of their current military activity by remote control, i.e., in the case of the assassination of enemy personnel via combat drones. The technological gadgetry of the novel, which was fictitious when the novel appeared in 1993, has turned into realistic description in retrospect. Furthermore, apart from the novel's novum of the CRAV's relationship to the real-worldUCAV (unmanned combat aerial vehicle), Mean's warfare by remote control also mirrors the first Iraq War's medial representation as a war led with an accompanying public relations campaign which glossed over its human costs by medially representing it as succession of surgical strikes carried out from a safe distance. The fact that Anthony's novel appeared two years after the First Iraq War suggests that Anthony's conception of her Third World War probably was influenced by this conflict. The story's novum of the CRAV mirrors the war reporting about said military conflict between a third world nation and the imperial hegemon of the world that limited the available coverage to air images of bomb sights. Conversely, Anthony minutely displays the human costs of war both for combatants and noncombatants. *Cold Allies* explicitly draws attention to the suffering brought about noncombatants through the practice of contemporary warfare.

The second major novum of the story, apart from it taking place in a near future scenario, is the fact that an alien race has come to earth in the form of blue hovering lights. These blue lights are the 'Cold Allies' from the book's title. In each chapter there is a subchapter bearing the heading "In the Light". These subchapters describe the experiences of characters who have been abducted by these aliens. The first chapter features a conference between the two Supreme Allied Commanders Europe (SACEURs) of the Western and Eastern—the Saceur-East, Andrzej Czajowski, and the Saceur-West, William T. Lauterbach—armies of the allies where the aliens are first mentioned (p. 26ff). A blue light first appears on the scene on page 12. General Baranyk is present at the conference as well and it is from his point of view that its proceedings are rendered. Lauterbach informs the others that a US fighter pilot named Justin Searles has been abducted by such a blue light alien during a combat mission (p. 27). Searles appears for the first time as a focal character on page 14, in the first subchapter which carries the heading "In the Light". In the course of the story, four other focal characters enter 'the light,' among them Gordon Means, who stays with the aliens, together with

Jerry Casey, while Rita Beauxdreaux and Justin Searles are eventually transported back to earth (p. 275). General Lauterbach is able to penetrate the light in his dreams, but he is incapable of actively communicating with the aliens. 'The light' constitutes a place outside of physical reality where each of the three focal characters who permanently enter it is presented with positive scenarios from their pasts. The aliens themselves are curious and want to study humankind. However, as opposed to the typical alien abduction narrative, the characters who enter the light are not submitted to physical examinations. The aliens of *Cold Allies* are more interested in the psychological make up of the human species and seek to understand human emotions. Lauterbach in turn wants the aliens to enter the war on the side of the allies, since the allies are losing the war. The fact that the aliens mercy kill fatally injured soldiers from both sides is transformed by Lauterbach into a ruse to fool the Arabs into believing that the aliens are actually on the side of the allies. Because the Arabs are rendered as very superstitious a panic breaks out among them when General Lauterbach forces Gordon Means to face the ANA's Western advance alone with his CRAV (p. 212). One blue light has taken a shine to Gordon and follows him around whenever he pilots his CRAV. When Gordon faces the ANA's Western army in a narrow switchback the blue light comes to defend Gordon's CRAV. Lauterbach's plan works out and the Western campaign is thus won for the allies. The Eastern campaign, however, is not yet over. In the town of Warsaw, Baranyk's Ukrainian division and the Polish army are encircled by an Arab army counting 400,000 men. The siege of Warsaw starts on page 221. During its course the allies become so desperate that Lauterbach decides to drop a nuclear bomb on the city together with its Arab attackers. However, in the last moment, when Baranyk and his comrades await their imminent, inexorable annihilation, a deus ex machina appears in the form of the formerly neutral Russian Army, which breaks the encirclement and scatters the Arab army which has been demoralized by the onset of a surprisingly harsh winter. As in the Second World War Russia's engagement in the war has a decisive effect. Thus, the Eastern campaign is won by the allies as well. The decisive impact the story's aliens have on the military situation in the novel hints at the fact that the losers of the real-world distributive war by far outnumber its winners and that a military conflict between the former and the latter could very well culminate in a victory of the South over the North.

The arrival on earth of the alien species puts humanity's fate into perspective. The aliens encounter a human species engaged in a process of self-annihilation. The fact that a Third World War has broken out between its peoples

shows that humankind has failed to learn from the past. The Third World War has been brought on by scarcity of resources and not by the competition of the imperial powers of old or a so-called clash of civilizations. However, the competition for resources which has led to the war in the story, and in our hypothetical future, is very much shaped by imperial competition between the center and the periphery. Today wars are fought for oil and other resources. The developing countries' demand for oil will dramatically increase in the near future, which will translate into a drastic intensification of international competition. This means that Anthony's scenario remains a distinct possibility as long as the distribution of essential resources and wealth isn't democratized on a global scale. The fact that the American Saceur is ready to employ a nuclear bomb on European soil reflects the unmatched ruthlessness which characterizes the Western way of warfare which was the basis of colonialism. The power relations of colonialism continue to shape the international political landscape of today. The North-South divide of today is an outcome of the colonialism of old. The total destruction of nuclear annihilation constitutes the logical culmination of the Western way of warfare which has been successfully exported to the South as shown by the ANA's genocidal practices. As the number of nuclear-weapon states continues to rise so does the possibility of a nuclear war as the IS's conduct demonstrates the human capability for atrocious behavior remains without limit.

In the last chapter, which constitutes an epilogue that takes place ten years after the fighting has ceased, the Arab General Sabry is visited by General Lauterbach, who is married to Rita Beaudreaux by now. Another deus ex machina is employed. The aliens have solved the Green House problem, and thereby dissolved the reason for the war, by 'cooling' the sun. The Entropy Myth is deconstructed in this narrative. Its near-future setting sets a narrow temporal horizon for the solution of the problematic of distributive injustice and the fact that the only way to solve humankind's existential environmental problems is an alien deus ex machina speaks for itself. In reality, "humans will n[either] travel to other parts of the universe nor will they receive help from some mysterious source outside themselves. [H]elp is not on the way to Earth and, therefore, humans have to realize they are alone and must of necessity become their own best resource" (Morse, 160). That is the essential message of *Cold Allies*. We must solve these two problems as long as there is still time to do so in a peaceful way. The novel is a work of dystopian fiction by virtue of its extrapolation of current tendencies into a plausible near-future scenario. However, the text does incorporate hope for a better future. The fact that the solution to the problematic of ecological degradation in the

world of the novel negates the necessity for war between the North and the South hints at the existence of a common denominator of universal humanism which doesn't depend on nationality, culture, or religion. This universal humanism in the story finds expression in the fact that Anthony employs focal characters from both sides of the conflict and depicts the antagonists of the West as rational human beings as well. It is in this universal humanism in which resides the utopian impulse as expressed by the novel. Anthony's first novel thus belongs to the category of Moylan's critical dystopia. The fact that it completely abandons the plot structure of the classical dystopia as well as its positive ending further justifies this classification. The novel emphasizes the fact that the main reasons of geopolitical conflict are economic not cultural or religious and thus engages the problematic of distributive injustice. The fact that a *deus ex machina* is employed to resolve the dichotomy that has resulted in a new global armed conflict foregrounds the necessity of radical change in the real world. The novel thus carries a didactic message which is typical of dystopian fiction. The possibility of such change is hinted at in the novel by the fact that all the participants of the war are of a similar psychological make up. The differences in wealth are shown as the primal impetus of conflict, while on the intersubjective level the novel insists on the universality of the human condition. The utopian impulse that Moylan deems characteristic of the critical, postmodern dystopia most prominently manifests itself in Anthony's novel in the chapters which bear the heading 'In the light'. There the different characters meet in a peaceful place which transcends the war and engage in intersubjective practices which eliminate the necessity for conflict. The novel thus suggests that communication between the different camps could serve to divert the occurrence of such conflict in the future.

Cold Allies isn't so much a metaphor for the dangers of a runaway military-industrial complex, as Dath and Kirchner suggest, but an extrapolation of current tendencies and circumstances taken to extremes. The actual North-South divide in the story takes the form of armed conflict. In the novel, the reason for the Arabs' hatred of the West is the latter's indifference with regard to Southern poverty. As Ziegler points out, this hatred has a real-world equivalent among the peoples of the South. Nearly one billion human beings today live in absolute poverty, a fact that is generally ignored by the public in the West. Over one third of the world's population lives in relative poverty. The extreme poverty of so many of the earth's inhabitants constitutes a reservoir of discontent which time and again finds its expression in armed conflict. *Cold Allies* gives us a glimpse of what such an armed conflict could

look like if the South would at one point unite against the North.

7.4 PATRICIA ANTHONY: *BROTHER TERMITE*

According to Dath and Kirchner, Anthony's second novel *Brother Termite* (1993) is a metaphor "für die technokratische Verwaltung der menschlichen Reproduktionsfähigkeit durch die Apparate von Staat und Wirtschaft" (Dath/Kirchner, 191). *Brother Termite* is a speculative SF novel. It was published in 1993, in the same year as *Cold Allies*. It is speculative because it envisions an 'imaginative leap,' and posits a clear disjunction from the empirical world, which cannot be linearly extrapolated from the current state of affairs. Its action takes place sometime between 1995 and 2003. The story purports that an alien race called the Cousins landed on earth at some point in time during Harry S. Truman's presidency (p. 10). The landing from the present of the story lies 50 years in the past (p. 63f). So, since Truman spent 8 years in office, 1945 to 1953, the story can be temporally situated in said time span. The temporal location of the landing could be read as a reference to the Roswell UFO incident of 1947. The story's single focalizer is a member of the alien species called Reen. *Brother Termite* can therefore be identified as a work of posthuman SF as well. *Brother Termite* puts a posthuman spin on the traditional alien-invasion subgenre of SF by taking up the point of view of the alien invaders. The Cousins set out to breed a new species, combining their own DNA with that of humans to avoid their imminent extinction. The thus created hybrid children are the only beings in the story endowed with a future, since the Cousins have brought about the extinction of humankind as well. *Brother Termite* is a genre-bending novel of Currie's second type of postmodern novels. The narrative constitutes a hybrid of the political thriller, the conspiracy thriller, the alternate history novel, the postmodern dystopia, the posthuman SF genre, and the genre of speculative SF.

Reen is the name of the alien who serves as the novel's only focal character. He holds the position of the White House Chief of Staff (p. 1) and is at the same time the leader of the Cousins on earth, Cousin Brother Firstborn. The American President is a human of Polish ancestry called Jeffrey Womack. Womack has spent the last 51 years in office (p. 31), thanks to an "unlimited term amendment" passed on the insistence of Reen (p. 189), and thanks to the fact that Reen, using Cousin biotechnology, has prolonged Womack's life (p. 148). Moreover, his approval ratings among the human population are still high (p. 32). Womack tells Reen that the secret of his success lies in the fact that "governments exist only by the apathy of the governed" (p. 1). This is a clear reference to the apathetic consumer typical of postmodern and

postdemocratic capitalism. The history of the Cousins conquering earth however is contradictory as it is represented in the novel. According to the novel, the Cousin race landed on earth fifty years prior to the events that unfurl in the story (p. 63). Womack has been in office for fifty-one years (p. 31). He thus must have succeeded Truman. Conversely, the story references numerous later US presidents whose terms in office all fall in the time span that Womack supposedly served as president. On the very first page of the novel Reen reminisces about a warning he received from Dwight D. Eisenhower, who was the thirty-fourth American president and as such succeeded Truman. Furthermore, John F. Kennedy, the thirty-fifth president of the US, is also referred to as a former president within the world of the story. These references thus explicitly contradict each other. According to the novel, Reen knew 12 American presidents, he “loved three of them, and now had outlived all but one” (p. 35). The one president he has not outlived yet (this president dies later in the story) is the fictitious thirty-fourth president of the US Jeffrey Womack. This contradictory frame of reference undermines the story's believability. The latter statement is of course contradictory as well, since the willing suspension of disbelief is paramount to the reception of SF as well as alternate history novels. If the reader is willing to suspend his/her disbelief enough to allow for imagining an alternate history scenario, as the presence of the Cousins on earth during the last fifty years, or for imagining the existence of an alien species which governs the earth in the story's present, such a reader will probably overlook the contradictions in the narrative's historical back story. The shared history of the Cousins and humankind is summarized in the book on page 132: Womack, after “just two months in office” (p. 132) learns of the existence of the aliens and of “secret treaties” (p. 132) which apparently have been struck in the past. The novel hints that Womack's predecessors in office knew of the Cousins and that it was only during his tenure in office that they chose to land on earth. This would explain how Reen, who is said to be more than three centuries of age, was able to get to know 12 American presidents. “[E]ight months later” (p. 132) the Cousins had landed on earth and took over the planet's government. Apparently, although it is never explained in the novel, after the aliens landed they struck an agreement with the leaders of earth—by letting on that they could wage war against humankind, and by intimidating humanity with their advanced technology, while in fact, the only way that the Cousins are able to fight the humans is via a doomsday virus—which allowed them to take over the government of earth. Two months after the landing the “UN National Security Council” (p. 132) became the principal governing body of the whole

planet. Although the council exclusively holds its meetings in Washington, other nationalities, e.g., the Germans, are also represented in the council. Reen as the White House chief of staff plays an important role in the proceedings of the NSC as do the directors of the FBI, William Hopkins, and the director of the CIA, Marian Cole. Jeff Womack, as the president of the USA, presides over the council as a whole, although, at the beginning of the novel, he is on strike and refuses to cooperate, i.e., he urinates over the legal documents he is supposed to sign into law (p. 11). The various nations on earth are thus governed by the NSC, which implies an internationalization and unification of world politics which reflects the real-world trends of globalization, which is a postmodern realist element of the narrative in accordance with Currie's typology. The novel, however, does not specify the political situation of the world. The internationalization of government includes Europe and the US, which seem to be ruled by the NSC, but there is no reference to the rest of the world, except for the fact that Europe, under German leadership, threatens war against China and Korea. The US international hegemony of the American century in the novel has developed to such extremes that a national governmental agency of the US rules the better part of the Western world. The novel completely leaves out the Cold War era and suggests that the East-West competition that characterized the post-WW II world seems to have unraveled by itself. In the world as projected by the text liberal democracy and consumer capitalism have triumphed as the world's dominant form of political organization which mirrors Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis. However, in the world of the novel as in the real world the end of the dichotomy between the Soviet Union and the US has resulted in a host of new problems that belie the fantastical nature of Fukuyama's premature proclamation of an end to the Hegelian development of world history that according to the latter has resulted from the end of competition between the grand modernist narratives of communism and liberal capitalism. In the world of the story, the dichotomy that drives the world of politics is the opposition between the interests of the alien race of the Cousins and the human race at large.

The story revolves around the schemes and machinations of five power groups: the FBI, represented by William Hopkins, the CIA, which is under the direction of Marian Cole, a rival group among the Cousins led by the Cousin Conscience called Tali, who wants to take over the leadership from Reen in order to bring about the extermination of humankind by unleashing the doomsday virus, Reen's own faction of pro-human Cousins, and the Secret Service, which is in league with the president. The "CIA merged with the KGB,

North Korean intelligence, and every thug in every crappy little police state south of the American border” (p. 204), while the FBI “has stayed as all-American as goddamned apple pie” (p. 204). The CIA merging with the KGB means two like-minded organizations joining forces. It also means that two of the most powerful institutions of the Cold War shared a common agenda. Furthermore, this internationalization of the world's intelligence agencies under American leadership again reflects the internationalization characteristic of globalization. North Korea, a member of the infamous real-world 'Axis of Evil,' is a totalitarian dictatorship as are the South-American police states the real CIA did help to install. The fact that these former enemies join forces suggests that their commonalities outweigh their differences. The American Central Intelligence Agency is thus likened to the Evil Empire's most notorious agency of oppression. The novel explicitly invites the reader to cognitively map these facts. The machinations of these five groups which are all localized in the hegemonic center of the imperial hegemon, i.e., the USA, eclipse or at least marginalize the developments in all the other parts of the world. The reign of the Cousins thus mirrors the structural bias inherent to George Bush I's new world order.

There are numerous plots and counterplots in the narrative, assassinations, kidnappings, and conspiracies, which are resolved at the end of the story without giving in to the thriller genre convention of a 'neat and tidy' ending which resolves all the problems that have been brought on by the story. The Machiavellian machinations of the different power groups within the story mirror the world of actual American and Western politics pretty accurately. The number of capitalists who use their wealth to influence the democratic process in their favor has definitely risen spectacularly during the last three decades of neo-liberal rule: “Die Zahl der Lobbyisten in Washington DC hat sich zwischen 1975 und 2005 von 3400 auf 32.890 erhöht” (Deppe, 37). This is almost a tenfold increase and a tendency that is mirrored in European politics as well (Ibid., 36). The story reflects this state of affairs which constitutes yet another effect of the neo-liberal hegemony and is characteristic of the postmodern politics of the spectacle that Crouch deems symptomatic of the current form the realm of politics has taken in the real world. The story departs from real-world politics only in one detail, namely that two of the groups vying for power consist of extraterrestrial aliens. The populace consists of apathetic postdemocratic consumers placated by a high standard of living and ignorant of the imminent catastrophe brought about by their rulers. The notion of an apathetic mass of people ruled by a gargantuan bureaucratic technocracy is one of Mohr's stock topics of dystopia. Anthony's

second novel thus falls under the heading of dystopian SF, although its back story is not located in a different future temporality, which constitutes the main means of cognitive estrangement in the SF genre, but is grounded on an alternate past that has resulted in the alternate present or very close near future that constitutes the point in time at which the story takes place.

In the course of the five decades the aliens spent on earth, they took up human traits. Some of them were even fully assimilated into human society. These are the pro-human Cousins under Reen's and Oomal's leadership. Oomal and his fellow Cousins are so human that they have become free-market capitalists. The Cousin race's history is another interesting aspect of the story. They have a history of "twelve hundred centuries of civilization" (p. 16). In the course of that history they "wiped every sentient race but the humans off the face of the galaxy" (p. 87). Theirs is a history of genocide. Like capitalism, "[t]he Community expanded, yes. It is the nature of the Community to expand" (p. 8). Their "ancestors murdered without cause. These other species didn't even get a chance to protest" (p. 88). This sounds very much like the history of colonialism and therefore of Western capitalism itself. "The Cousins [are] the ultimate multinational corporation" (p. 86). But as "[w]e all know the free market economy will eventually go belly-up" (p. 86), and thus the Cousins are "scattered in sparse knots across the galaxy" (p. 97), unable to reproduce or to accomplish anything sensible with their vast dominion. The Cousin race's history reflects the perpetual drive of capital which forever seeks to overcome all barriers to the accumulation of profit and which in the end might simply culminate in a state of static entropy just like the galactic dominion of the Cousins did.

The main theme of the book somewhat surprisingly is the 'bad' influence the human race has on the Cousins as well as the way in which the story's past and present differ from the real world of geopolitics. Among the 'bad habits' the Cousins pick up from their prolonged contact to humankind are blackmail, murder, power-mongering, and free-market capitalism. The Cousins are hive creatures to whom brotherhood is paramount. Only through their prolonged contact to humankind do they assume such characteristically human traits as jealousy and hunger for power. Reen and Tali both become murderers before the story ends, which clashes with the Cousins' collective tradition. In the past, when the Cousins killed, they killed collectively, giving in to their cultural habit of genocide. Before their contact with humankind the Cousins habitually destroyed whole species, but they never engaged in interpersonal, hands-on violence. Again, as in *Cold Allies*, the arrival of an alien species on earth provides an outside perspective on the human race. The Cousins'

practice of genocide is a clear reference to the colonial and imperial atrocities of capitalism's past. Their distaste for 'hands-on' violence reflects the cowardice of the butchers of the past of humankind, such as Hitler or Heinrich Himmler, who gave the orders, but refused to witness the actual act of killing. The comparison between the Cousin race and the late-capitalist market order is a telling one. Just like the latest phase of capitalism the Cousins are bound to a course that will culminate in their own destruction. The view the novel provides on the human race isn't a flattering one. It implies that traits like a proneness to violence, greed, lust for power for its own sake, and a Hobbesian urge for self-destruction are basic human characteristics. In *Brother Termite* as in a world of politics shaped by the ideologies of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism man is man's wolf.

The story is littered with references to real-world American politicians, such as Harry Truman, John F. Kennedy, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Richard Nixon. For instance, Reen was responsible for the assassination of the Kennedy brothers (p. 188), which apparently took place in the narrative world as it did in the real world (p. 195). Kennedy was President when he was eliminated in the story's past which, as has been pointed out above, clashes with Womack's storyline. In the book, the mastermind behind the assassinations is J. Edgar Hoover (p. 189). As reader, one cannot help wondering who *really* was behind these two seminal political murders. Here, too, the reader is induced to cognitively map the past of American politics and political assassinations. John F. Kennedy, furthermore, is a character within the story. President Womack displays a great interest in the paranormal and therefore hires a string of mediums, one of whom he makes Vice President (p. 126). When Womack is assassinated on page 134, the "spirit of John Fitzgerald Kennedy" incarnated by the medium Jeremy Holt (p. 126) becomes "the new President" (p. 187). Reen, who is responsible for the assassination of the Kennedy brothers in the novel, is forgiven by Kennedy/Holt, who claims that he has learned who was truly responsible for the double assassination in the afterlife. According to him, J. Edgar Hoover "suckered" Reen (p. 188) into believing that Kennedy was about to have him assassinated. Hoover is praised in the novel as a "master manipulator" (p. 188). Tali, Reen's principal opponent, is said to have learned from Hoover "how to use assassination and deceit" (p. 195). The Kennedy assassinations constitute one of the classical subjects of conspiracy thriller fiction. In the novel John F. Kennedy, after having been appointed as vice president, announces en passant that "there *was* a gunman on the grassy knoll" (italics in original; p. 126) and that the two official assassins, Lee Harvey Oswald and

Sirhan Sirhan, acted “under alien control” on behest of J. Edgar Hoover (p. 126). The novel hints at the possibility that there were very powerful players involved in the actual assassinations and highlights the fact that the official explanations for these two seminal political murders are not very persuasive. The novel's title harks back to the fact that Womack has chosen 'termite' as a nickname for Reen as well as the fact that Reen loves Womack (p. 31). Womack and Marian Cole are the only two humans he loves (p. 9). Marian Cole, it turns out, has mothered a child with Reen: “theirs had been a laboratory mating, not warm limbs wrapping warm limbs, but a petri-dish entwining of DNA” (p. 17). The reader learns on page 36 that the Cousins are in fact becoming extinct. Furthermore, they have made sure that humankind is too (p. 19). Like in *In the Country of Last Things* the human race has been rendered incapable of reproducing and is thus doomed to extinction. The only hope for the future are the hybrid children the Cousins bred, mixing human DNA with Cousin DNA. Their hybrid offspring are “Cousinly humans. Humans who would live four hundred years and breed like animals for the sheer exhilarating pleasure of it. [Reen's and Marian's daughter] would probably live long enough to see her progeny cover the galaxy like a blanket” (p. 151). Reen feels betrayed by Womack when he finds out that the latter is responsible for the mysterious anti-Cousin graffiti which appeared on the White House walls (p. 130). One of these graffiti represents an intertextual allusion to a seminal work of alien-invasion SF, H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds* (1898) (p. 54), as well as an intratextual reference to the pivotal significance of viruses to the story which the reader will only be able to appreciate later in the text.

The story begins with a riot in front of the White House where “Germans, French[, and] some Scandinavians” (p. 2) protest the White House's latest economic policies. Germany is referred to quite often in the story. It is mentioned in the story at several occasions that Germany is amassing an army of invasion at the Russian border to China (p. 63). The fact that protesters from so many different nations demonstrate in Washington bespeaks the internationalization of world politics which was effected by the Cousins again reflecting real-world globalization. The fact that foreigners demonstrate in the capital of the US hints at the subordination of the West under the leadership of the imperial hegemon in the world of the novel. It is never explained how international politics are organized in this parallel present, but it is intimated that the US rule at least the Western countries directly. This notion reflects the leading role the US play in the NATO and international politics. Furthermore, the subordination of Europe under the

government of the US not only emphasizes the internationalization characteristic of the globalization process, but also foregrounds the structural bias toward US leadership inherent to the so-called new world order. Anthony suggests that the West forms a monolithic entity which is shaped by a common interest that unites these countries even after the dissolution of the NATO's *raison d'être*, i.e., the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union.

The story is set in the very close near future or an alternate present with floating temporal signifiers hinting at the exact time frame, but never explicitly temporally localizing the world of the story. The differences between the world in the book and the real world that are characterized explicitly by the text are negligible save for the novum of an alien race visiting earth and, instead of conquering it outright or annihilating its population, choosing to become part of the democratic apparatus that governs the world and rendering the human race unable to reproduce. The text never elucidates the many changes the alien invasion might have effected in the world at large, but exclusively focuses on the world of US national politics instead. The America of the story has apparently remained a liberal democracy. The novel emphasizes the impact the American intelligence community has on the world of geopolitics, but this does not constitute a deviation from reality with the CIA's and the FBI's power having been very much increased by a slew of laws passed in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The novel emphasizes the importance of the machinations of small powerful lobby groups and the various secret services assume in the world of American (and by extension Western) politics. In the story, the economy is "in a recession" (p. 58), "Europe threatens war with China" (p. 40), there is "unrest in Italy" (p. 34), and the majority of the population of the West is apathetic and ignorant of its own fate. The world thus clearly reflects the present of its time of publication. The postmodern politics of the spectacle, i.e., the paramount importance of public relations, propaganda, social engineering, and spin play in our present postdemocratic societies, rules the world of politics as depicted in the novel as well as its real-world equivalent. The voting cattle is governed by a direct will to ignorance and an outrageous opportunism that results in the postmodern and postdemocratic subject's consent to its mystification. The apathy and gullibility of the populace in the world of the novel is highlighted by the fact that no one in a time span of 50 years has caught on to the fact that the supposedly benign alien race which has merged with the US government has brought about the extinction of humankind. The postmodern subject as characterized by the novel only appears as a conspicuous absence, a blank where the enlightened subject in the role of a

political actant who proactively takes part in the democratic process once was supposed to reside. The populace of the US is apathetic and complacent beyond precedent. The president's approval ratings soar, although he willingly colluded in bringing about the extinction of the human race. The novel's representation of the world of politics is thus rather realistic, making the novel an example of Currie third category of postmodern realism. The outside view on human relations that the novel's posthuman perspective provides isn't a very flattering one. The novel's evaluation of Western society's organizing principle is deeply pessimistic and in accordance with Crouch's theory of postdemocracy. The novel pretty aptly exemplifies the difference of interests that exists between the government and the people it is supposed to represent. The text emphasizes the importance that neo-liberal backroom politics plays in our current moment of history.

The fact that the story is told from the point of view of an alien who is about to bring about the extinction of humankind is an interesting paradox, since the reader, because of the access to Reen's inner life, cannot help sympathizing with him. As Currie points out "much contemporary fiction acquires its moral controversy exactly through the creation of sympathy for morally offensive characters" (Currie, 27). He gives Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1966), Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993), and Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* as examples of this strategy. *Brother Termite* can be counted as another example of this "creation of a strange sympathy for the devil" (ibid.). Reen's relationship to the humans he loves is complicated by the knowledge he has of the Cousin's project of the sterilization of humankind. Reen is a compassionate and sympathetic character, who has become the executioner of the human race. This nonviolent global genocide effected by him and his brethren does not tarnish him as a character. Again the point of view of the extraterrestrial alien is employed to judge humanity's progress thus far. Again humankind is found wanting. The total annihilation of all of humankind appears as an act of mercy killing in this text.

The fact that the story is set in a near future and that humankind will not survive serves to deconstruct the Extropy Myth. In this novel, the human race is doomed to extinction by virtue of the fact that they did not dare fight the aliens when they first landed, due to the fact that they did not solve a pressing existential problem, like the problematic of distributive injustice and the problematic of environmental degradation, when they still had the time to do so. Furthermore, the story foregrounds the ineptitudes of American liberal democracy. Womack has been the most powerful man in the world for over five decades and his approval ratings are still high, although he plays the

role of a senile alcoholic who urinates across legal documents instead of signing them. *Brother Termite* is not so much a metaphor for the technocratic management of human reproduction, as Dath and Kirchner suggest, but a rumination about Western politics. The novel time and again states the fact that the Cousins are working at making humankind go extinct. In fact, the birth rate has declined by 98 percent, but no one notices. Humankind has allowed their rulers to bring about its own extinction and only reacts against this threat when it is already far too late. *Brother Termite* thus is not so much a metaphor for the technocratic organization of human reproduction but a fable about contemporary politics.

The novel is a work of speculative SF and the alternate history genre which itself in turn is a subgenre of SF. The novel also belongs to Currie's third type of postmodern novels, i.e., it is a work of postmodern realism. Its paradoxical status of both belonging to the fantastic fiction of the SF genre and the realist mode can be resolved by recourse to Moylan's category of the critical dystopia. The novel displays some of the stock topics of dystopian fiction as provided by Mohr. The imminent extinction of humankind being the most prominent among these. However, the fact that the hybrid offspring of the alien and the human race will have a viable future opens up a room for the possibility for change for the better. Furthermore, Reen's compassionate character emphasizes the importance of intersubjectivity in human relations. The posthuman future of the two species in the novel is an expression of the utopian impulse which lies at the heart of the narrative. Anthony's second novel thus can be classified as a postmodern dystopia as well.

7.5 WILLIAM GIBSON: *PATTERN RECOGNITION*

William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* appeared in 2003. Its story takes place in the year 2002. The story's novum, from an SF point of view, consists in the main character's allergy to trademarks. This pathological reactivity to the semiotics of the market place, however, is neither explained by means of (pseudo-)scientific discourse nor in any other way, but just presented as a simple statement of fact. The 'willing suspension of disbelief' required from the reader, nevertheless, is minimal. Our cultural knowledge of the world of advertising and trademarking lets the story's non-scientific novum appear rather believable. The story's main character is called Cayce and she "perceives viscerally what others only see: the avisible violence of advertising" (Youngquist, 217). On the one hand, Cayce suffers from nausea and anxiety attacks triggered by certain examples of marketing, on the other hand, her affliction enables her to earn her living as "a dowser in the world of

global marketing” (p. 2). According to Jameson, Cayce's supernatural “gift is drawn back into our real (or realistic) world by the body itself; she must pay for it by [...] the commodity bulimia which is the inevitable price of her premonitory sensibility” (Jameson (2003c), 113). Her premonitory sensibility enables her to evaluate if a certain design will 'work' as a trademark or not. Furthermore, her “talent [...] is what suspends [the] novel between Science Fiction and realism” (Ibid., 112). The novel can thus be classified as a blend between soft extrapolative SF and postmodern realism. The story, furthermore, is a quest for the mysterious footage, an underground film project, which is anonymously uploaded to the Net in short fragments, and which plays a pivotal role in the story. The protagonist's allergy-cum-special-talent and the footage are the story's major departures from the conventions of realist fiction. Both of these items necessitate a willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader which transcends the bounds of 'normal' realist fiction. *Pattern Recognition* “is a realistic novel set in 2002. It is also a sf novel set in the endless endtimes of the future-present” (Hollinger (2006), 452). The story's present of course is an alternate present as the pasts of the alternative history subgenre of SF are alternate pasts. The present of the story quite clearly departs from the real world that it purports to represent, most remarkably so by the invocation of the cult of 'the footage,' which is a completely fictitious invention of Gibson's. Naturally, nearly all realist fiction can be said to describe such alternate presents in that they draw up fictitious scenarios which purport to represent reality. This method of presenting an alternate present is one of the prerequisites of literature in general.

Pattern Recognition is “a self-reflexive account, reconstructed as mimetic realism, of [...] how we find ourselves permeated by futurity as a kind of defining feature of the perpetual transition that is *now*” (italics in original, Hollinger (2006), 461) The story's fictionalized version of the reality of the year 2002 is a science-fictional version of 'ordinary' realist fiction. It “is a fictionalized phenomenology [...] of the experience of subjectivity in the volatile and transient *now* of global technoculture” (italics in original; Ibid.). It is an example of an alternate history of the present as it reflects the state of contemporary postmodern interiority. It is as such a genuinely postmodern novel, although its endorsement of the genre conventions of the thriller genre could justify to consider the book as an example of Wolfe's anti-post-modern neo-realism. However, even though the story succumbs to the teleology of the thriller genre, its high level of intertextual genre blurring compromises said classification. The novel combines elements from soft

extrapolative SF, the alternate history subgenre of SF, the thriller, cyberpunk SF, and the postmodern dystopia. The world as projected by the text is characterized by the hegemony of neo-liberal consumer capitalism and the subordination of the realm of culture under an all-powerful economy. The story's characters all exhibit a conspicuous lack of political consciousness and thus of political agency. This notion of the postmodern subject as a passive consumer of culture picks up one of Mohr's stock topics of dystopian fiction. The story portrays a postdemocratic dystopian present in which there is no room for hermeneutical depth because the glitzy surface is all there is. The world as projected by the text consists of Baudrillard's hyperreality of third-order simulacra, copies which lack an original and signifiers which lack a referent. The dystopian gaze in this novel by Gibson has been turned from a mode of the fantastic into a means of literal description which constitutes a prototypical feature of Moylan's critical dystopia. The novel "attempt[s] to extrapolate a historical narrative from a perspective of the present" (Link, 219) and telling the history of the present is a prototypically postmodern approach. However, according to Palmer, *Pattern Recognition* "is not itself an imagination of an alternative to our world or an extrapolation from our world, as we define sf to be, except insofar as any novel is that by being a fiction" (Palmer, 480). The congruities of the world as described by the novel and the real world of 2002 by far outnumber the discrepancies. Nevertheless, the fictitious cult of the footage as well as Cayce's supernatural gift let the story transcend the confines of 'simple' realism and Wolfe's anti-postmodernist neo-realism. The novel creates a field of intertextual tension in which it operates and in fact transcends the powers of generic categorization as in the case of Vonnegut's *Hocus Pocus*. As is the case with *Brother Termite*, Gibson's novel is, among other things, a genre-bending generic hybrid of Currie's second type of postmodern novels. It thus escapes the trappings of Wolfe's anti-postmodernist, teleological, and in fact conservative project of fiction. According to Green, "what makes [the novel] worth reading now [...] lies in the way it engages with the semiotic density of the mediascape, the sign and image saturated spaces that increasingly shape public and private consciousness" (Green, 212), i.e., the novel's most salient achievement lies in its realistic representation of the postmodern condition. Green thus dubs Gibson's book a work of late postmodern realism, Currie's third type of postmodern novels. Easterbrook contends that it is "Gibson's first truly postmodern novel" (Easterbrook, 60). According to Link, *Pattern Recognition* is an "espionage novel" (Link, 210). Jameson dubs the novel "a commercial adventure story" (Jameson (2003c), 107) which harks back to Thomas

Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) and to Hunter S. Thompson's proto-postmodern gonzo journalism (Jameson (2003c), 110). Palmer points out that "the novel i[s] a kind of ghost story" as well, since the single focal character's dead father visits her and manifests himself to her at the end of the story (Palmer, 474). The story's main character and only focal character is called Cayce Pollard. Her first name, she explains on page 32, is pronounced 'case'. Thus, Easterbrook points out that "the agonists of both *Neuromancer* and *Pattern Recognition* [are] dubbed 'case'" (italics in original; Easterbrook, 48). "Clearly, in naming his main character Cayce, Gibson is inviting us to see *Pattern Recognition* as a rewriting of *Neuromancer*" (italics in original; Palmer 473). This intertextual reference to Gibson's first novel together with its precarious oscillation between realism and SF, its thriller structure, and its elements of alternate history makes the book a postmodernist novel of Currie's second type. But, since it also represents the contemporary state of global culture in our current phase of capitalism, it mainly falls under Currie's third type of postmodern realism.

"Each of Gibson's [...] books is primarily a chase or a caper, or both" (Easterbrook, 63, n. 10). *Pattern Recognition* is no exception to this rule. The person who is chased in the novel is the elusive creator of the underground film project referred to in the story as 'the footage'. The footage represents the novel's utopian space that is free of and uncompromised by the ineluctable late-capitalist marketplace that rules supreme over all aspects of the human condition in the world of the novel. The footage represents the one element that can be read as the space of possibility for a better future that distinguishes the postmodern from the classical dystopia. At the end of the story, the market order apparently triumphs and it is the intention of the two characters who personify its sheer power, i.e., Hubertus Bigend and Andrei Volkov, to join powers in commodifying the footage while Cayce's integrity has been completely compromised. However, the story's ending leaves open the question whether Volkov and Bigend will be successful in their endeavor. This open ending could be read as an expression of the utopian impulse that Moylan identifies as one of the distinguishing feature of the postmodern dystopia genre. The other prominent element of Moylan's terminology that is featured by the text is the abandonment of the plot structure of the classical dystopia. The special sensibility of the story's main character is a typical feature of dystopian fiction, as is the moment of communication between the rebel and the representative of the totalitarian order that is realized in *Pattern Recognition* at the end when Cayce has a tête-à-tête with both Volkov and Bigend. Furthermore, the story emphasizes the importance of both

intersubjectivity and the written word, the latter being another typical feature of dystopian fiction. Late capitalism's sheer ineluctability in the world of the novel is compromised by the human capacity for intersubjectivity displayed by the novel's characters. The novel's characters interact with each other in a way that at least at first transcends the trappings of the totalitarian market order that governs their world.

The story's contemporary setting from the perspective of SF theory constitutes a sort of anti-novum. According to Vint, who draws on Adorno's and Horkheimer's term of the culture industry here, *Pattern Recognition's* "contemporary setting implies that we already live within the culture industry to such an extent that our only hope is to survive in it rather than escape from it" (Vint (2010a), 108). The term 'culture industry' implies that popular culture works like a factory that produces generic cultural artifacts whose only purpose is to pacify the masses and to reduce the individual subject to his/her role of the postmodern passive consumer. As has been argued above, the intersubjective contact and interaction that goes on between the novel's characters in fact serves as a mode of escaping the omnipresent culture industry in the novel. However, it is true that *Pattern Recognition*, in accordance with Jameson's theory, collapses the future into the present. "In deciding to set *Pattern Recognition* in the present, Gibson abandons the future [and] the possibility that life might be different tomorrow than it is today" (italics in original; Youngquist, 211). The story's setting in the present implies the ineluctability of late capitalism in that it seems to negate the possibility of a future that significantly differs from the present state of affairs.

The novel is conceived wholly in present tense. Gibson's previous works, all his near-future SF novels, were conceived in the past tense. This shift to the present tense is all the more remarkable since it is Gibson's only novel written thus. Both of his following novels, book two and three of the Bigend trilogy, *Spook Country* and *Zero History*, employ regular past-tense narration as well. Fludernik points out that "[t]he effect of [...] present tense narrative[s] is frequently one of surprising inconspicuousness; one hardly notices at all that the text employs the present tense" (Fludernik (2001), 252). She concedes that "present-tense narrative [...] significantly departs from the traditional schemata of the real-world temporality of storytelling" (Ibid., 256) because it levels the "crucial narratological distinction [between] story and discourse" (Ibid., 254). Hollinger thus speaks of the novel's "present-tense sf realism" (Hollinger (2006), 465). The novel constitutes a peculiar postmodern fusion of a variety of genres most prominent among these the genre of

postmodern realism and SF. In *Pattern Recognition* Gibson thus departs from the SF genre by positioning his story in the present and from his literary MO by telling it in the present tense. Youngquist remarks that Gibson originally “had set his story in the near future. But after 9/11 he found that his future no longer made sense” (Youngquist, 193). Gibson changed his literary MO in direct reaction to real-world events. Thus, “*Pattern Recognition* depicts a cyberpresent in some ways as grim as the futures of cyberpunk” (italics in original; Ibid.). Janine Tobeck thus speaks of the novel's “dystopic plausible present” (Tobeck, 29). The novel embodies postmodern theory's concept of a post-generic work of fiction.

Normally, “Gibson doesn't date his futures” (Easterbrook, 61, n. 2), but he dates this present. The story is set in the year 2002. Gibson diverges from the SF genre here. The 'Case' of *Neuromancer* has arrived in the contemporary. Furthermore, “*Pattern Recognition* is in many ways a retelling of *Count Zero* [(1986), since i]ts protagonist is a woman on the quest to find an artist” as well (italics in original; Ibid., 217). These facts construe an intertextual tension which is unique to Gibson's late work. The fact that Gibson refuses to imagine even a near-future setting for his last three novels can be read as a deconstruction of the Extropy Myth as well. Gibson “fails to imagine any plausible *beyond* of consumer culture” (italics in original; Youngquist, 218). There is “no future because the present is too volatile” (p. 59). The future in accordance with Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis is only imaginable as a continuation of the present and the present in accordance with Jameson's theorization of the postmodern condition transcends all attempts at its representation. “We have only risk management. The spinning of the given moment's scenarios. *Pattern Recognition*” (p. 59). The characters of Gibson's last three novels are trapped in the present as the only time frame available, which is a distinctly postmodern sensibility. “Change comes too fast and too furious to sustain plausible futures any more, at least of the sort [SF] used to imagine” (Youngquist, 193). Jameson calls it the canonical common-sense defense of the SF genre to argue that the genre accustoms its readers to the ever-increasing velocity of change in the present age in which future shock has become an everyday experience. He argues that the utopian vision of the future has become outdated as a consequence of this quotidian experience of radical change. SF's relationship to temporality is in fact far more complex than the common sense notion assumes. SF doesn't so much provide us with images of a possible future as it defamiliarizes our experience of our present reality, a function that is called cognitive estrangement. In 1982, Jameson proclaimed that that the future has become 'unthinkable'. *Pattern*

Recognition exemplifies this loss of the future as a space of possibility through its contemporary setting. The dystopian sheen the novel puts upon its alternate present mirrors Jameson's insight that total destruction and the extinction of all life on Earth today seem more plausible than a utopian vision of the future. Gibson's novel is engaged in a specifically postmodern form of nostalgia, a "nostalgia for the future as an arena of imagination, cognition, and critique" (Ibid., 212). The above quote from the novel can be read as metafictional commentary as well. As Hoepker remarks, "the author [here] might just have shamelessly unloaded some of his theoretical reflections through a character's speech [in a] slightly self-ironic comment" (Hoepker, 230, n. 4). Metafictional irony is yet another prototypically postmodern feature endorsed by this truly remarkable novel.

In the new millennium, Gibson's "books [have] become increasingly self-reflexive and self-ironizing in an unmistakable postmodern fashion" (Ibid., 52). For example, in *Pattern Recognition* an Internet forum plays an important role. In said forum, a person who calls herself Mama Anarchia posts regularly. Another regular poster called Parkaboy, who is the romantic-interest character of the story, takes offense at Mama Anarchia's choice of words. A typical post of Mama Anarchia's is given on page 278:

Do you know nothing of narratology? Where is the Derridian 'play' and excessiveness? Lyotardian language games? Where is the commitment to praxis, positioning Jamesonian nostalgia, and despair—as well as Habermasian fear of irrationalism—as panic discourses signaling the defeat of Enlightenment hegemony over cultural theory? But no: discourses on this site are hopelessly retrograde (p. 278).

Much later in the story it transpires that Mama Anarchia is actually the alias of another character called Dorotea Benedetti (p. 325). Benedetti has "a graduate student, in America [who] translates [what she has to say] into the language of Mama Anarchia" (p. 325), which is to say into the language of postmodern academia. Gibson in a way ridicules postmodern discourse here. Dorotea Benedetti, who works for Volkov and constitutes Cayce's main antagonist in the story, needs "a little puppenkopf," a "Puppet-head" (p. 325), to translate her messages into the lingo of postmodernism, which is in turn made fun of by Parkaboy (p. 278). The passage quoted above from page 278 very much resembles "*The Matrix's* parrothead mumbo-jumbo of Morpheus, who channels Baudrillard" (italics in original; Easterbrook, 58). Incidentally, *The Matrix* is referred to in the text (p. 187) as well as Baudrillard by name (p. 50) and, ironically, his work: "This stuff is simulacra of simulacra of simulacra" (p. 18). Early postmodern writers William S. Burroughs (p. 193) and Samuel

Beckett (p. 30) are mentioned in the text as well. Cayce's spectral father, the late Win Pollard, is said to have looked in his young years like William S. Burroughs. This could be construed to be a metafictional reference as well, since William S. Burroughs is one of the godfathers of cyberpunk SF, a genre which Gibson, in turn, himself gave birth to with *Neuromancer*. Nazare speaks of "Gibson's particular intertextual interface with Burroughs" (Nazare, 294), the latter writer being a champion of the science fictionalization of postmodernist fiction as well. It is thus not by accident that he is referred to by name in Gibson's text. Ridley Scott (p. 248) and *Blade Runner* (p. 151) are mentioned in the story as well. To be specific, in the novel a particularly futuristic looking part of Tokyo—which is said to have served as part of the set for Andrei Tarkovsky's SF-classic *Solaris* (1972)—is mentioned as "[n]ow [having] been Blade Runnered by half a century of use and pollution" (p. 151). Classical SF has been cyberpunked by decades of real-world erosion. The reference to narratology in the quotation from page 278 cited above can also be read as an instance of metafictional commentary. Obviously, the author must know 'something' of narratology to let one of his characters refer to it in such a way, and since narratology is the study of narrative, this reference to it *in* the narrative is an instance of self-reflexive metafictional irony. Mama Anarchia's post is also an example of postmodern name-dropping. Gibson thus lists "the brand names of interpretation. For Gibson, *Derrida* or *Foucault*, *Lyotard* or *Lacan* operate the same way as does 'Tommy Hilfiger'" (italics in original; Easterbrook, 56). The "names being dropped are brand names, whose very dynamic conveys both instant obsolescence and the [hegemony] of the world market today in time and space" (Jameson (2003c), 108). Said passage thus also constitutes a reference to the notion of a 'supermarket of ideas' in which certain 'tradenames' translate into cultural capital. Jameson in this regard speaks of "a kind of hype-uped name dropping" (ibid.), a "name-dropping [that] is [...] to be grasped as an in-group style: the brand names function as a wink of familiarity to the reader in the know" (ibid., 109). Therefore, Jameson reasons that in the novel "class status [i]s a matter of knowing the score rather than of having money and power" (ibid.). Accordingly, the novel on the whole avoids the problematic of distributive injustice. The text emphasizes the importance of cultural capital over economic capital. This refusal to deal with these two integral parts of postmodern reality, i.e., the two postmodern problematics, give the text a rather skewed perspective that incurs censure. It thus repeats the apoliticism which was characteristic of Gibson's cyberpunk.

There is only one explicit mention of 'class' in the novel. On page 258, Cayce

reflects upon the “fundamentally disturbing [way] how 'class' works” in the UK as opposed to the US (p. 258). It is a telling detail that Gibson put 'class' in quotation marks, as if to Cayce the very concept of class has been rendered atavistic by post-industrial capitalism. To her the concept of class has lost its original meaning and has turned into a signifier devoid of a referent. The novel thus mirrors the notion that the emergence of the postmodern society has brought about the dissolution of the class system of old. This is a notion which is propounded by the ideologues of neo-liberalism as an important part of the theoretical underpinning of the class war they have waged against the lower classes over the course of the last three decades. It is a fact that in the Western core countries the numbers of the industrial proletariat have dwindled over the course of the last decades, but it is also true that it has grown considerable on a global scale. Furthermore, a new class of people has emerged in the West whose occupational life takes place in the service industry. Accordingly, a person's class status remains of crucial importance. The text turns a blind eye to this fact. The indulgence of said feature of neo-conservative ideology by the text contributes to its overall apolitical nature which in turn serves to shore up the current status quo of neo-liberal hegemony. Palmer in this regard points out the obvious, namely that Cayce is exclusively “involved with [the] things [that] afflict the contemporary globetrotting upper class” (Palmer, 476). Cayce is perfectly insulated from the harsh realities of late capitalism. In the novel, “[w]e never see, firsthand, places that have become the sites of the export of labor, and at the same time we enjoy the luxuries of London and Tokyo with Cayce, and on her employer's tab, no less” (Link, 220). The novel is distinguished by “the absence of visible signs of production” (Ibid., 220f). There is only one single instance in the novel where, en passant, the main character reflects about the very existence of those uncountable millions, in fact billions, who have to produce the fashionable commodities she helps to market. Note that she does not reflect upon their working conditions; she only curtly acknowledges their existence, that is all apart from a rather harmless allusion to the monotony of the work involved (p. 13). The dark history of labor inherent to each commodity is never addressed in the story. The novel, in another prototypically postmodern move, dwells on the surface of the postmodern metropolises which its globe-hopping protagonist visits in pursuit of the novel's overriding quest.

However, in the real world the “cleanliness and impenetrability of the global city's [surface] structure conceal the violence at work in the global accumulation of capital and its penetration into every aspect of life in the global city”

(Ibid., 221). The global city, the late-capitalist metropolis, is demarcated with regard to its dwellers' solvency. The globetrotting lifestyle of the upper class is perfectly exclusive. The structural violence of the accumulation of capital finds one of its expressions in the working conditions of said "countless Asian workers who [...] spend years of their lives" producing the actual commodities (p. 13) whose dark history of labor is hidden by the logos Cayce helps to design. The "logo functions here as a sign that conceals violence and facilitates repression in the global economy" (Link, 215). There are a few examples in the novel where the rejects of late capitalism are mentioned, again en passant, as part of the backdrop, as an exotic ingredient which spices up the already delicious urban landscape that the affluent members of the upper class, which in the world of the novel can be considered as synonymous with the transatlantic faction of the bourgeoisie, Poulantzas's inner bourgeoisie, inhabit and enjoy. On page 72, "homeless men drinking cider on park benches" are mentioned as part of the scenery of London's Primrose Hill. On page 90, the indigent inhabitants of a "Victorian doss house" are romanticized as "the defenders" of this "bulwark against gentrification" and as "rocks in a river" of commerce (p. 90). However, one of the doss house's inhabitants catches Cayce's eye. His "blue and burning eyes [looking] from the depth of his affliction" startle Cayce (p. 90), "she shivers, and hurries on" (p. 90). In this instant, Cayce is a tourist of other people's misery. That is what the homeless man with the blue eyes has seen in her gaze and constitutes the cause of her discomfort. The inhabitants of the Victorian homeless shelter are as much part of the European "tourist playground" (Jameson (2003c), 107) that London is to Cayce as "the signs of homeless encampment [...] she spies" in Tokyo (p. 151) are part of the exotic background of this metropolis. The homeless are part of the scenery in the global city. Their existence does not raise questions but is taken in stride. There is one more instance of Cayce brushing the reality of the dark history of labor. At the end of the book where it has become clear that the footage is rendered via prison labor she "notices the black tips of a tattoo [...] showing above the collar" (p. 348) of one of the prison inmates who serve her as waiters. These little glimpses of the life of the lower classes, "of those less fortunate" (p. 352f), are the closest Cayce comes to the dark side of late capitalism. Cayce's own class status, however, is ambiguous. She has to work for a living as did her father. Cayce seems to stem from an upper-middle-class family. Almost all the novel's principal characters have the same class status as her or are straight-out members of the upper class or the inner bourgeoisie. The only notable exception are the two Polish immigrants to the

UK, Voytek and Magda Biroshak, and the former NSA agent Hobbs Baranov, who lives in a dilapidated trailer and is an alcoholic. Baranov has connections to the American intelligence community. He was no spy, but used to be a cryptographer, a mathematician (p. 226). He used to work for the American National Security Agency (p. 227), which recently has become world famous through the disclosures of one Edward Snowden. Baranov finds an email address for Cayce which is crucial to the story's thriller plot. He does so by the use of signals intelligence (p. 228) which presciently foreshadows the real-world scandal of the 2013 mass surveillance disclosures. Cayce Pollard's recourse to signals intelligence is a clear example of the predicative power of SF literature.

“Cayce is a tragic adventurer-hero grappling with the apocalyptic setting of post-9/11” (Robinson, 200). She is the story's single focalizer. All the action is mediated through her consciousness. Cayce “is on a [...] serious quest for truths about the fragments [of the footage], [...] her father, [...] her personal neuroses—she is a kind of 'Everyman/King Arthur'” (Ibid., 201). She is 32 years old. She works as a 'cool hunter' and also as an independent consultant for “a lethally pomo add agency” called Blue Ant (p. 287). Cayce's father went missing the year before on September 11, 2001, in the vicinity of the World Trade Center. He was a member of the American intelligence community. This loss still affects her. For this reason she consulted a therapist. As has been mentioned above, Cayce suffers from an “allergy, a morbid sometimes violent reactivity to the semiotics of the marketplace” (p. 2). Her malaise seems to be more of a physical than psychological nature. That is the reason why therapy has not helped her cure her condition. Her body reacts to advertising as a person suffering from an allergy reacts to certain animals or substances. Her allergy presents itself through panic attacks and acute fits of nausea. The fact that Cayce is allergic to trademarking gives her the capability to discern whether new trademarks are marketable or not. Thus, she is in London, she lives in New York, to advise Blue Ant on the marketability of a new logo for a German multinational sportswear manufacturer. She is staying at the apartment of a friend of hers, a director of music videos, who is called Damien and who is off to Russia shooting a documentary. The globe-trotting characters of the novel represent the internationalization characteristic of the globalization process. Blue Ant's owner, Hubertus Bigend, subsequently offers Cayce a different job. She is to search for and find “[t]he maker” (p. 68) of the footage. Green identifies the story's mysterious footage as a “Jamesonian nostalgia movie [that] evokes an earlier era while also remaining highly contemporary” (Green, 215). 'The footage' fragments have spawned a whole

subculture of fans or 'footageheads'. A "whole new in-group has formed around the mysteries of the footage" (Jameson (2003c), 109). These enthusiasts communicate among each other via an Internet forum called 'Fetish:Footage:Forum'. The footage is distinguished by the absence of any period markers such as trademarks, it is free of the all-powerful semiology of the market place, which is one of the main reasons for its special allure and the fact that Bigend pursues it to render it a marketable commodity. Cayce regularly posts on the forum and is in constant contact with a like-minded poster, Parkaboy. They have never actually met, but communicate solely via the Net. What distinguishes the footage from the rest of Cayce's world is that it seems to stand outside of late-capitalist consumer culture. "The footage is an epoch of rest, an escape from the noisy [world of] commodities" (Jameson (2003c), 114). The various clips that constitute the footage are uploaded to the Internet and are available there to everyone and for free. The footage is a pure oasis in a world completely and utterly commodified. It is the very antithesis to Hubertus Bigend, who represents the exigencies of late capitalism. The footage thus exemplifies the utopian impulse in a thoroughly anti-utopian world. The fact that it is available for free furthermore constitutes a democratic element, since it provides equal access to all interested parties. This is another feature that sets it apart from the utterly commodified culture presented by the text.

Bigend is an incredibly wealthy Belgian who was born from money (p. 68), which is realistic, since almost all serious wealth results from heritages. Bigend is a "sinister businessman who represents the new world order of global corporate culture" (Hollinger (2006), 453). He is so "well connected" that even the British laws of traffic do not apply to him (p. 61). Cayce accepts Bigend's job offer, although she is aware of the fact that Bigend is going to commodify the footage as soon as he gets the chance: "She strikes a deal with the devil of advertising fully aware that by discovering the creator of the footage she will be delivering the whole miracle into his cloven hands" (Youngquist, 218). Cayce's integrity is compromised, first by her decision to work for Bigend and later by her decision to sell her former band's biggest hit as the background music for a Chinese car commercial. Tobeck argues that Cayce "model[s] a familiar fear of living in a corporate culture: that of having to sell out to survive" (Tobeck, 32). However, Cayce is not forced to sell out. Conversely, Cayce makes the conscious decision to do so of her own volition at least twice over the course of the novel. *Pattern Recognition's* protagonist is willingly complicit with late capitalism. She isn't forced to do so in any way. This willing collusion with the powers of commodification mirrors the

postmodern subject's willing complicity in its own mystification that Paik deems characteristic of postmodern society.

There are two semiotic clusters which are highly visible throughout the course of the story, one being the international economy, as represented by Bigend and Volkov, and the other being war. The violence inherent to the late-capitalist market order is alluded to by the continuous references to the military in the text. *Pattern Recognition* is “a twentieth-century narrative of massive capitalist expansion inextricably yoked to repressed and traumatic violence” (Link, 209). Naturally, war is the epitome of traumatic violence. Thus the military completely permeates fashion and life in *Pattern Recognition*. “The novel's foregrounding of the development of military survival wear as style [...] speaks [...] to the repressed sense that consumers, as end-user are participants in capitalist expansion, are warriors in the 'war on terror'” (Link, 214). Cayce wears a military jacket, a “US MA-1 flying jacket” (p. 11). Another character called Boone Chu wears a “M-1951 US Army fishtail parka” (p. 146), and Damien wears a “tarn jacket [...]. Flecktarn” (p. 196f). Youngquist remarks that in *Pattern Recognition* the US Army “has turned fashion designer—the Tommy Hilfiger of the War on Terror” (Youngquist, 195). However, “Gibson's characters remain oblivious to the militarization of everyday life that has followed 9/11” (Ibid.). The novel's characters never once question this militarization of civilian life or its political implications. Gibson's characters are completely apolitical. They deny the very applicability of political modes of thinking to their lives. The text is characterized by a conspicuous absence of politics. It thus represents the postdemocratic state of the political system of the West. The Cold War is mentioned a few times in the text. For instance, Cayce sports an East German Stasi envelope (p. 63) that she has purchased via ebay and which serves her as a handbag. Her father was actively involved in the Cold War as part of the American intelligence community and Cayce at one point in the text remembers a trip she took to East Berlin shortly after the Fall of the Wall. She remembers the “manifest cruelty [and the] sheer boneheaded stupidity” (p. 280) of the GDR's attempt at Socialism and was moved close to tears by it. This strongly emotional reaction is somewhat uncommon for this character. Again it has to strike the reader as curious that Cayce is such an astute observer of the world, but fails to come up with any conscious reaction to the political dimension of the world that is described through her consciousness. According to Jameson, “ebay is certainly the best word for our current collective unconscious” (Jameson (2003c), 108). Everything and anything is for sale in late capitalism even the remnants of the world's failed attempts at erecting a Socialist

society. The Cold War permeates much of the text's back story, but is not the only war which is referred to in the text. Cayce eats at a Vietnam War-theme restaurant called "Charlie Don't Surf" (p. 14), which is an intertextual reference to Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979). The restaurant, which, cynically, serves Vietnamese food, is decorated with photographs of Zippo lighters "engraved with crudely drawn American military symbols" (p. 14). Postmodern war has turned into a tourist attraction here. The Zippo pictures remind Cayce of "tombstones in Confederate graveyards" (p. 14). That the same lighters were used to ignite the huts of Vietnamese civilians in the real Vietnam War completely escapes her. In addition, "the manual arming mechanism of the US Army's M18A1 Claymore mine" (p. 284) plays an important role in the story's conclusion. At peak times during the Vietnam War the US manufactured up to 80,000 Claymore mines a month^{xlvii}. Furthermore, Bigend drives a Hummer, the civilian version of the Humvee, a High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV), a military automobile that to him represents the "crown of cool" (Youngquist, 209). It "is the epitome of military chic" (Ibid., 210). Her friend, in whose apartment Cayce lives in London, Damien, is in Russia shooting a documentary about "the horrifying excavation into the site of a World War II atrocity in the former Soviet Union" (Green, 215). In the course of said excavation, a mass event that a character describes as "[s]omewhere between a three-month 1968 rock concert, mass public grave-robbing, and *Apocalypse Now*" (italics in original; p. 188), huge piles of excavated human bones amass around the digging sites. According to Green, these "body fragments [...] signify the trauma of real history, whether the nightmare of World War II or the horror of 9/11 [that] cannot be integrated into public or private memory, certainly not through consumption, the major force of social coherence in the novel" (Green, 215). However, the body parts in the story serve more as an exotic backdrop to parts of the action than as a symbol for the horrors of war. Cayce's profession is "scouting cool for the commodifiers" (p. 203). She searches for new trends and fashion fads for her corporate paymasters and "[m]ilitarism [...] saturates the fads that Cayce and Bigend pursue" (Youngquist, 195). The Vietnam war and the Cold War are referenced in the novel and the 'war on terror' permeates the text as a whole, but its main character completely fails to come up with any conscious cognition about this. "The history of twentieth-century warfare, and [...] its coincidence with the expansion of power of Western capital, is omnipresent in the novel" (Link, 214). However, the omnipresence of war in the world of the novel clashes with Cayce's completely oblivious disregard of the militarization of everyday

life. *Pattern Recognition* “juxtaposes images of violence and the expansion of capital [...], positing the recognizable pattern as a newly urgent question while refraining from claims of any direct causality” (Ibid.). The novel, furthermore, completely refrains from venturing any political comment at all. According to Link, the text suggests that there is “a patterned complicity of global capitalist expansion and global violence” (Ibid.). Gibson hints at this fact but never directly addresses it. The novel foregoes any evaluation of the circumstances it describes. The novel as a whole thus mirrors its main character's complicity with the status quo as it implicitly maintains the ineluctability of late capitalism. The text constitutes a case of a postmodern artifact that completely leaves open the task of coming up with valuable evaluation to the reader, but its blatant apoliticism nevertheless has to strike one as rather odd. The author not only refrains from venturing any kind of value judgment, but the world as it is represented by the text implicitly and explicitly acknowledges the uncontested hegemony of neo-liberal capitalism in a way that has to incur censure.

Gibson's postmodernist realism retains his former cyberpunk's apoliticism and even adds a moment of positive affirmation of the market place to the mix. The novel's blatant apoliticism and its affirmative attitude towards the late-capitalist commodification of human life amounts to “a cynical capitulation to the inevitability of market forces” (Vint (2010a), 111). However, as a postmodern artifact “Gibson's novel [...] gives rise to a multiplicity of readings” (Link, 228). But it is true that the “novel gives us homeopathy rather than antidote” (Jameson (2003c), 114). Maybe that is all that contemporary art can do? Cayce's complicity with the commodifying logic of the market place is mirrored by Gibson's affirmation of the inevitability of neo-liberal capitalism. Conversely, *Pattern Recognition's* “achievement lies in its attention to the minute surfaces of late capitalism, to the forms of sociality constituted in and through brand names, technologies, and simulated forms of nostalgia” (Green, 214f). The novel elucidates our current economical order and thus it falls under the heading of postmodern realism. Furthermore, *Pattern Recognition* is a postmodern dystopian text. Cayce's flight from the prison complex can be interpreted as the instance of rebellion which is prototypical of dystopian fiction and her encounter with Volkov, the mafia Czar who bankrolled the production of the footage, as an instance of communication between the dystopian rebel and the representative of the totalitarian order which is a stock contraption of dystopian fiction as well. The novel furthermore emphasizes the importance of the written language, which is another typical feature of the dystopian novel, via the paramount role

internet communication plays in the story. Many passages in the text purport to be transcriptions of emails and posts on the internet. The story's romantic interest subplot for instance comes into being and is played out completely through email contact and is only eventually consummated at the end of the story where the two lovers meet for the first time in the real world. Moreover, Cayce is set apart from the other characters of the novel by her special sensibility which in turn constitutes another stock contraption of the dystopian genre.

At the end Cayce is awarded with \$500,000 for her work by Bigend (p. 361). The footage has successfully been equipped with an exchange value which defeats the spirit that informed its massive success among the footageheads. Its special allure of providing an outside to the all-powerful economy has been shattered as a consequence of Cayce's actions. One is reminded of Marx's insight that immaterial things like one's consciousness or one's honor can have an exchange value too although they do not embody a quantum of socially necessary labor time. Quite fittingly and as an afterthought that accentuates the story's protagonist's compromised moral position, Volkov's chief of security at the end of the novel offers a toast to Cayce's father: "Had there not been men like [him], on the side of democracy and the free market, where would we be today? [...] Without men like Wingrove Pollard, Andrei Volkov might languish today in some prison of the Soviet state. To Wingrove Pollard" (p.352f). As Dorotea Benedetti points out, there is no difference between organized crime and politics in Russia (p. 324). Volkov's mafia connections as well as his political clout suggest that in a truly democratic society, and not just in a totalitarian system like the former USSR, he would indeed languish inside a prison. The toast to a former CIA operative as a trailblazer of democracy, which, in accordance with neo-liberal ideology, is equated with the free market in the above quotation, serves to highlight the enormous real-world power secret services continue to wield in the post-9/11 world. At the end of the novel Bigend and Volkov decide to join forces. Volkov's and Bigend's joint venture merges twentieth-century mafia oligarchy with twenty-first century 'lethally pomo' turbo-capitalism. In the world of the novel, there is no difference between the world of the totalitarian market order and the realm of organized crime, which highlights the dystopian notion that late capitalism is indeed a form of organized crime. "The cold war culture of paranoia and brand culture's exploitation of an economy of repressed fear-desire come together in a deadly combination epitomized, globally, by the vampiric Bigend's [...] match with [...] Volkov" (Link, 221f). The story's quest is realized in the end and all the mysteries brought on in the

course of the narrative are in the end accounted for and solved. The novel thus succumbs to the teleology of the thriller genre. However, the novel's main achievement lies in its accurate description of the postmodern condition.

In the international metropolises Cayce visits in the course of the plot's chase "there seems to be advertising on virtually every surface" (p. 275). There are McDonald's, Virgin Megastores, and "Starbucks clones" (p. 160) everywhere. Since Cayce is allergic to trademarks, she notices all the logos and advertisements that surround her. They are rendered in the text in short lists. People she meets work as advertising figures for multinational corporations or as viral advertisers. Volkov runs privatized prisons. Bigend runs a viral ad agency called Trans. The economy in the novel is "something that seems to be infecting everything" (p. 90). Magda, Voytek's older sister, works for Trans, a subdivision of Blue Ant, which does viral advertising. Her job is to go to bars, strike up conversations with strangers and in these conversations to mention certain trademarks or commodities (p. 86f). Thus, "[c]onversation becomes capitalized and *advertising becomes consciousness*" (italics in original; Youngquist, 219). The realm of intersubjectivity that comprises the story's main transcendental space free from commodification via said practice is, at least partly, commodified as well. Through his positive acclamation for the totalitarian market order Gibson has unconsciously created a truly pessimistic picture of our world, a truly dystopian present.

Bigend at one point in the story remarks that "[f]ar more creativity, today, goes into the marketing of products than into the products themselves" (p. 69). According to Vint, "[w]earing clothing with labels turns the self into an advertisement for the commodity, effacing use value as clothing and replacing it with the exchange value of 'cool'" (Vint (2010a), 109). All the characters in the novel are accompanied by descriptive lists of the kind of trademarks that they wear. Since Cayce is allergic to trademarks, she removes all labels from the clothing she wears and from the equipment she uses. "Cayce's refusal to wear trademarks can be read as resistance" (Ibid.). However, that is the only resistance she musters against the forces of commodification. "Cayce prefers [...] the regional, the local, the 'authentic' [as] represented by the Curta calculators [while] Bigend [represents] the central threat [of] homogenization" (Easterbrook, 47). However, "Cayce knows that she is, and has long been, complicit. [...] Complicit in whatever it is that makes London and New York feel more like each other" (p. 202). Cayce is deeply complicit with globalization and especially with the commodification inherent to fashion. "Cayce participates in an ethos of commodity fetishism

which reinforces, rather than challenges, capitalist social relations” (Vint (2010a), 109). Therefore, *Pattern Recognition* is “more drenched than any of [Gibson's early] novels in the allure of the commodity” (Bould, 133). Cayce's attitude is 'if you can't beat them, join them'. She thus keeps in line with the family tradition. Her father was a member of the American intelligence community and as such a soldier of the powers that be. His disappearance on September 11, 2001, haunts Cayce, but at the end of the story she has come to terms with her loss. The end of the novel thus complies to the conventions of the thriller genre. On the one hand, the novel elucidates the mediascapes of late capitalism, but on the other hand it affirms global capitalism's hegemony over the realm of culture. The novel's treatment of the events of September 11 is two-edged as well. *Pattern Recognition* was one of the first novels which addressed the terror attacks of 2001. However, it “treats 9/11 as a 'symbolic' singularity [and] structures the present moment as liminality and deferral” around it (Bould, 132). In the novel, 9/11 is presented as “[a]n experience outside of culture” (p. 140). Youngquist rightfully remarks that “[t]here is something disconcerting about a novel that makes so emotionally much of 9/11 and so little of its political effects” (Youngquist, 211), a verdict which also applies to Jonathan Safran Foer's 2005 novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* for instance.

Cayce's father used to work for the CIA in Moscow. Win Pollard was engaged in the Cold War as were many other characters in the book. Thus, “[i]n *Pattern Recognition* the Cold War is not over, it has just been commodified” (italics in original; Youngquist, 208). The Cold War has been superseded by the 'War on Terror,' but the principal players remain the same. 9/11 serves as the story's emotional historical backdrop, as a foil against which the action is depicted. 9/11 is represented as “an apocalyptic event that cuts us off from the historical past” (Hollinger (2006), 462). Thus “we find ourselves on the other side of an event that changed everything” (Ibid., 463). According to Hollinger, a “low-level post-apocalypticism [is] much part of the novel's texture” (Ibid.). Conversely, according to Palmer, *Pattern Recognition* “refuses the notion that the world somehow began again from zero on 9/11” (Palmer, 475). Nevertheless, never once does Gibson raise any questions about the 'singularity' of this event, he just accepts it as a given. *Pattern Recognition*, in this respect, is thus not subversive but serves to shore up the status quo.

The book ends with Cayce making peace with her father's absence while in Paris with Parkaboy, her allergy to fashion seems to have gone away of its own accord as well (p. 366). Thus, all problems are solved and all mysteries have been accounted for at the end of the story. *Pattern Recognition*

therefore fulfills the genre conventions of the thriller genre, which effectively bars it from the canon of postmodernist fiction, at least in Leypoldt's conception of it. A truly postmodernist novel in Leypoldt's conception is a text that subverts genre conventions and refuses closure. Nevertheless, the novel falls under the heading of Currie's third type of postmodern novels. Furthermore, it is a genre-bending intertextual novel of Currie's second type as well. The fact that this novel seems to defeat any attempts at neat categorization into a readily identifiable genre truly makes it a postmodern work of fiction.

7.6 RICHARD K. MORGAN: *MARKET FORCES*

According to Booker and Thomas, Richard K. “Morgan's *Market Forces* [from 2004 is] an exemplary case of speculative, satirical [SF] that shows us, in its imaginative [...] vision of a future capitalist nightmare, many of the central tendencies that are already present in the capitalism of our own day” (Booker/Thomas, 107). They also list it among the notable fiction of the subgenre of dystopian SF (Ibid., 73). For, among other things, the overall moral ambiguity of the novel, this text can also be classified as a postmodern dystopia as well. Furthermore, the book is clearly a work of extrapolative SF, not of speculative SF, in accordance with McHale's usage of said term. *Market Forces* takes the current state of capitalism as its point of departure and fashions a possible future world on the basis of the latter. The future of *Market Forces* is clearly dystopian. It features a wayward totalitarian version of late capitalism and its characters for the main part are completely amoral. “[D]ystopische Zukunftswelten, amoralische Figuren und ein entfesselter Kapitalismus” are the hallmarks of cyberpunk SF (Gözen, 9). *Market Forces* can therefore be considered as a late example of said subgenre of SF too. It is not a postcyberpunk novel, since it does not feature the constitutive elements of this subgenre, e.g., an amalgamation of cyberpunk elements and features of the traditional space opera. Conversely, Morgan's Takeshi Kovacs trilogy can be considered as exemplary for the genre of postcyberpunk.

The novel does not employ cyberpunk's trademark apoliticism. *Market Forces* begins with a dedication: “It's [...] dedicated to all those [...] whose lives have been wrecked or snuffed by the Great Neoliberal Dream and Slash-and-Burn Globalisation”. The world of the story is an extrapolation of the tenets of neoliberalism. The book describes a world shaped in accordance with the free-market trinity. The executives of financial firms based in London (and the rest of the Western world) duel each other to the death for promotions and lucrative contracts. These duels are carried out on the street in armored cars

called battlewagons. It is common practice to kill one's opponent in these duels, which are called tendering and road raging. The population in the novel is clearly divided into haves and have-nots. The streets of this near-future cyberpunk thriller are always almost empty because the only people who can afford cars and fuel are said executives. The haves are those who were born into the upper class or who have managed to enter it by surviving a truly murderous competition like Chris Faulkner, the story's protagonist. Faulkner's initial entry into the upper class of executives, however, was facilitated by a personal connection to the upper class (p. 386). The world of *Market Forces* is not a meritocracy. The subaltern in *Market Forces* have no chance of entering the upper echelons of society. There is no upward mobility in the Britain of *Market Forces* and in Morgan's world the situation in the UK is exemplary for the whole Western world. Said world is distinguished by an extreme internationalization of trade which affects every person who has to work for a living. The have-nots are clearly being discriminated against. Faulkner's father was shot by a security guard because he was dressed like a poor person (p. 383) and his mother died of a curable disease because she had no money to afford treatment. They live in the cordoned zones. In the zones, there are no cars, no medical facilities, and no protection by the law. "The police attitude towards the zones was containment, not law enforcement" (p. 85). The zones consequently are gangland territory. The poor are fenced in in the cordoned zones. While the affluent can move freely in and out of these guarded ghettos, their inhabitants cannot. In the novel, "class difference has been solidified into physical separation" (Booker/Thomas, 107). Faulkner grew up as a have-not and describes the hatred he felt towards the upper class of "suited fuckers" (p. 460) as the driving force behind his own ascent to the upper class: "I grew up hating. It was like fuel. Like food" (p. 386). Morgan here describes the dangerous discontent of those left out by the world of multinational capitalism. At the end of the novel Faulkner faces a gang of violent youths in the zones who refer to themselves as "the fucking dispossessed" (p. 461). This reflects the fact that every budget cut with regard to the welfare state translates into a rise of petty crime. The inhabitants of the zones have only one option available to them to make money and that is crime. This reflects the cultural apartheid that Žižek deems characteristic of the West. The fact that a whole swath of the population in the US is forced into a life of crime by the economical circumstances is brought to the fore by this element of the story. The inhabitants of the zones seem to belong to a whole other species of human beings. They are referred to by the police (p. 348) as well as by the

ruling class (p. 56) as animals who understand nothing but violence. As “in many dystopian works of [science] fiction, a stratified class structure has emerged, which makes th[is] future resemble Italy under the Medicis” (Schwetman, 134). The zones are an obvious metaphor for Thatcher's 'Two-Nations' project. Class and the problematic of distributive injustice thus are of paramount importance in the world of *Market Forces*. The zones are ghettos to which the members of the ruling class—which in the world of the novel is synonymous with Poulantzas's inner bourgeoisie—go to party. The upper class can kill inhabitants of the zones with impunity while gangsters from the zones who commit relatively minor crimes outside of the zones are met with the full force of repression (p. 347ff). The homes of the relatives of the perpetrators are bulldozed while the former face extremely long prison sentences or execution.

The story is set in the year 2049, 45 years in the future from the date of publication in 2004. This thus is a near-future scenario. The novel's main focal character, Christopher Faulkner, is 33 years old. The story begins with a flashback by Chris. He dreams of the death of his father, who was killed in a supermarket by security guards in the course of an argument which broke out because his credit cards had been denied (p. 3ff). After this prologue the story starts with Chris awakening from said dream beside his wife Carla, who is a mechanic and as it turns out is responsible for Chris's Saab battlewagon (p. 9). The story begins with Chris's first day on his new job as a junior executive at Shorn Associates, working in their Conflict Investment division. Shorn has an exclusive contract with BMW, and thus all its executives are provided with a BMW battlewagon. Furthermore, every Shorn executive is equipped with a Heckler und Koch Nemesis Ten pistol (p. 25). In the world of the novel, German technology is employed to fight North American and Japanese business rivals about contracts for South American insurgent enterprises. This reflects the internationalization inherent to the globalization process and also serves to emphasize the complicity of Western arms manufacturers in the Third World conflicts in which their products are put to use. Shorn's Conflict Investment is about small wars in developing countries; it is about “the sinister manipulation of Third World politics by violence-prone Western corporations” (Booker/Thomas, 72). Shorn invests into insurgent groups fighting civil wars in the Southern hemisphere and is rewarded with a percentage of the country's GDP once the insurgents they backed take over government. “At Shorn Conflict Investment, we are concerned with only two things. Will they win? And will it pay?” (p. 33). Shorn does not deal in morality. “We do not judge. We do not moralise[,] we assess, we invest. And

we prosper” (p. 33), which is exemplified by their unwavering support for a brutal dictator called Hernan Echevarria, who employs torture and murder against his people. The Conflict Investment division is clearly a metaphor for the current Western practice with regard to the Southern states of the periphery. Shorn's support for a brutal fascist dictator from South America harks back to the Chicago School's support of Augusto Pinochet. Chris describes Conflict Investment's program for the Southern countries under the aegis of Shorn Associates as follows: “Slash public health and education spending, open to foreign capital flows, dynamite local blockages in the legal and labour sectors [...] and get the military to crush inconvenient protest” (p. 315). Shorn Associates' standards for developing countries thus clearly resemble what is known today as the Washington Consensus. Jack Notley, Faulkner's boss, the most senior executive of Shorn's, asks the following question with regard to the North-South divide: “Do you *really think* we can afford to have the developing world *develop*? [...] Who's going to make our shoes and shirts? Who's going to supply us with cheap labour and cheap raw materials? Who's going to store our nuclear waste [...]? Who's going to buy our arms?” (italics in original; p. 339). The globalized multinational new world order of *Market Forces* depends on the Southern countries remaining undeveloped, i.e., poor, unstable, and pliable. This is clearly a reflection of the current world order. The novel's engagement of the North-South divide clearly reflects the real-world practices that some critics summarize under the heading of neo-colonialism. The treatment of the global South by Western multinational corporations in the world of the novel exemplifies the phenomenon that Dalby calls global apartheid.

On his first day at Shorn Chris meets his new colleague Mike Bryant at the men's room for the first time where the latter is literally washing blood off his hands (p. 16). Mike and Chris become friends as the story progresses. Later in the story Chris is asked by another character if “a good economist ha[s] to have blood on his hands” (p. 119) and Chris answers: “a practising free-market economist has to have blood on his hands, or he isn't doing the job properly. It comes with the market, and the decisions it demands. Hard decisions, decisions of life and death” (p. 119). Such sideswipes at neo-liberalism are common in the novel. Incidentally, the office of Chris's former boss is decorated with a picture of the latter's “father shaking hands with Margaret Thatcher” (p. 20). The son of another member of the upper class in the novel is about to enter “into the Thatcher Institute” (p. 163). A club in the zones Bryant and Faulkner frequent when they feel like partying with the poor is called “the *Falkland*” (italics in original; p. 81), which is an obvious

ironic reference to the Falkland War, which bought Thatcher her first reelection in 1983. Furthermore, New York's JFK International Airport in the novel has been renamed Ronald Reagan International Airport (p. 279). Later on in the novel Reagan is evoked by Shorn CEO Notley as a witness of character for a colleague because "he believes in a free market about as much as Ronald Reagan did" (p. 413). Both of the two Anglo-Saxon trailblazers of neo-liberalism are thus mentioned in the story as positive points of reference in the cultural memory of the society that Morgan depicts.

As in Anthony's *Brother Termite* and in Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* the story also features the the American intelligence community in the form of the CIA. However, in the world of *Market Forces*, the CIA has deteriorated from its status as an almost all-powerful secret agency to the status of an assassination service. Chris orders an assassination at Langley like one orders a pizza (p. 209f). Chris can choose from the "following five options; surgical, accurate, scattershot, blanket, atrocity" (p. 209). The CIA is now called "Langley Contracting" (p. 210). The US thus have privatized their foreign intelligence service which has been turned into a delivery service for hitmen. Moreover, the 'war on drugs' is still going on in the world of 2049. As it happens, the former CIA now is "the premier distributor of illicit narcotics in the Americas" (p. 292) and supplies "eighty per cent of North America's inner cities" (p. 294) with illegal drugs like heroin and crack. In 2049, the 'War on Drugs' has been going on for "the last seventy years" with very "much loudly publicised military activity devoted to destroying the coca trade" in South America (p. 291). The story draws attention to the structural bias inherent to this unwinnable war by pointing out that it is the global poor who suffer most in said conflict, while the rich consume drugs with impunity and also constitute the societal group which absorbs the lion's share of the profits generated by this lucrative although illegal business. With regard to drugs, the police "operate a containment policy in the cordoned zones" (p. 291). The poor are provided with cheap and highly addictive substances like crack as long as drug-related crime stays in the zones. These references bring the hypocrisy of the real-world 'War on Drugs' to the fore as well as the CIA's involvement in the heroin trade during the Vietnam War and afterwards. It furthermore draws attention to the fact that the world's secret services historically display a strong tendency towards cooperation with the mafia.

On his first day at work Chris furthermore meets senior partner Louise Hewitt, who castigates him for having provided his last dueling opponent with medical help instead of killing her. According to Hewitt, it "is a question of

corporate culture” to achieve resolution and avoid ambiguity and kill one's opponent (p. 23f). “We don't like loose ends [...] at Shorn Associates” (p. 24). Louise Hewitt is the story's main antagonist. This character's invocation of corporate etiquette as requiring decisive resolution in the form of killing one's opponents emphasizes the dog-eat-dog ideological background of the story in neo-liberal Social Darwinism, which requires man to act as man's wolf as a matter of course. The latter notion is also emphasized by the way in which the haves deal with the have-nots. During a night out clubbing in the zones Mike kills three teenage gang members who unsuccessfully tried to mug him and Chris (p. 54f). Bryant justifies his actions as follows: “People like that, civilised rules don't apply. Violence is the only thing they understand” (p. 56). When Bryant calls in his triple homicide to the “corporate police” the morning after, he is outraged about the fact that “*our* fucking police [...] want to conduct an investigation” (italics in original; p. 60). The reader in this context also learns that Bryant is married and has a child. The investigation leads nowhere and Bryant goes scot-free. Later on in the novel Chris and Bryant cripple one zone dweller and murder two others on behest of Troy Morris, the owner of The Falkland, who is not an executive and therefore cannot murder with impunity like Chris and Mike can. The fact that Bryant and Faulkner can break the law with impunity as long as their victims belong to the class of have-nots reflects the class bias inherent to Western neo-liberal jurisprudence. The executive assumes a dismissive and cavalier attitude towards crimes committed by members of the upper class while members of the lower classes who run afoul of the law are being met with the full force of the law. This is another reflection of the cultural apartheid characteristic of the neo-liberal state. It also brings to mind the quip of Anatole France which he brought forward in the age of the first-wave of free-market capitalism: “In its majestic equality, the law forbids rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, beg in the streets and steal loaves of bread”^{xlviii}. The have-nots in the world of the story have only one avenue open to them for escaping their fate of abject misery and that is a life of crime. Either they become criminals and actively partake of the exploitation of their fellows or they accept their permanent class status of belonging to the downtrodden majority of the populace whose lives are characterized by alienated menial labor and utter poverty. The novel continually draws attention to the class divide that constitutes the organizing principle of Western society as depicted by the text and thus invites its readers to cognitively map the paramount importance of the category of class in the real world. The novel thereby functions as an exemplification of the Jamesonian didactic work of art and assumes the

position of an observer of the hegemonic discourse of neo-liberalism. The novel's explicit didactic intent makes it fit rather neatly into the canon of contemporary dystopian fiction. Although the story is represented from the perspective of a member of the oppressive regime, said member over the course of the narrative rebels against the totalitarian order, has a moment of communication with another representative of said regime, and at the end of the book faces the threat of physical annihilation as a consequence of his rebellion.

The novel describes a dystopian world governed by the ethos of hegemonic masculinity as exemplified in the Schumpeterian figure of the heroic entrepreneur. The society depicted in the text seems to have overcome sexism however. The population of the world as projected by the text is no longer discriminated against along the lines of sex and gender, which is one expression of the utopian impulse in this work of fiction. The text however fails to transcend the bipolar continuum of heteronormativity. The novel revises the tripartite plot structure of the classical dystopia in a way that makes it fall under Moylan's heading of the postmodern dystopia. The very exceptionality of Faulkner's ascent to the apex of society which started out from the position of a have-not exemplifies the complete absence of upward social mobility in the world of the text. However, his feat of accomplishing the impossible opens up a space of possibility for change for the better in the context of the text. *Market Forces* thus constitutes a critical dystopia as well.

Chris and his wife Carla argue a lot. The main argument is always about Chris's job. Carla has moral reservations due to the fact that her husband is a paid killer in a suit. She wants Chris to quit his job and become a UN ombudsman instead. Carla is Norwegian and in Norway social democracy has survived into the twenty-first century, which is why she is treated like a moral retard when she goes there to visit her mother. Her nationality is also the reason why Chris drives a Saab. The fact that Norway succeeded in maintaining a social democratic welfare state in the present of Morgan's near future clearly constitutes an expression of the utopian impulse in this work. Not only does the example of Norway provide the world of the text with an outside perspective on the turbo-neo-liberal society which characterizes the better part of the national societies of the West in the text, but it also serves to open up a space of possibility for the successful application of a societal organizing principle that eschews the negative effects of the societies shaped in accordance with neo-liberal ideology that the story exemplifies via the example of Morgan's dystopian UK. Carla's father, a Socialist academic, lives

in the zones. As in Vonnegut's *Hocus Pocus* a relative socialist character is employed to pass moral judgment on the world that is described by the text. Carla's father is an alcoholic and resents Chris for his job as "a soldier for the new economic order" (p. 90) while he depends on the money Chris makes by his Faustian profession to survive. The novel does not explicate whether there is any remnant of the welfare state still in existence in the UK which would provide for the members of the Marxian reserve army of the unemployed, but from the hints given by the text it is clear that the neo-liberal privatization of social need has resulted in a situation in which the poor again completely have to fend for themselves. The character of the socialist father provides a moral value judgment of the world as projected by the text.

The old economic order has led to "the domino recessions" (p. 78), which are referred to a couple of times throughout the book. Apparently, the old economy did crash in a worldwide crisis after which the new system was established. Carla describes the new system as follows: "Balkanisation and slaughter abroad and the free market feeding off the bones, a poverty-line economy and gladiatorial contests on the roads at home" (p. 242). A neo-liberal utopia if there ever was one. The book describes a world that is in complete accord with neo-liberal ideology. It takes to extremes the tenets of said Social Darwinist ideology and depicts a society shaped by the latter. The domino recessions which brought about Western society's reorganization along the lines of a pure form of neo-liberalism constitute a point in time in the back story of the text where it speculatively departs from the real world. However, since we nowadays again all live in a world ravaged by a global financial crisis, said element of the story does not seem fantastic at all. Furthermore, this element of the text anticipates real-world events that came to pass a few years after the publication of the text. Although neo-liberal economic theory and practice resulted in a global financial crisis in 2008, and after the subsequent unprecedented bail outs by the state, a practice that explicitly violates one of the most important core tenets of neo-liberal economic theory, i.e., that the state has to refrain from taking influence on the financial sphere, neo-liberalism remains the paradigm of the global economy and continues to shape financial policy all over the world. The last global crisis of neo-liberal capitalism, paradoxically, has resulted in a further strengthening of the hold neo-liberalism has on the economic policies of the various national governments around the globe. Morgan's scenario that a recession brought on by neo-liberalism could lead to the establishment of a financial order characterized by a further radicalization of the practices endorsed by said ideology has thus been validated by reality. Furthermore, as

was the case with the financial crisis of the 1970s, which led to the establishment of neo-liberalism as the hegemonic approach to economical thinking and action, the crisis in the novel has been brought about by the very same class factions which prosper the most under the new economical order re-established after the crisis.

Over the course of the story its protagonist is transformed from a man riddled with doubt about his role in a truly Hobbesian world of violent competition to a true soldier of the market order who is ready to choke his best friend to death with his bare hands in order to get ahead. The story ends with Chris being a senior partner at Shorn (p. 469). Chris's quest to avenge the death of his father has made him a person who gets more than "well paid for murdering people" (p. 197) and at the end of the story he has ascended to the very top of the corporate ladder. Now he can make and break people as he pleases. At the beginning of the novel he was plagued by nightmares about the more gruesome of his duel kills and even saved the life of one of his opponents. At the end of the novel he is ready to murder his own best friend as a matter of corporate etiquette. Faulkner thus personifies the counterfactual neo-liberal ideal of the self-made man which has a real referent only in this ideology, since true wealth in reality is predominantly bestowed on the members of the inner bourgeoisie by birth right. The story's main character at the end of the novel has entered the uppermost echelon of his society by overcoming a truly murderous competition. His exemplary ascent emphasizes the steep real-world decline of upward social mobility under aegis of neo-liberalism.

In the appendix of Morgan's novel, he lists nine non-fiction books which have inspired him to write *Market Forces*. Among these six books are two titles by Noam Chomsky, two by Michael Moore, and Joe Stiglitz's *Globalization and its Discontents* (2002). The novel is an intertextual tapestry which connects the insights the author gained by reading said books. It is a work of McHale's category of extrapolative SF because it takes aspects of the current situation, neo-liberalism, and, in logical and linear fashion, constructs a scenario which constitutes a future extension of the current state of affairs. The competitive macho culture of the 'masters of the universe,' the Schumpeterian heroic entrepreneurs of the stock exchange, the brokers, the movers and shakers of Wall Street and its other national equivalents, in the novel is taken to its logical extremes. So is the notion of social apartheid. The zones of the novel are a material reflection of the two-tier society into which the neo-liberal project has transformed the industrialized nations. Furthermore, the West's relationship to the developing world is being ironically represented by the

policies of Shorn Associates' Conflict Investment division.

The fact that most of the novel is rendered from Chris Faulkner's point of view makes him sympathetic to the reader. However, the character undergoes a decisive transformation. In the beginning the reader is inclined to follow Faulkner's justifications for doing what he is doing, but over the course of the story he becomes ever less likeable as he turns into a radicalized version of Mike Bryant. At the beginning of the novel, he is reluctant to carry the handgun issued to him by his new employer. At the end of the story he is ready to choke his former best friend to death with his bare hands. He has transformed beyond recognition. The fact that he rejects the offer to join the UN as cowardly means that in the end of the story he wholly subscribes to the macho-gladiatorial ethos of the society he lives in. He broke with his wife and with his past in the zones as one of the have-nots and has turned into a true 'master of the universe,' which enables him to force through his decisions at Shorn. There is in fact a very real connection between hegemonic masculinity and the figure of the Schumpeterian homo oeconomicus and this connection is foregrounded by the narrative, although the society in the world of the text is characterized by gender equality. To be successful in the society as projected by the text one, whether male or female, has to accept the hegemony of a macho competitiveness, which nevertheless applies to men and women alike. The world of the novel thus is governed by a heteronormativity which only acknowledges the existence of two genders and one form of sexuality, i.e., heterosexuality. As far as race is concerned the world of the novel again incorporates a utopian impulse in that the oppression exercised by the totalitarian order predominantly operates along the lines of class and treats the different races equally. Troy Morris, like Helen Dole in *Hocus Pocus*, is a character of African descent who is effectively treated the same as his fellow white members of the upper class by the latter. Morris is faced with racism only by members of the lower class. The novel exemplifies a rather novel tendency within Western economic imperialism to dole out oppression and discrimination more along the lines of class than on those of race and ethnicity. However, the story explicitly addresses the scourge of racism in the instance of a racist attack committed by a gang of white neo-Nazis against one of Morris's relatives. The social Balkanization characteristic of the postmodern age of micropolitics is very much still in effect in the world of the novel in which the poor are pitted against each other along the dividing factors of race, occupation, age, and gender, while in the upper class there exists equality among the races and between the sexes. This mirrors the fact that the paramount importance of financial solvency in our current stage

of capitalism which is such a powerful factor of social coherence that it even carries the potential of transcending the racial prejudices that fueled the original process of colonization and thus the original accumulation of capitalism. Bryant and Faulkner take the law in their hands and torture and kill the neo-Nazis who raped Morris's female relative. Faulkner and Bryant as members of the inner bourgeoisie consider Morris as one of them and see the murders they commit against the have-not Neo-nazis as fully justified. Faulkner's complicity in these murders highlights the process of progressive perversion of his sense of moral over the course of the story. At the beginning of the novel he had moral doubts about the rightfulness of his acts of violence. These moral doubts vanish over the course of the novel as Faulkner progressively accepts the use of violence as a legitimate means of doing business. He considers murder as a legitimate means of sustaining a 'moral' standpoint as evidenced by the numerous other brutal murders he commits as the story progresses. The novel thus foregrounds the structural violence inherent to the totalitarian market order of its date of publication by way of the direct acts of hands-on physical violence that Faulkner commits as an integral part of his job description and his status of a member of the upper class. Conversely, the fact that Faulkner's first act after he has committed his last murder, this time against a fellow member of the upper class, after he has thus entered the most senior echelon of his society, as a new master of the universe, is to topple the fascist dictator that Shorn supported against his resistance, gives the ending a utopian edge that is in accordance with Moylan's concept of the critical dystopia, which leaves room for the existence of hope for a better society.

7.7 J. G. BALLARD: *KINGDOM COME*

Kingdom Come (2006) is J. G. Ballard's last novel. Ballard died in 2009. "Ballard most commonly wrote in the post-apocalyptic dystopia genre. His most celebrated novel in this regard is *Crash* [(1973)], in which cars symbolise the mechanisation of the world and man's capacity to destroy himself with the technology he creates"^{xlix}. *Kingdom Come*, like *Crash*, is set in the present. If *Crash* is an example of the 'post-apocalyptic dystopia genre,' which, in turn, is a subgenre of SF, then *Kingdom Come* is too. Ballard's last novel falls under the heading of postmodern dystopian fiction as well for the same reasons as the other novels discussed thus far. The fact that the world he envisions in this text constitutes an alternate present instead of a future scenario serves to emphasize the topicality of the phenomena he describes. Bould deems Ballard's late fiction as being set "fifteen minutes into the future [...] just

sideways from now” (Bould (2002), 308). Ballard's later novels as a general rule depict an alternate present, not a speculative future. However, they all investigate the effects of certain novel social phenomena that are characteristic of contemporary capitalism driven to extremes. His late novels thus fall under the heading of soft extrapolative SF, although they are temporally located in the present of an extremely close near future. While *Crash* is preoccupied with the “violent psychosexuality of car crashes in general, and celebrity car crashes in particular”¹, *Kingdom Come* deals with consumer capitalism's affinity to neo-fascism.

Ballard was one of the progenitors of the 1960s New Wave of SF. He, along with Samuel R. Delany, is responsible for what Brian McHale dubs 'the postmodernization of SF'. Ballard's 1969 short story collection *The Atrocity Exposition* broke new ground in this regard. Ballard's prototypically dystopian and grotesque SF engendered the emergence of his very own adjective, viz. 'Ballardian;' which is “defined by the *Collins English Dictionary* as 'resembling or suggestive of the conditions described in J. G. Ballard's novels and stories, especially dystopian modernity, bleak man-made landscapes and the psychological effects of technological, social or environmental developments’”ⁱⁱ. *Kingdom Come* can be considered as a Ballardian novel in the latter sense. Although its action takes place in the present or a very near near-future, there is ample reason to argue that this present is as much an alternate present as the one described in Gibson's *Pattern Recognition*. The text's present differs from reality in that it takes current tendencies to extremes in a fashion that makes it possible to classify the text as extrapolative SF, although it doesn't make clear whether it describes a near-future scenario or not. “Whether [J. G. Ballard] is still a writer of sf is [...] open to question” (Latham (2007), 485). However, if one accepts that dystopian fiction constitutes a subgenre of SF, then one has to admit that Ballard's last two novels at least belong to the science-fictional slipstream literature which has emerged in recent years. However, “Ballard's fiction [...] resists traditional generic conventions” (Matthews, 124). *Kingdom Come*, like *Hocus Pocus* and *Pattern Recognition*, subverts any attempts at a ready-made generic classification and can therefore be considered as a novel belonging to the second type of Currie's postmodern novel, i.e., it is a genre-bending intertextual work of fiction. *Kingdom Come* is a work of postmodern realism, Currie's third type of postmodern novels, as well. The alternate present as projected by the text is representational of the postmodern condition, especially with regard to the phenomenon of the postmodern politics of the spectacle and the ramifications of the latter in the real world. Ballard's “roots [lie] in sf [and] even [his

later] novels [draw upon SF's techniques and themes] especially an obsession with the social fallout of technological development and a speculative attunement to the perils and promises of the future" (Latham (2007), 485). The social fallout thematized in *Kingdom Come* consists of end-stage consumerism transforming into a new kind of fascism. Ballard tackles the real-world emergence of a new kind of a disconcertingly popular populist neo-fascism in the contemporary European political arena. The developments that preside over the world of the novel are the relative novelties of commercial TV and the American-style shopping mall and the rise of said reiteration of a popular fascism. *Kingdom Come* deals with social, i.e., political, rather than technological development here. The novel scrutinizes the reasons that motivate the constituency of the new far-right parties successfully popping up all over the European political landscape.

Ballard's alternate present is a dystopia of a suburbia ruled by racist violence, excessive consumerism, and psychopathology. In *Kingdom Come*, "Ballard fuse[s] sf modes of extrapolation with Surrealist methods for exploring the unconscious" (Ibid.). Ballard identifies an underlying propensity towards authoritarianism beneath the slick surfaces of contemporary consumer capitalism. *Kingdom Come* is a protracted investigation of said phenomenon. Latham points out "the persistence of themes of psychic violence in Ballard's work" (Ibid., 486). *Kingdom Come* deals with the social function violence can assume. "For Ballard, violence is both social threat and psychic refuge, and this tension, productive in his best work, always threatens to collapse into nihilism" (Ibid.). The late-capitalist wasteland that is English suburbia, the stage against the background of which the novel's action takes place, is totally devoid of any moral or ethics. "Within this moral vacuum, racism and fascism provide direction for the population's discontent" (Matthews, 132). In the world of the novel, late-capitalist boredom rules supreme: "profound alienation and deadening boredom [...] characterize late-capitalist society" (Rubin (2009), 132). The only way out for the hordes of bored-stiff suburbanites is sports-team fandom and a shallow patriotism expressed by ubiquitous St George's flags, shirts, and metal pin buttons coupled with an endorsement of neo-fascist politics.

Andrew Matthews points out that "Ballard's late fiction [...] constitutes variants of the detective novel in which the protagonist investigates quotidian communities where the veneer of normalcy is supported by an undercurrent of criminality, violence, and madness" (Matthews, 123). *Kingdom Come* is no exception from this rule. Its story too revolves around an investigation of a crime. In the novel, 42-year-old unemployed advertising agent Richard

Pearson enters the suburbs surrounding London's Heathrow Airport because his father has been shot dead in the local shopping mall, the Metro-Centre, by a sniper who supposedly randomly fired into the crowd. Pearson decides to solve this crime and find his father's true murderer. "In each [of Ballard's late novels], the crime that provides the narrative impetus is swiftly solved [...] the protagonist is steadily drawn into the community he seeks to expose, with the result that he eventually enters into a shared complicity with the perpetrators of the original crime" (Ibid.). When Pearson arrives in the suburbs the police have already arrested the supposed killer of his father. Over the course of the novel, Pearson not only becomes a resident of the suburbs himself, but also gets involved with the very people whose conspiracy resulted in his father's death.

"Ballard's final novel directly links the theme of violence to the end state of consumer society" (Ibid., 135). Violence in the novel is always directed against the Other: asylum seekers, Asians, Kosovans, Poles, and, rather ironically, against people who have no interest in sports and thus do not partake in the ritualistic victimization of the Other carried out repetitively by the sports-mad crowd of neo-fascist suburbanites. "The immigrant population constitutes the Other to the values and ideals maintained by the Metro-Centre mall" (Matthews, 136). The gigantic shopping mall called the Metro-Centre is the pivotal center of Ballard's suburbs. The values and ideals disseminated via the Metro-Centre's own TV channels are congruent with consumerism. Pearson is the first-person narrator of the story and his point of view provides the reader with an outside view of the proceedings taking place in Ballard's prototypical British suburbs. He calls the suburbs "the empires of consumerism" (p. 3). According to him, "the suburbs dream of violence" (p. 3). He deems the suburbs "the real centre of the nation" (p. 4): To Ballard, the suburbs are representative of British society. Since Pearson is an advertisement agent, he proudly muses that the suburbs are "virtually an invention of the advertising industry" (p. 4). The novel thus highlights the importance of advertizing and public relations to the postmodern political process. "The suburbs [a]re defined by the products we sold them, by the brands and trademarks and logos that alone defined their lives" (p. 4). Furthermore, the text draws attention to the paramount importance of consumerism to contemporary culture. Moreover, Ballard hints at the existence of a very real affinity between consumerism and xenophobic violence. From the very first moment Pearson enters the monotonous maze of the British suburbs violence is in the air: "The entire defensive landscape was waiting for a crime to be committed" (p. 5). At the beginning of the story,

Pearson decides to frequent a vandalized Indian restaurant whose proprietor is clearly scared. Pearson remarks that the St George's cross, as a ubiquitous icon for the shallow populist patriotism that guides the populace, is omnipresent (p. 8) in the suburbs from the very beginning of the story onwards. "Everywhere St George's flags were flying [...] as this nameless town celebrated its latest victory" (p. 12). Said victory consists of the successful arson attack on the suburban mosque. Every available surface of Ballard's British suburbs is "plastered with St George's stickers" (p. 16). Pearson witnesses "a very suburban form of race riot" (p. 9). A car parked in front of a mosque is set on fire by persons unknown. Pearson's first experience in his new surroundings is "an outbreak of religious cleansing" (p. 11). Said arson attack prompts the first appearance of the men "in St George's shirts" (p. 11) in the story. The St George's shirt is the uniform of the new fascists in the story. They are ubiquitous, roaming the suburbs as auxiliaries to the police, they keep up order at day and at night they join the sports fans as they attack the businesses of foreigners. "Ballard's late fiction suggests that the spectacle of violence in fact plays a vital role in producing communities and maintaining social cohesion" (Matthews, 124). The violence directed against immigrants and their businesses serves as a rallying point for the neo-fascists in St George's shirts. Their violence is not simple hooliganism, but a new form of 'street politics'. They scorn traditional fascists. Their fascism belongs to a new breed that combines fascist agitation with the joys of total consumerism. According to Matthews, "the violence depicted in the nove[l] is symptomatic of the waning of affect endemic to contemporary culture" (Ibid.). Xenophobic violence has become the rallying point for a populace totally bereft of any sense of community which would transcend the shallow joys of sports fandom. *Kingdom Come* "highlight[s] the potential of violence to not only preserve the status quo but also to initiate revolutionary political movements" (Ibid., 131). The revolutionary movement of late-capitalist consumers in the story will call out its own fascist republic of the shopping mall as the story progresses.

The suburbs are dominated by the Metro-Centre, which Ballard describes as "a cathedral of consumerism whose congregations far exceeded those of the Christian churches" (p. 15). After the burial of his father, Pearson speaks with a Sergeant of the local police force. In the course of said conversation, he learns that the man charged with the murder of his father is called Duncan Christie, a local resident, mental patient, and dedicated opponent of the Metro-Centre. Christie allegedly fired into the Metro-Centre crowd out of his hostility towards the "monster [...] shopping mall" (p. 21). The gun used in the

shooting incidentally was a police-issue Heckler und Koch machine gun which had been stolen from interlocutor's own police station (p. 25). Christie's arrival at the police station sparks the first riot of the story. Many more are to follow. Pearson goes on to talk to his father's solicitor who expresses a profound dislike of the shopping mall, calling it a "monstrosity" and ascertaining that there is "nothing worse on this planet" (p. 31). Pearson's new acquaintance bears the name of Geoffrey Fairfax. Fairfax goes on to utter that the shopping mall and the culture that it has spawned "is hell" (p. 32). According to him, the suburbs are "a plague area [...]. A plague called consumerism" (p. 33). Meanwhile, in the background of the action, the residents of suburbia celebrate "soccer as society's last hope of violence" (p. 36). The men in St George's shirts remain omnipresent while Pearson muses that the shopping mall is "subtly infantilis[ing] us" (p. 37): "As we entered these huge temples we became young again, like children" (p. 37). In fact, "consumer culture is infantilizing, offering only the illusion of free choice and ephemeral satisfactions" (Matthews, 136).

Pearson has a conversation with the Metro-Centre's public relations manager, Tom Carradine, which takes place at the mall. Pearson, behind the muzak that is played in the mall, detects something else: "Somewhere in there I can hear the Horst Wessel song" (p. 39). This is the first of numerous references to German Nazi-fascism in the novel. Not much later the narrator learns that the charges against Christie were dropped. "Three witnesses have come forward, saying they saw Christie in [another part of the mall] when the shots were fired" (p. 47). The detective-fiction mystery which drives the novel's narrator from then on is open again. The whodunit gathers speed again and Pearson learns that the three witnesses who absolved Christie are "all people of good standing. Respectable local professionals—a doctor at Brooklands Hospital, a head teacher, the psychiatrist at the secure unit who treated Christie" (p. 50). Three pillars of the community absolve Christie of the crime at hand.

"Ballard's narrators are detectives who are initially repulsed yet later seduced by the allure of violence" (Matthews, 138). Pearson, the narrator detective of *Kingdom Come*, decides to move to his father's apartment and pledges "to find his murderer" (p. 52). In his father's apartment, Pearson makes a disconcerting discovery. Apparently, his father had a keen interest in fascism. In the latter's study, Pearson comes upon "biographies of Perón, Goering and Mussolini, and a history of Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists [as well as] an illustrated guide to Nazi regalia and the ceremonial uniforms of the Third Reich" (p. 55). His father's "moderate workstation was almost a neo-fascist altar" (p. 55), and in the laundry Pearson finds "shirts [...]" with the

familiar St George's cross" (p. 56), the new brownshirts of the suburban neo-fascists. Pearson realizes that his father was a member of the paramilitary mob that roams the nighttime streets of Ballard's suburbs: "These so-called sports clubs [that know] Only one sport. Beating people up" (p. 58). The St George's crosses are "everywhere[,] the red crosses, not to help people but to hurt them" (p. 58). The St George's shirts have become "the signifier for a new kind of [...] Fascism" (p. 62). Pearson has to face the plausible possibility that his late father was part of the neo-fascist mob that roams the suburban streets at night. As the story progresses Pearson himself becomes associated with the conspirators behind the apparently self-propelled neo-fascist upheavals in the story.

The paramount theme of the novel is consumerism's affinity towards fascism. "Take the Metro-Centre [...] it already looks like a Nuremberg rally. The tanks of sales counters, the long straight aisles, the signs, the banners, the whole theatrical aspect" (p. 105). The fact that Göbbels's Reichs Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda was one of the main harbingers of modern PR and advertising is brought to mind by the story's continual references to Nazi fascism. Furthermore, the congruence of consumerism and fascism in the world of the novel emphasizes capital's real-world complicity with Nazi-fascism in particular and totalitarianism in general. Christie's psychiatrist, Tony Maxted, argues that its irrationalism is part of the allure of (the new) fascism. According to him, "[c]onsumerism creates huge unconscious needs that only fascism can satisfy. If anything, fascism is the form that consumerism takes when it opts for elective madness" (p. 105), when people consciously and willingly choose to be irrational and actively partake in their own mystification. The original fascists of modernity played on the irrational fears of the electorate to gain power as well. The cult of personality which the European fascists of old created around their leaders incorporates elements of a quasi-religious, pagan worship. The leaders of the new European far-right parties represent a new breed of leaders who appeal to an audience which doesn't differentiate between politics and advertising anymore. *Kingdom Come* warns about the danger of consumerism slipping over into fascism, which is a valid point to be made in the twenty-first century. Consumerism breeds a kind of political apathy that is highly conducive to neo-fascist agitation. The twenty-first century bears witness to the rise of a new fascism, a "soft fascism" (p. 259), personified in people like Jörg Haider and Marine Le Pen; "a new kind of fascism [that] needed a new kind of leader—a smiley, ingratiating afternoon TV kind of führer. No Sieg Heils, but football anthems instead. The same hatreds, the same hunger for violence, but filtered through

the chat-show studio and the hospitality suite” (p. 258); “fascism lite, a mild and non-toxic strain” (p. 191).

In the English suburbs which are depicted by Ballard as the breeding grounds of the new fascism “a gigantic boredom prevailed” (p. 64). The people of the suburbs are “bored. Deeply, deeply bored. When people are that bored anything is possible. A new religion, a fourth reich” (p. 210). This boredom is a specifically postmodern ennui born out of decadence. Ballard's suburbanites lead lives of material affluence. All their animal needs are met and they are sheltered from the pernicious effects of capitalism to such a degree that their lives lack any connection to (late-capitalist) reality: “People don't know it, but they are bored out of their minds. [...] Wherever sport plays a big part in people's lives you can be sure they're bored witless and just waiting to break up the furniture” (p. 67). The urge to commit random acts of violence derives from the postmodern yearning for the real. In a world of simulacra, only violence seems to provide an access to reality. The “violence in *Kingdom Come* is born out of apathy and boredom with the illusions of consumerism” (italics in original; Matthews, 132). In *Kingdom Come*, sports fandom and xenophobic violence serve as a safety valve via which the citizens of British suburbia can vent their frustration and battle their existential boredom. “Ballard suggests that dissatisfaction with the infantilizing illusions of consumer society will generate boredom that will result in an elective psychopathy, which in turn risks being co-opted by fascist politics” (italics in original; Matthews, 138). Ballard depicts “consumer society [...] as a perpetual cycle of boredom, violence, and psychopathy” (Ibid.) which could and does very well culminate in popular support for far-right parties like Haider's FPÖ and Le Pen's Front National.

At night “race riot[s]” continue to occur (p. 80), whose perpetrators always are the ubiquitous sports fans who populate the city after dark. In a conversation with Pearson another character surmises that “parliamentary democracy, the church [and] the monarchy” have lost their sway (p. 85). He asks, “[w]hat's the point of free speech if you have nothing to say” (p. 85)? In *Kingdom Come*, British society has entered the realm of postdemocracy: “*Kingdom Come* portrays a world in which [...] parliamentary democracy fail[s] to inspire the populace” (italics in original; Matthews, 132). The Metro-Centre does what the world of politics no longer can. It provides the suburban populace with meaning and purpose. Ballard investigates “the erosion of real political choice [...] and its impact on notions of community and solidarity” (ibid., 137). The denial of real political choice which is inherent to the postmodern politics of the spectacle engenders the political apathy

inherent to consumerism and conducive to neo-fascist agitation. Ballard stresses the theme of a “new kind of politics [that] is emerging at the Metro-Centre. [...] It's a new kind of democracy, where we vote at the cash counter, not the ballot box” (p. 145). Consumer choice has replaced political decision making. One of the novel's characters points out that “[c]onsumerism is the greatest device anyone has invented for controlling people” (p. 145). The postdemocratic populace of the republic of the shopping mall is easily rallied by shallow patriotism. In the novel, community is exclusively constituted by blind allegiance to the banners of local sports teams and the St George's cross which has become devoid of all meaning as a simple sign of belonging. “Ballard's fiction suggests that [consumer society] ultimately curtails the rights of the individual and nullifies the opportunity to engage in radical decision making” (Ibid.). Freedom of speech is meaningless when one has got nothing to say, and democracy loses ground when the electorate, “the citizens of the shopping mall” (p. 102), prefers to vote via their shopping choices. According to another character of the novel, consumerism has turned us “all [into] children today” (p. 86). Consumer society infantilizes its members. Another character of the novel tells Pearson that the “[p]eople long for authority, and only consumerism can provide it” (p. 86). Late capitalist consumer society has created an ideological vacuum that used to be filled by tradition and which today is claimed by a resurging right-wing populism. Postmodern politics has been turned into a spectacle which bears a much closer resemblance to commercial advertising than to the politics of old. Pearson's interlocutor thus identifies “consumerism [a]s a redemptive ideology [that a]t its best, [...] tries to aestheticize violence” (p. 86). The most basic tenet of the ideology of consumerism is a shallow patriotism which unites the apathetic consumers against an Other and provides the bored populace with a means to rupture the existential boredom of their existence. “In a world where the individual is offered freedom of choice but limited in political agency, Ballard suggests that violence becomes a matter of aesthetics” (Matthews, 132). Ethics cease to be part of the equation. Stylized and ritualized violence becomes the impetus of a late-capitalist consumer community of infantilized shoppers in St George's shirts. At daytime the populace enjoys consumerism via shopping, at nighttime the same persons attack immigrants to reassert their sense of community. This community is of a quasi-religious nature. Its mystification of the masses provides new idols to its worshipers. Ballard emphasizes the religious moment of the infantilizing politics of the spectacle endorsed by consumerism and its acolytes. The Metro-Centre is constantly filled with “a congregation of worshipers that

would have filled a dozen cathedrals” (p. 87). Shopping is worship in the religion of late-capitalist consumerism. “That's capitalism for you. Nothing can be free” (p. 91). Worship under late capitalism costs money. The religious quality of end-state consumerism is a recurring theme in the story. The Metro-Centre in the course of the story becomes a locus of pagan religious worship. The ubiquitous St George's cross has been turned into a new religious icon that is devoid of its former Christian meaning and only advocates adherence to one's group. The shallow patriotism endorsed by the populace in the novel negates the modernist metanarrative of Christian religion and turns the Christian symbol per se, the holy cross, into a simulacral icon devoid of sense and meaning, a symbol of the populace's opportunistic group mentality which is devoid of any real-world referent and as such a third-order simulacrum in the Baudrillardian sense. The vast consumerist spaces of the shopping mall have been turned into the church of a new creed. At the end of the story the three giant teddy bears which are the Metro-Centre's mascots have become the object of religious worship. This is hinted at an earlier point of the story: “This isn't just a shopping mall. It's more like a [...] Religious experience” (p. 40). The three giant teddy bears, “the Metro-Centre mascots” (p. 42), have been damaged in the shooting in which Pearson's father and two other shoppers were killed. The three bears have been turned into a place of worship with “cards decorating the plinth, many carrying messages in adult handwriting. There were flowers, a row of miniature teddy bears, one wearing a tiny St George's shirt, and a dozen jars of honey [...] a [veritable] shrine” (p. 43). This is a religion that infantilizes its disciples. Accordingly, at the end of the novel, the citizens of the republic of the shopping mall end up “praying to the teddy bears” (p. 265). This image encapsulates the message of the text: Consumer capitalism infantilizes and incapacitates its disciples, turning the act of consumption into a mystifying pagan ritual of worship and thus simulating the sense and meaning whose loss is the impetus behind these practices. At one point in the story a bomb explodes at the shopping mall the consequences of which Ballard describes in religious terminology: “The temple was under threat, and the congregation was rallying to defend it. Crowds of football fans [converged at] the St Peter's square of the retail world” (p. 113f). The shopping mall is the holy place of the religion of consumerism where its believers converge. Consumerism is the new religion of the postmodern age and the postdemocratic politics of the spectacle is about to eclipse the democratic process of old. The theme of a 'new kind of politics' is continuously being referred to in the story: “a virtual politics unconnected to any reality, one which redefines

reality itself. The public willingly colludes in its own deception” (p. 100). As Paik points out, the postmodern subject actively participates in its own mystification. “There is no message. Messages belong to the old politics” (p. 146). The 'new kind of politics' being referred to here is the postmodern politics of the spectacle. The new politics is populist, it promotes apathy, and under its sway the people vote at the cash register via the commodity choices they make. As parliamentary democracy spreads out over the globe its substance in its countries of origin dwindles. The populace is progressively excluded from the democratic process as neo-liberal backroom politics of excessively powerful lobbyists continually gains in importance. The latter phenomenon is characteristic of the new postdemocratic order which is in the process of being erected throughout the West while the populace progressively loses faith in the democratic process due to the thus effected sharp decline in political representation. The backroom politics characteristic of the political arena under the hegemony of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism results in a very real real-world afflux of the electoral basis of the new far-right parties. *Kingdom Come* thus reflects very momentous and potentially highly dangerous real-world phenomena. Xenophobia, in particular islamophobia, constitutes the rallying point for the new right-wing populism which is progressively gaining ground in the nominal democracies of the West.

Baudrillardian hyperreality is also a recurring theme in the story. Being a professional advertising agent, Pearson muses that the “TV ad jumped the gap between reality and illusion, creating a world where the false became real and the real false” (p. 93). Reality has been turned into a simulacrum of itself. There is no authenticity in consumerism. Even the shallow patriotism that has seized the suburban populace is devoid of a deeper sense of belonging. The only way Ballard's suburbanites are able to simulate a sense of community is by attacking those who are branded as different: “They needed action [...]. They needed violence [...] They hungered for reality” (p. 123). This is a negative community whose only unifying factor is the reaction against an Other. All consumerist ideology offers its adherents is a simulacrum of community.

In a conversation with another character, the latter confirms Pearson's feeling that 'something is going on' behind the scenes: “Nasty things are brewing here. [...] racism and violence. [...] Naked intolerance for its own sake. [...] this is only the beginning. Something far worse is waiting to crawl out of its den” (p. 102). Pearson's interlocutor foreshadows the events later to transpire in the story here. A bomb attack on the Metro-Centre takes place (p. 112). As it

turns out the bomb was detonated in a car which happens to belong to Pearson. Pearson does not report this to the police. It furthermore transpires that the only casualty of the bombing was Geoffrey Fairfax. Either he died trying to defuse the bomb or in the process of planting it. The bombing then triggers yet another riot of football, ice hockey, and basketball fans in the city (p. 119). Again the businesses of immigrants are the target of the rioters. Pearson suspects that a conspiracy is behind the bombing, the same conspiracy which is responsible for the shooting that resulted in his father's death. Another character surmises that there is "a hunger for violence [among the populace which i]s why sport obsesses the whole country" (p. 143). In the course of this conversation, Pearson tries to persuade his interlocutor, David Cruise, "the Wat Tyler of cable TV" (p. 131), who runs the Metro-Centre's own commercial television channels, to accept him as his new script writer. He envisions "the future as a cable TV programme going on forever [which, as Cruise points out astutely s]ounds like hell" (p. 146). Baudrillardian hyperreality rules supreme in Ballard's version of the contemporary Western democracy. The TV simulation is taken as the real. TV in turn is the postmodern medium par excellence and as such, according to Jameson, responsible for the depoliticization of the Western working class. In the novel, TV simulates reality and provides the populace with a fake sense of belonging, a simulated simulacrum of an authentic community. In the end, Cruise agrees to Pearson's proposal, letting the latter become the Göbbels to his Hitler. Pearson permanently relocates to his father's apartment and continues his "obsessive quest to find [his] father's killer" (p. 153). Pearson turns a blind eye to the potentially disastrous effects of the violence that permeates his suburban surroundings in order to become a part of the revived simulacral community. Pearson starts a new ad campaign with Cruise as the anchor person. The Metro-Centre spawns its own community by unifying all the sports fans of the suburbs and by organizing them into paramilitary units; "the residents of the motorway towns [...] are united [...] around sports and shopping" (Matthews, 136). Their "small-scale acts of violence [...] become increasingly organized in a manner reminiscent of the rise of Nazi Germany" (Ibid., 136). The bombing of the Metro-Centre is attributed to the populace's ready-made bogeyman. "Everyone in the [suburbs] was a friend, but out there somewhere was the 'enemy', constantly referred to by David Cruise on his cable programmes but never defined. At the same time, everyone knew who the real enemy was" (p. 160). Everyone knows who constitutes the Other to the emerging fascism: "the 'enemy', a term kept deliberately vague that embraced Asians and east Europeans,

blacks, Turks, non-consumers and anyone not interested in sport” (p. 189). Pearson sympathizes with the newly emerging fascists who are “tolerated by the police, since [they] did their jobs for them by keeping order in the towns” (p. 161). The Metro-Centre is “[t]he People's Palace” (p. 168) in this new emerging fascist republic of the people of the suburbs. “Who needs liberty and human rights and civic responsibility? What we want is an aesthetics of violence. We believe in the triumph of feelings over reason” (p. 168). A postmodern kind of frenzied emotion takes precedence over rationality. In the novel, apathy and existential boredom foster fascism. “Consumer fascism provides its own ideology, no one needs to sit down and dictate Mein Kampf. Evil and psychopathy have been reconfigured into lifestyle statements. It's a fearful prospect but consumer fascism may be the only way to hold society together” (p. 168). Consumer fascism is the new breed of populist fascism which in reality is emerging in various countries of the EU. “Give them violent hamster wheels like football and ice hockey” (p. 169) and they will follow you till their death. Pearson sees what is happening in the suburbs as a precedent for a “national revival” (p. 169). On TV Cruise explains that he wants “to tear down the old world and build a new order” (p. 176). By this point in the story Pearson has become a “sinister manipulator helping to sell [...] an ugly suburban fascism” (p. 188f). Consumer fascism has turned racism and xenophobic violence into a lifestyle choice.

Over the course of the story Pearson learns that his father had infiltrated the sport “supporters [...] freikorps” (p. 196) to find out who gave the orders. Pearson's father had been on a quest to uncover the conspiracy behind the going-ons in Ballard's suburbs, a quest which he passed on to his son. Like Pearson, whose original goal had been to uncover the conspiracy responsible for his father's murder, his father investigated “the Metro-Centre and its sporting militias” (p. 197) to find the responsible parties. When the Metro-Centre is set “on fire” (p. 201) later on in the story the new fascist uprising has its own Reichstag fire. Cruise broadcasts live from the burning Metro-Centre: He blames the fire on the diffuse enemies of the republic of the shopping mall (p. 203). Ironically, “[m]ost of his audience probably knew that the fire [...] was a ruse designed to rally support for the Metro-Centre [...]. They knew they were being lied to, but if the lies were consistent enough they defined themselves as a credible alternative to truth. Emotion ruled almost everything” (p. 204). The fire at the Metro-Centre becomes consumer fascism's *Reichstagsbrand*. In the world of the text as in the real world, the apathetic postmodern consumer welcomes his/her own mystification. The ruse works and “a suburban army dressed in its St George's shirts” (p. 204)

rallies around the mall to defend it against its nonexistent attackers. Then, while addressing “his new 'republic'” of the shopping mall, Cruise is shot live on TV (p. 205). The religious cult of the shopping mall is thus provided with its first martyr. Cruise becomes the Horst Wessel of consumer fascism, the blood witness of the neo-fascists in the text.

The story ends with British riot police besieging the Metro-Centre while the new republic's supporters are thronged inside it. “The crowd was drifting back into the mall, resigned to a future of eternal shopping. The republic of the Metro-Centre had at last established itself, a faith trapped inside its own temple” (p. 218). What follows is reminiscent of the Waco siege. The St George's shirt becomes the uniform of the soldiers of the new republic under the leadership of Tom Carradine and Tony Maxted. “The people of the retail parks were defending a more real Britain of Homebase stores, car-boot sales and garden centres, amateur sports clubs and the shirt of St George” (p. 225) against the state represented by the army and the police who have the mall surrounded. According to Matthew, “the violent uprisin[g] depicted in [...] *Kingdom Come* constitute[s] a challenge to the state and the machinations of capital” (italics in original; *Ibid.*, 132), it embodies “the collective resistance to the globalized form of capitalist sovereignty that has emerged at the turn of the twenty-first century” (*Ibid.*). In that lies a utopian capacity for change. However, the resistance of the populace only culminates in a re-affirmation of the status quo. The novel is overtly pessimistic in its assumption of the impossibility of an escape from consumer capitalism's cycle of boredom, mystification, and violence. However, the craving for authentic community that underlies the actions of the postmodern populace in the novel allows for a space of possibility for change for the better. The novel is thus not devoid of the utopian impulse an expression of which according to Moylan is characteristic of the critical dystopia. The fact that Ballard's dystopian present also adheres to most of the other characteristics of Moylan's concept of classification makes it possible to identify Ballard's last novel as a work of postmodern dystopian fiction.

The siege goes on for several months. The mutineers in St George's shirts hold a couple of hundred of people hostage inside the mall. In this fascist pocket revolution the reign of the commodity is not touched; there is no looting. “The cash tills were silent, but customers paid for their purchases” (p. 225). The Metro-Centre is a holy place even for the hostages. “No one had slipped a single fountain pen or gold chain into their pockets” (p. 235) while trapped with a literally limitless supply of expensive commodities. No one is ready to desecrate the holy halls of late capitalism. The “citizens of the

shopping mall, the free electorate of the cash till and the loyalty card” (p. 243) does not pillage. In the “second month of the Metro-Centre siege” (p. 245), Pearson at last learns who murdered his father. As it turns out Tony Maxted and Geoffrey Fairfax, together with other pillars of the community, ordered Christie to kill David Cruise, but Cruise did not show up and Christie instead opened fire at the Three Bears, the mall's mascots, and by accident hit Pearson's father and two other shoppers. Christie was also the one who triggered the proclamation of the fascist Republic of the Shopping Mall by, this time successfully, assassinating Cruise in front of the TV cameras. So, in the end, the murderer from the beginning turns out to be in fact the culprit, although he did not act alone, but on behalf of some of the most respected and honorable members of suburban society. It turns out in the end that Pearson's assessment of the situation at the beginning of the novel was literally right: the “amiable suburbs [had indeed] sat up and snarled, then sprung forward to kill [his] father” (p. 4). It was not the street thugs who routinely brutalize foreigners, but the members of the local upper class who conspired to bring about Pearson's father's death. The novel thus hints at the structural complicity of the totalitarian market order with the neo-fascist violence that ever so often erupts from within postmodern Western society. When the army and riot police finally storm the mall they find the St George's shirted mutineers kneeling in front of the three giant teddy bears, worshipping them like religious icons (p. 265). Someone has prepared to set fire to the mall and when the police storm it the fire breaks out. The mall subsequently burns to the ground and thus ends the fascist Republic of the Metro-Centre. The last chapter of the novel is an epilogue to the story and takes place three weeks after the end of the siege. Pearson has become involved with a female resident of the suburbs and the latter have become peaceful again. Matthews rightfully points out that “Ballard's critique of consumer culture in *Kingdom Come* is not especially illuminating or revealing” (Ibid., 137). However, the novel draws a salient picture of the end-stage consumerism characteristic of the late-capitalist market order and its day-to-day practices in the industrialized countries. It can thus be read as belonging to Currie's third type of postmodern novel, it is a work of postmodern realism. The newly peaceful suburbs of the story's epilogue retain the potential of a recurrence of the late-capitalist wave of xenophobic violence that has been described in the text, thus highlighting the threat contemporary neo-fascist populism poses to parliamentary democracy in the West and emphasizing the negative potential created by the postdemocratic decline of political representation in the postmodern.

7.8 CORMAC MCCARTHY: *THE ROAD*

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* was published in 2006. The story is about an unnamed father and son who travel across a post-apocalyptic US on foot due South. There is only one minor character in the story who is referred to by name. The two protagonists are only referred to as father and son. "In a world where names have lost their purpose, even the protagonists lack a name" (Broncano, 134). The country through which the unnamed father-son pair travels has been turned into an ashen desert by an apocalyptic cataclysm of some sort in the story's past. The apocalyptic event which turned the US into a wasteland of soot and ash is never elucidated in the text. The novel thus is a work of speculative SF, since it features a singular event in the past which changed the future which is the story's present. Whether the cataclysmic event in the past of the novel's back story was manmade or not is a matter of discussion. The most probable explanations for the state the phenomenal world of the text are either a meteorite hit or a nuclear war carried out via the deployment of neutron bombs. Cormac McCarthy is a Western author with distinct postmodernist leanings. In his novels, he draws upon "an array of literary practices and traditions, including romanticism and realism as well as modernism and postmodernism" (Snyder/Snyder, 30), which constitutes an amalgamation of styles that could be considered characteristic of postmodern hybrid fiction. *The Road* is postmodernist insofar as it displays a distinctly postmodern, among other things, apocalyptic sensibility: "the future, for McCarthy, is a grim apocalypse" (Cooper, 134). It thus doesn't matter that much whether the reason for the apocalyptic nature of the world as projected by the text was manmade or not. The story's highly allegorical nature serves as an exemplification of the notion of a world shaped by a totalization of the reign of the market order over the contemporary human condition either way.

The text is an example of postmodern intertextuality as well. According to Kenneth Lincoln, the novel is "a father-son love story at the end of the world" (Lincoln, 164). The topos of parental love permeates the whole of the story. Furthermore, the novel constitutes "a Stephen King nightmare thriller with no cheap thrills, spot-on hyperrealistic" (Ibid., 169). Lincoln describes it as a mixture of "*Waiting for Godot* [...] with *Pilgrim's Progress* and *King Lear*" (italics in original; Lincoln, 164). John Cant points out that the story's "image of the wasteland is [...] an intertextual reference to Eliot" (Cant, 269). Furthermore, according to Broncano, "the bleak environment of *The Road* [is a reference to] the destruction of the world by fire in Revelation" (italics in

original; Broncano, 9). Michal Palmowski reads *The Road* as “an allegorical statement on the human condition” (Palmowski, 357). Furthermore, Steven Frye interprets *The Road* as a biblical allegory: “Father and son wander a typological wilderness, vividly reminiscent of the Old and New Testaments, where they ponder the existence of God, the role of goodness and decency, and, similar to Christ, encounter a Satan figure Ely who tempts them to abandon all hope and faith” (Frye, 8). Broncano interprets Ely as reminiscent of the prophet Elijah. Ely is the only character in the story with a name, which sets him apart from all the others. In *The Road* instead of praising Yahweh over Baal as did Elijah in the bible, Ely proclaims the Nietzschean death of God: “There is no God and we are his prophets” (p. 181). However, Allen Josephs discards the notion that there is a connection between the Ely of the story and the biblical Elijah (Josephs, 135). In the novel, Ely remarks that “[w]here men cant [sic] live gods fare no better” (p. 183). Without man there is no God. The idea of God is thus exposed as a human construct. According to Josephs, “the episode with Ely [is] the ultimate expression of atheistically existential angst” (Josephs, 136). McCarthy's apocalypse is a secular one, although it is not fully devoid of mystery. According to Frye, “[i]n McCarthy's novels and in Dante's poems, the world is rendered as a kind of purgatory, in which human beings struggle for a time but do so with the overwhelming sense that material existence shrouds a transcendent mystery” (Frye, 7). Moreover, the road of the novel's title “resembles Dante's route into hell” (Broncano, 126). The story thus evokes a whole spectrum of texts by means of its explicit intertextuality. The story, as has already been pointed out above, is a work of speculative SF as well, since it features some of the stock topics of dystopian literature as given by Mohr. It belongs to the latter subgenre of SF and is an example of the critical, postmodern dystopia as well, since the text leaves room for hope and abandons the classical plot structure and the other trappings of the genre's traditional variety. Conversely, Palmowski argues that the text “is a tragedy rather than a didactic tale” (Palmowski, 358), while he at the same time stresses the novel's allegorical nature. However, the novel, as a critical dystopia, is very far from being devoid of didactic intent. The novel explicitly emphasizes the paramount importance of intersubjectivity to human salvation. Accordingly, Palmowski concurs that “the novel is far from being nihilistic” (Palmowski, 362). He surmises that the text “may be best described as antinihilistic” (Ibid.). Palmowski reads the novel as an exemplification of Sartrean and Nietzschean existentialism. According to him, the story's two protagonists are “[p]lunged into this nightmarish post-apocalyptic world, [but] they do not fret or despair

but against all odds try to live as human beings, despite the fact that it is both impossible and absurd” (Ibid., 363). Their refusal to give in in the face of a world devoid of any values which would give sense and meaning to their ordeal, according to Palmowski, can be read as an exemplification of the predicament of the human subject in existentialist philosophy. The latter variety of philosophy holds that the human subject has to invent itself, since there are no transcendental absolutes which could serve as an exterior basis for the generation of sense and meaning. The latter notion is akin to the Lyotardian postmodern philosophy that negates the effectiveness of the modernist metanarratives. The text thus does in fact incorporate a didactic dimension despite its tragic setting. Furthermore, the insistence on the novel's tragic elements gives credence to Paik's point that contemporary SF has to fulfill the role of postmodern tragedy. In McCarthy's world of postmodern tragedy the universal human need for intersubjectivity prevails along with the validity of the most basic moral values which remain universal especially in the context of postmodern relativism. The universal litmus test by which the story's two protagonists deduce whether one is to be considered as a human being or not consists of the question whether one 'eats people' or not. Just like Lyotard's postmodern philosophy rather randomly declares one single value, i.e., the value of justice, as exempt from the postmodern abolition of all values, the father-son pair employs the most basic imaginable moral evaluation to tell the 'good guys' apart from the 'bad guys' in the world of the text. The grounding of their humanism is wholly arbitrary, since it is devoid of any concepts which would transcend the rudimentary rules of moral exemplified by the conduct of these two characters.

If one were to categorize the text into a genre, the genre would be 'survival horror'. The survival horror genre is originally a video-game category. The text is thus a hybrid of the literary quest genre (a “heroic quest for a place in which [the] young son can survive” (Cant, 271)) and a para-literary video-game genre as well as of speculative dystopian SF. The survival horror genre is discernible in film as well, for example, in the five *Resident Evil* movie adaptations (2002-12) as well as numerous other horror and zombie films, such as *28 Days Later* (2002) and *Zombieland* (2009). Survival horror movies deal with small groups of humans who survived some form or other of an apocalyptic event and then have to deal with the post-apocalyptic landscape left by the cataclysm. The ubiquitous threat of zombie attacks which constitutes the other main story contraption of said movies is substituted in the novel with the threat posed by marauding gangs of cannibals which the

story's focalizer dubs "bloodcults" (p. 15). In the survival horror genre the apocalyptic event always goes along with the creation of an army of undead against which the human survivors have to defend themselves. In the novel, the father carries a handgun with which he defends himself and his son against the gangs of cannibals which haunt the novel's world. The remnants of humankind which sparsely populate the world of the text have turned into "men who would eat your children in front of your eyes" (p. 192). The apocalyptic event of McCarthy's story has not turned the population into zombies, but the utter scarcity of food has turned most of the remnants of humankind into anthropophagi, who hunt for humans.

On returning to the animal condition, the human being is driven by a will to survive that supersedes any ethical value and turns each individual into a potential source of food for the other. Mankind has been divested of its once differentiating traits and has succumbed to the Darwinian strife, becoming the most rapacious of species in a land devoid of animal and vegetal life (Broncano, 126).

The cannibalistic inhabitants of McCarthy's dystopian future reflect the Social Darwinism of our neo-liberal present just as the zombie of the survival horror genre reflects the mindless consumer of late capitalism. There is even a direct reference to the survival horror genre in the text: "We're not survivors. We're the walking dead in a horror film" (p. 57). In McCarthy's world just like in *In the Country of Last Things*, cannibalism reflects the competition of late capitalism. Capitalist competition has turned total and man has truly become man's wolf. The survivors who populate the world of *The Road* see their fellow human beings as sources for sustenance, as fair game. This reflects the degradation of human beings to object status which constitutes one of Mohr's stock topics of dystopian literature. Thus the use value of human beings no longer consists of their labor power in a world in which the market order has vanished completely. The use value of the human individual resides in his/her corporeality, it translates into the amount of meat which makes up the human body.

There are no temporal markers which would help to locate the story in time. It is clear from the provided detail, however, that it takes place in a very near future. Furthermore, "McCarthy seems to suggest that the end is both inescapable and imminent" (Cooper, 134). The story's near-future setting and its post-apocalyptic content contribute to the novel's status as a work of dystopian SF as well. *The Road* clearly constitutes an example of Currie's second category of postmodern novels. It is an intertextual novel.

Furthermore, the fact that McCarthy imagines the future as a grim dystopia “of cultural entropy” (Cant, 280) in itself serves as a deconstruction of the Extropy Myth. “In this novel, the darkest possible future has become reality” (Cooper, 135). The novel displays a marked affinity to the Gothic horror genre. It paints “end-times vignettes worthy of Hieronymus Bosch, the Rapture manmade, Halloween for real” (Lincoln, 165). The story's two protagonists travel through dismal woods of dead trees, sleep in dark caves and in dilapidated, abandoned houses under the constant threat of meeting members of the bloodcults. “The mummied dead [are] everywhere. The flesh cloven along the bones, the ligaments dried to tug and taut as wires” (p. 23). The story's distinct Gothic imagery contributes to its intertextuality as well.

The father-son pair's progress through the apocalyptic remnants of the US is rather vague in terms of location as well. The story's spatial markers are rather obscure. However, from the hints given in the text it is likely that the father-son pair's journey begins in “eastern Tennessee” and ends in “Galveston, Texas” (Cooper, 132). The story is represented almost entirely from the father's point of view. He exclusively serves as the novel's focalizer until the story's ending. There are many examples of interior monologue in the text. The author thus directs the reader's sympathy towards the father figure. The heroism embodied by the father who refuses to give in in the face of an unyielding world of averse circumstance and sacrifices himself to save his son is thus highlighted by the text. The reader has access to the father's most inner thoughts, which makes him the target of the sympathy of the recipient. The story is an exception in McCarthy's body of work for the insight it offers into the psyche of the story's main focal character. The “novel consistently draws attention to the father's courage” (Cooper, 135) as he soldiers on against the “crushing black vacuum of the universe” (p. 138). The novel foregrounds the father's “raw courage [...] as he attempts a journey fraught with horrific danger in order to forge the possibility of a future out of an apocalyptic waste” (Cooper, 139). The story features an overriding utopian moment in the father's pronounced heroism. McCarthy's “novel combines [...] moral heroism and bleak nihilism” (Cooper, 133). However, the utopian impulse clearly prevails over the dystopian nihilism in the story. It “privileges the haunting obligation of ethical behavior, indicating that the darkest possible world may not be entirely bereft of people able to believe in human goodness” (Ibid.). At least the father's “stubborn refusal to give up hope” (Ibid.) gives the text an optimistic edge which makes the story somewhat of an exception in McCarthy's oeuvre, which is distinguished by a sense of the utter contingency of events. *The Road* stands out in McCarthy's body of work

by virtue of its insistence on the human capacity for goodness and the intersubjectivity embodied in the relationship between father and son. As Palmowski points out the dramatis personae of McCarthy's other works "have severed themselves from the ordinary human world, but they do not exhibit any sense of loss as they are unable to comprehend the seriousness of their condition" (Palmowski, 358). Palmowski describes the characters of McCarthy's earlier novels as "in a spiritual sense, the 'living dead'" (Ibid.). Conversely, the two protagonists of *The Road* are spiritually and otherwise very much alive while they are being preyed upon by the novel's stand-in for the 'living dead' of the survival horror genre in the guise of the cannibals who haunt the world of the story. This constitutes an explicit inversion of this author's usual modus operandi. Another inversion lies in the role nature plays within the novel. In "McCarthy's earlier novels the barren inner lives of the characters are contrasted with the rich vibrant world of nature" (Ibid., 359). In *The Road* the protagonist's inner world contrasts with a world of nature which is barren and dead. *The Road* "is remarkably different in that respect. In *The Road* it is not the people who have deserted the world but the world that has deserted people" (italics in original; Ibid, 358). The protagonists' quest for sense and meaning can only be met by other people, other human beings are the only source of potential redemption in McCarthy's last novel while they at the same time constitute a lethal threat in the form of humans turning into animals of prey who hunt for other humans.

Another feature that sets *The Road* apart from the rest of McCarthy's oeuvre is the character of the son. In his other novels, McCarthy exclusively depicts characters that suppress "in themselves any trait of goodness and who abide by the law of violence" (Broncano, 4). The son is an exception to this rule, since he is severely distressed by any occurrence of violence that appears throughout the story. The novel is also an exception in McCarthy's body of work in another respect: "for once in McCarthy's whole canon, the reader is spared the anguish [of an open ending by] a brief epilogue in which the son is adopted by a surrogate family" (Ibid., 132). The boy's imminent survival is secured, the future of humankind however is left open by the novel's ending, which bestows a strong sense of ambiguity upon an otherwise highly conclusive finale. "The 'world to come,' to use one of Cormac McCarthy's trademark expressions, is for the reader to decide" (Ibid., 139). This emphasis on the reliance on the recipient's ability to come up with a valid interpretation of the text is another postmodern feature endorsed by the story.

The story begins “under the ashen graylight of a nuclear winter” (Lincoln, 164) with the father thinking “that the month was October but he wasn't [sic] sure” (p. 2). There is “[d]ust and ash everywhere” (p. 5) so that the two survivors constantly have to wear face masks. The climate is “very cold” and it rains and snows a lot (p. 7). “Through [a] hellish world [...] father and [...] son trek south, their telos not a precise location but only an instinctive determination to survive” (Cooper, 134). According to Manuel Broncano, the wasteland which is the world of *The Road* is an expression of “the acute ecological consciousness that is present in many of McCarthy's works” (Broncano, 8). McCarthy's wasteland can be read as an engagement of the postmodern problematic of environmental degradation. Although the novel never elaborates on the nature of the apocalyptic event that turned the world into an ashen wasteland, it seems to suggest that the catastrophe was manmade rather than the consequence of a meteorite hit. The novel's world consists of “a postholocaust grammar of scree, shards, smoke [...], bits and pieces of charnel, dead flesh and sallow bone” (Lincoln, 165). The fragmentation of the human body, another postmodern topos, is ubiquitous in the novel. It draws a very pessimistic picture of the future. The text constitutes an elaboration of the topos “of man's insignificance in a godless universe [which is] one of McCarthy's constant themes” (Cant, 268). The marked contingency of events in this story as *In the Country of Last Things* is an elaboration of a postmodern topos as well.

“In the world of *The Road*, Mammon has been divested of his power, but only after the universal devastation that he heralded has been completed” (italics in original; Broncano, 136). The state the phenomenal world of text is in strongly suggests that the apocalypse in the past of the story was manmade. A nuclear war with neutron bombs seems to be the best explanation for it. The imperialism of old has culminated in the near total destruction of everything. Since imperialism per definition is carried out by nation states on behalf of their capitalist classes, capitalism can be considered as the impetus behind McCarthy's apocalypse. The protagonists' journey lasts for many months. On page 23, the two come upon a broken Coca Cola vending machine. According to Broncano, said “vending machine stands as a symbolic representation of American consumerism” (Broncano, 136) in which lies the reason for the apocalypse. The father salvages a can of Cola from the wreck and gives it to his son, completely ignoring the money that the broken machine has spewed. Money is of no value in the world of the novel. Father and son subsist on food they salvage from the empty houses along the road they travel. They progress through a blasted, burned out landscape of ash

and soot, pushing a supermarket cart in which they have stowed their meager belongings. The two move through the post-apocalyptic US “like shoppers in the commissaries of hell” (p. 192). They ransack the houses and cities at the side of the road, behaving like shoppers in a shopping mall, “as if the[y] were on a shopping spree” (Broncano, 136). “The shopping cart [...] is a relic from th[e] times of frenzied consumption” (Ibid.) which gave birth to the cataclysm. Among the things they carry in the cart is a piece of tarpaulin with which they protect themselves against the ubiquitous rain and snow. The commodities of capitalism have been stripped of their exchange value. Their only worth lies in their use value. This is an inversion of the development under late capitalism which culminated in the nearly total eclipse of the use value of commodities. The exchange value has completely vanished in McCarthy's world, which is exemplified by the characters' total unconcern for money. When they come upon money (p. 22) or expensive valuables (p. 195), they ignore either. The novel has thus been criticized for its “rejection of contemporary consumerist culture” (Palmowski, 362). Culture, in the world of the novel, is nonexistent and capitalism has turned total in the commodification of the human body as a source of sustenance. The novel makes an implicit value judgment about late-capitalist hyper-consumerism when it stresses the importance of the fact that moral human beings do not engage in the consummation of other human beings. The topos of the shoppers in hell is a reference to consumer capitalism which according to the logic of the story has spawned the apocalyptic catastrophe which has turned the world into a giant mausoleum in the story. However, Mammon's power allegorically perseveres inside the world of the story in the practice of cannibalism as the most extreme form of commodification.

The “novel remains intentionally vague about the cause of the catastrophe” (Ibid., 134). The only reference to the cataclysm made in the novel appears on page 54: there was “[a] long shear of light and then a series of low concussions” (p. 54) which seems to favor the neutron bomb explanation. In the world of the novel, “[e]verything [is] as it once had been save faded and weathered” (p. 6). The fact that buildings and other material structures have remained intact, while most organic life, animals, plants, humans, has vanished, further suggests that the apocalyptic event involved the use of neutron bombs. The ubiquitous ashes are thus “residue of a neutron bomb [...] that kills all living organisms and leaves objects standing” (Lincoln, 165). In an interior-monologue analepsis the father remembers what happened to the boy's mother (p. 57ff). The boy's mother, out of desperation, committed suicide (p. 60). The man's wife “gives up her role as protective mother,

seeking in suicide a nihilistic end to her agonic and hopeless existence“ (Broncano, 128), whereas the boy's father “assumes the roles of both father and mother and defies the dangers of the perilous journey along the Dantesque road of hell“ (Ibid.). In direct opposition to the choice of sacrificing others for their own survival which the cannibals made, the father chooses to sacrifice himself for the survival of his son.

The first time the father-son pair encounters other survivors is on page 62. This group of survivors very much looks like the walking dead in a horror movie: “shuffling through the ash [...] Stained and filthy. Slouching along with clubs in their hands“ (p. 62f). The boy and the man hide themselves from the group of people, but encounter one of its members on his way “to take a crap“ (p. 65). The man is described from the father's point of view as a “roadrat“ (p. 68). When the 'roadrat' threatens to kill the boy the man shoots him dead with the second-to-last cartridge left in his gun (p. 68). The dead 'roadrat' is “the first human being other than the boy that [the man has] spoken to in more than a year“ (p. 79). The 'roadrat' was a cannibal (p. 79). There is one litmus test in the world of the novel to discern whether a person is one of the 'good guys,' or not. The 'bad guys' are those who feed on other human beings. The 'bad guys' represent a totalized late-capitalist consumerism, while the 'good guys' stand for the existentialist predicament of the human subject in a world devoid of sense and meaning which thus has to invent itself as it goes along, acting morally in the face of the utter absence of everything which once could have been a source for moral values. This basic dichotomy between the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys' creates “a Manichean vision of the world that pits virtuous men against villains (a tradition of the Western genre) [...] and sounds like an echo of the 'evil empire' rhetoric, the hawkish policies of the Reagan years“ (Lagayette, 81f). Over the course of the novel, however, this Manichean distinction will grow increasingly blurred. The boy and the father think of themselves as “the good guys“ (p. 81) who are “carrying the fire“ (p. 87) of civilization. “The fire signifies that vitality that burns within the ardent heart, the mystery that is the spark of life itself and that needs no reason to exist“ (Cant, 271). Furthermore, the topos of 'carrying the fire' constitutes an intertextual reference to the myth of Prometheus. Josephs argues that the fire stands for “the literal belief in [the] presence of God“ (Josephs, 138). He then goes on to make a pretty convincing case for considering the son as a sort of 'second coming'. At the end of the novel the one distinguishing feature to tell the good from the bad guys remains whether they “eat people“ or not (p. 304). The story thus emphasizes the value of intersubjectivity as evidenced via the

discussion between the surviving son and the strange man who does not eat people over the late-capitalist exchange value which is exemplified in the cannibalistic commodification of human beings as evidenced by the 'bad guys'. It is thus not necessary to read the story in religious terms to come up with a valid moral interpretation of the text. McCarthy's apocalypse, for all its many hints to religion, is secular.

On page 93, at least a whole month has gone by since the beginning of the novel. "It could be November. It could be later" (p. 93). A couple of days after they have successfully escaped from the 'roadrat's' gang father and son come upon "a frieze of human heads, all faces alike, dried and caved with their taut grins and shrunken eyes" (p. 94). On their way they come upon more severed heads (p. 195), mummified bodies (p. 204), and "a charred human infant headless and gutted and blackening on [a] spit" (p. 212). As Cooper points out, "th[e] images [of barbarism in the novel] are presented with horrifying simplicity" (Cooper, 156). The images of severed human body parts and of the general fragmentation of the physical human being contribute to the story's overall Gothic horror imagery which in turn strengthens the story's intertextuality. Furthermore, the latter example of utter human cruelty for Broncano is allegorical of the fate of humankind as depicted in the novel: "Like the Greek Titan, Cronus, man devours his own children in order to perpetuate himself, a fallacy that proves [...] the irrational drive to survival that guides humans when confronted with extinction, only to hasten it" (Broncano, 126). Palmowski stresses the importance of the protagonists' refusal to consume human flesh. He argues that this refusal serves as their basic moral compass: "Living in a world of total moral confusion, they need to reestablish the border separating good from evil. Good guys do not eat people, no matter what" (Palmowski, 364). According to Palmowski, this behavior of the two protagonists signifies the existence of a basic human need for some mode of transcendental moral without which the human subject is unable to endure. "Man confronted with the absurdity of his existence has to invent some meaning that would justify his life" (Ibid.). McCarthy "throws [his characters] into the hostile godless lawless universe" (Ibid., 365) which represents the contemporary postmodern human condition in the absence of any viable metanarratives that could provide the subject with sense and meaning and thus with a foundation for moral. However, McCarthy's protagonists refuse to succumb to nihilism through their repudiation of the practice of cannibalism and thus exemplify the fact that the human subject has a basic existential need for universal values that transcend the order of mere physical survival.

The next survivors the two meet are a group of people held captive in the basement of an abandoned house (p. 116f). “Huddled against the back wall were naked people, male and female, all trying to hide, shielding their faces with their hands. On the mattress lay a man with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt. The smell was hideous” (p. 116). The people in the basement are held there as stored food for another gang of cannibals. The human beings in the basement have been reduced to the status of being a commodity, their only value lies in the physicality of their bodies as a source of meat. The man's amputated legs have been eaten, and the man has been kept alive to keep fresh the meat. The basement acts as a refrigerator and the people in it embody the role of human cattle waiting for the slaughter. The abject horror of the situation is rendered particularly striking because the cannibals are regular human beings, not the demented madmen of Gothic horror fiction, or the mindless zombies of a splatter film. The cannibals have made the rational, sane decision to regard their fellow human beings as nothing more than a source of sustenance. Their behavior is in accordance with a rational evaluation of the human condition as presented by the text. In the absence of all other sources of food it seems only logical to revert to the ways of cannibalism. In fact, the father-son pair acts irrational in their refusal to become anthropophagi. They cling to an atavistic remnant of morality that has become outdated in the reality of the novel. This atavistic insistence on some form of moral transcendence in the face of an utterly nihilistic world forms the novel's overall humanist message. There are worse things than death, the novel insists here. Death is to be preferred to the moral depravity embodied in the figure of the cannibal. Father and son thus refuse the Social Darwinist conception of the human being as 'man's wolf'.

At one point in the novel, the father ruminates about the fate of language in the post-apocalyptic world: “The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. [...] Finally the names of things one believed to be true. [...] The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality” (p. 93). This parallels the disintegration of language as it is described in *In the Country of Last Things*. As the objects to which language used to refer vanish language deteriorates as well. “In a typically post-structuralist move, language is divested of its 'sacredness' as the only viable tool to interpret the world we inhabit, for such a world is made of words only” (Broncano, 133). First the material objects vanish, the referents dissolve, which is then mirrored by the language the characters speak. “The country surrounding the journey [...] is filled with signifiers with no existing referent” (Woodson, 22). Weathered billboards line the road, advertising wares that no longer exist and evoking a

capitalist system which in the present of the story has been rendered perfectly defunct. The signifier losing its signified certainly constitutes a post-structuralist notion. However, it is not the case, as Broncano suggests, that the world of the referent is dissolving in *The Road*. As Linda Woodson points out *The Road* “illustrates the ability of words to evoke that which we can know without language” (Woodson, 15). The power of language to grasp reality is ultimately shored up in the novel. The father teaches the son how to read and as long there are human beings capable of reading and writing left alive language perseveres. Although the father deems all books to be “lies” (p. 199), he does not question the ontological basis of language, which becomes clear from his endeavors to teach the son to read and by the tales he tells the latter; “for all the dissolution of language that *The Road* exhibits, the novel serves as an ongoing argument for the power of fiction, the power of storytelling” (italics in original; Woodson, 23). The father's endeavors to teach his son the stories that make up his cultural knowledge, while the son has no notion of the world as it was before the cataclysm, resemble the oral tradition of older cultures. Furthermore, as in the case of all of McCarthy's novels, *The Road* “is an expression of its author's 'love of language'” (Snyder/Snyder, 32). The story's emphasis on spoken language only heightens language's capacity of conveying meaning and sense. However, the protagonists' vocabulary has shrunk in accordance with the diminishment of the world of the referent. The story's minimal language clearly sets it apart in McCarthy's oeuvre, which is characterized by a very magnanimous vocabulary. Phillip and Delys Snyder thus speak of *The Road*'s “austere restraint” with regard to its language (Snyder/Snyder, 36); “the story is told directly and simply, and the language is spare” (Evenson, 60). The novel's language and its minimalistic dialogue mirror the bare bones to which human life has been reduced in the world of the novel; “language [is] taken closer to its primal uses” (Woodson, 23) as a tool of survival while at the same time the act of narration belies this minimalism and exposes it as a method of storytelling that creates the referential illusion. The story overall emphasizes the importance of intersubjectivity as the arbiter of sense and meaning and intersubjectivity to a considerable degree in the novel and in the world at large depends on linguistic mediation. The novel thus stresses the importance of language and its capability to serve as a the basis of moral evaluation.

When the two protagonists finally reach the coast in what seems to be Galveston in Texas they are nearly out of food again, and the sea is “[c]old. Desolate. Birdless” (p. 230). Their quest for a different part of the country where things might be different ends in “an isocline of death. One vast salt

sepulchre. Senseless. Senseless“ (p. 237). Their quest thus ends in a further negation of sense and meaning. However, they again manage to find food (p. 246) and a flaregun with eight rounds of flares (p. 256) aboard an abandoned boat and they camp out on the beach for a few days to unload the ship. The ship is called “Pájaro de Esperanza,” 'Bird of Hope' (p. 239). Hope in the context of the novel has thus far always been provisional. Never once do the two protagonists manage to shed the omnipresent threat of death in the form of starvation on a permanent basis, since the impossibility of a permanent reprieve from the threat of death constitutes the very organizing principle of the world the characters inhabit. However, the father-son pair is nevertheless driven by an atavistic form of hope for a better existence. The boat's name emphasizes the importance of hope in the context of the story.

Once they leave their camp unguarded and a thief steals all their things and provisions (p. 271). They manage to catch the thief and the father forces him to strip off all his clothes and leaves him naked to die (p. 275). The boy is very distraught by his father's action (p. 276). He is aware that he has become an accomplice to the murder of the thief, since the latter has no chance of survival without his shoes and clothes. By killing the thief in such a fashion, the father blurs the line between 'the good guys,' i.e., he and his son, and the 'bad guys,' i.e., the rapists, murderers, and cannibals who predominantly populate the world of the novel. The son's compunction about their treatment of the thief highlights the fact that he is the more morally upright of the pair. The son embodies a transcendent notion of moral that stays valid even in this world of utter nihilism. Josephs's interpretation of the character of the son as a second coming is undergirded by the fact that this character stalwartly clings to the tenets of Christian morality, while the father takes recourse to a more vengeful mode that exemplifies the notion of 'an eye for an eye'.

As they pass through another abandoned town a few days later the father gets hit by an arrow (p. 281). The father shoots the man with the bow with the flaregun and tends to his wound with a first aid kit he salvaged from the boat (p. 285). The man with the bow represents a humanity which has returned to its origins in a hunter-gatherer existence as well as the cannibalistic logic of late capitalism which turns man into 'man's wolf' and other human beings into fair game. Later on, the father starts coughing blood (p. 292), which is a premonition of his imminent death. As the father perishes the point of view changes and the boy becomes the story's focalizer (p. 300). The telos of survival is passed on from the father to the son as well. However,

this telos remains compromised by the fact that the consumption of human flesh remains taboo. The son remains inside the constraints of the father's moral continuum. After the death of the father the boy stays for three days by the side of his father's body. On the third day “[s]omeone was coming” (p. 301). A man with a shotgun appears. The boy points the pistol at him and asks him if he and his people are cannibals. The man answers in the negative (p. 304), and the boy goes with him. The story's quest for an intersubjective grounding on which a better existence could be possible has been fulfilled in the boy's discovery of a society of humans who do not engage in the practice of cannibalism and thus transcends the commodifying logic of late capitalism. Although the characteristics of said society remain unspecified in the story, it is clear that its organization relies on intersubjectivity as opposed to the Social Darwinist rule of the survival of the fittest which governs the social apparatuses of the 'bloodcults'. The novel thus hints at the possibility of a better society even in the face of an all-consuming apocalypse and can therefore be categorized as a critical, postmodern dystopia in accordance with Moylan's definition of the term.

The story ends with the boy meeting the stranger's wife. She embraces him (p. 306) and through this gesture accepts her role as a substitute for the boy's lost mother. The “dead father's quest [thus] has been fulfilled, [...] the son will survive” (Cant, 279). The society which accepts him as a new member is characterized by human warmth as exemplified in the gesture of the hug. This culmination of the novel thus highlights the importance of human goodness and the latter's paramount importance in a postmodern condition where the humanist universals lack a foundationalist basis outside of discourse. The novel insists that moral remains valid even after the end of the metanarratives, even after the end of the world.

“By sparing the child's life, [...] McCarthy leaves the door ajar—if not fully open—for hope” (Broncano, 2). The persistence of hope in the face of an overwhelmingly gloomy world is the central motif of the novel. Broncano construes that *The Road* is an inverted version of the biblical story of Abraham, because the father, in the course of the story, contemplates several times killing the son to save him from the 'bad guys' who would rape and devour him. However, at the end of the story the father realizes that he would have been incapable of carrying through this task. In *The Road*, God does not demand of the father to sacrifice his son, but gave him the “job” (p. 77) to save him: “My job is to take care of you. I was appointed to do that by God” (p. 80). When the father is about to die he gives the boy up to the

world, he passes him the pistol with which he is supposed to defend himself or if need be to commit suicide with. The son asks the father “who will find the little boy?” (p. 300) and the father answers “[g]oodness will find the little boy. It always has. It will again” (p. 300). These are the last words the father speaks. At the end the father puts his trust in God or destiny to take care of his son, convinced of the benevolence of fate in spite of it all, and as Isaac was saved by the mercy of God in the bible, so the son is saved by a secular *deus ex machina* in the novel.

Cant rightfully speaks of “the evident allegorical nature of the text” (Cant, 272). Palmowski considers the text an allegory on the human condition and surmises that “general existentialist truths are dramatized in this novel” (Palmowski, 365). According to Broncano, “the meaningless debris of a world chastised by fire provides an apt setting for the father and son's allegorical quest for the post-apocalyptic—and post-postmodern—grail” (Broncano, 30). Conversely, it can be argued that the novel's post-apocalyptic setting reflects a very postmodern sensibility, i.e., the sense that we are at present already living on the other side of an apocalyptic event. Thus, paradoxically, although the novel can be read as a quest and therefore as highly teleologically structured, *The Road* nevertheless can be considered as belonging to the realm of postmodern fiction as categorized by Currie and Moylan. Furthermore, the ambiguity of the book's ending—it is left open what will become of the human race—can be interpreted as “the supreme paradox in a text full of paradoxes, and represents [...] the most controversial finale of any of McCarthy's works” (Broncano, 125). The novel creates a tension between the extremely contingent surface structure of the events in the story and a teleology of events which is bestowed retrospectively upon these events if one reads the story in the light of its ending as a biblical quest as some critics do. “*The Road* expresses the paradox that lies at the heart of all serious pessimistic literature: its literary passion defies the very emptiness that it proclaims” (italics in original; Cant, 280). Even the apocalypse will leave human beings still capable of kindness. “The depravity of the human race has reached its culmination in *The Road*, but it has not yet succeeded in defeating humanity's latent and primal instincts for good” (italics in original; Cooper, 158). According to Glover, “the novel insists that hope is not unrealistic” (Glover, 207). The boy has been saved by a *deus ex machina*. Josephs argues that McCarthy's employment of said story device is evidence for a religious reading of the novel: “Why drag out a deliberate and undisguised *deus ex machina* [...] if what you want to do is deny any sort of *deus*” (italics in original; Josephs, 140)? He goes on to argue that the character of the loving

mother introduced into the story in its last paragraphs shores up “the only remotely happy ending in all of McCarthy's work” (Ibid., 141). This is yet another feature which sets *The Road* apart from the rest of McCarthy's oeuvre. The fact that the most gloomy possible background for a story culminates in the most happy ending of McCarthy's whole body of work hints at the realization that McCarthy in the end is a pessimistic optimist like Vonnegut.

“The boy has [...] emerged as a messianic figure, unselfishly concerned with others in a wasted world” (Frye, 9). The son represents the future of humankind, a future which is completely left open at the end of the novel, but the finale gives rise to hope for the better. The father's quest, “undertaken in the certainty of his own impending death, is motivated by paternal love, a love that the son returns” (Cant, 271). The woman at the end tells the boy “that the breath of God was his breath yet though it pass from man to man through all of time” (p. 306). The woman encourages the boy to pray. But McCarthy's apocalypse is a secular one. The son chooses to pray to his dead father instead of God. The novel thus identifies (parental) love as the *sine qua non* of the human condition even in times of total devastation. The last words of the novel are neither the son's nor the father's but the author's: “all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery” (p. 307). The novel thus ends on a positive note: “McCarthy's hum is [...] daring us to hope in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, no matter the odds” (Glover, 208). The bleakness of the world of the novel harshly contrasts with the bucolic image evoked on the last two pages of the text (p. 306f). “Because McCarthy shifts the feel of the narration away from what we have been used to [so far] this moving passage can be read as the words and opinions of the author[, offering] a paean to a lost pre-disaster life” (Evenson, 59). The language in which the novel's final image is conveyed transcends the distinction between the narrative world and direct comment by the author. The novel ends “in a space where the separation between the world within the book, the narrative utterance that creates this world, and the author's commentary in the real world, is deliberately blurred” (ibid.). The last word of the novel is 'mystery'. This is no coincidence: “Much of Cormac McCarthy's work hums with mystery” (Josephs, 142). Josephs reads the ending's image of the trouts “as McCarthy's ultimate poetic commentary on his own creation, on his own version of what seems a kind of Christian existentialism” (Ibid.). The optimism that is endorsed by the story's ending gives credence to reading the novel as a religious allegory, although the world of the story is utterly devoid of any form of religious transcendence. Conversely, Josephs

argues that “the divine becomes immanent in the love between the father and the boy” (Ibid., 143). However, one could also argue that it is love itself which is source of transcendence and mystery in the novel without recurring to the presence of a Christian (or other) God. Josephs seems to at least partially concur with this view when he writes that in “the face of the unbearable bleakness and desolation and despair of the novel, that very mystery—the mystery of love incarnate, emanating from the boy—gives us an exemplar and it shines a ray of hope in all that cold and all that dark” (Ibid.). Furthermore, the novel's conclusion reminds the reader that all “things of grace and beauty [...] have a common provenance in pain” (p. 56). Only after the death of the father and after having lived through the agnostic purgatory of their journey on the road can the son proceed to partake in the happy ending that is so exceptional with regard to the rest of this particular author's work. Judging from the postmodern perspective this evocation of the redemptive power of suffering may seem outdated. However, it may be “cliché to believe in [it], but it redeems nonetheless” (Slade, 69).

7.9 RICHARD K. MORGAN: *THIRTEEN*

Richard K. Morgan's 2007 novel *Thirteen* is a biopunk-SF thriller. Note that the novel's UK version is titled *Black Man*. That the novel appeared under a different title in the US is probably due to the racial connotations its UK title harbors. Furthermore, in the UK and in Germany Morgan is written without the K., Richard Morgan. In an interview, the author claimed that he preferred his name to be written with the middle initial, since it constitutes “a venerable genre tradition”ⁱⁱⁱ (he gives the following list of SF writers with middle initials in their names: Ursula K. Le Guin, Philip K. Dick, Robert A. Heinlein, Peter F. Hamilton, Robert E. Howard, Vonda N. McIntyre, Maureen F. McHughⁱⁱⁱⁱ). He forgot Samuel R. Delany and Octavia E. Butler.

The story's protagonist is a genetically engineered variant of the human race, a purpose-bred sociopath named Carl Marsalis. He works as a bounty hunter for the United Nations Genetic Legislation Authority (UNGLA), hunting down other genetically engineered variant Thirteens like himself. His character is a variation of the Deckard character of *Blade Runner*. Another intertextual element in the text is the Mars colony, which Morgan basically borrowed from Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars trilogy as well as from *Blade Runner*. As a work of second-wave cyberpunk, the novel incorporates both the defining elements of cyberpunk fiction as well as elements of the space opera. However, these intertextual elements do not suffice to classify the novel as an

intertextual novel of Currie's second type of postmodern novels. The novel adheres perfectly to the conventions of the thriller genre and especially through its blatant apoliticism is congruent with most works of first-wave cyberpunk. The world as projected by the text bears the traits of both a utopian and a dystopian vision of the future. Therefore, the novel could also be classified as a postmodern dystopia.

Variant Thirteens are genetically modified humans who were purpose-bred as soldiers by the US and UK governments. As it is explained in the story, which takes place precisely 100 years in the future from the date of publication, in the year 2107, Westerners have become too civilized to serve as useful soldiers anymore. The story purports that Western males have become so 'feminized,' as a character in the story puts it, that there is a lack of human resources for the military. For this reason the variant Thirteens were bred. They served in many wars in the past of the story, but in the present of the story have become illegal. They are only allowed to live in reservations and on Mars. Carl Marsalis is an exception. He belongs to a tiny group of Thirteens who work as bounty hunters for the UNGLA. In the story, the US have broken up into three states: the Rim States confederation, which is basically California, the Confederate Republic, which is basically the Southern bible belt and the Midwest of the US, and the North Atlantic Union consisting of the East-Coast states. The Rim States and the Union have remained liberal Western societies, while the Confederate Republic has deteriorated into a fundamentalist Christian theocracy in which old-fashioned racism and gender oppression, which have been overcome by the other two states, still flourish.

Carl Marsalis is a black Briton. He encounters racism because of the color of his skin only in Jesusland, as the Confederate Republic is called by the novel's characters. At the beginning of the story Marsalis is locked up in a Jesusland jail for the crime of abetting an abortion, i.e., "fetal murder" (p. 111). Inside he is called 'nigger' constantly both by the black as well the white inmates. The black inmates in turn refer to the white inmates as 'bird shit'. Racism has survived in Jesusland as opposed to the other American states in the novel which have surmounted it and only discriminate against genetically-engineered people like Marsalis. In the Union, the Rim States, and the West in general, Marsalis is discriminated against for his genetic status as a variant Thirteen only. This is a utopian feature of the text. Traditional racism has been overcome in the West. Nevertheless, the discrimination directed against genetically-engineered human beings seems to have taken its place, which in turn is a dystopian feature of the text. The text suggests that there exists a

human need for an Other against which one's own community can be defined. In the story there are several references to pogroms against genetically-engineered human beings which have led to the Munich Accords which banished the Thirteens to reservations and the Mars colony. Naturally, the historical Munich Agreement of 1938 is evoked by this reference. The fact that the world's governments in the past of the novel have given in to the xenophobic pressure from the street, making the victims of xenophobic violence the scapegoats for the very violence directed at them, mirrors real-world politics, for example, the draconian toughening of the asylum policy in the FRG after a rash of pogrom-like violence against asylum seekers at the beginning of the 1990s, which constitutes a rather blatant real-world example of a Western jurisdiction blaming the victim of racist violence. Marsalis enforces said Accord for his European paymasters. His moral status is thus highly ambiguous. He attaches great importance to the fact that he works as a freelancer, however. In the past, Marsalis was interned on Mars as well, but he won the lottery and thus got the permission to travel back to earth. The fact that his job is to victimize his fellow Thirteens completely compromises his standing with regard to moral. Marsalis personifies the amoral tough-guy character typical of first-wave cyberpunk fiction.

The story starts with an image of physical dismemberment (p. 5), i.e., one of the touchstones of biopunk fiction. As becomes clear as the story progresses a variant Thirteen has fled Mars onboard a spaceship. The travel takes several months. Normally, the astronauts are cryo-frozen during the journey, but due to a glitch the renegade Thirteen, Allen Merrin, wakes up early during the voyage. To survive the travel he surgically removes the other crew members' limbs and eats them. To do this he unfreezes and refreezes the crew members after removing the non-vital parts of their bodies for food. According to Robin Wood, "cannibalism represents the ultimate in possessiveness, hence the logical end of human relations under capitalism" (Wood, 131). Christopher Sharrett in a similar vein points out that "cannibalism is [...] a proper metaphor for consumerism in capitalist society" (Sharrett, 308). The topos of anthropophagy serves the same purpose here as its invocations in *The Road* and *In the Country of Last Things*. After having 'harvested' all the non-vital body parts of his victims, Merrin goes on killing them all and eating the rest of their bodies. When the ship crashes into the ocean, Merrin has arranged the mutilated remains of his victims in a horrific manner to create a diversion for his escape. "The ripped-to-the-gums grin of a mutilated human head where it lay loosely attached to the limbless torso sprawled on the floor. [...] The flesh of both cheeks had been sheared off up to the cheekbone, where

stringy fragments of tissue still clung. The jaw was stripped. The eyes” gouged out (p. 51). The spacecraft belongs to the Western Nations Colony Initiative (COLIN). Therefore, two COLIN detectives take on the case. Merrin then starts assassinating people all over the three American states. Or at least the genetic trace materials found at the murder scenes suggest this. Therefore, the plot develops into a “serial-killer mystery [which is an] offshoot [...] of the classical detective story“ (Gomel (2011), 55), furthering the text's intertextuality. The story is a convoluted conspiracy thriller as well as a work of extrapolative SF. Its space travel topos, the nova of space ships and the existence of a human colony on Mars all further contribute to the novel's status of belonging to the genre of postcyberpunk. The novel's overall affirmative attitude towards technology and capitalism fit into this categorization of the text as well.

In the world of *Thirteen* “things are getting better. There's no fighting in the Middle East [...] no starving in Africa, no war with China” (p. 371). The fact that the problems in the Middle East and Africa appear to have been solved constitutes a utopian element in the text. However, this could also be read as an endorsement of the Extropy Myth. The economic system of Morgan's 2107 is very much neo-liberal capitalism. Therefore, the basic organizing principle of the world has failed to evolve in any way over the course of a whole century. The fact that at least a part of the problematic of distributive injustice seems to have unraveled of its own accord seems to suggest that Johan Norberg's prototypically neo-liberal 'homeopathic' approach of doing nothing and waiting for things to change by themselves will in the end be justified by history. However, there is still a “silent service underclass” (p. 69) of rightless migrant labor in existence. The problematic of distributive injustice is continuously hinted at throughout the story, but it is never directly addressed. In this regard, *Thirteen* seems to mirror classical cyberpunk's political conservatism. Furthermore, the problematic of environmental degradation is completely absent from the novel. The text thus tacitly endorses the neo-liberal world view in which there is no room for the problematic of environmental degradation. The novel completely eschews directly addressing the two postmodern problematics and thus endorses the Extropy Myth.

The variant Thirteens are “[m]onsters summoned up from the deep dark violent past to safeguard the bright lights and shopping privileges of Western civilization” (p. 392). Since there are no wars left to fight, they have become obsolete and are now perceived as a threat to public safety. Furthermore, they have become a target “for the hormonal hatred [of] the rest of

humanity" (p. 499). The fact that racism in a new genetic guise remains a problem in the society of the novel constitutes one of the dystopian elements of the text. As has already been pointed out above, the text suggests that there exists a basic human need for an Other against which community can be defined. Its other main dystopian features are the theocracy of the Confederate Republic and the fact that humankind's development over the course of one whole century has been incapable of transcending the trappings of neo-liberal capitalism. The text thus fits uneasily into Moylan's categorization. The world of the text is characterized by immense technological progress, featuring many of the nova that are typical of SF, while the organizing principle of the society projected by the text has remained unchanged. This static state of affairs can be considered as a dystopian element of the text which clashes with its utopian moments. The text thus can be read as a postmodern dystopia, although its rather blatant apoliticism renders this categorization problematic. The utopian impulse characteristic of the critical dystopia finds many expressions in the world as projected by the text, but its dystopian elements are countermanded by the story's homeopathic approach to the two postmodern problematics. The text's problematical political message is a reiteration of the nihilistic apoliticism of first-wave cyberpunk, while the world as projected by the text lacks many of the key elements of dystopian world building characteristic of cyberpunk SF. The text's rather positive attitude towards technological progress and its conciliatory view of late capitalism are congruent with the genre characteristics of postcyberpunk fiction.

In the world of the text, every human characteristic is explained via the science of genetics. The history of humankind is conceived as one big breeding project, translating pretty neatly into flat-out Social Darwinism. The story's main scientific novum, the breeding of genetic variants, is backed up by the pseudo-scientific discourse of Social Darwinism. This too is a conservative train of thought. The text never problematizes this approach to human history and thus tacitly endorses said view of human development. The novel's over-all affirmative attitude towards late capitalism, its affirmation of the homeopathic approach to the postmodern problematics, and its endorsement of the metanarrative of neo-liberal capitalism which maintains that the problems of the human race will unravel by themselves through the application of the free-market trinity and thus denies the necessity for change, all contribute to the text's nature of constituting a rather conservative vision of the future. Moreover, judging the text by Neuhaus's criterion of subversiveness, Morgan's *Thirteen* would have to be classified as trivial.

The text could be read as a postmodern dystopia for its blending of utopian and dystopian elements, however, its homeopathic approach to the two postmodern problematics negates any didactic message this text could express. According to Moylan, the didactic intent of the classical dystopia has been passed on to the postmodern dystopia. To characterize the text as a critical dystopia is thus rather problematic. Furthermore, the novel with its neat and tidy ending fulfills all the conventions of the thriller genre, which makes it problematic to see this work of fiction as a postmodern text. It could be read as a work of postmodern realism, since the world as projected by the text seems to be identical to the world at its date of publication with the notable exception that in the book the two postmodern problematics have resolved of their own accord. The novel can thus not be judged by recourse to Currie's categorization. *Thirteen* is an SF novel written in accordance with Tom Wolfe's concept of anti-postmodernist realism and as such a *contradictio in adjecto* which is the only postmodern feature this work of fiction endorses.

7.10 CHUCK PALAHNIUK: *RANT*

According to Sidney L. Sondergard, Chuck "Palahniuk's characters repeatedly experience physical and psychological misery of their own making, because they were conceived in misery" (Sondergard, 14). Thus, Palahniuk's fiction in general is an example of the redemptive power of suffering. In this novel the title character experiences pain of his own making on a regular basis through his practice of letting himself be bitten and stung by a wide variety of animals and insects to inoculate himself against boredom. The story thus thematizes the existential boredom of the postmodern consumer subject as did Ballard's *Kingdom Come*. Palahniuk has been compared to Ballard for the surrealist vignettes he creates out of the prototypically urban postmodern environments he renders in his novels. Furthermore, Cynthia Kuhn and Lance Rubin identify Palahniuk as the "Kurt Vonnegut for the twenty-first century" (Kuhn/Rubin, 5) and like Vonnegut in, for instance, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Palahniuk pursues the time-travel motif in *Rant*. *Rant* thus belongs to Booker and Thomas's second category of SF subgenres, i.e., the time-travel narrative (Booker/Thomas, 15ff). Like Vonnegut, Palahniuk is expert at rendering the more grotesque aspects of the contemporary (postmodern) condition of Western society as well:

Palahniuk's novels articulate what many of us feel instinctively, the deadening, regressive, and potentially dangerous symptoms of postmodern life that trap us into narrow subjectivities: extravagant commodity fetishism, excessive nostalgia,

stultifying effects of mass media, post-industrial corrosion of our cities, damaging sexual or narcotic addictions—and the inability of religious institutions to provide a spiritual antidote (Kuhn/Rubin, 3).

Palahniuk's 2007 novel *Rant* is no exception from this. After finishing his “horror trilogy,” consisting of *Lullaby* (2002), *Diary: A Novel* (2003), and *Haunted: A Novel of Stories* (2005) (Kuhn/Rubin, 4), Chuck Palahniuk, the notorious author of transgressive fiction, ventured to write an SF novel. *Rant* certainly “is a [SF] novel but one that uses the medium of oral biography to tell the story” (Mackendrick, 9). It is a work of extrapolative SF and also incorporates fantastic elements. First and foremost the story is a work of dystopian SF and another instance of the postmodern dystopia. It features exploitation, class antagonism, overpopulation, and an authoritarian government that oppresses the masses and other standard features of the dystopian novel in accordance with the list of stock topics of dystopian SF as given by Mohr. Furthermore, its metafictional organizing principle as well as many other features of this text makes it fall under the heading of the postmodern dystopia.

Rant was published in 2007. In an author's note preliminary to the text itself the author gives the intertextual reference points of the novel: Brendan Mullen's (oral) biography of Germs lead singer Darby Crash called *Lexicon Devil* (2002), Jean Stein's (oral) biography of Edie Sedgwick, *Edie: American Girl* (1982), and George Plimpton's (oral) biography of Truman Capote *Truman Capote: In Which Various Friends, Enemies, Acquaintances, and Detractors Recall His Turbulent Career* (1997). The author's note continues: “This book is written in the style of an oral history, a form which requires interviewing a wide variety of witnesses and compiling their testimony”. *Rant* is a fictitious oral history of the book's title character called Buster 'Rant' Casey. It very much is an intertextual novel. “A central strategy [of] Palahniuk [...] is to encode his novels with signifiers that connote difference, alienation, and resistance at the level of narrative structure itself” (Sondergard, 17). This time he uses a narrative formula which is probably the most non-fictional form of writing there is to tell a story which not only takes place in an unspecified near future but also incorporates jarring fantastical elements. The novel is composed as if real interviewees were interviewed about the life of the title character. The *Verfremdungseffekt* thus effected is considerable and influences the reception of the story by the reader. The reader has to piece the narrative together him/herself from the information given by the fictitious interviewees. The conventions of the oral biography for a reader

who has come upon them before denote a high level of factuality of the story being told. The oral biography as such is more akin to journalism than to fiction writing. However, once the reader has agreed to the willing suspension of disbelief necessary to follow the story's action, the oral biography form serves to heighten the mimetic effect of the narrative. According to Fludernik, pseudo-oral narration usually aims to create a mimetic effect. The various different fictional interviewees (altogether 56 different characters) are all equipped with their own idiolects and back stories. The novel even features a list of 'contributors' at its end in which, as a form of epilogue, in one line for each character, states the characters' imminent future after the end of the story. As one interviewee puts it: "How weird is that? Instead of a biography, this story will become fiction. A factual historical artifact documenting a past that never happened [...] another obsolete truth" (p. 313). The latter quote quite aptly summarizes *Rant's* complicated relationship to the real world. The text is distinguished by "a destabilized sense of genre (which simultaneously validates the transformative power of the narrative, for its effects of time alteration are actually achieved)" (Sondergard, 13), or more precisely, the narrative carries within itself the germs of its own undoing: If the story the novel tells were true, all the events recounted in it would become fiction again because the story's characters would have changed reality via their power of time travel, so that the events in the novel would not have come to pass. Nevertheless, the interviewees' speech is highly mimetic even up to the point where there are contradictions between the different accounts of the same proceedings which are inevitable as in real oral biographies. MacKendrick speaks of *Rant's* "gritty realism [which] makes its magical qualities palpable or compelling for the reader" (MacKendrick, 12). The oral-history form contributes to the story's *effet de réel*. "The simplifications and exaggerations of the linguistic features of orality [...] serve the purpose of facilitating identification" (Fludernik (2009), 66). Every interviewee displays the idiosyncrasies of spoken speech. The narrative progresses as the interviewees tell the story of Buster 'Rant' Casey. The text mimics "conversational storytelling [...] in which the conversation develops into a series of narratives" (Fludernik (2009), 64). All of the interviewees also tell their own stories at the same time as they tell the one of the main character. Every fictional interviewee engages in the process of self-characterization. The title character is the only one who never has his say in the book, and is thus purely characterized by the other interviewees. Buster Rant Casey's life story is represented from the point of view of various friends, detractors, acquaintances, and relatives of his. The picture that is thus drawn of the

story's title character is contradictory and multifaceted. Palahniuk's recourse to the conventions of a non-fiction genre paradoxically serves to heighten the text's referential illusion. The text can therefore also be considered as an example of postmodern realism.

The fictitious interviewees resemble pseudo-oral narrators, insofar as the latter "are often garrulous, repetitive, contradictory and illogical" as well (Fludernik (2009), 65). There are conflicting storylines with regard of the main character. Some of the interviewees deem him a murderer (p. 56), others a compassionate prankster. As "all of Palahniuk's works [*Rant* is a] love stor[y], [al]though [...] the romantic fantasies nurtured in the Hollywood cinema and disseminated throughout the American imaginary as normative forces [...] are decidedly absent" (Slade, 66f) from the story. *Rant*'s love story takes place between the title character and Echo Lawrence, the only character except Rant himself who is exempted from the list of contributors in the epilogue. Furthermore, the story revolves around the love Rant feels for his mother. Thus, at the end of the story he travels through time on a quest to rescue her from getting raped. These two women constitute the story's romantic interest. As the story progresses it becomes clear that Rant traveled back in time and after being unable to keep his mother from being raped by another incarnation of himself he marries her to help her bring up himself as a child. In general, Palahniuk's "plots are all composed of contingent crises, detailing personal alienation and suffering that threatens to spiral into self-destruction and possibly even into wide-scale violence" (Sondergard, 13). *Rant* is no exception from this rule. The contingency of the events within the story is highlighted by the title character's incapability to decisively influence his mother's predicament. Even endowed with the power of time travel the characters of this novel are incapable to change events in a expedient way. The only characters who come to decisively alter the course of history do so in a negative way to ameliorate their own status and to serve highly egoistic aims. The title character's attempt to change history for the better is thwarted by the events in the world of the novel. The story thus highlights the absence of teleology in real-world events and invalidates an approach to history which relies on the modernist metanarrative of the inevitable progress of human society towards some Hegelian utilitarian goal. However, the protagonist's persistent attempts to influence history towards a more positive development epitomizes the necessity of pro-active behavior on the part of the postmodern subject in the real world.

Rape is not the only example of violence in the novel. The book suggests that

a string of unnatural deaths that occur in Rant's family were either caused by him or by Green Taylor Simms, who constitutes an alternate Rant, i.e., an incarnation of Rant in another time line. Green Taylor Simms, Chester Casey, and Buster 'Rant' Casey are three incarnations of the same character in three different timelines. The story thus represents the concept of 'the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous' in its character(s); "what Ernst Bloch called the [...] 'synchronicity of the nonsynchronous' (*Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen*): the coexistence of realities from radically different moments of history" (Jameson (1991), 307) is to be taken literally in *Rant*. Yet, Jameson argues that this phenomenon has disappeared with the advent of the postmodern: "Ours is a more homogeneously modernized condition; we no longer are encumbered with the embarrassment of non-simultaneities and non-synchronicities. [...] Everything has reached the same hour on the great clock of development or rationalization" (Ibid., 309f). Žižek, in contrast, among others declares that the *Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen* persists under and is even characteristic of postmodernity. It can be persuasively argued that the phenomenon of the synchronicity of the nonsynchronous has intensified under postmodernity. In this regard, in other words, "postmodernism is more modern than modernism itself" (Ibid., 310) in that it combines the pre-modern, the modern, and the postmodern in an eclectic *mêlée* without precedent. Žižek accordingly points out that the modern and the pre-modern are an integral part of the postmodern global constellation. The novel exemplifies this notion through its employment of various different contradictory timelines which subvert the teleological modernist approach to historical time and undermine the very idea of a linear goal-oriented progression of historical time.

Drawing upon Guy Debord's term of the 'spectacle'—which denotes a phase of capitalist development in which the relationship between commodities supersedes the relations between persons and under which citizens have been turned into spectators by an almost all-powerful media industry—Rubin describes "the spectacular control of time [which aims] to control historical perception, resulting in an historical amnesia" (Rubin (2009), 139) as characteristic of the postmodern condition. The latter state of affairs results from the market place's domination over the realm of culture and all other facets of human existence. The postmodern subject per definition is severed from historical time. As Jameson remarks, the postmodern subject inhabits the synchronic, not the diachronic. According to the latter, the loss of historicity is one of the distinctive features of the postmodern condition. Palahniuk's novel foregrounds the postmodern subject's status of being deprived of an

understanding of history as malleable to human intervention and thus of being denied the capacity to influence the course of history. The novel emphasizes this loss of agency and depicts it as characteristic of the postmodern condition. "The spectacle aspires [...] to foster a collective amnesia so as to reinforce the seemingly natural, inevitable workings of the status quo" (Ibid.). The abovementioned disconnection from historical agency is used by the apologists of the current socio-economic order as an argument for the supposedly ineluctable nature of the status quo which is thus defined as an inescapable, and thus as ahistoric, i.e., as impervious to change, constellation and as the teleological goal of the past development of human society. Palahniuk's text problematizes said approach to history which found its prototypical expression in Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis. Although the story's title character is unable to avert the pernicious fate of his mother, he nevertheless assumes a proactive stand towards historical time. The text thus expresses a utopian potential inherent to the contemporary human condition to take influence on the phenomenal world and thus to transcend the spectatorial ethos hoisted upon the contemporary citizen of the West by a seemingly all-powerful culture industry. Furthermore, this expression of the utopian impulse in a dystopian conception of a plausible future society makes the text fit rather aptly into Moylan's category of the critical dystopia.

Rant is very much about time. To begin with it is a time-travel narrative, which is one of the reasons why it belongs to the SF genre. The meaningful usage of time is one of the novel's central motifs. "Time spent commuting to and from work, or creating and consuming commodities, becomes commodified itself. Time becomes packaged and sold [...] in the logic of market-dominated spectacle" (Rubin (2009), 138). The notion of a commodification of time itself emphasizes late capitalism's supreme rule over all aspects of human life. "The spectacle divests time of its qualitative attributes and converts into quantitative, exchangeable segments, abstracting it, rendering it newly fit for consumption" (Ibid., 138f). The late-capitalist society of the spectacle has commodified time and the characters of the novel are depicted as taking part in a continual struggle to reinvest their time with sense and meaning, through sexual contact, through willfully causing automobile accidents, and by subjecting their bodies to mutilation and violence. This recourse to extreme physical means, i.e., to transgressive practices, which focus on the physical body as a medium of the possible transcendence of the commodified nature of time under the reign of the culture industry, foregrounds the necessity of pro-active behavior on the part of the postmodern subject in order to overcome the commodified nature of

time that is characteristic of the postmodern condition. The story's focus on human corporeality as a medium of resistance to the trappings of the culture industry takes part of the notion of postmodern theory that foregrounds the physical, material embodiment of subjectivity in the human body and its subversive potential. The story's emphasis on physical embodiment also serves to countermand the poststructuralist fallacy of regarding human subjectivity as being solely a discursive construct. In Palahniuk's novel the human body again becomes the locus of resistance against the late-capitalist status quo.

The story starts with Rant's childhood, when many of his older relatives die under suspicious circumstances. The story hints that Rant has something to do with the deaths, but it is not revealed in the story what 'really' happened. This ambiguity, and there will be more examples of contradicting storylines as the narrative progresses, is a distinctly postmodern feature. The story refuses a neat and tidy conclusion as opposed to Morgan's *Thirteen* and Wolfe's anti-postmodern variety of contemporary realism. Its ultimate rejection of closure makes it fit in pretty neatly in the postmodern canon. Leypoldt's criteria for classifying a work of fiction as postmodern are thus met by Palahniuk's novel. Furthermore, the very concept of the book denies teleology. The digressing storylines which are represented in the direct speech of fictional characters are ordered so that the narrative displays a recognizable temporal progression, but the oral biography format counteracts this structuring as the fictional interviewees pursue their various garrulous idiosyncrasies. The story leaves it completely up to the reader to come up with a comprehensive interpretation of the text which can endow the narrative with sense and meaning in accordance with the events of the story as depicted in the text. The different contradictory versions describing the events from the perspective of a variety of individual subject positions force the reader to make his/her own decisions about which storyline and which interviewee's version of events to believe and to fashion a coherent narrative out of the material provided by the different interviewees her/himself. The story's open ending furthermore contributes to and exemplifies its overall denial of teleology. The novel's generic hybridity and pronounced intertextuality as well as the metafictional irony that is the fulcrum of this work of fiction's approach to storytelling contribute to form a uniquely postmodern artifact of astounding complexity. The story's postmodern version of a *Bildungsroman* is distorted via the prism of the *Verfremdungseffekt* generated by its unconventional mode of narration. The cognitive estrangement that Darko Suvin identifies as symptomatic of the SF genre, in this novel, is enhanced by the

effects of the text's narrative organizing principle. Palahniuk's novel, like Vonnegut's *Hocus Pocus* and Gibson's *Pattern Recognition*, defies all attempts of an easy generic classification. The text constitutes a *Bildungsroman* insofar as the coming of age of its title character is described. It furthermore is a work of extrapolative soft SF in the guise of an oral biography, a work of postmodern realism and a postmodern dystopia. It thus falls under Currie's second type of postmodern novels, it constitutes a genre-bending intertextual novel.

Rant's content is a mixture of fantasy and SF. The book deals with journeys through time, which is one of the *novae* Roberts deems characteristic of SF. However, the time travel itself in the story is not made via a scientific device, but by magic. The story's main *novum* is that people who are involved in a car crash while meditating can travel back in time by virtue of their brain activity during the impact. This feature of the story very much begs for the willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the reader. The magic time travel topos fits better into the category of magic realism than under the heading of SF. Nevertheless, the brain activity explanation for the purported time travels of the novel's characters at least hints at a scientific explication and thus does not transcend the realm of SF. One of the characters of the novel sums up the text's version of time travel as follows: "You burn out your brain with rabies. Go all theta-trance-y with driving. You hit something and wake up naked in history" (p. 309). Rant's reincarnation Green Taylor Simms explains that the "theta level of brain activity [is of] special interest [...] It's at this frequency that mystics report that visions and inspiration are most likely to occur. In those relaxed moments, while [...] driving [...] as you lapse into theta brain waves, you [...] make connections and achieve revelations" (p. 308). The pseudo-scientific explanation for time travel suggested by the novel is that while one's brain activity is at said theta level time travel becomes possible. The novel features a few other *novae* which are typical for SF as well. First of all, there is the title character's superhuman sense of smell and taste, which gives the story an SF-superhero spin. "Rant Casey had a dog's sense of smell. A human bloodhound, he could track anything" (p. 25). Then there is the dystopian near-future society described in the text. The population is divided into Nighttimers and Daytimers. Since there are too many people for the traffic system to work any longer in this near future, the government has divided the populace into two groups. The one group lives, works, and drives during the day and the other during the night. The "Infrastructure Effective and Efficient Use Act—the I-SEE-U Act" (p. 172) was passed "to make the system carry more vehicles" (p. 172). This law is an extrapolation of current

events. Ever greater numbers of automobiles clog the streets. At some point in the future, the number of cars might very well surpass the carrying capacity of the existing traffic structure. Thus, the “infrastructural supports [in *Rant*] are [...] determining, rather than instrumental” (Latham (2002), 145), a state of affairs Latham deems typical of the postmodern era. In *Rant*, “urban planning [i]s reifying social relations, fostering alienation, and reinforcing class separation” (Rubin (2009), 137). As is the case with Morgan's *Market Forces*, in *Rant* class difference has been solidified into physical separation. “The I-SEE-U Act highlights [...] how the spaces of everyday life become hierarchically fixed as citizens' behavior and actions became conditioned” (Ibid., 138). The world of *Rant* is divided into a two-tier society, supposedly not for social reasons, but to make room on the freeway. Nighttimers are prohibited by a curfew from going out during daytime. The Nighttimers are discriminated against and oppressed, while the Daytimers represent the future version of the moral majority. The Daytimers see themselves as the “decent, productive members of [...] society” (p. 222), while the Nighttimers represent late capitalism's dispossessed. Class thus plays a pivotal role in *Rant*. Nighttimers are those who do the low-paid menial work. It is the children of the poor and disenfranchised who are forced to live their lives at night.

You study any pretty democracy, from the ancient Greeks forward, and you'll see that the only way each system functions is with a working class of slaves. Peons to haul the garbage so that the upper crust can campaign and vote. Nighttimers had become that—an effective and efficient method to sweep the slave class out of sight (p. 194).

The notion of overpopulation is thus addressed as well as the problematic of distributive injustice because the Nighttimers represent the disenfranchised Other of the (neo-)conservative 'decent' citizens in the text. The text thus explicitly addresses the postmodern problematic of distributive injustice. The world as projected by the text reminds one of Morgan's *Market Forces*. Both texts place an overriding importance on the traffic sphere. However, while in *Market Forces* it is the rich who use the street as a stage for gladiatorial contests against each other, in *Rant* it is the have-nots who use the streets for a different version of a vehicular competition. The main novum of Palahniuk's novel is the existence of the cult of Party Crashing. In *Rant*, the objective of this game isn't to kill one's opponent but to damage the opponent's car. While the competition in Morgan's novel constitutes an exemplification of neo-liberalism's dog-eat-dog mentality, Palahniuk's novel describes the sport of Party Crashing as a means of the poor to reinvest their time with sense and

meaning and thus to resist the commodification of time as heralded by the society in which the participants live as the oppressed peons of a wayward late-capitalist state. Palahniuk's characters fight their existential boredom via 'Party Crashing,' which constitutes a secret demolition derby that takes place on city streets at night. The game is organized by persons unknown and is set during a designated window of time. The object of the game is to crash into other players who display a certain 'flag'. The participants recognize each other by dressing their cars with tin-can tails and 'Just Married' tooth paste graffiti, or with 'forgotten' coffee mugs bolted to their car roofs, or a Christmas tree tied to the roof. Party Crashers look for these designated markings, or flags, to hunt and crash into each other. The motivation behind engaging in this activity differs from interviewee to interviewee, but the overriding driving force behind 'Party Crashing' is the urge to reinvest one's time with meaning, to fight the hyperreal boredom of the spectacle, and to achieve some form of social bonding. After having left his hometown of Middleton for an unnamed urban center Rant joins the cult of Party Crashing. Most of the interviewees from the city are also members of said cult. Party Crashing in the world of the novel performs an emancipatory effect which reinstates its participants as active human subjects and equips them with the means of resisting the commodifying logic of the late capitalism. As in *Pattern Recognition*, it is intersubjective contact which helps the novel's characters resist the commodifying logic of the culture industry. However, while in Gibson's novel, late capitalism has managed to penetrate even the realm of intersubjectivity, in Palahniuk's novel intersubjective social contact retains an emancipatory potential. Via Party Crashing the Nighttimers in the world of the novel manage to overcome the isolation inherent to their role of passive consumers within the culture industry. The novel thus emphasizes the utopian potential of intersubjective interaction and thereby leaves open a space for hope for a better society which makes this work of dystopian SF an example of Moylan's critical dystopia genre.

Among the Nighttimer population the rabies epidemic which was caused by Rant has resulted in the appearance of the Droolers, people infected by the rabies epidemic who in the delusional state of the disease begin to behave like the zombies in a George Romero movie (p. 220). The Droolers are shot on sight by the police and Daytimer vigilante squads (p. 221). The nation-wide rabies epidemic responsible for the zombiefication of a large swath of the Nighttimer population has been caused by Buster 'Rant' Casey, who, it turns out, is a superspreader of the rabies virus. The authorities and the Daytimer community do everything in their power to contain the rabies epidemic to

the Nighttimer community. As was pointed out above, the Droolers clearly constitute a reference to the Zombie film genre. These 'zombified' human beings represent the late-capitalist consumer as formed by late capitalism's "rationalized machinery of boredom, conformity, and commodification" (Rubin (2009), 136). Furthermore, the Droolers also represent postmodernity's rejects, they are the useless surplus population, the marginalized one third of society that is excluded from the society of the spectacle, and which have returned like the Freudian repressed to haunt the upper strata of society. They have come back from the dead to haunt the affluent part of the population. Since the zombification is confined to the Nighttimer population, the Daytimers' reaction to the Droolers consists of unbridled class oppression. Vigilantes and the police kill any Nighttimer caught after curfew in order to keep the epidemic from spreading to the Daytimer population. The Droolers are hungry for human flesh. They attack and bite off limbs when they get the chance and, as has been pointed out above, cannibalism is an obvious metaphor for late-capitalist consumerism. The fact that they, as Nighttimers, have been excluded from the consumerist society of the spectacle is the reason for their anthropophagy. The pent up, repressed unsatisfied consumer desire comes to the surface in the most extreme possible form. The repressed hunger of the lower strata, their craving to take part in postmodern consumerism, resurfaces in the novel in the practice of cannibalism.

The dystopian two-tier society in *Rant* is clearly an SF novum as is the fact that in the book the film industry has been replaced by 'boosting peaks,' or 'neural transcripts'. Every citizen has a port in the back of the neck with which they can connect to machines which record the sensory stimuli of the person in question. These recorded experiences are then sold as peaks. The film industry has switched to producing commercial peaks instead of movies (p. 118). Boosting peaks has replaced all other forms of entertainment, as people use it as a substitute for real experiences. A "'boosted peak,' is [...] the file record of somebody's neural transcript, a copy of all the sensory stimuli some witness collected" while experiencing something (p. 114). The effect of the peak thus depends on the experiencing person's state of mind during the 'outcording' process, and so they can modify it by filtering the neural transcript through different witnesses, "that's what the primary participant is called: the witness" (p. 114), for instance, a baby for the tactile track, a blind person for the audio track, a starving African for the taste track, a dog for the olfactory track. The creation of peaks has become an art form and an industry in the world of *Rant*. By this technology people can have virtual experiences

which they cannot have in real life, and their virtual lives tend to outweigh their real ones. Boosting peaks in the novel perpetuates a commodified system while seductively insulating individuals from involvement and interaction. The consumer of boosted peaks stays at home alone and experiences the recycled second-hand lives of other people. 'Boosting peaks' in the novel is a stand-in for the Internet and the postmodern medium *par excellence*: television; it represents the cutting edge technological gimmick with which the culture industry pacifies the masses, engendering "a boredom more effective than the threat of violence in keeping the populace passive; lulling citizens into consuming ever more entertainment and prefabricated happiness" (Ibid., 132f). Capitalism in the novel has adapted to the new boosting technology: "the corporate world [...] broadcast peaks or effects that enter the port even when it's unplugged" (p. 147). In this way, the corporations engender a craving for their product directly in the mind of the person in question. This constitutes a potentiation of the power of real-world advertising. In the world of *Rant*, the mind has quite literally become commodified, a notion which corresponds to Jameson's notion that under late capitalism even the human psyche has become commodified. Commercial transcripts also feature product placement as did the Hollywood feature films of a now bygone age. The fact that every human being in the world as projected by the text has been equipped with a port potentiates the power of advertising in the world as projected by the text. Furthermore, the practice of boosting peaks intensifies the isolation of the postmodern consumer. The power of the culture industry to pacify the consumer and to render her/him a passive recipient of cultural artifacts which were designed to act as a substitute for actually real experience has been intensified by technological innovation in the world of the text. The text erects a dichotomy between the passive consumer of boosted peaks who leads an alienated life of postmodern existential boredom and the active participant of Party Crashing who like Rant in many cases is no longer capable of consuming peaks due to an infection with the rabies virus spawned by the title character. The text thus exemplifies the craving for real, authentic experience that Gregson identifies as characteristic for the postmodern mindset. A person who has become infected with Rant-type rabies can no longer boost peaks. Rant contracted the rabies virus in the course of his childhood practice of letting himself be bitten by all kinds of animals and insects. Therefore, Rant himself was never able to boost peaks (p. 146) and thus lived a life completely his own. Rant was never able to use his port, which is why his life has always been authentic. The search for authentic experience in the

hyperreality of the ubiquitous simulacrum is a central motif of the story. Rant lets himself get bitten and stung by all kinds of animals and poisonous insects in order to 'vaccinate' himself against boredom. Furthermore, the pain and the poisoning he experiences thus are authentic as opposed to “a [postmodern] world where the difference between the fake and genuine has ceased to function” (Slade, 62). The postmodern craving for authenticity is Rant's motivation for moving to the city and for joining 'Party Crashing'. “Rant Casey wasn't evil. He was more like, he was trying to find something real in the world. Kids grow up connected to nothing these days, plugged in and living lives boosted to them from other people. Hand-me-down adventures” (p. 60f). This corresponds to the fact that the generations who grew up after the advent of color TV statistically tend to spend the better part of their free time watching TV. According to Comor,

television watching [is taking] up increasing amounts of free time. In 1970, the television set was on for an average of 32.5 hours each week in U.S. households. In 1980, this figure rose to 46.5 hours. In 1995, the television set was on for 50 hours a week. [Thus,] time spent watching TV has increased more than any other free time activity (Comor, 178).

Boosting peaks in the story is a stand-in for very real real-world phenomena: “What bothered Rant was the fake, bullshit nature of everything” (p. 61). Therefore, he prefers real poison-induced erections, animal bites, and oral sex to second-hand entertainment. Rant is on a quest for real, authentic experiences and he thus personifies the postmodern craving for the real. One of the story's interviewees, Shot Dunnyun, is a designer of peaks. He got kicked out of transcript school because his approach was too “artsy” (p. 114). He works in a store which rents out transcripts, i.e., peaks produced for commercial usage. “All these fat, middle-aged dumbshits just want something to kill time. Nothing dark and edgy or challenging. Nothing artsy” (p. 114). One could read the latter statement as metafictional commentary by Palahniuk, commenting on the book market at the date of publication in 2007, because that is what he does, writing dark, edgy, and challenging prose.

Ultimately [...] Palahniuk's novels articulate the importance of developing meaningful communities, fighting boredom with imagination, and trying to lead an authentic life by pushing back against the spectacle, something increasingly vital as the political and cultural environment become more tyrannical (Rubin (2009), 140).

Rant constitutes a further elaboration of this project of its author.

Buster 'Rant' Casey was born in the fictitious small town of Middleton situated in a non-specified rural area. “Buster acquires the nickname 'Rant'

from a childhood prank involving animal organs which results in numerous people getting sick. As the victims throw up, they make a sound resembling the word 'rant,' which becomes [...] Buster's nickname"^{liv}. Said childhood prank again involves the story's overriding quest for authenticity. As a child Rant plays several practical jokes on the people in his village. He finds a way of earning massive amounts of money and develops his habit of getting bitten by all kinds of insects and animals on purpose so he can skip school. "After his first bite from a black widow spider, Rant discovers that toxic spider bites cause him to get an erection. This may very well be an ironic reference to Marvel Comics' Spider-Man. Rant uses this effect to get out of school and eventually threatens his way to an early diploma and a rather large check that he uses to leave town"^{lv}. "Rant [...] took with him a check for ten thousand dollars and a certificate saying he's graduated early" (p. 103). Rant moves to an unnamed city and becomes a Nighttimer. He then, via a completely random encounter, hooks up with a team of 'Party Crashers' whose members all are interviewees for the book (p. 123). As the story develops, it becomes clear that Chester Casey, Rant's father is not his "for-real pa" (p. 111). In truth, Chester Casey is Rant Casey who traveled back in time (p. 235) to save his mother from getting raped by an unknown assailant, hinted at in the story to be Green Taylor Simms, who is Rant's real father (p. 111) and his grandfather, his great-grandfather and his great-great-grandfather (p. 238), and a reincarnation of Rant in another timeline as well. And because Rant and Green Taylor Simms are the same person, two incarnations of the same person in two diverging time lines (p. 260), Rant is invested with the special powers he got (p. 257). Furthermore, he is immortal for this reason, which is shown in the story by his surviving a bite of a black widow spider (p. 44), the same kind of spider that killed his grandmother (p. 20).

The people who travel in time are called Historians (p. 263). These Historians travel back in time to kill or rape their ancestors and thus become unstuck in time and immortal. Since, if you are your own father, you are the reason for your own existence, and hence become immortal. The other choice for the time traveler who seeks to become a creature of a higher order than the average human being is to kill her/his parents before he was conceived. Female time travelers obviously are limited to the latter practice. When "the time traveler eliminates his physical origins, [he] transform[s] himself into a being without physical beginning and therefore without end. Stated simply: a god" (p. 266). The time travel theme is an SF topos, but the way it is realized in the story is rather unscientific. The story purports that you travel in time when you are in a vehicle collision, or some other kind of accident involving a

head-on collision of your car at high speed, if you are in a certain stage of brain activity, i.e., the theta trance level, in the moment of the crash. The argument is that time is subjective, that when one is in an automobile accident time “jells or freezes” (p. 213). Green Taylor Simms identifies such an experience of time as “Liminal Time [which] represents a moment in which time stops passing. The actual definition is a moment 'outside of time'” (p. 213). Thus when in a car accident, one steps outside of time. “In Liminal Time, time stops. A person is beyond time” (p. 213) and can thus travel through it. Therefore, 'Party Crashing' is the favorite pastime of Historian Green Taylor Simms (p. 258). It turns out later in the book that Simms is the person who organizes 'Party Crashing,' the person who sets the time windows and determines the 'flag,' the person who decides to bar you from taking part, when too many fouls have been called upon you (p. 307). Rant first encounters Simms, one of his two alter egos, during his first Party Crashing event shortly after his initial arrival in the unnamed city in which the principal part of the story takes place. After having moved to the city Rant converts to Nighttimer status and starts to work as an exterminator. He smuggles the poisonous insects he is supposed to kill home inside his lunchbox (p. 145). Fellow Party Crasher Echo Lawrence becomes Rant's girlfriend (p. 160). Rant uses up the massive fortune he accrued as a child to buy Echo a string of cars she all totals during Party Crashing. Then Rant apparently commits suicide during a Party Crashing event, after a highly publicized pursuit by the police, driving his car off a bridge. When the police open the wreck, however, his body is missing, although the doors of the car are locked and the windows closed and intact (p. 229). A short time after Rant's disappearance Green Taylor Simms chooses to crash his car as well (p. 309) and disappears too.

The book features two contradicting lines of explanation for the events that transpire. Either the time travel theme is real and the reason for the occurrences in the story, or Green Taylor Simms is a demented mythomaniac and all the people who went missing after they had crashed their cars are simply dead. The novel does not resolve said contradiction, although the time travel explanation is clearly privileged by the text. As far as sideswipes at late capitalism are concerned the following lines from *Rant* remind one of Žižek's quip that under late capitalism today 'Evil' is our daily practice: “How's an intelligent person supposed to react when he discovers that he is merely the product of a corrupt and evil system? How do you continue to live after you learn that [...] you [...] will only perpetuate some evil system” (p. 303)? The Extropy Myth is deconstructed in the narrative by the two-tier society represented in the text. Palahniuk has designed a near future in which the

simple fact that the world's population continues to grow has led the government to divide the populace into two castes in order for the traffic system to remain functional. Class thus is of paramount importance in the text. Rant's world reflects "a postmodern world where the Orwellian power of the mass media and the crushing weight of the past make [authentic experience] all but impossible" (Kuhn/Rubin, 1). The text extrapolates a facet of the current situation and projects it into the future according to likelihood and necessity. It is thus an example of extrapolative dystopian SF. However, the fact that the subculture of 'Party Crashing' is so popular among Nighttimers hints at the existence of a utopian longing on the part of the participants. The text thus imagines a dystopian near future in which hope for a better future persists.

7.11 GARY SHTEYNGART: *SUPER SAD TRUE LOVE STORY*

Gary Shteyngart's novel *Super Sad True Love Story* from 2010 is an example of Currie's second type of postmodern novels. It is a genre-bending intertextual novel. The story constitutes an amalgamation of the romantic novel, the epistolary novel, of extrapolative soft SF, and of the postmodern dystopia. Shteyngart's novel defies an easy generic categorization. However, its metafictional organizing principle, its abandonment of the classical dystopian plot structure, and its moral ambiguity first and foremost make the text yet another example of the postmodern dystopia. The novel purports to consist of diary entries by its first-person narrator, Lenny Abramov, and email transcriptions of the story's romantic-interest character, Eunice Park. The epistolary form is commonly used to add a higher degree of realism to the story, but this effect is effectively counteracted by the novel's futuristic dystopian setting. The story starts June 1 (p. 3) of an unspecified year in the near future. It begins with a diary entry of Lenny's. From the beginning it alternates between Lenny's diary and Eunice's email correspondence. It ends November 10 of the same year (p. 304). The narrative's time frame thus roughly spans six months. The story ends with an epilogue which takes place an unspecified amount of decades after the events that transpire in the story itself. The love story begins on the first page and continues to dominate the whole text. The story's dystopian narrative at first merely provides a backdrop to the romantic action. However, the dystopian components of the back story at one point come to dominate the love story.

Lenny Abramov is the story's protagonist and its first-person narrator. He is 39 years old and works in the creative economy for a corporation which

promises its customers to prolong their life spans. He is a “Life Lovers Coordinator (Grade G) of the Post-Human Services division of the Staatling-Wapachung Corporation” (p. 5), while Eunice is unemployed and lives on her parents' fortune. Lenny is the son of two Soviet-Russian immigrants who belong to the working class. He himself is upper middle class and so is his romantic interest Eunice Park, who is the daughter of two immigrants from Korea who have fared better in the US than Lenny's parents. Eunice is 24 years old.

The population of the novel's world is divided into “High Net Worth Individual[s]” (p. 5), the prospective customers of Lenny's life extension firm, and Low Net Worth Individual, LNWI, who constitute the lower orders of society and by far the better part of the population. Shteyngart's future US society is another example of a two-tier society in which large swaths of the populace are cut off from the joys of consumer capitalism which constitute the *raison d'être* of the novel's two principal characters. However, while Eunice actively embraces the consumerism characteristic of the life of the upper class in the story, Lenny is primarily interested in fulfilling his love to the much younger Eunice. Lenny displays interest in partaking of the life prolongation technology his employer corporation peddles to the superrich, but otherwise he is rather uninterested in the joys of conspicuous consumption. Lenny is further set apart from his fellow members of the upper class in that he is interested in reading books, which in the world of the novel makes him an outcast, since the world as projected by the text is a postliterate one. The only form of the production of written texts that has survived is the practice of writing emails and posting on the Internet. Abromov thus displays an unusual receptivity in the context of the text which constitutes a typical trait for the protagonist of a dystopian text.

Lenny and Eunice at the beginning of the story meet in Rome, have drunken sex, and Lenny falls head-over-heels in love with her. From this point onwards the story depends on the tension between Lenny and Eunice's renderings of their relationship to maintain its suspense. Lenny is in search of “someplace safe and warm [...] to while away the angry seasons and the holocausts” (p. 5) while Eunice is searching for a meaningful existence and struggles to define her own personality and to come to terms with her family background. However, Eunice's main concern is shopping. She is very materialistic. Her attitude towards shopping is almost of a religious nature. To her shopping is the most meaningful activity there is. She thus reflects the apathetic consumer who is characterized by political apathy and a preternatural desire for the commodities advertized by the society of the spectacle. The novel's

romantic interest character is obsessed with the commodified world of fashion and the technological gimmicks of the culture industry. Eunice has completely internalized her role as a consumer. She is incapable of transcending the mores fostered by the reign of the culture industry and as such a personification of the postmodern postdemocratic subject who makes lifestyle choices instead of partaking in the political process.

Super Sad True Love Story's love story plot basically is a postmodern rewriting of Anton Chekhov's novella *Three Years* (1894). In Chekhov's book a reasonably well-off middle-aged man sincerely falls in love with a beautiful young girl. Like Lenny, Chekhov's protagonist is ugly. In Chekhov's novella the two marry. The three years referred to in the title signify the time span which the story covers. In the end the young beautiful wife settles and accepts the ugly old man as her husband. Shteyngart's *Super Sad Love Story* on the other hand covers a time span of six months. Eunice at first accepts Lenny as her boyfriend (however reluctantly) and moves in with him in his New York apartment. Lenny provides for her and worships her. However, Shteyngart's novel does not have a happy ending. At the end of the story Eunice leaves Lenny for his life-extended boss who is a true High Net Worth Individual. However, in the epilogue of the story the reader learns that Eunice left Lenny's boss as well, this time for a young Scotsman (p. 329). The futility of these two love affairs between a very young woman and two older men is definitely more realistic than Chekhov's successful love story. The fact that Eunice in the end chooses a man of her own age seems to be in line with the statistics regarding relationships with a high age difference between the respective partners.

The story's main SF novum consists of the so-called *äppäräti*, technological devices which are comparable to smart phones. In the world of the story everyone has to carry his/her *äppärät* at all times, since they also serve as a means of identification. The *äppärät* is "the device that rule[s] the world" of the novel (p. 260). US Americans even "worship" their *äppäräti* (p. 78). The *äppäräti's* main function however is to provide their proprietors with the opportunity to rate each and every individual in the reach of its camera nozzle. The inhabitants of Shteyngart's dystopian US are constantly rating each other along the parameters of 'personality,' 'fuckability,' and 'sustainability' wherever they are. Furthermore, in the world of the novel, "[m]oney equals life" (p. 77). A person's financial background constitutes the most salient parameter according to which a person in the novel can be rated. A HNWI has access to the service of artificial life extension, while LNWI's don't. The superrich in the world of the text have become a new posthuman species

which is granted access to a fountain-of-youth technology which allows them to live indefinite lives. LNWI's are clearly discriminated against in the world of the novel. The omnipresent *äppäräti* rank every inhabitant of Shteyngart's plausible future society wherever s/he is. Below a certain standard of financial solvency one becomes a *persona non grata* in the world of the text. The text thus divides the population of Shteyngart's future in haves and have-nots just as the global apartheid that Dalby deems characteristic of the contemporary world system governs access to the amenities of Western consumer capitalism with regard to financial solvency. Lenny's class status is suspended somewhere between being a HNWI and a LNWI. He aspires to one day have the wherewithal at his command to afford a "Indefinite Life Extension" as well (p. 12), but in the present of the text he does not. Lenny is aware of the severe 'genetic defect' which bars him from undergoing the life-extension treatment peddled by his employers himself: His "main genetic defect [is that his] father is a janitor from a poor country" (p. 60). Class is of pivotal importance in the world that is projected by the story. The most important parameter according to which everyone is ranked in the novel is credit. The streets of Shteyngart's New York, where the bulk of the story takes place, are lined with so-called 'credit poles' which evaluate the credit ranking of each passer by. LNWI's have three-digit credit rankings while the members of the upper middle class have credit rankings of about 1500. Any person below this credit ranking is an outcast and per definition barred from representation via the political system in the text.

The US national currency in the novel has been rendered worthless by currency devaluation. Financial transactions in Shteyngart's US take place in Chinese Yuan. This is an expression of the internationalization process characteristic of globalization and also gives voice to the fear that China as the current US's main creditor could one day demand its money back and thus ruin the entire US economy which is based on tremendous amount of national debt. In the novel, "the *new* United States of America" (italics in original; p. 8) is governed by the "American Restoration Authority" (p. 8) and "the Bipartisan Party" (p. 9). The executive in the world of the text clearly takes precedence over the legislative and the judiciary and thus mirrors the practices of authoritarian etatism as evidenced in the new paradigm of the postdemocratic politics of the spectacle. The American President is of Latin American descent and his name is Jimmy Cortez (p. 155). However, whenever there is talk about the government the principal player who is held responsible for the course American politics has taken in the novel is Defense Secretary Rubenstein (p. 287). The military in the world of the novel has

taken over the function of policing and thus the reach of power of the Secretary of Defense has been tremendously extended. In Shteyngart's future US, there are military checkpoints everywhere as well as tanks and armored personal carriers; furthermore, ubiquitous armed National Guardsmen in full battle dress have assumed the function of policing. The population is kept in check by these means as well as by the constant threat of being deported to so-called "Secure Screening Facilit[ies]" (p. 89), where political dissidents are rumored to be detained and tortured. The story hints at the existence of a secret archipelago of jails and prison camps comparable to those in *In the Country of Last Things*, a notion which is definitely reminiscent of the practices employed by the US authorities in the course of the 'War on Terror'. The world of the novel thus mirrors the militarization of everyday life in the US after the events of 9/11.

According to Booker and Thomas, "dystopian fiction tends to have a strong satirical dimension" (Booker/Thomas, 65). *Super Sad True Love Story* clearly satirizes the current obsession with smartphones with the novum of the äppärät as well the current tendency to rate just about everything on the Internet and the trend of posting personal information on the Internet via social networking. After the civil war which breaks out at one point in the world of the text the äppäräti cease to work for a longer stretch of time. This results in a wave of suicides, since the population of Shteyngart's US can no longer "connect" without the help of their technological gimmickry (p. 270). The äppäräti are clearly a stand-in for the Internet and television. Without the constant distraction of being able to rate one another on the Net, "all [of them] are bored out of [their] fucking minds" (p. 270). The äppäräti also represent the contemporary state of global culture dominated by new technologies which is an argument for classifying the novel as postmodern realism. The novel mimics current reality in other respects as well. In the world of the novel, the US are involved in a highly unpopular war in Venezuela which reflects the US military engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Balkanization of the story's society along the lines of financial solvency mirrors the phenomenon that some critics describe with the existence of two Americas, the one the America of the superrich one percent of the population at the apex of society, and the other the America of those who have to work for a living, barely get by, or are excluded from consumer capitalism and represent the rest of the population. The LNWI's in the world of the text represent the latter portion of the US citizenry and by extension those swaths of the world population which are discriminated against in our global order of cultural apartheid.

The US in the novel is at war with Venezuela, where American soldiers “are being *massacred*” (italics in original; p. 11). Former National Guardsmen after returning from tours of duty in Venezuela do not get paid their promised bonuses for partaking in the war and thus lead the protests against the government, which eventually result in a nationwide uprising which is brutally squelched by the government. On page 159, a major riot breaks out in Central Park, where the protesters against the government have built a tent city. The government's reaction consists of “just shooting everyone” (p. 159). The point in the story where the dystopian background finally gains precedence over the love plot is on page 238. A panic breaks out among Lenny and Eunice's upper-middle-class friends and one can hear “the sickening contralto of middle-class people screaming” (p. 241). The American Restoration Authority “RAISES THE THREAT LEVEL [...] TO RED ++IMMINENT DANGER” (p. 238) in reaction to a pronouncement by the Chinese Central Bank which signifies that the Chinese government will no longer grant credit to the Bipartisan state. Riots break out which result in a state of civil war. Two of Lenny's upper-middle-class friends are even killed in the turmoil, although the violence is primarily directed against the poor. The problematic of distributive injustice is clearly engaged by the novel. At one point of the story the National Guard simply starts “killing Low Net Worth Individuals” (p. 180), which are also referred to as the “unneeded people” (p. 302), as “all the riffraff with no Credit” (p. 257), “the ragtag gaggle of Low Net Worth Individuals” (p. 103), and “all the niggers and spics” (p. 158), by HNWI's and the upper middle class. LNWI's are targeted by the ubiquitous Browning machine guns of the National Guards, while the latter “would never hurt people with” high credit ratings (p. 66). During the turmoil of the civil war one's financial background becomes a matter of life or death. Race is also of some importance but nowhere near the paramount importance that one's credit rating has for one's survival. The American president's Latin American descent and the fact that the people in Shteyngart's future US are discriminated against mainly for their credit rating, i.e., their class status, constitutes a utopian element of the text.

After the civil war, which is referred to in the novel as “the Rupture” (p. 249), Norway, Saudi Arabia, and China take over the US government. In some parts of the former US, there is still fighting going on: “Nassau warlords fighting Suffolk warlords. Ethnic stuff. Salvadorians. Guatemalans. *Nigerians*” (italics in original; p. 285). These two phenomena, the fighting between ethnic groups and the fact that the American government is given over to more prosperous nations, further highlight the high stage of internationalization the world in

the novel has attained, which allows the novel to be read as postmodern realism in accordance with Currie's typology. Furthermore, Lenny's employer, the Staatling-Wapachung Corporation takes over the armed forces. A private corporation thus in fact takes over the executive branch of the government. This represents the immense power multinational global corporations wield in the current state of completely financialized capitalism. At the end of the story the whole city of New York is transformed into a resort town for people with high credit rankings. The poor are either deported or conscripted to work as cheap labor for the new state. This mimics the real-world phenomenon of gentrification, which is another characteristic of late capitalism. The fact that the gentrification in the story is effected by holding the poor at gunpoint while they leave their former homes highlights the indirect violence inherent to the real-world equivalent to these proceedings in the story.

According to Booker and Thomas, "a common theme in American dystopian fiction [is that it] often depicts books and literature as powerful threats to the power of dystopian regimes" (Booker/Thomas, 69) like for example in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953). As far as original twentieth-century neo-liberalism is concerned, both Reagan (p. 331) and Thatcher (p. 86) are mentioned in the novel as is Henry Kissinger (p. 20). Furthermore, George Orwell's seminal dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is mentioned in the text as well (p. 19) as are several dystopian SF movies (p. 217). The latter references to some of the founding artifacts of dystopian fiction posit the text in question in an intertextual continuum with said tradition. *Super Sad True Love Story* is Shteyngart's version of a dystopia in accordance with the situation at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century. The novel also refers to the postmodern decline of reading. In Shteyngart's novel books are referred to as "doorstops" (p. 25) by the characters and their official denomination is "bound, printed, nonstreaming Media artifact[s]" (p. 90). The attitude of the population towards literature is that "books *smell*" (italics in original; p. 52) and Lenny is being stared at "for having an open book" (p. 37) in his hands and made fun of for being the "last reader on earth" (p. 91) by his friends. Lenny owns an impressive collection of books and likes to read, while the only use all the other characters make of written language are emailing and misspelled street signs. The characters of the story "hate reading" (p. 296). Shteyngart's near future is thus presented as "a post-literate age" (p. 277). However, although the activities of reading and writing are thus highlighted in the story, they have no subversive potential in the world of the text. Lenny Abramov is not Orwell's Winston Smith. Abramov

doesn't rebel against the oppression exercised by his totalitarian regime. Lenny just aspires to being left in peace. Although in *Super Sad Love Story* Big Brother “monitor[s] everything” (p. 73) as well, the protagonists of the story are comfortably cushioned from the negative effects of their run-away totalitarian government's oppressive measures. Eunice and Lenny do not care for the plight of the oppressed of their society, they “just wan[t] to be safe” (p. 257), and since they are wealthy, they and their families make it through the Rupture unharmed. The only Low Net Worth Individual who has his say in the novel is a former National Guardsman called David, who becomes one of the ringleaders of the protests against the government and is shot as a consequence. Eunice has a conversation with him in which he states that “we were all in this together” (p. 146), but Eunice rightfully corrects him “we're not all in this together” (p. 146). There is no solidarity between the different classes in the novel as in the real world.

At the beginning of the story Lenny makes it clear that, although he is no HNWI, he is “not Low Net Worth either” (p. 59). He neither belongs to the “poor” nor to the HNWIs of the upper class. He is a member of the story's small “Middle-class” (p. 106). However, Abramov is “the richest man in Chinatown” (p. 260) and as such he is exempt from the exigencies of the post-rupture US. Lenny Abramov does not want to make history, but to witness it from a secure position together with his girlfriend. At the end of the story he points out that “[o]nly people with blood on their hands” will be able to survive under the new circumstances (p. 314), for example, “the blood of a hundred” who were massacred by the government in Central Park (p. 305). Lenny actually feels “guilt [...] about the deaths of the poor people” (p. 181), yet he has got blood on his hands too. His silence is consent. He does not care about the plight of the oppressed as long as he himself is safe. This reflects the indifference of the postmodern consumer in the West with regard to the Third World.

The story ends with an epilogue which is set several decades after the events which transpired in the story. The rupture has resulted in “the fall of the Roman Empire” (p. 256), i.e., the US have imploded. “The Chinese and Europeans [have] decoupl[ed]” the world's economy from the US (p. 11). Lenny has moved to Italy and his diaries and Eunice's email correspondence have been published as a book by a Chinese publishing house. As it turns out, Eunice has left Lenny's boss as well and married a Scotsman the same age as her. The life extension treatment Lenny's boss underwent has backfired as well. It turns out that it is impossible to cheat death via science. This is an explicit deconstruction of the Extropy Myth which holds that an escalator

effect could one day let (rich) human beings live indefinitely. The problematic of distributive injustice is addressed in the novel as well through the pivotal role class plays in the world of the story. The problematic of environmental degradation is being hinted at several times in the novel, but it plays no major role in the proceedings. The novel mentions “global warming and the end of human life on earth” in the epilogue (p. 330). So, while the downfall of the US had severe repercussions on the problematic of distributive injustice, the postmodern problematic of environmental degradation remains unsolved at the end of the story. The story's epilogue suggests that the end of the US's role of being the imperial hegemon of the world does not equal the end of Western civilization. The post-rupture world order which has been established in tandem by Europe and China seems capable of providing stability to the world of geopolitics as described by the novel. This constitutes a utopian ending to Shteyngart's dystopia and makes the novel fit into Moylan's category of the critical dystopia. The fact that the problematic of environmental degradation has not been overcome in the new world order of the text's epilogue highlights the importance of that problematic in the real world. The fact that in said new world order books continue to be published hints that the post-literate future of Western society will not put an end to literary production and constitutes a utopian element as well. In Shteyngart's novel hope for a better future persists even in the face of the end times of US-led late capitalism.

7.12 KEN MACLEOD: *INTRUSION*

According to Bould, the beginning of the new millennium is permeated by “a dreadful aura of mind-numbing obeisance to corporate culture” (Bould (2002), 307). Conversely, a new 'new wave' of politically conscious SF has been emerging since the last decade of the last millennium. “Ken MacLeod [is] one of the most politically astute, eyeball-kick-profligate sf writers” (Ibid., 310), who debuted in this period. MacLeod is one of the most notable proponents of the British boom of SF in the second half of the 1990s. “MacLeod[’s SF] has a stronger social and political dimension in its exploration of near-future technological developments” (Booker/Thomas, 328) than the preceding stage in the development of SF, i.e., cyberpunk, used to display. His body of work incorporates utopian as well as dystopian elements as does his penultimate novel *Intrusion*.

According to Booker and Thomas, “there is often a fine line between utopia and dystopia, and one person's dream society might be another person's nightmare. Indeed, many sf novels include both utopian and dystopian

characteristics” (Booker/Thomas, 69f). MacLeod's 2012 novel *Intrusion* displays characteristics of both utopian and dystopian fiction. However, the dystopian aspects of the world as developed in the story clearly prevail, which makes the novel an exemplary instance of the prolific subgenre of dystopian SF. The fact that the novel leaves room for hope for a better future lets it fit pretty neatly into the canon of the critical dystopia, although its structure ostentatiously mirrors the tripartite plot structure of the classical Cold War era dystopia.

The story starts out in a near-future London in March (p. 1). The year is not specified but from hints given in the story it can be reasonably deduced that it takes place one or two decades after its date of publication. The story's lead character is Hope Morrison (quite obviously an aptonym which personifies the utopian impulse inherent to this text), a pregnant London woman in her late twenties or early thirties. She is pregnant with her second child and it is this second pregnancy around which the story revolves, since Hope refuses to take 'the fix,' a pill which repairs genetic defects within the fetus and inoculates the child against all manners of childhood diseases. Hope's refusal of the fix constitutes the novel's moment of rebellion against the totalitarian order which is a common element of the plot structure of the dystopian narrative. After having taken this decision the rest of the text revolves around the state's hunt for the rebel, which eventually culminates in Hope's re-assimilation into the totalitarian society. The text thus adheres to the tripartite plot structure of the classical dystopia. The fix, a genetic cure-all, constitutes the story's main SF novum which was developed by bio-engineering. 'The fix' is mandatory in the UK and apparently all other Western countries: “America, Britain, Germany, Iran, China [the so-]called [...] New Society countries the Free World” (p. 140). Iran and China seem to have embraced liberal democracy, while liberty in the nominally 'Free World' has dwindled, which is in accordance with the prognostication Colin Crouch makes in his theory of 'post-democracy,' i.e., that while liberal democracy spreads externally with ever more countries embracing its tenets politically, the substance of democracy in the West dwindles away, culminating in a democracy which is constrained to serving the wishes of an elite few at the apex of society, a state of affairs that Burbach identifies as prototypical for the state of the politics of the spectacle in the postmodern age. The executive branch of the government has been equipped with the right to force its citizens to live a healthy life even against the expressed will of the citizens. The mandatory intake of the fix is the culmination of this dictatorship of a one-party state which claims to act in its citizens own best interest. This is a clear reference to

real-world politics, for example, the EU's campaign against smoking. The world of the novel takes to extremes tendencies which already exist in the present of publication. The state in the novel constitutes a benign dictatorship. The reasons for which oppression is exercised amount to a rather rudimentary 'greater good': "they don't do these things for fun. They do them for [...] good reasons, pressing reasons, often even from wanting to do good" (p. 290). The oppressive rules enforced by the executive are based on what the government considers as its supreme knowledge of what is good for its citizenry. Cigarettes, alcohol, sugar, and drugs have been outlawed. The "state [...] steps in to allow people to make the choices *they would have made* if they had [...] all the relevant [...] information" (italics in original; p. 147). The novel thus depicts a society whose citizens are forced to act in their own best interest and in which everything that could be in some way detrimental to the latter has become illegal. "The government [i]s *enabling* people to make the choices they would make for themselves if they knew all the consequences of those choices" (italics in original; p. 149). The agenda of the government in *Intrusion* is to protect the populace from their own bad judgment. The neo-liberal nanny state has been turned totalitarian in the world of *Intrusion*. Plato's order of the philosopher kings has been realized as expressed by a government which deprives its citizenry of the negative freedom to harm their own bodies. As Plato's philosopher kings the rulers of this society arrogate to themselves the perfect knowledge of what is best for each individual citizen and thus curtail the personal rights of the populace.

Instead of the Cold War of the second half of the twentieth century, the world in the novel is dominated by the Warm War. After what Hobsbawm and Baudrillard consider the Third World War, i.e., the Cold War, in the novel there seems to be a Fourth World War happening. Again the notion that humankind will remain impervious to learning from the mistakes of the past which has already been raised by Vonnegut, Anthony, and Morgan is brought to the fore. The principal opponents of the West in the novel's version of the Cold War are Russia, again, and India. The 'Warm War' has resulted in a peculiar situation. The latter two countries are represented in the West as the totalitarian Other. Accordingly, George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is read in a very curious way in English high schools: The "teacher had explained how it was really all about how the West and China had always been allies against Russia, from the Cold War all the way through to the Warm War" (p. 187). Just like in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* the Party declares that Oceania has always been at war with Eurasia and in alliance with Eastasia. The New Society is rallied against the Other of the "Russian imperialists, the Indian chauvinists,

the Naxal nihilists” (p. 144). The Naxals are the novel's stand-in for Al Qaeda. Above quotation is not the sole reference to, arguably, the most influential work of dystopian fiction, i.e., *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The phrase “The sunshine beyond winter” (p. 374) in the novel clearly constitutes a variation on Orwell's 'place where there is no darkness' in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

The UK is governed by 'the Party,' which constitutes a dystopian version of the New Labour party. All inhabitants of metropolitan areas are under constant CCTV surveillance, beginning with their own apartments in which they voluntarily install “cameras in every room” (p. 1) for security purposes. These cameras record everything which is done and said within the private space of home. As becomes clear over the course of the novel, the UK has become an intrusive police state which closely monitors the most minute behavior of its citizens. For example, the government places sensors on pregnant women to prevent them from drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes. The latter two activities are illegal in MacLeod's UK. However, torture, “the clinical, sterile application of pain” (p. 114), is officially sanctioned police practice. In MacLeod's UK, “the cameras and face-recognition software and all the rest of the surveillance systems [a]re [always] aware, at some level, of [everyone's] location and destination” (p. 236). The people of MacLeod's Britain are constantly monitored by the government, not only via CCTV cameras, but by other means as well: “Your personal profile is automatically updated all the time, from surveillance and from interactions —purchases, interpersonal connections, interactions with official bodies, social services, health, police...” (p. 212). Because of the ubiquity of CCTV cameras no one can move without being monitored by the government. The omnipresence of CCTV cameras in the novel clearly reflects the situation in real-world Britain. Despite the latter facts, the citizens of the UK imagine Russia to be an evil totalitarian control society as opposed to the New Society. “In Russia the government watched people all the time, with cameras everywhere [w]hereas [in the UK] we ha[ve] transparency and accountability. Everything was transparent and people were accountable. Or everything was accountable and people were transparent. One or the other” (p. 187). Obviously, citizens of the UK are subject to exactly the same omnipresent system of control as it is considered to be common in the territories of the totalitarian Other. Thus, one character explains that “[o]rdinary, non-political, everyday life is far more regulated [in the UK] than it is in Russia or India” (p. 124).

The new prime enemy of the West with whose existence the totalitarian police measures are justified in public are the so-called Naxals, a “transna-

tional insurgent franchise [to which, for example, belongs the so-called] Neues Rote Armee Fraktion [sic]" in Germany (p. 12). The Naxals have succeeded Islamic fundamentalists as the most prominent threat to the Western way of life of the New Society. The Naxals are nihilists who fight Western civilization as such on principle. The fact that the enmity of the Western system has switched so easily to a new target belies the current dichotomy between the values of the West and those of Islamofascism. People who have been identified as threats to public security disappear in "the global archipelago of interrogation cells and black sites and ghost prisons" (p. 326), which is definitely reminiscent of the global 'War on Terror' and the practices endorsed by it.

Like *Pattern Recognition*, *Intrusion* as well features the brandnames of the theoretical supermarket of academia: "Giddens, Parsons, Habermas—[...] Foucault, Lacan, Derrida; [...] Althusser, Dunayevskaya, Fine and Saad-Filho, Ticktin, Mandel and Rodolsky; [...] Popper, Kuhn, Latour, Lakatos, Bloor Baskhar" (p. 117f). The latter barrage of theorists, many of them Marxists, is invoked by a character to whom another character who has just been tortured by the police turns for advice and consolation. The academic is a professor at a university and the advice he gives to the tortured woman is: "Just ignore it, say nothing, and, believe me, it'll be like it never happened" (p. 127). He adds that "*Amor fati* and *carpe diem* [i]s the ticket" (italics in original; p. 128). Keep your head down and ignore the appalling state your country is in is the academic's advice. The consulter subsequently realizes that "all the techniques of critique she had so painstakingly learned had turned out to be an instrument of the very systems of domination they anatomised" (p. 129). The latter train of thought constitutes a scathing critique of contemporary academia. Instead of being a host of intellectual resistance against the totalitarian order, in the text postmodern academia has capitulated to the powers that be. Petrovic's accusation that teachers and professors function as the cultural commissars of late capitalism comes to mind as well as Dinello's identification of an academic-industrial military complex at work in contemporary academia.

Another element of the story reminiscent of a phenomenon of the present day is the novel's treatment of climate change. The climate in the novel has changed. Global warming has resulted in "icy winters and rainy summers" (p. 229). In the world of the novel the problematic of environmental degradation is thematized by the notion that the efforts humankind has made in the story's past to counteract global warming in the present of the story risk "tipping the planet into a new ice age" (p. 132). The novel thus addresses the

problematic of ecological survival. However, the world of the story has “clean air [and] abundant energy” at its disposal (p. 145). Advances in science have “cracked the carbon problem and fixed cancer and heart disease” (p. 124). These are the utopian components of the story. 'The fix' could also be read as a utopian element, since its purpose is fending off diseases in the unborn child, but its mandatory character makes it a symbol of the totalitarianism of Britain's one-party state. However, against a neo-liberal reading of the story that would suggest that fighting global warming might in the end do more bad than good it can be noted that past efforts to curtail the effects of climate change have resulted in a utopian situation in which Žižek's third form of violence in the form of physical disease has been overcome and the multiform pernicious effects of global warming have ceased. The story thus incorporates a space of possibility for change for the better and therefore falls into the category of Moylan's critical dystopia.

Hope is in the course of the story bullied and oppressed into taking 'the fix'. She has no religious grounds to refuse it. Religious reasons are accepted as reason for being exempted from taking 'the fix'. This too is a utopian feature of the text. Not only does there seem to exist perfect equality between man and woman (although the story completely fails to transcend the confines of heteronormativity), but all religious persuasions seem to be treated the same by the government as well. Hope refuses to take it solely because it is her decision to do so and she refuses to feign any belief to be legally exempted. Her “refusal to take pre-natal genetic medication without good cause is [considered as] tantamount to child neglect, and itself grounds for declaring [her] an unfit mother” (p. 344). At the end of the story, Hope and her husband Hugh face a life in prison for charges resultant from Hope's refusal to take 'the fix' (p. 346). They are only able to avoid a life sentence by means of a super-natural *deus ex machina* which saves them at the last moment.

The problematic of distributive injustice is only hinted at in a few points in the story. On page 121, “the hegemonic class fractions, people who've been to Oxbridge and Harvard and Beijing” (p. 121) are referred to. Otherwise, the protagonists of the novel are all being treated the same with disregard to their race and religion. The problematic of distributive injustice is thus only awarded a minor role in the story. *Intrusion* elaborates a technocratic nightmare that is in accordance with some tenets of contemporary Western society. However, its guarded silence with regard to the problematic of distributive injustice leaves out an element of pivotal significance to the structure of global culture and can only be read as a form of literary avoidance behavior on the part of the author. Furthermore, MacLeod's

attitude seems to mirror Orwell's in that he can only imagine a dystopian state evolving from the left part of the political spectrum here. The novel's over-all avoidance of the problematic of distributive injustice results in a text whose analytical scope is somewhat skewed. A dystopia that leaves out the omnipotent category of class cannot help to reproduce the class bias at the base of contemporary society.

7.13 ERIC BROWN: *THE SERENE INVASION*

“Narratives involving the invasion of the Earth by alien forces from outer space are among the oldest forms of science fiction” (Keith/Thomas, 28). The prototypical precursor of alien-invasion SF is H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds* (1898). Alien-invasion narratives predominantly involve a malign alien species that attempts to conquer planet earth. Conversely, “Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* (1953) is notable for its treatment of alien invaders as essentially benevolent” (Ibid., 31). Eric Brown's 2013 novel *The Serene Invasion* constitutes a reworking of Clarke's book of 1953. Both novels depict a benign invasion of earth by an alien species which sets out to solve humankind's most existential problems, i.e., the problematic of distributive injustice and the problematic of environmental degradation. Both novels are subdivided into three parts and have no lead character. The narration of *The Serene Invasion* alternates between a cast of half a dozen focal characters, while *Childhood's End* features a third-person omniscient narrator. The tripartite division of the story is important in both novels. The three parts of *The Serene Invasion* take place in the year 2025, twelve years in the future from the date of publication, 2035, and 2045 respectively. Furthermore, Brown's novel features an epilogue which takes place in 2055. The narrative of *The Serene Invasion* thus covers a time frame of thirty years, while *Childhood's End's* narrative extends over a time span of roughly 136 years.

According to Bould, “Eric Brown [writes SF] as it might have been written by Conrad or Greene (or even a young Ballard)” (Bould (2002), 310). Like MacLeod, Brown is one of the proponents of the British SF boom of the 1990s. “He established himself with space opera/planetary romance [...] and has recently come closer to Earth” (Ibid.). *The Serene Invasion* incorporates elements of the space opera, however, its principal action takes place on earth. The story starts in 2025 in Uganda, Africa, in a world plagued by the same ailments the world of the date of publication suffers from, i.e., resource depletion, climate change, religious hatred, poverty, hunger, and terrorism. The first chapter of Part I of the story is rendered from the point of view of the first of a string of focal characters from whose positions the story is told.

The first focalizer is an English doctor named Sally Walsh who works for the Red Cross in Uganda as part of a relief operation. Keith and Thomas point out that “alien invasion narratives [have] the potential [...] to serve as commentaries on real-world social and political phenomena, especially colonialism” (Keith/Thomas, 28). In Brown's 2025 Africa, “the Chinese and the Europeans and Americans [use] the continent like a gameboard” (p. 15). There are droughts, famines, and wars all over Africa and the Middle East. Sally Walsh together with an African colleague of hers is kidnapped by Islamist terrorists. The terrorists want to execute Walsh and the other doctor in front of a TV camera to set a sign and deter Westerners from entering Africa, an element of the story which seems to presciently anticipate the practices of the IS in the present. However, when the terrorists set about killing the two doctors they are unable to do so. As it turns out later on in the story an alien invasion has begun at the same time. The alien race is called the Serene. No human being will ever lay eyes on a member of said species. The representatives of humankind in the course of the story will exclusively communicate with the Serene's representatives called self-aware entities. The nomination of the alien species hints at the fact of their almost all-powerful prowess and their benign agenda. Eight spaceships of the Serene appear on earth in eight different locations, which mirrors the arrival of the Overlords on earth in Clarke's *Childhood's End*. From the moment of their arrival, the earth's population quickly finds out that it has become impossible to commit acts of violence. The media refer to this effect as “the outbreak of non-violence” (p. 116). The aliens call the ban on violence effected by them via their almost all-powerful technological prowess “*charea*” (italics in original; p. 170). “Through [a] readjustment of fundamental reality, the Serene brought about *charea*” (italics in original; p. 170). From then on, whenever a human being wants to commit an act of violence s/he is rendered incapable of doing so. As in *Childhood's End*, the alien species does not reveal itself to humankind. The self-aware entities select about ten thousand humans as representatives for the human race, gather them in their spaceships and explain the Serene's designs for earth's future to these representatives. Among the ten thousand representatives there are two further focal characters of the story, i.e., Geoff Allen, a British photographer, and Ana Devi, a sixteen-year-old Indian street kid. The Serene reveal that they have been monitoring earth for the last two centuries. They explain that humankind's history in these two hundred years was “fueled by a fatal combination of political greed and lack of foresight. What is even more tragic [...] is that many [...] know very well what needs to be done in order to

prevent a global catastrophe” (p. 161). The Serene argue that humanity's history is progressing as “a slow-motion, snowballing suicide” (p. 162). The Serene declare that they plan to provide humankind with limitless energy, the capability to change salt water into fresh water, and new inexhaustible resources, thereby solving all of humankind's most existential problems. Again, as in Anthony's *Cold Allies*, an all-powerful deus ex machina ensures humankind's future survival. “With limitless energy, with advanced computer systems, with much production automated, you will find that you have increased leisure time...” (p. 167). The Serene honor Marx's promise that technological progress and class struggle will lead to a situation where each gives according to their abilities and receives according to their needs. In the world shaped by the Serene, automated production does not produce unemployment, as it necessarily does under capitalism as Marx has shown, but leisure time for the workforce. The Serene's goal for humankind is to create a socialist utopia. They then broadcast their plans to the world's population (p. 173). On the same page one finds a reference to two momentous alien-invasion movies, i.e., *Independence Day* (1996) and *War of the Worlds* (2005), the latter an adaptation of Wells's novel of the same name. The text thus provides two intertextual reference points from popular culture which put the story of *The Serene Invasion* into perspective from an SF point of view. The US, “the all-powerful demon [is] rendered impotent” (p. 178) and the “delights of capitalism” are reversed (p. 179). The arrival of the Serene serves to provide the reader with an outsider's view of the human race. Again, as in *Brother Termite* and *Cold Allies* humankind is judged and found wanting. That the two postmodern problematics can only be solved by the agency of a nearly all-powerful alien deus ex machina only highlights the importance of these real-world problems. The novel furthermore emphasizes the importance of violence in the maintenance of the status quo. The universal inhibition on the exercise of physical violence has catastrophic effects on the sustainability of the status quo. The text thus foregrounds the structural violence on which our current totalitarian market order is based. The point of view of Ana Devi, one of the principal focal characters, especially addresses the problematic of distributive injustice. Her life is ruled by utter poverty. She has no formal education and lives on the streets of India. Her life, before it is completely transformed by the Serene, is a constant struggle for survival which foregrounds the totalized competition under late capitalism. The fact that MacLeod has chosen one of the people who populate the periphery of the global South as one of his focalizers neatly exemplifies the agenda which he pursues with his novel. The novel's pre-

dominant theme is a rumination of how it could be possible to transform the real world into a more just and democratic society for all the world's inhabitants especially with regard to those people who more often than not are left out of the equation by European and North-American theorists, i.e., the impoverished inhabitants of the global South. As has been pointed out above, the consequences of the 'charea' effected by the aliens highlights the fact that our current global capitalist order completely depends on (structural) violence. After the 'charea' has been introduced the very ordering principle of capitalist society the world over is dissolved and the old power relations thus very quickly disintegrate. The 'charea' effects the late-capitalist market order at its most basic point of constitution. The incapability to enforce the status quo via the application of physical violence robs the global apartheid characteristic of the rule of the Washington Consensus of its very foundation. Furthermore, the 'charea' changes the very concept of human society in the text beyond recognition.

The story's antagonist, the villain, is called James Morwell Jr. He presides over a multinational global corporation which among other things owns a media empire to rival Rupert Murdoch's. As it transpires Morwell loses everything under the influence of the Serene. In the world shaped by the Serene, people have no desire for the commodities his corporation produces anymore. This fact foregrounds the psychopathological nature of the extreme consumer desire engendered by late capitalism. Even Morwell's sex life is rendered defunct because the 'charea' precludes him from engaging in the sado-masochistic practices he used to engage in to attain sexual relief. As his power crumbles Morwell despairs and soon is driven by an all-powerful desire to kill himself, but the 'charea' thwarts all his manifold endeavors to end his life. In the course of the story, Morwell is contacted by another alien race which is at war with the Serene called the Obterek. Morwell has gathered the human resistance against the Serene around him, consisting of the old minority of people who actually thrived under late capitalism, i.e., the members of the inner bourgeoisie who have lost everything under the rule of the Serene, and the Obterek provide him with the opportunity and the technological wherewithal to attack the Serene. However, Morwell's attempts to end the 'charea' are subsequently thwarted, humankind is allowed by the Serene's technology to spread out over the stars and all the story's focal characters, except the one who sacrifices himself to avert the Obterek's last attempt against the Serene, live happily ever after in a solar system sans violence, greed, and poverty which provides ample room for human colonization with the help of the Serene's terraforming technology. Morwell is a representative

of the ruling class which prospers under late capitalism. His agenda is outspokenly anti-social and misanthropic. MacLeod thus exemplifies what kind of persons make up the global elite which has brought about the neo-liberal and neo-conservative counterrevolution. In the end, Morwell eventually succumbs to his psychopathologies and at least is successful in his endeavor to kill himself. This exemplifies capitalism's thrust towards eventual self-destruction. Morwell personifies the unlimited greed on the part of the inner bourgeoisie that drives late-capitalist consumer society. The fact that his greatest success in the world of the novel consists of his successful self-annihilation hints at the self-destructive character that Western society under the auspices of late capitalism is imbued with.

The Serene's rule over earth has resulted in an enormous over-all increase in life-expectancy (p. 286), the "world's religions have taken something of a battering" (p. 284), "entire industries ha[ve] vanished—meat farming among others" (p. 236), where there used to be poverty before the coming of the Serene there now is prosperity (p. 244), "wars and violence of all kinds have been banished to the [...] 'dustbin of history'" (p. 223), and "the chains, McDonald's and KFC and the like, which had force-fed a willing populace a diet of low quality food laced with addictive fats, salts and sugars" have vanished (p. 349). All the positive effects that in MacLeod's *Intrusion* have been brought about by a technocratic control over the populace in *The Serene* are part of a natural development which originates from the impossibility of violence. In a well-ordered global society there is no need for organized religion any more. Violence towards other species has been realized as an evil and the totalized exploitation characteristic of current capitalism has simply ceased. The story highlights the detriments of the situation as it was before the Serene arrived and as it was at the date of publication in the real world: "For decades, centuries, we in the West ha[ve] turned a blind eye to the inherent unfairness of how the world worked. We led easy, affluent lifestyles [...] and who cared if that meant that the good life was at the expense of millions, billions, in the so-called third world whose poverty subsidised our greed" (p. 224)? The latter quote constitutes an apt formulation of the current world situation characterized as a system of global or cultural apartheid by Dalby and Žižek respectively. The novel can thus be read as a protracted condemnation of the current state of affairs. The fact that the radical change that is necessary in the light of the two postmodern problematic is effected in the novel by supernatural fiat only serves to emphasize the importance of change in the present age. Despite its positive gist the novel thus draws up a rather pessimistic vision of the future. The

personification of hope for the better in the race of the Serene only emphasizes the fact that there seems to be little hope for a betterment arising from an impetus that springs from inside of late-capitalist society.

8. CONCLUSION

The poststructuralist fallacy consists of the notion of the basic self-referentiality of language. Conversely, the assumption of a connection between texts and outer reality is a *sine qua non* of all theorizing. Only a theory which accepts the interconnectedness of text production and outer reality is capable of attaining valuable insights into the order of things. The factuality of history has to be defended against all attacks and so must be the universality of human rights. Historiography and its texts provide valid sources about the past and allow us to understand our present moment of time. SF as a literature of cognitive estrangement, counter-intuitively, does not deal with the future but with the present and the past which led to this present. SF is not prognostic but retrospective. It thus holds the potential of allowing the recipient to come up with an interpretation of a given SF text which elucidates current reality and the history it results from. Postmodern theory holds that any reading of a work of literature recreates the original text in a new form. The activity of interpretation thus is a creative process whose importance is emphasized by postmodern theory: The recipient of any work of art draws on his/her cultural *Erfahrungshorizont* during the act of interpretation. The cultural environment from which any given artifact emerged must therefore be considered in the critic's interpretation as well. In the case of literary SF, our cultural knowledge about said genre incorporates many texts from various media. SF nowadays is a gigantic industry and the number of artifacts produced under its heading are legion. However, there are certain content-level elements which make it possible to discern if a given text belongs to said genre or not. The texts under investigation in this study come from a group of authors from very different generic traditions who all have in common that they at some time in their careers have created an SF novel or even a host of SF novels. As has been shown in this study, dystopian near-future SF clearly dominates the output within said genre as well as the science fictional slipstream literature which has evolved in the last two decades. SF exemplifies many *topoi* which can be considered as prototypically postmodern. It has been shown that the notion that SF is the representative fiction of postmodernity constitutes a valid approach to interpreting texts from this genre. Dystopian SF voices the postmodern notion that the postmodern condition is a critical condition. Just like postmodern theory it is an autobiography of our current age. SF investigates the present from the point of view of a fictitious future. This *Verfremdungseffekt* constitutes a distinctly postmodern approach to history. Another postmodern notion which is directly addressed in much SF is the idea of the fragmentation of the

unified humanist subject. However, to uphold the unity of the humanist subject is a *sine qua non* of all ethics. The postmodern subject is founded in the material, physical body, not in the realm of metaphysics. Body and mind coexist in a dialectical relationship; one cannot exist without the other. Language is anchored in the material via the body. Thus subversive SF investigates the embodiment of the postmodern subject through instances of human/machine hybridity, transgressive physicality, and the fragmentation of the human body.

As has been shown, under postmodernism it remains necessary to make evaluative judgments about the aesthetic value of artifacts. 'Subversiveness' as an evaluative category is better suited to accommodate postmodern art than the modernist classification of art under the categories of high and low art. If a given work of art shores up the discursive status quo or if it deconstructs the latter should be the evaluative criterion by which to judge a text's critical significance and to classify a given artifact as either 'trivial' or 'good' art. An artifact 'resists' the hegemonic discourse when it subverts the rules of that discourse by assuming the point of view of the observer, when it analyzes the workings of said discourse. Literature's subversive potential depends on the extent to which the text transcends the historically given facts and why it does so. SF extrapolates currently existing phenomena into a fictitious future in a plausible fashion. The topic of SF thus is the current reality and the way in which its fictitious futures differ from it. SF at its best is an investigation of the current circumstances and an 'etymology' of how these circumstances came to pass. Accordingly, postmodernism can be seen as the autobiography of the contemporary. It reads the present circumstances historically, investigating the reasons for our current situation by examining the present and the past that has led to this present. In art a similar strategy can be summarized under the heading of 'cognitive mapping,' which Jameson describes as a new, contemporary form of class consciousness. 'Good' SF employs strategies which are akin to cognitive mapping. For an SF text to be of critical significance it has to engage the hegemonic discourse of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism. A 'good' postmodern artifact deconstructs the discursive status quo of neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism and engages the Extropy Myth, which holds that limitless expansion is to be expected and that the future will be a static continuation of the present. SF as the genre of literature which habitually fashions possible and plausible futures out of the elements which make up our present is predestined to make transparent the extropic mythology of late capitalism. Being locked on a course to imminent (self-)destruction is the basis of tragic narrative. Capitalism is a process of

continuously running into barriers which it then overcomes, but the finite nature of our planet's resources sets a barrier which capitalism will be unable to surpass. Dystopian SF thus has to function as contemporary postmodern tragedy by emphasizing the fact that our current totalitarian market order is set on a course to self-destruction. Technology has become the object of a quasi-religious salvation myth, a myth this study calls the Extropy Myth. This myth holds that the limitless expansion which is the core of contemporary capitalism will be rendered possible by advanced technology. The 'religion of capitalism' involves faith into the institution of perpetual progress. This belief goes hand in hand with a fetishistic disavowal of reality as the dark history of labor of each commodity, which is being actively ignored by the West. For (postmodern) art to be of critical significance, for it to be truly subversive and meaningful, it has to engage the twofold postmodern problematic, i.e., the reality of distributive injustice and of environmental degradation in order to deconstruct the Extropy Myth of neo-liberal ideology. SF can accomplish this; at its best it is a form of postmodern tragedy which reveals the mythological assumptions which underlie the hegemonic discourse.

The neo-conservative counter-revolution successfully established the tenets of Social Darwinism as 'common sense' and 'natural truth'. Today, neo-liberalism reigns supreme in the whole world. One of the goals of neo-liberalism was the transformation of the social-democratic, Keynesian welfare state into a 'workfare' regime, which was successfully put into practice in the US, the UK, and in Germany, and created a disenfranchised periphery as well as reinstating the mechanism of the industrial reserve army of the unemployed. The Bretton Woods system of a more 'humane' capitalism lasted only three decades and was later then replaced by the so-called Washington Consensus. The re-liberalization of the global economy resulted in internationalization processes which culminated in what is today called globalization, i.e., the global enforcement of neo-liberalism by the IFIs in accordance with the ten key points of the Washington Consensus. Colonialism is part of capitalism's dark history and constitutes the original accumulation of capital theorized by Marx. Today we live in the age of neo-colonialism. The colonialism of old was a forerunner of the globalization process. The Washington Consensus and the 'debt trap,' in which the majority of the countries of the global South are caught, translate into a totalitarian global market order whose rules are congruent with a new imperialism and a renewal of the relationships of dependency that characterized the colonialism of old. The New World Order proclaimed by Bush I in 1990 translates into nothing more and nothing less than a further neo-liberalization of world politics and a new round of

imperialism of the center against the periphery.

The ascendancy to global hegemony of neo-liberalism is coeval to the ascent of postmodernism in the cultural sphere. Postmodernism is characterized by an incredulity with respect to the modernist *metarécits*, by the logic of the simulacrum, depthlessness, ephemerality, instability, epistemological and ontological doubt, and by the coeval processes of homogenization and differentiation. Contra the proclamation that the major three grand narratives of modernity, viz. conservatism, liberalism, and socialism, have been rendered void under postmodernity it can be noted that the former two in their new guises as neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism are alive and well. With regard to socialism it can be remarked here that Marx's insights into the workings of capitalism remain of enormous critical significance under the regime of late capitalism.

The history of capitalism is commonly divided into four phases: mercantilism, industrialism, Keynesianism, and late capitalism. Late capitalist post-Fordism assumed dominance in the early 1970s. It constitutes our current economic order. Late capitalism and the information age are completely intertwined. The emergence of information technology is a necessary prerequisite for late capitalism. Cyberspace is the third dimension of global capitalism. Late, or information, capitalism is characterized by abstract, completely disconnected financial transactions which take place in the Net and move more capital in a matter of seconds than all the world's assets are worth combined. The 'disconnection' of the stock markets from the real economy has resulted in a financialization of the global market place which leads to an accumulation of cyclical financial crises. Speculation, the best example is the trading of derivatives which has skyrocketed in the last decades, has become a form of gambling. The disconnection of the financial system from active production and from any material monetary base has put into question the very basis on which value is supposed to rely. The postmodern crisis of representation, identity, and selfhood is connected to this momentous transformation of the global financial sphere.

The fact that each year tens of millions of human beings die of hunger is the scandal of the century, since our current global agriculture could feed twice as many people as the earth has got inhabitants. The postmodern subject of the West assents to its own mystification when it actively ignores this fact. It is part of late-capitalist mythology that competition is non-violent and that humankind is currently engaged in a 'great ascent'. The fetishistic disavowal of reality which characterizes the postmodern subject habitually glosses over the dark history of labor which is inherent to any commodity it consumes as

well as the fact that the hegemony of the global food oligopolies has resulted in a world situation in which millions of human beings die of starvation and curable diseases in a world characterized by abundance. The postmodern problematic of distributive injustice thus must be addressed by any work of art which aims at attaining critical significance. Our global system of cultural apartheid must be replaced by an order of a more just and truly democratic nature which democratizes the distribution of wealth on a global scale.

Under our present global turbo-capitalism, commodification has turned total. It is thus sensible, under the current circumstances, to speak of hyper-consumerism, as opposed to the rather moderate consumerism which was typical of modernity. The exchange value of social prestige expressed through consumption now rules supreme in our postmodern capitalist societies. Our education system no longer aims at the advancement of the students' critical faculties, but at turning them into spectatorial consumers and passive, compliant, apolitical citizens. Furthermore, neo-liberal capitalism has a distinctly negative influence on the global environment. At present, 55,000 species go extinct each year. We are thus living in the middle of a huge extinction crisis. Hence, the postmodern condition is a critical condition. For a work of art to be of critical significance it has to thematize the problematic of environmental degradation as well.

Postmodernity is the name of our current historical conjuncture and postmodernism is the name of the cultural consequences thereof and of the theory which attends to the latter. Furthermore, contrary to the neo-conservative claim of the 'end of history' history as 'the realm of necessity, materiality, the force of circumstances, institutions, events and developments that we cannot evade' obviously persists. The neo-liberalization of world politics has led to a situation in which the insights formulated by Marx some 150 years ago are again very much up-to-date. The neo-liberal counterrevolution was as much a class reaction of the Right to the 1968 uprisings as postmodernism was the reaction of the Left to the failing of said uprisings. The neo-liberal project was highly successful while postmodern theory has become dominant in academia over the course of the last three decades. However, in the new millennium a number of theorists has put forward the notion that postmodernism is dead, i.e., defunct as a valid approach of interpreting our current culture. Conversely, this study insists on the continuing relevance of a postmodern theory which has been purged of the poststructuralist fallacy.

The identity of base and superstructure is one of the main characteristics of postmodernism as theorized by Jameson. Culture has extended to encompass

the whole of society and, at the same time, has become synonymous with the economy. Everything has become cultural, and all of culture has been commodified. Postmodernism has raised commodification to the power of two. This constitutes a qualitative difference from the epoch of modernity and modernism as such. Postmodernity furthermore is distinguished by an explosion of micro-politics. The two paradoxical tendencies inherent to postmodernity, homogenization and differentiation, result in a Balkanization of the lower strata of society. Racism, xenophobia, homophobia, classism, and sexism remain valid tools of the authoritarian populism which is the political strategy of neo-liberalism. The world of politics has undergone a severe shift to the right over the course of the last decades. Today the former social democratic parties profess positions which were considered as conservative before the rise of the New Right.

Under late capitalism human beings are reduced to units of consumption and labor. Labor is kept in check by capital via the constant threat of outsourcing, the existence of an attendant reservoir of part-time workers, and the existence of the industrial reserve army of the unemployed. Working conditions worsen, while working hours increase, and the hard-won provisions in workers' rights gained through union power are rolled back. The dichotomy between the global market order and individual workers' lives has intensified greatly under late capitalism. Today's multinational corporations are de facto empires on which the sun never sets and the work force has to keep up with the thus effected cybernetic system of command and control. Production is outsourced while workers in the West are turned into interface machines and obedient automatons.

The postmodern condition is characterized by obscurity, acceleration, aesthetization, and ephemerality. Jameson's concept of late capitalism is identical with neo-liberal capitalism and the stage that Burbach refers to as globalization as well as Harvey's regime of flexible accumulation. The purported obsolescence of postmodernism can be considered as part and parcel of the postmodern 'theory of ruptures'. In our current phase we are lightyears away from any degree of resolution which would transcend the epistemes of postmodernism. The nature of our post-9/11 societies has led many theorists to attest to the already dystopian character of our present reality. To be postmodern is the realization that we are already living science-fictional lives at present. To be more specific, we live in a cyberpunk SF future, as imagined by the first-wave cyberpunk of the early 1980s.

In our current Information Age, propaganda, ideology, marketing, misinformation, advertisement, PR, social engineering, and spin play a pivotal

role for the dissemination of capitalist mythology through the mass media. The postmodern medium *per se* is television and nowadays is flanked by the Internet. Television has effected a depolitization of the populations of the West. This accounts for the wide-spread cynicism and apoliticism among the citizens of the West. The postmodern subject assents to its own mystification and ignores the ramifications of its apathetic ignorance and the consequences of its apoliticism which allows minority parties from the extreme right via a very low voter participation to gain ascendancy and the neo-conservative New Right's successors to continue to govern the postdemocratic state. This is the result of the postmodern disavowal of reality and the postmodern denial of tragedy in the political realm.

A real sense of tragedy, meaning an awareness of those realities the hegemonic discourse urges us to ignore, is a *sine qua non* for a realistic engagement with the current situation and as such a prerequisite of postmodern theorizing. This notion dovetails with the concept that SF has to function as postmodern tragedy. Art has not been exempt from postmodern capitalism's thrust towards hyper-commodification. It is therefore necessary to insist on art's continuing negative potential and its critical significance. Art of critical significance has in some way to engage contemporary reality, it has to be realistic in some way. The postmodern revival of realist fiction thus does not constitute a naïve return to the conventions of realism, but a combination, or hybrid, of postmodernist metafiction and the realist writing practice. It is not clear if this hybrid fiction constitutes a departure from literary postmodernism, or 'just' another phase within postmodernism. Some critics go as far as to equate contemporary SF and postmodern realism, arguing that SF does more justice to rendering the postmodern condition than (postmodern) social realism. Postmodern realism reflects deeply postmodern concerns in its engagement of alienation, death, terror, angst, and commodification. The postmodern fragmentation of subjectivity finds expression in literature in the postmodern erosion of character. Furthermore, postmodern realism is distinguished by its highlighting of contingency over teleology and its denial of resolution and moral. Postmodern realism combines over 100 years of literary history in an intertextual blend of conventions and styles which makes it a prototypically postmodern genre of hybrid fiction. In a parallel move contemporary SF displays a tendency of sampling the different story elements from its various previous phases. The history of the SF genre also stretches over the whole of the twentieth century up to the second half of the nineteenth century. Some critics argue that SF can provide texts which are more 'truthful' literary renderings of current

reality than Thomas Wolfe's new social realism. SF is *the* postmodern genre *par excellence*. Many critics concur that SF has become the representative fiction of the current age. Dystopian SF which deals with manmade catastrophes only reflects real-world phenomena. Cyberpunk SF marks the completion of the postmodernization of SF. Its aesthetic converges with the one endorsed in such postmodern works of art as the fiction by Pynchon, Coover, and Burroughs. Cyberpunk SF is the apogee of the feedback loop that exists between mainstream postmodernist writing and popular SF writing. It marks the point in time where contemporary mainstream fiction merges with SF. Cyberpunk explicitly addresses the postmodern problematics of distributive injustice and environmental degradation. Conversely, first-wave cyberpunk often displays a blatant apoliticism. Its successor, second-wave or postcyberpunk breaks with this unfortunate tradition. Postcyberpunk marks the recurrence of discreet utopian features in contemporary SF. Second-wave cyberpunk displays distinct sense of the political interconnectedness of current reality and the scenarios it projects. As has been shown in the chapter 7 of this study, contemporary dystopian fiction retains the potential of coming up with politically astute scenarios of critical significance.

Out of the thirteen SF novels discussed in chapter 7 of this study nine picture the future as a dystopia. Out of the four novels which imagine a better future one pictures a world in which the problematic of distributive justice has unraveled all by itself, thus favoring the homeopathic approach to global apartheid of neo-liberalism. Furthermore, the novel in question completely ignores the problematic of environmental degradation. The second novel concocts a scenario in which both postmodern problematics are solved by alien agency, i.e., a galactic, all-powerful deus ex machina is necessary to overcome the ills brought about by what once was just one part of the world, 'the socio-economic mode of one of the species on earth,' and what is today invested with the powers of fate, i.e., the totalitarian market order of late capitalism. The third novel is an example of the alternate history genre, a subgenre of SF, and although the world it imagines is not characterized by the stock topics of dystopian fiction as given by Mohr, it nevertheless ends with the imminent extinction of humankind. The fourth novel describes the present in a science fictional manner, but refrains from engaging the two postmodern problematics. From this small corpus one can thus discern a tendency towards the depiction of dystopian near futures in the SF texts from the last decades. This dovetails with Jameson's assessment that the only future the postmodern mindset is capable to imagine is a grim dystopia. Four of the novels from chapter 7 feature the topos of cannibalism.

Cannibalism in these works is an obvious and powerful metaphor for the unbridled and insatiable desire that is the driving force behind consumer capitalism. By using other human beings as a source for sustenance the cannibals in these four novels have totalized the commodifying logic of late capitalism; the human body has become a commodity whose use value resides in the amount of meat it provides. In *In the Country of Last Things* cannibalism is part of a commercial operation. Human beings are slaughtered and their flesh is harvested to be sold for money. The story speaks of a 'human slaughterhouse,' evoking the real-world terror of industrial farming. The harvested flesh is endowed with an exchange value. It is to realize this exchange value in the form of money that the butchers in the story kill their fellow human beings. In *Thirteen* there is only one single character who engages in the practice of cannibalism. The story's villain eats the bodies of the crew of the spaceship with which he has escaped from Mars. He does so to survive. There is no monetary incentive for his actions. This instance of anthropophagy neatly exemplifies a situation in which man has become man's wolf. The cannibal in *Thirteen* kills humans for the use value of their flesh. In *Rant* the acts of cannibalism that occur in the story are committed by persons who have been infected by a rabies virus. In the delirious stage of the disease the infected persons turn into 'zombies' and hunt for human prey. Since the epidemic is confined to the bottom half of society, to the stratum of the two-tier society pictured in the novel which is denied access to the consumer capitalism which shapes the world of the novel, the story's zombies exemplify the topos of repressed consumer desire. The postmodern subject under late capitalism is subjected to an infinite expansion of desire and it is incapable of differentiating desire from need. The walking dead in Palahniuk's novel embody the postmodern subject for which consumer desire has become the sole driving force. In *The Road* the majority of the remaining human population have turned into anthropophagi. The apocalyptic event in the past of the story has destroyed the world's animal population so the survivors of the cataclysm hunt for human prey instead. The story's two protagonists choose the more difficult way of subsistence, scavenging for food in the abandoned buildings along the road. The society in *The Road* has returned to the hunter/gatherer status. The father and son are gatherers and the cannibals are hunters. However, the cannibals also use their women as meat breeders. The bloodcultists impregnate their female members to eat the babies once they are born. This invokes the story of Cronus from Greek mythology. Cronus devoured his children to perpetuate himself. The members of the bloodcults in *The Road* consume their children for the same reason.

Human beings are thus reduced to an objects status, their sole value residing in the use value of their flesh. The story thus depicts a world in which late-capitalist competition has been driven to its furthest extremes. The story's world is characterized by an inversion of the situation under late capitalism. In the latter situation the world is governed by a totalization of the reign of the exchange value, while in the world of the story the world is solely governed by the use value of things and persons. There is no commerce going on in the world depicted in *The Road*.

In the world of *The Road* humanity is divided into two groups, hunters and gatherers. There is no society any more only small groups of left-over human beings who band together for protection. The problematic of environmental degradation looms large in the world of the novel. Planet earth in *The Road* has been ravaged by an apocalyptic event which has turned it into an ashen desert. The Entropy Myth is deconstructed by McCarthy by virtue of the story's post-apocalyptic setting.

Market Forces depicts a society where class difference has solidified into physical separation. The division of the story's population into haves and have-nots which represents the real-world two-tier societies established by the neo-conservative counterrevolution is shown through the ghettoization of the inhabitants of Morgan's fictitious UK. The gentrification characteristic to postmodern capitalism in the world of the novel has been turned total so that the poor are fenced in in the so-called zones, while the rich enjoy complete freedom of movement. Žižek's 'cultural apartheid' has been totalized in the story. The whole of society has turned into a system of gated communities. The story thus prototypically exemplifies the problematic of distributive injustice. *Rant* in a similar vein depicts a future two-tier society only that the separation in this story is not physical but temporal. The population in the story is divided into two groups. The haves live and work at daytime while the have-nots live and work at night. After the outbreak of the rabies epidemic in the story the class division enforced by the story's government turns lethal. Nighttimers who are found on the streets after curfew are shot on sight as Palahniuk's futuristic moral majority struggles to confine the epidemic to the lower stratum of society. The problematic of distributive injustice thus plays a central role in the unraveling of the story. The Entropy Myth is deconstructed by the fact that technological progress in the world of the novel culminates in a system of cultural apartheid. In *In the Country of Last Things* the whole of the population suffers from the exigencies of the entropic state the world has entered in the story. There is no direct reference to a group of people exempt from the contingent misery that rules the story's world. However, there still is

a division between those who have a home and those who have not. Nearly half of the population of Auster's postmodern metropolis are homeless and live on the streets. This reflects the gentrification of late capitalism as well as the steep rise in the number of homeless people in the US after half a decade of Reaganomics. The problematic of environmental degradation is hinted at in the story by the extreme weather which characterizes its setting. Half of the population freezes to death in the Terrible Winter in the story which could be considered as a stand-in for the Greenhouse Effect. *Intrusion* hints at the existence of an upper class of individuals who 'run things'. The story however is confined to the world of the working class under the totalitarian one-party dictatorship. *Intrusion* is the most classical dystopia discussed in this study. It focuses on many of the topics typical of dystopian fiction, but does not engage the postmodern problematic of injustice. The problematic of environmental degradation however is openly addressed in the story. As in *In the Country of Last Things* and *Hocus Pocus* the weather has been transformed by the actions of man. In the world of *Intrusion* man's efforts to countermand climate change has brought on the threat of a new ice age. In *Hocus Pocus*, Vonnegut in a similar vein uses the topos of an imminent ice age as a stand-in for global warming. In *Hocus Pocus* the population is divided into two classes as well, the ruling class and the servant class. The story's protagonist belongs to the servant class as do most of its other characters. Racism and classism are exemplified by said division of the population. While the ruling class is unified under one sole agenda, the servant class is divided along the lines of race and status. The have-nots are discriminated against and oppressed by the government. The postmodern surplus population, the societal group which Marx called the industrial reserve army and the *Lumpenproletariat* is soaked up by the ever growing carceral archipelago in the world of the story. The government in the story is reduced to the executive function of policing and looking out for the members of the ruling class. The story thus engages both problematics of the postmodern as well as the Extropy Myth. In *Super Sad True Love Story* the population is divided into High Net Worth Individuals and Low Net Worth Individuals. The former almost resemble a distinct species of evolved human beings by virtue of the fact that they benefit from life extension technology which helps them to prolong their lives indefinitely. The have-nots, on the other hand, live in tent cities at Central Park and when a riot breaks out among them the government chooses the Pinochet option to squelch it in the bud. The National Guard opens fire on the poor and a civil war breaks out which in the world of the story is referred to as the Rupture. The life extension technology in the story is an exemplification of the Extropy

Myth. At the end of the book postmodern gentrification is exemplified as well when the Low Net Worth Individuals are driven from the city at gunpoint. Neo-liberal privatization is reflected by the fact that a multinational corporation takes over the US National Guard. Since the National Guard has taken over the function of policing in the story, the corporate takeover translates into a bona fide coup d'état. The civil war in the story ends with reentrenchment of the status quo. The escalator effect of the Extropy Myth is clearly deconstructed by the story. Furthermore, the problematic of distributive injustice is directly addressed, while the problematic of environmental degradation is only addressed at one single point of the story. However, this is carried out in such a way that makes clear that even if the system of global apartheid were to be overcome, the human race would still have to face the impending catastrophe of ecological devastation. In *Kingdom Come*, the population is divided into those who are part of the conspiracy and those who are left out. The nationalist and xenophobic sentiments of the citizens of the fascist republic of the shopping mall is directed against immigrants and people with no interest in sports. Those who take up the St George's cross as a fascist insignia are part of the postmodern society of the spectacle and are provided with their 'bread and circuses' in the form of sporting events and xenophobic violence after the end of the games. The foreigners who serve as the target for the recurring miniature race riots in the story have to live in fear, while the citizens of the shopping mall vent their existential postmodern boredom through violence and elective psychopathology. *Kingdom Come* does not engage the postmodern problematic of ecological survival, but the problematic of distributive injustice is hinted at by the text through the fact that monetary financial solvency is the supreme exclusion criterion of the society of the spectacle as theorized by Derrida. The population in *Thirteen* is basically divided into genetically engineered human beings, so-called Variants, and naturally-bred human beings. There is one area in the story where the racism of old has not been overcome which is called Jesusland by the characters. However, this area is clearly marked as deviant in the story. All the other states have managed to abolish racism, classism, and sexism and liberal democracy has covered the globe. The Variants are the only societal group which is discriminated against. The world of the story has remained under the rule of neo-liberal late capitalism. 100 years of human evolution have thus gone by without any change of the organizing principle of society. The problematic of distributive injustice is only hinted at in the story. The North-South divide is still in place and there is still an underclass in existence which provides the menial work for the upper

strata. This societal group is made up out of immigrants from the south. *Thirteen* fails to imagine any qualitative change from the actually existing world of the present. The story favors Johan Norberg's homeopathic approach to global poverty and completely ignores the problematic of environmental degradation. *Pattern Recognition* constitutes the one novel from the corpus whose action is temporally located in the present. Furthermore, Gibson's alternate present is not marked as dystopian. The novel is further set apart from the rest of the corpus by the fact that its protagonist has a superhuman capability which cannot be explained by (pseudo-)scientific discourse. The superhuman capabilities of the title character in *Rant* are pseudo-scientifically explained as a consequence of the story's version of the time travel novum. However, the problematic of distributive injustice is at least hinted at in Gibson's story. There are two societal groups of people in the novel. There is the upper class to which all the actants of the story belong and the underclass which resides in the background of the story and which is excluded from the novel's glitzy consumer-capitalist hyperreality. The problematic of environmental degradation is completely missing in the story. In *Cold Allies* the world's population is divided along the lines of the present-day North-South divide. The impoverished South is at war with the for the better part still wealthy North. This state of affairs mirrors the global apartheid which characterizes the global situation of geopolitics at the present. Both problematics of postmodernity are exemplified by the story and the fact that an alien deus ex machina is employed by the story to solve them clearly emphasizes the pressing urgency of finding a solution for their real-world equivalents. The world of *Brother Termite* is divided into two groups of beings, those who can reproduce and those who cannot. The alien species in the story is unable to reproduce and has rendered the human race infertile as well. Only the genetically-bred hybrids which combine the DNA of the aliens with that of the human species have a future in the world of the story. Humankind has become extinct. The alien species represents the malign influence of late capitalism in the world of the story. The alien race's history is one of genocide, and the nature of their community is infinite expansion. The problematic of distributive justice is thus engaged metaphorically by the story. The fact that the human race in the novel has allowed the alien species to render it incapable of reproduction is a direct result of the political apathy of the postdemocratic postmodern subject. The novel thus depicts the politically apathetic postmodern subject of the present day. The Extropy Myth is engaged in the story by the fact that even the highly involved technology of

the alien race is incapable to provide it with a future. *The Serene Invasion* engages both problematics of the postmodern. As was the case in *Cold Allies* an all-powerfull alien deus ex machina is employed which solves humanity's most pressing problems. The fact that the ban on violence effected by the aliens leads to the complete dissolution of the capitalist society depicted in the story highlights the structural violence which is the basis of our world system of global apartheid. The earth's population in the story at the beginning is divided into haves and have-nots. The latter are prototypically represented by an Indian street child who serves as a focalizer, while the former are represented by a prototypical member of the inner bourgeoisie, the tycoon of a multinational corporation which is ruined by the aliens' benign influence and who also serves as a focal character. The world population is rendered capable of differentiating need from desire again by the influence of the aliens and thus loose all interest in the useless (use value-less) commodities peddled by the tycoon's corporation. Nearly all of the SF texts discussed in this study thus engage the two postmodern problematics as well as the Extropy Myth. This proves that contemporary SF is highly capable of providing art works of critical significance. The over-all conclusion of this study with regard to the corpus of literary SF investigated in chapter 7 is that the literary genre which by many is considered as perfectly apolitical in fact is highly political and clearly critically reflects upon the contemporary situation. A common characteristic which all the texts discussed share is that they belong to the realm of postmodern literature as given by Currie. The texts exemplify Currie's threefold spectrum of postmodern novels which illustrates the fact that postmodern literature is still alive and well and that contemporary literary production does not transcend the epistemes of the postmodern. Not only is our contemporary still largely congruent with the postmodern condition as theorized by Jameson, but contemporary art can still be interpreted along the lines of postmodern theory.

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- i http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chuck_Palahniuk#.22Guts.22_and_Haunted; 03/20/14, 17:21 hrs.
- ii [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Split_personality_\(disambiguation\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Split_personality_(disambiguation)); 07/30/13, 19:07 hrs.
- iii For an extensive study of the phenomenon of alienation in the contemporary see Jaeggi 2005.
- iv The term 'vulgar Marxist' is commonly applied to denominate a classical Marxist position which holds that the base, i.e., the economy, completely and necessarily determines all the artifacts of the superstructural entity of culture.
- v Curiously, while the English translation was published in 1982, the German version was only published in 2010. I am using the latter edition here.
- vi For a more extensive criticism of Baudrillard see Kellner 1995.
- vii https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Noam_Chomsky; 07/02/14, 20:50 hrs.
- viii Compare subchapter 4.7
- ix <http://www.onedayswages.org/about/what-extreme-global-poverty>; 04/02/14, 18:34 hrs.
- x Compare subchapter 2.4
- xi The term 'authoritarian populism' was coined by Stuart Hall, one of the precursors of the discipline of cultural studies. Drawing upon Nicos Poulantzas's concept of 'authoritarian etatism' "kreierte Hall den 'absichtlich widersprüchlichen Begriff' des autoritären Populismus, um genau den widersprüchlichen Charakter der aufkommenden Verhältnisse zu treffen: eine Bewegung zu einer autoritären Form demokratischer Klassenpolitik" (Kannankulam, 254).
- xii Compare subchapter 2.1.3
- xiii https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Karl_Marx; 06/29/14, 21:08 hrs.
- xiv Compare subchapter 2.4
- xv Compare subchapter 2.1.2
- xvi http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Consensus; 01/25/13, 19:38 hrs.
- xvii http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seoul_Development_Consensus; 01/25/13, 20:12 hrs.
- xviii Compare subchapter 4.7
- xix http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_for_the_New_American_Century#cite_note-RAD2000-14; 08/03/13, 16:43 hrs.
- xx Compare subchapter 4.4
- xxi Incidentally, Carl Freedman calls Marx "one of the major theorists of science fiction" (Carl Freedman quoted in Gözen, 41).
- xxii http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/#California.27s_deregulation_and_subsequent_energy_crisis; 01/23/13, 21:36 hrs.
- xxiii Ibid.
- xxiv Compare subchapter 2.1.2
- xxv http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Margaret_Thatcher; 05/01/13, 17:11 hrs.
- xxvi Note that Kannankulam in this regard speaks of the myth of the *Wirtschaftswunder*. He points out that the "Kapazitätsverlust [der deutschen Wirtschaft nach Kriegsende] lediglich maximal 20% gemessen am Stand von 1937 [...] betrug" (Kannankulam, 156).
- xxvii http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kasino-Kapitalismus#Susan_Strange; 01/16/14, 14:03 hrs.
- xxviii http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_a/interact/www.worldgame.org/wwwproject/what-b.shtml; 03/16/13, 18:21 hrs.
- xxix http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Accumulation_by_dispossession; 02/08/13, 15:15 hrs.
- xxx http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Warren_Buffett; 02/05/13, 11:09 hrs.
- xxxi http://www.economist.com/node/3518560?story_id=3518560; 01/16/14, 14:46 hrs.
- xxxii Note by the way that since Lenin pushed through the implementation of a Fordist regime of factory production in Soviet Russia, the Soviet Union never was a truly Communist country, but just implemented an alternative version of capitalism.
- xxxiii Compare subchapter 4.4
- xxxiv http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heisenberg_principle; 02/10/13, 13:40 hrs.

- ^{xxxv} Henceforth, I will use the tripartite categorization that Jameson uses, instead of the quadripartite one which categorizes capitalism into the four phases of mercantilism, industrialism, Keynesianism, and globalization and instead of Burbach's categorization which gives the four phase of capitalism as mercantilism, industrial capitalism, monopoly capitalism, and globalization.
- ^{xxxvi} According to Featherstone "in August 1975, [a] newspaper announced that postmodernism is dead and that 'post-postmodernism is now the thing'" (Featherstone, 1).
- ^{xxxvii} I use the term 'abstract labor' in the sense in which Robert Kurz employs said term, i.e., as denominating the kind of work which is characteristic for capitalism, viz. alienated and alienating labor. Marx uses the term differently. Marx employs the term abstract labor as opposed to concrete labor, the former applying to human labor in general as a quantifiable entity relating to the exchange value and the latter applying to the specific act of production in particular relating to the use value.
- ^{xxxviii} <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty>; 06/20/11, 1:04 hrs.
- ^{xxxix} <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extropy>; 04/12/13, 10:31 hrs.
- ^{xi} <http://www.indexmundi.com/g/r.aspx?v=69>; 09/14/13, 20:33 hrs.
- ^{xii} Ibid.
- ^{xlii} Note that some critics such as Brooks Landon discern another stage in the development of the genre, consisting of the wave of feminist SF of the 1970s and 1980s.
- ^{xliii} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/An_Anna_Blume; 07/10/14, 09:05 hrs.
- ^{xliv} Interestingly enough Peter Freese in his 2009 monography about Kurt Vonnegut's novels is unaware of the fact that the town of Scipio actually exists (Freese, 684).
- ^{xlvi} The American dream has lost its sway in the real world as well. Of all the Western industrialized countries today the US is the one with the least amount of upward social mobility. Cp. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Upward_mobility#Upward_and_downward_mobility; 06/28/2014, 17:13 hrs.
- ^{xlvi} https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folter#.E2.80.9EKrieg_gegen_den_Terror.E2.80.9C_ab_2001; 06/28/14, 21:17 hrs.
- ^{xlvi} https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/M18_Claymore; 02/26/15, 17:52 hrs.
- ^{xlviii} https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Anatole_France; 02/10/15, 10:59 hrs.
- ^{xlix} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._G._Ballard#Dystopian_fiction; 02/23/14, 16:25 hrs.
- ⁱ Ibid.
- ^{li} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._G._Ballard; 02/23/14, 16:03 hrs.
- ^{lii} <http://www.bsfa.co.uk/www.vectormagazine.co.uk/article.asp%3FarticleID=62.html>; 06/18/14, 15:22 hrs.
- ^{liii} Ibid.
- ^{liv} [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rant_\(novel\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rant_(novel)); 04/13/13, 18:12 hrs.
- ^{lv} Ibid.