NEW COMPARISONS IN WORLD LITERATURE

The Global Novel and Capitalism in Crisis

Contemporary Literary Narratives

Treasa De Loughry

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New Comparisons in World Literature

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To Andy Mullen, my co-conspirator.

Do Colm Ó Ceallaigh—múinteoir, údar, agus Daideo.

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Contents

1 Introduction: Global, Postcolonial, and World Literatures 1
Part I: Global, Postcolonial, and World Literatures 1
Part II: Literature and Crisis 7
Part III: The Global Novel*: Overview* 11
Works Cited 18

2 Global Literature, Realism, and the World-System in Crisis 25
Part I: World Lite, Global Lit 25
Part II: Realism, Form, and Crisis 28
Part III: World-Systems Theory and Capitalism-in-Crisis 35
Works Cited 41

3 "Worlds in Collision": Salman Rushdie, Globalisation, and Postcoloniality-in-Crisis 45
Part I: Introduction: Postcolonial Disenchantment 45
Part II: The Moor's Last Sigh *and the Capitalist Realist Epic* 48
Part III: The Ground Beneath Her Feet*'s Incommensurable Worlds* 60
Part IV: America's Signal Crisis in Fury 68
Works Cited 81

4 "Prophet Malthus Surveyed a Dustbowl": David Mitchell, Neo-Malthusianism, and the World-Ecology in Crisis 87
Part I: Introduction: A "Novel Globalism" 87
Part II: Ghostwritten *and the Global Optic of Hegemony* 92
Part III: Cloud Atlas, *Neo-Malthusianism, and Eco-Apocalypse* 103
Part IV: The Bone Clocks, *Vampirish Predacity, and Climate Change* 115
Works Cited 124

5 Aesthetic Attitudes to Globalisation: Rana Dasgupta, Capitalism-in-Crisis, and Narrating the World 131
Part I: Introduction: World-Systemic Realism 131
Part II: Globalisation and Capitalism-in-Crisis in Tokyo Cancelled 136
Part III: Solo *and Surviving Millennial Capitalism* 150
Works Cited 163

6 "FAC UT ARDEAT": Rachel Kushner, the World-Historical Novel, and Energetic Materialism 169
Part I: Introduction: Resources and Historical Novels 169
Part II: Reading for Sugar in Telex from Cuba 173
Part III: Galvanic Energy and Resistance in The Flamethrowers 181
Works Cited 197

7 Conclusion: Towards a Literary Internationale? 201
Works Cited 206

Index 209

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Global, Postcolonial, and World Literatures

Part I: Global, Postcolonial, and World Literatures

Arundhati Roy, in *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (2014), states that "Capitalism is going through a crisis whose gravity has not revealed itself yet" (p. 45). Roy's diagnosis of capitalism's fault lines—of wealth hoarding, environmental toxification, falling growth rates, and increasing strikes—is unusual in its maximal overview of capitalism's weaknesses, presenting a complex but compound series of cascading ecological and economic crises.[1] Yet many accounts of capitalism-in-crisis have not attended to its longue durée, regional differentiation or cognisance that capitalism is the process and gravitational field through which environments are organised, labour commodified, and imperialism funded. Likewise, Marxist postcolonial scholar Timothy Brennan eschews a renewed fascination with the novelty of crisis, of its "'epistemic breaks,' 'Copernican revolutions,' and 'historical ruptures'" (2014, p. 11), noting instead that "a political break can be affected as much by historical continuities as by ruptures", or in Marx's famous formulation that history occurs first as tragedy then as farce (2004, p. 85). That contemporary financial systems are too complex for even neoliberal technocrats to understand is a symptom, *prima facie*, of algorithmic convolutions, but also the almost sublime nature of global capitalism, and the difficulties involved in imagining a longue durée world-system structured by repeated cycles and speculative busts, especially

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in a period of economic decline and hegemonic transition. This general "*cultural* debility" (Mirowski 2013, p. 12), or the unimaginable totality of capitalism, is a consequence for Fredric Jameson of the "ugly and bureaucratic representational qualifications" (2009c, p. 608) of a world that conditions its own horizons of understandings, and that finds its own demise incomprehensible.

This monograph is concerned with how with a combined crisis of capitalism is likewise registered in disciplinary and representational terms as an incapacity to narrate totality, alongside a dissatisfaction with postcolonial literary modes, and an attempt to "make real" capitalist globalisation and its worsening situation. Global fictions are here differentiated against world literature given the latter's emergence from comparative literary studies and emphasis on "great works" of art.[2] In contrast, global literature emerged from the massification of postcolonial literary studies, taking its germinal thematic focus from discussions of "after empire" while deploying transnational and deterritorialised narratives that mobilise postcolonial tropes such as "*hybridity, diaspora, transculturation, subaltern, hegemony, deterritorialization, rhizome, mestizo, Eurocentrism* and *othering*" (Gunn 2001, p. 18; see also O'Brien and Szeman 2001, p. 605).[3] However, for O'Brien and Szeman, editors of a special issue on "The Globalization of Fiction/The Fiction of Globalization" (2001), it "does not really make sense to search for a literature of globalization—for texts that explicitly thematize the processes of globalization—any more than it does to search for particularly explicit examples of postcolonial literature" (p. 610) due to the breadth of globalisation's definition as a mode of economic expansion, cultural homogenisation, and synonym for American dominance. But despite this critique global literatures can be negatively defined: unlike postcolonial studies and its concern with the socio-political legacies of empire, anti-colonisation movements, and institutional canonicity, the global novel unevenly registers the nation as an important category, has expansive geographical horizons, a long historical scale, and often thematises its leave-taking of postcolonial aesthetics and concerns while being "born translated" (Walkowitz 2015) for a global literary audience based in Northern metropoles. Studies of global fictions are eclectic, focusing on the circulation and production of literary forms, or in studies of American narratives of consumption (Annesley 2006); in warnings about the reproduction of America in "global" works that manufacture the local "*as* the world" (Brennan 2001, p. 661), or as Baucom ponders whether "Expansion contracts; contraction enriches" (2001, p. 169);

or of globalisation as simply a long-standing, even ancient, consensual exchange of ideas, goods and people that expands literature's horizons of possibility (Gunn 2001, p. 20; Israel 2004, pp. 2–3). What most of these accounts share is an emphasis on the role hegemonic regions like North America and Europe still play in consecrating and disseminating such literatures; and how this reproduces American or "global northern" literary works as the "world".[4]

But for Gikandi postcolonial literature's global thrust gained currency exactly because of its emphasis on mobility and migrancy, a turn that risked ignoring an "other, darker, older narrative of poverty, of failed nationalism, of death, that will simply not go away" (2001, p. 639). Taking heed of such warnings, this monograph's conceptual apparatus is perversely not drawn from the same postcolonial ground from whence global literature emerged: such an approach would merely confirm the ongoing circulation and cachet of particular "postcolonial" tropes, like a scepticism towards socialist post-independence nation-states, a privileging of modernist stylistics, and a recirculation of questions of transnational belonging. The body of global works examined here by Salman Rushdie, David Mitchell, Rana Dasgupta, and Rachel Kushner, focused as intently as they are on post-colonial disenchantment, frictionless global circulation, and US empire, seem not to have much to say about the postcolonial as a body of critically urgent work that reclaims, as Bhagat Kennedy argues, "cultural, economic, and political sovereignty" (2018, p. 335). Compare the lively and sustained engagement with questions of postcolonial style, national development, and political possibility in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), against the cosmopolitan deterritorialisation of his global rock epic *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999), the planetary coincidences and historical compression of Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows* (2009), or US empire as a cipher for desire and repulsion in Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007). Rather this monograph finds fecund critical ground in materialist world-literary studies that bring together world-systems theory, Marxist postcolonial approaches, and "second wave" ecocriticism, to examine the narrative strategies of modes of realism and narratives of globalisation, conditioned as they are by "rational" attunements to capitalist reality, amidst a flattening of national differences, the diminishment of political possibilities, and imaginaries that tend to figure the end of the world sooner than the end of late capitalism (Jameson 2009b, p. 50).

To return to the idea of "disciplinary" crises, a recent turn in world-literary studies towards historical capitalism rather than strictly colonialism emerged in part because of the omissions of postcolonial studies to

account for the period of post-independence as one of continued asset-stripping through structural readjustment: or the new financial mechanisms by which formally colonised nation-states experienced shock integrations into the world-system, involving intensified rounds of privatisation, deregulation, and a collapse in subsistence economies, in ways that maintained ongoing structurally disadvantageous positions, or the status quo of core-periphery dynamics (Lazarus 2011, pp. 7–9; see also Brennan 2004; Lazarus 2004; Parry 2004a). A materialist world-literary theory thus responds to a perceived difficulty or conceptual incapacity in the field of postcolonial studies to grapple with a situation that exceeds anti-colonial temporalities or conditions and demands a new critical language to parse the complex and ongoing oppressions of an uneven world-system, rather than an over-determined use of the "postcolonial". Such work takes capitalism as the "interpretive horizon" of literature (Brown 2005, p. 1), with the spread of European colonialism and capitalism producing a "baseline of universality" (p. 2) of experiences and sensoriums throughout the world. Most notably the Warwick Research Collective (WReC), marry Brown's insights with Moretti's account of the "one, and unequal" world-literary system (Moretti 2004, p. 149; WReC 2015, pp. 7–9), and Fredric Jameson's equation of modernity to "worldwide capitalism" (2002, p. 12), to describe their method as an analysis of "*the literature of the modern capitalist world-system* [….] modernity is both what world-literature indexes or is 'about' and what gives world-literature its distinguishing formal characteristics" (p. 15). For such critics, world-literary analyses involve reading for the formal disjunctions of fictions that register the alienating affects of capitalist modernity, especially in the peripheries and semi-peripheries of the world-system, where the violence of appropriation is most visibly expressed. Taking on the precepts of world-systems theory thus means attending to the longue durée of a system that is a world-economy, or to paraphrase Immanuel Wallerstein, an economy that is a world unto itself, with capitalism's recurring hegemonic long-waves and economic cycles the major structuring logic of modernity. Secondly, world-systems theory's tripartite scheme of core/periphery/semi-periphery restructures the global economy according to differential logics of accumulation, rather than the temporalising effect of the "post" in postcolonial, with peripheries areas of resource extraction and cheap labour, semi-peripheries those regions where prices for labour and raw material are calculated, and core regions where wealth is hoarded, and cultural capital bestowed anew.[5]

In the context of this theoretical shift, postcolonial *literary* studies is reappraised as a "pragmatic adjustment to the demise of the socialist-communist emancipatory movements that swept across the Third World and flourished during the 'Bandung' years" (Lazarus 2011, p. 9). The shift in postcolonial energies from anti-imperialist political movements after the end of World War II, towards the subsumption of anti-colonial energies following the advent of neoliberalism, occurred during what world-systems theorist Wallerstein describes as the "first bifurcation" (2011, p. 156)[6] of the world-economy. Although the global protests of 1968 were generally against capitalism and US imperialism, they also marked the moment in which many anti-systemic movements were rejected, including "social-democrats in the West, the Communist parties in the socialist bloc, the national liberation movements in the Third World" (Wallerstein 2011, p. 157). The defeat of postcolonial liberation movements through mechanisms like Structural Adjustment Programs that compelled peripheral and post-Soviet states to adjust to "'normal' capitalism" (Amin 1997, p. 13), also corresponded with a "sea change" (Lazarus 2004, p. 4) in the 1980s in postcolonial theory, (not just the political-economic resistance movements of the post-colonial era), with a formal approach to culture allowing scholars a detachment from social concerns, and "'an astonishing sense of weightlessness with regard to the gravity of history'" (Said qtd. Parry 2004a, p. 4).[7] The "exciting play of an infinite self-fashioning" (Brennan 2004, p. 138) of postcolonial literary theory after its institutionalisation in the academy led it to privilege migration, cosmopolitanism, and mobility as virtuous traits in terms that accorded with the consensual, transnational ideals of capitalist globalisation (see Dirlik 1994). This included its hostility to the nation-state and its sense of having "moved *past* colonialism and imperialism" (Brennan 2004, p. 138), which culminated in the post-1989 position that "socialism itself was pronounced dead and buried" (Lazarus 2004, p. 5). For Said postcolonialism had become a "misnomer" (2002, p. 2) against the continuing effects of neo-colonial technics, and "structures of dependency and impoverishment".

For contemporary critics of postcolonial literary studies, its focus on "imperialism rather than capitalism" (Deckard 2015, p. 239) is symptomatic of an "end of history" aporia and dismissal of alternate political histories, in which capitalism is an invisible cause, about which little can be said, rendering postcolonial studies insufficient as a method for fathoming the conditions by which peripheral nations have been further structurally

disadvantaged (Bernard et al. 2015, p. 6; Lazarus 2011, p. 17). This critique of postcolonial studies as seemingly reluctant and incapable of identifying the structural nature of previous and ongoing (neo)colonialisms began to emerge in the early 1990s. Anne McClintock, in a well-known article, targeted the production of postcolonialism as a marketable and non-threatening field of study (1992, p. 93) that ignored the uneven and diverse reality of postcolonial conditions and politics (p. 87), including the funding of ecological extraction and economic devaluing by the World Bank and IMF (p. 95). Arif Dirlik similarly noted how textualist studies privileged heterogeneous, local, and subjective forms of experience or a "politics of location" (1994, p. 336) that displaced anti-imperialist politics with questions of epistemic instability and the fragmentation of the body politic, with Aijaz Ahmad sensationally remarking that such approaches risked producing the "*death* of politics" (1992, p. 65). The post-Soviet age was not one of "postcolonialism but of intensified colonialism" (Miyoshi 1993, p. 750) even though it had a different aspect to previous moments of imperialism and used new technologies of profiteering and expansion.

What was required was a new conceptual framework, not simply a vocabulary shift, to evaluate how colonial relations did not precede capitalist modernity, but were in fact animated by it. Since the US' invasion of Iraq sharper questions have emerged regarding postcolonial theory as a means of historicising and critiquing new forms of imperialism, albeit drawing on older narratives of imperial rise and fall, like that of ancient Rome (Loomba et al. 2005, p. 1). Another attempt to name conditions of imperial power arose in Amitava Kumar's anthology on "World Bank Literature", in which he calls for a "different protocol of reading" (2003, p. xix) to imagine the vast causes by which local quixotic responses to national economic downturns are connected with decisions taken by multinational institutions like the World Bank. Although Kumar's anthology eschews the lessons of world-systems theory, its attempt to link local malaises with transnational economic systems is symptomatic of the disciplinary challenges and theoretical aporias of postcolonial theory. Concurrently, emergent theories of postcolonial-ecocriticism sought to examine the intertwined nature of political and ecological injustice in terms that would illuminate intensified forms of ecological extraction committed globally (Mukherjee 2010, p. 6).[8]

Materialist world-literary theories, most noticeably that of the Warwick Research Collective (WReC), provide a vital strand in this

renewal of Marxist thought, with the collective arguing that the horizons of the literary unconscious are always those of global capitalism and that the "world-system exists unforgoably as the matrix within which all modern literature takes shape and comes into being" (2015, p. 20) to different degrees of criticality and reflection. A cohort of affiliated scholars extends the implications of this work to argue for worlded eco-materialist approaches that consider capitalism not only as an economic system, but as a *world-ecology*—or how capitalist expansion is both fuelled by the appropriation of nature's "free gifts", but also forcibly alters and locks regional socio-ecologies into global systems. This includes Michael Niblett's approach which takes Jason W. Moore's capitalist world-ecology as world-literature's "interpretive horizon" (2012, p. 20); Kerstin Oloff's historicisation of the Caribbean gothic in relation to ecological revolutions, from colonial plantations to US imperialism (2012); or Sharae Deckard on the aesthetic registration of monocrops from cacao to tea (2017). What differentiates this field from more "traditional" world-literary studies concerned with translation and reading practices is an urgency around reading for social and environmental injustice, and the presumption of culture's oppositional force in navigating and making understandable vast and often unimaginably global processes. This careful attention to politics, power, and form makes this body of materialist world-literary thought a critical and necessary one for reading for global fiction's registration of compound and terminal crises of capitalism.

Part II: Literature and Crisis

If the emergence of postcolonial literary studies in the 1970s and 1980s offers a practical accommodation to the demise of radical socialism through a detached analysis of empire, subjectivity, and form, then global fictions appear towards the end of the millennium as the "late-stage" consequence of friction-free globalisation, and an effervescent Clintonian-era utopian investment in notions of cosmopolitan belonging and "in-between" migrant identities. Global literature often eschews or quickly passes over anti-colonial struggles and politics and is often written in a "post-national" vein in mass literary works that encode the easy transnational mobility and spritely planetary viewpoint of a literature that reproduces the ambition of globalisation in its narrative structure, character movements, and plot progressions. Consider David Mitchell's multi-story

country-hopping *Ghostwritten* (1999), or Alex Garland's *The Tesseract* (1998), one of the earlier examples of a global novel that telescopes meaning through a fragmented narrative form, or the "tesseract" which operates aptly as a metaphor for capitalism as "a thing you are not equipped to understand. You can only understand the tesseract [….] We can see the thing unravelled, but not the thing itself" (2007, p. 249). The idea of the tesseract as something that can only be seen through its dissolution or trace is dangerously suggestive of the perpetual deferment of meaning of "post" theories, but finds usefulness as a metaphor for the vast networks that now constitute lived experience and which can only be observed through their epiphenomenal affects.

Conditioning the emergence of global fictions is a concern with recovering agency and causality through richly researched and imagined multi-site historical fictions: this includes carefully patterned histories of colonialism and post-independence criminal capitalism in Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), Bulgarian and Georgian communist and post-Soviet transnationalism in Rana Dasgupta's *Solo* (2009), or Rachel Kushner's Amazon-New York-Italy interlinks in *The Flamethrowers* (2013). The impetus for these globally interlinked historical works is to consider what a history of the present might look like when financial volatility, resource scarcity, and geopolitical conflict, crowd out future political imaginings. Despite the originary differences between global and world fictions, one from postcolonial literatures, the other from comparative studies, they are now more than ever often spoken of in the same vein—an obvious consequence of the globalising thrust of contemporary works, and the circulation of fiction. But it is also worth, given these conceptual slippages, considering what world literature can teach us about global fictions given that its emergence and contemporary popularity is linked to economic crisis.

The editors of a recent special issue on "Global Crises And Twenty-First-Century World Literature" (Hansong and Wojno-Owczarska 2018), rightly note that Marx and Engel's "The Communist Manifesto" (1848) was written under the shadow of labour disruptions, food riots, economic depression, and political revolution (pp. 245–246). World literature's conceptualisation, from Goethe to Auerbach, is always presented as a potential salve to the "crises" of national parochialism, and a symptom of the internationalisation of economy and culture. Goethe's meditations on world literature are described by Martin Puchner as "a solution to the dilemma" he "faced as a provincial intellectual caught between

metropolitan domination and nativist nationalism" (2017); Marx and Engels' world literature emerged during an expansive phase of financial capitalist-colonialism in tension with the immiseration of Europe's proletarian classes and the globalisation of emancipatory revolts; and Auerbach's that of a post-World War II desire to unite a broken Europe. These crises are articulated at different levels—the personal, social, political, national—and with varied outcomes, and in contemporary revisions are removed from a consideration of how they may interrelate to world-systemic crises which also take discrete forms (overaccumulation, financial over-extension, scarcity), and manifest differently depending on one's positionality in relation to the world-economy. Put differently, the cosmopolitan and humanist ambition of Goethe's world literature, or the interlinking of globalisation with novel cultural habits for Marx and Engels are not deterministically tied to world-economic flows, but always operate as "structures of feeling" or what Raymond Williams defines as the residual, emergent, and dominant aspects of social change, which are variously registered in aesthetic, thematic, critical, and conceptual terms.

Fredric Jameson's "political unconscious" (1981) offers a different way into this issue. Rather than saying *tout court* that world literature is itself a "crisis mode of cultural production" (Hansong and Wojno-Owczarska 2018, p. 246) dealing with a variety of issues "From epidemics to political scams and scandals, climate change to species extinction, financial crashes to terrorism" (p. 246), or the global novel as a means of narrating the "'War on Terror,' the 2008 financial crash, the European 'migrant crisis,' and U.S./Mexico border politics" (Anam 2019), we may ask how it is that narrative conventions and literary modes like realism, modernism, or world-historical narratives stabilise and mould how we apprehend crisis, particularly if our current conjuncture is one of hegemonic transition and world-economic decline. For Jameson literary forms sediment traces of older narrative forms and modes of production, while staging within itself social contradictions, like history's "absent causality" and totality's appearance in parts. Crises are mediated through inherited literary modes and presuppositions that can maintain, limit, challenge, and/or expand our apprehension of the nature of these events, and these are registered differently according to the conditions within which literary works emerge.

More specifically, if the current moment is one of disciplinary and representational transformations, what is the broader nature of the economic or ecological crises to which many of these theories and works respond?

For environmental historian Jason W. Moore, world-systems theorist Giovanni Arrighi, and Marxist literary critic Fredric Jameson, there are two overarching forms of capitalist crisis. Firstly, capitalism's normative condition depends upon constant crises of, for example, resource and energy scarcity to produce discursive and material justifications to overcome barriers to accumulation and expand into new commodity frontiers. Capitalism develops, as Jameson notes, like a "spiral" which is "discontinuous but expansive" mutating into "a larger sphere of activity and a wider field of penetration, of control, investment and transformation" (2009a, p. 139). These are called cyclical and developmental crises and are expressions of the "maturing contradictions inscribed in those regimes of value, power, and nature that govern capitalism over the *longue durée*, and through successive long centuries of accumulation" (Moore 2014, p. 290). This notion of "normative" and cyclical crises glosses Marx's differentiation of contradictions, of overproduction or financial speculation, or what Paul Mason describes as the "major phenomena of the twentieth century" that complicate accumulation—of "state capitalism, monopolies, complex financial markets and globalization" (Mason 2015, p. 54). What interests us here are not the finely drawn differences between accumulative cycles or institutional pressures, but rather how culture narrates developmental crises, through say, the consideration of historical colonialism and contemporary capitalism as proximal processes, or in the reappearance of neo-Malthusian narratives of consumption and scarcity.

Secondly, a key focus of this monograph is how contemporary global literatures register insurmountable and *epochal* crises of capitalism perhaps not seen since the advent of early-modern capitalism. Recent accounts of capitalism-in-crisis speak to the singularity of the current moment, to the intensity of overaccumulation cycles, and ecocidal effects, which are hindering social reproduction. For Moore, the epochal nature of the current conjuncture emanates precisely from capitalism's exhaustion of nature. Capitalism is not just an economic system, but is an ecological regime or a "world-ecology", which confronted with climate change, increasing environmental toxicity and dwindling resources, is now facing a terminal failure of reproduction. However, capitalism, having extended across the globe and into every aspect of social relations and ecological life now has nowhere else to expand and no new frontiers to exploit. Rising labour, material, and resource prices cannot be fixed by future rounds of accumulation by dispossession, and the only frontiers left on the globe to colonise are ever more difficult, costly, and dangerous to explore. As

Moore remarks "The zeitgeist of the twenty-first century is therefore understandably infused with a sense of urgency", as anthropogenic pressures push "the conditions of biospheric stability—climate and biodiversity above all—to the breaking point" (2016, p. 1).

However, this is not to fall into the trap of proclaiming yet again that the humanities is a field in crisis, itself a well-worn space-clearing gesture that assures the critical novelty of the weary (early career stage) academic. Uniting the contemporary preponderance of world, postcolonial and global critical studies is, WReC argues, a maximalist emphasis on disciplinary connections, and "commonality, linkage and connection, articulation and integration, network and system" (2015, p. 6). Disciplinary territorialism, rather than structural thinking, no longer offers a productive path forward in a current moment in which questions of uneven development, precarity, and environmental degradation are increasingly at the forefront of cultural critique and "state of the world" pronouncements.

Part III: *The Global Novel*: Overview

Crucially moments of crisis are "difficult to understand, interpret, and act upon" given that they are always pre-mediated and understood by already existing sets of narrative strategies, presuppositions, and concepts (Moore 2016, p. 1). Crisis is an integral aspect of capitalism's structure, of its repeated "signal" or developmental crises, and as prefiguring its terminal disease, and scaling the macro-economic to the textual means examining how structural crises may present in disciplinary and representational terms. *The Global Novel* focuses on works by Salman Rushdie, David Mitchell, Rana Dasgupta, and Rachel Kushner that take the world as their horizon of understanding and seek the causal forces by which agency is eroded and history shaped. The methodology deployed here is developmental—tracing the emergence of recent narratives of crisis—and comparative, by examining texts which are set in a variety of places among them, Mumbai, London, Lagos, New York, Paris, Ulaanbaatar, and Tbilisi. Drawing on materialist, world-systems and world-ecological theories by Arrighi, Jameson, Lukács, and Moore, this monograph initially argues for a critical transition from postcolonial concerns and theories to world-systemic ones, arguing that this shift is due to the urgency and global scope of contemporary economic and ecological crises that exceed national or postcolonial paradigms. This is followed by four chapters that track a cumulative shift in the emergence and varied manifestations of the global novel. This includes firstly, the transition from postcolonial-poststructuralist aesthetics to transnational concerns through

Rushdie's later fictions; the emergence of deterritorialised and expansive "northern" narratives in Mitchell's global fictions; followed by Rana Dasgupta's world-systemic and fractured story cycles; completed by Rachel Kushner's world-historical, US empire novels.

Notably, all of the texts examined here are Anglophone fictions, or novels written in English. The "global Anglophone" now largely circulates as a misnomer on the academic job market for catch-all roles that involve the study and teaching of African, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, Latin American, South Asian, East Asian, or European literatures in translation, and sometimes involving competency in more than one language (Srinivasan 2018; Anam 2019). That "world" and "global" job roles bracket the rest of the world as "other" in the teaching of English literature departments is tied to the contrary politics of "diversifying" curricula, the uncomfortable uncertainty over the usefulness of categories like "Commonwealth", "Third World" and latterly, "postcolonial" (Srinivasan 2018, p. 309), and simultaneously of neutralising the specificity of area studies approaches. This monograph does not intervene in these discussions, but it is an easy logical move to argue that the "global novel" and its corollary job role both suffer from the effects of "world" literatures as a commodity to be briefly sampled on representative modules. The global also offers, as Anam argues, "a means of thinking beyond the presumption of discrete, extractable literary traditions that seems to mark many discussions of World Literature" (2019)—or a disaggregation of the regional knowledge and language specialisation of world literatures—an effect of transformations in humanities teaching, or of reduced staff, research funding, and a creeping parochialism.

To this, we should add that global literatures in English can be usefully defined as a recent phenomenon, as a mass literary category of world-hopping fictions that is not reducible to a literary offshoot of globalisation but rather is in a position, due to its thematic scale, wide distribution, and unique combination of commercialisation and politicisation, to capture the kinds of ideologies, politics, and narrative forms at work in narrating the world—a different argument to those that argue that global and/or world literatures in English are somehow separate to comparative literature, as though one was the unserious mass-market bedfellow to the other more proper object of study. These four authors are in receipt of prestigious literary prizes, and much has been made elsewhere about their reception and consecration by the academy as examples of postcolonial,

global, world, contemporary, British, Indian, and US literatures—a geographic confusion that is itself symptomatic of the difficulties entailed in categorising global fictions.

Rushdie's postcolonial-global fictions, David Mitchell's composite global novels, the short-story cycles of astute observer Rana Dasgupta, and Rachel Kushner's novels of imperialism are useful objects of analysis in that they offer a condensation of the "political unconscious" of narratives of globalisation. They have a proximity to hegemony, or a propinquity to the presumptions and biases of political ideologies emerging from core regions, and are the product of international literary networks that presuppose a largely metropolitan and northern audience highly familiar with the globalisation of technologies and experiences, of the ease of travel and border crossings, and pragmatic "rational" attunements to reality—assumptions that presume stable political systems, energy abundance, and guaranteed citizenship, the stabilising effects of "commonsensical" beliefs grounded in capitalist realities, and of the potentiality of cosmopolitan and aerial global stories that cross borders and centuries. Their baseline of experiences, subjectivities, and even kineticism is that of the capitalist world-system, and more specifically of a friction-free mobility during a period of relative financial and hegemonic stability from the 1990s to the early 2000s.

In the following chapter, I devote some time to setting up the development of the global novel, including critiques of the "dull new global novel" (Parks 2010) and "world lite" literature (Blumenkranz et al. 2013, p. 1), before going on to examine the form's relation to realism and crisis. The chapter considers Jameson's revision of Lukács' class consciousness in spatial and world-systemic terms as a way of considering subordination across different subject or regional positions, concluding with an analysis of how form and crisis can be put into dialogue with world-systems theory's *developmental* and *epochal* crises of capitalism as a generative way forward in examining global works.

Chapter 3 begins this monograph's close readings and maps a transition from the postcolonial disenchantment of Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), to the global-American style of *The Ground Beneath her Feet* (1999) and *Fury* (2001), and their cosmopolitan mythologising, geopolitical allegories, and depiction of American hegemony. It initially examines how *The Moor's Last Sigh* rejects the exuberant postcolonial epic fabulism (akin to magic realism) that characterised Rushdie's earlier works in favour of a disenchanted capitalist realism

that focuses on the insufficiency of art to represent Bombay's globalised criminal capitalism, after India's rejection of dirigisme and entry into the world-economy after deregulation in 1991. In contrast, *The Ground Beneath her Feet* is read as embodying, in its deterritorialised rock music mythologising, the fractures or irreconcilabilities of global cosmopolitan abstractions of identity and form. The final section on *Fury* concludes the argument by examining how it operates as a form of fin de siècle "world-systemic" literature that foregrounds the "autumnal" decline of American hegemony through a hyperrealist aesthetics of literary compression and excessive violence.

Chapter 4 on David Mitchell examines the transition in his global novels, from the deterritorialised "global northern" focus of *Ghostwritten* (1999) and *Cloud Atlas* (2004), towards the near-future climate change disaster of *The Bone Clocks* (2014). It argues that these works attempt to imagine totality through networked narrative forms, producing a pessimistic environmental imaginary concerned with the catastrophic consequences of consumption, extraction, and energy scarcity. Here realism is read as an episteme by drawing on Mark Fisher's theory of the foreshortened horizons of contemporary society which views capitalism as the only "realistic" socio-economic system. In Mitchell's fictions, this produces characters who foreground "commonsensical" and "pragmatic" adjustments to reality, in a competitive and predacious account of humankind that stabilises a normative view of "capitalist realism".

Chapter 5 examines Rana Dasgupta's short-story cycle *Tokyo Cancelled* (2005) and bipartite novel *Solo* (2009) as world-systemic texts. It firstly reads *Tokyo Cancelled* and stories from New York, Lagos, and Paris, considering how they narrate times of great epidemiological and social turmoil. The second half of the chapter on *Solo* examines how it deploys a bi-partite form and oneiric narrative to imagine strategic adaptations to global capitalism after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Throughout the chapter deploys the notion of "world-systemic realism" based on Jameson's spatial revision of Lukács's class consciousness, to examine how these fictions critique modernity through peripheral standpoints and in doing so, attempt to make meaningful vast socio-economic processes.

Extending this analysis of critical realisms, Chapter 6 on Rachel Kushner's *Telex From Cuba* and *The Flamethrowers* reads how they use marginalised characters and unreliable narratives in historical and realist fictions, to energetically interconnect histories of Futurism, rubber extraction, automotive modernity, and avant-garde art movements, to

depict the consolidation of post-World War II American imperialism. The first section investigates *Telex From Cuba*'s "energetic materialism" or how sugar fuels nascent US imperialism in Cuba, as narrated through the "average heroes" of historical fiction. The latter half examines *The Flamethrowers*' triangulation of oil with accelerationist land art in the US, alongside Italy's automobile industry and Autonomist protest movements, in ways that figure historical fiction's drive to narrate totality through the ambivalent form of the "peripeteia".

The conclusion briefly examines divergent trends in the global novel outside the scope of the book, including pop-cultural instances by Hari Kunzru and Haruki Murakami, and fictions that probe ongoing forms of neo-colonialism by authors such as Roberto Bolaño, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and NoViolet Bulawayo. It concludes by advocating modes of critical practice that reappraise materialist, systemic world-literary analyses to provide a critical reading method that would unpick the limitations, and also the political and aesthetic possibilities offered by global fictions.

To summarise, this book's theoretical framework draws on world-ecological, world-literary, and Marxist cultural theories to examine how the current crisis of capitalism is also a singularly epochal one that has coproduced disciplinary and representational crises in literary studies. These are registered differently according to the material, perspectival and historical conditions within which the works examined in this project have emerged in the past twenty years, occasioning transformations from the postcolonial to the global, and in new forms of realism.

Notes

1. In the immediate aftermath of the global financial crash of 2007, accounts of capitalism-in-crisis focused on its imminent demise due to intensifications of class exclusion, ecological collapse and economic exhaustion. See Duménil and Lévy (2011), Mirowski (2013), Moore (2015), and Piketty (2014), and prior to the financial crash, see Harvey (2005) and Arrighi's (2005a, b) two-part essay on hegemony.
2. We can crudely reduce world-literary research to two dominant strands. The first argues for the extreme incommensurability rather than mutuality of literature, with David Damrosch advocating a practice of "*detached engagement with worlds beyond our own place and time*" (2003, p. 281) through close reading, thus avoiding the dreadful error of macro-historical comparative approaches like Moretti's distant reading, which Damrosch warns supposes "that we *are* the world" (p. 28). See also Beecroft (2008) and Apter (2013). The second major strand is that of a "systems" approach to world-literary studies, like Pascale Casanova's 2004 analysis of the antagonistic

field of literary production based on autonomous metropolitan poles; and Franco Moretti's distant reading approach, whose comparative method is based on changes in novelistic devices throughout time and across national borders (2004, p. 151). Core to Moretti's method is the correspondence between the structurally "one, and unequal" world-economic and world-literary systems (p. 149). The work of the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) likewise presupposes that world-literature is a "one but unequal" system, but refuses Moretti's disregard for form's capacity to immanently register economic, rather than simply market-based, structural unevenness (2015, pp. 55–57).To these, we can add recent critical works which consciously align themselves to either the heteronomy or autonomy of the literary field—including Aamir Mufti (2016) on world literature's Anglophone and oriental nature, and the need to recuperate untranslated vernacular literatures; Pheng Cheah's (2016) argument for the world-making force of a world literature that takes on postcolonial studies' critique in imagining more utopian worlds (p. 2); and the "cosmopolitan-vernacular" approach deployed by the Swedish research group "Cosmopolitan and Vernacular Dynamics in World Literatures" (Helgesson et al. 2018).

3. The topics of "globalisation" and the "global novel" have become increasingly popular areas of investigation in humanities scholarship. See the following: *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, edited by Mike Featherstone (1990), *The Novel and the Globalization of Culture* by Michael Valdez Moses (1995), *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, edited by Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (1996), *The Cultures of Globalization*, edited by Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (1998), "Globalization and Contemporary Literature" by Nico Israel (2004), *The Internationalization of English Literature* by Bruce King (2004), *Fictions of Globalization: Consumption, the Market and the Contemporary American Novel* by James Annesley (2006), *World Writing: Poetics, Ethics, Globalization*, edited by Mary Gallagher (2008), "Fictions of the Global" by Rita Barnard (2009), *Global Matters The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies* by Paul Jay (2010), *Literature and Globalization: A Reader*, edited by Liam Connell and Nicky Marsh (2011), "The Globalization of the Novel and the Novelization of the Global: A Critique of World Literature" by Mariano Siskind (2012).
4. The planetary also emerges in discussions of the "global". Ursula Heise uses the phrase "eco-cosmopolitanism" to explore the production of "planetary 'imagined communities' of both human and nonhuman kinds" (2008, p. 61) arising from sociocultural practices that generate planetary networks and imaginaries that require new forms of local/global identity. Spivak also calls for literary critics to think "planetarily", in a reaction to the perceived exhaustion of the postcolonial. It is defined as the knowledge that the planet

is impossible to imagine in its vastness and is merely "on loan" to humanity (2003, p. 72). Wollaeger describes the planetary as a speculative trope, "conjuring" the "interplanetary" (2012, p. 3), whereas the global for Wollaeger achieves a combined cosmopolitan and ethical desire to acknowledge the locatedness of place and openness to other positions. On the cosmopolitan, to paraphrase Timothy Brennan, it appears in the late 1990s and early millennium as the idea to the structure of capitalist globalisation. See also Cheah and Robbins (1998), Vertovec and Cohen (2002), Breckenridge et al. (2002), and Harvey (2009). In literature, see Rita Barnard's call for "a new kind of plot, with new coordinates of time and space, that may serve as a corollary to the brave neo world of millennial capitalism and perhaps even provide the conceptual preconditions for a cosmopolitan society" (2009, p. 208), by drawing on Ulrich Beck's idea of a "'cosmopolitanization from within'" (Beck qtd. Barnard, p. 208) and "localization from without". Or Berthold Schoene's *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (2009) which argues that fictions by David Mitchell, Ian McEwan, and Arundhati Roy are "new cosmopolitanisms", or world-community forming texts, in a clear framing of the "global" as a category for superseding the nation. See Chapter 3 for a more detailed analysis of postcolonial-cosmopolitanism in relation to Salman Rushdie's novels, and Chapter 4 for a materialist rather than "cosmopolitan" reading of David Mitchell's fictions.

5. See Deckard and Shapiro's neat tripartite aggregation of this field of eco-materialist world-literary studies, which is likewise deployed here, as:

    1. a world-historical perspective of the nested temporalities of capitalism's durées and cycles
    2. a world-ecological conceptualization of capitalism as not only a world-economy, but as constituted by and through ecological regimes
    3. a world-literary reading practice attentive to the aesthetic mediation of combined and uneven development and to the hierarchical differentiation of the world-system between cores, semiperipheries and peripheries (2019, p. 7).

6. For Wallerstein 1989 signalled the "second bifurcation" of the world-economy from the idea of liberal reformism, as post-Soviet countries were integrated into the world-system without the "optimistic (and stabilizing) effect of the post-1918 and post-1945 nationalist decolonizations" (2011, p. 158).
7. Lazarus (2004, pp. 3–4, 9) and Parry (2004b, p. 68) each cite Spivak and Bhabha as representative and influential examples of such readings. Their critique is not limited to either figure but to a whole disciplinary field of discursive-based analyses that tend to simplify and ignore the changing political trends that have shaped postcolonial studies. See also Parry

(2004a, pp. 13–36, 55–74), Brennan (2002, pp. 185–203), and Lazarus (1999, pp. 68–143), especially Lazarus's account of Bhabha's privileging of cosmopolitanism, diaspora, and migration, and his misreading of Said's Palestinian national politics (1999, pp. 133–137).

8. These developments have been reinvigorated by the expansion of environmental humanities and the productive interdisciplinary dialogues of the field's "second-wave". See the work of Andrew Ross, Mike Davis, Lawrence Buell, Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Pablo Mukherjee, Rob Nixon, and Ursula Heise. Buell defines first wave ecocriticism as forms of "earthcare" (2005, p. 21), or the focus on the pastoral, locality, and Heideggerian forms of dwelling, often in studies of Romantic British poetry and nineteenth-century American literature. Second wave ecocriticism involves an attention to "social ecocriticism" (2005, p. 22), or the "interpenetration of metropolis and outback, of anthropocentric as well as biocentric concerns" (p. 23), and alongside this we should add the existing lineage of ecofeminisms (Garrard 2014, p. 2), and the rich history of Marxist ecocriticism, specifically the green anarchist writings of Murray Bookchin and Janet Biehl.

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CHAPTER 2

Global Literature, Realism, and the World-System in Crisis

Part I: World Lite, Global Lit

Our discussion so far argues that we should consider global literature through the lens of materialist world-literary studies to consider interrelations between disciplinary, representational, and world-systemic crises. But central to discourses about global fictions are anxieties regarding literary value, or how the "global novel" is the literary correlative to capitalist globalisation, with its bland transnational plots, universal themes, and lack of idiosyncratic language or radical political thought suggesting a crisis of literary form. As if in response to a chill wind of homogeneous taste or the "McCulturisation" (English 2005, p. 3) of literature, Tim Parks warned in 2010 of the rise of the "dull new global novel" as authors desirous for success pandered to the exigencies of a North American dominated world-literary marketplace by writing easily translatable and politically neutral texts. Author Kamila Shamsie preceded Parks's article with a similar piece for *Wasafiri* on the changing nomenclature surrounding international literature, arguing that such texts, regardless of their categorisation as "international" or "minority" works (Shamsie 2009, p. 110), only succeed in the marketplace if they appeal to the tastes and interests of core or "first-world" "Anglophone" audiences (pp. 112–113). Continuing this critique of the "bland global novel", a strident editorial in *n + 1* stated that since the 1990s the literary consecration and success of authors like Haruki Murakami, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Orhan Pamuk

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were part of a "Global Lit" (Blumenkranz et al. 2013, p. 14) trend that maps a "Jason Bourne–like tour through the emerging financial capitals of what used to be the third world" (pp. 1–2) by producing polite works of ethical "universal relevance" (p. 2) akin to a "Davos summit" (p. 13), which erodes the visibility and cultural cache of radical socialist and anti-colonial authors and intellectuals. Most bitingly, Philip Hensher described diasporic fictions like Jhumpa Lahiri's *Lowland* (2013) or NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013), as containing a "superficial multicultural aspect" that "concealed a specifically North American taste" in novels concerned with the circulation and progress of migrants in the US. Writing against these judgements, editor and author Pankaj Mishra stated that a demand for global fictions in core metropoles meant that emerging writers were overly critiqued for producing appropriately "bland" literary styles, plots, and narrative modes to appeal to "transnational elites" (2013), when their presumed "Benetton-ish cosmopolitanism" belied the actual concerns of these fictions with neoliberal precarity, failed nationalist movements, civil wars, and social immobility.

Critiques of the "blandification" of global novels are, in their most-left wing expression, akin to concerns voiced by literary scholars in the 1980s and 1990s regarding the complicity of postcolonial authors with their own consecration and exoticisation, and their suspicion of socialist post-colonial developments. These include Timothy Brennan's 1989 monograph on Salman Rushdie which argued for the role of the Anglo-American publishing market in shaping the politics and style of peripheral or "third-world" works amidst the exhaustion of postcolonial revolutionary energies, with Brennan briefly observing that Rushdie, alongside Isabelle Allende, Carlos Fuentes, and Bharati Mukherjee, wrote ironic, hybrid novels wary of postcolonial national narratives of progress (1989, pp. 34, 54).[1] That Rushdie exists as a flashpoint in any discussion of representation and authenticity in postcolonial novels is unsurprising given his breakthrough success with *Midnight's Children* (1981) during the consolidation of the postcolonial literary field, and Rushdie's own eager participation in the creation of his authorial image. However, Neil Lazarus describes tongue in cheek the treatment of Rushdie as the only "author in the postcolonial literary canon" (2011, p. 22), by poststructuralist-postcolonial critics focused on narrative form, cultural difference, and ambivalence. Analyses that over-emphasise Rushdie's fabulist and irreverent magic realist style as a homology to cultural-ethnic hybridity are to the detriment of a fuller account of what Brennan argues is Rushdie's

appraisal of "older but still viable forms of resistance to the current free-market open-door policy of the Indian government" (1999, p. 127) in *Midnight's Children*, and critique of Thatcherite Britain in *The Satanic Verses*.

At work in accounts of "world lite" and global literature is a more general trend, also present in postcolonial literature, whereby modernist narrative modes are privileged, leading to the proliferation of "modernist-associated terms such as hybridity, polyphony, pastiche, irony, and defamiliarization rather than realist-associated conceptual categories such as historical transition, class consciousness, and totality" (Cleary 2012, p. 265). *n + 1*'s complaint regarding the "new literary globalism" characterised by Arundhati Roy's modernist-realist *The God of Small Things* (1997), Khalid Hosseini's *Kite Runner* (2003), and latterly Mohsin Hamid, Kiran Desai, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, against the diminishment of "folkloric long poems", or "dreary tales of hardscrabble villages with nonpotable water" (Blumenkranz et al. 2013, p. 1), mobilises in an ironic and melodramatic fashion, the same heuristic of literary modernism and critical value, with "Third" world realist texts omitted from the contemporary "canon" of "world lite" (Blumenkranz et al. 2013).

Aside from anxieties about the literary value of global works given their planetary scale, cosmopolitan politics, and presumed modernism, an additional strand of thought focuses on literature's autonomy and transhistorical universality. This includes Wai Chee Dimock's "fractal geometry" (2006, p. 94) of close reading, with the epic form a register of the cumulative species of humankind requiring an extreme literary comparison between ancient and modern forms (2013). Such readings have found their way into analyses of "global" fictions, with Jason Howard Mezey arguing that David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* is a form of epic endowed with the traces of previous literary forms, with the text's six-story structure contiguous with Homeric lyrical hexametric epic verse, and *Cloud*'s broken form corresponding with the incomplete sentences of Dante's *terza rima* scheme in *The Divine Comedy* (2011, pp. 17–19).[2] At work here is the presumption of literature's peculiar qualities, which opens up a "transhistorical" space of interaction somewhat abstracted from the "outer" realm of politics. But an almost nostalgic emphasis on literature's autonomy from the marketplace does little to challenge Marx and Engels emphasis on world literature as the cultural complement to an expansive global economic system (Brouillette 2014); or the body of materialist scholarship for whom globalisation has not created a

"world" (Cheah 2016) separate to that of culture, but a world-system of humankind's own doing, the "ideological jungle" of Fredric Jameson's account of the "horizon of immanence" (2009b, p. 608) of totality, within which questions of agency and imaginative expression are unevenly staged. Accounts of global literature's transhistorical or intrinsic qualities need to be framed alongside questions of whither the emergence of "commonsensical" approaches to cultural value; the politics of representation, particularly in relation to post-colonial nationalism and "global" belonging; and the many presumptions, of citizenship or even fossil capital, that go into cultivating energetic, border-crossing planetary imaginaries.

Part II: Realism, Form, and Crisis

To reprise, debates in literary studies encode worries about the value of mass literary global works, revise their emergence within narratives of universal literary forms, and reiterate the autonomy of literature. As discussed in Chapter 1, recent materialist world-literary studies focus on the registration of capitalist modernity within cultural works, and the usefulness of a language of combined and uneven development to describe, in relational terms, the power dynamics structuring world-economic and world-literary systems (see Deckard 2015; Niblett 2012; Oloff 2012; WReC 2015). But what of texts that take for granted the capitalist world-system as not only a universal socio-economic and environmental reality, but in Francis Fukuyama's 1992 encomium, the "triumph" of Western capitalist liberalism, and the end of socialist-communist history? What of a literature that reproduces the language of late capitalist globalisation, in its narrative structure, character movements, and plot progressions? What criticism do we mobilise in relation to mass literary works that encode a friction-free modernity, refusing accounts of narrative alienation or estrangement, for a focus on narratives of global coincidence and totality as unknowable; and in later manifestations thematise the literary experimentations, flattened characters, and fractured forms necessary to narrate the extraordinary promises of late-capitalism? Global literature parallels to some extent the emergence of "world lite" as a cultural expression of globalisation. But in contrast to world or postcolonial literature, global fictions do not require the contextuality of local immiseration or decolonial struggles and require less meta-translation of national conditions or local histories, given that they often deploy their determinant historical framing within their own structure. Global literatures are without the exuberant postcolonial stylistic experimentations of magic realism, or the dense

historicisation of postcolonial national narratives, and they are popular in metropolitan cores given their ability to translate local difference into universal idioms in deterritorialised and expansive works that eschew the nation-state as one interchangeable location among many—consider fragmented nation-hopping works by Hari Kunzru, David Mitchell, Kamila Shamsie, or Rana Dasgupta, or the emergence of "War on Terror" narratives by Mohsin Hamid, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and Michael Ondaatje (see Shamsie 2009; Ganguly 2016).

The second major lesson that can be gleaned from the modernist/realist debates of postcolonial literary studies and "global lite", and an important point of difference, is that modernism is not always the default literary mode of such works, despite the emphasis on modernism as a signifier of "high" literary works, and the proliferation of modernist-inflected approaches to authors like Rushdie. If world literature's aspiration to universality (Blumenkranz et al. 2013, p. 8) is shared by global literature, we should ask what versions of "universality" or capitalist reality are being stabilised. This means paying attention to the presuppositions and "commonsensical" paradigms deployed in such texts, or how realism is not simply a mimetic category but a way of investigating interrelated socio-historical forces and epistemic structures by reanimating discussions around Lukácsian realism and crisis. Fredric Jameson queries whether the "most useful 'definition' of *realism*" may not lie in this facility of works to "raise the issue of realism as such within its own structure, no matter what answer it decides to give" (2012, p. 478), and this approach is taken with a body of global novels concerned with how reality is constructed, whether through "realist" strategies with which to enter into capitalistic relations, as in the contemporary criminal networks in Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*; as a "pragmatic" and "commonsensical" approach to society in David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten*; or a critical account of contemporary imperialism (*Fury*, *The Flamethrowers*). For Jameson, modernism is less a distinctly articulated reaction *against* realism than a co-mingling of both as a kind of "'estranging estrangement'" (2012, p. 479), and the latter two chapters of this monograph examine contemporary modes of "estranging" realism, by examining the world-systemic imaginaries of Rana Dasgupta and Rachel Kushner and how they depict relations of power and capitalist expropriation through experimental forms. Their modernist-realist accounts make explicit their "estrangement" of capitalist reality, and the waning of American cultural

and economic hegemony, in terms resonant, if not concordant, with diagnoses of the fin de siècle period of imperial decline that marked early twentieth-century fictions.

Realism as a literary mode and epistemological position offers a generative way into reading capitalist totality. Rather than a mimetic representation of the world, Jameson describes how for Lukács the realist novelist attempts to "overcome the presentational constraints of the immediate, and *somehow* suggest the active influence and effects of that whole range of social and historical forces without which this unique event is finally inconceivable" (2009a, p. 206), or as being concerned with the desire to represent the totality of interrelations that constitute reality as "it truly is" (Lukács 2010, p. 29). But Lukács' account of "authentic" realisms (2010, p. 29) is not simply rooted in his desire for authors to go beyond mere appearances, to the "submerged" (p. 46) forces governing reality. Such realisms emerge, Lukács states, at moments of crisis, with Taylor-era labour reorganisations and world-systemic transformations after World War I operating as the catalyst for totalising forms that attempt to cohere the fragmented reality created by the dissonances of modernity, with its combination of decaying imperial powers, labour specialisation, automation, and fragmented cultural forms (Lukács 1971, pp. 84–89; see also Larsen 2011, p. 97). The publication of key works by Bakhtin, Lukács, and Auerbach during and after the 1930s post-war period of economic depression and World War II's political destabilisation "do much" for Cleary "to explain Lukács's and Auerbach's tendency to conceive of modernism in what now seem such extraordinarily catastrophic terms" (2012, p. 257). This includes Lukács' account of an interiorised and subjective modernism that "'leads not only to the destruction of traditional literary forms, [but] […] to the destruction of literature as such'" (Lukács qtd Cleary 2012, p. 256).

Lukácsian theories of realism have been similarly reprised by other world-literary critics concerned with contemporary revisions of form and capitalist totality. The editors of a collection on "peripheral realisms" make a defence of Lukács on the basis of Bewes and Hall's influential collection in 2011, and a "new realist turn" (Esty and Lye 2012, p. 276),[3] with Lukács now "best appreciated for having located a text's realism in its aspiration to totality, with 'totality' defined not as something out there but as the demand to consider interrelations and interactions between disparate phenomena". Thus, Jed Esty and Colleen Lye argue that realist forms now exist that approach the capitalist world-system as though

it is "partially, potentially describable in its concrete reality" (p. 285) but without risking the fallacy of imagining capitalism as a "foreclosed or fully narrativized entity". Likewise, Lukács notes that for Hegel "the economy has not even objectively reached the stage of being-for-itself" (1971, p. 57), and there is "no possible position within such a society from which the economic basis of all social relations could be made conscious". Questions of totality also need to be reframed according to ideological qualifications, of "what can I know *in this system*? What should I do in this new world *completely invented by me*? What can I hope for *alone in an altogether human age*?" (Jameson 2009b, p. 608), and attendance to the varying phenomenological experiences of core and peripheral regions provide changing viewpoints through which to consider capitalist imaginaries.

More precisely, the construction of comparative imaginaries through the trope of peripheral characters and settings, as in Rana Dasgupta's fictions which capture the "feeling of globalization" (Elborough and Dasgupta 2006, p. 2), is mirrored in the concurrent shift in literary studies towards materialist critiques of imperialism given the post-1989 global expansion of capitalism in forms which, as the editors of a recent collection note, "could not have been envisaged during the debates around the postcolonial that took place in the 1990s" (Bernard et al. 2015, p. 6). Examples of greater world-mapping tendencies include Jennifer Wenzel's account of planetary novels that imagine the world "*from below*" (2014, p. 19) with narrator's situating their penury within a "broader, transnational context", and Jed Esty and Colleen Lye's stress on "the possible advantage of peripherality for thinking relationally across different kinds of subordinated positions on different scales" (2012, p. 272). "Peripheral" texts and peripheral realisms are not merely relational in the weak sense that imagining the world from "below" the northern hemisphere is necessarily a beneficent or worldly viewpoint, but to return to the point made by Fredric Jameson in his 1986 article on "Third-World" literature, peripheral cultural productions have a proximity to the "nightmarish reality of things" (1986, p. 70) and a "*situational consciousness*" (p. 85) of one's specific relation to capital.

This essay is worth considering briefly because of Jameson's attempt to reconcile Lukács' class consciousness with the spatial relation between cores and peripheries, which enables for Jameson a peculiar form of "'mapping' or the grasping of the social totality" which is "structurally available to the dominated rather than the dominating classes" (1986,

88, fn. 26). His account of the "standpoint" view (2009a, p. 215), or the phenomenological differences between experiences of "oppression and exploitation" in the First and Third Worlds, draws from Lukács's theory of the epistemic advantages of the proletariat who can "go beyond the immediate in search of the 'remoter' factors" (1971, p. 175) structuring reality. But it is only due to recuperations of Jameson's essay by Marxist postcolonial literary critics (see Szeman 2001; Brown 2005; Lazarus 2011; Majumder 2017), that it can be read beyond critiques of its binary language of "First" and "Third" worlds, and "reductive" approach (Ahmad 1992). Jameson's "Third-World" essay was (and still is), condemned for its statement that "All third-world texts are necessarily, […] allegorical […] particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel" (1986, p. 69), and that in Third-World texts "*the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*". Aijaz Ahmad provided the most influential critique of the language of First and Third Worlds, and the idea that societies were defined only "by relations of intra-national domination" (1987, p. 9), outside of "intersecting conflicts based upon class, gender, nation, race, region and so on". Neil Lazarus summarises this and other judgements of Jameson's essay, stating that they accuse him of orientalism and cultural essentialism by inverting a "Marxist critique of 'Third-Worldism' into a 'Third-Worldist' critique of Marxism" (2011, p. 99). Many critics misread Jameson's purposeful ventriloquising of his audience's presumptions, taking as his own beliefs ironic statements, like that Third-World literature may have no value to American literary critics unused to such texts, who seek but are unable to find in "third-world literature" the "satisfactions of Proust or Joyce" (Jameson 1986, p. 65), and that nationalism has been dissipated in North American thought and therefore requires no further investigation. Likewise, Ahmad's argument, that Jameson should replace the nation with the "larger, less restricting idea of collectivity" (1987, p. 15), is already evident in Jameson's call for a literary comparison based on "a more typological analysis of the various socio-cultural situations from which they [texts] spring" (1986, p. 87, fn. 5).

Jameson's (1986) essay can now be examined for its valuable account of the violent structural formations that entrench uneven development, and how these factors produce phenomenologically different experiences of capitalist relations. This means acknowledging that the language of

"third worldism", although anachronistic, operates in his essay to pinpoint a specific experience of colonialism and relation of ongoing inequality. Most pertinently to this analysis is Jameson's use of the phrase Third-World to refer to a reframing of class consciousness according to one's material conditions, in what Brown describes as Jameson's invocation of the "master-slave dialectic […] to establish as largely the positional matter of where one stands in relation to Capital" (2005, p. 8). This formulation of Third-World or "peripheral" literature to describe its proximity to ruthless forms of capitalist exploitation (Lazarus 2011, p. 106; Szeman 2001, p. 808) is central to questions of totality, and the development of a relational, world-systemic critique which takes as its starting point Lukács' class consciousness (see also Sauri 2011, p. 476).[4]

For Lukács, the unique position of the working classes catalyses their approach to the world in terms of international solidarity, and history as a process in which their labour is a key component. In contrast, the bourgeoisie smooth over the "remoter factors" that structure reality, assuming the existence and supply of such factors into "rational calculation" (Lukács 1971, p. 174). In Jameson's essay on cognitive mapping, these "remoter" factors are described in a spatial language of absent causes, with capitalism in core regions constituted by the shifting of industry and manufacturing to the Global South after the implementation of free trade agreements. Class is here coproduced with and somewhat superseded by capitalism's fragmentation of labour and industry in Jameson's account of Third-World standpoints, with peripheral and core regions each having forms of experience that are necessarily unavailable to the other, and "that makes it unavoidable for that group to see and to know, features of the world that remain obscure, invisible, or merely occasional and secondary for other groups" (2009a, p. 216). However, although Lukács' catastrophic imaginary might, Larsen argues "momentarily furnish a glimpse of the social and historical totality, loosening the 'rigidity' of reified, antinomial subject-object relations" it may then, as Lukács identifies, make "way for an equally rigid structure" (Lukács qtd Larsen 2011, p. 97). While cognisant of the error of imputing a particular "consciousness" to class, Jameson's rearticulation of the "standpoint" of class in world-systemic terms offers a generative reformulation of Lukács to affirm the possibilities of relativising structural apprehensions of modernity.

To return to realism, with the "*negative* constraint" (Jameson 2009a, p. 218) of labour dialectically producing "the self-consciousness of the

commodity" (Lukács qtd. Jameson 2009a, p. 218), for Lukács expansive "great realisms" (2010, p. 46), and the proletariat with their "aspiration towards totality" (1971, p. 174), could overcome the fragmentations of social life. In an earlier moment, Jameson's concluding essay to the famous anthology of Frankfurt school writings *Aesthetics and Politics* likewise describes how a "new realism" (2010, p. 236) could disrupt the "commodity system" by projecting a global network of class struggle by illuminating the "structural relations" between oppressed classes or peripheral regions, which would include what are typically regarded as modernist elements of literary form, especially its "emphasis on violent renewal (sic) of perception" (p. 236). In his later 1980s essays, he continued arguing for the importance of realism through a "principled relativism" (2009a, p. 215), or a comparative world-literary method which compares texts on the basis of the situations from which they emerge.

However, Lukács states that it is only during moments of crisis due to the fragmentation or atomisation of different spheres of social life following Taylorisation that the "underlying unity" of the system is apparent (2010, p. 28). When capitalism functions during periods of economic stability, it is experienced as a "unitary" totality akin to Jameson's account of the amnesia of core zones, but during moments of crisis "autonomous elements are drawn together into unity" (p. 28), which is experienced as the disintegration of social forces in a dialectic of fragmentation and coalescence. Put simply, during times of stability totality is parsed obliquely or not at all, but during economic crises the system's dissolution and fragmentation make capitalism's interrelatedness visible. Jameson states in similar but not identical language that realism appears during "punctual moments" (1990, p. 174),[5] when it is the only expressible form for moments of great social and economic change. In his later work on modernism, Jameson describes crises of representation emerging in response to the "defamiliarising" conditions figured by each new generation (2002, p. 157), or the revolutionary promise of sudden and radical historical breaks, and here the importance of systemic crises of capitalism to Lukács's theory of totality becomes under-emphasised. If we take Lukács, and later Jameson's, approaches to realism and totality as crucial to our development of a formal approach to global and world-systemic imaginaries, then Lukács' emphasis on the dialectic of "grasping" totality at moments of structural change—from one accumulation cycle to the next—enables a notion of crisis grounded in contiguity rather than rupture, with a longue durée notion of crisis and form[6] taking precedence. Whereas Jameson

prioritises the defamiliarising affects of modernism, or revolution as a way of qualifying realism's modernism, Lukács' realism, resituated within world-systems theory, can offer critical vantages onto the coproduction of cyclical *developmental* and *epochal* crises of capitalism.

Part III: World-Systems Theory and Capitalism-in-Crisis

Updating Lukács' emphasis on crisis and realism means examining what worlded crises now trouble cultural imaginaries. Recent accounts of capitalism-in-crisis speak to the singularity of the current moment, with insurmountable barriers of overaccumulation, ruinous climate change, rising toxicity, and the decline of US economic hegemony meaning that capitalism is undergoing a radical transformation in the mode of production not seen since the advent of early-modern capitalism, in an epochal crisis of momentous proportions. Such dire ecological and economic conditions have consequences for the political horizons of novels which seek to map global social relations. Lukács' account of the emergence of realism during Europe's post-war economic depression becomes here a mode inextricably linked to a *combined* crisis of economic limits, environmental collapse, and the decline of teleological narratives of globalisation. Lukács valorised modernist European works that attempted to mobilise collective critical imaginaries, and we may ask whether forms of radical collective thought are possible in contemporary "global lite" works.

But first, understanding how capitalism is in crisis requires a summary of world-systems theory and the reproduction of hegemony. Immanuel Wallerstein defines capitalism as a historical process existing since Columbus "discovered" the new world in 1492, which is characterised by the "*endless* accumulation of capital" (2004). A world-system is an uneven system that is a world, but not necessarily a world-encompassing system, as conveyed by the hyphen. It is constituted by invisible axes of power and trade linking core, semi-peripheral and peripheral processes and regions (2004, pp. 91–93).[7] These are relational terms that express the uneven nature by which core regions (not solely nations) exploit the cheap labour and raw materials of peripheries, with the "semi-periphery" acting as a transistor zone within which value is bestowed upon labour and materials, and demand mediated from peripheries to purchasers in cores (Shapiro 2008, p. 37). For world-systems theorists, and many Marxist scholars, the end of Soviet communism from 1989 onwards meant that

after the dismantling of the last residual socialist holdouts, neoliberal capitalism became the first example of a universal capitalist world-system in history.

However, the twenty-first century has witnessed severe economic and ecological crises which have prefigured the end of the road for capitalist modernity. The worldwide financial collapse of 2008 triggered a global depression and brutal austerity programmes which eroded social structures, depressed wages and diminished the future prospects of millennial youth. Protests like the 2011 Occupy movement or the Arab Spring revolutions were a direct response to these conditions, with activists critiquing the seemingly eternal longevity of a financial system undeterred by government bailouts, with deepening youth unemployment and poor food yields catalysing political discontent. Significantly, these crises are multi-faceted, rooted in limited avenues for economic expansion, the financialisation of everyday life, climate changed weathers, a retrenchment of class politics, and the US' hegemonic decline (Amin 2010, p. 7). Rather than an external ecological limiting factor, these conditions are crucial in hindering the reproduction of capitalism, with ecology a vital element of the entire bundle or "web" of relations that constitute capitalist civilisation (Moore 2015, pp. 2–3). Environmental historian Jason W. Moore describes this as a theory of the "world-ecology" or the interlinked nature of the "accumulation of capital, the pursuit of power, and the co-production of nature in dialectical unity" (p. 3). Capitalism's loss of economic opportunity, and environmental frontiers, is hastening what world-systems theorist Giovanni Arrighi describes as the autumnal years (2005b, pp. 86–87) and terminal decline (2005a, p. 57) of US hegemony.

Arrighi explains his concept of hegemony via Gramsci as the interstate (rather than intra-class) competition for domination of the world-system. A state becomes hegemonic when it can "credibly claim to be the motor force of a general expansion of the *collective* power of rulers *vis-à-vis* subjects" (2010, p. 31), or when it has military and political might, and economic and cultural pre-eminence in the world-system (Wallerstein 2004, p. 94). For Arrighi, hegemonies ascend during periods of "'systemic chaos'" (2010, p. 31) which are catalysed by crises of capital accumulation. He defines his schema of hegemonic rise and fall according to Marx's theory of M–C–M′ cycles of accumulation: capital initially accumulates through money (the M cycle) or financial and speculative forms (credit, stocks), into commodities (C cycle) and is transformed in times of overaccumulation and the search for new investment possibilities (M′

cycle) into liquidity (2010, pp. 5–7). The final phase of the cycle is a turbulent time in the world-economy as overaccumulation crises lead to the long-wave switching to finance capital, which circulates without reference to commodities or the mode of production. The purely speculative nature of futures trading is an apt example of capitalism loosening itself from the constraints of material production and consumption by taking flight into new investment opportunities. Arrighi gives approximately 175 years for a full cycle to occur (a "long-century"): we are now entering the end of the financial cycle of American hegemony (1860–2035) and are well underway into the next hegemonic cycle (1980-onwards), with China emerging as the new dominant economic hegemony competing with America for resources, financing, and markets (Baucom 2005, p. 27). This account of historical capitalism as constituted by recurring economic cycles does not propose an overly rigid structural account of endless economic waves producing identical results across space and time and rather sees capitalism as composed by "structural parts and evolving stages" (Wallerstein 1974, p. 415), with cyclicality constituted by the conjugation of local conditions with structurally similar processes.

Returning to the current age, Wallerstein noted as early as 1976 that the US hegemony was "over" after the 1945–1967 period of integrated political, military, economic, and cultural empire building, but that the decline was "scarcely precipitous" (p. 461). Rather, fin-de-siècle moments are characterised by the resurgence of apparent wealth as economies boil with credit capital, or the "*belles époques*" period of the transitional phases of economies, described by Arrighi as aspects of the Clinton, Reagan and even Florentine hegemonies (2005b, p. 88). However, although varying cycles of apparent prosperity have occurred between 1967 and the present day, the US' growing reliance on foreign finance capital throughout the 1990s and beyond, and its unsuccessful invasion of Iraq in 2003, are sure signs for Arrighi of its movement from a hegemony demanding tribute and ensuring protection to other nation-states, to a "hege*money*" (Arrighi 2005b, p. 112, fn. 57) reliant on foreign capital.

For instance, the emergence of neoliberalism in the 1970s as a new accumulation regime depended on the production of distinctive Wall Street financial mechanisms as well as Third-World debt servicing Structural Adjustment Programs which provided avenues for the investment of excess capital into ventures that would ensure the supply of the "'four cheaps'" necessary for accumulation, of "cheap labour, cheap energy, cheap food, and cheap resources" (Keefer and Moore 2011, p. 48). Capitalism generally attempts to overcome barriers to its own self-valorisation

through the renewal of technics of plunder and dispossession. But this tendency eventually comes into contradiction with what Marx describes as the "unlimited expansion of production, to production as an end in itself" (1991, p. 358), against the fact that value can no longer be realised. Capitalism's developmental effort to conquer obstacles to accumulation mean that it is reconfigured again "on larger and more comprehensive foundations" (Arrighi 2010, p. 341). But one of the defining qualities of neoliberalism is precisely this insurmountable block to further accumulation, given that it is defined in part by its "intensive production of nature" (Smith 2007, p. 16) and transformation of every aspect of the environment, from the life sciences to the atmosphere, into another marketplace or commodity frontier. However, this occurred without a concurrent transformation in technology or revolution in "labour productivity" (Keefer and Moore 2011, p. 47), in contrast to the plethora of "technologies of surveillance and mapping, transport and communication, and data assessment and calculation" that Moore describes as being vital to the just-in-time production methods and financialisation of the economy, which gave neoliberalism its initial injection of surplus value. Capitalism, having expanded across the world and into the macro (atmospheric) and micro (genetic material) arenas of life, has no new commodity frontiers to exploit.

The future outcome is rather bleak, with Wallerstein predicting that the next several decades will witness the fluctuation of economic values, increases in political instability, the loss of prosperity, and a concurrent rise in societal disquiet and violence (2000, p. 265). But this chaotic and turbulent period, rather than a transitional moment from one hegemony to another or a developmental crisis in which capitalism attempts to overcome its maturing contradictions, could, Moore argues, lead to a singularly "epochal" crisis that will necessitate new forms of accumulation, just as the transition from medieval feudal relations to early-modern capitalism occurred during a moment of world-historical turbulence, with the Black Death leading to struggles between various factions for greater economic distribution and gender equality (Keefer and Moore 2011, p. 53).[8] Recent increases in food and oil prices, alongside the instability of the financial system and rising wages in the industrial heartlands of China and India, have for Moore produced a Lukácsian-like apprehension of totality, of connections between "biophysical transformations and biophysical problems and crises, on the one hand, with the central institutions of the capitalist world economy, on the other—of financial markets, of large

transnational firms, of capital intensive agriculture" (Lilley and Moore 2011, p. 136). This book's definition of crisis likewise aims to connect economy, ecology, and literature, combining Lukács' insights into form and economic crisis, with Jameson's account of "standpoints" or spatial view on capitalism, with an analysis of the world-system's terminal crises.

This chapter began with critiques of the "blandification" of literature, and an additional risk in describing global fictions are the differences between what versions of globalisation are being narrated—of precarity, migrant labour, environmental degradation, consumption, war on terror narratives, and so on. Avoiding the trap of equating global literature with globalisation as though this correlation was without ideological or economic significance, this book attends throughout to Jameson's "*situational consciousness*" (1986, p. 85), or from where such global narratives are imagined—a fundamental factor that conditions each text's apprehension of globality. An analysis of the ideologies, presumptions, and biases of global fictions is thus necessary because these texts are often regarded without attention to their politics and geographies. Thus, "global" could be considered an empty pre-fix to literature to the extent to which as O'Brien and Szeman note "*all literature is now global, all literature is a literature of globalization*" (2001, p. 611), but to mutate their phrase, all literature is the literature of capitalist globalisation, but what matters are the critical apparatuses which are brought to bear on such works.

Notes

1. Graham Huggan's *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001), references Rushdie as a paradigmatic instance of the commodification of postcolonial texts and authors through a process of "'strategic exoticism'" (p. 32), which both affirms and challenges "exotic" postcolonial images and narratives. Sarah Brouillette's *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (2007) examines Rushdie as exemplary of the construction of a unique postcolonial authorial identity (p. 66), with his public appearances and plurality of essays, reviews, and interviews, acting as vital paratexts that serve to legitimise his unique postcolonial "authenticity".
2. Mitchell in interview states that his original intention was to create a nine-story interlocking novel but he shortened it to six due to the complexity and vastness of the project (Denes and Mitchell 2004), somewhat troubling this hexametric reasoning.

3. As part of this realist turn, Esty and Lye reference critical works from ethnic, transnational, and gender studies, which have been influenced by Lukács and Adorno (2012, p. 278, fn. 18). See Matthew Beaumont's influential edited collection *Adventures in Realism* (2007), and Alison Shonkwiler's and Leigh Claire La Berge edited collection *Reading Capitalist Realism* (2014) which focuses on the relation between capitalist dispossession, debt, and narrative in largely North American contexts.
4. The language of "first" and "third" worlds is used here according to Jameson's redefinition to signify variations between capitalist cores, socialist regions, and formerly colonised peripheries (1986, p. 67), and to capture the subjugation of societies that were "forced into the capitalist world-system, of their having been yoked, on the basis of conquest and political domination, into a global order predicated on inequality and exploitation" (Lazarus 2011, pp. 105–106). See also Kunkel who notes that for Jameson "the disappearance of the Second World and the elimination of pre-capitalist arrangements in the Third marks in fact the *beginning* of a universal history" (2010).
5. Jameson defines "punctual moments" as revelatory moments for realism, against the mimetic realism described in "handbooks of 19th-century literature (or of early 20th-century film)" in contrast to "those punctual moments in which—in a generally stylized and modernized cultural climate—we ourselves occasionally learn again, by experience, what genuine realism 'really' is" (1990, p. 174).
6. World-system theory's radical periodisation enables ambitious world-literary comparisons, with Stephen Shapiro suggesting a cultural comparison between Raj-era nineteenth-century India and early-modern England given that both underwent a transition at the same "stage" of economic development from pre- to early capitalism, leading to similar transformations in "caste, belief, and narrative systems" (Shapiro 2008, p. 303).
7. Despite Gunder Frank's opposition to Wallerstein's account of the capitalist world-system—principally, that for Gunder Frank it is 5000, rather than 500, years old—he offers a very useful précis of world-systems theory, paraphrased as follows: (1) the world-system is a "world" of its own, which does not need to be worldwide, (2) capital accumulation is the motor force of world-systemic history, (3) it has a centre-periphery structure, (4) it is structured by the cyclical nature of hegemonies which succeed the previous one, and (5) it experiences long and short economic cycles of alternating ascending and descending phases (Gunder Frank and Gills 1993, pp. 3–4).
8. See Silvia Federici's account of the resistance to feudalism and emergent capitalism by heretic millenarian movements in medieval Europe, including the Cathars, Waldenses, Spirituals and Apostolics, who rejected property laws, class hierarchies and commerciality, along with the brief progress made in women's rights during the fourteenth century (2004).

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CHAPTER 3

"Worlds in Collision": Salman Rushdie, Globalisation, and Postcoloniality-in-Crisis

Part I: Introduction: Postcolonial Disenchantment

Six years after the publication of *Midnight's Children* (1981), Salman Rushdie stated that its ending previously regarded as "too pessimistic about the future" (1992e, p. 33) was in the light of violent sectarianism between Indian Hindus and Muslims, now regarded as "absurdly, romantically optimistic". By August 1997, the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence, the situation had deteriorated still further and in response Rushdie published an article in *Time Magazine* stating that the irruption of "ancient violence" in "new forms", including the destruction of the Babri Masjid (mosque) in Ayodhya by Hindu fundamentalists, and the retaliatory Bombay bombings of 1993 by Muslim factions, was proof that the utopianism of post-independence India's aspiration to become a nation of inexhaustible cultural and ethnic multiplicity was shattered (1997).[1] India, according to Rushdie, was now "suffused with the sense of an ending" with the first stage of "postcolonial India" passing amidst an overwhelming "disenchantment" (1997). *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), hereafter abbreviated as *MLS*, was Rushdie's first novel following the fatwa and spoke directly to his concern with India's post-independence malaise. Based in Bombay and spanning a four generational time-period from the British Raj to 1993, the novel satirically rewrites *Midnight's Children* (1981) by alluding to the downward trajectories of *Midnight's* characters

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and depicts the ethical evacuation of modernist art, the degradation of the narrator as a figure of India's multiculturalism, and the erosion of Bombay's cosmopolitanism by corrupt politicians, fascist theocrats and criminal cabals. Unlike Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1320) or Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667), texts upon which *MLS* draws, the narrator Moraes "Moor" Zogoiby's travels through Bombay's demonic underworld of Hindutva fundamentalists fails to conclude in an emancipatory vision.

MLS' postcolonial cynicism was the culmination of Rushdie's account in *Midnight's Children* of Indira Gandhi's oppression of anti-government groups during the 1975–1977 Emergency and is a frequently marked tendency of "second wave" postcolonial novels: Kwame Anthony Appiah describes the emergence of "novels of delegitimation" (1991, p. 353) that reject Western imperialism and the "nationalist project of the postcolonial national bourgeoisie" in the disenchanted post-1970s decolonial phase. Revathi Krishnaswamy accords with Appiah, with a post-1960s trend of postcolonial novels exposing "corrupt national bourgeoisies" (1995, p. 126). Previous to *MLS* Rushdie had written widely on the failures of not only postcolonial, but also socialist and liberation national governments across the ideological spectrum, like *The Jaguar Smile*'s (1987) critique of the Sandinista Nicaraguan government and its suppression of opposition parties and contrary viewpoints, *Shame*'s (1983) satire of the relationship between Pakistan's former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and President General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, and *The Satanic Verses*' condemnation of Margaret Thatcher as "Mrs Torture" (1988, p. 266) and preceding prose essay on racism in Britain as emerging from the "critical phase of its postcolonial period" (1992d, p. 129) due to the cultural crisis of a formerly powerful empire.

However, what differentiates *MLS* from *Midnight's Children*, and what merits its analysis as a transitional work in Rushdie's oeuvre is its condemnation of colonisers and post-independence politicians alike as being complicit in the rise of Hindutva theocrats and atavistic businessmen, specifically its pessimistic treatment of history as an unending expanse of colonisation; account of art as being unable to truly portray and critique Bombay's complex networks of criminal capitalists and excluded slum dwellers; and self-conscious eradication of artistic, identitarian, and cultural multiplicities in favour of stark binaries of black and white, underworlds and overworlds. These tendencies emerge from Rushdie's frequent condemnations of not only Hindutva Indian nationalism, but also critique

of global capitalism, arguing in 1990 that the lack of any "real alternative to the liberal-capitalist social model (except, perhaps, the theocratic, foundationalist model of Islam)" (1992c, p. 426) would necessitate new interrogative analyses by modern novelists. *MLS*, in its overt reworking of *Midnight's Children*, critical reflections on the latter's aesthetic qualities and foregrounding of the inability of art to convey the criminal nexus of post-dirigisme Bombay, takes leave from the postcolonial optimism of Rushdie's earlier works.

This chapter argues that *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995), *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) and *Fury* (2001) together map an ideological transition in Rushdie's works from an account of the failures of postcolonial national development and an associated modernist aesthetic mode, towards questions of globalisation, cosmopolitan migrancy, and America's cultural influence. It examines *MLS*' leave-taking of Rushdie's "Bombay Trilogy" (Varma 2004, p. 87, fn. 29), through its rejection of the exuberant postcolonial magic realism that characterised Rushdie's earlier works, in favour of a disenchanted literary mode that depicts the insufficiency of art to represent Bombay's post-independent criminal capitalism. The second section analyses how *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* extends *MLS*' leaving-taking of postcolonial Bombay through a global American narrative that privileges cosmopolitanism and migrancy, replacing *MLS*' account of criminal "underworlds" with references to the creative excesses and daemonic sites of Greek mythology. This emphasis on nearly supernatural excess fuels a dramatic narrative of wild attraction, extraordinary musical abilities, and the rapid ascent to fame of *VTO* band members, Vina and Ormus. Irreconcilable states of being, including Ormus' real and spectral selves, and the narrative's contrary mix of Greek classical myth, the epic, and twentieth-century rock music history, inform the narrative's digressive structure, and account of political and earthly fracturing. The third section on *Fury* (2001), examines how, in contrast to *MLS*' longue durée focus on colonialism and postcolonial national development, or *Ground*'s expansive global narrative, it is carefully attuned to the frenetic pace of its time, offering a "hyperrealist" and condensed depiction of millennial New York by deploying compressed narrative modes like paranoid interconnections, abrupt flashbacks, forced analogies, and the pithy allegorisation of a gendered fury to account for the affective and financial crises of American hegemony.

PART II: *THE MOOR'S LAST SIGH* AND THE CAPITALIST REALIST EPIC

Upon publication, *MLS* won the Whitbread Prize for "Best Novel", the British Book Awards "Author of the Year" in 1995, and the European Union's Aristeion Prize in 1996, but despite these accolades, *MLS*' reception by reviewers was mixed. J. M. Coetzee argued that the novel's account of "multiculturalism" (1996) could not outweigh the text's missteps, with its short-lived characters and exhausting intertextual references, while Orhan Pamuk (1995) was similarly piqued by the novel's melodramatic body count and "flamboyant cynicism" (qtd. Pamuk; see also *MLS* 1995, p. 185). In contrast to the proliferation of articles on *The Satanic Verses*' irreverent and postmodern treatment of history, magic realism, migrant subjectivity, and infamously Ayatollah Khomeini's retaliatory fatwa against Rushdie, *MLS* suffers a comparative lack of critical attention in part because it is difficult text for postcolonial literary critics who mobilise poststructuralist inflected readings that critique grand histories of imperialism and elevate hybridity, palimpsesting, and migrant consciousness as "states of virtue" (Brennan 2004, p. 133). Although *MLS* briefly engages with histories of colonisation, these are presented as ongoing processes in India's economic landscape, despite the narrator "Moraes" being a hybrid and minority "cathjew nut, a stewpot, a mongrel cur" (1995, p. 104), this is insufficient to combat Bombay's toxic sectarian politics, and finally the novel self-consciously effaces and parodies the magic realism of *Midnight's Children* as a painterly "epic fabulism" that detracts from the city's criminal underworlds. When Neil Lazarus, tongue in cheek, states that Rushdie's novels are constantly cited "as testifying to […] notions of migrancy, hybridity, diaspora, 'in-betweenness', 'translation', and 'blasphemy'" (2011, p. 22), this still holds true for *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, but not for *MLS* which constantly presents the reader with the limits of artistic explorations of hybridity, subjectivity, and multiculturalism.

These reasons necessitate the novel's analysis as a transitional text in Rushdie's oeuvre by reference to the broader socio-historical conditions to which it refers. Thus, if *Midnight's Children* marks the transition from a socialist cosmopolitan outlook to the cynical postnationalism of India's post-emergency elites (Jani 2010, p. 22), then *MLS* completes Rushdie's transition towards a political pessimism that emerges from a distinctly global-neoliberal juncture. As Caroline Herbert notes, *MLS*' Bombay is

"corporate and globally capitalist" (2012, p. 948), with Rachel Trousdale likewise arguing that it mobilises a "global" (2004, p. 95) critique of cosmopolitanism with Indian examples. This chapter examines how *MLS* fictionalises actually existing sectarian conflicts and ruthless mafiosos, and how the novel pointedly establishes that the socio-political conditions of contemporary Bombay are such that previous aesthetic modes are unsuited in narrating either 1990s India, or utopian futurities. Put differently, *MLS* narrates a state of postcolonial civic crisis, while translating concerns with global criminal capitalism and corruption into *representational* crises of postcolonial art.

Historical Realism and Corporate Capitalism

In a near contemporaneous interview to *MLS*, Rushdie describes how *The Satanic Verses* mobilises a form of "ironic distance", in deploying a non-mimetic but still correlative relation between real events and their fictionalisation (London Consortium and Rushdie 1996, p. 65). Critic Timothy Brennan similarly notes that Rushdie's underemphasised "journalistic" method avers on the side of political cartoonism rather than pastiche in novels like *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, which are "resolutely non-postmodern" (2006, p. 74). *MLS* is likewise deserving of an analysis of its "journalistic" historical method given its facticity: the novel references major figures and artistic movements from India's decolonisation onwards, including Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, mid-century film star Nargis Dutt, and authors Premchand, Sadat Hasan Manto, Mulk Raj Anand and Ismat Chughtai (1995, p. 173), with Aurora based on Indian-Hungarian modernist artist Amrita Sher-Gil (Rushdie 2010, p. x–xi). The text is divided into four sections that correspond with four generational stages of Indian national development, from the British Raj through to anti-colonial movements, and from independence to 1993, and includes a family tree with dates that establish the text's historical parameters from 1857, the year of Solomon Castile's birth (Moor's grandfather) and a period of mutinies against the British Raj, until Moor's death in 1993, the same year Bombay experienced retaliatory bombings by a Muslim criminal gang following Hindu-Muslim intercommunal violence.

Within these longer timeframes, *MLS*' major focus is the fifteen-year period from 1977 to 1993 during which narrator Moraes and his siblings

die.[2] Throughout this time, Bombay experienced some of its worst religious violence: the 1992 destruction of Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in the Uttar Pradesh region of northern India by Hindutva forces led to the deaths of over two thousand people in consequent riots and marked the beginning of an insidious phase of religious fundamentalism. In 1993, Muslim criminal Dawood Ibrahim and his D-Company carried out retaliatory bombings of Bombay at over thirteen sites, causing the deaths of more than three hundred people. *MLS* closes its Bombay section with these bombings and makes multiple references to Babri Masjid (1995, p. 363, p. 365), with Moraes stating that "Those who hated India, those who sought to ruin it, would need to ruin Bombay [....] And it may have been that what was unleashed in the north (in, to name it, because I must name it, Ayodhya) – that corrosive acid of the spirit" (p. 351). These attacks coincided with the rise of Hindutva neonationalists locally and nationwide, with the "Shiv Sena" political party succeeding in local elections in Bombay,[3] a situation the novel parodies through satirical caricatures of Shiv Sena, and leader Bal Thackeray as Raman "Mainduck" Fielding of the "Mumbai Axis" party.

An important, although unmentioned event in *MLS* that also structures this period of Indian history was the nation's economic deregulation upon entry into an IMF Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1991. The most significant aspect of this bailout was the ideological shift by former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in the 1980s that a new India would "seek to 'do a Korea'" (Gandhi qtd. Weinstein 2008, p. 30). Using the same language of economic modernisation, Shiv Sena promised to turn Bombay into "a new 'Asian Tiger'" (qtd. Herbert 2012, pp. 949–950) during a 1995 election campaign. Up until that point, India had followed a flawed doctrine of dirigisme, or protectionist and reformist economic policies initiated by Jawaharlal Nehru's government. But under Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao's administration, in the 1990s the SAP was used to implement neoliberal economic policies, including India's withdrawal from minimal levels of access to food, housing, healthcare, and education, alongside the deregulation of the Indian marketplace by devaluing the rupee and opening the nation to external trade (Weinstein 2008, p. 30).

If historical fiction necessarily bears within itself "a standard by which it may then be judged" (Jameson 1971, p. 192), then *MLS*' ending—with the destruction of Bombay and the death of the narrator—is a consequence of the novel's historical fidelity. The destruction of Moor's symbolic multiplicity by the "singularity" of religious fundamentalism and

corporate manoeuvring, firmly closes off the utopian possibilities of the novel's imaginary, and as we shall see later, the political possibilities of an exuberant postcolonial aesthetic mode. This extends to the narrative's treatment of history as a series of interchangeable events, or a longue durée of contiguous predacious colonial and merchant capitalism. The "ironic distance" of *MLS*' historical method is thus a resolutely parodic and despairing one, which critiques Raj colonialists and corporate Bombay business families alike as complicit in the rise of Hindutva nationalists and the city's deepening inequities.

A prime example of this "presentist" treatment of history is through the narrator's father, merchant Abraham Zogoiby. After marrying Aurora da Gama in 1939, the Christian heiress to the da Gama spice company, Abraham moves the family to Bombay and expands into banking, property, drug smuggling, and human trafficking by using his knowledge of India's boom and bust economic bubbles to exploit the weaknesses of his competitors. However, upon arriving in Bombay, Abraham is initially rebuffed by the city's major corporations and is warned against expanding his business by important families. Several of the houses mentioned in this section, including Jeejeebhoy, Readymoney, and Sassoon, made their fortunes in actuality in the nineteenth-century opium trade between Britain and India (pp. 180–181). David Sassoon, a Baghdadi-Jewish businessman, was one of the world's largest cotton and opium traders in the nineteenth-century. Dubbed the "Rothschilds of the East" the Sassoon's trace their ancestry to the Ibn Shoshan Jewish family in Spain (Sapir 2014), and most likely inspired Zogoiby's elaborate Moorish-Jewish genealogy. However, for an unscrupulous businessman like Abraham who is "prepared to take risks" (1995, p. 182), the city of Bombay is open to ruthless entrepreneurs. Abraham capitalises on Bombay's rapid modernisation and historical amnesia by excavating the structural weaknesses of the "Cashondeliveri" house which date back to the disastrous financial speculation of the 1860s Cotton Mania to engineer a dramatic takeover of the firm, describing his success as "the way the decadent Persian Emperors must have felt when the armies of Islam thundered in" (p. 182). This ironic comparison by a Jew to the colonising forces of Mughal-era Islam looting the wealth of a decadent society in its terminal decline offers a clue to Abraham's strategising—he expands his business by mobilising historical knowledge, with corporate exploitation accommodating religious difference. Consequently, *MLS*' account of Abraham's Jewish ancestry depicts internecine battles over resources and trade routes

rather than religious quarrels, with Moor stating that it is "exceptional, freakish, improbable" (p. 331), that Bombay's Muslim gangs are "united by a Cochin Jew", but "In the end, people make the alliances they need" (pp. 331–332) in favour of an "inter-community league of cynical self-interest".

Strictly speaking, Abraham's privileging of corporate risk as early as 1946 is anachronous: in actuality, India experienced the shuttering effects of Nehru's economic dirigisme until 1991, albeit the lines between finance capitalism's "high-risk" and "high reward" logic, local manufacturing, colonial business legacies, and informal economies have always been blurred. What mattered after independence "was the color of money" (Appadurai 2000, p. 631), and undergirding Bombay's cosmopolitanism was the cash and thus trust-based nature of its shadow economies, with cash's circulation through "various kinds a commerce [...] a vital ingredient of sociality" (p. 634) linking its diverse industries and ethnic groups. But critically *MLS*' historical inaccuracy offers an undifferentiated longue durée of capitalist enterprise to implicate Bombay's patrician nineteenth-century traders as much as British Raj colonialism in the development of the state's corrupt economy. Abraham's success is based on his advantageous knowledge of inherited debts from the nineteenth-century, as earlier economic moments exert an exaggerated influence on the present. However, the ongoing impact of financial boom-bust cycles leads to the loss of historical thinking Abraham so successfully weaponises. The reification of temporality and capitalist history in *MLS* produces the flattened political horizons of a present in which historical colonialism, the failures of Nehruvian policies, and contemporary deregulations of housing and welfare, all coexist. 1991's deregulation is an absent cause, structuring the novel's pessimistic account of history as an inevitable force, impervious to the trajectories of postcolonial nationalism and progressive cultural pluralism against religious and economic fundamentalisms. This collapsing of temporalities, or "presentism" is defined by Jameson as the reification of temporality and collective "loss of historicity" (Jameson 2015, p. 120) of late capitalism, and its production of a pervasive "political paralysis" characterised by an "inability to imagine, let alone to organize, the future and future change" (p. 120).[4] Presentism has a recent genealogy in postcolonial studies with Neil Lazarus critiquing Arundhati Roy's comparison of India's Hindutva movement to Hitler's fascism because it imagines history as the inescapable recurrence of a powerful capitalist elite that exploits an innate will-to-power, in an evacuation of future political horizons. This method construes the "past as the history of the present"

or the logic through which "this thing that has happened has, in a sense, *always been happening* or has always been *about to happen*" (Lazarus 2004b, p. 33). But such historical anachronisms can serve generative purposes—Bombay's real estate bubble, despite occurring in the 1990s, is retrofitted to Indira Gandhi's 1970s Emergency to critique, as Caroline Herbert argues, both the "earlier policies of the Congress government and the later Shiv Sena–BJP alliance" (2012, p. 950), which failed to uphold Nehruvian secular socialism. In another pointed historical aberration, Moor is afflicted with an illness that causes him to age "double-quick" (1995, p. 143), a supernatural process that achieves meaning as a Fanonian allegory for India's too-rapid national development and it's sickening effect on the body politic.

Capitalist Realism and the Waning of Epic Fabulism

Abraham uses other techniques to hide his identity as Bombay's criminal don. He appears to his family an ineffective "loving husband" (p. 182), and bland managerial figure, and draws on visual metaphors to obscure the historical means by which he creates his wealth and to satirise art's inability to illuminate Bombay's criminal present. Fittingly, Abraham unveils his managerial disguise to Moor following the latter's diabolical rite of passage in the Bombay Central underground prison and time working as a neonationalist thug for Raman Fielding, telling Moor "goblin-sagas" (p. 333) of Bombay's demonic criminal world, and appearing to his closest colleagues as a cartoonish arch-villain comparable to Mogambo in Hindi cinema's 1987 *Mr. India* (p. 331). That Moor gains additional powers of perception only after being rejected from his family and experiencing Bombay's unsavoury antipodes—apprehending the city's reality as an "*unnaturalism*, the only real ism [sic] of these back-to-front and jabberwocky days" (p. 5)—suggests a form of spatial perception akin to Jameson's reconfiguration of Lukács' class consciousness. For Jameson, literature from the peripheries has a propinquity to the worst excesses of capitalist accumulation, especially the proletarianisation of human labour which correspondingly manifests in the predominance of allegory in "third-world" texts that forego the boundaries between personal privation and public inequity (Jameson 1986, p. 69). Jameson's point is problematised by Rushdie's own position as a major author in the postcolonial literary marketplace, with *MLS* emerging from a relatively non-experimental set of "Western" literary forms like ekphrasis, the

künstlerroman, and a frustrated bildungsroman, but learning to see totality from a diminished class position is crucial to the novel's mapping of Bombay's criminal capitalism and critique of Aurora's artistic limitations.

Despite Aurora Zogoiby's beginnings as a social realist painter depicting Bombay's 1946 striking workers, she becomes "another *grande dame*" (1995, p. 304) on Malabar Hill, with her literal elevation and class prejudices making her fearful and unseeing of the "surreal stratum" (p. 304) and "unnatural realism" of Bombay's criminal underworld. But Aurora's blindness is a knowing complicity, with Moor marvelling at her lack of curiosity, describing his parents' marriage as a "brilliant, legitimising façade" (p. 107) for Abraham's activities. Given Aurora's "overworld" viewpoint, *MLS*' contrastingly gritty imaginary is achieved by situating Moor in an underground prison, from which he looks "up" at the city. Only full imbrication into the city's mafia and "underworld" can guarantee full insight into Bombay's social reality. Extending this form of metropolitan viewing to a global one, David Cunningham argues that crime dramas like *The Wire* and *Gomorrah* are "capitalist realist epics" because they mobilise global scales and scopes of reference in linking local instances of criminality to cities around the world, while simultaneously acknowledging the futility of ever imagining the "economy in all its aspects" (Saviano qtd. Cunningham 2010, p. 19). *MLS*' longue durée history of Moorish violence and Jewish dispossession, global consumption and international conspiracies, visual language and cinematic references, aligns in many respects with the ambition of Cunningham's "capitalist realist epic" while also reflecting on the limitations of art to imagine the totality of these relations.

As though to underscore this point, *MLS*' preferred literary mode is of contrasting doubles to convey the occluded realities of Bombay: of "Under versus Over, sacred versus profane, god versus mammon, past versus future, gutter versus sky" (1995, p. 318), in a form of literary chiaroscuro that consciously eschews the irreverent magic realism of Rushdie's earlier works. Describing his long-tentacled spice-arms-drugs corporation, Abraham employs a crude language of surfaces and hidden depths, stating that "The magic stops working when people start seeing the strings" (p. 187). Moor later recalls that "nine-tenths" (p. 341) of Abraham's criminal empire was "submerged below the surface of things", a palimpsesting he describes as "Under World beneath Over World, black market beneath white" (p. 184). The novel's repetition of a dualistic language, especially black and white to code overworlds and underworlds, alongside

references to post-independence films like Mehboob Khan's *Mother India* (1957),[5] makes a subtle point about the contemporary usurpation of ideals of earlier nationalistic black and white films, despite the contrastingly bright colours and figurative profusion of Aurora's "epic fabulist" (p. 174) works. The novel's deployment of the "downwards" journey into space and class, in order to see "upwards" into the totality of city relations by using an allegorical language of stark binaries, is also a striking divergence from the vibrant and irreverent magic realism that characterised Rushdie's earlier works. Problems of representation here operate self-reflexively as negative modes of critique.

But *MLS*' apprehension of totality also occurs during a transformative time for India's post-independence secular national consciousness, and simultaneously for the postcolonial magic realist novel. Lukács argues that it is only during crises of accumulation that totality is graspable (2010, p. 28), and marrying this statement with Cunningham's account of totality and capitalist globalisation, it is during moments of hegemonic turbulence, like the expansion of neoliberalism in India and the coproduced growth of sectarianism, that the dialectic of not-knowing and knowing totality becomes possible (Jameson 1998, p. 76). However, Cunningham's millennial "capitalist realist epic" requires retooling to account both for *MLS*'s 1990s context, and how it responds to the postcolonial literary debates earlier Rushdie works established. Given *MLS*' overt disenchantment with art as a form of knowing and action, it more closely approximates a cynical and exhausted post-dirigisme realism that rejects the suitability of an earlier magic realism to narrate the travails of the post-IMF-World Bank nation-state.

Before setting out this exhausted realism, *MLS* diligently cycles through the sequences of Aurora's artistic development from her 1946 social-realist "Chipkali" phase, which immediately precedes India's decolonisation, to the "epic-fabulist" period as a response to India's post-independence reality.[6] The carnivalesque multiplicity of Aurora's "epic fabulism" is a synonym for Rushdie's magic realism in *Midnight's Children*, and like the latter's portrayal of the surrealism of post-independence India, recounts the origins of Aurora's epic fabulism in her "deep creative confusion, a semi-paralysis born of an uncertainty not merely about realism but about the nature of the real itself" (p. 173) following decolonisation, with fellow artist Vasco Miranda urging her towards the fantastic: "Forget those damnfool realists! The real is always hidden – isn't it? – inside a miraculously burning bush! Life is fantastic!" (p. 174). *Midnight's*

Childrens' magic realism originated in part from Latin America's "lo real maravilloso", a form used by radical anti-colonialist writers like Alejo Carpentier and Miguel Asturias to capture the surreal coexistence of residual modes of production (Denning 2006, p. 723), alongside Rushdie's debt to writers like Günter Grass and his "reconstruction" (Rushdie 1992a, p. 279) of post-World War II's "reality from rubble", and the absurd playfulness of surrealists like Luis Buñuel.[7] Tracking a different political trajectory from the socialist basis of Latin American magic realism, *MLS*' portrayal of Aurora's epic fabulism culminates in "Mooristan"—a series of postmodern works imagining a mythical, metaphorical, and polyphonic place. Produced in the 1970s, "Mooristan" depicts Moor as "Boabdil", the last Moorish King of Grenada, who becomes a metaphorical unifier of India's ethnic and religious multiplicity amidst an abundant revelry of architectural styles and magical apparitions: "Place where worlds collide, flow in and out of one another, and washofy away [….] One universe, one dimension, one country, one dream, bumpo'ing into another, or being under, or on top of. Call it Palimpstine" (1995, p. 226). But Moor critiques Aurora's epic fabulist style for distracting from her artworks' underlying political message noting that "it was easy not to feel preached at, to revel in the carnival without listening to the barker, to dance to the music without caring for the message in the song" (p. 227). Throughout this period, Aurora produces exuberant and irreverent artworks, but the meaning of Mooristan, that medieval Spain and twentieth-century India share histories of multiculturalism eroded by monolithic religions, is lost in the message.

Atef Laouyene rightly notes that Rushdie's palimpsesting of Andalusian and Indian history is "an attempt to map out the limits of postcolonial hybridity as an empowering subject position" (2007, p. 145) and to "articulate his misgivings about the potential failures of certain forms of hybridity art". The evacuation of hybridity as an aesthetic strategy and identity position is already self-evident in *MLS*, and more interesting still is the text's recourse to realism, binaries, and the breakdown of speculative forms like metaphor. Thus, Moraes afflicted with a strange condition that causes him to age doubly fast argues that there is "No need for supernatural explanations; some cock-up in the DNA will do" (1995, p. 145), and following this explanation of his condition as a measurable, albeit strange quantity, describes how he is forced to "live out the literal truth of the metaphors so often applied to my mother and her circle. In the fast lane, on the fast track, ahead of my time, a jet-setter right down

to my genes, I burned – having no option – the candle at both ends" (p. 161). In an earlier prose piece, Rushdie defines metaphor as both the figural "*bearing across*" of meaning and migration (1992a, p. 278), but by the time of *MLS*, metaphor's transformative quality is bracketed by the novel's deflation of magical reasoning.

Fittingly, in a text about demagoguery and corruption, only Abraham, in contrast to artist Aurora, can command true creative powers. In a key scene, Abraham describes his ability to bring about Bombay's Backbay land reclamation project stating that "'Your mother and her art crowd were always complaining what tough times they had *making something out of nothing*,' [….] 'What did they make? Pictures! But I, I, I – tho [sic] brought a whole new city out of nowhere! Now you judge: which is the harder magic trick?'" (1995, p. 185). Abraham's "magic trick", along with his agent Kéké Kolatkar, is in forcing through legislation decreeing that "any persons who had settled in Bombay subsequent to the last census were to be deemed not to exist" (p. 186), meaning that he could now hire the cheap spectres "created by law". Abraham's dissipation of citizen rights transforms inconvenient slum dwellers into an invisible but profitable labour source. Herbert rightly states that *MLS* portrays the recent transformations of Bombay by Shiv Sena in dialectical terms as "anti-poor" and "anti-Muslim" (2012, p. 950), but also that the city is rendered in actuality and in the novel as "corporate and globally capitalist" (p. 948), through a neoliberal dynamic of financial "dematerialization" and "hypermaterialization" (Appadurai qtd. Herbert 2012, p. 947) of cheap land and invisible labour. "Palimpsesting" thus undergoes a radical and cynical transformation in *MLS* from a postmodern painterly style which in political intent approximates *Midnight*'s desire to convey the multitudinousness of the Indian nation-state (1992b, p. 16), to Abraham's successful occlusion of his "underworld" activities by his "overworld" appearance. This revision of legal and social realities approximates an idea of palimpsesting closer to *Nineteen Eight Four*'s account of history as a "palimpsest, scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as was necessary" (Orwell 1949, pp. 42–43; Salgado 2007, p. 163) by those in power, in more contrastingly dystopian terms than Jawaharlal Nehru's foundational and abstract account of Indian history as a "palimpsest on which layer upon layer of thought and reverie had been inscribed" (1946, p. 59; see also Weickgenannt Thiara 2009, p. 180).

Aurora is unwittingly prescient when she observes that the multiplicity of place, history, and culture in Mooristan's palimpsests becomes

"One universe, one dimension, one country, one dream" (1995, p. 226), rather than the idealised multiculturalism of Rushdie's elastic "India idea" (1997). With the clarity of hindsight, Moor realises that the true "uniting principle" (1995, p. 408) of the Mooristan works is religious fundamentalism, a "tragedy of multiplicity destroyed by singularity, the defeat of Many by One". Likewise, Rushdie declared in interview that *MLS* was the final text in a four-book arc exploring the South Asian continent after decolonisation (Jaggi and Rushdie 1995), with the text's portrayal of Aurora's art designed to depict the "flip side to pluralism; the down side can be confusion, formlessness, chaos, a lack of vision or singleness of purpose" easily overcome by "monolithic, brutal views". In an overly explicative moment, Moor extends Rushdie's observation by noting that in Aurora's later works the "ideas of impurity, cultural admixture and mélange" (1995, p. 303) that inflected Mooristan and the harlequin Moor as a symbol for multicultural tolerance, were "capable of distortion, and contained a potential for darkness as well as for light". Thus, the "monolithic" views referred to by Rushdie in interview and in the novel surely encompass religion, as observed by analyses of the sectarian histories of *MLS* (Herbert 2012; Siddiqi 2007; Trousdale 2004), but also the elevation of capitalist technics of plunder, dispossession, coercion, and exclusion as important principles guiding the post-dirigisme state. As Moor states, the early 1990s oversaw "the birth of a new age in India, when money, as well as religion, was breaking all the shackles on its desires" (1995, pp. 343–344). The language of "oneness" conveys multiple theocratic and capitalist meanings, including the "heavyweight unification" (p. 351) of Bombay's criminal factions, and a retrograde Hindutva fascism of "one religion". As Zeeny Vakil, who appears in *The Satanic Verses*, tells Moor, "in a religion with a thousand and one gods they suddenly decide only one chap matters" (p. 338), and earlier in the text, artist Vasco Miranda cynically defines democracy as "one man one bribe" (p. 167). A capitalist-theocracy thus emerges that can powerfully align economic deregulation and illegal activities for the benefit of politicians, theocrats, and businessmen alike.

Collage and Totality

As though acknowledging the limits of Mooristan, Aurora changes medium to collage towards the end of her career. In an unnamed work, she represents Bombay's slum-dwellers as trash, and it is perhaps this work

which offends Abraham most gravely, who soon thereafter arranges for Aurora's assassination. In actuality, the city's slums, including Dharavi which is the largest, are partially the effects of IMF debt financing which produced a permanently redundant mass of reserve labourers. Made with bits of rubbish, the "trash" collage plays on the grotesque metonym of slum inhabitants as the "refuse" of the city's labour force in an economy of meaning that corresponds with the austere conditions of its subjects. The collage reproduces the complex nature of "patched-up" (p. 302) homes constituted by the piecemeal nature of shantytowns, with figures made out of items "the metropolis did not value", including "lost buttons, broken windscreen wipers, torn cloth, burned books, exposed camera film". These objects stand in for bodies made invisible by Abraham's bureaucratic manoeuvring, as the scrappy and improvisational nature of slum life is reproduced in figures forced to find limbs from an unfit pool of items, thus becoming further physically marked and stigmatised by their oddity: "many of them ended up with two left feet or gave up the search for buttocks and fixed a pair of plump, amputated breasts where their missing behinds should be" (p. 302).

Aurora's collage literalises Lukács' account of proletarian workers who are enlivened to their conditions by their "self-objectification" through the transformation of human labour into a commodity which "reveals in all its starkness the dehumanised and dehumanising function of the commodity relation" (1971a, p. 92). The collage's reconstitution of humans by waste products powerfully imagines the violent centripetal and centrifugal forces of neoliberal capitalism on Bombay which draws workers into its slums as reserve labour, while disaggregating their humanity through a denial of citizenry. That the slums provide a ready source of cheap labour for exploitation is discovered by Abraham to his benefit once he orchestrates the removal of newly arrived migrants from census figures, effectively transforming migrants into illegal guest workers unprotected by the laws of the state. The emergence of slums as one of the "foundational socio-ecological [categories] of our times" (Moore 2011, p. 118) depends precisely on their role as sinks for those effected by neoliberal dispossessions, with land grabs and cheap labour the axes upon which a "postmodern politics" of flexible accumulation depends (Jameson 2015, p. 130).

Aurora's representation of the dissolution and reassemblage of human bodies thus briefly imagines how India's subaltern poor are reified by their integration into a world-economy of labour. If an earlier realism

was "dependent on the possibility of access to the forces of change in a given moment of history" (Jameson 1971, p. 204), Aurora's collage and *MLS*' variety of disenchanted post-dirigisme realism are dependent on limited intimations of the whole that are cognisant of the impossibility of imagining totality, or capitalist realist epic. Although collage draws on modernist aesthetic modes like fragmentation, dissolution, and estrangement, it achieves meaning through an interrelation of pieces and effects, through metonymy and substitution, specifically the homology made between excluded workers and trash. Collage thus unveils the reification of slum people as commodities in waiting in a way that briefly renders it closer to a radical art form that would catalyse political action across subordinated positions.

Part III: *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*'s Incommensurable Worlds

Part of the cultural cachet of Rushdie's novels is their overt staging of the theoretical debates of poststructuralist-postcolonial studies, and the recirculation of pithy reflections on migrant subjectivity and cultural hybridity. What differentiates *MLS* from earlier works like *Midnight's Children* (1981), and later novels in the "worlds in collision" (Livings and Rushdie 2005)[8] series such as *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), is its extreme restaging of these debates in its account of artists colluding with the processes by which criminal capitalism goes unnoticed and the secular state is dismantled. *MLS*' historical-realist and extremely imagistic literary form examines the challenges for Aurora of portraying Abraham's actions, and in its turn to visual media and use of binaries to flesh out the hidden actions of Bombay's "underworld" reveals a dissatisfaction with the disengagement and abstractions of theory and culture from iniquitous conditions. Notably, *MLS*'s satirical caricature of Marxism, Hindutva nationalism and poststructuralism, and Aurora's politicised collage works are grounded in the "materialist/poststructuralist oppositions" (Bernard et al. 2015, p. 4) of 1990s postcolonial theory, and it is within these debates that the text achieves meaning. However, the novel's conclusion, with Moor dying on a hill in the Alhambra in Spain, accedes to a pessimistic account of the erasure of individual political agency amidst the waning of magic realism's aesthetic potential as a way to register India's religious and ethnic multitudinousness. The novel's dominant mood is a pessimistic one that sees resistive action in small pockets of artistic experimentation, but accords

that post-1989 socialism is "dead and buried" (Lazarus 2004a, p. 5), and Indian secularism under threat.

MLS was Rushdie's last solely Indian work, and he followed this with a series of American-global texts including *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) and *Fury* (2001). Accordingly, these works' shifts in scale and content, including a reorientation to the US as the magnetising and generative locus for future artistic development, deployed alternate literary modes and formal choices, such as *Ground*'s lengthy and digressionary rewriting of the emergence of an Indian-American rock supergroup through the lens of Greek classical myth, and *Fury*'s contrastingly and extremely narrow setting in New York City in the summer of 2000. National crises are reconfigured from those of postcolonial development and creative practice in *MLS*, to questions of identity and cosmopolitan migrancy in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, and to artistic crises and an allegorised national-libidinal violence in *Fury*. These shifts express transformations in socio-historical trends more broadly, with *Ground* engaging with 1990s poststructuralist-postcolonial arguments about ontological hybridity and migrancy within a lengthy, post-national global narrative, while *Fury* reterritorialises Rushdie's oeuvre in a radically compressed form by intimating the over-heated financial markets and end-of-empire sensibility of US millennial imaginaries.

However, while in interview Rushdie describes *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (hereafter referred to as *GBHF*) as the first part in a trilogy that includes *Fury* and *Shalimar* that asks how stories are interconnected and "a part of everyone else's story?" (Livings and Rushdie 2005), the novel, with its initial setting in Bombay and references to multiple other characters and situations in Rushdie's oeuvre, draws initial inspiration from his "Bombay" works. This includes references to characters like Whiskey Sisodia from *The Satanic Verses*, Aurora from *MLS*, an Abraham-like business figure called Homi Catrack from *Midnight's Children*, and main protagonist Ormus Cama (rhymes with da Gama), who is born in Bombay in 1937 (a full decade before independence and the birth of one hundred magical children in *Midnight's Children*, and a full two decades before the birth of Moor in 1957). *GBHF* thus continues Rushdie's leave-taking of Bombay, by spending nearly half the narrative in India, while melodramatically setting up the narrator's long-drawn farewell to the sub-continent.

However, while *MLS*' historical errors make critical points about the contiguities between colonialism, Nehruvian socialism and capitalism in a mode of "ironic distancing", *GBHF*'s alternate reality enhances its fictional distance and retelling of rock music history in mythic rather than

historically accurate terms. The narrative's intentional shift to a global cultural form and expansive border crossings, framing music, love, and passion as transcendent and timeless qualities is critically different to the historical presentism of *MLS*. This section examines how *GBHF*'s cosmopolitan mythologising produces a global rather than postcolonial narrative that finds its locus and meaning in America. It builds upon the previous argument about *MLS* as a transitional work in Rushdie's oeuvre by paying attention to the role of form and meta-commentaries on art, here Umeed "Rai" Merchant's photography and examines the emphasis on identitarian and formal "fractures" throughout, framed as they are by the novel's deterritorialised qualities.

Mythic Cosmopolitanism

The Ground Beneath Her Feet is narrated by Bombay photographer Rai and concerns his relationship with rock super-group VTO, composed of lead singer and Greek-American Vina Apsara, and Bombayite Ormus Cama, and their lives across three continents. Key to the narrative's "leave-taking" of postcolonial magic realism is its repurposing of several Greek myths in a retelling of rock music's purportedly South Asian origins and universal appeal. This use of classical intertexts repurposes *MLS*' language of criminal underworlds and political overworlds to the daemonic underworlds and "overworlds" of mortals and gods, inspired by the Greek myth of *Orpheus and Eurydice*. This debt to mythology extends to the novel's central romance plot, with the great passion between musician Ormus and singer Vina ruptured by her death by an earth-shattering quake. Vina Apsara's name is modelled on "Vina, the India lyre. Apsara, from *apsaras*, a swanlike water nymph" (1999, p. 55), and in case the parallels between Eurydice, who dies after dancing with Naiads, and Vina is unclear, we are told that Apsara means in "(Western terms, a naiad, not a dryad)". Thus, in contrast to *MLS*' emphasis on binaries of political-corporate overworlds and criminal underworlds, *GBHF* transposes the language of doubles onto a supernatural and mythic account of global culture. But rather than repurpose myth to critically comment on the past, the dramatic excesses of Greek myth fuel Vina and Ormus' melodramatic affair, tremendous musical abilities and rapid ascent to fame, while offering an account of cultural globalisation as a supernatural and transcendent experience.

Other Greek myths inform the tale, with Ormus' musical talent based on his access to underworlds in which his dead twin brother, Gayomart, offers premonitory visions of future pop hits and glimpses of alternate

realities. Suffering periods of "darknesses" (p. 54) Ormus can project his mind into "empires of the unseen" to find the spectral shadow of Gayomart. This capacity for cognitive projection is modelled; the narrative tells us, on the Greek tale of twins Castor and Polydeuces, with Polydeuces bequeathing the near-dead Castor with some of his immortal powers, necessitating Castor's travels between both worlds. However, Gayomart's return is limited to his transmission of musical premonitions rather than a visit to the "real" overworld. Significantly, Ormus receives his musical presentiments 1001 nights before their release to the public, in a postcolonial Scheherazadian twist that relocates rock music's origins in Bombay rather than America. This revision of America's cultural-musical ascendancy curiously repurposes *MLS*' deconstruction of monolithic national narratives. Yet America is the site of the duo's eventual musical success and from where they achieve global domination, with the US described lovingly as the magnetising centre of the world-system and the heartland for the realisation of Ormus' ambitions: "America, the Great Attractor, whispered in my ears too" (p. 100). Bombay is in this logic, a "hick town, a hayseed provincial ville" (p. 100) against the architectural hypermodernity of global metropolises like Tokyo, Buenos Aires, and New York. *MLS* argues that counter-histories that celebrate admixture and multiculturalism are necessary to avoid the worst excesses of violent sectarianism, but here *GBHF*'s revision of rock music's origins diminishes its actual socio-political import in favour of a mythologised cosmopolitan-postcolonial narrative that celebrates the creative fecundity of India while simultaneously taking leave from it.

The novel's synthesis of ancient Greek myths with contemporary celebrity culture and foregrounding of abstract but interlinked ideas of "frontier" crossings—of realities, musical genres, identities, and national borders—resituates the text within an abstracted global-cosmopolitan narrative rather than a localised milieu. Cosmopolitanism exists in *GBHF* in two senses: firstly, in summoning a world-imaginary that draws on what Bruce Robbins describes as "a professionalism that [...] believes in its own intellectual powers of generalization, abstraction, synthesis, and representation at a distance" (1998, p. 253). These narrative technics are crucial to *GBHF*'s melange of narrative traditions, and dialectical interplay between universal myths, the global epic, American cultural globalisation, and Bombay localism. Secondly, cosmopolitanism is the cultural sensibility of friction-free narratives of globalisation, or in Timothy Brennan's parlance that "globalization bears on cosmopolitanism as

structure to idea. It is that purportedly new material reality to which the new ethos—cosmopolitanism—responds" (2001, p. 662). *GBHF* registers the transformation of contemporaneity through its account of global migrancy, and the mobility and hybridisation of culture, but it also suggests cosmopolitan narrative technics of sublimation and universalism, which are grounded in specific hegemonic conditions and a "national-cultural mood" (Brennan 2001, p. 661) of Clintonian free-trade, multicultural celebration and centre-right liberalism. For instance, *GBHF* celebrates Ormus' musical capacity for world-cultural forms, while situating VTO's success in an America that renders equivalent Ormus' rage at Vina into a national anger at the US' loss in Vietnam: "Angry America [...] the America of loss, the America that's taken a beating and doesn't fully understand how [....] responds to Ormus' wrath, because he's a very angry man, angry with Vina, himself" (1999, p. 379). That Ormus' melodies are universally appealing replicates the mythological account of Orpheus' music as appreciated by gods and men alike. These structures of thought, by which equivalence and mistranslation service a particular variant of cultural universalism, suggests the "elusiveness of imperial attitudes" (Brennan 1997, p. 11) that guide Ormus' work and trajectory, and the effective way difference is sublimated to popular American forms, like rock music, whose origins and transmission have material-ideological underpinnings that do not hinder their transplantation in *GBHF* to Gayomart's necro-underworld. This is in spite of the narrative's knowing parody of world-music as a way of performing diversity, while deflecting from questions of cultural appropriation and value: Ormus adds worlded flavour to his "un-American sounds", by including "the sexiness of the Cuban horns, the mind-bending patterns of the Brazilian drums, the Chilean woodwinds moaning like the winds of oppression, the African male voice choruses like trees swaying in freedom's breeze, the grand old ladies of Algerian music [...] the holy passion of the Pakistani *qawwals*" (p. 379). The novel threads an uneasy path between its postcolonial origin story and knowing celebration of Ormus' own cosmopolitan creative practice, which samples sounds rather unproblematically to capitalise on VTO's enormous musical success. As Mondal argues, *GBHF*'s narration of belonging in alternately localised and transnational cosmopolitan forms implicitly restages America as the home of migrant and multicultural identities, which can be "writ large on a global scale" (2007, p. 181). If cosmopolitanism is, as Brennan argues, an idea to the structure of globalisation which finds approbation largely in core regions like America, then it is

one which has exported a "self-confident locality for consumption *as* the world" (2001, p. 661), just as cosmopolitan music-making is a strand of cultural making that manufactures the world from the core, from whence it gains purchase.

Form and Incommensurability

The most striking illustration of the novel's alignment of form with ideas of local belonging and globalisation is when Rai uncovers the Shri Piloo Doodhwala goat scam. Piloo is Vina's neglectful Bombay foster parent, and he transforms his goat milk empire into a ruse through which he makes money by availing of "substantial tax rebates and improvement grants" (1999, p. 231). Rai makes his name as a photographer by misattributing images from a murdered investigative reporter that confirm the "*decisive voiding*" (p. 242) of the goats—their absence proves Piloo's fraud. Notably, Rai's only travels outside of Bombay are described in curiously vacant and premodern terms. The landscape, without the "polyphonic reality of the road" (p. 238), is characterised by silences, unmappability, and stagnant feudal relations, as though these regions were "over a thousand years" in the past. Unlike the allegorical pairings of darkness/lightness, overworld/underworld of *MLS*, Rai claims that his photographic explorations into light, composition and scene are an attempt to voyeuristically illustrate the "souls of things" (p. 221), but rural India is only briefly and very partially described as a primitive foil to Bombay's modernity. Underlining the unimportance accorded to these scenes, the scandal caused by Rai's images lasts all too briefly before threats of recrimination precipitate his flight to America.

In contrast to the central role Aurora and her art play in *MLS*, arguably photography is a narrative subject rather than an aesthetic mode immanent to *GBHF*, or put differently, photography offers stylistic opportunities to Rai, but his emphasis on the impermanence of memory and the fictionality of even truthful narratives is a briefly realised element of narrative plot rather than one that guides the text's formal concerns throughout. As Florian Stadtler notes, this is a filmic text of flashbacks and flashforwards, in which Rai "allows one scene to play out, then fades out and zooms in or cuts to next" (2014, p. 139). The marrying of Greek excess and supernaturalism to the trajectory of musical fame and filmic techniques is a contrary composition that formally stages *GBHF*'s dominant literary logic as that of incommensurability, or the irreconcilabilities between forms of knowledge and reality that illuminate the cultural

logic of globalisation. Rai is concerned with capturing the emergence of global schisms: "That's what I see when I'm a camera: the battle lines, the corrals, the stockades, the pales, the secret handshakes" (p. 344), or the conflict among various ethnic and political groups, amidst the emergence of "tribal" and "premodern"-like contemporary collectives (p. 343). As Pirbhai notes, this incommensurability is furthered in the characters' doubling, with various alter-egos, doppelgangers and spectres haunting the text throughout (2001). Ormus' doubles include Gayomart, his dead twin, and Cyrus Cama, the living brother of twin Virus, who is imprisoned for a murder-spree, and who provides a piercing critique of Ormus' "self-hating, deracinated music" (1999, p. 556) which has long been at the "very heart, of the arrogance of the West". Vina's alter-egos include the apsaras and Greek naiads after whom she is named, and super fan Mira, who replaces Vina in VTO after the latter's death. Furthering this narrative mode of incommensurable forms, realities and pairings, is *Ground*'s use of historical inaccuracies to reconfirm its heightened fictionality within a parallel realm of alternate histories—in contrast to *MLS*' journalistic historical realism—through references to the musical duo Carly Simon and Guinevere Garfunkel as the hit-makers of "Bridge Over Troubled Water" (p. 156), J. F. K.'s lucky escape from assassination in Dallas (p. 185), and the ascribing of *Don Quixote* to Borges' Pierre Ménard (p. 280).

Lukács states that the totalising form of the epic was only available to a pre-lapsarian world united by religious certainties, but totality is now "no longer given to the forms of art" (1971b, p. 38). *GBHF*'s annexation of classical myths in its various guises suggests an attempt to recuperate a totalising "pre-lapsarian" myth of contemporary cultural globalisation. But this "frontier-crossing" becomes less a universalist account of mythic celebrity, than a cosmopolitan classical irrealism—or the revision of capitalist globalisation in mythological and dream-like terms that transplant the narrative to a parallel universe. At work is an uneasy doublethink of distancing and admission in the text's initial disavowal of American cultural hegemony and reinscription of these same magnetising dynamics of "America, the Great Attractor" (1999, p. 100). The novel's synthesis of cultural traditions is an intensely ambivalent one that oscillates between condemnation and critique of Ormus' success and use of "worlded" musical forms, as the complex and contrary dynamics of cultural globalisation produce what Mondal describes as an imprinting of "paradox, contradiction and irreconcilability" (2007, p. 171) on the text's content and form.

Nowhere are these dialectic shifts between incommensurable modes, or real and unreal selves, classical and contemporary forms, and historical and parallel universes, more evident than in *GBHF*'s contrary account of earthquakes as rooted in multiple causes, including partition and its earth-shattering socio-political and familial divisions, along with nuclear testing, tribalism, and migration. The ur-figure for incommensurability is Ormus, who represents the spectral and real, neither of which can easily cohabit. Indeed, these irreconcilable selves act, as Ormus' nurse and lover Maria state, as "*Two worlds in collision*" (p. 326), and a deforming "*gravitational force*" in which "*There are rifts, tears, slippages, incompatibilities*" (emphasis original 1999, p. 327). Earthquakes are allegorical symptoms of the fractures in individual identity, and emerging from the disorientations of modernity they are also represented as literal responses to the geopolitical rifts caused by globalisation. The earth is riven by the "*wrongnesses*" (p. 327) of its inhabitants, as earthquakes become a form of divine retribution for human sin. Modernity's disorientation is visible as a crack in a Bombay pavement that "could widen" (1999, p. 62) and swallow a person whole, and border-shattering earthquakes are the geological and geopolitical fault lines emerging from the end of the Cold War, refracting the intense plurality of global discontent. From the 1980s onwards, earthquakes intensify on "international frontiers" (p. 451), as though the world was "*coming apart at the seams*". The "new hegemonic geopolitics" (p. 554) of the Cold War destabilises the most vulnerable nations, the "emergent economies of the South, the Southeast, the Rim" through a devastating series of tremors that culminate in a mega-quake that swallows famous singer Vina Apsara whole. However, the novel's planetary earthquakes symbolise the shattering effects of the end of the Cold War and personal traumas, with Vina's death on the fourteenth of February 1989 occurring on the same date the fatwa was declared against Rushdie (Mondal 2007, p. 173).

These earthquakes are thus planetary-cracking synonyms for frontiers, or sites of metaphorical and creative reimagining and destruction. Rushdie's use of metaphor, contained by the cynical realism of *MLS*, is here a looser and baggier trope for the frontier-crossing possibilities of migration and fluid identities, and conversely their dissolution. Ormus, tormented by musical visions, feels that his world is one reality among many but that it is currently "out of joint" (p. 184) with other parallel universes. Pointedly, Ormus' worries make Rai consider that "nothing could be relied upon any more" (p. 184), a feeling compounded by

earthquakes that literally “shook our confidence in who we were and how we had chosen to live” (p. 218). Ormus is, the narrative tells us, a soul “*born not belonging*” (p. 72), who torn asunder from his twin is “semi-detached, if you like, without strong affiliation to family or location or nation or race” (pp. 72–73). This unbelonging is described in a long passage that takes on the oratorical qualities of Rushdie’s prose works, particularly his near-simultaneous two-part essay “Step Across this Line” (2002b), describing how humanity’s expansionist and wondrous desire to adventure is hindered by “*ties*” (1999, p. 73) and associated “stigmas and taboos against rootlessness, that disruptive, anti-social force”. Elsewhere Rai opines how individualism and “big ideas” create a “wider fracturing” (p. 343) and a reactive rush back to the stockades of monolithic nationalism and religious fervour, from “postmodern into premodern”.

GBHF’s emphasis on “being born” dislocated rather than becoming so through migration, marks a sustained shift in Rushdie’s politics of migration (Mondal 2007, p. 179), from a contingent experience to a universalised and “existential” quality. The frontier crossings of *GBHF* are largely those of Ormus’ imaginative travels to his twin’s underworld and VTO’s global musical domination and are far removed from discussions of difficult border crossings and racial exclusions, predicated as they are on global flows rather than the obstacles and exclusionary practices of national policies. The novel’s account of migration as being uprooted from national borders or questions of national belonging is in contrast to *MLS*’ longue durée account of the diminishing possibilities to narrate and celebrate intermixed histories of conflict, exile, and trade routes among Bombay’s Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities. The frontiers being crossed in *GBHF* are those of excessive desire and creativity fuelled by a dislocated sense of self put in motion by the possibilities of just-in-time globalisation.[9] The greatest divergence between *MLS* and *GBHF* therefore is the latter’s lack of “ironic detachment”, with its mythic-rock celebration providing a jubilant account of transnationalism that codes its expansionary logic in a language of creative possibility and self-becoming.

Part IV: America’s Signal Crisis in *Fury*

At odds in all these texts, from *MLS*, to *GBHF* and *Fury* is their treatment of history. Past events are a useful repository of corporate knowledge and advantage in *MLS*, repeating a seemingly undifferentiated cycle of boom,

bust, and corporate takeover. This longue durée history, in which past abuses and actions exert an oversized influence over the present, ends in an inability to summon a futurity that could reanimate postcolonial utopianism. For *GBHF*, history is that of the premonitory zeitgeist. Charged with a mythic narrative of lost doubles and telepathic connections, rock musician Ormus taps into dominant music trends before transcending the immediate to produce VTO's globally successful music. Rai's digressive narrative, coupled with the novel's mythological sub-plot, suggests that history is an "overworld" screen, a contingent setting of which there are multiple "parallel" versions. *GBHF*'s dominant crisis becomes not that of national development, but rather a divinely imagined excess of lust, identity, and irruptions of creativity, which are in tension with contrarily retrograde and "premodern" monolithic modes of being that place a stress on earthly concerns, including the figurative, literal, and literary.

Fury (2001) is Rushdie's first singularly American novel, and its historical scope is contrastingly microscopic and intent on capturing the affective tone and sensibility of fin-de-siècle American hegemony. It immediately takes on macroeconomic significance by referring to New York City as a metropolis in its "third millennium" (Rushdie 2001, p. 3) boiling "with money", or credit capital, high property prices, and demands for luxurious "recherché produce", comparable to a latter-day Rome in its final years. Indeed, the text's setting and time of publication were marked by frenzied financial speculation from 1999 to 2001, especially the dot-com bubble, which the text's narrator and protagonist Malik Solanka opportunistically exploits through an online science fiction legend named "Kronos". A puppet dollmaker based in London, Solanka initially becomes famous for his popular history-of-philosophy program "The Adventures of Little Brain", about a blonde, spiky-haired heroine who travels through time to meet famous historical figures. Solanka flees to New York City after he considers murdering his wife, yet New York also boils with a libidinal rage or "fury", this time emerging from the gap between collective desires for greater prosperity against diminished expectations. These unfulfilled aspirations irrupt in a psycho-somatic and gendered rage, with several upper-class women, described by Solanka as "trophies" and "Oscar Barbies" (2001, p. 72), gruesomely murdered and scalped by their polo-playing, financier boyfriends. Like *GBHF*, *Fury* also references Greek myths, using the trope of Euripides' Furies, or the goddesses of vengeance, who infuse the indescribable rage of the main character and America's population.

While history in *MLS* and *GBHF* is constituted by monumental national and global events, including Indian independence, the Bombay bombings, and 1960s counter-culture, history in *Fury* is that of the tabloid and broadsheet, and the minutiae of the year 2000s summertime movie screenings and political battles, popular musicians, and far-away coups. This hyper-attention to the present leads to a congested narrative of irreverent details, servicing the novel's commitment to a frenetically localised realism, among them references to the George W. Bush versus Al Gore presidential election, blockbuster movies *The Cell* and *Gladiator*, and celebrities like Jennifer Lopez, Christina Ricci, and Dennis Rodman. *Fury*'s brevity, attention to detail and American focus is in stark contrast to *MLS* and *GBHF*, jettisoning the former's mediations on Indian postcolonial art and politics, and existing in sharp contrast to the latter's epic mythologising and planetary scale. While *Fury* still mobilises the geopolitical focus of previous narratives, with Solanka reflecting on his experiences in Bombay and childhood in Methwold Estate (a recurrent reference in Rushdie's fictions), these references are cursory, serving only to excavate long-repressed memories of traumatic sexual abuse to buttress the plot's rationale for Solanka's troubling and intermittent rages, which are often directed towards women. Likewise, although the narrative is somewhat concerned with the revolution brewing in Lilliput-Blefescu (a pseudonym for Fiji), this serves as a plot point for both Solanka's doomed love affair with Neela Mahendra, and the recirculation of his Kronos legend as the visual propaganda for the Pacific Island's coup. That Solanka's cultural products flow from New York to Lilliput-Blefescu further actualises the influence of American cultural and economic power on peripheral regions. But despite this over-focus on American might, *Fury* registers geopolitical crisis in nearly world-systemic terms by locating emergent economic, cultural, and affective crises in the US' overheated economy. The following section examines how economic decline produces *Fury*'s frenetic literary mode and "end of era" sensibility, which is augmented by references to Rome's imperial decline and *The Great Gatsby*, and how it uses allegory to analogise economic decline with national-libidinal anguish.

End of Empire and Hyperrealism

Signal crises are moments of economic destabilisation that herald the end of an accumulation cycle and the erosion of hegemony. These moments produce a contrary resurgence of financial wealth, or a "*belles époques*"

(Arrighi 2005, p. 88) transitional phase from one stage of an accumulation regime to the next. Recent examples include the emergence of neoliberalism in the 1970s as a revitalised economic cycle dependent upon Wall Street financial mechanisms and Third-World debt servicing programmes which initially provided quick returns, and the post-Soviet Union and Gulf War period from 1989 to 1992, which led to declarations of the US' "new world order" (George Bush qtd. Smith 2003, p. 6) and that the "capitalist revolution" (p. 6) had arrived. But the US' growing reliance on foreign capital throughout the 1990s and beyond, the exhaustion of speculative bubbles from the "collapse of Long Term Capital Management (1998) or the bursting of the dot.com bubble (2000–1)" (McNally 2009, p. 41), and America's unsuccessful invasion of Iraq in 2003, are sure signs for world-systems theorists like Giovanni Arrighi of the US' movement from a hegemony demanding tribute and ensuring protection to other nation-states, to a "hege*money*" (2005, p. 112, fn. 57) reliant on foreign capital and in terminal decline.

Fury is a pointedly "fin-de-siècle" work that reflects both on the end of a century—a time which traditionally enables millenarian reflections on history—and on the end of an era, by intertwining over-heated markets and over-heated sexual excess, to foreground the decline of American cultural and economic hegemony. Rushdie registers these world-systemic shifts in affective and aspirational terms, describing in interview how a "sense of infinite possibility" was interrupted by the 9/11 attacks, which "underlined and dramatized" a profound geopolitical and economic change that was "happening anyway" (Weich and Rushdie 2002). In his prose works, Rushdie locates his pessimistic global outlook in the late nineteen-sixties, stating in an essay on Günter Grass that the summer of 1967, which immediately preceded the student protests of 1968, was a time when "the West was—perhaps for the last time—in the clutches of the optimism disease [...] when unemployment was an irrelevance and the future still existed" (1992a, p. 276). For Rushdie, future imaginaries have since been stymied by what he later describes as the failure of the post-Cold War era to "usher in a new era of liberty" (2002a, p. 301), leading to national and regional balkanisation, and religious and ethnic fundamentalism. While this critique, of the post-Soviet Union era's failure to deliver capitalist liberty, is not new, what is in the case of *Fury* is its largely American focus and extremely pessimistic future outlook, augmented by the text's oscillation between private anguish and national-economic disconsolation.

This conflation of individual trauma and economic distress is facilitated by two interrelated methods, firstly, *Fury*'s "hyperrealist" literary-historical mode, with references to then-contemporary headlines and movie references, and inventories of market goods and current events producing an overly detailed, or "hyperreal" depiction of millennial New York. This informational overload is compared by Rushdie to the flattening effect of pointing a blazing "searchlight" onto a scene, in contrast to the "single light source" and "deep relief" technique of Johannes Vermeer's seventeenth-century paintings, to create a "dislocating mood without doing anything surrealistic, to show how you can use reality, itself, and just by staring at it intensely you can make it look very odd" (Weich and Rushdie 2002). Excessive historical details in *Fury*, including references to then-popular movie stars and politicians, alongside overheard conversations and rapid shifts in mood, tone and subject, are all aspects of this "hyperrealist" literary form. Baudrillard, the first to use the phrase "hyperreal", defines it as a phenomenon produced by the constant reproduction of simulacra to generate "*an equivalent representation*" (2001, p. 148) of reality, but one that outstrips the "surrealism" of the surreal given that "we already live out the 'aesthetic' hallucination of reality" (p. 149). Copies and simulacra abound in *Fury* with masks of fictional characters destabilising the boundary between reality and representation: face masks based on Malik Solanka's Kronos sci-fi narrative appear as the visual propaganda of the coup in Pacific island Lilliput-Blefescu (a pseudonym for Fiji),[10] and masks of the popular and bold time-travelling puppet "Little Brain" are worn by models.

An additional feature of "hyperrealism" is its dislocating effect, and key to *Fury*'s method are its rapid shifts in focus, producing jarring equivalences between individual trauma and national despair. Solanka makes references to his "secret sadness" (2001, p. 7), or his sexual abuse in Bombay as a child, and in the following breath redirects it to questions of "virtual reality", political power, and the recent "complaints of abused women", preyed on by the city's elite or "Caesars". The novel's core structuring principle is this compression of the emotional and political—the eponym, *Fury*, refers to the rage emanating from the pathological irruptions of repressed fears and deferred wealth promised by the "American Dream" (p. 55), with strident assertions of national success exacerbating bottled-up fears about an uncertain future on the verge of post-bubble economic collapse. The worst effected are the "young, the inheritors of plenty" (p. 115), who lash out at women and struggle to adhere to the norms

of sexual behaviour. Solanka's young Yugoslavian lover Mila Milo (a trite play on Milosevic) complains that her wealthy peers can no longer control their sexual aggression, and that "Guys don't really know how or when or where to touch girls anymore, and girls can barely tell the difference between desire and assault, flirtation and offensiveness, love and sexual abuse" (p. 115). Likewise, walking the streets of New York, Solanka overhears a man's admission that he nearly punched his ex-wife upon their reconciliation, and pithily concludes by stating that this story, about the propinquity of sexual desire and rage, is an allegory for ambivalent feelings towards the nation, "for wife, read America" (p. 89). Eventually, Solanka discovers that the recent deaths of several young women are connected to an exclusive S&M club created to pacify the insatiable desires of wealthy youths who "have to travel further and further in search of kicks, further from home, further from safety. The wildest places of the world, the wildest chemicals, the wildest sex" (p. 152), with the sexualisation of violent behaviour by the city's elite corresponding with the frenzied speculation and erotic language surrounding financial capitalism's penetration into new frontiers.

This overly-close narration of the present is punctuated by frequent references to Rome in its imperial decline. *Fury* often refers to Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* (2000), a blockbuster film set during the reign of the dissolute Commodus, son of Marcus Aurelius, who is regarded in Edward Gibbon's canonical tome *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1909/1776), as symbolising the end of the glorious "Age of the Antonines". At *Fury*'s time of publication, and in the period following the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, references to the Roman Empire operated as a byword for America's civilisational decline. Vilashini Cooppan describes how commentators were quick to compare the US to Rome immediately preceding and following its invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan (2005, pp. 82–83), in terms vastly different to Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, and its account of a new imperialism constituted by deterritorialised, global institutions modelled on Rome's constitutional powers. *Fury* diverges from Hardt and Negri's account in its assertion that the American nation-state is a central unit of hegemonic power, but it emphases the contiguity between millennial New York and the Roman Empire by describing the young men surrounding Mila, Solanka's young muse, as "satraps" (Rushdie 2001, p. 4), an archaic term for provincial Persian governors; and "Praetorian" (p. 4), a phrase for the personal

guards of Roman emperors. Mila's boyfriend is a "quarterback centurion" (p. 40), mixing the muscular bravado of American footballers with the principal officers of Roman armies; and Jack Rhinehart, Solanka's gossip columnist friend and former war correspondent, calls the city's wealthy populace, "petulant, lethal Caesars" (p. 7), and compares his journalism to the Roman author and biographer Suetonius (p. 56), stating that "These are the lives of today's Caesars in their Palaces" (p. 56). Finally, Solanka states that the discontent poisoning New York results from the actions of "*Erinnyes*" (p. 123), or the "ferocious deities" and malcontents of Roman myth which haunt the city; and briefly considers sub-titling his science fiction legend "'Professor Kronos's Amazing No-Strings Puppet Kings' [….] 'Or, Lives of the Puppet Caesars'" (p. 139).

In interview Rushdie describes wanting *Fury* to have the feel of its millennial moment, an "evocation of an age" (Weich and Rushdie 2002), comparing it to F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and its vivid ventriloquising of the 1920s Jazz Age. Solanka also compares his career revival in New York to Jay Gatsby, a figure who briefly lived "that brilliant, brittle gold-hatted, exemplary American life" (Rushdie 2001, p. 82; see also Srivastava 2012). *The Great Gatsby*, like *Fury*, references the Roman Empire to buttress its critique of the brief and opulent lives of 1920s financiers. An earlier version of *The Great Gatsby* was published in galley proofs in 1924 as *Trimalchio* (West 2002, pp. xvi–xix), named after a wealthy and crude protagonist in the first century A.D. Roman text the *Satyricon* by Gaius Petronius. Trimalchio throws an extravagant party complete with musicians, acrobats, and lavish courses (MacKendrick 1950, p. 308), just as Jay Gatsby organises a series of opulent soirées. *Fury*'s link to *Gatsby*, like its evocation of the Roman Empire, is fuelled by similar economic circumstances: the desire to register, in aesthetic form, the cultural sensorium of brief instances of economic hubris before they dissipate, albeit by suggesting an undifferentiated landscape of imperial rise and fall. Put world-systemically, a structural homology exists between *Fury* and *The Great Gatsby* given that each emerges from one peak financial "autumn" phase of capitalist accumulation, with the 1920s and the late 1990s both eras of unusual financial liquidity and speculation which produced extreme prosperousness as well as existential angst about consumption and future economic collapse.

Libidinal Apparatuses and Geopolitical Allegory

Stephen Shapiro calls this method, of comparing works based on their registration of similar moments in capitalist economic long waves, a “periodic” one (2014, pp. 1250–1251). An important difference between both texts, however, is that *The Great Gatsby* acts as a parable against the excesses of the nouveau riche, drunk on the promise of wild stock market speculations and endless accumulation, while *Fury*’s object of study is the pathological effects of economic decline. This decline can be figured contrarily as forms of excess, including bursts of sexual intensity and/or rage. Solanka makes clear the correspondence between his fitful anger and a generalised national malaise, stating that the world is “burning on a shorter fuse” (Rushdie 2001, p. 129), expressed for him in bodily terms as insomnia and bubbling skin (p. 69), a consequence of Solanka’s “boiling thoughts” (p. 129) and frequent rage black-outs. Nationally such economic and affective overheating emerges in “psychological disorders and aberrations” (p. 115), due to what Solanka names the “Jitter Bug that made people mad: excess not of commodities but of their dashed and thwarted hopes” (p. 184). In *Fury* America’s inability to fulfil endless promises of wealth and aspiration leads to bodily afflictions, psychological maladies, and acts of extreme violence, including pyromania, random shootings, and a series of femicides.

Fredric Jameson’s account of “libidinal apparatuses” theorises precisely these links between private affect and material conditions, or the psychopathological means through which desires are always informed by and invested in socio-economic “preconditions” and narrative structures (1981, pp. 50–53), with the text a machine for “ideological investment” (p. 15), or what Franco Berardi describes as the imaginative tools used to describe the psychopathology of markets in emotive terms as “depressed” or “panicked” (2008, pp. 23, 27). This account of libidinal apparatuses as the sharp investment of material conditions in narrative, speaks to wider issues regarding form and the world-economy, or how we imagine global capitalism. In his essay on “Third-World” literature, Jameson describes libidinal apparatuses as a necessary feature of peripheral texts which must be read in “political and social terms” (1986, p. 72). Allegory is in this account an important principle of Third-World literature, in which the “*story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*” (p. 69). But this enlivened and totalising class consciousness is for Jameson, unavailable to core (read “postmodern”) regions because of a narrative emphasis

on individuality and fragmented subjectivities (p. 85), which eschews the world as its referent or structural thinking as its process. Solanka identifies his fragmented identity in terms similar to Jameson's account of core regions, describing the schizo-paranoiac maladies produced by the "contradictions and impoverishment of the Western human individual" which are most visible in New York, a "city of fiery, jeweled garments and secret ash, in this time of public hedonism and private fear" (Rushdie 2001, p. 86). But *Fury* also contrarily signals its use of allegory in "peripheral" terms in the conflation of public and private inequity through an estranging literary mode (hyperrealism), that brings to light the conditions of capitalist reality through "physical illness or psychic crisis" (Jameson 1986, p. 70), which exceed the psychological to become a figure of wider social contradictions.

More precisely *Fury* signals a shift in Rushdie's use of allegory from a trope concerned with national, or rather postcolonial states, to one that narrates conditions of hegemony. Consider the use of "postcolonial allegory" in *Shame* (1983), and its fictional account of "Peccavistan" or a Pakistan ravaged by a female panther-like succubus named Sufiya Zinobia. *Shame* uses Sufiya's transformation to allegorise the effects of a patriarchal and military nation-state amidst "*Sharam*" (1983, p. 38), or a national, gendered, and familial affective structure "containing encyclopaedias of nuance" (p. 39), that encourages violence against women to protect against its opposite "shamelessness" (p. 115). In contrast, *Fury* is concerned with the downturn of an American core narrative of prosperity, as opposed to the violence of partition which produced Peccavistan's failures and incited *Shame*'s use of national allegory. *Fury*'s most polemical scenes are those that link individual malaise and disaffection with America's macro-economic decline. Musing on the interrelated failures of US culture and politics, Solanka is enraged at the decay of American values, and vexed at his seduction by the nation's "brilliance" (p. 87) and "vast potency", especially its role as "the world's playing field, its rule book, umpire, and ball" (pp. 87–88). Solanka describes his interest in America as a kind of sexual awakening: he is "aroused" (p. 87) by the US' "potent" economic, cultural, and military might and recalls the autocratic language of the late-stage Roman Empire in describing himself as a "supplicant" (p. 88) or petitioner to the nation, with his desire magnetised towards its epicentre, New York. *Fury*'s national allegory is thus structured not only by a different geopolitical space—the US—but by an

ideological attachment to its signification of global dominance and aspirational possibilities, that takes on a language redolent of desire, repulsion, and decay.

This mapping of allegory in relation to the US requires a readjustment of Jameson's account, especially given global literature's mobilisation of elements of postcolonial literature. Leerom Medovoi argues that Jameson's "politicolibidinal forms of allegory" is relevant to an emerging body of "World-system literature about America" which is, of necessity, "a literature of terminal crisis" (2011, p. 657). This includes works, like *Fury*, or for Medovoi, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007), that extend towards "politicolibidinal" allegories, and a mapping of attraction, desire, or grief, to imagine the world-system as "an interplay of subject and object—power and desire, force and affect—as they are propelled by the spatial dialectics of territory and capital" (p. 657). More significantly, Medovoi's realisation, that Jameson's allegory finds application in works that register the US' hegemonic decline, and that exceed national framing during moments of world-systemic crisis, is urgently applicable to *Fury* and its dominant sub-plot, the mysterious and gruesome murders of New York debutantes.

Upper-class trio, Sky Schuyler, Bindy Caudell, and Ren Klein, exist as "doll-like [....] totems of their class, the class that ran America, which in turn ran the world, so that an attack on them was also, if you cared to see it that way, an attack on the great American empire, the Pax Americana, itself" (Rushdie 2001, p. 74). They are killed by their boyfriends, polo-playing Bradley "the Horse" Marsalis III, famous restaurant owner Anders "Stash" Andriessen (named after a minor character in *American Psycho*), and Keith "the Club" Medford (p. 73), the son of a wealthy developer who is a "bête noire" (p. 199) of local unions. Brash and lewd, the men's emboldened masculinity is threatened both by anticipated economic collapse, particularly the devaluing of the real-estate upon which their family's wealth is based, and secondly by the hyper-sexualised behaviour of Sky, Bindy, and Ren. Parodies of millennial or third-wave feminists, these three balance their over-sexed image with business acumen while belonging "to no man" (p. 74), but their sexual prowess lessens the perceived virility of Bradley, Anders, and Keith who conspire for their murder.

While these femicides are thus initially designed to contain the sexual cravings and accomplishments of the women, given the world-systemic context of *Fury* they also appear as efforts to stop the cultural-economic

unwinding of American empire. Sky, Bindy, and Ren are gruesomely reified in death, reduced to objects or "totems" by their murders—a blow to the head, followed by scalping—an action loaded with settler-colonial era connotations of trophy gathering. In materialist terms, this action confuses symbolic value with actual cultural capital or exchange value, in an attempt by their killers to take excessive possession of their social status. This confusion is a pathological and semantic aberration linked to changes in American hegemony and disruptions of value—Bradley, Keith, and Anders mistake hoarding the signifier (hair, scalps) for the eternal possession of the women's cultural capital. Being scalped was to "remain a trophy even in death" (p. 153). Solanka notes precisely this confusion, stating that the men prized the symbolic value of "the signifier above the signified" (p. 154).

Karl Marx describes hoarding as occurring in "advanced bourgeois societies" during "times of upheaval in the social metabolic process" (2009), in a desperate attempt to acquire and retain the value of commodities. Hoarders yearn to petrify exchange value, thus illuminating the commodity's symbolic and libidinal attraction as "eternal treasures", which become "celestial and wholly mundane" in their promise of future material wealth. During periods of excessive financial liquidity as an overheating system "boils" with cheap credit, capital is often "spatially fixed" or invested in land and the built environment to secure future wealth. The New York scalpings derive from a similar process, as an attempt by the murderers to cling to their victims' cultural capital during a moment of economic turmoil, class change, and psycho-semantic disruption, in effect, "fixing" their totemic force. As Solanka notes, these three girls "were property" (Rushdie 2001, p. 73), and in death, their scalps provide tangible instances of value during a period in which questions abound about what representations of value are most real. The New York murders are, within the logic of Rushdie's text, a brutal effort to stabilise durable gendered and class relations during an era of world-systemic turbulence (see Shapiro 2014, pp. 1261–1262), or put differently, engage a dynamic "interplay" of desire and fear associated with transformations in cultural and economic value, producing a world-systems literature about the US' terminal crisis.

Keya Ganguly describes the true meaning of Hegel's "Minerva's owl" (2004, p. 164) at the "*end of history*", or at the "dusk of an age rather than at its dawn", as one that can achieve "*the beginning of historical understanding*". In *MLS*, Aurora's collage depicts Bombay's uneven

development as an actual trash-heap of India's recent economic reforms, briefly foregrounding the necessity for alternate modes of representation that illustrate the conditions within which subaltern figures dwell, in a manner that recalls Ganguly's reprise of Hegel's historical thought. Significantly, *MLS* ends its Bombay section with a series of exploding skyscrapers that reference D-Company's actual bombings. These explosions are the "tombstones" of both India's secular hybridity (Varma 2004, p. 77), and the emergence of an economy of transnational criminality, through the symbolic destruction of the twin bases, ecologic and economic, of India's colonial-era wealth, as "Peppercorns, whole cumin, cinnamon sticks, cardamoms mingled with the imported flora and birdlife, dancing rat-a-tat on the roads and sidewalks like perfumed hail" (1995, p. 375).

Rushdie's following American-global novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and its dehistoricised use of classical literary forms shifts away from the extreme historic and geographic specificity of *MLS*' account of Bombay's criminal cabals and confirms Rushdie's leave-taking of postcoloniality as national project and aesthetic form. The novel's cosmopolitanism elevates migrancy as a generative mode of being, and site of creative potential while occluding the sublimation of difference in imperial terms, or America as the world. Rushdie's following work, *Fury* (2001), continues *GBHF*'s frenetic exultation of the US and embodies a "hyperrealist" style designed to produce the "dislocating" mood of mass media, with the novel's formal emphasis on speed eschewing the bloated tomes of Rushdie's earlier works, instead deploying a pithy allegorisation of hegemonic decline as gendered fury. Reading *MLS, GBHF*, and *Fury* together, this chapter maps a trajectory in Rushdie's works from the metropolitan focus and postcolonial aesthetics of *MLS*, to the deterritorialised global mythologising of *GBHF*, and the hyperreal and American-global emphasis of *Fury*'s narration of a city and even era, in decline.

Notes

1. Bombay was renamed Mumbai by the ruling Shiv Sena neonationalist Hindu party in 1997, in a restoration of the city's non-anglicised Marathi name. This chapter uses Bombay in accordance with the naming structure of *The Moor's Last Sigh*.

2. *Midnight's Children* ends at the beginning of this period with Indira Gandhi's 1977 state of "Emergency", making *MLS* a continuation and refraction of the earlier text.
3. Nationally, the right-wing Hindutva Bharatiya Janata Party capitalised on religious and political tensions following the destruction of Babri Masjid, an incident with which they were actively involved (see Appadurai 2000; Herbert 2012).
4. Jameson defines presentism in part through reference to Lyotard and his addition of temporality to Kant's sublime as "a present of shock, which arouses a waiting or anticipatory stance that nothing follows" in a "formalization of revolutionary disillusionment" (2015, p. 103).
5. See Stadtler for a fuller account of how Aurora embodies an "alternative urban vision of 'Mother India', in opposition to Abraham, who mutates into a *Godfather*-like villain" (2014, p. 110).
6. This epic fabulist phase has three stages: the exuberant epic-fabulism of the "Mooristan" works (1957–1977); the emergency-era apocalyptic "high Moors" (1977–1981); and the "Moor in exile" or "dark Moors" series following his expulsion from the family and travels through Bombay's underworld (1981–1987). These stages roughly correspond with Indira Gandhi's political fortunes, including the state of emergency and the assassination of Indira and her son Rajiv Gandhi (1995, p. 218; see Schultheis 2001, p. 585).
7. The Spanish sections of *MLS*, not under discussion here, make striking references to surrealism: the Moor dies near the "Ultima Suspiro" (p. 4) or "last sigh" gas station, and the name of Luis Buñuel's autobiography is *Mon Dernier Soupir* (1982) or "My Last Sigh"; Vasco Miranda, a Goan artist who loves Aurora and moves to Benengeli in Spain, pioneers a new artistic style described as a "spiced-up rehash of the European surrealists" (p. 148) called "*Kutta Kashmir Ka* ('A Kashmiri' – rather than Andalusian – 'Dog')" in reference to Buñuel and Salvador Dalí's famous short film "Un Chien Andalou". Miranda's experiments in surrealism are short-lived, and he produces bland airport works that sell for "truly surrealist sums" (p. 148), before moving to Benengeli and dressing like a parody of Salvador Dalí complete with "moustachio-tips" (p. 326), and "Tyrolean short trousers", in a reflection and critique of Dalí's commodification of his surrealist aesthetic.
8. Rushdie describes the "worlds in collision" series as follows: "My life has given me this other subject: worlds in collision. How do you make people see that everyone's story is now a part of everyone else's story? It's one thing to say it, but how can you make a reader feel that is their lived experience? The last three novels have been attempts to find answers to those questions: *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Fury* and the new one, *Shalimar the Clown*, which begins and ends in L.A., but the middle of

it is in Kashmir, and some is in Nazi-occupied Strasbourg, and some in 1960s England" (Livings and Rushdie 2005). By choosing to start with *MLS*, this chapter argues for an overlapping and longer "leave-taking" of postcolonial aesthetics and concerns in Rushdie's oeuvre, and an expanded definition of the "worlds in collision" series. This series is a useful way of grouping together those works that are consciously deterritorialised, set in multiple locations, and concerned with transformations in the globalisation of culture, politics, trade, and migrancy.

9. "Step Across this Line" briefly notes the exclusionary force of racial profiling, but states that we live in the era of the "post-frontier" (2002b, p. 425), of "mass migration, mass displacement, globalized finances and industries" as all crossings become alike.
10. This chapter does not examine the narrative's Lilliput-Blefescu subplot in detail. Notably, the revolution in Lilliput quickly collapses into a pessimistic, despotic tyranny which can only be resolved by British and American intervention. That a coalition of world-powers is required to police world geopolitics is a given in *Fury*, likewise that the revolution takes its visual cue and energy from Solanka's Kronos legend which is fomented in New York, thus actualising the flow of capital and cultural production from New York, a world-city, to marginal and peripheral Lilliput-Blefescu, in terms not unlike the circulation of VTO's "blockbuster" music in *GBHF*, or indeed Rushdie's loss of control of his own public image after the fatwa. See Brouillette (2005) and De Loughry (2017).

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CHAPTER 4

"Prophet Malthus Surveyed a Dustbowl": David Mitchell, Neo-Malthusianism, and the World-Ecology in Crisis

Part I: Introduction: A "Novel Globalism"

Upon publication, David Mitchell's sprawling global composite novels, *Ghostwritten* (1999) and *Cloud Atlas* (2004), were regarded positively by literary critics who saw in these narrative's blend of historical timeframes and generic styles an emergent body of "planetary" (Iyer 2006) and "Translit" fictions (Coupland 2012), and a "novel globalism" (Iyer 2007) that sought to imagine a "utopian cosmopolitan society" (Barnard 2009, p. 214). *Ghostwritten* garnered attention for its complex exploration of causality, ambitious nine-story structure, and roving global imaginary. Set largely in the 1990s, the text shifts from Okinawa to Tokyo, Hong Kong, China, Mongolia, St Petersburg, London, Cork, and New York. Its nine stories are interconnected by chance meetings and a butterfly-like amplification of events, and taken together the text is greater than the sum of its parts. While *Ghostwritten* was interpreted by critics as a "novel *of* globalization" (Vermeulen 2012, p. 383), comparable to Alejandro González Iñárritu's composite film *Babel* (Barnard 2009, p. 208), or Krzysztof Kieślowski's interconnected *Three Colours* films (Lively 1999), Mitchell's third novel *Cloud Atlas* was read as an "epic of globalization" (Mezey 2011, p. 30) that uses repeating birthmarks, the transmission of narrative artefacts between stories, and themes like "predacity" and Nietzschean will-to-power to produce a "globalised being-in-common" (Schoene 2012, p. 109). *Cloud Atlas* was rightly

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regarded as a more accomplished and polished book than *Ghostwritten*, tightly interweaving six broken narratives in an innovative matryoshka doll format, meaning that each narrative, bar the futuremost one, is broken in half, midway through scenes and sometimes sentences, and then returned to in reverse order. An exercise in generic styles, it includes a Victorian Pacific travelogue, a 1931 epistolary about a musical amanuensis in Belgium, a 1970s thriller about a journalist uncovering a faulty nuclear reactor in California, a comedy-of-errors memoir tracking the misfortunes of an elderly publisher, a far-future prison interview with a revolutionary clone in Korea, and a post-collapse account of warring tribes in the Hawaiian islands.

Mitchell's sixth novel, *The Bone Clocks* (2014), re-articulated *Cloud Atlas*' multiple story forms, with six consecutive chapters from 1984 to 2043 tracking Holly Sykes and her involvement in a battle between immortal figures and soul-stealing "psychodecanters". Like Mitchell's other global novels, *The Bone Clocks* is a virtuosic exercise in multi-vocal narration, encompassing England, the Swiss Alps, Baghdad, Perm, New York, and West Cork. References to previous characters in Mitchell's oeuvre, and the resurrection of themes of predacity, morality, and consumption, signpost Mitchell's construction of a "maximalist" (Harris and Mitchell 2015, p. 16) literary universe. But *The Bone Clocks* failed to impress critics who read it as a pastiche of popular science fiction, thriller, and New Age narratives, devolving "into lots of silly mumbo-jumbo" (Kakutani 2014) in a jargon-laden fifth chapter about "sub-speaking" telepathic "Horologist atemporals" who are locked into an eternal war with vampirish "Anchorite psychodecanters".

This chapter examines how Mitchell's fictions attempt to imagine totality through networked and transhistorical narratives, and a pessimistic environmental imaginary concerned with the catastrophic consequences of consumption and extraction, through the idea of capitalist realism as a modality and episteme, or how Mitchell's fictions are conditioned by ideologies that stabilise an idea of human civilisation as universally hubristic. *Cloud Atlas* in particular necessitates analysis of its world-building qualities, given its blithe global mobility, undifferentiated treatment of race or gender, and suggestion that characters are reincarnated in largely similar predacious situations. Compounding this erasure of historical difference, a comet-shaped birthmark brands each main character, in a sign of the "universality of human nature" (Naughtie and Mitchell 2007, 3:48–3:49), with the novel's eponym, the "cloud atlas", signifying "the fixed human

nature which is always thus and ever shall be" (4:01–4:06). Utopian readings of the "cosmopolitanism" of Mitchell's fictions elide their troubling accessibility, as the global mobility of their transhistorical, networked narratives erases geographic, historical, and even gendered differences in a manner that corresponds with the transnational ambition, geographic mobility, and space-time compression favoured by multinational corporations. In place of a specific national boundedness, these fictions draw on popular global discourses of environmental crisis, surveillance, and causality that are indebted to British and American "commonsensical" claims to realism, and circumnavigating the Global North they trace a wide but superficial geographic horizon.

While some critics read texts like *Cloud Atlas* as epic novels that use recurring birthmarks and textual objects to produce a convivial "common, grander epic experience" (Mezey 2011, p. 13) of humanity, this chapter argues that such readings mistake stylistic ambition for historical-political depth by examining the discursive and structural conditions through which these fictions construct global imaginaries. This reading is indebted to Fredric Jameson's account of the historical impress of modes of production on literary forms, and the "formal *sedimentation*" (2009c, p. 126) of emergent and residual structures of feeling. Jameson describes as "*ideologemes*" (p. 72) the "pseudoideas" (p. 73) of conceptual systems, opinions, and prejudices that condition knowledge, arguing that ideologemes can be read as inscrutable symptoms of wider social contradictions and the "ideological coding specific to each mode of production" (p. 75). The following section examines the ideological coding or "unconscious optics" of these texts: in *Ghostwritten* a crisis of political action and emphasis on empirical knowledge; in *Cloud Atlas* a depiction of "natural" forms of human predacity that conditions the retrogressive historical horizons and future ecological apocalypse of the novel; and *The Bone Clocks*' critique of neoliberalism and petro-modernity, culminating in a climate-catastrophe end tale. This is somewhat different to Jameson's account of *Cloud Atlas* as a historical novel that, in its multiple temporalities and elevation of assemblage to an "aesthetics of singularity" (2013, p. 304) or structuring principle, gestures towards "contradictions in which we are ourselves imprisoned, the opposition beyond which we cannot think" (p. 308), and ultimately towards utopia. But while Jameson's analysis is directed by the notion that formal expressions of meaning "do not require interpretation to 'produce' their problems"

(p. 311), this chapter's ideological analysis "produces" a critical engagement with Mitchell's works, arguing that an engagement with the presuppositions that guide global imaginaries is necessary to unpick the contradictory and limiting obstacles to effective environmental thought.

This reading is therefore motivated by two questions: what narratives depict global processes, and how do they limit or construct future left imaginaries? If Mitchell's global works are novels of and about globalisation, then how they narrate the world can offer new ways of parsing the *episteme* of capitalist globalisation, or the conditions of possibility for how globalisation is represented. This chapter deploys a historical and ideological reading of literary form and discourse to expose the political biases and omissions within core fictions that are bound up with capitalist ideology. For instance, in *Ghostwritten*, a sentient satellite is dismayed that humanity consistently outmanoeuvres its beneficent actions and eventually decides to follow a radio host's advice to "let events take their course" (Mitchell 1999, p. 428) by hiding information that a comet is about to destroy the world, thus indicating the text's extreme political pessimism and implied belief that it is easier to let apocalypse happen than to reform or revolutionise society. Mark Fisher names this phenomena "capitalist realism" (2009, p. 2), or the belief, drawing on Jameson's infamous statement, that there is no alternative to capitalism other than the destruction of life on earth (2009b, p. 50). Throughout the text, references to overarching forces and strange weather occurrences are glimmers of a "ghostwritten" whole, with causal forces operating as allegories for the "invisible hand" of capital.

The previous chapter used David Cunningham's theory of the "capitalist realist epic" to parse how Salman Rushdie narrates the vast scales and scopes of multinational capital. For Cunningham, global capitalism is the epic subject of contemporary life and "abstracting" narrative forms that draw on totalising tropes are apparatuses for establishing the impossibility of knowing and making sense of the complex and unmappable relations of the world-economy (2010, pp. 19–20). While narratives like *Ghostwritten* and *Cloud Atlas* have global scales and grand narratives of universal causes, naming them "supranational" (Mezey 2011, p. 18) epics belies their limited global outlook and debt to Anglo-American narratives of ecological crisis and energy depletion. By way of contrast, world-literary scholar Franco Moretti argues that the modern novel is a stylistically experimental and often "*flawed*" masterpiece that registers the tension between the "totalizing will of the epic" and the fragmentation

of modernity in terms that correspond with the longue durée of Wallerstein's world-economy (1996, p. 5). Mitchell's composite global novels, despite their epic historical ambition, do not try to rigorously systematise the contractions and expansions of historical long waves of capitalist civilisation, but this is not to state they completely disavow the world-system. That *Cloud Atlas* begins in the nineteenth century, the heyday of industrial capitalism, and finishes in a post-subsistence island; and that *The Bone Clocks* ends with anarchic youths in 2043 stripping solar panels and siphoning fuel, tells us more about these narrative's carboniferous conditions of knowledge than it does about their utopian and cosmopolitical purview.

These texts then are read through Mark Fisher's account of the curtailed political horizons of contemporary society which produce a "realist" acceptance of capitalism as the only viable socio-economic system, and Cunningham's "capitalist realist epic" which refers to texts that inscribe the existence but impossibility of fully knowing totality, in a manner that registers Jameson's account of the mode of the production as the single "synchronic system of social relations as a whole" (2009c, p. 21) that is "nowhere empirically present". Marrying these two concepts, of the political horizons of capitalist realism and the aesthetic forms of capitalist totality, *Ghostwritten*, *Cloud Atlas*, and *The Bone Clocks* approximate a moderated version of the global "capitalist realist epic" or "hegemonic" or "core" capitalist realism, with these novels seeing in global crises the imprint of repeatable events and unchangeable natural causes. While the object of *Cloud Atlas*' critique is not clear, its "atlas" of recurrent human nature, from racial hierarchies to the will-to-power, aligns with *Ghostwritten*'s insistent mapping of normative causes, and *The Bone Clocks* cosmography of interconnected events and immortal beings. David Mitchell's composite global novels are thus world-mapping texts that belong to a category of Anglo-American fictions that make universalist claims about historical teleology and humanity's eco-apocalyptic fate, in contradistinction to the emergence of systematising novels that register the violent penetration of global capitalism in peripheral zones and take capitalist modernity as their overt political horizon (see Deckard 2015).

The first part of this chapter examines *Ghostwritten*'s depiction of a sentient satellite called the Zookeeper or Zooey. Frustrated by humankind's tendency to violence and chaos, it rejects its "peace-keeping" function and produces the eco-apocalypse of *Cloud Atlas*. *Ghostwritten*'s main theme is the search for causality, and the text's search for "meaning" is carefully

plotted throughout its nine stories, with each connected through chance encounters and observations, sometimes with enormous consequences. This section examines the seventh story's dramatisation of the narrator, Marco's search for meaning in a casino; the paradigmatic space for financial "casino capitalism"; and a microcosm for the novel's anti-utopian capitalist realism, followed by an analysis of the text's displacement of spectres from core to peripheral regions. The chapter goes on to analyse *Cloud Atlas*' portrayal of humanity as suffering from an innately predacious, transhistorical human nature, that when taken to its logical extreme in Sonmi~451's consumerist dystopia, manifests in the thorough ruination of nature. The final section examines *Cloud Atlas*' structure of feeling as a dominant resource-angst that registers contemporary fissures in neoliberalism's production of "cheap natures". This structure of feeling emerges in the text's repeated references to 1970s dystopian films about depleted landscapes, and concerns about time, shortened lifespans and biophysical exhaustion, figured through meditations on old age and speeded up growth regimes. A brief interlude on Mitchell's short story "The Siphoners" (2011) and its account of a far-future energy scarce regime links *Cloud Atlas* and the final section on *The Bone Clocks* (2014), which examines how it re-articulates the theme of predacity as soul-sucking Anchorites whose rapacious appetites are allegories for finance capital's exhaustion of millennial youths. Predacity here operates as ecological critique, with the text concluding in scenes of energy scarcity and rapid civilisational decline.

Part II: *Ghostwritten* and the Global Optic of Hegemony

Satellite Eye: Organising Nature and Eco-Apocalypse

Ghostwritten's final chapter is set in a millennial apocalyptic future where the Zookeeper or "Zooey", a sentient "quantum cognition" mind, flits between satellites and tries to stabilise global stock markets and halt nuclear war. Zooey is charged by its maker, physicist Mo Muntervary, with safeguarding the earth's citizens and does so by intervening in human affairs. But its virtuous attempt to offer humanity a way out of its reliance on fossil fuels, weapons, and war is thwarted by human ingenuity:

> I believed I could do much. I stabilised stock markets; but economic surplus was used to fuel arms races. I provided alternative energy solutions; but the researchers sold them to oil cartels who sit on them. I froze nuclear weapons systems; but war multiplied, waged with machine guns, scythes and pick-axes. (1999, p. 425)

Zooey embodies the symbolic role of a post-Gulf War law enforcer in its efforts to limit humanity's destruction of the globe by implementing laws of accountability (p. 423). Its stringent adherence to these laws echoes the international dictates of the United Nations, a multinational group whose power to act quickly in cases of war or genocide is severely curtailed by competing national interests. In the pursuit of accountability, the Zookeeper blows up the "quantum cognition" facility in Texas, stops a nuclear strike, and destabilises a bridge to halt an African militia from committing atrocities. But Zooey's role as the globe's moral, juridical, and quantitative "zookeeper" is eclipsed by escalating chaos on earth. After a massive world war and civil lockdown on "Breakdown" (p. 405) and "Brink" (p. 416) days, the Zookeeper declares the four laws to be "impossible to reconcile" (p. 425). In one of the satellite's annual phone-ins to Bat Segundo's late-night radio show, it issues an ominous injunction that it will "lockout" (p. 428) the visitors to its zoo in a fortnight's time when a comet is due to fly past, potentially sentencing the earth to a "winter of five hundred years!" (p. 423). *Ghostwritten*, *Cloud Atlas*, and *The Bone Clocks* inhabit the same literary universe, and the catastrophic climate change, rising sea levels, pollution, and nuclear fallout of Sonmi~451's world in *Cloud Atlas* result in part in Zooey's disastrous rejection of its role as the policer of the "earthly" zoo and conversion into a necropolitical, doomsday machine.

Zooey's aerial views are crucial to the politics of *global* representation and account of realism in *Ghostwritten* and Mitchell's global novels generally. Historically, post-World War II satellites, from electronic surveillance and ordnance technologies, to "spy-satellites, drones and other video-missiles" (Virilio 1989, p. 1), were used by state reconnaissance projects to survey and gather global climatic, biopolitical and military information, and early environmental imaginaries emerged from aerial photographs of nuclear bombs and Apollo space missions (Heise 2008, pp. 22–23). Benjamin's 1936 essay on the "mechanical reproduction" of art argues for the mode of perception, here interpreted as satellite images, as an active

force shaping the "field of perception" (1968, p. 223). How global narratives are portrayed and narrated, and through what medium this takes place are fictionalised accounts of the very social transformations bound up with changes in "perception". In this case, those aerial images emerged from increasing US dominance and nuclear technology, which are linked with changes in perception itself, given how the "view from above" is treated as though providing an omniscient and objective lens onto events on earth. However, satellite images are "artificially assembled" by algorithms into a convincing and detailed image of "earthly totality" (Kurgan 2013, p. 11), and are not visible to the human eye. While satellite imagery has taken on an increasingly important role in monitoring and gathering data on conflicts and climate change, disastrous misreadings of visual data occur, most infamously in the US' interpretation of satellite imagery as evidence of Iraq's storage of weapons of mass destruction. While the exactitude of satellite data has increased, interpretations of that information are always conditioned by political and historical reasoning amidst contested attempts to "name reality" (Deutsche qtd. Kurgan 2013, p. 18), and to gain traction over territorial disputes and military action.

Likewise, Benjamin observes that the ability to precisely map, zoom in, and view phenomena is not equivalent to knowing the precise formations of reality, or what "was visible, though unclear" (1968, p. 236), and Zooey's nearly total knowledge of earth's climatic conditions and surface movements is of no use given that its epistemic capacities are incommensurate with lasting agential power. In Jorge Luis Borges' brief story "On Exactitude in Science" (1946), cartographers make the ultimate ludic fallacy by producing a map of empire the size of the very territory itself, but the map is regarded as useless and falls into ruin. Near the end of Zooey's chapter, the satellite states that "When I was appointed zookeeper, I believed adherence to the four laws would discern the origins of order. Now, I see my solutions fathering the next generation of crises" (Mitchell 1999, pp. 425–426), and Zooey's inability to move from representation to lasting political change leads it to conclude that it is unable to preserve "order in the zoo" (p. 410). It is not, as Zooey's creator Mo Muntervary states, that technology without political interference could produce better ethical actions and that Frankenstein's "gothic gore" (p. 371) could have transformed into "transplant technology", but that technology necessarily shapes and is conditioned by political contexts and the interpretative lens of modes of perception. While Vermeulen argues that *Ghostwritten*'s references to the observation of events are a metaphor for the organising

force of biopower by "monitoring, conserving, and observing a life that is seemingly subject to pure chance, in the hope of establishing patterns and regularities that somehow make that life look less random" (2012, p. 388), Zooey's inability to achieve meaningful biopolitical action in spite of its totalising aerial vision demonstrates that technologies on their own do not lend themselves to active discernment and correction of humanity's foibles. The equivalence of aerial imagery and truth is a contemporary misapprehension rooted in the misplaced notion that scientific advancement and technological accuracy can, on their own, deliver authoritative solutions to geopolitical turmoil on earth.

Claims for cartographic accuracy, scientific precision, and totalising knowledge are partial, historical, and ideological and unwittingly reveal the unconscious optics of everyday life. Zooey focalises and interprets the explosion of infestations and infections on earth through EyeSat lenses, and significantly, its optic of interpretation (a military satellite lens) limits its political horizons as it interprets these events as a weakening of the globe's systems, leading it to catastrophically discharge itself of its duties. This phenomenon embodies Fisher's account of "capitalist realism" as a staunchly anti-utopian ideology that masquerades as a natural and non-political set of presumptions, among them that capitalism is the "only viable political-economic system" (Fisher and Dean 2014, p. 26), leading to a "feeling of resignation" (p. 27) that capitalism cannot be surmounted or altered in any meaningful way other than by the collapse of society and the degradation of the environment. Zooey's inability to become a truly successful earthly overseer is both a comment on the unconscious optics of representation, with technologies mistaken for accurate tools of interpretation, and a reflection of the novel's "capitalist realist" political pessimism as humanity dextrously perverts the satellite's good intentions to ameliorate earthly conditions.

What ultimately frustrates Zooey's global mapping is a strange weather motif of simultaneous catastrophes that suggests the vast but unrepresentable structural processes linking political and ecological events. The Zookeeper rings radio host Bat Segundo on the same date annually, and by the time of its final and fourth phone-in, the world has narrowly averted nuclear war due to the satellite's interventions. In the final scene from a low-altitude MedSat over the Central African Republic, the "Brink Day" of near nuclear catastrophe has passed and all curfews and censorship laws have been lifted. But Zooey can no longer reconcile its four

moral laws, and instead of producing order, the satellite's repeated interventions have sown the seeds of new crises in an extraordinary scene of global environmental and social cataclysm that mentions all the classic causes of civilisational breakdown in dystopian fiction including plague, viral mutations, war, rising sea levels, refugee crises, nuclear meltdowns, famine, and out-of-control GM crops (p. 425). Zooey's recitation of these eco-statistics is shocking because of their simultaneity, as extra-human natures, from infections to infestations, erupt in a disorderly tidal wave of cumulative crises.[1] In Mitchell's treatment of ecological crisis, both human actions and extra-human natures are part of an impenetrable planetary socio-ecological fabric, as the correspondence between unstable environments and social chaos disrupts Zooey's ability to gather data and make meaning from the world, leading it to conclude that the "zoo is in chaos" (Mitchell 1999, p. 425) and, more worryingly, that "The visitors I safeguard are wrecking my zoo" (p. 428).

This depiction of epidemics, economic fluctuations, and political change as a tsunami of strange weathers has a recent genealogy in weather reports as a means of naturalising unusual and concurrent climatic and social events. Andrew Ross describes how in 1987 the falling prices of the Wall Street stock market were a preferred way of linking economic crisis with the freezing temperatures of America's Eastern seaboard (1991, p. 238). Bat Segundo's radio show in *Ghostwritten* follows the same format described by Ross. Immediately after Zooey's attack on the quancog facility, Bat announces his next segment of music, wartime news reports, and weather: "Well folks, due to this week's dispatch from the Delta quadrant, we only have time for Bob Dylan's "World Gone Wrong". Coming up at 4 – more on the strikes against the North African Rogue States – and the weather. The Bat will be back" (Mitchell 1999, p. 392). Cultural theorist McKenzie Wark states that the Wall Street stock crash of 1987, the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and fall of the Berlin Wall, and the 1990–1991 Gulf War, are interrelated by a series of "media vectors" or "vectors of communication" which draw seemingly unrelated and multiple occurrences together into a comprehensible narrative (1994). The period of 1987–1991 was an extremely turbulent one for world politics, and analogies made between diverse events in *Ghostwritten* are likewise attempts to simplify seemingly ungraspable correspondences. However, just as global satellite images of the earth give a perspectival view that will never be available to the human eye, this does not mean that the world is flat, and just as "media vectors" create links between varied events, an

interrelation exists that is not simply a vector created by media apparatuses. *Ghostwritten*'s use of "strange weather" style motifs is a symptom of structural processes that produce unrepresentable but existing links between disparate occurrences.

Chance and Causality

Thus, despite *Ghostwritten* lacking the strong thematic structure and consistency of *Cloud Atlas,* its most powerful global trope is a "butterfly effect" paranoia that networks events with other stories and amplifies their consequences. For instance, the collapse of Denholme Cavendish bank in Hong Kong precipitates the betrayals and murders at the centre of art heists in St Petersburg, enables the prosperity of the great-granddaughter of the elderly woman from the Chinese "Holy Mountain" chapter, and leads to Marco being thrown out of his lover's house and therefore saving Mo Muntervary from an oncoming taxi. The text's butterfly effect creates new patterns that are beyond the scope of either satellites or "ghostwriters" to map in their totality. The novel's overriding theme is therefore both the spatial patterning of global interconnections and the search for a causal framework, much as Brother Juniper from *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* looks for divine intention behind the collapse of a bridge. *Ghostwritten* quotes Thornton Wilder's book in the epigraph, stating that "Some say that we shall never know, and that to the gods we are like the flies that the boys kill on a summer day, and some say, on the contrary, that the very sparrows do not lose a feather that has not been brushed away by the finger of God" (Wilder qtd. Mitchell 1999, p. vii). While critics like Dillon note the intertextual reference but not the strong thematic connection between both texts' account of causality (Dillon 2011, p. 158 note 2), for Vermeulen, *Ghostwritten*'s debt to Wilder is in its account of the "dispersed and decentralized workings of a power that cannot be reduced to a central cause or a single sovereign agency" (2012, p. 382). This chapter takes a different critical approach given its emphasis on the politics of representation and reads the seventh chapter of *Ghostwritten*, about Marco's meditations on chance and appeals to "commonsensical" truths and observable phenomena, as an exemplary one to assay the text's production and definition of causality as a universal episteme.

Marco is a ghostwriter, a profession that references the novel's title and implies an overarching author or force "ghostwriting" reality. But while Marco's central meditations as a "part-time Buddhist" (1999, p. 271) are

on the nature of chance, his musings are deeply conflicted. On the one hand, Marco's casual Buddhism means that he apprehends the world as an interconnected place of mysterious coincidences. Leaving Katy Forbes' apartment, he saves Mo Muntervary from chapter eight from being killed by an oncoming taxi and questions his opportune timing: "That short woman in an orange anorak wandering across the road in front of that taxi […] – why is she about to be mown down, and not me?" (p. 273). On the other hand, Marco blames "chance" and contingency, or the "cocktail of genetics and upbringing" for his fortunes, as he explains through a "Marco Chance versus Fate Videoed Sports Match Analogy" (p. 292) causal model. For those playing the game, they exist in a chaotic "sealed arena" (p. 292) of multiple potential outcomes, but for those watching the tape the outcome is predetermined. For Marco, it is a matter of perspective, a neutral question of whether you are the observer or the observed. This neutrality regarding one's perspective ironically sidesteps Zooey's role as both a traditional data gathering satellite and an actant whose observations alter the future outcome on the earthly zoo, dramatising the invisibility of systems of control and punishment against Marco's normative claims for realism in the guise of an easy relativism.

Marco's band is named "The Music of Chance" after Paul Auster's absurdist novel centred on gambling and contingency, and fittingly, the final scene of Marco's narrative is set in a casino. Marco concludes his story with a reflection on the biophysical and impersonal forces that condition chance in a section that deserves quoting at length:

> There is Truth, and then there is Being Truthful.
>
> Being Truthful is just one more human activity, along with chatting up women, ghostwriting, selling drugs, running a country, designing radiotelescopes, parenting, drumming, and shoplifting. [….]
>
> Truth holds no truck with any of this. A comet doesn't care if humans notice its millennial lap, and Truth doesn't care less what humans are writing about it this week. Truth's indifference is immutable. (p. 316)

The contrast between changeable human decisions and immutable physical "truths" like a comet's orbit is augmented by the protean slippages of the verb "Being" prefixed to "Truthful". For Marco, one can "be" or "not be" truthful, just as one can be or not be "ghostwriting, selling drugs, running a country" (p. 316). Truthfulness, like all human action, is contingent and confined to a realm of conditional knowledge,

unlike the immutability of the "Truth" Marco defines in physical terms, with a roulette ball effected by the "Truth" of its physical and universal properties. In interview, Mitchell reconfirms this stress on immutable forces, stating that in his works he creates "the illusion of chance [...] which is an act of fatemaking, within our universe which is governed by chance" (Marijn and Mitchell 2013), comparing the universe to a "pinball game", in an analogy that resonates with Marco's final denouement on the roulette table.

But Marco's appeal to the "pinball game" of impersonal physics is problematic. The casino is the ur-site of capitalism's utopian promise to bestow fantastic wealth or penury on its subjects (Comaroff and Comaroff 2002, p. 782)—an ideology magnified by the vast riches and destitution produced by financial "casino capitalism". Marco's wider presupposition is that a sense-in-common exists by which appeals to general pragmatism, "rationality", and a subdued Buddhism produce a harmonious society that does not make impossible demands on the rationality of its subjects. His preferred realism accommodates both a capitalist realist and neoliberal approach, or what Mark Fisher describes as an anti-utopian or "realist" approach to society and the idea that capitalism is the best socio-economic system to deliver a utopian flourishing of wealth and comfort to its subjects (Fisher and Dean 2014, pp. 34–36). Marco's beliefs are empirical but chaotic—and rooted in forces that are impersonal ("realist"), but promise occasional (neoliberal) utopian beneficence.

Earlier I stated that if the global novel emerges from a moment of capitalist globalisation, then reading for the ideologies of such novels offers a means of fathoming the episteme of globalisation. In their analysis of popular globalisation discourses, Cazdyn and Szeman argue that an investigation into the "modalities of common sense" (2011, p. 38) captures the "ethos and epistemology of globalization" (p. 41). "Commonsense" refers here to the reproduction of the "same general assumptions, the same beliefs in the character of geopolitics" (Cazdyn and Szeman 2011, p. 41) in any register through which hegemony is expressed, and has a stabilising function by ratifying bewilderment during transitions in accumulation regimes (Jameson 2009a, p. 208). *Ghostwritten*'s account of the immutable and empirical nature of realism through appeals to universal commonsense is begotten by the reproduction of ideology via the rationalisation of uncommon events. For example, in the first story of *Ghostwritten*, a teacher critiquing the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo movement

states that society is created along Foucauldian lines with citizens abdicating some freedoms in a social contract that guarantees safety from "starvation, bandits and cholera" (p. 23). Etienne Balibar notes that the language of justice and rights contains a "kernel" of utopian meaning that emerges from and is "returned" to the masses from whence it originally came (qtd. Jonsson 2010, p. 125). A flicker of such utopian groundswell still exists in discourses of civilisational norms, but for Jonsson "the ideology of universalism, disseminated from above, keeps its hegemony only for as long as it is able to activate the utopia of universality, which emerges from below" (p. 125). The seeds of utopian movements are policed through society's regulatory function and as the teacher states "'Society' […] 'is an *outer* abdication'" (Mitchell 1999, p. 23). Ideology is most effective when it appears invisible, natural, and as "non-political, just the way things are" (Fisher and Dean 2014, p. 27) despite the use of coercion and abjuration of individual agency. *Ghostwritten*'s slippage between its "commonsensical" account of impersonal biophysical forces and the "Being Truthful" of contingent human action is central to ideology's production of social control and capitalist processes as mutually constituting forms of natural and realistic structures of society.

Non-Corpums and the Repressed Capitalist Real

Although the appearance of multiple "non-corpums" or non-bodily souls appears to trouble *Ghostwritten*'s phantom-free account of globalisation, the differing ontologies of Zooey, a satellite spectre, and the unnamed floating soul of the Mongolian chapter offer another vantage into the text's episteme.[2] Zooey can travel ephemerally through cybernetic networks, enmeshed through multiple hosts to extend its global aerial view. Its unmoored quality differentiates it from human-machine cyborgs, or the Mongolian non-corpum. Rather, it is an invisible and mobile extra-human phantom and planetary watchdog, evacuated of any human or animal markers. Adrian Ivakhiv argues that the monstrous excrescences of television shows like the *X-Files* and the "ubiquitous eye in the sky of satellite surveillance" (2008, p. 101) are symptoms of pre-millennial, Anglo-American "powerlessness" (p. 106) and guilt in the face of an oncoming "ecological crisis" (p. 107). Inassimilable irruptions of nature in television and films are, for Ivakhiv, instances of an uncanny and unmappable "Real" (p. 104) that emerged despite the relative economic prosperity and comfort of life under Clinton and Blair era liberal governments (p. 100).

Through this reading, Zooey is arguably a spectre of globalisation that allegorises anxieties about ecological degradation, dematerialised capital reproduction, and the increased autonomy and agency of technologies that threaten to bring about the end of human labour (and life) in the Global North.

In contrast to Zooey's global travels and symbolic value as an American doomsday spectre akin to *Terminator*'s "SkyNet", the fifth chapter follows an amnesiac "non-corpum" which is the product of local historical trauma. Set in Mongolia, the unnamed spectre emerges after a failed transmigration between bodies by a member of an enigmatic magical sect of "Yellow Hats" (1999, p. 201) during Stalinist-era purges of Buddhist clergy. The non-corpum is created when a novice boy's soul is interrupted during its transmigration by Soviet-led mercenaries, and torn asunder from its historical and material origins. While the Mongolian spirit requires touch to transmigrate, proof that it exists on a "physical plane" and one that is "sub-cellular or bio-electrical" (p. 165), non-corpums can neither move into animals nor can they make themselves known to their hosts, remaining largely unknowable and existing in a wholly parasitic rather than symbiotic relationship.

That the non-corpum of the Mongolian narrative exists at a human rather than satellite level means that its reflections are predominantly on the binaries of local-global and displacement-dwelling that structure narratives of economic globalisation. In one paradigmatic scene, the non-corpum contrasts the subjectivities of Danish backpacker Casper against Mongolian peasant Gunga. Casper shares the non-corpum's nomadic nature, living "nowhere" (p. 160) and travelling aimlessly. Both are followers of routes rather than roots, travelling ceaselessly across the globe and consuming local histories to stave their ennui (p. 161). However, the non-corpum is quickly exhausted with the restless, "westernised" and "non-stop highways" of Casper's mind, which flit between currency values, films, childhood memories, and pop songs (p. 166). In contrast, Gunga is described as having an "intimate" (p. 166) and meditative mind, and her days are spent worrying about her family's health, money, and survival. After a life attuned to the drudgery of Mongolia, she is portrayed as uniquely well-tuned to any slight changes in her mind, and she quickly perceives that something is amiss after the non-corpum transmigrates into her mind. This section uses developmental binaries to contrast the rapid-fire thought processes of "Western" minds, against the authentic slowness of Gunga. Literalising these differences, the Mongolian non-corpum is

fated to become human once more by tethering itself to a young Mongolian baby, being "shackled by flesh and bones" (p. 202) to weigh down its ephemeral form.

The fourth "Holy Mountain" chapter that precedes the non-corpum's Mongolian tale is also set in East Asia and follows an unnamed woman who owns a tea shack and observes rather than participating in all the major trends of Chinese twentieth-century history. She is the brutal victim of rape by the local Warlord's son, escapes Japanese forces, hears about the communist overthrow of the Kuomintang, and converses with communists who know the "magic" (p. 127) of "Marx, Stain, Lenin, and Class Dialectics". She observes the famines that follow Mao's "Great Leap Forward" (p. 131), is the victim of the Red Guard's destruction of Chinese history, and becomes a folk hero during Deng Xiaoping's government due to a glowing magazine profile that names her a proponent of "Socialist Entrepreneurialism" (p. 149). What differentiates these rural East Asian chapters against the rest of *Ghostwritten* is their condensation of historical movements, portrayal of political turmoil, and alignment of authenticity with rural locality and indigenous belief systems. Examples include the shaman in Mongolia, the tree spirit in "Holy Mountain", and the non-corpum who travels to Mongolia from China because "If I lacked clues in reality, I would have to find them in legends" (p. 176).

Žižek argues that the discourse of "friction-free" capitalism surrounding cyberspace and the world-economy suppresses the irruptions of repressed, "Real" social contradictions (1997, p. 36), and *Ghostwritten*'s displacement of aberrant historical spectres onto mystified peripheral zones is one instance of this suppression. *Ghostwritten* accommodates tensions between realism and the supernatural through the dismissal of supernatural figures in core cities as the product of superstition, madness, or technological innovation, as with the appearance of a doppelganger and New Age beliefs in Marco's London section. Capitalist realism is a condition of core zones in the text, necessitating the expulsion of "non-modern" spectres to peripheries, and the differing ontologies of Zooey—an AI satellite spectre—and the unnamed floating soul of the Mongolian chapter, the latter the product of mid-century Soviet repressions, offers a critical vantage into the text's episteme. The unintended effect is to preclude Mongolia and China from the metropolitan capitalist realism that structures other narratives, and to portray rural Asia as a site of unrefined mysticism. This contrasts with the narratives of financial and technological modernity mobilised throughout *Ghostwritten*: including Hong Kong

as a site of international finance (into which a ghost intrudes occasionally), international criminality and art thievery in St Petersburg, and US military conspiracy on Clear Island in Ireland.

Part III: *Cloud Atlas*, Neo-Malthusianism, and Eco-Apocalypse

Neo-Malthusianism, Biopolitics, and Ecological Crisis

If a nuanced analysis of *Ghostwritten*'s ideological horizons reveals a core-based capitalist realism with a peripheralised invocation of Asia through developmental tropes, *Cloud Atlas*' continuity with *Ghostwritten* is through the universalisation of capitalist tropes of "predacity" that depict ecological crisis as the natural outcome of innately competitive and consumptive societies. *Cloud*'s sociobiological narrative of violent human behaviours and anxieties about resource limits is read here as an ensemble of neoliberal symbolic structures and political horizons that naturalise forms of rapacious behaviour. However, the re-emergence of Malthusian and social Darwinist narratives in *Cloud Atlas* has a long lineage in Victorian to contemporary debates about human nature, and a common trope linking these discourses is the biopolitical function of crisis narratives in facilitating dispossession. These paradigms are bound up with how capitalism reproduces and sustains its accumulation process by reorganising the "world-ecology" through manufactured scarcity and the plunder of nature's "free" resources, from woodlands to genomes.

Core to *Cloud Atlas*' environmental crisis narrative is the threat of Malthusian overpopulation leading to resource depletion and environmental ruin. Ecocritic Greg Garrard states that Thomas Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) is the "most influential forerunner to the modern environmental apocalypse" (2004, p. 93) due to Malthus' argument that nature has a "limit" that when exceeded by overpopulation leads to nightmarish boom and bust population cycles that alternately exhaust and replenish earth's natural resources through famine, scarcity, and epidemics (Malthus 1798, p. 55). Malthus famously argued against both William Godwin's argument for an equal and sustainable society and Adam Smith's notion of the perfectibility of humankind (p. 4), and his pessimistic view of human nature as lazy and insatiable fed into nineteenth-century social Darwinist rhetoric which argued for coercive regulatory measures, and later twentieth-century punitive eugenicist policies against marginal (or "undesirable") groups (Ross 1993, pp. 108–109). *Cloud Atlas*' account of competitive and predacious

human behaviours derives from a similar well of lurid sociobiological discourses, while ignoring the varying historical conditions that produce such tendencies.[3]

That strands of Malthusian inflected thought are still popular and influential, among them the 1990s neo-Malthusianism and "ecology of underdevelopment" (Watts 2001, p. 135) of Washington demagogues like Robert Kaplan and Jeffrey Sachs, is because accounts of epidemics, population growth, and resource scarcity call for strategies of biopolitical control and discipline. Unlike Malthus' theories, rooted in then pervasive fears about the French Revolution, contemporary variants of neo-Malthusianism argue for regulatory action through debt bondage mechanisms, free trade agreements, and Structural Adjustment Programs to discipline dissatisfied peripheral states and ensure the production of cheap commodities. Contemporary narratives of overpopulation and depletion legitimise neoliberal technics of dispossession and accumulation, naturalising the exploitation of peripheral zones. As eco-Marxist Leerom Medovoi states, the trope of eco-catastrophe "facilitates some kind of regulatory transition between accumulation regimes" (2010, p. 136), with appeals to environmental limits a narrative means of ensuring that life is "assessed", organised, and made "more productive" (p. 137).

Malthusian registers of ecological crisis are significant when examining the wider context of biopolitical control and economic transformation structuring *Cloud Atlas*' future dystopia. This way of reading combined crises relies upon what Jason W. Moore calls a "world-ecology", or how hegemony, the production of nature, and capital accumulation are interlinked processes. For Moore, capitalism is a "gravitational field" (Keefer and Moore 2011, p. 42) through which human and extra-human natures have been integrated, surveyed, and commodified on a global scale for over five hundred years. However, neoliberalism differs from previous accumulation regimes in that it over-relies on speculative financial capital, seeking to drive down the cost of resources without a concurrent "revolution in labour productivity" (p. 47). The onset of neoliberalism in the 1970s was marked by the introduction of financial mechanisms that invested excess capital through coercive debt mechanisms forced onto peripheral states. These methods were coproduced with then prevalent "limits to growth" rhetoric,[4] to ensure the continued supply of the "four cheaps" necessary for capital reproduction of "cheap labour, cheap energy, cheap food, and cheap resources" (Keefer and Moore 2011, p. 48). 1970s

oil shocks and inflation brought about a "new phase of accumulation and a restructured capitalism dominated by neoliberalism and so-called globalization" (Smith 2007, p. 18) with nature constitutive of capitalism's reconfigured "accumulation strategy" and search for surplus value. The result was, according to Neil Smith, the "intensive production of nature" (2007, p. 16), through new ecological commodities, like genomed flora and seed patents. In recent times, the impact of climate change, the suppression of crop yields, and the lack of new investment frontiers to exploit have generated a crisis of cheap nature (Moore 2010, p. 229), specific to the current moment of neoliberal capitalism. Contemporary financial crises are bound up with the exhaustion of bioenvironmental strands of cheap nature, and these conditions make it difficult to produce future imaginaries that go beyond current narratives of capitalism-in-crisis, like the fifth story in *Cloud Atlas* that makes one strand of capitalist culture, a consumerist dystopia, its guiding telos for depicting future environmental degradation.

Fernando Coronil states that the materialities and modalities of nations co-constitute their socio-ecological conditions and discourses (1997, p. 8), and Michael Niblett, deploying Moore's theory of the world-ecology, similarly argues that literary scholars must consider how "ecological regimes and revolutions" are consciously and unconsciously registered in literature, "since these organize in fundamental ways the material conditions, social modalities, and areas of experience upon which literary form works" (2012, p. 20). This chapter draws on these insights to examine how *Cloud*'s global scope and omniscient viewpoint bear the impress of the materialities of the Global North, or North American and British discourses of ecology in crisis, including an assemblage of neo-Malthusian "limits to growth" discourses and a sociobiological rhetoric of competitive individualism that views the environment as an "external and essentially ahistorical limit" (Keefer and Moore 2011, p. 49) to be overcome and commodified, with themes of predacity, consumption, and scarcity operating as narrative devices that transcend history while structuring *Cloud Atlas*' ecological imaginary.

Predacity and Universality

Cloud Atlas' title refers to the immutability of human nature "the fixed human nature which is always thus and ever shall be" (Naughtie and

Mitchell Naughtie and Mitchell 2007, 4:01–4:06).[5] Rather than a positive account of "humanity-in-common" however, *Cloud* depicts predacity and greed as innate and universal causes of conflict and near-extinction. In interviews, David Mitchell frequently avows that predacity is the germinative, thematic "stem cell" of *Cloud Atlas* (Martin and Mitchell 2010), stating that "Perhaps all human interaction is about wanting and getting" (Turrentine and Mitchell 2004). Predacity as a brutally competitive law of survival is informed by frequent references to Nietzschean "will-to-power" struggles across the ages as cyclical and eternally recurrent forms of human nature that transcend and exploit social hierarchies. The composer Vyvyan Ayrs is a self-professed fan of Nietzsche, naming his newest composition "*Eternal Recurrence*" (Mitchell 2004, p. 84), and later energy executive Alberto Grimaldi asks himself "*how it is some men attain mastery over others while the vast majority live and die as minions, as livestock?*" (emphasis original, p. 131), concluding that the answer is human nature (p. 132). Predacity scales *Cloud Atlas* in what Mitchell describes as the "way individuals prey on individuals, groups on groups, nations on nations, tribes on tribes" (Naughtie and Mitchell 2007, 4:13–4:17). Correspondingly, minor character Morty Dhondt tells Robert Frobisher that war is ignited by the "will-to-power", observable in "bedrooms, kitchens, factories, unions and the borders of states" (2004, p. 462). Predacity connects individuals to the nation-state and is a metonym for the text's historical recurrence, with each main figure a "reincarnated" soul of previous characters and each plot a reiteration of characters trying to escape compromising positions of "predacious" exploitation: from the elder composer Vyvyan Ayrs' plagiarism of his amanuensis' works to Henry Goose's slow poisoning of Adam Ewing in the hope of stealing his notary documents, Timothy Cavendish's entrapment in a nursing home, and the exploitation of Sonmi's role as an errant clone to help shake out sympathetic revolutionaries. However, as Morty Dhondt warns "Our will to power, our science, and those v. faculties that elevated us from apes, to savages, to modern man, are the same faculties that'll snuff out *Homo sapiens* before this century is out!" (p. 462), and the competitive advantages gained in each narrative by Pacific-based colonialists, America's Cold War energy complexes, and Korean corporations are eventually undercut by a disastrous future of wars and ecological collapse.

Predacity is also reconfigured as a cannibalistic metaphor to describe the relationship between exploiters and exploited, with poisoner Henry Goose telling his victim that "The weak are meat, the strong do eat"

(p. 524), and the novel's matryoshka doll format operates as a mode of narrative ingestion with each story finishing midway through sentences and pivotal scenes before being taken up again. As Mitchell notes, the novel's structure operates in a neat homology with the text's cannibalistic theme: "Each block of narrative is subsumed by the next, like a row of ever-bigger fish eating the one in front" (Turrentine and Mitchell 2004). *Cloud Atlas*' deployment of metaphors of cannibalism as narrative appropriation or ingestion is central to the text's construction of an expansive world-referring and cross-historical imaginary, a trope the novel openly parodies in Robert Frobisher's narrative. Composing the radical new sextet "Cloud Atlas" and working as an amanuensis to the composer Vyvyan Ayrs, Frobisher states that their "three modi operandi" are "Revisionals", "Reconstitutionals", and "Compositionals" (2004, pp. 59–60), in a self-conscious summary of Mitchell's "revisional" reiteration of previous narratives, the new "compositional" arrangement of *Cloud Atlas*' nested structure, and its "reconstitution" of already existing genres, including the colonial Pacific travel journal of Adam Ewing; Robert Frobisher's 1930s epistolary; Luisa Rey's detective-criminal thriller, written in "chapteroids" with ostensibly "one eye on the Hollywood screenplay" (p. 164); Timothy Cavendish's picaresque memoir; Sonmi~451's science fiction, dystopian narrative written as a long-form interview Q&A; and finally, Zachry's episodic post-fall story.

However, while *Cloud Atlas*' assemblage is new its form is not. Its cannibalistic incorporation and reconstitution of other narrative modes thematise the reproduction of cultural artefacts through the recirculation of previous narratives and characters as holograms, clones, and video recordings. In Fredric Jameson's account of cognitive mapping, he argues that a turn to a "thematics of mechanical reproduction" (1988, p. 356) and conspiracy plots is a "degraded figure of the total logic of late capital", and in *Cloud Atlas,* the transmission of previous stories is a conspiratorial mode of coincidence that aligns with the novel as a "degraded figuration" of capitalist world-mapping. For instance, Adam Ewing's travelogue ends up in Frobisher's study, Frobisher's music is heard by Luisa Rey, and she reads his love letters; Luisa's tale, in the form of a drafted crime novel and potential Hollywood script, ends up on Timothy Cavendish's desk; Cavendish's memoir is turned into a movie that is seen by the clone Sonmi~451, who becomes a god and figure of hope for Zachry's tribe. The narrative fragmentation of the novel requires the regurgitation of entire

plot lines to sustain its narrative arc and thematic bite, with Robert Frobisher reading Adam Ewing's diary, and giving away a major plot line by describing Ewing as a "bumbler" who is "blind to all conspirators – he hasn't spotted his trusty Doctor Henry Goose (*sic*) is a vampire, fuelling his hypochondria in order to poison him, slowly, for his money" (2004, p. 64, [*sic*] in original). This hyperlinking of previous stories with future ones through incipient plot revelations, together with the nested story format, shuttles the reader back through time, meaning that the latter half of the text is a composition of endings. This narrative unravelling confirms the realisation that cultural reproduction and transmission will not stop future civilisational collapse, with competitive individualism and coercive dominance endlessly recurrent forms of human behaviour.[6]

Consumption and Eco-Dystopia

The effect of *Cloud Atlas*' recursive form is to chart a complicated trajectory between the resistive actions of various characters alongside a treatment of nature and time that strips individuals of historical agency. In this manner, the novel's "modi operandi" of "Revisionals", "Reconstitutionals", and "Compositionals" (pp. 59–60) can be reframed as environmental modalities that affirm *Cloud*'s complicated acceptance of a crushing social determinism that shapes its historical structure. Shoop and Ryan argue that the language of predacity and consumption produces history as "a kind of metabolic system" (2015, p. 98), with narrative artefacts and human souls endlessly metabolised through time. Notably, the birthmark linking the main characters is shaped like a comet, affirming *Ghostwritten*'s emergent environmentality, with comet synecdoches for the principles of biophysical forces and an impersonal "Truth" which "doesn't care less what humans are writing about it this week" (1999, p. 316).[7]

As mentioned, the trope of eco-catastrophe stabilises the onset of biopolitical reorganisation, and *Cloud Atlas*' account of predacity as an immutable principle owes much to neoliberal political discourses and social transformations. While sociobiological and eugenicist accounts of racialised hierarchies have existed since the late nineteenth century, advances in biotechnology since the 1970s promised to "level up" and improve the human genome, feeding into a deterministic language in which ability and inequity had everything to do with "selfish genes" (Dawkins 1976). In this harsh, atomistic world, Margaret Thatcher's remark that "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men

and women, and there are families" (Thatcher qtd. Nixon 2012, p. 597) assumes humankind's innately competitive nature, as individuals fight to attain their rightful place in free market societies by using predetermined abilities (Ross 1993, p. 101). *Cloud Atlas*' account of social relations is likewise that of competitive individualism and atomised relations, produced by an episteme that naturalises social "structures of domination and submission" (Ross 1993, p. 102).

These tendencies are exemplified in *Cloud*'s penultimate story about a futuristic Korean corpocracy with genomics an important branch of knowledge and means of class stratification. Writing her abolitionist "Declarations", the clone Sonmi consults a "judge, genomicist, syntaxist" (Mitchell 2004, p. 362): in the university, she lives in the "Faculty of Genome Surgery" and visits the "Faculty of Psycho Genomics"; and the populace is divided into serf-like clones, non-genomed refugees, and elite genomed consumers. These references gesture to now mainstream anxieties about gene manipulation and the creation of "super-humans" amidst the popularisation of preventative gene therapies, and signify then prevalent worries surrounding 1990s promises to revolutionise nature. During the period of *Cloud*'s conception, British Prime Minister Tony Blair gave a speech affirming his commitment to GM crops against popular resistance (2002), with neoliberal eco-modernisation a core tenet of New Labour's commitment to "satisfying" consumer appetites. *Cloud* makes clear its debt to such histories in the fourth narrative set in 1990s Britain, with Timothy Cavendish noting how Cambridge is populated with "Biotech Space Age cuboids [which] now sit cloning humans for shady Koreans" (Mitchell 2004, p. 170), linking then contemporary government policies to the text's future corporate dystopia.

However, while Sonmi's narrative is intensely critical of genome meddling, her account of consumption as a dystopian nightmare of perfected neoliberalism belies how, as Neil Smith argues, the "*production*-of-nature" (2007, p. 9) leaves "radically open the ways in which social production can create accidental, unintended even counter-effective results vis-à-vis nature". Differentiating these narrative forms further, of ecological dystopia and ecological apocalypse, Benjamin Kunkel describes the end of the world or apocalypse narrative as bringing about anarchic chaos, with dystopia envisioning a "sinister *perfection* of order" and the refinement of "totalitarian rule" (2008, p. 90). Certainly, the difference between the fifth story "An Orison of Sonmi~451", set in the Korean peninsula circa 2100AD, and the sixth narrative, set in the Hawaiian islands in the distant

future, is that the former imagines the "Nea So Copros" juche[8] perfecting the coercive rules of ceaseless consumerism by employing genetic and legislative means of stratifying its populace in a manner that recalls the orderly masses of Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* (1921) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). Confirming the dystopian lineage of Sonmi's world, during her ascendancy she reads texts by "two Optimists"—George Orwell and Aldous Huxley (2004, p. 220)—and her name, Sonmi~451, is a reference to Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit~451* (Parker 2010, p. 203). In contrast, the final story accords with Kunkel's description of anarchic "apocalypse", with the narrator of "Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After" describing the collapse of civilisation, with remnants of clock time and schooling barely existing in a subsistence world populated by warring tribes. Furthermore, Sonmi~451's narrative is written as a long-form question and answer interview in a narrative equivalent to the juche's sinister "perfecting of order", while Zachry's retrospective post-fall story models its corrupt dialect on the anarchic linguistic experimentation of Russell Hoban's regressive post-nuclear communities in *Riddley Walker* (1980). Taken together, the dystopian juche of Sonmi's tale and anarchic tribalism of Zachry's narrative map an entropic transition from the debauched excesses of consumerism to historical regression in terms that fail to move away from nature either as a realm to be mastered or as a vengeful force that responds to imbalances by unleashing a torrent of plagues, toxicity, and scarcity.

Sonmi's story therefore employs some but not all of the discursive tropes of neoliberal eco-catastrophe, seeing nature as a landscape that can be penetrated "all the way down" (Smith 2007, p. 10), while framed by a critique of the excesses of consumerism which manifests as an extreme form of socio-ecological and even narrative control. In Sonmi's narrative, the Korean peninsula of Nea So Copros is one of the last bastions of habitable land and civilisation, albeit under the control of a mysterious "corpocratic" junta who have thoroughly commodified nature. Exiled mountain communities explain to Sonmi that the regime denounces fleeing citizens or "colonists" (p. 348) for stealing natural resources from corporations, among them "rain from WaterCorp; royalties from VegCorp patent holders; oxygen from AirCorp" (2004, p. 349). But advancing soil pollution, dead fisheries, poisonous air, and monocrop hybrid crops, alongside "Melanoma and malaria belts" (p. 341) and dead "Production Zones", threaten the regime's stability. On a hill, overlooking lakes filled

with fish effluence stands a "mighty corp logos", alongside which "a malachite statue of Prophet Malthus surveyed a dustbowl" (p. 344). The lesson is clear: the eradication of unwanted insects, turn to GM crops, and branding of landscapes with corporate logos are efforts by the juche to violently smooth-over and incorporate nature into the regime's corpocracy. Even the moon is assimilated into the pageantry of the juche's reprobate capitalism, with a "lunar projector on far-off Fuji" (p. 236) beaming advertisements from "SeedCorp" onto the moon's surface, of "tomatoes big as babies; creamy cauliflower cubes; holeless lotus roots" (p. 236), with speech balloons emerging from "the SeedCorp Logoman's juicy mouth". Ironically, the similarity between anthropomorphised images of food and the Logoman's unwittingly appetising "juicy mouth" serves to defamiliarise food as people while familiarising people as foodstuff, a trope repeated later when Sonmi discovers that clones are reprocessed as fast food and "soap"—the clone protein nutriment.

As expected from a corporate dystopia, constant sloganising infects the narrative. Consumers recite "catechisms" like "A Soul's Value is the Dollars Therein" (p. 341), and the government is called "Unanimity" in deference to the regime's thorough elimination of socio-ecological difference. Nouns are replaced by brand names, as types are substituted by kinds: shoes become nikes; coffee, starbucks; petrol, exxon. Lacking stimulus, Sonmi is brought to one of Neo-Seoul's shopping malls or "gallerias" named Wangshimni Orchard in an ironic reference to the man-made construction of urban "orchards" in place of dying woodlands, as the mall's commodities replace the biodiversity of nature (p. 236). *Cloud Atlas*' account of future society extols diversity as a good in its own right, with the loss of ecological diversity analogised to the peninsula's political and cultural banality. The narrative marries this observation with a warning: the market produces a greater variety of goods consumers seethe "to buy, buy, buy" (p. 236), but absolute freedom to consume annuls socio-political rights.

Power and Biophysical Exhaustion

In contrast to the tightly organised world of Sonmi's tale, the futuremost narrative of *Cloud Atlas* depicts a world riven by out-of-control viruses, toxicity, and retributive natures, a direct consequence of the juche's perfected consumerist dystopia. Set in the Hawaiian Islands circa 2300AD, the sixth chapter is narrated by goat herder Zachry Bailey who resists

attacks on his valley by marauding Kona tribes people, and recounts visits by Meronym, an anthropologist from the "Prescients" or ship-faring explorers who search for vestiges of human life. Meronym's news of the outside world is grim, describing cities like Melbourne, Johannesburg, Buenas "Yerbas", Mumbai, and Singapore as plague ridden and "*jungle-choked*" (2004, p. 285) following the collapse of ruling "*Old'uns*" who meddled with "*crazed atoms*" (p. 286), because of their overconsumptive "*hunger for more*" (p. 286). Combined with Sonmi's story, Zachry's narrative is a riposte to the wanton experimentation and excavation of earth's wealth for more "power" and commodities, with this section locating the socio-ecological collapse of the world in appetites for "*more gear, more food, faster speeds, longer lifes, easier lifes, more* power, *yay*" (p. 286).

Here, *Cloud Atlas*' sociobiological language of predacious natures and predacious *human* natures scales metaphors of nature and society—of power as a verb, supplying force, energy and surging kinetic action, to power as a noun, or the exertion of authority. Such discourses of energy are always conditioned by their lack, and the novel's catastrophically shortened temporalities are framed by *Cloud Atlas*' debt to 1970s dystopian movies like *Soylent Green* (1973) and *Logan's Run* (1976), which emerged at a key moment of Malthusian anxiety about overpopulation and oil scarcity. Petro-theorist Graeme Macdonald states that the current age is one of "Petroleum culture" (2013, p. 13), and that "our cultural production should reflect that, regardless of how abstract or distorted the projection" (p. 9). *Cloud Atlas* certainly offers a literary correlative to the time-space compressed world of cheap oil, with the novel's recursive short-story format, choppy structure, breezy spatial mobility, and sudden, violent temporalities producing a dynamic kineticism conceivable only in an era of readily available fossil fuels, while the text's narrative of ecological modernisation is conditioned by the threat of resource depletion. In *Cloud Atlas*, this "resource-angst" (Macdonald 2013, p. 19) registers in repeated references to time, and depictions of slowness and death. Luisa Rey's story is titled "Half-Lives: The First Luisa Rey Mystery", with the "Half-lives" of the title referring to the recursive format of the text, with stories split in half, or "half-lives". Half-lives is a reference to the time (a "half-life") it takes for nuclear isotopes to decay, conjoining the "half-lives" of radioactive decay to the text's structure, and broader concerns regarding the on-streaming of nuclear energy. "Half-lives" also refers to the shortened lifespans of characters like Timothy Cavendish,

who is forcibly retired into a nursing home, and clone Sonmi, who can only live for twelve years.

Cloud's narrative of ecological collapse is thus framed by repeated references to characters running out of time, in depictions of biophysical exhaustion and shortened lifespans—most notably in the continuities between Timothy Cavendish's narrative, a tragic-comic tale about his entrapment in a nursing home, and Sonmi's story. Cavendish is tricked into entering nursing home "Aurora House" after he approaches his brother Denholme for a loan to stave off thuggish clients. Denholme appears in *Ghostwritten* as a troubled Hong Kong financier, and in *Cloud Atlas*, he tells Timothy that the only assistance he can offer is a place to "lie low for a while" (2004, p. 160), without confiding that this place is Aurora House. *Cloud Atlas*' depiction of exhausted natures is a symptom of the "epochal rupture" of neoliberalism, of the depletion of new frontiers to "restore the conditions for expanded accumulation" (Moore 2010, pp. 229–230), and Timothy's imprisonment literalises this point by conjoining his brother's link to global financial crises with the gradual rationalisation and eradication of "surplus" humans. A comic figure, Cavendish melancholically recalls his humiliations by a new generation of brazen youths who respond aggressively to his inability to behave "the way an old man should – invisible, silent and scared" (Mitchell 2004, p. 174). But in Aurora House he realises that his mortality and creeping senility, anachronistic language and sagging body, brand him unfit to reproduce in the time-space compressed world of global capitalism. His fellow inmates note that the elderly are unwanted because they act as an "Everyman's *memento mori*" (p. 377) that the world prefers to hide out of sight, and similarly, the eponym of Mitchell's sixth novel *The Bone Clocks* is a pejorative used by immortal psychodecanters to describe humans who wear the effects of time; their ageing faces the very "bone clocks" or *memento mori* the psychodecanters hope to avoid.

While trying to escape from Aurora House, Cavendish roars "Soylent Green is people!" (p. 179) in reference to the 1973 film about the recycling of human body matter into a protein food substance called "soap". By the time of Sonmi's story, enforced obsolescence is taken to extreme principles with speed and efficiency realised in grotesque biopolitical measures. Fabricants are euthanised at 12 years of age and dismembered into a *Soylent Green* foodstuff also called "soap", in a speeded up growth regime that supplies the juche with vigorous and obedient workers just like the replicants in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982). Predacity is

linked to cannibalism in what Knepper describes as a “sustained allegory” (2016, p. 106), for “the endemic predations of capitalist accumulation”. Cannibalism as an allegory operates literally, with clones being recycled into “soap”, and figuratively, referring to the social cannibalism of class hierarchies and inequality (p. 110). This gruesome doubling of cannibalism as the predacious feeding on bodies and labour exposes what Knepper calls the “necropolitical and necro-economic tendencies of the one and unequal world-system” (p. 111), in an allegory that forcefully rejects progressive historical teleologies (Ng 2015, pp. 112, 118), and critiques the environmentally damaging processes that undermine social relations. Importantly, the juche’s turn to state-sanctioned cannibalism implies a backdrop of extreme biophysical exhaustion—clones are a key source of calorific energy, buttressing failing sources of food in a nightmarish portrayal of the consequences of extreme transformations of the environment. Rather than witnessing old age, Sonmi’s era rationalises inefficiency. She observes that a key difference between her era and Cavendish’s is that in his time people “uglified as they aged” (p. 244), without access to the “fixed-term lifespans” and “euthanasium” provided by the juche.

While Cavendish and Sonmi’s narratives are linked by fears of senescence and emerging biophysical exhaustion, David Mitchell’s 2011 short story “The Siphoners”, with its gruesome account of geronticide as a population control measure, is an important bridging fiction between both chapters. “The Siphoners” is set in an unspecified location in 2033 in a Russian-Chinese empire called Jīndàn-TransUral, during a period of intense resource depletion. The narrator, anthropologist Avril Bredon, ekes out an existence in a remote cabin with her husband Bruno who suffers from Alzheimer’s disease, with Avril battling the compound pressures of socio-ecological catastrophe and neurological degeneration: “*Economics has eaten itself; dementia is eating you; climate change has crippled global agriculture; our government only has the means to hold the Cordon because Jīndàn-TransUral needs order on their farm*” (p. 132). Ironically, Avril’s former profession as an anthropologist is rendered obsolete by the post-anthropos threat of human extinction in the transition to a post-oil world, with paraffin a valuable commodity for the new regime. In energetic terms, the story’s turn to older fuels signifies historical regression, aligning oil-based civilisation with luxuries like the internet and global travel: “Our fuel’s gone. What now? Back to firewood, peat: back to the Middle Ages, step by step” (p. 137). But energy scarcity intimates wider social transformations and a roving band of teenage militia siphon

Avril's remaining paraffin. Supplying her with suicide "Mercy Beans" (p. 137), they hasten the liquidation of the regime's newly surplus population, with immigration bars of "Thirty-five years old for men" (p. 138) and "thirty for women", echoing the 1976 movie *Logan's Run* about the enforced euthanasia of anyone over thirty amidst a depleted post-apocalyptic landscape. Mitchell's dystopian imaginaries play on the limited temporalities of an Anthropocene cut short by socio-ecological collapse, and in the "Siphoners", geronticide as a form of eugenicism neatly conjoins energy crises, foreshortened lives, and neo-Malthusian anarchy.

Part IV: *The Bone Clocks*, Vampirish Predacity, and Climate Change

The final and sixth chapter of David Mitchell's *The Bone Clocks* (2014) re-articulates "The Siphoners" post-oil apocalypse, replacing Jīndàn-TransUral with the south-west of Ireland, and Avril Bredon with Holly Sykes, at a crucial moment of civilisational decline. It is 2043, and the region is threatened by the fall of a Chinese cordon, hastening an "Endarkenment" typified by roaming anarchic youths or male "Jackdaws" who reinstate "the law of the jungle" (2014, p. 572), using firearms to steal food and solar panels, while dispensing "huckleberries" that promise quick and painless deaths. This pessimistic vision of the near-future imagines society regressing to the survival of the Jackdaw fittest, with riots and violence a few missed meals away. *The Bone Clocks*' major sub-plot, however, is a supernatural one, concerned with the battle between immortal and altruistic "Horologists", and soul-stealing "psychodecanters" or "Anchorites", with the 2043 narrative an eco-apocalyptic coda to the fantastical duels preceding it. Unlike *Ghostwritten* and *Cloud Atlas*, however, *The Bone Clocks*' reception was altogether more muted, with critics like Kakutani (2014) and Wood (2014) criticising the seemingly interminable jargon of the psychodecanter storyline which functions to knit Mitchell's preceding works into a "maximalist" literary universe. But the novel's supernatural plot critically reengages Mitchellian themes of predacity and social turmoil. Vampirish Anchorites figure as allegories for transnational financial capital, and the wearing and wasting of millennial youths as sources of enervating labour in ways that productively engage the climate change coda of the final story.

The Bone Clocks reprises Mitchell's signature-fragmented novel style, featuring six tales by five narrators roughly a decade apart: Holly Sykes,

a runaway in 1980s Gravesend who witnesses warring supernatural forces; amoral Cambridge undergraduate and fraudster Hugo Lamb who encounters Holly in the Swiss Alps in 1991, and is soon recruited by a band of predatory soul stealers; Ed Brubeck, Holly's partner and a war-journalist who has flashbacks to near-misses in post-9/11 Iraq; English author Crispin Hershey whose mid-life creative crisis echoes Timothy Cavendish's missteps in *Cloud Atlas*; Horologist Xi Lo who, in his 2025 incarnation as Canadian psychiatrist Iris Fenby, participates in the final duel between Horologists and Anchorites in the "Chapel of the Dusk"; and a final and sixth story narrated by Holly in 2043 from a post-apocalyptic Irish peninsula collapsing into anarchy. This exhausting inclusion of multiple narrative voices is amplified by the Horologists' frequent references to previous bodily reincarnations, and rapid shifts between literary modes, from the near-future eco-apocalypse of 2043 to the journalistic realism of Brubeck's 2004 Iraq, and Crispin Hershey's overly long künstlerroman. Uniting this frenetic overloading of distinct narrators, the text's tonally similar stories, and the "now, now, now" (Le Guin 2016, p. 261) of the first-person present produces a breathless global narrative that collapses difference into a tableau of cyclical resurrections and recurrent historical patterns. Intruding on this tonal synchrony is the narrative's jarring self-reflexive and ironic literary mode, with characters like Crispin Hershey operating as indulgent meta-commentators, producing overly self-conscious reflections that disrupt the narrative's fictional force (Le Guin 2016; Wood 2014). Consider Richard Cheeseman's on-point review of Crispin Hershey's latest book, in which "the fantasy sub-plot clashes so violently with the book's State of the World pretensions, I cannot bear to look" (p. 281).

The Bone Clocks' own "fantasy sub-plot" bursts forth in the fifth chapter's jargon-laden supernatural denouement of "hiatussing", "subsaying", and "psychoduels", as the "Horological Society" struggle to destroy the "Anchorites of the Chapel of the Dusk of the Blind Cathar of the Thomasite Monastery of Sidelhorn Pass" (p. 189). Into this setting, the Anchorites can appear anywhere: much as multinational capital aims to reproduce conditions for accumulation globally. References in this section to a predetermined "script", and to alternately reincarnating and resurrectionary souls, produce an eccentric theology that combines secularism with Hindu and Buddhist beliefs in reincarnation and karma, and Abrahamic-Christian afterlives. This cosmogony recentres the author as the text's "omniscient deity" (Wood 2014), much like the meta-fictional "ghostwriters" of Mitchell's previous works.

Confirming this theological notion of authorial vision is Mitchell's commitment to building a "maximalist" (Harris and Mitchell 2015, p. 16) literary universe or a hyper-novel, with previous works now "chapters in an *Über*-book" (Schulz and Mitchell 2014). Throughout *The Bone Clocks*, references are made to previous works in the Mitchellian oeuvre including Mo Muntervary and the non-corpums from *Ghostwritten* (1999); *Cloud Atlas*' *Spyglass* magazine; atemporal Marinus from *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (2010); and *Black Swan Green*'s Jason Taylor. This complex patterning of characters, narrative threads, and "archetypal themes" (Peace and Mitchell 2018), from predacity to ecological destruction, elevates narrative structure and repetition into an organising principle. As mentioned, *The Bone Clocks'* literary mode is likewise expansive, accommodating elements of the bildungsroman, journalism, künstlerroman, and science fiction while structured by repetitious themes, figures, and tropes. However, in contrast to *Ghostwritten* and *Cloud Atlas, The Bone Clocks'* critical approach to ecological destruction imagines climate change as an imminent rather than far-future aspect of civilisation. Predacity here becomes an ecological trope, literalised in depictions of energy scarcity and rapid civilisational collapse to signpost a pessimistic but critical account of capitalist futurity.

Predacious Neoliberalism and Vampirish Anchorites

The Bone Clocks, like *Cloud Atlas*, frames its account of power through a portrayal of humanity's innately consumptive nature. In a key passage, student Hugo Lamb defines power in coercive terms as "the ability to make someone do what they otherwise wouldn't, or deter them from doing what they otherwise would" (2014, p. 95) through methods of control, punishment, and reward. But for immortal Immaculée Constantin, power is a universal and capricious force, as it is for Frobisher in *Cloud Atlas*, that scales place and time, moving "from host to host, via war, marriage, ballot box, diktat and accident of birth" (p. 96), and that structures the "plot of history". While *The Bone Clocks* and *Cloud Atlas* share this treatment of predacity as a socio-historical principle, here they diverge, as predacity takes on literal figuration in *The Bone Clocks* account of cannibalistic psychodecanters who "decant" or suck the "psychosoteric charge" or souls of psychically gifted children to ensure their own mortality.

Anchorites must recruit new members, and in the second story about Hugo Lamb, we witness his transition from young Cambridge graduate to ruthless Anchorite. Hugo's indifferent attitude to love, grief, and compassion renders him a perfect target for the Anchorites—he steals the valuable stamps of an elderly and mute stroke victim, causes the suicide of an indebted friend, and defines humans deterministically as "walking bundles of cravings" (p. 144). Appealing to Hugo's vanity, Constantin recruits him by stating that "psycho-decanting" offers a means to refuse the decrepitude and vulnerability of old age. Notably, the Anchorites' demonic desires extend to wealth, as their cannibalism encompasses both souls and capital. "Psychodecanting" Anchorites' rapacious desire to feed on souls is a vampiric figuration of the alienation of labour, or in Marxist terms, of capitalist classes feeding on the literal and metaphorical lifeblood of their workers.[9] While Anchorites, unlike vampires, are soul suckers rather than blood ones, both require life-forces of various kinds to sustain them. This way of figuring vampires is a well-worn one, with world-literary theorist Franco Moretti arguing that they are not simply remnants of feudal society, but operate as metaphors for capital accumulation (1988, p. 91). Dracula feeds not only on the blood or alienated labour of peasants, but like the expansionary financial capitalism employed by the British colonial regime at the time of *Dracula*'s publication in 1897, he expands from his Transylvanian castle to London to seek out new frontiers of land and blood. Taking on the "incorporeal" (Marx qtd. Moretti 1988, p. 91) qualities of the commodity form, Dracula symbolises the purest form of exchange value. Just as world-ecologists map capitalist environment-making as an ongoing dialectic of value generation and negation (see Moore 2015), vampires enact the same rapacious desire to possess, destroy, and further the accumulative logic of capitalism.

We can productively read the Anchorites in similar terms. They are based in Switzerland, one of the most competitive capitalist nations on earth, and like Dracula, Anchorites are compelled by the "*curse* of power" (Moretti 1988, p. 92), to harvest souls in a narrative of capitalist expansion that naturalises economic markets and the monsters they generate. Sanguinary metaphors abound: the Anchorites bestow immortality by giving disciples "black wine" made from the souls of "psychosoteric" humans, just as capitalism requires periodic injections of cheap labour and commodity frontiers to re-enervate stagnating markets. Mortals, or rather, labourers, are the Anchorites' "food supply" (p. 382), akin to how capital is figured infamously by Marx as coming into the world "dripping

from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt" (Marx 1990, p. 926). Crucially, several properties render Anchorites neoliberal rather than historical vampires, with their hunger for metaphysical meat symptomatic of transitions in precarity and work. Marx's corporeal imagery, as McNally notes, enlivens the way that workers' bodies wear the exhausting labour demanded by industrial work (2011, p. 136), but critically the emphasis on effervescent souls as sustenance in *The Bone Clocks* articulates the affective qualities of neoliberal labour, and service workers as embodiments of corporate subjectivity. The novel plays on this incursion of work into subjectivity by figuring Anchorites' as "sucking souls", in an idiomatic reference to the life-draining qualities of repetitive and banal service work dependent on the manufacture of a pleasing and helpful disposition, despite it being often precarious and insufficient for maintaining the conditions for a good life. This affectual wearing and wasting is less spectacular than the corporeal exhaustion of Marx's industrial work, but one in which future aspirations and bodily wellness are contained by low wages and indeterminate labour.

Writing on the individuation of mental health, Mark Fisher argues that the current "chemico-biologization of mental illness" (2009, p. 37) exempts it from analyses of the structural socio-political reasons for depression—of low paid work, foreshortened horizons, and a lack of fulfilment or social mobility. This context for generational malaise is clearly emerging in mature economies integrated into the core activities of the world-system, like Europe and North America, among a youth demographic who are now refused the secure welfare and wages of their parents. Significantly, psychodecanters prey on children who exhibit a peculiar "psychosoteric charge". Children are often represented in literature as uniquely calibrated to receive supernatural messages; however, an alternative reading of children in *The Bone Clocks* is as ciphers for the crushing impact of displaced indebtedness and the pressures of multi-generational ecological and economic ruin. The draining off of the youthful "psychosoteric charge" of the Anchorites' victims figures the exhaustion of future generations by a static class hoarding vitality, or access to diminished socio-ecological conditions.

Neoliberal capitalism operates on the promise of affluence despite precarious labour. Notably, the Anchorites lure their victims through friendship and flattery, because "If the prey isn't conscious and calm during decanting, the Black Wine's tainted" (Mitchell 2014, p. 437). This includes Holly Sykes who narrowly avoids "psychodecanting" by Immaculée Constantin who grooms her over several weeks, with Holly's escape

a kind of soul or capital flight. That Anchorites must gain the trust of the children they hope to "decant" only to murder them in the last instant is a frightening ideological reveal that lays bare the dreadful mechanics of manipulation, shock tactics, and soul-eating through which victims/labourers are persuaded into unequal relations of exchange value, in a critical allegory that scales from individual to systemic neoliberal "soul draining".

Children appear elsewhere in Mitchell's oeuvre as sites of redemption or evil through life-giving or life-taking practices. In *Ghostwritten*, the Mongolian non-corporeal binds himself to a dying baby, becoming reincarnated through an act of salvation rather than of murder. In contrast, in *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet* (2010), a Japanese fertility cult practices "child-eating" (Metz 2017, p. 127), distilling the bodies of children into an immortal unguent, or an "Oil of Souls" (Mitchell 2010, p. 450). That this trope repeats across Mitchell's fictions is, as Metz notes, a figuration of his own literary consumption, or how he "cannibalizes his own cannibals" (2017, fn. 16 p. 127). Contrarily, if sustenance confirms ideology, then the Horologists' beneficent properties are confirmed by their vegetarianism—their "phylum" (Mitchell 2014, p. 431), Xi Lo tells Holly, is "herbivorous" against that of carnivorous Anchorite soul-eaters. The point is that vampiresque cannibals prey on the weak and marginal, but Horologists are either "Sojourners" who choose to migrate into new bodies, and thus control their resurrection, or "Returnees" who are reincarnated into the bodies of mortally ill children forty-nine days after corporeal death. Both are life-giving rather than life-taking cycles of reincarnation and resurrection.

Near-Future Climate Disasters and Salvific Prescients

The Anchorites' survival depends upon their ability to capture and feast upon souls, and capacity to transverse time and space, meaning that they embody the compressions and dematerialisations of global capitalism. In Sonmi's narrative in *Cloud Atlas*, the overconsumptive behaviour of the Korean juche is the final warning bell of apocalypse, and the amorality of the Anchorites in *The Bone Clocks* suggests financial capitalism's furthering of civilisational collapse. By the sixth narrative in 2043, the Anchorites are defeated in a fatal duel in the "Chapel of the Dusk", and Holly Sykes is largely cut off from the rest of the world after a series of "NetCrashes". She depends on the largesse of a Chinese consortium to supply fuel

and ration boxes, but after the consortium withdraws from West Cork, Holly is nearly stripped of her solar panels by roving thieves who excuse their behaviour by appealing to the carelessness of their parent's generation, who continued burning oil during a time of "creature comforts" (p. 571). Reproducing the enforced immigration quotas and geronticide of Mitchell's short story "The Siphoners", Holly is given pills as insurance from the horrors of post-endarkenment pillaging (p. 572).

Reflecting on the prior conditions that led to this civilisational decline, Holly describes the combined effects of catastrophic rising sea levels, dreadful "gigastorms", "deadlanded" regions, mass extinction, and epidemics of Ebola and "Ratflu", as a "plotless never-ending disaster movie I could hardly bring myself to watch" (p. 525). Her account of the sudden onset of ecological disaster resonates with recent climate change fiction in imagining the sudden transition from a world of relative comfort and constant energy to one ravaged by the compound irruption of extreme weather conditions and oil depletion. Holly's adopted son Rafiq is incredulous of the abundant electricity and technological marvels of her era (pp. 524–525). Marinus states that "Some magic is normality you're not yet used to" (p. 492), and the ending of *The Bone Clocks* is grimmer than either *Ghostwritten* or *Cloud Atlas* in imagining a generational shift towards an unrecognisable tribal future, as compound events speed up the Mitchellian trope of historical regression. *The Bone Clocks*' crucial difference to *Cloud Atlas* is that the former imagines the *near*-future collapse of society due to climate change and fuel shortages, in contrast to the latter's displacement of environmental catastrophe into the distant future, no doubt due to the financial crash of 2008 and now daily evidence of manmade climate change.

That actual socio-ecological conditions structure *The Bone Clocks*' future imaginary is evinced in the text's frequent lapses into a journalistic register. Holly's husband, war correspondent Ed Brubeck, narrates the third story set in 2004, and diagnosing Iraq's present difficulties, Brubeck segues into a pithy condemnation of Paul Bremer's military rule, as tens of thousands of civil servants, members of the Ba'ath Party, and the Iraqi Army lost their jobs, creating thousands of hostile insurgents (pp. 240–241). Brubeck's largely accurate report of Iraq's regional instability is one instance among many in the novel in which historical veracity and political condemnation define the text's account of imminent disaster. Similarly, Marinus' indictment of the pharaonic inequality of 2025 has shades of

the Occupy movement, and his dreadful report card to the recently awoken Horologist Esther Little combines the worst eco-apocalyptic tropes, of energy scarcity, overpopulation, mass extinctions, and climate change, with a pithy summary of the grisly excesses of recent governments: “Wait till the power grids start failing in the late 2030s and the datavats get erased. It’s not far away. The future looks a lot like the past” (pp. 478–479).

Mitchell describes the increasingly dystopian tenor of his future imaginaries as a form of realism and “the ultimate trip” (Ruskin and Mitchell 2014). The verisimilitude of *The Bone Clocks*’ diagnoses of contemporaneous ills conditions the imperative register of its near-future eco-catastrophe. Although the supernatural war between Anchorites and Horologists jars with the text’s condemnation of governments and supranational actors, the novel’s oscillation between journalism and preternaturalism foregrounds the impossibility of narrating any near-future text without recourse to the socio-political failings of the present. Despite the text’s dominant strand of speculative realism, it remains, like the immortal souls themselves, shackled to earthly concerns, specifically that of an oil scarce, climate changed earth. If humans are to the Anchorites, “a veined, scrawny, dribbling … bone clock, whose face betrays how very, very little time they have left” (2014, p. 501), then their corporeal wasting reflects that of the environment itself, whose ruination is a consequence of the exploitative practices of “soul-eating” capitalism.

Mitchell’s global novels imagine environmental destruction through deterritorialised and networked texts that gesture towards the innately hubristic nature of humankind, and the increasingly near-future timelines of climate change in the Anthropocene.[10] In *Ghostwritten* stories like Marco’s naturalise “commonsensical” approaches to reality based on capitalist forms of social organisation, which are confined to core rather than peripheral zones, *Cloud Atlas* elevates violent competition and greed as universal and ahistorical principles of social organisation, while *The Bone Clocks* imagines a near-future of anarchic civilisational decline. However, in the final chapter of *The Bone Clocks*, the Horologists, having formed a think tank called the Prescients, appear in a timely deus ex machina fashion to take Holly’s granddaughter and Rafiq to safety in Iceland. Atemporal Marinus admits that the Horologists have had to become “more interventionist politically” (p. 590), and they reappear in Zachry’s story in *Cloud Atlas* as the final beacon and protector of civilisation.

The "Prescients" replace *Ghostwritten*'s concern with causality and "pre-ghostwritten forces", and *Cloud Atlas*' recurrent tales of predacity by suggesting that Horologists, in prompting ameliorative human action, offer a counterweight to the carnivorous force of power as the structuring agent of history. Likewise, the transmission of resistive actions through storytelling or copies in *Cloud Atlas*, and the irreverent ending of *Ghostwritten* are the utopian seeds that reinforce the importance of acts of narration and resistance. In *The Bone Clocks*, "precognition" or prophetic visions are described as "a flicker of glimpses. It's points on a map, but it's never the whole map" (2014, p. 479), and Mitchell's speculative future imaginaries are complex "glimpses" into the anxieties and discourses that inform contemporary narratives of global ecological crisis.

Notes

1. I use the phrase extra-human natures rather than "non-human" natures in line with Jason W. Moore's use of the term to refer to the totality of viruses, animals, forests, soils, etc., that constitute bundled webs of human-nature relations.
2. In Zooey's narrative, a fellow sentient soul called "Arupadhatu" states that at least five and possibly more "non-corporeal sentient intelligence (sic)" (1999, p. 422) exist in the world, among them the Mongolian non-corpum of the fifth story. In *The Bone Clocks*, these "non-corpums" are redescribed as "atemporals", who often choose lives of isolation (2014, p. 462).
3. Karl Marx makes an equivalent observation in the *Grundrisse* when he scathingly notes that Malthus ignores the different relations and reproductive rates of historical-capitalism, transforming these into an "abstract numerical relation" (1939, p. 276) which "rests neither on natural nor on historical laws".
4. Specifically those that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s with books like Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968) and the Club of Rome report *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al. 1972), informing a growing awareness of human made environmental destruction and limits to earth's carrying capacity.
5. References to souls participating in a shifting cloud atlas abound, with Zachry, the narrator of the final story describing how "Souls cross the skies o' time, Abbess'd say, like clouds crossin' skies o' the world" (2004, p. 318), and "Souls cross ages like clouds cross skies, an' tho' a cloud's shape nor hue nor size don't stay the same it's still a cloud an' so is a soul" (p. 324). In the fourth narrative, Timothy Cavendish's lament

to youth concludes with a plaintive call for a "never-changing map of the ever-constant ineffable? To possess, as it were, an atlas of clouds" (p. 389).

6. Heather Hicks notes that *Cloud Atlas*' account of narrative transmission is "less about how individuals can become historical agents […] than about how literary genres provide us archetypes to resist the 'terror of history'" (2010, p. 13). Lynda Ng observes that cannibalism troubles progressive teleologies, an idea reinforced by the way each "one story-strand [is] consumed by and contained within the text" (2015, p. 118). See also Shoop and Ryan (2015, p. 93).
7. A tension exists between the trope of reincarnation and *Cloud Atlas*' account of an overpopulated world. The birthmark comet motif is a synecdoche for resistive action by exemplary figures marked with the tell-tale sign, in contrast to the non-reincarnation of an implied mass of consumers.
8. Nea So Copros stands for the "New East Asian (Sphere of) Co-Prosperity", used by the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II to consolidate Asian nations against US Empire building (Edwards 2011, p. 198). While the Korean section of the novel is frequently described as South Korean, the use of "Juche" for the corpocracy originates from North Korea.
9. Mitchell's seventh text *Slade House* (2015) is a useful auxiliary novella to *The Bone Clocks*. It follows predacious Anchorite twins Jonah and Norah Grayer, "soul vampires" (p. 195), who lure victims in nine-year cycles into their "orison", a house preserved since 1934, where they perform psychodecanting ceremonies, siphoning psychosoteric charge off "engifted" souls to ensure immortality.
10. See also Jason Moore's "Capitalocene" (2015) as a way of reinstating capitalism's extraordinary co-optation and exploitation of human and non-human life into discussions about the "Anthropocene".

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CHAPTER 5

Aesthetic Attitudes to Globalisation: Rana Dasgupta, Capitalism-in-Crisis, and Narrating the World

Part I: Introduction: World-Systemic Realism

Rana Dasgupta offers an important corrective to Salman Rushdie's disenchantment with postcolonial politics or exhausted post-dirigisme realism, and David Mitchell's hegemonic capitalist realism, by writing in a variety of forms, including a short-story cycle, a two-part novel, poetry and journalistic prose that critique capitalist's technics of oppression, aspiration, and inequity. *Tokyo Cancelled* (2005), a global short-story cycle shortlisted for the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, takes its structure of thirteen stories from an impromptu gathering of travellers stranded in an airport en route to Tokyo by record-breaking snowstorms and a global meeting of world leaders which triggers mass protests. A short-story *cycle* rather than collection of stories, the narrative is conjoined by its framing device and consistent use of folkloric tropes, like "once upon a time" opening sentences that without fail introduce key settings and characters. But the recurrence of extremely unusual events also provides a quixotic and surreal take on globalisation, including Oreo cookies as a magical device that transmogrifies a woman into a New York clothing store; a fecund plant erupting out of an ageing Moroccan executive in Paris; or a seabird bursting from the throat of a Bangladeshi sailor who summons his Ukrainian lover to rescue him from a freight ship in Marseille. Dasgupta's second text *Solo* (2009), a two-part novel set in Eastern Europe and New York,

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won the Commonwealth Writers Prize with Salman Rushdie's endorsement confirming "Rana Dasgupta as the most unexpected and original Indian writer of his generation".[1] The first half of the novel is narrated by centenarian Ulrich ("First Movement 'Life'") in late twentieth-century Sofia, whose fortunes as a failed and reclusive chemical engineer closely mirror Bulgaria's twentieth-century geopolitical upheavals. After Ulrich blinds himself with sulphuric acid leftover from chemistry experiments, he narrates the second half of the novel, or "Daydreams". Set in the new millennium, it consists of a trio of feisty characters Ulrich describes as his "children" who escape their circumstances in Eastern Europe by working for security companies, pirating music, smuggling drugs, and writing poetry. By leaving Georgia and Bulgaria, and mobilising forms of strategic adaptation to overcome the peripherality of their structurally disadvantaged states, these characters forego Ulrich's link between national and personal development and instead take the world as their horizon of possibility.

A central difference between Dasgupta's world-expansive imaginary and the other global texts examined thus far is his inclusion of marginal characters such as Bangladeshi sailors, New York taxi drivers, Buenos Aires film buffs and Georgian gangsters, and a dizzying array of global cities like Warsaw, Tokyo, Frankfurt, Tbilisi, Lagos, London, Shenzhen, and Istanbul. In interview, Dasgupta describes his interest in the "hypermodern" quality of life in emerging world cities, stating in 2012 that Delhi is a particularly apt site from which to apprehend global capitalism because "it's a kind of place where the surface of the earth has broken open, and one can see the precise churn of the twenty-first century in a very real way, in a way that one can wander around in the west for quite a long time without really encountering" (Colbert and Dasgupta). Since the fall of the Soviet Union, capitalism has made rapid inroads into previously closed off socialist regions, with India's post-dirigisme entry into the world market in 1991 occasioning incredible economic and social turmoil. But while an author like Rushdie treats the rapidity of India's modernisation as a corrosive social malaise that prompts representational crises, Dasgupta's main lines of enquiry are the new aesthetic forms necessary to elicit the magical, estranging, and global qualities of capitalism.

In interview, he describes *Solo* as the search for "new questions" and an "adequate language" (Crown and Dasgupta 2005) to depict the disorienting effects of Bulgaria's rapid geopolitical change, and *Tokyo Cancelled* as the attempt to assemble a multiplicity of stories that imbue abstract

socio-economic systems with feeling (Dasgupta 2006d, p. 17). While outside the scope of this chapter, Dasgupta's later prose work *Capital: A Portrait of Twenty-First Century Delhi* (2014) also urgently foregrounds the need for "more ideas, more words, more language" (2014, p. 39) to give expression to the accelerated pace of modernisation in Delhi, a city where the "raw stimulus" of modernisation strains limits of expression (Colbert and Dasgupta 2012). Unsurprisingly, given Dasgupta's concern with narrating global economic processes, a key trope of both *Tokyo Cancelled* and *Solo* is the flatness of their main characters. Dasgupta expresses his intent in *Tokyo Cancelled* to tell tales by "theme, not by character" (Pereira and Dasgupta 2005), and *Solo* is also driven by four main characters who represent post-Soviet thematic trends: for the first half of the narrative, Ulrich is an observer rather than participant in history, and the latter half follows three imagined offspring, Khatuna a brash, gangster moll who channels her rage into a series of Randian architectural projects; Boris, a brilliant musician and the "Pied Piper" (2009, p. 344) of post-industrial music; and Irakli, a sensitive poet suffering an artistic crisis after experiencing the alienations of post-Soviet modernisation and observing Boris's unbridled creativity.

The fragmented forms of both *Tokyo Cancelled* and *Solo* are also key to their production of peripheral viewpoints and global mapping, with *Tokyo*'s short-story cycle networking multiple locations to illuminate the "echoes between life in different locations" (Elborough and Dasgupta 2006, p. 2), and *Solo*'s bi-partite structure enabling an expansive account of both the trials of Bulgaria's twentieth-century history and the explosive potential of post-communist youths. Of particular interest is *Tokyo Cancelled*'s use of the story cycle or composite novel form, which, by its very nature, draws on the short story, a form long regarded as the ideal vehicle to narrate peripheral or excluded members of society (O'Connor 1963, p. 20). However, *Tokyo Cancelled* largely foregoes the dominant conventions of both the short story's expression of local voice and the short-story cycle as a contemporary way of touching upon domestic, local, or national conditions in narratives of migrancy and cultural conflict, as in Amy Tan's *Joy Luck Club* or Sandra Cisneros's *House on Mango Street* (Nagel 2001, p. 15). Lucy Evans, in her account of the Caribbean short story, argues that Nadine Gordimer's description of the form as a suitable mode for expressing modernity (2011, p. 13), because of its fragmentation, ambiguity, epiphany and brevity, and association with peripheral groups, collapses the sheer diversity of the form under the grouping of

"postcolonial" writing (p. 14). Missing from general accounts of the short story are an engagement with the historical conditions for its emergence and the specific literary and cultural traditions to which it refers.

This chapter expands on Evans's call for greater differentiation: while Dasgupta's works share with previous short-story forms an emphasis on fragmentation and peripherality to convey the discontinuities of global modernity, some of the text's closest formal and thematic predecessors are medieval cycles such as Boccaccio's *The Decameron* (1351) and Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (1475). Like *Tokyo Cancelled*, they are narrated by travellers who tell tales to pass the time in an overture to the oral origins of the form, and return to a central "transit" section—the inn or the airport lounge. In the case of Dasgupta, these stories are much stronger when considered together than apart, especially given their thematic consistency in excavating the weird and uncanny expressions of late capitalism, polygonal focus on multiple sites, and jarring shifts into various fable-like worlds, of fantastic tailors, insomniac billionaires, sentient dolls, and frozen youths. Dasgupta's networked stories exceed Romesh Gunesekera's summary of the short story as focusing on particular incidents, revelations, and operating as a "contained" world unto itself (2016, p. 8). However, Dasgupta admits that his repurposing of the medieval folkloric cycle appears "somewhat mutilated and flat" (2006d, p. 17), a consequence of the text's lack of characterisation and global mobility which strongly foregrounds the structural homologies or similarities between different figures and locations at the expense of character portrayals.

More expansively, Dasgupta's comparative imaginaries provide unique insights into the culture and "feeling of globalization" (Elborough and Dasgupta 2006, p. 2). This critical shift is mirrored in materialist world-literary critiques, which, as the editors of a recent collection note, "could not have been envisaged during the debates around the postcolonial that took place in the 1990s" (Bernard et al. 2015, p. 6). As mentioned in Chapter 2, recent examples of greater systemic and world-mapping tendencies include Jennifer Wenzel's account of planetary novels imagining the world "*from below*" with narrators situating their penury within a "broader, transnational context" (2014, p. 19), and the Warwick Research Collective (WReC 2015), who argue that the horizons of the literary unconscious are always those of global capitalism. Jed Esty and Colleen Lye's essay on "peripheral realisms" likewise moves beyond the language of postcolonial studies to stress the advantage of a world-systemic language of cores/peripheries/semi-peripheries for considering

"subordinated positions on different scales" (2012, p. 272), with texts narrated from or about peripheral regions providing a relational way into capitalist imaginaries.

Such Marxist re-evaluations of the limits of postcolonial literary studies, and the emergence of more expansive global critical frameworks, are crucial to this chapter's analysis of Dasgupta's representation of peripheral experiences and capitalist modernity. Central to this theory of literature and "capitalism-in-crisis" is a contemporary world-ecological revision of Lukács' account of economic crisis and the fragmentation of social life, and a reframing of Fredric Jameson's idea of "principled relativism" to produce a relational, world-systemic analysis based on regional differentiations of space. Notably for both Lukács and Jameson realism is the only literary mode capable of overcoming the alienation and fragmentation of social life, with a "new realism" (Jameson 2010, p. 236) accommodating aspects of modernism like fragmentation, alienation, and shock as symptoms of the unequal structural conditions through which classes, later modified by Jameson as peripheral regions, are integrated into the world-economy. This chapter builds upon Jameson's reformulation of Lukács to mobilise the notion of a "world-systemic realism", examining how Dasgupta's texts, in narrating peripheral regions and experiences, map global relations by seeing valences of subordination and crisis in various regions as instances of a single capitalist world-system. "World-systemic realism" refers here to world-literary methods of reading comparative viewpoints to uncover capitalism's global structural formation. This definition of realism is a necessarily elastic one, accommodating *Tokyo Cancelled*'s folkloric short-story cycle and *Solo*'s bipartite novel form. Despite these formal differences, both texts share a concern with peripheral viewpoints and moments of capitalism-in-crisis.

The first part of this chapter examines three stories from *Tokyo Cancelled*. Section one on "The Changeling" examines its use of residual and emergent literary forms, like the text's refunctionalisation of the medieval short-story cycle and references to the irruption of smallpox in Paris, alongside alternate conceptions of death, communal life, and storytelling to imagine a literary response to "epochal" crises of capitalism. The following sections examine two adjacent short stories, "The Store on Madison Avenue", set in New York, and "The Flyover", set in a marginal marketplace in Lagos. Taken together these stories perform Jameson's "situational consciousness" or how capitalist relations manifest differently according to one's specific structural relation to, and phenomenological

experience of, the world-system. The latter half of this chapter examines Dasgupta's second text, *Solo*, and how it maps the oppression of individual agency and collective notions of progress amidst Bulgaria and Georgia's twentieth-century history of geopolitical upheaval. The narrator Ulrich, although crushed by his decision to return to Bulgaria, achieves a weak form of self-realisation by imagining a trio of ambitious dream characters, who mobilise "realistic" strategies of survival by exploiting post-Soviet conditions of oligarchical capitalism, becoming in the process terrifying caricatures of the ruthless corporate executive.

Part II: Globalisation and Capitalism-in-Crisis in *Tokyo Cancelled*

"The Changeling" and SynTime

Tokyo Cancelled closes with a short essay by Rana Dasgupta where he summarises the text's method as a response to Walter Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller" which bemoans the loss of "value" (2006d, p. 13) of experience in a post-World War I Europe riven by the shock of modernity and the diminishment of communicability amidst the valorisation of forms like the bildungsroman (Benjamin 1936, pp. 83–84). The novel and the bildungsroman are, for Benjamin, a "symptom" (p. 87) of the decline of storytelling, by integrating individual subjectivities within social order (p. 88). Positioning his work alongside Benjamin's critique, Dasgupta argues for *Tokyo Cancelled*'s short-story cycle form as an "experiment in how storytelling might respond to this inconsequence of experience" (2006d, p. 16) by making meaning of narrative fragments, from graffiti to spam mail. The essay includes photographs of politicised graffiti with swastikas and manifestoes proclaiming "Neutrality! Anti-Nato!" (pp. 14–15), abandoned coin-operated telephones, and a badly wrought sketch of a woman's face that together, Dasgupta argues, offers a more adequate heuristic method for the contemporary moment. Extending this logic, *Tokyo Cancelled*'s short-story cycle form operates as the structural correlative to these fragments, with the cycle's embedded audience format foregrounding the necessity of collective storytelling in contrast to Benjamin's account of the private reading experience of the novel.

Such questions, of how fragmented fictions offer insights into modernity, are central to Jameson's account of literary form. In an early essay on Lukács, he describes how the extension of the artwork to connect "widely

disparate phenomena and facts" (Jameson 1971, p. 168) could dissipate "the illusion of inhumanity" of wider socio-historical conditions. But for Jameson, as for Benjamin, the novel is concerned with individual lived experience and is therefore insufficient for depicting the abstract "collective dimension" (p. 169) of vast systems and the conditions by which the "outside world remains stubbornly alienated". The major problem for art, according to Jameson and Lukács, is in overcoming the alienations produced by capitalist civilisation like specialised Taylor-era labour practices and the separation of public and private spheres (Jameson 1971, pp. 167–169). Dasgupta, aware of the abstract quality of vast multinational systems and their "never-ending geographies" (2006d, p. 13), argues that this exact gap between lived experience and the "giant forces of modernity" is what prompted him to mobilise a fragmented and folkloric narrative form that tells tales by "theme, not by character" (Pereira and Dasgupta 2005), and that attempts to imbue vast systems with meaning through a language expressive of a "time of magical transformations" contiguous with the extraordinary promises of globalisation.

"The Changeling" is the tenth story in *Tokyo Cancelled* and thematises the extreme epidemiological and financial conditions whereby collective and public forms of death and storytelling are repurposed. The story begins with changeling Bernard Dussoulier, who, once outed as a supernatural being by his wife, is thrown out of the couple's home and soon finds himself in the midst of a smallpox outbreak in Paris. Trapped in a quarantine zone, Bernard meets Fareed, a Moroccan advertising executive who is dying because of a mysterious, fecund flowering plant, and who finishes his life singing a final song of life and death. Bernard is tasked with finding Fareed the right "words" to help him die (2006c, pp. 266–267). He comes close with "SYNTIME" a word on a business card given to Bernard by a mysterious businessman, meaning both "An experience of time in which past and future moments exist simultaneously in the present" (p. 281), and "SYNTIME INC. Global business processes". Although the first meaning of "SYNTIME" seems suggestive of Bloch's account of the "simultaneity of the non-simultaneous", or the coexistence of older modes of production with multiple temporalities that exist simultaneously in the present, the latter meaning of SYNTIME as referring to "global business processes" suggests a capitalist version of time as an undifferentiated eternal present. However, Fareed's death challenges SYNTIME's anti-utopian and corporate connotations. During his thirteen-day protracted death (corresponding with the thirteen tales of the book),

Fareed sings a lengthy song on life and death that situates death as a collective experience at the midpoint of life: "*The death I die is not my own, nor does it belong to another: | For did I not start my death when I was born | And was my birth my own? | Or was it not?*" (p. 283).

Fareed's account of death in his elegy literalises the meaning of SynTime. His death is a halfway point, a fold in linear conceptions of time that denies capitalist narratives of longevity and youth by situating decay as the other half of life. Fareed's call for a collective death in the final line "*I bid you my Friend, my companion in life: | Come and die my death with me! | And I will die yours with you*" (p. 283) is actualised in his plant's incursion on Bernard's body, which roots the motile changeling in his host's body and fuses their spirits "Like two raindrops on a window" (p. 290), leading to Bernard's death. Significantly, Fareed gains a magnetic authority during his final two weeks, attracting fellow hotel residents and neighbours who transmit his lyrics posthumously. His public demise suggests an older, medieval version of death as described by Benjamin in the "Storyteller" in which he urges his readers to "think of the medieval pictures in which the deathbed has turned into a throne toward which the people press through the wide-open doors of the death house" (p. 93). Benjamin states that the private enclosure of death correlates with the decline of storytelling, with death's invisibility diminishing its role as the first legitimising moment of the "transmissible form" (p. 94) of one's biography and accrued wisdom, as "even the poorest wretch" gained a narrative authority while dying. Extending the comparison between "The Changeling" and Benjamin's account of medieval death, that Fareed's efflorescence of song occurs during a smallpox epidemic recalls Giovanni Boccaccio's fourteenth-century cycle *The Decameron*, set during the Black Death.[2] Likewise, "The Changeling"'s account of licentious displays of "violence and destruction as if defiant egos were competing with Death itself" (2006c, p. 274) is akin to medieval accounts of the fearlessness and disinhibition of plague-era populaces.

Unlike "The Changeling"'s medieval antecedents, however, versions of Fareed's song quickly become "viral", transmitting simultaneously and imperceptibly around the world, and appearing in New York, Milan, and Bulgaria despite police barricades. His dirge becomes part of society's post-crisis collective bricolage, with versions of it developing into "the anthems of that terrible moment" (p. 287), surviving in "second- or third-hand versions" (p. 288) including improvisational rap pieces, "highbrow poetry" (p. 287), graffiti, websites, poetry slams, and children's

games. Fareed's song also sparks a new genre of "'debate' songs" emerging from a rap titled "Devil's Advo Cut" with his poetry challenged by an otherworldly voice. Worried about the emergence of a "death cult" (p. 288) like Ernst Bloch's account of anticipatory forms of resistance in "non-simultaneous" cultural forms, US and Italian authorities try to contain the circulation of Fareed's poetry. That these rhymes elicit strong and excited reactions in global audiences through collective forms of expression suggests Benjamin's statement that memory and communal narratives together make their "peace with the power of death" (p. 97) by responding to a need for what is described in the tale as an intimate and excessive "outburst of creativity" (2006c, p. 288). The fragmented structure of *Tokyo Cancelled* and Fareed's poetry therefore aligns the text with a tradition of group storytelling and meaning-making that depicts the obverse of Benjamin's elegy for the lost "art of storytelling" (1936, p. 87), by demonstrating the importance of cohering fragmented, individual experiences of extreme crisis into a "more comprehensive whole" (Dasgupta 2006c, p. 287). However, while Dasgupta's use of medieval narrative forms helps network the "echoes" (Elborough and Dasgupta 2006, p. 2) of globalisation in different locales, it is not the same as taking on Chaucerian political horizons, or "pre-lapsarian" feudal consciousnesses, despite the suggestive continuity between the text's critique of capitalism and use of archaic forms. In interview, Dasgupta admits that his deployment and reformulation of the medieval short-story cycle inadequately gestures to the "vast reality" of capitalist globalisation (Elborough and Dasgupta 2006, p. 8), but can open up an "unspeakable" space of expression.[3]

SynTime is therefore a signifier for the coexistence of residual, dominant, and emergent narrative and political trends that together are "effective element[s] of the present" (Williams 1977, p. 122). The turn to a medieval concept of public death literalises Raymond Williams's account of the residual as an "alternative or even oppositional" form to dominant culture, or pre-capitalist remnants of resistive movements which have yet to be "'sublated' by capitalism" (Bloch 1977, p. 31). Likewise, the untimely reappearance of smallpox signifies the irruption of repressed and ancient life forms in terms that resonate with Jason Moore's account of the incipient epidemiological fissures that multiplied during the "late-feudal" plague era and are re-emerging in the contemporary moment of super-weeds and viral pandemics (Lilley and Moore 2011, p. 142). Significantly, changes in accumulation cycles are often linked to epidemiological

disasters, with David Harvey comparing the political and economic turmoil of Europe in the 1840s and 1850s to the psychosomatic emergence of "yuppie flu" in 1980s New York (1989, pp. 287, 306), with periods of intense time-space compression exaggerating pre-existing social tensions and ailments. That "The Changeling" is set in Paris, a city long equated with speculative bubbles and revolt, is important given this link between viral irruptions, residual resistive movements, and signal crises of the world-economy. Notably, multiple unseen characters conspiratorially describe smallpox as a ploy designed to boost a waning funeral industry, and a wild epidemic set loose from its "underground" sewage confines by a mysterious bomb at the Bastille (2006c, p. 285), in a pointed reference to the French Revolution.

Paris gained its reputation as the cultural and economic "Capital of the Nineteenth Century" (Benjamin 1999, p. 3), after Georges-Eugène Haussmann's ambitious scheme of architectural modernisation in the 1850s, following a period of mass European protests by working classes seeking to overthrow remnants of feudal and monarchical systems. Having quelled the protests and elected a Napoleonic forebear, Paris's modernisation was funded by a "rash of speculation" (Benjamin 1999, p. 12), erasing the medieval city and disaggregating working-class areas into surrounding suburbs. Haussmann's Paris, with its modern, wide boulevards, arcades, and synthetic gas lighting, was designed to suppress dissent and support an emergent consumer culture. His legacy is central to the exercise of power and enclosure in "The Changeling", with Haussmann's clear rational mapping unwittingly allowing for the efficient barricading of the city's major boulevards into quarantine zones: "The increasingly dense fractal patterns that appeared on the wall-sized map of Paris looked precise and beautiful. 'Thank God for Haussmann,' someone said" (2006c, p. 274).

Aside from space, the narrative further configures Paris as a site for the reproduction of finance capital through Bernard who works an investment banker for Goldman Sachs, in actuality one of the world's leading investment firms. His role as a financier, or enabler of ephemeral capital, is complemented by his lack of physicality as a changeling, or non-bodied soul who detaches from his human host every fifty years. This trope, of high-level executives and financiers as vampiric capitalist demons, is not new, and while the existence of changelings in the narrative is common knowledge, they are regarded with deep suspicion once they are ousted as successful top-level executives and politicians. In debates on their legal

status, politicians mobilise a disused French Republican motto to state that "neither liberty, equality, nor fraternity could be extended to creatures that had no long-term loyalty to the nation or even to the species" (p. 259). Changelings are therefore treated with contempt because they are interpreted as symbols of a disloyal and elite global financier class, drawn to powerful political-economic positions and only fleetingly present in human form.

As mentioned, changelings must leave their human bodies before their fiftieth birthday or risk being unable to detach themselves from their hosts, in a disembodied articulation of finance capitalism's detachment from material conditions of production. Indeed, their fifty-year lifespans are equivalent to the time spans of Kondratieff waves of capitalist expansion and recession. Fernand Braudel describes Kondratieff cycles as two halves constituted by the "favourable conjuncture" (Braudel 1992, p. 80) of capitalist prosperity, or a minor M-C cycle of economic growth, followed by the "downward trend" of economic decline (M′ cycle), with three Kondratieff cycles constituting Giovanni Arrighi's long wave of economic hegemony (see also Wallerstein 2004, pp. 31, 95). Bernard's human timeframes take on the same longevity and structure as Kondratieff economic cycles, as an upward swing of capitalist prosperity and physical dynamism followed by economic exhaustion and corporeal decay. Jameson similarly uses the language of vitality and weariness to describe finance capital as the "highest and last stage of every moment of capital" (1997, p. 142). Exhausting its revenue streams, capital "seeks to die and be reborn in some 'higher' incarnation [...] in which it is fated to live through again the three fundamental stages of its implantation, its productive development, and its financial or speculative final stage" (pp. 142–143). Bernard's life is likewise defined by implantation, growth, and death, as changelings figure the shorter fifty-year Kondratieff cycles that compose a longue durée. That Bernard appears in the twenty-first century, a moment world-systems theorist Giovanni Arrighi describes as the "autumnal" turbulent period of American geopolitical decline (2005, p. 86), further aligns the tale with the turmoil and financial speculation of the mid-nineteenth-century "late capitalism" of Haussmann-era Paris.

However, changelings, unlike capital, do perish in the story and at the close of the narrative Fareed's flowering plant fuses his body and spirit to Bernard's, leaving the changeling unable to detach his soul: "He was tugging against something that he was attached to indivisibly, a dead weight on his spirit that prevented him from finding the strength to

return" (2006c, p. 290). At the moment of death and SynTime, the qualities that Bernard shares with corporate capitalism, including his spectral mobility and concern with the present, are crushed by the monstrous plant's "earthing" or rematerialising effect. Fareed's irruption of fecund nature halts Bernard's attempt to unmoor himself from human form, or in allegorical terms his transformation into spectral capital. Fareed's flowering corporeality and intense longing to die a public, communal death are thus an obstacle to devolved corporate capitalism, and his commitment to oral storytelling reawakens the political revenants of 1840s and feudal-era protests, foregrounding how fragmented literary forms cohere experience during moments of extreme world-ecological change. "The Changeling"'s expression of residual and emergent temporalities thus reworks medieval storytelling tropes to depict the emergence of global ecological fissures, among them viruses and fecund plants, that disrupt capital accumulation.

Principled Relativism: "The Store on Madison Avenue" and Commodity Fetishism

In the introduction, I define "world-systemic realism" as a mode that uncovers the alienating effects of commodification during moments of crisis and attends to core-peripheral apprehensions of capitalism. In the following section, I examine two adjacent texts in *Tokyo Cancelled*, the fifth story, "The Store on Madison Avenue", and the sixth story, "The Flyover", and how they mobilise varied responses to the real subsumption or commodification of socio-ecological relations in terms that actualise Jameson's "situational consciousness" and the "principled relativism" of class and region that inflect one's relation to totality.

In "The Store on Madison Avenue", taxi driver Pavel is the illegitimate child of Robert De Niro and a young Chinese laundry worker. Abandoned on a freight truck, Pavel is taken in by Polish handlers at New York's John F. Kennedy airport, returning *Tokyo Cancelled* to its initial staging in an airport. Continuing the text's emphasis on transit, Pavel becomes a taxi driver, imagining them in his naïveté to "truly know the world" (Dasgupta 2006c, p. 135) and inadvertently echoing his father's role in the 1976 movie *Taxi Driver*. However, unlike film character Travis Bickle, Pavel's night-time drives through New York are frictionless, peaceful experiences lit by the brilliant glow from aspirational advertisements: "*Transform your dreams into gold!* and *It's time to make*

a change!" (p. 136). Pavel's unsurpassably efficient and smooth drives through New York City and his miraculous strength are irrepressible signatures of his obscured paternity, as De Niro's celebrity becomes a tangible property through which Pavel makes real the imaginary qualities of fantastic strength and ease emitted in movies. Likewise, Pavel's girlfriend Isabella is the unknown daughter of Isabella Rossellini and Martin Scorsese. She appears to Pavel as a mermaid entertainer at an aquarium, where beads of air look "like Tiffany silver" (p. 136), and at home, Isabella realises her parentage by surrounding herself with the accoutrements of global branding.

Marx writes that the logic of the commodity form is based on fetishism, with social relations between producers becoming an exchange relation between things. Social relations are reified and substituted for a claim to "supra-sensible or social" (1990, p. 165) being, with the commodity's exchange value a "socio-natural" property of the commodity itself. However, in "Store on Madison Avenue", the production of celebrity as a socio-natural property occurs through an even lengthier chain of commodification and abstraction than what occurs in the marketplace, or in Marx's statement that exchange value "is the mode of expression, the 'form of appearance', of a content distinguishable from it" (p. 127). These qualities can be defined more precisely through Guy Debord's "society of the spectacle" with the spectacle the other side of money and money the universal mediating term for all commodities, meaning that the spectacle is the "general abstract equivalent of all commodities" and "the money which one only looks at" (1967, par. 49). The proliferation of celebrity-based media and advertisements lengthens the chain of reification through which use-value is completely substituted for "the totality of abstract representation" (par. 49), or mediated exchange value until the "world one sees is its world" (par. 42). In "Store on Madison Avenue", the world one sees is literally the world of the spectacle: Pavel and Isabella are, as the children of celebrities, imbued with innate qualities of celebrity-dom, giving them unnatural powers of good fortune, strength, and beauty.

Celebrity thus becomes a reified socio-natural quality transmitted through consanguinity that takes on commodity fetishism's conversion of "things into persons" and "persons into things" (Marx 1990, p. 209). This is a symptom of the "real 'subsumption of labour under capital'" (Mandel 1990, p. 944) and in this case, the subsumption of space and

nature under capital, an aspect briefly realised and demystified in the story's most extreme depiction of commodification—Isabella's transmogrification into a store on Madison Avenue by a batch of magical cookies. The Oreo cookies are a one-off prize for the brand's anniversary and come with detailed instructions from the "wizards" at Nabisco Corporation (2006c, p. 141). Crushing one cookie into a pint of milk and pouring the mixture over Isabella, Pavel watches her violent yet unnoticed transformation into a store on Madison Avenue, as her body becomes "metastasized" (p. 142) into steel, concrete, and glass. The store is named simply *Isabella* and becomes a "deluxe clothes boutique" (p. 143) complete with delicate "gossamer dresses", and a "Primordial Chic" (p. 144) sensibility. In place of Isabella's organs, the shop comes complete with intricate and elaborate interior fittings such as mannequins, display tables made out of frosted glass, and a rotating cable system moving clothing in a "stately overhead dance" (p. 143), with the store peopled by alien attendants "who all seemed, with their elongated limbs and their weightless gait, to belong to some new subphylum of humanity". Isabella's colossal transformation from fully formed woman into a huge, outfitted clothing store is an extreme and partial literalisation of the "social metabolism" (Marx 1990, p. 198) of commodity capitalism, as she subsumes her human form and metamorphoses into urban space.

Isabella is a roaring success on its first day and occasional transmogrifications make the couple very wealthy. However, the astonishing and infrequent transformation of a section of Madison Avenue into a clothing store attracts the wrath of Chu Yu Tang, the city's most powerful real estate agent. Chu is angered at the sudden malleability of land, defining his business according to the French translation of real estate as "*immobilier*" (2006c, p. 153) or fixed property—a quality now disturbed by the volatility of city space. Land and buildings are forms of fixed capital, and in contrast to the circulation of fluid capital, fixed capital gives up its value relatively slowly. The magical appearance of a new temporary store on Madison Avenue is, on a practical note, a threat to Chu's space-power and the extraction of rent, and more dramatically challenges the basis of real estate as the management and control of "immobile" assets, in a pointed satirisation of the US's then ballooning subprime mortgage market. Chu is angered precisely because of this astonishing disruption of the socio-ecological basis for the accumulation of value, as the magical cookies disrupt how capitalist laws of value produce "time as linear, space as flat, and nature as external" (Moore 2014, p. 286). One of the major

means of defining fixed capital in contrast to fluid capital is that a "part of its value always remains fixed in it as long as it continues to function" (Marx 1992, p. 238), and the shock of the tale's urban transformation is that it greatly accelerates the timeframes through which fixed capital becomes fluid capital by unmooring the "fixity" of fixed capital.

It is only when Pavel flees the hyper-commodified city and lives for a time in a forest off the nearby I-95 motorway (an interstate highway that also figures in middle story "Speedbump") that he gains the ability to slow down, reify, and manipulate the world-as-spectacle. Pavel is plagued by visions of rapidly "writhing images of people and places and things" (2006c, p. 152) portraying the libidinal sensuality of mass media as "glistening images of the passions of the world". Pavel's exile removes him from the society of the spectacle and allows him to master the world as a set of dead images and libidinal desires, of "frozen moments, dead images that had been accelerated just beyond the speed of perception" (p. 152). His filmic ability to reduce the world to its parts is the ability to examine the expression of the world through subjective, socially mediated processes or simulacra. This is akin to what Margaret Cohen describes in Benjamin's later work as the "difference between mystifying and critical (illuminating) phantasmagorias" (1989, p. 90), and what I earlier described as the goal of world-systemic realism to uncover the "remoter factors" structuring everyday life, or reification's substitution of social relations by relations between things. Pavel achieves a penetrating critical gaze, parsing the world as a series of images, a symptom of the "second-degree abstraction" of financial capital (Jameson 2015, p. 116), through which he rejects the space-time compression of neoliberalism and apprehends the structural formation of the world-as-spectacle. His exile in the woodlands bequeaths him with Godlike powers of transubstantiation, and while under attack from Chu's daughters, Pavel understands the "secrets and illusions of the physical world" (Dasgupta 2006c, p. 155). Turning his body into a rock to withstand his attackers, Pavel rematerialises the world by transforming his attackers into their own concrete prison cells.

"The Flyover" and Market Relations

"The Store on Madison Avenue" depicts commodity fetishism as a reified category that can be spatialised and manipulated in extraordinary ways. In contrast, the main character of Marlboro "The Flyover: The Sixth Story",

the tale immediately following "The Store on Madison Avenue", neither overcomes his situation nor achieves agency over the well of aspirational narratives from which he draws hope. Marlboro, a young, unemployed hustler who is known for his "Reputation" (p. 158), is pressed into the service of local criminals, but falls foul of his associates when an unexpected police raid on a market is regarded as a "personal attack" (2006c, p. 163). As repayment Marlboro is dispatched to kill the local Commissioner who is later revealed to be his father. Following the murder, Marlboro creeps into the former marketplace, now surrounded by a three-metre-high wall, as it is turned into "an empty fortress with holes for cars" (p. 163), after being stripped of his investment in consumerist notions of progress and affluence. In contrast, Pavel and Isabella conclude their story having achieved a normative, bourgeois life, with Isabella opening a successful clothing store and Pavel returning to his job as a taxi driver. A key difference between "The Flyover" and the "Store on Madison Avenue" is this situational materialism of class and region through which Marlboro is excluded from the bourgeois conditions and fairy-tale spectacle of commodity capitalism in New York.

Marlboro's trouble starts once he is approached by Mr. Bundu, a criminal associate of the powerful Kinglord Bombata, who entices Marlboro to work for him in a speech valorising the complexity and intellectual challenges of the flyover markets near Balogun, described as an unimaginable complex network of vying interests, business deals, corrupt influences, counterfeit goods, and ethnic tensions that map the "whole universe" (p. 159). Manthia Diawara describes the West African market's cornucopia of goods and people in similar terms to Mr. Bundu as an extreme order of inclusion, "Visit the market and see the world" (1998, p. 122), providing the "right to consume" (p. 120) for those whom Structural Adjustment Programs exclude from consumption. However, in "The Flyover", markets are also sites for the exploitation of people. In Bundu's speech traders, transport links, prostitutes, foreign companies, and the police are "owned" by competing criminal gangs. For Bundu, the "whole universe" of the market is "a pyramid of mercury" (Dasgupta 2006c, p. 159) of shifting criminal interests and commodities that demands domination and control over even the most insignificant market spaces. Marlboro's role is to help Kinglord Bombata squeeze ten per cent from forgotten, marginal market sites, indicating his lowly position at the bottom of a vicious chain of exploitation. For Mike Davis, predacious relations emerge in overcrowded slums populated by a mass "informal proletariat" (2004,

p. 24) who compete like Marlboro in brutal conditions for dwindling resources, work, and proximity to powerful contacts. Lagos, where this story is set, has experienced some of the worst unplanned urban growth in the world from “300,000 in 1950 to 10 million today” (Davis, p. 7), with the citification of smaller Nigerian towns producing “probably the biggest continuous footprint of urban poverty on earth” (p. 15) “from Abidjan to Ibadan”. These conditions shape Marlboro’s fate: unloved by his father, abandoned by his mother, and living next to a screaming highway, he is a victim of the micro-politics of slum exploitation.

Despite what Keith Hart describes as new forms of patronage in migrant slum communities in places like Accra, Ghana, that produce an “egalitarian brotherhood of floating young men anchored in the patronage of a few resident big men” (1990, p. 189), Marlboro only briefly receives money from Bundu and his relationship to the criminal is decidedly unequal. These themes—of the exploitation of the poor by the wealthy—are repeated in various forms and contexts throughout *Tokyo Cancelled*. In the first story, Prince Ibrahim commissions a luxurious robe from a talented tailor in a remote Indian village who is told to spare no expense in making the garment, but the Prince fails to recognise the tailor when he arrives in the city without a purchase order and the tailor is financially ruined; in “The Frankfurt Mapmaker”, a young woman called Deniz is smuggled from her remote Turkish home to Frankfurt only to become mad after witnessing the gruesome aftermath of organ harvesting; in the ninth story, Riad, a Bangladeshi sailor, is abandoned on a freight ship because of unpaid port fees; and in the final story, a couple are physically exhausted and unable to digest food in a surreal allegory for the debilitating impact of Argentina’s financial collapse on the country’s youth.

However, Marlboro initially expresses self-confidence about his future. Named after a popular brand of cigarettes, he self-assuredly states that those with a “fluorescent light” (Dasgupta 2006c, p. 157) of good social standing can magnetically attract wealth and power, a position validated by Marlboro’s commanding role in his local neighbourhood as a man of “Authority” (p. 158) and “Reputation” for his advice on improving one’s luck. His evenings are full of visitors bringing him “ginger juice or measures of whisky in return for advice on how they could improve their luck in business or love”. Marlboro’s reputation brings him to the attention of Mr. Bundu, eventually leading to his downfall, but his initial success is rooted in the libidinal attraction of his name rather than any outward display of ingenuity or effort, or indeed control over the magnetic “fluorescent light” of his fortune. Moreover, that Marlboro explains his

luck through metaphors of energy and attraction corresponds his belief in accruing wealth out of nothing as a spectral figuration of Nigeria's petro-economy, thus obliquely aligning Marlboro's dreams with the narratives of prosperity surrounding Nigeria's new found wealth.

But while the enigmatic figure controlling Balogun market is named "Kinglord" to doubly affirm his power and status, Marlboro lacks control over the source of his "Authority" and is eventually a victim of neoliberal forms of exclusion from stable waged labour in ways that further his crisis of masculinity. Abandoned by his mother, Marlboro's companion is an imaginary female spectre called Asabi who takes on a dual maternal and sensual role, and affirms that Marlboro will achieve a plenitudinous future (pp. 160–161). Later Asabi guides Marlboro to the room in the Commissioner's house containing photographs of his mother and evidence of his patrilineage, thus confirming his belated and dreadful realisation that Bundu had engineered his patricide and erased the networks which would have enabled Marlboro to realise the beneficence of his name. At the tale's end, Marlboro climbs into a new enclosure surrounding his former marketplace, literally walling off his life to understand how different or not "all the apparently separate players in this game actually were" (p. 167).

Marlboro's exclusion from the second-degree commodity capitalism Pavel comes to master in New York is an expression of how the immiserating conditions that enable capital accumulation are displaced geographically and psychically from the sensorium of core regions. While Dasgupta describes *Tokyo Cancelled* as narrating "the dream of a self of infinite possibility" and "the perpetual promises of instant transformation delivered by consumerist whisperers" (Crown and Dasgupta 2005), elsewhere he spatialises this as a proximity to survival: "Living in Europe at the present time, you usually don't confront those things so closely. You are able to export such things to the far reaches of your mental globe – however falsely – and to create a secure division between yourself and those who need to survive" (Elborough and Dasgupta 2006, pp. 6–7). However, that "The Flyover" is far less thickly imagined than "Madison", being only eleven pages long in contrast to "Madison"'s twenty-three, bespeaks the unevenness of *Tokyo*'s stories and the occasional flatness of its prose, with Marlboro's narrative bordering on an Afro-pessimistic portrayal of curtailed future imaginaries.

As mentioned, *Tokyo Cancelled* is more successful when considered as an interrelated story cycle rather than as a collection of essays. The

tale immediately following "The Flyover", "The Speedbump", is a two-and-a-half-page narrative allegorising the decline of the American automobile industry as a speedbump in Detroit that causes the protagonist's son Matt to die in a fatal motorbike accident. Personal disaster acts as the "speedbump" and middle narrative of the entire text and as a metonym for Detroit's "crashed" economy. The adjacency of "Flyover" to "Speedbump" forces a comparison between the decades-long overcrowding and misemployment of Lagos's youth, despite Nigeria's petro-economy, against the slow decline of America's car industries. These stories are two halves of a world-systemic whole, intimating the complex causal links knitting America's post-imperial decline and Nigeria's advancement in the world-economy.

The "Flyover"'s literary influences also coordinate the tale's registration of wider world-economic shifts. Repeated references to "flyover" roads and the spaces between are references to J. G. Ballard's novel *Concrete Island* (1974), about architect Robert Maitland who crashes his Jaguar into a forgotten traffic island next to a London motorway. The island is overlaid with remnants of British imperial history including an air raid shelter from World War II, the ruins of Edwardian and Victorian houses, and a cinema (2014, p. 53). Marlboro's tale concludes where Ballard's begins, suggesting that narratives of urban decay and alienation may find fecund growth in booming Lagos. But instead of layers of imperial past Marlboro finds decayed vegetables and broken "audio cassettes" (Dasgupta 2006c, p. 167), and in contrast to Maitland's entry into the flyover in a luxury car, Marlboro's space is due to become a garage for wealthy car owners. The differences between *Concrete Island* and "The Flyover" exemplify the structural disadvantages of core-peripheral relations conditioning Marlboro's fate. If Ballard's flyover is a site for the projection of Maitland's imaginary, then Marlboro's tale of rise and fall is mirrored in the flyover's transition from booming marketplace to a site riddled with detritus, rezoned for imminent luxury developments from which Marlboro is excluded.

Dirk Wiemann rightly states that "sites of transit" (2013, p. 163) in *Tokyo Cancelled* figure the "supermodern condition of cutting-edge global mobility" of spaces of circulation that interlink the world. *Tokyo Cancelled*'s repeated references to global infrastructures, from the airport of the opening sequence to Marlboro's flyovers, reflect the world-systemic scope of the text, which rapidly juxtaposes its stories by shifting location

from London to Delhi, Frankfurt to New York, Lagos to Detroit. However, *Tokyo* also immanently represents narrative as another global infrastructure that networks disparate but structurally homologous experiences of global crises by depicting personal moments of revelation against a backdrop of roads, flyovers, and speedbumps. Paraphrasing Lukács, the novel is "an instrument of composition" (1971, p. 71), and in *Tokyo Cancelled*, global relations can only be represented in abstract terms like infrastructural metaphors that give form to complex crises. Significantly that the text opens with a destructive snowstorm which shuts down air travel in the entire "hemisphere" amidst a city seething with protest links ecological crises with socio-political discontent from the outset by disrupting global circulations and prefiguring epochal transformations of the world-ecology.

Part III: *Solo* and Surviving Millennial Capitalism

Post-revolutionary Youths and the Antidevelopmental Novel

While deploying different formal structures—the short-story cycle and bipartite novel—both *Tokyo Cancelled* and Rana Dasgupta's second text *Solo* (2009) are concerned with formal experimentation as a way into narrating the unreal promises of capitalism and with fragmented story-worlds as a way of cohering narratives of globalisation at key moments of social transformation in a Lukácsian dialectic of dissolution and totality. While *Tokyo Cancelled*'s mode is more allegorical, treating characters as flattened vehicles for its fables of modernity, *Solo* uses a dream-form to offer a longue durée history of Bulgaria's rapid regime change and Eastern Europe's recent shocking entry into the world-system.

Solo is a bipartite novel, with the first half depicting Bulgaria's tumultuous twentieth-century history through the life of Ulrich, a centenarian and failed chemist who studies in Berlin in the 1920s, and survives his estrangement from his wife and child amidst the rise and fall of Bulgaria's complicated history of fascism, Stalinist reforms, USSR-oriented communism, and entry into the world-economy. Ulrich finds these revolutions and revisions of history intensely alienating and as though he is carrying a "shredded inheritance" (Dasgupta 2009, p. 9) which he struggles to cohere into a meaningful narrative. This leads him to narrate the second half of the novel "Daydreams" from his derelict apartment in Sofia, imagining what might have happened if he had had children ready to

participate in the new millennium. These millennial dream "children" are ambitious, courageous, and opportunistic and successfully navigate the post-Soviet rise of gangster oligarchs. They include Khatuna, an architect of secure buildings and the former lover of a dangerous Georgian gangster, her delicate poet brother Irakli, and successful Bulgarian violinist and drug smuggler Boris.

An important bridging text conjoining *Solo*'s two halves is Rana Dasgupta's short essay travelogue on Georgia (2005), where he observes the impact of its entry into the world-economy after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. During this time, a lack of governance throughout the former Union was filled by a combination of previous party apparatchiks, "comprador intelligentsia (sic)" (Szelenyi qtd. Derluguian 2001, p. 21), "black marketeers and outright gangsters" who, through the strategy of "predatory privatization" (Derluguian 2001, p. 21) or "*prikhvatizatsia*", jostled to gain control of public assets. After a frenzied period of economic liberalisation, a cabal of "celebrity post-communist tycoons" emerged who consolidated their wealth through land grabs, drug smuggling, human trafficking, real estate, and oil, leading to the uniquely corrupt and hubristic quality of life in Tbilisi. There are, Dasgupta observes, "an absurdly high number of casinos in Tbilisi" (2005), empty clothing stores and restaurants laundering money, and a concordance between brash politicians and criminals who are "now toughened for the era of gangsterism, and updated with the hysterically festive style of the hyper rich living amid economic apocalypse".

Dasgupta's essay on Georgia is a valuable supplementary text for reading the Bulgarian sections of *Solo* because it reaffirms the ongoing legacy of disastrous post-Soviet capitalism today. Unlike Georgia, Bulgaria—where the bulk of *Solo* is set—was not officially part of the Soviet Union, but it was an allied state behind the Iron Curtain that depended upon the Union for trade and colluded with it in military, economic, and political matters. Signalling continuities between the essay and *Solo*, several real figures from the travelogue reappear as fictionalised characters: Vakhtang Maisaia from Georgia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, whom Dasgupta interviews in "Thereafters", reappears as the cousin of Kakha Sabadze, Khatuna's ill-fated gangster husband; in *Solo*, Kakha is a former USSR footballer, has a famous model for a daughter, and in the bloody anarchy of the post-Soviet era becomes a politician, football magnate, and tycoon, until he is assassinated by rival factions. Kakha is modelled on real-life Bulgarian wrestler, businessman, and oligarchic Ilia Pavlov, who

used state money to fund takeovers of nationally owned steel companies.[4] While Khatuna is a stereotypically ruthless and glamorous gangster moll, her trajectory follows that of an unnamed young woman who appears at the end of Dasgupta's travelogue. Having lost her well-paid job in the Georgian government, she is recruited by an "American construction company" (2005) working in Baghdad, just as Khatuna's violent mafia experience makes her uniquely well qualified to work for post-9/11 security firms in New York and Baghdad in *Solo*.

Solo is largely concerned then with the strategies and ethical compromises required to survive post-Soviet collapse amidst its shock integration into global capitalism. In actuality, many struggled to survive economic liberalisation and the end of the Soviet Union, "hustling to supplement precarious household incomes with allotment agriculture and petty trade" (Derluguian 2001, p. 22), with reports emerging in Russia of middle classes selling "personal belongings from card tables on the streets—desperate acts that the Chicago School economists praised as 'entrepreneurial,' proof that a capitalist renaissance was indeed under way" (Klein 2008, p. 225). Ulrich's dream children mobilise such "entrepreneurial" brio through dubious careers in security companies and drug smuggling because they wish to escape the penury of post-Soviet regions. Radical anthropologists Jean and John Comaroff describe this as a strategic form of adaptation among post-revolutionary adolescent youths. Excluded from wage labour, disadvantaged by declines in industry, stable work, and the welfare state, they exploit the "incivilities, illegalities, and importunities" (2000, p. 308) of global capitalism by becoming impatient and "precocious entrepreneurs". Forms of exclusion generate cunning methods of adaptation, and the emergence of a healthy "counternation: [...] with its own twilight economies, its own spaces of production and recreation, its own modalities of politics with which to address the economic and political conditions that determine its plight" (p. 308). This chapter examines *Solo*'s account of post-revolutionary youth and the pressures of pragmatic or "realist" strategies of adaptation and survival as Boris, Khatuna, and Irakli circumvent the restrictions of the nation-state to cathect a parallel politics of consumption and governance.

Earlier, I defined this chapter's use of realism as encoding a Jamesonian critique of commodity capitalism on a world-mapping scale, or "principled relativism" that maps geographically diverse instances of oppression. *Solo*'s account of the desires of post-revolutionary youths to overcome

structural disadvantages visited on Soviet states subverts the bildungsroman by depicting how characters like Khatuna perpetuate some of the worst excesses of corporate-capitalist disciplinary technologies. Arguably, this produces a narrative akin to what Jed Esty describes as the "antidevelopmental" tendencies of early twentieth-century modernist novels that through "stunted youth plots" (2009, p. 371) delink personal development from successful national narratives and have as their horizon the "open, multinational frontier of global capitalism". Although *Solo* is concerned with post-Soviet rather than colonised regions, it deploys a version of Esty's "stunted youth" plot in characters who cast-off dire national conditions by becoming subversive examples of transnational entrepreneurs.[5] As Neil Lazarus notes, the deepening erosion of "social provisions and benefits" (2012, p. 121) in post-communist areas under the guise of capitalist modernisation and free trade necessitates an "anti-imperialist or anti-capitalist critique" to illuminate the dreadful conditions produced by capitalist reforms. *Solo* is a "world-systemic realist" text insofar as it narrates the questionable and ruthless strategies its characters use to overcome their exclusion from capitalism.

Thus, a central difference between *Tokyo Cancelled* and *Solo* is that while *Tokyo* expresses the magical and extraordinary possibilities of globalisation, *Solo* focuses on the failed hopes of those who accommodate history, or a "realist" apprehension of the improvisational ethos and strategies by which post-revolutionary youths struggle to survive in an era of great political-economic change, while deploying a "world-historical" narrative that exceeds any one nation-state and stages the rise and fall of imperialist, capitalist and communist systems (Deckard 2016, pp. 60–61). *Solo* deploys a narrative of "adaptation" because of a constellation of crises, the chief among them being the legacy of regime change in the 1990s. But the opportunities for capital accumulation, regionally and globally, available due to the Soviet Union's collapse were short-lived. *Solo*'s representation of Boris's wilful dissemination of music and Khatuna's career as a securities consultant illustrate the deepening of crises of accumulation in that capitalism lacks control over new technologies of cultural reproduction and necessitates the rise of privatised security forces to implement the will of corporations and to take over from dissipating state structures in a symptom of emerging geopolitical instability.[6]

Solo's episteme is thus framed by its concern with wider socio-historical conditions that stymie collective aspirations, and its aesthetic method is centrally concerned with the inadequacy of language and art to express

reality following the rapid onset of economic modernisation. The first half of this section examines how this leads to Irakli's jagged modernist poetry about the negative impacts of standardising global processes, and the second half focuses on how Boris and Khatuna seek to circumnavigate and exploit the technics of globalisation. Boris, a successful Bulgarian violinist from a remote town, evades the strictures of contractual obligations and breaks his record contract by prolifically making music that he disseminates for free online. Khatuna, Irakli's sister and the former wife of an assassinated Georgian gangster, uses her expertise in armaments and security technologies to rapidly advance in a New York-based security firm by building the futuristic infrastructures of global coercion. Both see the nation-state as a negative constraint that necessitates alternate forms of acumen and adaptation in a "realist" strategy borne of post-Soviet survival.

Aesthetic Attitudes to Globalisation

Irakli is the only one of Ulrich's Georgian "children" who produces narrative art in response to his environment. His creative method is described in pre-sensory and nearly pre-historical terms as visions that appear to him "like memories of the womb return sometimes before sleep. Under their influence, he feels his hands as big as planets in the absolute night, and hears the postponed echo of ancient sea monsters" (2009, p. 294). His poetry is correspondingly highly associative and pre-cognised, with full comprehension just out of reach. Dasgupta describes Ulrich as a contemporary prophet, stating that the text is concerned with the "search for an adequate language" (Crown and Dasgupta 2005) to describe the disjunctive personal experience of living during a time of great national and global change, and similarly, Irakli exists at an oblique angle to the world he lives in. A child when the Soviet Union collapses, Irakli seeks out fellow poets who search for a "truer place" (2009, p. 219) and a unique language to express their dissatisfaction with reality, and he pays little attention to food or clothing, harbouring "an unhappiness about reality" only poetry can capture. Irakli's poetry is extremely fragmented and lacks arguably "poetry", but his work is a counterpart to Ulrich's frequent use of lists by confirming the necessity of broken and cumulative forms to narrate the complex effects of modernisation. Irakli eventually commits suicide and his death is the outcome of his disenchantment with post-Soviet modernity.[7]

A central theme of *Solo* is the separation of two irreconcilable halves, with Irakli's final book of poetry named "*Androgyne*", after the "lost bliss" of pre-fractured organic wholes (p. 328). Irakli's book is epigraphed by a quote from Plato on the intimacy and friendship of two soul mates, and Irakli feels his separation from friend and protégé violinist Boris, as a profound and insurmountable loss in a manner that foreshadows the text's bipartite structure. Irakli and Boris are precisely one year apart, share the same birthday, and provide each other with the furious poetic and musical inspiration of "lost halves" realigning, echoing the first half of the novel when Ulrich's childhood friend Boris shares the same birthday, giving Ulrich "a sense of predestination" (p. 23). Although Irakli suffers writer's block when exposed to Boris's frenetic creativity, initially poetry flows to him unbidden during his first encounter with his friend's "magnificent" (p. 278) music, even when Boris experiments with a discordant version of a sonata that alienates his audience and appears to Irakli as an "endless struggle" (p. 279):

radium cholera bitumen patriot
albatross desiccate fungicide pyramid
chemical Africa national accident
multiply hurricane industry motivate

- the violin not played but wrestled, the piano pummelled, like the repetition of a gun that has ceased to work.

terminal citizen management piracy
digital contribute parasite northerly
democrat corporate marketing ministry
generate synchronise quality property
Pakistan automate cellular weaponry
bullet hole Heisenberg certify history

Plastic wanted to stop it. He said,
'This is suicide.'

alcohol medicine embassy recognise
dentistry personal hospital circumcise

> It was interminable, and there was no refusal. The piano crashed the same chord a hundred senseless times, a psychopath's barrage.
>
> *document educate financing bellicose*
> *structural legalise radical standardise*
> *borderline distribute rational wintertime.* (p. 280)

Boris's music unlocks Irakli's attempt to discover a language, style, and form that encapsulates the fullness and experiential contradictions of reality, even if this appears as snippets of words or an extreme form of parataxis, with words juxtaposed next to one another without any linking conjunctions. Despite the poem's dissonance, the use of four to five multisyllabic words per sentence and of twelve to thirteen beats per line produces a neat visual order and aural constancy. In the second stanza, every last word finishes on a "y", with the sound and intent of these adverbs conveying a frenzied and active condition. In the broken third stanza, every final word finishes in an "ise" word, or in verbs that denote action, apart from the final word, "wintertime", which acts as an aural and denotive halt to the action. Hard "t" and "c" sound proliferate internally in each stanza and when combined with the active verbs, adverbs, and gerunds of the poem produce an active sound and intent to "standardise" and "rationalise" national economies. Jameson states that a "new realism" would incorporate modernism's "emphasis on violent renewal[s] of perception" (2010, p. 236), but rather than rehearse modernism's emphasis on "dehumanizing reason" it would expose the "commodity system and the reifying structure of late capitalism" (p. 237). Irakli's poetry, with its juxtapositions, associative logic, and visual and oral emphasis on multisyllabic words, puts this "critical realism" into play while being akin to the avant-garde experimentations of modernist poets like Gertrude Stein and Ezra Pound, or the contemporary irreverence and high-low juxtapositions of flarf poetry.

But while the violent imagery and aural cacophony of the poem replicate the cognitive dissonance, absurdities, and violent revolutions of capitalist modernisation, the full meaning of Irakli's work necessitates a pre-existing knowledge of Ulrich's biography, in a form of supplementary reading that forcibly conjoins the two halves of the text. The first line's sequence of industrial chemicals like radium and bitumen (an oil derivative) refers to Ulrich's previous career as a chemist in Bulgaria when

intensely damaging industries were signs of national progress and loyalty to a shifting socialist ideal, despite the resulting ecological devastation. The second verse's managerial corporate language is potentially subverted by the alternate flows alluded to by "*piracy*" and "*digital*", but this is curtailed by the medical terminology of the third verse which infers that Bulgaria is "*circumcised*" by historical forces. The final verse forcefully gestures towards the nation's restructuring towards a "*borderline*", "*wintertime*" but "*rationalised*" neoliberal economy. That Irakli's poetry necessitates an awareness of the text in its entirety means that the reader must perform his account of "androgyne", or the recovery of two lost halves and the coming to consciousness of more totalising forms of knowledge (see also Deckard 2016, pp. 79–80).

In contrast to Irakli's creative crises and diminutive personality, the poet's muse, Boris, is a musical genius. Originally discovered by music executive Plastic Munari on a pig farm in Bulgaria, Boris is brought almost immediately to America to record his album in New York. While there, he achieves instant fame and befriends Khatuna and Irakli. However, it is not long before Boris breaks his record company contract, embodying millennial youth's careless attitude towards the production and ownership of art by allowing his music to disseminate in a "post-industrial" (p. 344) way, prolifically posting recordings online and collaborating with other artists without permission. The ownership of Boris's best-selling song is in doubt and his record label becomes resigned to the fact that the track now floats free "and all the lawsuits in the world are not going to bring it back" (p. 344). Boris's music is described by manager Plastic as having an "aesthetic *attitude* to globalisation" (p. 278), and certainly, his behaviour renders him an example of the collaborative possibilities of early twenty-first-century digital and file-sharing technologies. However, Boris's creative promiscuity is also a direct response to his youthful experience of being raised in a remote Bulgarian village, where he learns music from nomadic gypsies who teach him to play the violin by "angling his mind askew to the world" (p. 190). This is significant given the text's politics of music distribution—elsewhere Ulrich describes with great historical veracity the sudden introduction of prohibitions against nearly all musical forms during communism, including jazz, Turkish, gypsy, and Arabic music (Dasgupta 2009, p. 97), with national folk music stripped of its collective and provisional ethos.[8]

In contrast to Bulgaria's history of cultural censorship, Boris short-circuits the juridical rules of private property, or music as a commodity. His manager Plastic Munari eventually loses control of Boris's music,

learning of his exploits through increasingly hysterical newspaper reports alleging Boris's participation in Eastern European drug cartels (p. 326). Largely unburdened by expectations or knowledge, Boris is indifferent to the legal norms of nation-states or multinational corporations, and in an enigmatic passage, this combination of naïveté and opportunism is described as the root of his success, with the current age described as one in which "children knew less than their parents, who themselves preserved a mere fraction of what they had been taught. People no longer felt they could rely upon the future, and they fell upon Boris's musical prophecies as if they were sparkling ponds in the desert" (p. 322). A lack of generational knowledge produces a deficit in future imaginaries fittingly supplied by Boris—an ambiguous figure exiled from history and orphaned by his parents. His ahistorical sensibility, like capitalism's self-valorisation as an immutable process, leads him to succeed spectacularly as a global artist where Irakli fails to thrive. But Boris becomes a symbol of economic success and demise, exemplifying certain capitalistic principles, like the global reach of his music, a lack of historical consciousness, and profligate sensibility in dealing with New York record executives and war criminals alike, while disregarding claims over the ownership of creative practice.

Technics of Global Discipline

The final character in Ulrich's trio of "children" is Khatuna, a beautiful young woman from Georgia who acts as a nexus for the opportunistic and glamorous façade of the youthful millennial capitalist. Khatuna is literally the child of Georgia's messy transition to a post-Soviet state, conceived after a state meeting with Soviet Union officials in May 1981, during which her mother sensed an anarchic and heady "romance of chaos" (p. 198) amidst the "crisis of their *system*" that she translates into a sexual urge. Khatuna goes on to marry famous footballer-cum-gangster Kakha Sabadze. Paranoid about security, Kakha rebuilds a medieval fortress to hide the "most advanced security installation in Georgia" (p. 210), with doors made of "explosive-proof steel", and new perimeter walls with advanced security systems. In actuality, post-Soviet oligarchical capitalism has led to the rise of private security forces that could, Derluguian warns, be employed in securing the "nastiest hot-spots of the world" (2001, p. 31). Rather aptly, Khatuna fulfils this warning at the narrative's end by moving to Baghdad to redesign the "new security city" (Dasgupta 2009, p. 341) and satiate her desire for muscular displays of power among "real men, where real things happen" (p. 342).

After Kakha's assassination by rival gang members, Khatuna flees to New York with her brother Irakli, and she impresses her co-workers with her detailed knowledge of armaments and surveillance systems to rapidly succeed as head of security systems at "Struction Enterprises" (p. 275). Khatuna's rhetoric of heavy securitisation is not retrograde but futuristic as she reproduces a language of privatised neoliberal urban governance. One of her new projects is to rebuild an entire city block in New York with "high-security housing for high-end individuals" (p. 319) complete with barricades, promising that "It will be a totally secure block" (p. 320). Khatuna's work in New York corresponds with the paranoia suffusing the city following 9/11 which furthers opportunities for private security entrepreneurs. Indeed, Struction's motto, "*Building the twenty-first century*" (p. 234), plays on the absent prefixes of "struction" as both the "con-struction" and "de-struction" of urban environments. In Dasgupta's essay on the "sudden stardom" of "Third-World" megacities, he notes the uneven combination of hypermodernity and underdevelopment in cities like Delhi and Shanghai, with "gleaming gated communities, parallel economies and legal systems" next to "residential housing involving corrugated iron and tarpaulin" (2006b). Dasgupta's statement that life in European and American cities like "London, New York or Paris" is increasingly looking like that in "Third-World" cities does not appear so radical given a post-2008 unending system crisis, featuring dwindling wages, and squeezed middle classes. Thus, if this period is indeed that of America's terminal hegemonic crisis, then as Giovanni Arrighi states, the resurgence of "ultramodern and early modern traits" (2010, p. 79) of "state- and war-making" (p. 80) like mercenary armies which blur the lines between national armies and corporate security forces is further confirmation of systemic chaos in the world-economy, expressive of the limits of the "modern system of rule" (p. 80). Khatuna's turn towards early and ultramodern elements of private warfare evinces the extreme dissolution of civil society and crises of governance visited on post-Soviet states like Georgia, but also how the US's increasing devolution of state-managed disciplinary infrastructures has resulted in ever more sophisticated and "hypermodern" technologies of biopolitical control and surveillance by "early-modern" style mercenary forces.

In *Solo*, these tendencies coalesce in the aestheticisation of power. Khatuna's tendency towards "gangster chic" plays on the spectacle of security infrastructures in an alternative to absent state infrastructures. Khatuna embodies the intrusions of these new surveillance systems; she

frequently films herself and has a tattoo of an eye on her lower back. Initially to survey her lover Kakha, after his death it becomes a metonym for her rebirth as a securities consultant. Khatuna's reliance on military spectacle extends to her vanity as she seeks a mood of "security" and beauty (pp. 215–216). Consequently, Khatuna is disappointed by the lack of machismo demonstrated by the FBI and their everyday-looking staff. Their logo is a pair of scales framed by a wreath, but "What harm could you do to someone with a pair of scales? She had thought it would show a gun, at least, or maybe a missile" (p. 324). The Comaroffs describe how millennial youth play on the presence and absence of civil society, "its elusiveness, its incompleteness, from the traces left by struggles conducted in its name" (2000, p. 330), and Khatuna intuitively seeks out the FBI for a show of strength rather than for their juridical might, but concludes that there was "little gratification" in getting the government to arrest Boris, because "People in the government looked like bus drivers and chewed their nails" (Dasgupta 2009, p. 325). She finds "gratification" in explosive and movie-like displays of machismo strength: technics essential to the violent politics of jostling interests in Georgia and to the urban governance of declining core regions.

Khatuna is therefore the energetic "tragic optimist" (Colbert and Dasgupta 2012) who catalyses the oncoming capitalist apocalypse, as she exemplifies how the children of former failed nations can become the new zealots of neoliberal tendencies, heralding dreadful transformations of state structures. After Kakha's death, Khatuna shirks from his position that "Land is real. Loyalty is real" (Dasgupta 2009, p. 215), by embracing the deterritorialisation of global security technologies. Having experienced the provision of civic services by mercenary gangs, Khatuna engages wholeheartedly in the rush to privatise, outsource, and simulate formerly state-owned infrastructures. In an example of such processes, Khatuna explains how US jails are now precast in concrete and transported from China, as in an ironic twist the apparatuses of disciplinary power are shipped in from America's authoritarian but economically booming nemesis (p. 283). However, her participation in the globalisation of security industries aids the production of new technologies of discipline or a "necropolitics", by which forms of oppression and violence in the guise of war or responses to insecurity (Mbembe 2003, 12) are evidence of the state's relinquishment of elements of modern sovereignty, or Agamben's "states of exception" in which states extend their power and supersede constitutional rights during times of emergency, which

soon become normative conditions. Khatuna's approach to her role as a securities consultant exemplifies how the pursuit of profits and efficiency undermines individual political or ethical considerations as she becomes a grotesque "caricature of the corporate mogul" (Comaroffs 2000, p. 309). While Boris's attitude towards globalisation is bred of guileless and opportunistic profiteering, Khatuna participates in a darker vision bred of Georgia's post-Soviet condition, with vast gulfs between rich and poor exacerbated by emergent forms of governance and discipline. That she uses her enormous energy and creativity to further the necropolitical elements of the modern state displays an ethical deficit central to *Solo*'s account of the mutations, or "scars", that lead to characters engaging in ambivalent actions that capitalise on crises of state sovereignty.

In interview, Dasgupta describes how he is interested in "characters who are not at the core of the system in which we live and who must imagine radical transformations of themselves if they are to survive within it" (Crown and Dasgupta 2005). Ulrich's "daydreaming" of the second part of *Solo* is the attempt, through a lengthy oneiric form, to imagine a radical transformation of self and agency. In the second half of the narrative, marbles fill Ulrich's pockets and he thrusts two into Boris's hand, echoing Ariel's song in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* that:

> Those are pearls that were his eyes:
> Nothing of him that doth fade,
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange. (2011, 1.2.399–402)

Ulrich describes his children as "strange offspring [...] whose blurred faces float among rows of lamps strung like greenish pearls in the darkness" (Dasgupta 2009, p. 82), as his near-death imaginings turn "into something rich and strange" in their circumvention of normative forms of capitalist globalisation through incivil behaviours and fragmented aesthetic forms. *Solo* concludes on an ambiguous note, with Ulrich imagining the generations needed to erase the scars of his post-revolutionary youths, stating that after a time their descendants will "give birth to angels, and there'll be nothing left to show what bad times we sprang from" (p. 348). Ulrich's dream children are not simply the successful obverse to his failed life, but offer a set of strategies and compromises with which they hope to escape the limitations of post-revolutionary conditions.

In contrast to *Solo*'s vision of failure and often unlikable characters, *Tokyo Cancelled*'s impersonal stories depict the magical transformations that occur daily under the rubric of capitalist globalisation. However, both *Solo* and *Tokyo* share an emphasis on thematic and allegorical narratives that treat characters as symbolic types, and are concerned with alternate literary forms that flesh out the extraordinary and impossible promises of economic narratives of progress. Both also construct their global narratives through fragmented literary forms and voices, with Irakli's poetry in *Solo* and *Tokyo Cancelled*'s short-story cycle playing on the dialectic of dissolution and reconstitution that Lukács describes as central to totalising imaginaries at key moments of capitalism-in-crisis. Although Dasgupta's *Tokyo Cancelled* is a global narrative, it attends to differences in local imaginaries, as for example in Marlboro's tale and his exclusion from Nigerian fairy tales of consumption, with *Solo* imagining the questionable, contingent strategies used by post-Soviet youths to acquire prosperity. Dasgupta's works offer an important contrast and corrective to polarities in global novels of either deterritorialisation or local historicism, by combining literary experimentation with left politics in a nuanced treatment of the interaction between characters, nations, and the world.

Notes

1. See the back cover endorsements to the 2010 edition of *Solo*. In the introduction to the 2013 *Granta Best of Young British Novelists* anthology, editor John Freeman expresses regret that Dasgupta, alongside authors China Miéville, Mohsin Hamid, and Tom McCarthy, was "too old" (p. 14) for consideration of the award. Dasgupta's recent non-fiction text, *Capital: A Portrait of Twenty-First Century Delhi* (2014), was shortlisted for the Royal Society of Literature's Ondaatje Prize and the Orwell Prize for the best political writing.
2. Lukács describes briefly wanting to write *The Theory of the Novel* in a form akin to *The Decameron*, involving war-shattered youth in dialogue with one another in the shadow of World War I (1971, pp. 11–12). Without confusing coincidence with causality, the multiple reappropriations of *The Decameron*'s collective storytelling form as a way of narrating crisis, from Lukács to Dasgupta, are significant to this chapter's argument about epochal crises of the world-system and the necessity for fragmented literary forms.
3. Deckard, likewise interested in how these tales narrate totality, argues that they "function as spectres of loss figuring commodified and exhausted

ecologies and cultural formations" as the erasure of individual plots and the frame narrative "speaks to the difficulty of establishing a collective consciousness" (2013, p. 192).

4. See also Misha Glenny's account of Ilia Pavlov's key role in Bulgaria's transition to capitalism (2008, pp. 3–20).
5. See Lazarus (2012) and David Chioni Moore (2001) on the unsuitability of postcoloniality as a paradigm to fully explain the legacy of historical imperialism and diverse internal colonisations of Russia, then the USSR, and latterly the region's global integration.
6. Dasgupta has written recently on the twenty-first-century convulsions effecting nation-states grappling with ever greater amounts of tax avoidance, global and transnational solidarities based on religious or ethnic exclusions, hard-line "big party" politics, and the abdication of the nation-state as a sanctuary for refugees, stating that "the current appeal of machismo as political style, the wall-building and xenophobia, the mythology and race theory, the fantastical promises of national restoration – these are not cures, but symptoms of what is slowly revealing itself to all: nation states everywhere are in an advanced state of political and moral decay from which they cannot individually extricate themselves" (2018).
7. In a recent essay on the live-streamed suicide of a French teenager in a post-industrial town, Dasgupta describes how her death is in part because the only bargaining tool of youths excluded from social mobility is "their own existence" (2017): we could extend this reading to Irakli's death in *Solo*.
8. Dasgupta, in a 2004 essay on Tim Rice's ethnography of Bulgarian music, describes how the communist Bulgarian state imposed strict rules on music ownership, making all music property of the state and tasking official musicians and orchestras with playing new compositions designed to reflect the nation's transition from a peasant economy to a modern socialist state.

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CHAPTER 6

"FAC UT ARDEAT": Rachel Kushner, the World-Historical Novel, and Energetic Materialism

Part I: Introduction: Resources and Historical Novels

What is the literature of a world-system during a time in which *capitalist* dynamics of oppression and imperialism have exceeded the postcolonial era, and both the world-economy and ecology are experiencing careering and epochal transformations? The choice of authors and texts in this monograph offers a cumulative trajectory into this question, from a transition in the postcolonial novel towards a state of disenchantment in response to the emergence of global criminal and corporate capitalism in Rushdie's later Bombay works; to the stabilisation of modes of "capitalist realism" in Mitchell's global fictions; to a consideration of fractured narrative modes and strategic behaviours in Dasgupta's texts. What these global literatures share is an interest in identifying agency and hegemony amidst the codification of "global" aesthetics, experiences, and dispositions through the mobilisation of innovative and sometimes fragmented literary forms that cover huge geographic scales and transhistorical scopes.

This chapter on Rachel Kushner's *Telex From Cuba* (2008) and *The Flamethrowers* (2013) will test the analysis thus far by considering whether and how other worldly texts formally register wider material or disciplinary crises. It will also closely examine the "resources" of global narratives—an under-theorised but crucial aspect of the global novel, given its assumption that the propulsive shortcuts and libidinal energies

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derived from cheap resources, or food and fuel, will continue. The following study will thus pay attention to the energetic modalities of Kushner's fictions, and how they tell the history of imperialism through peripheral narrators and brief glimpses of extractive labour elsewhere. In contrast to Dasgupta's figuration of totality through fractured short-story narratives, muted characters, and a reconsideration of medieval forms and fissured ecologies, Rachel Kushner's *Telex from Cuba* and *The Flamethrowers* both deploy a smoothing tone to offer globally synchronous narratives about nonsynchronous experiences at the periphery of capital accumulation, or the combined but uneven temporalities and labour that are central to capitalism: including the primitive accumulation of rubber tapping in the Brazilian Amazon, Italian machine assembly piecework, and sugar plantations in Cuba. Fuelling the readerly quality of both texts and their depiction of the dialectical interaction between US consumption and economic hegemony alongside "older" modes of capital accumulation is an "energetic" mode of world-historical interconnection offered, if not fully reconciled, through intensely observant yet marginal narrators.

In the previous chapter, I examined how the commodification of extra-human natures and unpaid human labour in Rana Dasgupta's *Tokyo Cancelled* was troubled by surreal and gothic figurations of commodified spaces, natures, and things, amidst a time of socio-economic and ecological crisis. In contrast, Kushner's novels focus on the violence inherent in the production of value through often historically realist works. Historical fiction's contemporary importance in offering *global* rather than strictly *national* narratives of world-systemic unevenness is explored in Kushner's consistent emphasis on near-distant and imperial contexts. Moreover, both *Telex* and *The Flamethrowers* are concerned with figures at the edges of socio-political groupings—prostitutes, cabaret dancers, unestablished female artists, and children from "semi-peripheral" spaces like the Midwest or Cuba—presented in these fictions as Lukácsian "average heroes" or "observer-narrators" (Jameson 2013, p. 268). Reviews of *The Flamethrowers* focus especially on the passive first-person narration of Reno, a young woman from Nevada who moves to New York City without concrete plans for her own artistic development, but becomes caught up in the city's conceptual art scene. Reno's narration is at once observant but curiously detached, and from the Midwest, she is multiply semi-peripheral: battling preconceptions of her insignificance as a female ingénue from Nevada, she goes by a nickname coined by enigmatic philanderer and photographer Ronnie Fontaine (2013, p. 57). Likewise,

multiple key characters in *Telex from Cuba*, such as zazou-inspired cabaret dancer Rachel K., are important but minor figures in the Cuban Revolution. Zazous were World War II bohemians who rejected Nazi restrictions on behaviour and clothing (Hart et al. 2015, p. 207), and Rachel K. uses her indeterminate racial identity and zazou role-play to present herself at a remove from Cuban politics while acting as an intermediary for the revolution. Refusing to condemn Rachel K. to a femme fatale role, Kushner revises her actual history as an escort who was killed during the Cuban Machado regime, to one who cunningly survives multiple regime changes (p. 206).

As Jameson rightly notes, the historical novel dramatises the narrator as "the theatrical spectator, who observes the great episodically and from afar" (2013, p. 268). In Kushner's fictions, the "great" are the managerial corporate strata and their ancillaries—high-level company executives, like the Stites in *Telex*, or Sandro Valera, artist and heir to the Moto Valera Company in *Flamethrowers*. That the nature of the historical novel enlivens the futility of the form itself, given that the historical events depicted are already given but narrated through the contingency of individual decisions and dilemmas (Jameson 2013, p. 268), we may ask what effect this has on how global *capitalism* is perceived in the text as a world-historical totality in itself, with its own "horizon of immanence" (2009b, p. 608) that conditions what can be known or imagined in the capitalist world-system. Everly, a child-narrator in *Telex from Cuba*, imagines crossing the Tropic of Cancer en route to Cuba from the US and is disappointed that although a "map illustrated relationships among islands and seas and continents", "The water she could see from the ship porthole illustrated nothing—just water, with no daisy chains or markers of any kind" (2008, p. 46). The spherical model of the globe, with its geopolitical markers is "more real" to Everly than the appearance of *aqua nullius*. This early lesson teaches Everly that national borders, imperial influence, and the push-pull economic factors driving her family to Cuba can only be expressed through abstract figurations and are also predicated on the "invisibility" of normative social relations. In *The Flamethrowers*, the reader, rather than naïve narrator Reno, apprehends the book as a world-encompassing historical text with the US finding geopolitical expression through acts of neo-colonial extraction and influence elsewhere. Wealth and artistic capital achieve fruition due to the globalisation of underdevelopment or the Italian piecework and Brazilian rubber tapping that operate as the novel's crucial materialist "substrata", with freedom located in US

automotive culture. It is not that one subtracts from the other, but that the novel's disparate global fragments offer a totality available only to the reader, or if this is a novel of global corporatism—to Moto Valera. Put differently, *The Flamethrowers* especially is a novel that meta-fictionalises ways of seeing capitalism that require the overview of the world-historical reader, or the corporate auditor.

In interview, Kushner describes wishing to find the "form and through line of a constructed world that can hold in it what I really think about… everything" (Kunzru and Kushner 2013, p. 105). The ambition and complexity of containing works about "everything" produce contrary and irreconcilable tendencies—of the planetary overviews available to those who make corporate history and those who read it, the impossibility of the average spectator/narrator accessing totalising viewpoints, and the immanent impossibility of figuring a major alternative to actual historical events and the importance of minor acts of storytelling and resistance. The world-historical form is a way of figuring class revolutions, extractive politics, and uneven displacements, and its contrary conclusions and effects can be read through what the Warwick Research Collective call an "aesthetics of anamorphosis" (WReC 2015, p. 72)—or the narration of the fragmentary, aleatory, and alienating qualities of capitalism—in this case through unreliable and minor narrators. A note of differentiation, WReC notes that "In the work of writers from peripheral and semi-peripheral formations, the registration of combined and uneven development through deployment of an aesthetics of anamorphosis is characteristically pronounced and intensified" (p. 72). Works like *Telex from Cuba* and *The Flamethrowers* are relatively conventional historical novels,[1] whose national/hegemonic framing is that of the US, but this chapter probes how Kushner uses the historical realist novel alongside peripheral "observer-narrators" to intimate the displacement of capital accumulation elsewhere. It finds generative potential in the idea of anamorphosis in narrators who are thrust into, even if they refuse to see, moments of world-revolutionary import in peripheries and semi-peripheries. This line of argumentation intentionally drifts somewhat from the last chapter on Jameson's spatial revision of Lukács' class consciousness to consider a variant of world-systemic texts concerned with the US's global dominance.

I will return to the historical novel later, but notably both texts are fuelled by the most calorific, energetic, and propulsive resources—sugar and oil—the extraction, processing, distribution, and consumption of which has occasioned an accelerated capitalism. In Claire Westall's 2017

editorial for the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, she argues for an "energetic materialist" (2017, pp. 265–266) approach to comparative analyses, drawing from world-systems, ecological, and literary theories, to attend to the uneven distribution and consumption of resources, while recognising the resistive quality of cultural work. Together *Telex from Cuba* and *The Flamethrowers* are two halves of a "prehistory" (Hart et al. 2015, p. 210) of the contemporary moment, from the 1930s to the 1970s, that can be read in "energetic materialist" terms as articulating global forms of commodification and resistance through food and fuel, from the Cuban fruit plantation complex of *Telex* to the petro-fuelled art of *The Flamethrowers.* However, *Telex*'s interlinked depiction of plantation agriculture, expatriate communities and race, and *The Flamethrowers* account of land art and automotive culture require a deductive literary approach. Resources and energy demand analyses of their coproduction of literary modes, but also confirmation of, and resistance to, particular energy regimes. This means, as Graeme Macdonald argues, becoming "more adept at divining the specific fuel(s) literary modes run on" (2013, p. 6). Aesthetically, energy is registered in seen and unseen ways, from the taken-for-granted kineticism of networked global novels to the play on "gasoline" as a metaphor for political power and as the ignitory substance in *The Flamethrowers*' Molotov cocktails.[2] For Macdonald, the intensely "extractive" (2013, p. 8) nature of our current world-ecology means that we always already live within a dominant energy regime registered by culture no matter "how abstract or distorted the projection" (p. 9). Unpacking the consequences of this method means considering what unseen energetics, subjectivities, and aesthetic forms are conditioned by both novels' emphasis on cheap resources for imagining global transformations of extraction, labour, and resistance.

Part II: Reading for Sugar in *Telex from Cuba*

Rachel Kushner's first novel, *Telex From Cuba* (2008), is a lushly written historical novel and bildungsroman narrating the lives of American United Fruit Company (UNF) executives and families during the fall of the Batista regime from 1952 to 1959. Set in Oriente, a province in Eastern Cuba dominated by fruit and sugar plantations, *Telex* neatly links US imperialist corporate practices, plantation agriculture, and political discontent. Like *The Flamethrowers*, which uses Reno's marginality as a way of observing class inequities and larger social totalities, *Telex* is retrospectively told from the first-person point of view of children and a series of

persona non grata who observe from within but at the margins of the world they inhabit: including K. C. Stites, the son of Malcolm Stites, the manager of United Fruit Company's "Cuba Division"; Everly Lederer, the daughter of George Lederer, a manager at the reopened US-owned Nicaro nickel mine; Rachel K., an enigmatic cabaret dancer who spies on Cuban politicians for Castro's rebels; and Christian de la Mazière, arms smuggler and former Nazi collaborator. As mentioned, these minor figures are Lukácsian "average heroes", at the margins of historical events, while achieving gradual realisations in the process. However, *Telex*, cognisant of the partial totalities available to its narrators at any given moment, and that the life of US workers in Cuba is one to which an accounting of the contiguities between colonialism and US imperialism is largely inadmissible, means that child-narrators like K. C. alternate between a near-critique of plantation life, while also withholding full condemnation of the plantation system or his father, a senior UNF manager. This lack of total realisation is symptomatic too of the tensions of narrators in thrall to US imperialism, while also being critical of its failings. That workers in *Telex from Cuba* and *The Flamethrowers* such as the Haitian and Jamaican plantation labourers in Cuba, to the striking Autonomist factory workers of Turin, are always described by distanced narrators like Reno, Rachel K., and K. C. Stites who are removed from the pressures of assembly line work or sugar cane harvesting, while being the beneficiaries of these systems, is key to both novel's narration of US imperialism. "No one" Cokal observes "is capable of complete understanding" (2008) in *Telex from Cuba*—an epistemic and political diagnosis that frames the novel's ongoing negotiation between complicity and critique.

Sugar, Resources, and (Neo)-Colonialism

Central to *Telex*'s account of the history of US intervention in Cuba is an energetic engagement with food, energy, and labour. Appropriately, it opens with the burning of United Fruit Company's sugar cane plantations in a symbolic and economic blow by Castro's guerrilla forces at the heart of the company's operations on the island and against the US's export-imperialism. Sugar is the hidden imperative of the text, and the reason for the extreme inequality of Oriente, with sugarcane workers living in bohios or wooden shacks with "Dirt floors, a pot in the middle of the room, no windows, no plumbing, no electricity" (2008, p. 9). Struck by the poverty

of harvest workers, K. C. and his mother are reminded by Malcolm Stites that "the company paid them higher wages than any Cuban-owned sugar operation" (p. 11). Ironically, Stites tries to ameliorate the situation by giving the workers allotments and agricultural lessons, the knowledge of which the temporary, landless, and illiterate workers are ill-equipped to implement (p. 10).

Sugar was one of the original commodities through which the boom-bust dynamics of plantation capitalism were trialled, firstly in sites like Madeira and then throughout South America and the Caribbean. It ignited the Atlantic slave trade and drove powerful socio-ecological transformations in the New World by exhausting soil and slaves, depleting water and timber, while necessitating a capitalist system of social organisation and trade. Capitalism's initial moment of "accumulation by dispossession" through the enslavement of vast populations in the service of cheap sugar was central to its longue durée of plunder and productivity. As Marx notes, slavery is "as much the pivot upon which our present-day industrialism turns as are machinery, credit, etc. [....] It is slavery which has given value to the colonies, it is the colonies which have created world trade" (Marx 1846). The consequences of the sugar-slave plantation system extend to the political-ecologies of the present. US military occupation and policy interventions from 1899 to 1902 meant that Cuba retained the contradictions of the pre-existing "colonial order" and that "In all its essential features and in its principal functions, the republic gave new political form to the socio-economic infrastructure of the old colony" (Pérez quoted Chomsky 2010, p. 27).[3] The "new" colonialism of US intervention maintained its interest in sugar, alongside commodities like tobacco and fruit, while instantiating technics of racial segregation deployed in the US South and enacting paramilitary reprisals against black activists. Falling numbers of workers were easily replaced by migrant labourers from Haiti, Jamaica, and China, who laboured in penurious conditions (Curtin 1990, pp. 179, 199; see also Mintz 1985).[4]

Plotted within Kushner's literary history of US imperialism is an accurate account of the United Fruit Company's promotion of Jim Crow style systems of segregation in which "occupational and social hierarchies were racially stratified" (Queeley 2014, p. 106). In *Telex*, US nickel and fruit plantation executives live among the well-groomed avenues of Preston, with streets lined with "old-fashioned streetlamps [...] huge homes with yellow-lit windows" (Kushner 2008, p. 93), and host guests at antebellum style plantation houses, like the UNF guesthouse in Saetía that looks

"like something from Savannah Georgia" (p. 84), while attending the "Pan-American Club" (p. 75) for games of golf, croquet, and yacht trips. These towns reinstantiate the social hierarchies of polite American society and urban life in Cuba, a condition heightened by the novel's romantic and nostalgic account of cotillions, Cajun food, Yacht Club parties, and ice cream parlours called *El Louvre*.

Alongside these spatial forms of demarcation and control, workers in actuality and in *Telex* are paid at the end of the harvest and obliged to shop in expensive local commissaries (Queeley 2014, p. 106), and K. C. recounts how delayed wages discouraged workers from deserting (Kushner 2008, p. 15). Continuing the novel's interweaving of authentic details, UNF plantations are constituted by a mix of colonial slave systems, corporate policies, and imported racial violence. The fruit company's disciplinary apparatuses are enacted by Hatch Allain, a brutish former Cajun plantation boss, who flees to Cuba after murdering a man on a Louisiana plantation. UNF hires him to strike fear into the company's workers (p. 74), a threat underlined by Hatch's immunity under company law (p. 89). His family live in crude brick houses claustrophobically close to the sugar mill and railway yard, both the better to oversee labourers, and in recognition of the Allain family's blue-collar status within the American community, for whom the spatial organisation of class is a crucial and obvious way of separating managerial and agricultural workers. The appointment of former criminals to such disciplinary roles does not escape K. C. who observes that the rural guard patrolling Oriente includes Captain Sosa Blanco, pardoned for his role in punitive murders. In the final chaotic moments of the Batista regime, Sosa Blanco torches shanties in Nicaro and hangs black workers (p. 89), a reminder that extreme outbursts of racial violence find fecund ground in the exceptionally violent conditions enabled by plantation systems.

Repulsed by the back-breaking labour of cane cutting, K. C. cannot help ventriloquising his father who notes that plantation workers often disappeared and "never paid the company for their boat passage from Kingston" (p. 15). K. C.'s inability to establish a stable political position beyond his father's means that he frequently justifies UNF's actions in Cuba. But his retrospective ordering of events in the years after the revolution and in the context of civil rights movements forces disquieting counterpoints to his previously unquestioning adherence to UNF policy. In another example of the limited conservative viewpoints of US expatriates committed to UNF's vision, K. C.'s mother, an ostensibly charitable

woman, naively decries the penury of plantations run by "native people" (p. 11), hoping that the "good" example of the United Fruit Company will "influence the Cubans to treat their own kind a bit better", rather than examining how plantations further "micro-aggressions" among the poor.

Plantations and Plot

In Sylvia Wynter's astonishing essay "Plot and Plantation", she states that the Caribbean plantation system is the "classic plantation", in which people were "an adjunct to the product, to the single crop commodity – the sugar cane – which they produced" (1971, p. 95). The plantation system's force is in attempting to eradicate the crop as subsistence rather than commodity, a struggle over class and resources that is presented in *Telex* at the mature stage of its development, with peasant communities enlivened by revolutionary communist struggles. The plantation is a global rather than local socio-ecological entity: caused and continued by planetary demands and trade links, and in fiction, it will always stage the effects of imperialism by reducing local agency and figuring class conflict as a fight against capitalism. In *Telex*, K. C. remarks on United Fruit Company's creation of an entire free trade world, noting that the company's privileged position furthered UNF's impunity towards workers:

> The company had a set of arrangements with Batista, annual payments, and in return there were no taxes, no tariffs, and we didn't have to bother with the labor unions or any labor laws. We exported raw sugar, and nobody raised a stink. We sent our sugar up to Boston for processing, to the Revere Sugar Refinery. (Kushner 2008, p. 29)

Telex from Cuba, in marrying the plantation narrative with the historical novel, and a sentimental tale of manners and frustrated expatriate desires, reinforces the peripherality and passivity of narrators who are always pushed to the side by the exigencies of imperial-corporatism, and conversely a global socialist resistance. Aside from *Telex*'s child-narrators, the most pitiful figure in the text is Charmaine Mackey who briefly has an affair with the enigmatic Cuban millionaire Lito Gonzalez, who understands that her desires are an expression of libidinal lust rather than political freedom, which is only briefly realised.

Core to *Telex* is how the privileged expatriate world of social events means that the children of the novel, who are likewise constrained by etiquette and social expectations, struggle to read their surroundings, with commodities like sugar abstract synecdoches for primitive accumulation. Everly Lederer reads in a UNF corporate biography titled *Empire in Green and Gold* (p. 45) that Cuba is the "world's sugar bowl" and imagines a "pink crystal bowl, beveled on the edges and filled with glinting white sugar. A pink crystal lid, cut like a gemstone. The sort of thing Mrs. Vanderveer would have brought out for tea service". For Everly, this reference to Cuba as a global sugar dish symbolises an entire social world of manners, removed from the brutal labour and immiseration of sugar production, in an imaginative division common to many US characters in *Telex* and encouraged by the novel's spatial displacements which re-enact what Edward Said describes as the aporias of imperial fictions (see *Culture and Imperialism* [1994]). But Everly's role as a child and ingénue means that she is not fully subsumed into US Oriente society, and can offer surprising insights about the injustices of class hierarchies and racial segregations. Her gradual racial awakening occurs at home as she becomes aware of how the family's intelligent Haitian houseboy, Willy, is perceived by other Oriente families, and in turn, she puzzles over Willy's revelations that the island's "troublemakers" are not those "causing problems for the company", but rather workers attempting to organise against union bans (p. 155). Everly's father takes on his role as an employee of the Nicaro mining concern because "Money was always a problem" (p. 41), and the Lederer family's efforts to scale the middle classes suggest that Everly's empathy arises somewhat from her less privileged position in Oriente society.

Moreover, Everly's narrative is set in the 1950s (until the concluding "return" chapter), but narrated from a sympathetic third-person point of view (Hart et al. 2015, p. 196), in contrast to K. C.'s first-person retrospective narrative, which leads to tensions between his contemporary awareness of progressive politics and his family's work in Cuba. Unable to reconcile these differences, K. C. defends UNF's sugar plantations because the labourer's work is "voluntary"—in contrast to the brutality of "forced" (p. 30) colonial slave labour. This line of argumentation carries through to K. C.'s defence of UNF's policies as being built on a longue durée of brutal responses to revolutions in the Caribbean. Plantation owners punishing slaves, "tied the slaves to ladders [...] and whipped them to death" (p. 187). For K. C., his father was against "comrades"

rather than slaves, but in a region structured by revolution "certain ideas, certain lessons, silt in—like the belief that it's necessary to crush these things before they get out of hand. And that the only effective way is with violence" (p. 187). Violence begets violence, and the difference is, as the wife of an executive argues, that "viol*ence* and viol*ent*—those are different. It's the difference between incident and *intent*" (p. 257). Ironically, this scene happens in a digressive chapter set in the Pan-American Club right before an explosion which shatters mirrors and limbs, suggesting the "explosion" of residual colonial era justifications of "incidental" and deserved "intentional" violence.

The key difference between Everly and K. C. is in how they apprehend intent and effect, a difference that finds expression in their varying narrative points of view and class positions, and illustrated well by their contrary responses to scenes of violence against animals. In a cruel episode, K. C. describes how his father makes him watch as he slaughters a pig with a hammer to enforce the lesson that: "pigs are food and not pets, and it's a father's duty to make his child understand this. But I think Daddy also wanted me to understand that life is violent and arbitrary and unfair—that it's not easy, like a child might think, especially a child like me, living in a paradise, coddled by Mother and by Annie" (p. 90). K. C.'s attitude towards sugarcane workers as labourers rather than slaves because they made a "choice" to work in Cuba demonstrates the success of his father's actions in reinforcing hierarchies of control and punishment, and that life is unaccountably "violent and arbitrary and unfair", a consequence of contingent and "natural" hierarchies rather than a product of the system itself.

Repeating this alignment of plantations and social violence, Rachel K., an escort and cabaret dancer, fears Malcolm Stites because "he didn't know which parts of him were rotten, or even that he harbored rot" (p. 34). Rachel K.'s point is that Stites cannot see the "rot" of his marriage and managerial work as bound-up expressions of destructive attitudes towards family, gender, and the environment. Extending this reading of ecological violence and lust, *Telex*'s epigraph is from "Invitation to the Voyage" by Charles Baudelaire: "All is order there, and elegance,/ pleasure, peace, and opulence" (p. vii); the poem in its entirety imagines a decadent and sensual scene of orientalised lust. Rachel K., in her work as an escort, is associated with multiple forms of exoticism, including the barely repressed sensual excess of the tropics. Throughout *Telex*, and in exoticised narrative accounts of the Caribbean generally, the coproduction

of sensuality, desire, and consumption is rarely perceived apart. Cuba, an unnamed narrator tells us, has three constants of "syphilis, tobacco, and trees with fruit whose flesh was the pink of healthy mucus membranes, a fruit that smelled like women's shampoo" (p. 259). Each is associated with specific moments of colonialist and capitalist expropriation: syphilis with the Columbian exchange, a tropical "New World" revenge; tobacco with the slave plantations of early-modern colonialism; and trees, whose flesh and smell semaphore female sexuality, while giving up bounties of fruit and wood.

Reinforcing this sensual colonial account of nature, Everly Lederer reads how conquistadors arrived in the New World "ready to gorge themselves" (p. 152), eating parrots in an act of ownership and defiance, or "punishment and justice" (p. 153). Mirroring the language of food as exclusive property, or "delicacy", K. C.'s father urges him to eat the eggs of a pregnant lobster, because it is an exclusive "delicacy" (p. 170), and the point is not, as Malcolm reminds his son, "about taste, it was about having things that other people couldn't have, and there was a certain burden in that". The burden associated with consuming the actual and symbolic fertility of the lobster is akin to how historical invaders and contemporary corporations consumed the fertility of Cuba's land and the energy of its labourers. For Everly, the conquistadors, like K. C., did not enjoy the taste of the parrots. Instead, they wished to hoard them, to "eat a bird that talked" (p. 152), and to tame the parrot's "showy and beautiful" feathers, by consuming a rare curiosity, in an early modern expression of plunder and privatisation. In the lines immediately preceding this scene, Everly describes the Portuguese man-o'-wars that entered the nearby bay and caused havoc with their deadly tendrils. These jellyfish kill their prey, Everly narrates, by paralysing and eating them, but "it [the fish] looked so relaxed. Sometimes you didn't want to be able to move. You just wanted to be held" (p. 152). Against the danger of Portuguese man-o'-wars, or Spanish conquistadors, Everly's reaction is to empathise with those who remain fatally indifferent—or a feeling of laxness and the inability to halt the violent termination of the region's wildlife, operating here as a metaphor for how Everly acts as a witness or "spectator" for the punishment meted out by American companies against Cuba's inhabitants. In Tucker-Abramson's article on Kushner's *The Flamethrowers*, she argues that its appeal to critics lies in the text's withholding from narrator Reno of full narrative comprehension, in ways that align with the

incomprehension generated by the 2008 financial crash while also offering a "fantasy of the repair of that economic system" (2019, p. 88). We might ask what kind of narrative satisfactions and fantasies of "repair" or restoration is conjured by *Telex from Cuba*? Everly's final reflections on the "greenness" of the water in Levisa Bay offers her a way of unpacking the contingency of colour and race to suggest historical fiction's generative revisionist possibilities. In the novel's concluding paragraph, Everly observes that the sea is "Like an eye, it both reflects and refracts the sky at which it gazes" (p. 322). What produces the eye's gaze is a whole set of socio-cultural presuppositions and shifting viewpoints—a realisation Everly now extends as an adult to her time in Cuba and the strained race relations that structured it. Her gradual political and racial awareness is confirmed by the final chapter's gathering together of the narrative's loose threads as Everly and her sisters find their former house servant Willy Blousse. En route to the Caribbean, Everly realises that a childhood tale, of a man from Dakar who discovered a message in a bottle from Guernsey and was invited to dinner, most likely would not have attended, given that "There was a detail a child might overlook: the man from Dakar would be black" (p. 319). The narrative satisfaction offered to the reader is that the text subverts the role of the plantation-plot: of the colonised as the infantilised victims of rational colonial agents, by presenting child-narrators as unwitting witnesses to the forces of historical change in Oriente, who, like Everly, can gradually unveil the myths of their youth. This narrative satisfaction though also withholds fiction's utopian function, as the reader is presented anew with the novel's aestheticisation of the political.[5]

Part III: Galvanic Energy and Resistance in *The Flamethrowers*

The World-Historical Novel and Peripeteia

Rachel Kushner's following text, *The Flamethrowers*, initially appears to be a radical departure to *Telex from Cuba*, offering a high-octane response to the 1970s avant-garde New York art scene, deindustrialisation, and then contemporaneous strikes in Italy. Narrated by an unnamed female narrator, land-artist, and motorcycle enthusiast nicknamed Reno, the novel is concerned with her artistic development and relationship with artist Sandro Valera, heir to the Moto Valera motorcycle company, which is embroiled in the Italian Autonomist "Years of Lead" or *Anni di Piombo*

protests. The novel extends beyond Reno's narrative, offering a longer perspective into the development of the Valera Company after World War I, and Sandro's father's experience as an Italian Futurist; and it extends geographically to consider the brutalities of a "Fordlandia" style rubber-tapping operation in the Brazilian Amazon. Significantly, the two major sites in which the text is located: a gradually deindustrialised and financially bankrupt but artistically thriving 1970s New York City, and Rome during the Autonomist protests against piecework, industrial labour, and wages for housework, were both crucial locations for the post-World War II consolidation of US hegemony through structural transformations in industrial labour, energy, and the emergence of neoliberalism. What *Telex from Cuba* and *The Flamethrowers* share is a commitment to the historical novel as a global form concerned with world-revolutionary moments, narrated by the "average heroes" of such events. Together these novels look back at moments of US geopolitical expansion (in Cuba), or the artistic creativity, and transition to neoliberalism of New York City in the 1970s, to suggest accelerating points in the US's hegemonic decline.

However, Tucker-Abramson notes that the two dominant critical responses to *The Flamethrowers*, on the one hand critiquing it's periodisation and on the other its masculinity, detract from the novel's account of art and world-historical foment (Tucker-Abramson 2019, pp. 73–74). This lack of attention to *The Flamethrowers*' attempts to connect sites of capital accumulation and protest tended to focus on authenticity and totality in highly gendered terms. Reviewers described Kushner's "eerie confidence" (Wood 2013), and *The Flamethrowers*' "too cool" "portentous" "too stylish" and "macho" qualities (Kirsch 2013), while others drew attention to its tonal similarity to male authors like Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler (Seidel 2013)—as though an ambitious transnational novel figuring the complexities of conceptual art could only be comprehended in masculine terms. Alternatively, Frederick Seidel's review in *The New York Review of Books* implicitly critiqued the book for not being authentic enough, for its unconvincing descriptions of motorbikes and Italy, and "tiresome, histrionic, hysterically overwritten" prose. That we should consider these gendered responses as bound up with the politics of the text is because they are responding to the "too muchness" of a global and erudite novel, and because macro-thematic works written by women are less likely to be considered for publication or short-listed for literary awards (see VIDA; Shamsie 2015). To return us to Francine Prose's 1998 essay, women writers are often ghettoised as writing domestic,

sentimental works against the bold panoramic sweeps of male writers, who are ostensibly unafraid to tackle metropolitan life, the state of the nation, and the alienating affects of technology (1998, p. 67).

Reviewers had issues not only with the text's overly macho qualities, but also its inassimilability: several read against the grain of *The Flamethrowers*, reading in its oscillation between Reno's introverted narration and the text's global comparative viewpoint, an eschewal of a Marxist "paranoid connectedness or knowing universalism" (Wood 2013), and Kushner's ostensible rejection of both the "liberal fantasy that the individual and the private are the most important dimensions of social knowledge" and "the converse Marxist fantasy that one can explain individual experience through larger social systems" (Figlerowicz 2013). More specifically, the two halves of the novel, set in New York and Italy, and Reno's difficulty in parsing the social codes of each, are for Andrew Strombeck "inassimilable" sides of "disparate cultural contexts" (2015, p. 452), or the impossibility of grasping totality. The moment when Reno contrasts the stench of gasoline in Rome with her cousin's garage in Nevada signifies for one interviewer the irreconcilable divergences of Reno's experiences that she "can't draw a connection between the smell of gasoline in her cousins' Nevada garage and the stench of gasoline on the people of Piazza del Popolo" (Arnold and Kushner 2013). In contrast, Kushner in the same interview asserts that Reno "*does* see a connection between Reno boys who tinker on dirt bikes and the aftermath of a demonstration/riot in Rome" (Arnold and Kushner 2013).

This particular scene is worth quoting at length. Caught up in a tear gas attack against Autonomist protestors in Rome, Reno associates the smell of petrol bombs with childhood memories and experiences or the "embodied memory and habitus" (LeMenager 2014, p. 104) of oil:

> [...] Reno kids, my cousins and their friends, always smelling of gasoline. Scott and Andy returning from the filling station in the back of Uncle Bobby's pickup truck with pink gasoline in plastic jugs, or siphoning it from unsuspecting neighbors with a segment of old garden hose [....] Gasoline was a summertime smell. Long solstice days. The rangy Doppler of a lawn mower. Scott and Andy done with their chores [....] That I could draw no connection between that world and this one, the people who stank of gasoline in the Piazza del Popolo, and Scott and Andy who loved its smell, made me sad for Scott and Andy in a way I could not explain. (Kushner 2013, pp. 283–284)

Reno's sadness is for the lack of political ignition in Scott and Andy's petro-urban upbringing. Cut off from the sinews linking Nevada and Rome, they are unable to imagine the alternate uses and abuses of gasoline beyond summer chores and the diligent but numbing mindlessness that attends the careful polishing of "engine parts" (p. 284), their boredom a condition of the US's rust belt. This scene is an important bildung moment in Reno's formation, with her realisation that childhood experiences, of ennui and automotive youth cultures, can be recast in terms of urgent political protest—a messy but necessary shard in the complex nexus of global petro-modernity and imminent deindustrialisation. As Kushner states, Reno now has to "incorporate a new and more complex association with what was formerly an 'innocent' smell for her" (Arnold and Kushner 2013). It is not that Reno's realisations carefully pattern global political and economic shifts. As Tucker-Abramson notes, Reno is "the idiot of the novel" (2019, p. 86), rather than its hero, a passive figure modelled after Flaubert's naïve Frédéric Moreau (Wood 2013), who is haplessly thrown into, and carefully observes without fully comprehending, historically important events. Rather, *The Flamethrowers* suggests totalising interconnections through energetic collisions with other spaces and protest groups, or as Kushner patiently describes, in the "cracks open in the places where things do not cohere" (Arnold and Kushner 2013), of places fissured by revolution and a transition to a post-Fordist, neoliberal regime, leading to a sense of the "non-coherence" and "rupture" of lived experience.

The novel's epiphanic logic is alive to what Jameson describes as the dialectic of "peripeteia", or narratives that figure reversals in fortune and that emerge in modern texts as the "ambivalence of negative and positive" (Jameson 2009b, p. 561) aspects of "victories": consider how *The Flamethrowers* makes explicit the costs of modernity in accounts of exploitative assembly line work or the indentured labour of rubber tappers. The "successes" of capitalism, of profit, meritocracy, and new commodity frontiers, are always undergirded by their imminent failure, through exhaustion, scarcity, or overaccumulation; rendering the peripeteia of capitalism's logic a decidedly structural trope in any novel considered with the rise and fall of the world-system. Alongside this mode of literary history is that of anagnorisis, or moments of recognition, and pathos or suffering (p. 565). Elsewhere, Daniel Hartley argues that *The Flamethrowers* provides a moment of Jamesonian "anagnorisis" through "*subjective* cognitive maps of selected subjects of neoliberalism, enabling

an aesthetically unified representation of that which is objectively, geographically, and socially dispersed" (2019, p. 142). However, the point of *Flamethrowers* is that totality is both available and not graspable to Reno. She, like the reader, could intimate the whole, but her progression is not dependent on accessing knowledge of the "multitudinous others suppressed from the official story and field of vision" (Jameson 2009b, p. 565), like the Brazilian workers whose lives are sealed off from her narrative, or say her decision not to contact Autonomist revolutionary Gianni who helps her leave Italy. Her encounters with other "neoliberal subjects" are important to her aesthetic development as an artist, and the novel's fuller shift in the last quarter from a bildungsroman to a künstlerroman. But the political and plot progression Reno makes is limited, still bound up with her self-actualisation through Sandro and his artistic cohort, and her complicity in his brother's murder, by refusing to disclose Gianni's role as a spy in the Valera household. Rather Reno relates to these events as commodities and potential resources for future video-art projects. As Tucker-Abramson observes, readings of the novel attendant to its world-historical scope need to "disarticulate" Reno's narrative from the revolutionary content of the "novel's standpoint" (2019, p. 75) given that the text "ultimately refuses Reno's perspective".

Moments of "refusal" appear in Reno's at times nonsensical and almost anachronistic realisations. Consider her observation that Autonomist protestor Gianni and her New York friend Giddle both smoke the same "North Pole" brand of cigarettes (Kushner 2013, p. 308). The jarring and quick likeness in Gianni and Giddle's names, their aleatory and uncommitted relationship with Reno, and their chain-smoking, effects similarity through seriality and juxtaposition. This forced contrast is designed, much as Reno's reflections on her upbringing, to articulate her growth from "innocence" to "experience" given her forays into the art world and the Autonomist revolt. But Reno's flattened aestheticisation of the world around her, as a series of moments to be mined in future artworks, is a peculiarly opportunistic and alienated approach to her surroundings in terms not dissimilar to Jameson's account of conspiracy as a poor way of effecting totality through paranoid coincidence, or "theme and content" (1988, p. 356).

In the previous chapter, I noted how Rana Dasgupta argues for the necessity for more vibrant ideas and aesthetic forms to illustrate the accelerated pace of capitalist modernisation. In contrast, Rachel Kushner's literary method is deductive, using Reno's retrospective ordering of her narrative, alongside richly researched analeptic scenes in Brazil and Italy, to

sketch tendencies that cohere partly because of the novel form's world-making capacity, and what Kushner describes as the "global" smoothing tone of the text which unites the narrative's multiple voices and characters (Kunzru and Kushner 2013, pp. 108–109).[6] In interview, Kushner explains that for Fredric Jameson the historical novel "provides a conception of what shapes people's lives among the larger forces of history" (Hart et al. 2015, p. 211). Historical novels have longer timeframes and a "collective dimension" (Jameson 2013, p. 267), within which individual narratives are developed, with Jameson arguing that modernism's innovation was to capture the complex totalities of simultaneities, contingencies, and ungraspable interrelationships structuring urban life, but that realism via Lukács involves the projection of "*interrelationship* as an aesthetic [...] and *somehow* suggests the active influence and effects of that whole range of social and historical forces without which this unique event is finally conceivable" (2009a, p. 206).

Repurposing Lukács's language of occluded realities, for Kushner the novel "puts people in motion and, in that, tries to render invisible things visible and deal with question that don't have easy answers" (Kunzru and Kushner 2013, p. 106).[7] Her method is one of condensation, of the "various threads and strands" of historical narratives and imagined lives, to shift through the "levels" of history that fiction enables (Arnold and Kushner 2013). In contrast, however, to critics who equate totality with "paranoid connectedness" (Wood 2013) or indeed the false totality figured by Reno in her desperation to match her experiences in New York and Rome (Gianni/Giddle), totality is for Lukács an "aspiration" (Jameson 2009a, p. 206) and a "framework" (p. 211) for unpacking how knowledge is "positioned, pursued, and evaluated" in collective terms. The novel is especially well equipped to link divergent themes, places, and peoples through the electric sense of collective aesthetic and political movements, or the "feel and texture of a time" (Kunzru and Kushner 2013, p. 106), while maintaining Reno's voyeuristic but superficial apprehension of events as a way of "shopping for experience" (Kushner 2013, p. 313). This method also expresses the occlusions and epistemological limits of the novel's first-person narration as an essential quality of (not) knowing totality, given that aspirations to knowledge are articulated through violently overdetermined classed, raced, and gendered positions. In one instance, Nadine, the ex-wife of anarchist Burdmoore is told by him to think in "totalities" (Kushner 2013, p. 309), and she applies this

principle to the economy of five-minute rounds of her work as a prostitute, as the limited, passive, and marginal narrators of Kushner's fictions produce an anamorphic politics of knowing and memory.

Galvanic Feeling and Art

Returning to petro-modernity, the structure of feeling of *The Flamethrowers* is an energetic and cumulative one that links the historic upswell of experimental art practice, and political protest against exploitative Italian industrial piecework, or the very labour that supplied the machines fuelling American automotive cultures and Reno's land art. When Kushner describes *The Flamethrowers*' ability to narrate "a large-scale event, of lots of people being involved in a political moment, an art movement, a march, a kind of collective aesthetic or illegality, by something like electricity or feeling" (Kunzru and Kushner 2013, p. 106), it is not a coincidence that political and artistic movements are described as being like "electricity". Consider Kushner's account of the "galvanic energy" (Hart et al. 2015, pp. 198, 214) of feminist autonomist protestors, the "kind of electricity, an act and a refusal and a beauty" (Kushner 2013, p. 373) of the Roman protests, alongside the "energy" of New York City's youths (p. 44), and Reno's "young electricity" (p. 7). The structure of feeling of *The Flamethrowers* is the charged one of a contemporary moment in tension with the conditions of possibility of both petro-modernity and revolutionary movements. This alignment of novelty with the "shocking" thrill of electricity is an old one, with Walter Benjamin describing the jolts of modernity, including the "posthumous shock" (2007, p. 175) of the photograph in tandem with car crashes, nervous energy, and machine work. Mills observes that for Benjamin and Marx, capitalist "shocks" dampen revolutionary potential, producing an "anaesthetized human body" (2007, p. 23) which must be overcome in any revolutionary process. Returning to *The Flamethrowers*, given the boom-bust valuations of oil during the novel's setting around the 1973 oil shock crisis, this structure of feeling, of charged affective moments, operates well as the other half of peripeteia—a narrative trope that emphasises the ambivalence of economic gain.

Importantly, the novel opens not with Reno, but with an accidental death and murder: Sandro's father, T. P. Valera, brains a German shoulder with a headlamp from the motorbike of a now dead friend and fellow Futurist. Real-life Italian Futurists celebrated speed, war, and technological progress, in what later became a melange of misogyny and fascism

with a "symbolically toxic avant-garde" (Noys 2014, p. 14). T. P. Valera's Futurists likewise fuse techno-utopian beliefs with poetry and metallic fetishism, reading "poems about speed and metal, recipes for soufflés of wire and buckshot" (Kushner 2013, p. 74) in a desire to magnify human speed and strength. Driven to destroy pre-existing ideologies and traditions, the group invest their futuric imaginaries in childish incorporations of machine materials into clothes, and drawings of "swift-moving men" (p. 75), while Valera, the only engineer of the group, incorporates his Futurist desire for velocity and technological progress in motorbike designs. Energised by the call to arms of World War I, the Futurists join an assault regiment called the "Arditi" (translated as "The Daring Ones"), but are quickly injured and killed (p. 77).[8] Here, the novel explicitly if crudely links accelerationist fantasies with fascist fantasies of technological progress over nature and even women. We are invited, through the centrality of motorbikes to Moto Valera, to consider the contiguity of such fantasies from World War I through to the 1970s. However, Reno, introduced to the New York art world as Sandro's girl, is somewhat erased by her interest in motorbikes which attracts both the curiosity and narcissistic introspection of men, who seem to think that the combination of "women and machines [….] had something to do with them" (p. 179).

In contrast to the desire to replace human flesh with machinery, and to exalt technology through an art infused with screws and metal sheets, Reno's travels on a motorbike are in the service of land art, of "drawing *in time*" (p. 9) to capture "the experience of speed" (p. 30). Her desire to illustrate speed is a modernist one, qualified by late 1960s and 1970s land art which courts the toxic-sublime, with land artists monumentalising open pit mines and quarries (Lippard 2014, p. 83). Reno is inspired by Robert Smithson's choice to place his famous *Spiral Jetty* monument in Utah, the "slag-heap world of the West" (Kushner 2013, p. 8) and a place of industrial runoffs, oil exploration, and the manmade salination of the Great Salt Lake. But as art historian Lucy Lippard notes, land art is a masculine practice generally constructed without reference to place, with most of it "site-specific but not overtly place-specific" (p. 82). Similarly, Reno's land art is about velocity and the traces generated by automobiles, rather than a place-specific engagement. Her visit to the Bonneville Salt Flats to set a land-speed record on her Moto Valera motorbike is, the novel suggests, a culmination of the Futurist desire for speed and destruction, but also of an aesthetics that takes its cue from the dematerialising effects of financial capital, and the dispersed geographies of American

oil-powered life (Huber 2013). Notably, Reno is more attracted to the motorbike's streamlined aesthetic appeal and promise of autonomy than the mechanics of the thing, noting that she needed her cousins' help to maintain it (p. 114). Eventually, she sets the woman's land-speed record not in a motorbike, but in a rocket-powered vehicle called the *Spirit of Italy* (p. 125). What matters is not the instrument of her achievement, but the glamorisation of speed. For Reno, the joy of the motorbike is how it rehearses the association between acceleration, oil, and the "*spatial experience of freedom*" (Huber 2013, p. 157): one that exists in sharp tension with her observation that perhaps "women were meant to speed past, just like a blur" (p. 297). The motorbike becomes an ambivalent expression of the spectacle of speed trials and gives Reno access to the patriarchal world of land art, but its acceleration also offers her practical advantages. Observing Honda's new advertisements proclaiming "Speed is every man's right" (p. 13), Reno qualifies this statement with the hazards of speed as "a causeway between life and death". Immediately thereafter, Reno witnesses a man harassing a woman by splashing petrol on her legs and threatening to set her alight (p. 13). Velocity here becomes a pragmatic escape strategy from the inequities of domestic "flamethrowing".

But what sets the politics of Reno's land art apart from Lippard's critique of the colonising effect of "a pseudo rural art made from a metropolitan head-quarters" (Lippard 2014, p. 88) is her involvement with a new wave of avant-garde artists in New York. The differences between conceptual and minimalist art are worth explaining as they deepen the text's ambivalence towards, on the one hand, the rejection of the commodification of art and artists as workers, and on the other, minimalist art's expression in the novel as an ironic commentary on deindustrialisation. Firstly, conceptual art is a dematerialised practice involving gestural performances, or art as "affect, commentary, dare, proposal, lament" (Arnold and Kushner 2013), often involving disguise and role-playing (see Lippard 1997). Examples in *The Flamethrowers* include Reno's friend Giddle who views her current identity and café work as an ironic performance, or Henri Jean who carries a striped-pole around SoHo. Aside from provocation, conceptual artists disrupted the institutionalisation of art by making unsellable works. No one, Lippard remarks, thought that "a public greedy for novelty, would actually pay money, or much of it, for a xerox sheet referring to an event past or never directly perceived, a group of photographs documenting an ephemeral situation or condition, a project

for work never to be completed, words spoke but not recorded" (Lippard 1997, p. 263). This reconsideration of art as gesture and protest emerged from a redefinition of artists as "art workers" (Bryan-Wilson 2009, p. 1), in response to the emergence of New Left civil rights movements (p. 4).

In contrast, Reno's mentor and lover, Sandro Valera, is a minimalist, producing massive artworks that require approbation by an art-buying elite. They include "large aluminum [sic] boxes, open on top, empty inside, so bright and gleaming their angles melted together" (Kushner 2013, pp. 92–93), fabricated in a factory in Connecticut that painstakingly hand-makes artworks (p. 93).[9] Confirming his affinity to the idea, if not the practice, of industrial labour, Sandro also lives in a former industrial warehouse, a place with the "feel of a very clean machine shop" (p. 203), still greasy with the chemicals of fabric processing. Ironically, Sandro's inherited wealth is from the very industrial work that his pieces refer to, amidst a shift to the "flexible" working practices of neoliberalism. Parodying post-industrial automation and the underemployment of workers, Sandro's fellow artist Stanley Castle invents an algorithm that organises his neon tube pieces, forcing, as Sandro notes, "his own obsolescence. The art made itself. Sandro said that Stanley's work had outmoded him the way the postindustrial age was now robbing the worker of his place and that this truth made the art more powerful" (p. 159). Here, the "flexible" automation of work practices, time-space compression, and the capitalisation of art spur what David Harvey calls the neoliberal era's "series of novel experiments in the realms of industrial organization as well as in political and social life" (1989, p. 145).

In actuality, the automation of (art)work, and fetishisation of industrial materials and spaces fuelled the gentrification of Manhattan's derelict industrial quarters, with minimalist artist Gordon Matta-Clark appearing in the book radically altering industrial spaces. But a difference exists in how figures like Sandro capitalise on both familial wealth and the ongoing primitive accumulation of material extraction to produce post-industrial works laden with irony, in contrast to the "gestural" performances of eccentric conceptual artists, like Burdmoore, part of an anarchic and misogynistic group called the "Motherfuckers" who operate at the margins of institutional art. Reno courts both worlds; seeking recognition by gallerist Helen Hellenberger, she produces short-lived land artworks whose intention is to capture the feel rather than the force of speed.

"We Want Everything": Energy and Suspension

If we consider *The Flamethrowers* as a novel of diremption—or one in which the major story pivot points happen in New York and Rome—and that figures the complex interplay of consumption and deprivation, artwork and industrial piecework, gentrification and dereliction, then the Italian section is crucial in adding political force to Reno's ephemeral attempt to capture "speed" and the novel's production of a petro-modern affect of automotive freedom. Most importantly of all, this section, a brief interlude of approximately eighty pages, thematises suspension and slowness. Jelly-Schapiro argues that we need to clarify the multiple temporalities of the world-system, structured as it is by the uneven coproduction of modes of "primitive accumulation, the moment of expanded reproduction, and the moment of accumulation by fabrication" (2019, p. 39).[10] Within these temporalities of capital accumulation, we can add the energetic and accelerative force of fossil fuels, amidst the resistive temporality of the strike, given that both are crucial to *The Flamethrowers.*

The Italian section of *The Flamethrowers* begins once Reno arrives in Rome late in the narrative. Having witnessed Sandro Valera kissing his cousin Talia, Reno flees Villa Valera with Gianni, the family groundskeeper and a covert Autonomist spy, and arrives in the middle of the "Years of Lead" protests. Disillusioned by the boredom and hazards of assembly line work, Operaismo and later Autonomist protestors refused wages as compensation for work (see Balestrini 2016). While New York conceptual artists practised gestural art as a dematerialised resistance to commodification, Autonomist strategies of refusal included slowed productivity, and strikes. In *The Flamethrowers*, Moto Valera is, like Fiat, a hotbed for wildcat strikes and left-wing radicalisation against "severe shop-floor policies" and "piecework" (Kushner 2013, p. 250), with protestors chanting "'We want nothing!' […] 'More work, less pay!' […] 'Down with the people, up with the bosses!' 'More shacks, less housing!'" (p. 276). The impact of the "Years of Lead" extends to the US, with the Moto Valera crew at the Bonneville Speed Trial conducting a work-to-rule and slowdown in solidarity with striking workers in Milan (pp. 118–122). Their protest "suspends" the efforts of Italian driver Didi Bombonato to break the land-speed record in the rocket-propelled *Spirit of Italy* until the Italian strikes are called off.

Autonomist protests originated as a response to Italy's post-World War II Marshall Plan era expansion in factory work, amidst the discovery of oil and gas in Italy's Po Valley. As Jason W. Moore notes, post-war transformations in "classic Fordism" were "unthinkable without Cheap steel, rubber, and oil" (2015, p. 96), as socio-economic shifts to post-Fordism were coproduced with "successive waves of enclosure, imperial expansion, scientific practice, and dispossessionary movements" (p. 96). More pointedly for Autonomia, Europe's shift from coal to gas and oil had important consequences for organised labour movements, with such refineries requiring little human input. After World War II, US-funded programmes in Europe sought to diminish coal supplies because of the efficacy of coal strikes through the supply of new fossil fuel sources (see Mitchell 2011, pp. 31–42). Given this alliance of coal with protest, it is no coincidence that by "1965, Italy was the largest gas producer and consumer in Western Europe" (Hayes 2006, p. 56).[11] Italy's enriched northern industrial hinterlands soaked up the "reserve labour" of poor agrarian southern farmers, suffering from the enclosure of commons and the diminishment of labour opportunities.[12] This unevenness was intentional, a strategy of Italy's northern bourgeois class who "reduced the South to an 'exploitable colon[y] … enslaved to the banks and the parasitic industrialism of the North'" (Gramsci quoted Jelly-Schapiro 2019, p. 38).

Sandro neatly describes how his family furthered Italy's "trifecta" (p. 266) of "Gas, tires, and oil"—with canny industrialists like his father T. P. Valera integrating motorway infrastructure, factory labour, and consumption to produce a vibrant automotive economy—"Brought in the so-called miracle, the postwar miracle, everyone in his own little auto, put-putting around, well enough paid from their jobs at Valera to buy a Valera, and tires for it, and gas" (p. 266). Moto Valera's expansion into fossil fuels and tyres, a fictionalised compression of Fiat, Pirelli, and Moto Guzzi (Hart et al. 2015, p. 197; Wood 2013), illustrates how a rush of petrochemical extraction proliferates new industries, from steelworks to oil refining. Reno recalls this while being driven down the Autostrada by Gianni, who she imagines takes "it as a given that Italy had a central artery, a car culture, a tire company so large it was practically a public utility" (p. 266). But despite Gianni's involvement with the Autonomists he cannot connect the infrastructures and cultures of petro-modernity with his own political resistance. This alienation from the ecological basis for industrialisation and, conversely, resistance, carries through to the novel's account of rubber tappers in Brazil which remain "out-of-mind" for

every character apart from T. P. Valera. Like Henry Ford before him, T. P. Valera's 1940s Amazon operation is run by a brutal overseer, enslaving indigenous peoples who quickly perish through overwork, extra-zealous disciplining, or failed escape attempts, all ironically and grimly marked in the overseer's notebook as death by "*Yellow fever*" (p. 213). Valera Senior remains untouched by the exertions of rubber tappers, who much later are still unaware that World War II has ended and labour indefatigably, expecting a huge pay check to enrich their children (p. 367).

These scenes in Brazil are short-lived and serve to reaffirm the ongoing violence of T. P. Valera's "entrepreneurial" method and its global reach, uniting the different kinds of work in Brazil and Italy, of rubber tapping and piecework as uneven expressions of accumulation across diverse ecologies and social relations, combining both hypermodern and residual elements. Reno's employer Marvin describes his former interest in violent deaths on film, noting that they are "part of stock footage, even if someone had to be killed, I mean originally, to generate the reference" (Kushner 2013, p. 323), and likewise, the novel implies the violence needed to generate or mine the material "references" of modernity, with Reno's petrolic mode of being and the New York avant-garde art scene depending upon an entire peripheral socio-ecological frontier displaced elsewhere.

However, if we follow the logic that Reno fails to comprehend how the dematerialisation of art and gentrification of New York City are bound up with the precarious nature of work in Italy and Brazil, then this context is admissible to the novel's standpoint, but not Reno's. The logic being mapped here is a curiously partial *and* world-systemic one, in which *The Flamethrowers* presents international histories of labour and extraction omitted from many US literary narratives of globalisation, but focalises much of the narrative through our ingénue, Reno. The effect is to thematise Reno's naivety, but also to structure within the novel form Jameson's account of postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism in core regions as producing a mode of subjectivity and sociality that almost blinds its participants from "knowing" about immiserating conditions in the "third-world". It is unsurprising that Reno projects onto the world the qualities we might associate with Jameson's "first-world" postmodern, including a deeply subjective and self-commodifying gaze. But the principled relativism of Jameson's "Marxist standpoint" view, or indeed the reader, opens up the possibility of considering how "the way in which the very possibility of conceiving of a […] certain unique emotion

is dependent on the labor of other people and on a social differentiation of production within which those particular human possibilities are available or on the other hand excluded" (Jameson 2009a, p. 206). The psychic and geographical differences between the world of US speed trials and conceptual art, Amazonian indentured labour and Italian piecework, are united, the text suggests, by the implied world-historical links of the novel's "global tone", juxtaposing experiences to produce the "anticipatory imaginaries" (Jelly-Schapiro 2019, p. 40) that emerge from partially seen expressions of collectivity.

Reflecting on *The Flamethrowers*, Kushner states that it is about the creative-destructive power of insurgence, of not knowing which way the flames of protest will burn (Barron and Kushner 2013), leading to the multiple meanings of the novel's eponym. The destructive power of revolt is linked to piecework, or the assembling of ignition sets at home which are the very mechanisms that spark the combustion process. Roberto Valera's decision to institute piecework is the initial "fire" that sets his labour force aflame with revolutionary discontent. Likewise, the oppression of women is illuminated by feminist Autonomia protestors, offering Reno a generative political position from which to critique the brutalist misogynistic photographs of assaulted women in Ronnie Fontaine's work. Actual "flamethrowers" exist: T. P. Valera's assault unit is called the "ardent" (p. 365) or Arditi, and his commitment to war is described as an "ardor" (p. 365), or a destructive desire that made him "dash into war, toward death, and then toward money and power". The epigraph to the novel, and the inscription over the fireplace in the Valera family home, is "FAC UT ARDEAT" (p. 224), or "Make it burn", a reference to the fire's purpose and T. P. Valera's youthful insurgency. This destructive "ardour" is contiguous with the New York power blackout of 1977: a moment of suspension that conversely enables energetic anarchic exuberance and looting in which "there was no private property" (p. 349). This looting is a kind of flamethrowing, a mode of revolt that like the slowdown strike operates as an obstacle to the kinetic rush of carbon infrastructures and capital accumulation, much as *Telex from Cuba* begins at the end of the Batista regime with the burning of UNF's sugar plantations. Rather than the immaterial gestures of conceptual art, these revolts suggest a recircuited relation between energy and collective resistance, with moments of pause, refusal, and obstruction amplifying both novels' imperfectly glimpsed world-historical imaginary.

Notes

1. *The Flamethrowers* is a relatively conventional bildungsroman with well-signposted analeptic scenes, in contrast to the discussions of avant-garde art which occur in the text and the inclusion of unexplained images. For Kushner, the essential messiness and complexity of the novel form mean that it will "never be fully assimilated into the modernist project" (Kunzru and Kushner 2013, p. 107), unlike visual art.
2. Discussing Reza Negarestani's *Cyclonopedia* with its surreal and gothic theorisation of oil in the Middle East, Niblett describes how the "extreme expression" of oil's transformative ontology, and "telluric" and adumbral qualities, is rarely found in literature which generally avoids engaging with the materiality of oil (Niblett 2015, p. 273).
3. From the 1700s onwards, the Spanish colonial empire had brought over a million slaves to Cuba until slavery's abolishment in 1886 (Chomsky 2010, p. 20).
4. By the early twentieth century, nearly all Cuban land was owned by American and European investors in sugar, tobacco and fruit plantations, mines, and railway infrastructures (Chomsky 2010, p. 27). Foreign influence extended over finance, with Spain dominating Cuban banking, and the US Cuban debt.
5. Untreated here is how Kushner gestures to an older literary postmodernism, while maintaining a commitment to realism's political force and expanded geopolitical or "hemispheric" horizons, absent in works by say Don de Lillo or E. L. Doctorow. Kushner's expanded global consciousness takes its point of emergence from the "signal crises" of the US empire, or the growing visibility of the US's hegemonic decay which was unavailable to previous moments. Kennedy and Shapiro state that 1968 was a catalysing "pressure point" in signalling the US's "long-wave" hegemonic collapse, which originated in the long downwards phase from 1929, while containing elements of the next "belles époques" period of financial liquidity. The emergence of neoliberalism as an accumulation cycle at this time, and the supersession of a "third neoliberal phase or of something else entirely" in the 2010s, "helps clarify what has long been a topic of confusion over when to date the onset of postmodern cultural products" (Kennedy and Shapiro 2019, p. 12). *The Flamethrowers*' conscious reconfiguration of 1970s postmodernism through visual rather than literary arts, by limning the deindustrialising and dematerialising effects at work in economy and culture, is one instance of this contemporary retrospective approach to postmodernism as the cultural logic of neoliberalism, and as thoroughly excavated by Tucker-Abrahamson (2019). Thanks to Mark Steven for opening up this line of thought.

6. Alongside this is Reno's passivity as a character, with her "introversion" operating as a carefully disguised "extroversion" (Hart et al. 2015, p. 204).
7. Kushner addresses her historical method straight on in an interview with Hart and Rocca, which is worth quoting at length:

   > *Q.* It sounds like you're arguing with Georg Lukács's *The Historical Novel*. He argues that the genre depicts the prehistory of the present.
   >
   > *A.* I think Lukács says more or less what I'm saying, that the historic must not figure as a dead relic but resonate with contemporary times and connect to them by evoking a social reality with meaning, not just a mound of historical details, disconnected from the lives of the living. But the term *historical novel* suggests a genre or subspecialty, which I would resist [....] But to capitulate, I'll agree that I'm very interested in history. There's a deep tradition of formulating a narrator who is a kind of anyperson [sic] intersecting with History with a capital *H*, and I can see that in both of my books". (Hart et al. 2015, pp. 210–211)

8. In actuality, the Arditi were a fast-moving assault unit tasked with difficult military tasks who suffered great causalities during the war (Daly 2016, p. 134). They attracted the approbation of Futurists who admired their "emphasis on speed and danger" (p. 135) and anarchic hooliganism.
9. See Tucker-Abramson for a reading of how the artists in the novel are "caught" between "capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production, both caught up within and about the mobility of capital and the fixity of the soil; they are works that reveal the impossibility of autonomy" (2019, p. 83).
10. Jelly-Schapiro defines "accumulation by fabrication" as "the synthetic creation and subsequent assimilation of an outside to capital — through the devaluation of assets and labor or privatization of public services and resources" (2019, p. 22).
11. Italian author and activist Nanni Balestrini, whose works are an important intertext to *The Flamethrowers* (see note below), notes how the oil shock crisis of 1973 gave industrialists the pretext to enforce redundancies, displace industries to peripheral countries, and through automation, reduce the need for human labour and potential interference with the assembly line (2016, p. 197).
12. Kushner's interview with activist and *Potere Operaio* founder Nanni Balestrini, and her introduction to the 2016 translation of Balestrini's *Vogliamo Tuttoi* or *We Want Everything* (1971), contextualises *The Flamethrowers*' depiction of the "Years of Lead" protests.

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CHAPTER 7

Conclusion: Towards a Literary Internationale?

This monograph examines how global fictions imagine, obfuscate, and interrogate the historical conditions and politics of capitalism-in-crisis, and the extent to which capitalism is a "gravitational field" involving narrative and ideological apparatuses that register transformations of the world-ecology. This involves a close reading of the material conditions that structure Salman Rushdie's 1990s and early 2000s fictions, and their representation of India's post-dirigisme market liberalisation, through to the increasingly deterritorialised and US-focused register of Rushdie's later works. The second substantive chapter sought to challenge the way David Mitchell's global fictions are treated as though they are instances of unproblematic cosmopolitan world-making, instead examining how they naturalise capitalist modes of competitive individualism in terms indebted to neoliberal and "global northern" assemblages of value, narration, and politics. An analysis of Rana Dasgupta's texts struck a contrasting path, examining his use of world-systemic and fragmented literary forms to cathect the unevenly felt manifestations of capitalist globalisation's salvific and estranging fantasies. While the final chapter examined Rachel Kushner's use of world-historical, anamorphic forms, among them the "reversals" and ambiguities of the peripeteia, as a way of limning the US' growing hemispheric might. These various examples of the global novel correspond with broader socio-historical trends that manifest differently depending on each text's geographic and cultural context. This includes the changing literary forms and politics of narratives of globalisation from

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the early 1990s through to the present moment, from post-Soviet attitudes of dismay and accommodation, such as the crushing disappointment that the post-Cold War era gave way to another period of national-ideological balkanisation instead of a "new era of liberty" (Rushdie 2002, p. 301), through to the brief moment of millennial prosperity that fuelled expansive "global northern" imaginaries, and later registrations of capitalist globalisation's rapacious technics of economic expansion and resource extraction, alongside longer historical treatments of US empire.

Ultimately, capitalism is the "infernal machine" (Jameson 2014, p. 146) through which the horizons of these works are mediated. But taking "capitalism-in-crisis" as the uniting trope that links the thematic concerns and aesthetic qualities of these novels can suggest the obverse to this monograph's intentions, which is to either naturalise crisis as the immutable condition of modernisation, or to imagine capitalism as an awesome and infinitely adaptable process outside the realm of human intervention and effective revolt. Marxist ideological analyses coexist with a "Marxist positive hermeneutic" (Jameson 1981, p. 286), and the dialectical uncovering of the utopian inclinations of these self-same works. If utopianism has been absent throughout this monograph, it is in part because the overt ideologies and themes of each text do not necessarily aim towards an emancipatory project beyond *Cloud Atlas*'s gesture towards reincarnation or the just-in-time rescue missions of the "Prescients". But the latter two chapters on Dasgupta and Kushner have sought a path out of this morass, to theorise how various realisms can offer comparative viewpoints, and an aesthetics of anamorphosis and estrangement, to uncover the globally uneven experience of life under capitalist modernity.

Likewise, despite Pankaj Mishra's misgivings about the rise of "bland" transnational writers (2013), he states that recent negative evaluations of the global novel gloss their challenging contestations of incomplete decolonisation, which resonate with the concerns of stunted economic, political, and cultural national development voiced by an earlier generation of Bandung-era novelists and theorists. Rather than emphasising the contiguities between this moment and an earlier wave of postcolonial authors, Mishra points towards a new generation of writers who are "politically more recalcitrant and internally diverse", willing to probe ongoing forms of neo-colonialism, and to scrutinise the unrealistic aspirational desires of peripheral youths structurally excluded from prosperous core regions. Mishra's apprehension of a revitalised nationalist and

anti-imperial critique is mirrored in the expansive themes and grim narratives of recent literary awardees. For example, the 2013 *Granta* "Best of Young British Novelists" (Freeman 2013) list was applauded for its inclusion of marginal transnational narratives, from Ned Beauman's narco-magical exploration of Burmese-London drug cartels, to Helen Oyeyemi's fairy-story retelling of racial African identity in Massachusetts's suburbs, to Sunjeev Sahota's portrayal of illegal Indian immigrants working as building labourers in Sheffield, through to Xiaolu Guo's narrative of Chinese exiles in London. Many of those on the list were either born outside Britain or are the children of immigrants, often writing about Britain or not at all. Combined, they signal a dizzying plurality of places and viewpoints that for one reviewer produced a sense of post-imperial melancholia as he searched "mostly in vain, for any sense of what it might be like to be young and in Britain at the moment" (Adams 2013).

Absent from this account are several major examples of "worlded" fiction that gesture towards the varying tendencies of the field. These include pop-cultural instances of the global novel like Hari Kunzru's *Transmission* (2004), a comedic account of American ambition and computer viruses gone awry; and *Gods Without Men* (2011), about the mysterious disappearance of a child in the Mojave Desert, a typical example for Douglas Coupland of a "translit" work that crosses "history without being historical; they span geography without changing psychic place" (2012). Additionally, the cult Japanese writer Haruki Murakami cannibalises an American "global pop-culture reservoir" (Murakami and Wray) of mass paperback novels, movies, and even advertisements, for their "style, structure, everything", to produce massive and irreverent works like *Kafka on the Shore* (2005) and the three-volume *1Q84* (2012), which have made him a global literary superstar. Although Kunzru and Murakami both write novels that are global by virtue of their condensation of pop-cultural trends, Murakami's erasure of linguistic nuance to appeal to both Japanese and global audiences exemplifies a tendency in the literary marketplace towards the diminishment of idiosyncratic language to aid easy translation, as discussed in Tim Parks' essay on the "dull new global novel". This trope is a signature quality of another global writer, Kazuo Ishiguro, who stated in interview that Russian translator David Magarshack was one of his greatest literary influences, "because I think the rhythm of my own prose is very much like those Russian translations that I read" (Ishiguro qtd. Walkowitz 2007, p. 221). If this monograph has tended at times towards a deterritorialised analysis, this is

because works by authors like David Mitchell and Rana Dasgupta often consciously eschew regional detail or vernacular language, in favour of mobile narratives, fable-like plots and translatable prose. This can inform and stabilise Anglo-American ideas of "commonplace" experiences, like Mitchell's backpacker narrators and their tendency to orientalise the East. But it can also produce critical texts, like Dasgupta's twenty-first century estranging capitalist fairy-tales, or the global "smoothing tone" deployed in Rachel Kushner's fictions to elicit the "nonsynchronous" but dependant flows of rubber tapping, machine assembly, and dematerialised artworks across the Brazilian Amazon, Rome, and New York.

In contrast to these easily translatable and self-universalising works, some of the most lauded novels of recent times are closer in theme and substance to *Granta* and Mishra's observation of a politicised literature in registering neoliberal transformations of labour and curtailed aspirations. They include Roberto Bolaño's sprawling account of cultural critics seeking an enigmatic author amidst a landscape of maquiladoras and femicide in the Mexican city of Ciudad Juárez in *2666* (2009), NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names* (2013) and its bleak narrative of the frustrated dreams and menial working conditions of Zimbabwean immigrants in the US, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) and its Nigerian narrator who moves to the US, and produces a successful blog that taps into the East Coast's gentrified subculture before returning to Lagos. What these authors bring to light are the forms of cultural hegemony, forced migration, and regional neocolonialism conditioning peripheral and semi-peripheral regions still subject to severe structural disadvantages, often in hybrid literary forms. Bolaño's literary method deploys admixtures of realism and the fantastic, or an "irreal" and uneven registration of the world-system (Deckard 2012) in an attempt to challenge the reification of the Latin American Boom Novel and the popular magic realist form, and produces a circuitous, epiphenomenal narration of the effects of NAFTA, World Bank Structural Adjustment Programs, and resultant transnational criminal gangs. Similarly, Adichie's *Americanah* combines blog posts and state of the nation observations with a sprawling bildungsroman form and piercing critique of US race relations, whose narrative centre becomes Lagos rather than the US or the UK. This is not to state that such fictions provide pessimistic examples of Third-World suffering, rather they fictionalise the condescending attitudes of NGO workers and concerned but ill-informed spectators, with local turmoil located in an international

matrix of neo-colonial legacies, capital flight, displaced industries, and the feminisation of industrial labour.

Alternatively, the editors of *n+1* describe "another path" (Blumenkranz et al. 2013, p. 13) of a vernacular literary internationale composed of radical manifestoes, treatises, novels, and poetry, driven by left activists who are fluent in several languages and willing to map what Arundhati Roy describes as the skeins linking local events with "mammoth" global enterprises (Roy 2002, pp. 132–133). In examples of such politicised author-activists, *n+1* list several of the most interesting writers exposing the faultlines of global capitalism today, among them French author Marie NDiaye with her emphasis on the contrary dynamics structuring French-Senegalese migration, Elena Ferrante's acclaimed Neapolitan trilogy and its portrayal of the changing role of women in Italian society amidst industrial strikes and class conflict, and Mahasweta Devi's attention to the plight of Adivasis suffering gendered violence, deforestation, and dispossession. This emerging strand of activists/writers is one future strain upon such critical work could progress. However, *n+1*'s emphasis on oppositional, multi-lingual, and modernist works deploys a similar logic of aesthetic value and inaccessibility (see Brouillette 2014), as we saw previously in relation to postcolonial-poststructuralist approaches to Rushdie's fictions, and which often simply ignore the huge body of realist anti-colonial writing by authors like Mia Couto, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Clarice Lispector, or Ismat Chughtai (see Lazarus 2011, p. 26). World literature may produce a counter-cultural trend to the homogenisation of global culture by focusing on the "*sub*national—the particular, local, and regional—dimensions of social life" (Pizer 2000, p. 225), but to what end, if we already apprehend such fictions with a series of presuppositions regarding literary form and value?

This monograph advocates a form of critical practice, rather than a mode of reading or strict categorisation of fiction, that attends to issues of imperialism and power, and reads how global texts catalyse subordinated positions across peripheral scales. Attending to how fictions consider the structural similarity rather than *difference* of forms of suffering and experience under the rubric of late capitalism is to be recommitted to a global politics of solidarity. This monograph has therefore sought to query not only the politics of the global novel, but also to produce a theoretical method that advocates what Dirlik describes as "practices of resistance against the system of which it is a product" (Dirlik 1994, p. 356), by

reappraising materialist, systemic world-literary analyses to provide a critical reading method that would unpick the limitations, and also political and aesthetic possibilities offered by global fictions. To accede completely to universalist accounts of the inevitability of capitalism's longevity, or of future ecological collapse, would be to exclude any intimation that an alternate and more just political future is possible. A worlded theoretical method can find critical ways of engaging universalism to produce that "kernel" of emancipatory collectivity, while maintaining an awareness of the potentiality and tensions within contemporary writing.

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Index

A
Accumulation cycle, 36
  Autumnal period
    decline, 141
Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi, 204
Ahmad, Aijaz, 6, 32
Allegory, 75
Amin, Samir, 36
Anam, Nasia, 9, 12
Annesley, James, 2, 16
Apocalypse and Dystopia, 109–110
Appadurai, Arjun, 52, 80
Appiah, Kwame Anthony, 46
Arrighi, Giovanni, 10, 71, 141, 159
  terminal decline, 36
Asturias, Miguel Ángel, 56
Auerbach, Erich, 8, 9
Auster, Paul, 98

B
Babri Masjid, 45, 50, 80
Balestrini, Nanni, 191, 196
Balibar, Etienne, 100
Ballard, J.G., 149
Barnard, Rita, 87
Baucom, Ian, 2, 37
Baudelaire, Charles, 179
Baudrillard, Jean, 72
Beaumont, Matthew, 40
Benjamin, Walter, 93, 136, 140, 187
  'The Storyteller', 136
Berardi, Franco, 75
Bernard, Anna, 60, 134
Blade Runner, 113
Blair, Tony, 109
Bloch, Ernst, 139
Blumenkranz, Carla, 26, 27, 29, 205
  n + 1, 25, 27
Bolaño, Roberto, 204
Bombay bombings, 1993, 45, 50
Borges, Jorge Luis, 94
Bradbury, Ray, 110
Braudel, Fernand, 141
Brennan, Timothy, 1, 2, 4, 5, 17, 18, 26, 48, 49, 63
Brouillette, Sarah, 39, 81, 205
Brown, Nicholas, 4
Bryan-Wilson, Julia, 190

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T. De Loughry, *The Global Novel and Capitalism in Crisis*,
New Comparisons in World Literature,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-39325-0

Bulawayo, NoViolet, 204
Buñuel, Luis, 56, 80

C

The Canterbury Tales, 134
Capitalism-in-crisis, 1, 10, 15
Carpentier, Alejo, 56
Carson, Rachel, 123
Casanova, Pascale, 15
Cazdyn, Eric, 99
Chapter Outline, 13–15
Cheah, Pheng, 16, 17, 28
Cheap Nature, 37
Chomsky, Aviva, 175, 195
Cleary, Joe, 30
Club of Rome, 123
Coetzee, J.M., 48
Cohen, Margaret, 145
Comaroff, Jean, 99, 152
Comaroff, John, 99, 152
Cooppan, Vilashini, 73
Cosmopolitanism, 46, 47, 49, 52, 63, 64, 79
Cosmopolitan Novel
  cosmopolitanism, 17
Coupland, Douglas, 87
Crises of capitalism, 34, 35
  belles époques, 37
  developmental crisis, 35, 38
  epochal crisis, 35
  hegemoney, 37
Cuba and Jim Crow, 175–176
Cunningham, David, 54, 90
  capitalist realist epic, 54, 90
Curtin, Philip D., 175

D

Dalí, Salvador, 80
Daly, Selena, 196
Damrosch, David, 15
Dasgupta, Rana, 131, 132, 136, 150, 151
  Solo, 131, 150
    Aesthetic Attitudes to Globalisation, 154–158
    Anti-Developmental Novel, 150–154
    Khatuna & Global Discipline, 158–161
  Tokyo Cancelled, 131
    "The Changeling", 136–142
    "The Flyover", 145–150
    "The Store on Madison Avenue", 142–145
Davis, Mike, 146
Dawkins, Richard, 108
Debord, Guy, 143
The Decameron, 134
Deckard, Sharae, 5, 7, 17, 28, 91, 153, 157, 204
De Loughry, Treasa, 81
Denning, Michael, 56
Derluguian, Georgi, 151, 152
Devi, Mahasweta, 205
Diawara, Manthia, 146
Dillon, Sarah, 97
Dimock, Wai Chee, 27
Dirigisme, 52
Dirlik, Arif, 205

E

Ecocriticism
  first-wave
    second-wave, social ecocriticism, 18
Edwards, Caroline, 124
Ehrlich, Paul, 123
Empire in Green and Gold, 178
Engels, Friedrich, 9
Epochal crisis, 10, 13, 35, 38, 139–140

Esty, Jed, 30, 31, 40, 134, 153
Evans, Lucy, 133

F
Federici, Silvia, 40
Ferrante, Elena, 205
Fisher, Mark, 90, 91, 95, 99, 100, 119
  capitalist realism, 90, 91, 95, 99

G
Gandhi, Indira, 46, 53, 80
  1975–1977 Emergency, 46
Gandhi, Rajiv, 50, 80
Ganguly, Keya, 78
Garland, Alex, 8
Garrard, Greg, 103
Global Anglophone, 12
Global literature. *See* Global novel
Global novel, 2, 8, 9, 11–13, 16, 25–29, 33, 39, 201
  capitalism-in-crisis, 202
  as a critical practice, 206
  literary internationale, 205
  pop-culture, 203
Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 8, 9
Granta, 203
  "Best of Young British Novelists" 2013, 203
Grass, Günter, 56, 71
Gunder Frank, Andre, 40
Gunesekera, Romesh, 134
Gunn, Giles, 2, 3

H
Hamid, Mohsin, 77
Hansong, Dan, 8, 9
Hardt, Michael, 73
Harris, Paul, 88, 117
Hartley, Dan, 184
Harvey, David, 140
Haussmann, Georges-Eugène, 140
Hegemony, 2, 13–15, 36–37
Heise, Ursula, 93
Helgesson, Stefan, 16
Herbert, Caroline, 48, 50, 53, 57, 58, 80
Hicks, Heather, 124
Historical fiction, 50
  presentism, 51, 52, 62, 80
Hoban, Russell, 110
Huber, Matthew, 189
Huggan, Graham, 39
  strategic exoticism, 39
Huxley, Aldous, 110
Hybridity, 56

I
Israel, Nico, 3, 16
Ivakhiv, Adrian, 100
Iyer, Pico, 87

J
Jameson, Fredric, 2, 4, 9, 10, 16, 28, 29, 31, 50, 53, 55, 60, 76, 89, 107, 137, 184, 185
  Class and the Standpoint View, 33
  first and third worlds, 40
  ideologemes, 89
  libidinal apparatuses, 75
  peripeteia, 184
  political unconscious, 9, 13
  presentism, 52, 59
  principled relativism, 34, 193
  situational consciousness, 31, 39
  third-world allegory, 53, 75
  'Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism', 31–33
Jani, Pranav, 48
Jelly-Schapiro, Eli, 191, 192, 196

Jonsson, Stefan, 100

K
Kakutani, Michiko, 88, 115
Kennedy, Liam, 195
Klein, Naomi, 152
Knepper, Wendy, 114
Kondratieff cycles, 141
Krishnaswamy, Revathi, 46
Kumar, Amitava, 6
Kunkel, Benjamin, 109
Kunzru, Hari, 203
Kurgan, Laura, 94
Kushner, Rachel, 169, 170, 173, 181, 185
- *The Flamethrowers*, 169, 181
  - Futurism, Speed, and Art, 187–190
  - historical novel and peripeteia, 181–187
  - Land Art, Conceptual Art, Minimalism, 188–190
  - Years of Lead, Protest, 191–194
- *Telex From Cuba*, 169, 173
  - Plantations and Violence, 180
  - Sugar and Neocolonialism, 177

L
La Berge, Leigh Claire, 40
Laouyene, Atef, 56
Lazarus, Neil, 4–6, 17, 18, 26, 32, 33, 48, 52, 53, 153, 205
Le Guin, Ursula, 116
LeMenager, Stephanie, 183
Lippard, Lucy, 188–190
Logan's Run, 112, 115
Loomba, Ania, 6
Lukács, Georg, 170, 174
- Crisis and Totality, 34–35

Lye, Colleen, 30, 31, 40, 134

M
Macdonald, Graeme, 112, 173
Malthus, Thomas, 103
Mandel, Ernst, 143
Marx, Karl, 9, 78, 123, 143, 144, 175
- Commodity Fetishism, 143
- hoarding, 78

McNally, David, 119
Meadows, Danielle, 123
Medovoi, Leerom, 77, 104
Metz, Joseph, 120
Mezey, Jason Howard, 27, 87, 89, 90
Mintz, Sidney, 175
Mishra, Pankaj, 26, 202
Mitchell, David, 27, 29, 87, 91, 106, 114, 115
- *The Bone Clocks*, 88, 92, 115–122
  - Anchorites and Vampires, 118–119
  - children, 119–120
  - Cli-Fi, 120–122
  - Maximalism, hyper-novel, 117
  - predacity, 117–120
- *Cloud Atlas*, 27, 87, 103–115
  - Consumption and Eco-Dystopia, 108–111
  - Neo-Malthusianism, 103–105
  - Power and Scarcity, 111–114
  - predacity, 105–108
- *Ghostwritten*, 29, 87, 92–103, 117
  - Chance and Causality, 97–100
  - Non-Corpums, 100–103
  - satellite views, 93–95
  - strange weathers, 96
- The Siphoners, 92, 114, 115, 121
- *Slade House*, 124

Mitchell, Timothy, 192
Mondal, Anshuman, 64, 66–68
Moore, David Chioni, 163
Moore, Jason W., 7, 36, 104, 123, 192. *See also* World-ecology
- four cheaps, 104

world-ecology, 36
Moretti, Franco, 4, 15, 16, 90, 118
Mother India (1957), 55
Mr. India (1987), 53
Mufti, Aamir, 16
Murakami, Haruki, 203

N

NDiaye, Marie, 205
Negri, Antonio, 73
Nehru, Jawaharlal, 49, 50, 57
Neoliberalism, 37, 38, 48, 50, 57, 59
New world order, 71
Ng, Lynda, 114, 124
Niblett, Michael, 7, 28, 105, 195
Nixon, Rob, 109
Noys, Benjamin, 188

O

O'Brien, Susie, 2, 39
O'Connor, Frank, 133
Oloff, Kerstin, 7, 28
Orwell, George, 110

P

Pamuk, Orhan, 48
Parker, Jo Alyson, 110
Parks, Tim, 25
Parry, Benita, 4, 5, 17
Petronius, Gaius, 74
Pirbhai, Mariam, 66
Pizer, John, 205
Planetary
eco-cosmopolitanism, 16
Postcolonial-ecocriticism, 6
Postcolonial literary studies, 3–6, 26–29, 32
Postcolonial theory, 60
Post-communism, 153
Prose, Francine, 182
Puchner, Martin, 8

R

Rao, P.V. Narasimha, 50
Realism, 29–35
authentic realisms, 30
new realism, 34, 135
peripheral realisms, 30, 31
punctual moments, 34, 40
Robbins, Bruce, 63
Ross, Andrew, 103, 109
Roy, Arundhati, 52, 205
Rushdie, Salman, 26, 29, 45
Bombay Trilogy, 47
fatwa, 14 February 1989, 45, 48
Fury, 47, 61, 69, 79
femicide, 75, 77
fin-de-siècle, 69, 71
gendered violence, 72
Gladiator, 73
hyperrealism, 47, 72, 76, 79
Lilliput-Blefescu, 70, 72, 81
politicolibidinal allegory, 77
roman empire, imperial decline, 73–74
The Ground Beneath her Feet, 47, 61, 62, 79
cosmopolitanism, 63–65
earthquakes, 67
historical inaccuracies, 66
irreconcilability, 65
Orpheus and Eurydice, 62
photography, 62, 65
ironic distance, 49, 51
The Jaguar Smile, 46
magic realism, 47, 48, 54–56, 60, 62
Midnight's Children, 45–49, 55, 60, 61, 80
The Moor's Last Sigh, 29, 45, 47, 48, 79

Abraham Zogoiby, 51
Aurora Zogoiby, 54
collage, 59
corporate history, 51–53
disenchanted realism, 60
epic fabulism, 48, 55, 56, 80
Mooristan, 56
overworlds/underworlds, 54
Shiv Sena, 50, 53, 57, 79
social realism, 54
surrealism, 55, 72, 80
The Satanic Verses, 46, 48, 49, 58, 61
Shalimar the Clown, 60, 80
Shame, 46, 76
Step Across this Line, 68, 81
worlds in collision series, 60, 80, 81
Ryan, Dermot, 108, 124

S
Said, Edward, 178
Salgado, Minoli, 57
Sassoon, David, 51
Sauri, Emilio, 33
Schoene, Berthold, 87
Schultheis, Alexandra, 80
Scott Fitzgerald, F., 74
The Great Gatsby, 70, 74, 75
Shamsie, Kamila, 25, 29, 182
Shapiro, Stephen, 35, 40, 75, 195
Shonkwiler, Alison, 40
Shoop, Casey, 108, 124
Short-story cycle, 133–134
Siddiqi, Yumna, 58
Smith, Neil, 71, 105, 110
Smithson, Robert, 188
Soylent Green, 112, 113
Spiral Jetty, 188
Srinivasan, Ragini Tharoor, 12
Srivastava, Neelam, 74
Stadtler, Florian, 65, 80
Strombeck, Andrew, 183
Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), 50
Sugar and Slavery, 175
Szeman, Imre, 2, 32, 33, 39, 99

T
Terminator, 101
Totality, 27, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 38
Trousdale, Rachel, 49, 58
Tucker-Abramson, Myka, 180, 182, 184, 185, 196

U
United Fruit Company (UNF), 173
Utopianism, 202

V
Varma, Rashmi, 47, 79
Vermeulen, Pieter, 87, 94, 97
Virilio, Paul, 93

W
Walkowitz, Rebecca, 2, 203
Wallerstein, Immanuel, 4, 5, 17, 35, 141
Wark, McKenzie, 96
Warwick Research Collective, 4, 6, 16, 28, 134, 172
anamorphosis, 172
Watts, Michael, 104
Weickgenannt Thiara, Nicole, 57
Weinstein, Liza, 50
Wenzel, Jennifer, 134
Westall, Claire, 172
energetic materialism, 173
Wiemann, Dirk, 149
Wilder, Thornton, 97
Williams, Raymond, 139

Wojno-Owczarska, Ewa, 8, 9
Wood, James, 115, 116, 182–184, 186, 192
World-ecology, 7, 10, 103–105
World lite, 27, 28
World literature, 2–4, 6–9, 16, 25, 28–30, 32, 40
  periodic comparison, 75
  periodicity, 40
  World-system literature, 77
World-systems theory, 1, 4, 7, 13, 17, 35–40, 71, 78
  belles époques, 70
  developmental crises, 10, 11
  Signal crises, 70
  US *hegemony*, 71
WReC. *See* Warwick Research Collective
Wynter, Sylvia, 177

Z

Zamyatin, Yevgeny, 110
Žižek, Slavoj, 102